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Richard Field, DD, 1561-1616

Of the Church (Five Books, 1606/10)¹

– on Ministerial Orders and Bishops

Vernon Wilkins

Introduction

Richard Field was ‘one of the most stupendously learned of Anglican theologians in an age when Anglican clerical scholarship was the wonder of the world’ – so writes Paul Avis in his *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*² of Richard Field, DD, 1561-1616, Rector of Burghclere, chaplain to their majesties Elizabeth I and James I, and latterly also Prebend of Windsor and Dean of Gloucester. Like his close contemporary (and probable friend) Richard Hooker, Field developed an immensely significant apologetic for the Church of England in the late-Elizabethan and (in Field’s case) early-Jacobean eras. Whereas Hooker’s prime concern was to counter the excesses (as he saw them) of the non-conformists, Field’s concern was to counter the papists, or Romanists (as he variously called them). It was a masterstroke of his sometimes highly polemical argument to demonstrate that the reformed, Protestant Church of England after the Elizabethan settlement was the true Catholic continuation in England of the historic Latin Church; that the Latin Church itself had always been, in its fundamental sense, a true Protestant Church; and that the latter-day popes and their followers and spokesmen were but a schismatic and heretical faction within it, albeit ‘**the prevailing faction**’ (3.8/I.171),³

1 *Of the Church*, 5 books and two appendices (Books 1–4 with appendix to Book 3, Oxford 1606; Book 5 with appendix to the whole work, Oxford 1610; 2nd edition of whole work, with additions to Book 3 and to the appendix to Book 3, Oxford 1628; 3rd edition Oxford 1635; Ecclesiastical History Society edition in four volumes, Cambridge 1847-52. The EHS edition runs to over 2000 pages in total; it modernised the spelling, typeface and layout, and extensively updated and supplemented the references to the quotations Field cites in his footnotes).

2 Paul Avis *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1989) p 68

3 Note

- For those (probably few) who might have access to Field’s work, *Of the Church*, references such as (3.8/1.171) mean Book 3, chapter 8, found in Volume I, page 171, of the 1847-52 Ecclesiastical History Society edition. ED means the Epistle Dedicatory at the beginning of the whole work. 5.ER means the Epistle to the Reader which Field wrote to introduce book 5, when it was published in 1610 (four years after books 1-4);

- ‘**bold text in quotation marks, thus**’ (or larger blocks of bold text indented without quotation marks, as per usual style convention) is quoted verbatim from the EHS edition of Field; it is acknowledged that putting such quotations in bold represents a departure from usual style convention, but it is a deliberate measure given the necessary abundance of quotations from Field’s work in this study;

- “**bold text in double quotation marks, thus**” is Field quoting from the Fathers and other Schoolmen, either verbatim, or to give the general sense - the 1847-52 EHS

whose erroneous beliefs and corrupt practices had never been upheld by the greater part of the Fathers and Schoolmen – for it was the Church of England and not the late-medieval Church of Rome which had ‘adhered to the Catholic verity’ (3.39/I.325). Thus much of Field’s work argues, at times with considerable disdain,⁴ against the writings of various papist⁵ advocates such as Bellarmine and Stapleton, and he draws heavily, and with much approval, on the writings of the Fathers and the scholastic theologians of the historic Catholic Church.

Unlike Hooker, Field is comparatively unknown in our present age. There is very little secondary literature which gives prominent attention to this Anglican divine, and his single magisterial work, *Of the Church* is not well known today, nor widely available. Following his death, King James I, who had earlier described him, after first hearing him preach, as ‘a *field* for God to dwell in’, confessed, ‘I should have done more for that man’. It would seem then, that he was neglected to some extent in his own day, though he was

edition claims ‘care... having been taken... to ascertain the correctness of the reference’ (I.xiii);

• ‘... (non-bold text in parentheses inside a quotation, thus)...’ is my insertion into, or minor amendment of, Field’s text, for better explication or clarity;

• all quotations from Field are in bold as noted above, but otherwise all *italics*, bulletting or numbering, layout, and any other formatting, within quotations are all mine (except for italicised Latin, which is original), added for emphasis or clarity.

4 Field’s writing can reach heights of polemicism, and he can be very scornful of his adversaries’ reasoning and of their unjustified claims against Field and his fellows. Phraseology in the like of the following abounds:

wicked calumniation (ED/I.xxii)

what could be more frivolously spoken? (1.15/1.49)

our adversaries so tediously contend and jangle (2.1/1.62)

sophistical cavillation (2.4/1.77)

insolently boast (2.9/1.89)

more than ordinary impudency (2.9/1.90)

notable trifler (3.40/1.327)

he knoweth not what he writeth (3.40/1.328)

most vain and idle (3.40/I.330)

Surely it seemeth, his brain was much crazed when he thus wrote, saying, unsaying, and saying he knew not what (4.6/II.410)

doth but more and more shew the distemper of his head (4.6/II.411)

impious miscreant (4.6/II.411)

his folly is too great (4.6/II.411)

See then, if he be not forced to run round in a circle (4.7/II.413)

most gross absurdities (4.7/II.414)

fantasy (4.7/II.417)

senseless conceit (4.7/II.419)

5 In this study we shall employ the terms ‘papist’ and ‘Romanist’ in the sense that Field himself uses them, namely to refer to his opponents, the representatives and advocates of the Tridentine Church of Rome.

much admired particularly for his preaching and his conversation, for his learning and his knowledge of the Fathers and of the scholastic theologians through to his own day; and for his prodigious memory for everything he read. James I evidently liked and respected Field and perhaps even counted him a personal friend. He was summoned by the King to attend the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, and at James' nomination might have become bishop of Oxford had not his death intervened after a seizure, at age 55.

An Esteemed Understanding of the Church

Demonstrating a right understanding of the Church was Field's lifetime's work and consuming passion. In his Epistle Dedicatory to the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Richard Bancroft, he laments that:

the unhappy divisions of the Christian world, and the infinite distractions of men's minds, not knowing, in so great variety of opinions, what to think, or to whom to join themselves, (every faction boasting of the pure and sincere profession of heavenly truth, challenging to itself alone the name of the Church, and fastening upon all that dissent, or are otherwise minded, the hateful note of schism or heresy), hath made me ever think, that there is no part of heavenly knowledge more necessary, than that which concerneth the Church. (ED/I.xix)

That Field singles out the importance of Church unity is of pertinent interest to us, for we shall see that it largely drives his understanding of ministerial orders (especially of bishops). Why, we might ask, is the formulation of an ecclesiology and an apologetic for Church unity his chosen task, rather than a delineation of Christian truth, say? This is an intriguing question, given that, as we shall see, apostolic Christian truth is the absolute bedrock of his entire argument, and the preservation of it his dominant burden – nothing is more foundational, and Field does in fact devote considerable space to setting out the fundamentals of this 'faith once delivered to the saints'.⁶ Non-conformism, we must remember, provides the backdrop to much of the theological debate around the turn of the century, and the publication of Field's first edition of Books 1 to 4 came only two years after the Hampton Court Conference (at which he was present), itself devoted entirely to debate on the non-conformism issue. Although it was Hooker, rather than Field, whose work argued

⁶ Field frequently refers to this quotation from Jude 1:3

specifically against the non-conformists, it remains the case that the unity and stability of the still young Church of England was a very vexed issue. We shall shortly observe that Field's opponents, the Romanists, had charged the Church of England with having broken unity, both by schism and heresy, and that Field counters the charge with a claim that it is the Church of England, not the Church of Rome that is in unity with the historic apostolic Church. With Rome on the one hand, and the non-conformists on the other, threatening the stability, as Field saw it, of all that the English Reformation had fought for, it must not be wondered that the unity of the Church was such a great concern to him. And yet Field's quest for the essential unity of the Church is not at the expense of the essential doctrine of the Church, for, as we shall see, unity is precisely unity in the truth of the apostolic Christian faith, in his estimation.

With his single *magnum opus* thus devoted to this subject, and running to well over 2,000 pages in its nineteenth-century edition, it goes without saying that Field held an exalted and deeply respectful view of the Church, 'that blessed company, which... we call the Christian Church, as consisting of them that believe in Christ now already come in the flesh'⁷ (1.5/I.19), or:

the multitude and number of those whom Almighty God severeth from the rest of the world by the work of his grace, and calleth to the participation of eternal happiness, by the knowledge of such supernatural verities as concerning their everlasting good He hath revealed in Christ His Son, and such other precious and happy means as He hath appointed to further and set forward the work of their salvation. (1.6/I.25)

Using terminology reminiscent of Calvin, he lyrically writes:

We say, therefore, that all they are of the Church, that outwardly hold the faith of Christ; and that that society wherein the sincere outward profession of the truth of God is preserved, is that true Church of God, whose communion we must embrace; that happy mother, in whose womb we are conceived, with whose milk we are nourished, and to whose censures we must submit. (1.11/I.38)

We shall confine ourselves here to a narrower concern, namely that of Field's view, in itself also a thoroughly high view, of *ministerial orders* in general and

7 Field here draws on I John 4:2.

of *bishops* in particular. As will already have become apparent, it is our intention that this study shall allow Field largely to speak for himself. It will assemble a plethora of quotations from Field himself, gathered from throughout his five books *Of the Church*, and it represents a sincere endeavour to ensure that the selection of quotations is representative of the whole, and that each is sensitive to context; and that the end product fairly summarizes Field himself, and grinds no axe other than his own.

Rather, though, than move directly on to the subject of *orders*, we shall arrive there via a consideration of Field's 'notes' of the Church, so as to establish beyond doubt that ministerial orders are no mere adjunct to the Church, nor an optional extra, nor a peripheral aspect, but an utterly essential and central feature of it, in Field's view.

Field's 'Notes', or Distinctive Marks, of the Church

'A note, mark, or character, is that whereby one thing may be known and differenced from another' (2.1/I.61), and so Field is concerned 'to find out the notes whereby the true Church may be known and discerned from all other companies and societies of men in the world.' (2.1/I.61) Such notes, or characteristics, '(p)erpetually and absolutely... proper to a thing' (2.1/I.62), must be 'inseparable and incommunicable' (2.1/I.62); that is, 'never being not found in that to which it is proper, nor ever being found in anything else' (2.1/I.62). By 'the true Church', Field means not the entire Christian Church generally considered, namely all those professing the Christian faith and thus including all heretics and schismatics; nor the orthodox Church, which excludes heretics; but 'the true Catholic Church' (2.2/I.65), which also excludes schismatics.

The 'profession of divine verities revealed in Christ' (2.2/I.64) would, Field argues, be a single, sufficient 'note' of the true⁸ Church, except that *heretics*, who are not of the true Church, would be thereby included (for every heretic believes *some* of the corpus of divine truth); the 'entire profession of the truth revealed in Christ'⁹ (2.2/I.65) would exclude heretics (because any heretic fails in some respect to believe all Christian truth), but it would not exclude

⁸ Field sometimes abbreviates 'the true Church' to simply 'the Church', but it is always clear from context whether or not he is considering the Church excluding heretics and schismatics, or otherwise.

⁹ Answering various charges by Bellarmine, Field subsequently clarifies this 'profession' to mean a sincere and pure profession 'free from all damnable, fundamental and pertinacious error' (2.3/I.67), in order properly to exclude the heretics.

schismatics. Now, schismatics also are ‘not fully and absolutely of the Church’ (1.13/I.42), in Field’s view, for anything which destroys the essential unity of the Church cannot be of the true Church. Unity must be defended at all costs, and so the ‘notes’ of the Church must be extended so as to exclude schismatics. Field achieves this, not by a further modification of this one ‘note’ of the Church (the ‘*entire profession of the truth revealed in Christ*’), but by the relatively radical addition of two further ‘notes’.

Those ‘notes’, he thus concludes, which ‘do perpetually, and ever sever the true Church from all conventicles of erring and seduced miscreants’ (2.2/I.65), and which

are inseparable, perpetual, and absolutely proper and peculiar, which perpetually distinguish the true Catholic Church from all other societies of men and professions of religions in the world, are three:

- *First*, the entire profession of those supernatural verities, which God hath revealed in Christ his Son:
- *Secondly*, the use of such holy ceremonies and sacraments as he hath instituted and appointed to serve as provocations to godliness, preservations from sin, memorials of the benefits of Christ, warrants for the greater security of our belief, and marks of distinction to separate his own from strangers:¹⁰
- *Thirdly*, an union or connexion of men in this profession and use of these sacraments, under lawful pastors and guides, appointed, authorised, and sanctified, to direct and lead them in the happy ways of eternal salvation’ (2.2/I.65),

that is, ‘order of ministry, and due obedience yielded thereunto’ (1.10/I.31).

We must keep in mind, here and in the following pages, that the first of these ‘notes’ is Field’s fundamental, overriding concern, namely apostolic Christian truth. But he finds it necessary to add the other two out of his concern for the preservation of this truth in order and unity. In other words, it is the sacraments of the Church, and the provision of a presbyterate (as we shall see), which is the apostolic and divine means of ensuring that the Church falls

¹⁰ Field’s understanding of the sacraments is beyond the scope of this study, save to note that in his estimation they are a ‘given’ for any right understanding of the Church. But that he sees them as ‘marks of distinction’, and that the ‘right use of sacraments’ itself necessitates an ordained ministry, indicates at least some part of the reason Field includes the sacraments as his second ‘note’ of the Church.

neither into heresy nor schism. This is significant, for it gives us further indication of Field's determination to champion and uphold the unity of the Church, a matter dear to his heart, which we shall soon see to be of immense importance to his understanding of ministerial orders in general and of bishops in particular. Equally, though, we shall soon discover that the unity Field quests for is not one which papers over the cracks of fundamental divisions in the Church, especially where the 'faith once delivered' is concerned. It is a unity rooted in apostolic truth:

We say, that there is nothing, besides sincerity of profession and right use of Sacraments, essential to the Church as a collected multitude, but only order and orderly connexion, or union of men concurring in these; while some authorised thereunto do teach, direct, and command, others obey (2.4/I.75),

for otherwise it is not possible

sufficiently (to) distinguish the whole body of the Church from the conventicles of schismatics, unless an orderly union or connexion of men concurring in them be added, which orderly union or connexion is essential to the Church as a collected multitude (2.4/I.75).

The essence of the unity of the Church of England is that it is, in Field's view, a connectional Church, and the '*orderly connexion*' is maintained by the Church's ministry – we will examine this in detail in due course.

He summarizes these 'notes' thus:

- 1 the entire profession of revealed truth, according to the rule of faith left by Christ, and
- 2 the right and due use of sacraments,
- 3 under lawful pastors and guides appointed to conduct the sons of God, in the ways of their eternal bliss and happiness (2.4/I.77).

These 'notes' (*Christian truth, sacraments, ministry*) 'are inseparable, they are proper, and they are essential, and such things as give being to the Church' (2.2/I.65). And so the essential place, in Field's estimation, of ordained ministry in the Church is becoming clear in our survey – and yet it is not a self-generating priority, as if to say that ministry is important (or that the clergy are important), or has an important place, in and of itself, without any external reference, or for a self-serving goal; for the prime moving force of

this high view of ministerial orders, as we have begun to see and will continue to see with great emphasis shortly, is apostolic Christian truth, and the need for this truth to be preserved in unity. 'It can be no church that hath no ministry' (3.39/I.316), and:

(t)he ministry of pastors and teachers is absolutely and essentially necessary to the being of the Church. For how should there be a Church gathered, guided, and governed, without a ministry? Therefore the ministry of those whom God sanctified to Himself to teach, instruct and govern His people, is an essential mark and note of the Church (2.6/I.82).

Antiquity, Succession, Unity, Universality, Catholicity

The notion of 'notes', or distinguishing marks, of the Church is not original to Field, of course. Field sets his 'notes' against those traditionally proposed by his papist adversaries, which he names as '**Antiquity, Succession, Unity, Universality, and the very name and title of Catholic, expressing the Universality**' (2.5/I.78). These, or more exactly Field's reasons for denying their validity as 'notes' (as understood by his adversaries), and Field's own reinterpretation of them, will be of interest to us, bearing as they do upon our study.

Antiquity, the first of the papists' 'notes' of the Church, is understood by them to be the unbroken line of continuance of the Church back to the apostles. On this basis, the papists argue, the Church of Rome is the true Church, because it is the Church of antiquity, as opposed to the newly created Church of England, which is not of antiquity and therefore not a true Church. But antiquity, in Field's view, is only valid as a 'note' of the Church if 'it (that Church) have anciently, and ever holden the doctrine of truth' (2.5/I.81). For

if any Church founded by the apostles, or their coadjutors, and left by them in the true profession, ... can demonstrate that they have not since departed from their first and original estate, they thereby do prove themselves to be the true Churches of God. And if any other that began since, as innumerable did, can shew that they have the faith first delivered to the saints, they thereby prove themselves no less to be the true Church of God than the former, which had their beginning from the apostles themselves, and have continued in a state of Christianity ever since. Do we not see then, that it is truth of doctrine, whereby the Church is to be found out...? (2.5/I.80)

Thus this very ‘note’ which the Romanists use to justify their assertion that the Church of Rome is the authentic true Church of antiquity, Field turns against them to show the very reverse – on the grounds that the Church of Rome has departed from true doctrine despite its unbroken line of continuance (and so is not at all a Church of antiquity); whereas his own Church holds to the apostolic doctrine (and so is a Church of antiquity, despite its youth). There can be ‘no plea of antiquity on behalf of any Churches whatsoever, though established by the apostles, unless they can prove that they have not left their first faith’(2.5/I.81).

So we see that *Antiquity*, properly considered, is *antiquity of apostolic Christian truth*, and no other.

Succession, as a ‘note’ of the Church, is understood by the papists to be the existence of an unbroken line of bishops stretching back to the apostles, for (the Romanists allege) ‘(n)o bishop may be esteemed and taken as lawfully ordained, unless he be ordained of three bishops at the least; and they, such as have been ordained in like sort; and so ascending till we come to the first’ (3.39/I.317). Needless to say, Field examines ‘the allegation of the papists, endeavouring to prove against us, that we have not the true Church amongst us, because (as they falsely suppose) we lack the visible succession of pastors and bishops’ (3.40/I.327).

Field notes Calvin’s view, that

more is required to find out the true Church than personal succession; and that the fathers did not demonstrate the Church barely by personal succession, but by shewing that they that succeeded held the faith of those that went before them. (3.40/1.328)

For succession rightly considered is

not bare succession, but ... lawful succession, when not only the later succeed into the void rooms of those that went before them, being lawfully called thereunto, but also hold the faith their predecessors did. (3.40/I.328)

Ministry is essential in a true Church, as we have seen, for ‘(i)t can be no church that hath no ministry’ (3.39/I.316). But it is a truism to say, therefore,

that a church must have a succession of ministers – because, of course, for there to be a continuing ministry, when ministers die, ‘all being subject to death’ (2.6/I.82), they must be replaced; or alternatively, ‘if either the wickedness of them that are in place, cast them out, or their weakness cause a voluntary relinquishment of their office and standing, others must succeed.’ (2.6/I.82). But the line of succession, so precious to the papists, must needs be considered broken or damaged if any occupant of a place in the line should depart from the apostles’ doctrine. True ‘succession’, therefore, Field argues, is simply succession of right doctrine: ‘truth of doctrine is a necessary note whereby the Church must be known and discerned, and not ministry or succession or anything else without it.’ (2.6/I.84) It is this that guarantees the continuing existence of that Church.

Thus Field is clear in his own mind that the essence of heresy, and correspondingly of schism, is not that the heretic necessarily dissents from the teaching of his contemporary Church (which could, hypothetically, be heretical itself), but rather from the teaching of the apostles; nor that the schismatic separates himself from the fellowship of his Church (which could, hypothetically, be a schismatic Church itself), but rather from the fellowship of the apostles.

In this sort the fathers were wont to reason from succession, in the controversies of religion. First, they reckoned up the successions of bishops from the apostles’ time; and then shewed that none of them taught any such (heresy) as was then called into question, but the contrary; and consequently, that the apostles delivered no such thing, but the contrary. (3.40/I.328)

Thus the heretics, ‘thought themselves wiser than the apostles themselves, affirming that they mingled the law and the gospel together, taking exceptions of ignorance and imperfection against them and their doctrine.’ (3.40/I.330) Thus the test of heresy, and of schism likewise, must always be made in relation to the original apostolic doctrine and Church.

So we see that as with *Antiquity*, so *Succession* also, properly considered, is *succession of apostolic Christian truth*, and no other.

Unity is the papists’ third ‘note’ of the Church. They argue that the Church of England has broken unity in its separation from Rome; it is a schismatic

Church, and therefore not a true Church. Field is, as we have seen, keen to uphold unity, but it must be unity properly considered; for '(t)he unity of the Church consisteth principally in three things' (3.41/I.330):

- 1 'in observing and holding the rule of faith once delivered to the saints' (3.41/I.330); or again, 'in respect of the rule of faith and use of the sacraments of salvation' (2.7/I.86);
- 2 'in respect of the coherence and connexion of the pastors and bishops amongst themselves' (2.7/I.86); or again, 'in the due connexion of many pastors, and the flocks depending on them, among themselves' 3.41/I.330); or again, 'in respect of the same head, Christ, and guides appointed by him... all holden in a sweet coherence and connexion amongst themselves, as if there were but one episcopal chair and office in the world; which unity of pastors and bishops, though they be many and joined in equal commission, with dependence from one another, Christ signified, by directing His words especially to Peter: "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs"' (2.7/I.85, quoting John 21:15-17);
- 3 in due and submissive obedience of the people to their pastors' (2.7/I.86), or again 'in the subjection of the people to their pastors' 3.41/I.330).¹¹

'All these kinds and sorts of unity we think necessarily required in some degree, in all those societies of Christians, that will demonstrate themselves to be the true Churches of God' (3.41/I.331). Thus Field is quite content to acknowledge that unity, the third of the papists' 'notes', thus understood, is entirely in accordance with his own 'notes' of the Church. Once again, though, what is of central importance is not a bare, outward, visible, nominal unity only, but a

11 The requirement that the people should submissively obey the pastors is not infrequently mentioned by Field, and several examples occur in the quotations cited in this study. Furthermore, the preservation of unity in the Church entails a disciplinary as well as a directional aspect to the pastors' role to 'govern' the Church. We have already noted that the Church is 'that happy mother... to whose censures we must submit' (1.11/I.38) – to which can be added an immediately preceding reference asserting divine testimony as to the 'Church, to whose authority and direction the Lord commandeth us to submit ourselves' (1.11/I.38); and that Field's third 'note' of the Church is 'order of ministry, and due obedience yielded thereunto' (1.10/I.31). Later we shall note that the bishop is a "judge in Christ's stead" (5.2/III.212, quoting Cyprian) and we shall note the 'power of the Church in ordering offenders' (1.16/I.51), or 'in the ordering of sinners' (1.16/I.52).

unity which finds its essence in Field's fundamental concern, namely the apostolic 'faith once delivered', preserved and propagated by a divinely appointed ministry – in other words, 2 and 3 above alone are not sufficient, without 1 and 2, the 'connexion of many pastors', is not a self-existing, self-authenticating hierarchy; it is not under the authoritarian headship of the pope either, but is rather under the headship of Christ. The pastors, it should be noted, do not *define* the church; rather, they *maintain* the *unity* of the church – the Church is not the company of pastors, nor the bishops, nor even the 'orderly connexion'; rather, it is the 'orderly multitude of right believers' (2.4/I.76), 'that blessed company... of them that believe' (1.5/I.19).

So we see that as with *Antiquity* and *Succession*, so *Unity* also, properly considered, is *unity of apostolic Christian truth*, and no other.

Universality is the fourth of the papists' 'notes'. The Church of Rome is, they maintain, the Church universal, and is thus the true Church; but the English Church is certainly not universal in their view: therefore it is not a true Church. But in Field's view, universality 'is nowhere found, but in that blessed number of Christians that have been, are, and shall be' (3.43/I.349); and it 'is not found in any one Church, limited either in respect of time or place'. (3.43/I.349) Or more exactly:

universality may be a note of the true Church in respect of particular societies of Christians, limited in time and place; though not by having it, yet by demonstrating themselves to pertain to the unity of that Church that hath it. This no particular Church can do, but by proving that it holdeth the common faith once delivered to the saints, without heretical innovation, or schismatical violation of the unity and peace of the Christian world. (3.43/I.349)

Field is adamant that the Church of England can so prove itself to hold 'the common faith once delivered to the saints', and so certainly is part of the Church universal – unlike the Church of Rome which has certainly departed from that ancient faith.

So we see that as with *Antiquity*, *Succession* and *Unity*, so *Universality* also, properly considered, is *universality of apostolic Christian truth*, and no other.

Catholicity (by which fifth ‘note’ the papists don’t mean *universality* again, but rather the actual calling of a Church by the name Catholic) cannot possibly be a ‘note’ of the Church now, according to Field. For:

(t)he title of Catholic cloth most fitly express those, both Christian men and societies of Christians which hold the common faith without particular divisions from the main body of Christianity. While, therefore, there was but the main body of Christianity at unity within itself and such portions of seduced and misled people as apparently divided themselves from it, the name of a Catholic was a note and distinctive mark or character to know and discern a Catholic from an heretic, or schismatic. (2.9/I.89)

This was the case once long ago, but:

howsoever it was in the days of the fathers, it is not now proper to the true Church, but common to schismatics and heretics; and therefore ... it cannot now serve as a mark or note distinctive, whereby the true Church may be known from misbelievers. (2.9/I.89)

That is, there are heretical and schismatic ‘churches’ which count themselves ‘Catholic’ – in other words, the Church has for centuries been a divided Church, the split between East and West being a prominent case in point. So the mere naming of a Church, or a Christian, as Catholic, these days, is absolutely no guarantee of authentic, apostolic Christian faith. To claim *appropriately*, therefore, that a Church is truly Catholic needs more than that the word ‘Catholic’ appears in its title; that is, to claim that a Church is a *true* Catholic Church, that Church must show that it holds ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’, that ‘common faith’ of the ancients.

‘This being the way for particular Churches to demonstrate themselves to be catholic, by proving they hold the catholic faith, it is easy from hence to conclude, that the reformed Churches are the Catholic Churches of God.’ (3.43/I.349) This is a bold move by Field. Far from acknowledging that the Church of England has broken from the Catholic Church and then justifying this state of affairs, Field courageously declares that the Church of England is the Catholic Church – it has brought itself back into line with the historic, apostolic Christian Church, from which the Church of Rome broke fellowship many years since.

So we see that as with *Antiquity, Succession, Unity* and *Universality*, so *Catholicity* also, properly considered, is *Catholicity of apostolic Christian truth*, and no other.

Orderly Connexion

We have already seen how unity, in Field's view, is an utterly essential *sine qua non* for any right understanding of the true Church. Now we see also that unity is one of the prime driving forces for his understanding of ministerial orders. It is not the only one, for we have already observed the importance of ministers 'to teach, instruct and govern His people' (2.6/I.82); and yet, of course, these two aspects of the orders of ministry, namely, (a) to preserve unity, and (b) to teach the truth of the Christian faith, are not distinct, for unity is precisely unity of truth, as we have seen. So we should see Field's view of the fundamental purpose of the ordained ministry as being to preserve and propagate the apostolic Christian truth in unity down through the ages – *antiquity* of truth, *succession* of truth, *unity* of truth, *universality* of truth without heresy or schism; only when such is true of the Church, Field believes, can it justify calling itself the one, true, *Catholic* Church.

The Church is connectional in Field's view, as noted above, and not a hierarchical structure of a sort which is domineering and authoritarian by nature – these latter terms are foreign to Field's understanding of the Church of England, though he clearly sees them as aptly describing the Church of Rome. The term 'orderly connexion', as an expression denoting the essential unity of the Church, and used frequently by Field, refers in the first place to all the people of the Church, as in Field's third 'note', where the Church is described as 'an union or connexion of men in this profession and use of these sacraments, *under* lawful pastors and guides, appointed, authorised, and sanctified, to direct and lead them in the happy ways of eternal salvation' (2.2/I.65). But in a derivative way the term is appropriated to the body of pastors themselves, as in 'the due connexion of many pastors, and the flocks depending on them, among themselves' (3.41/I.330), and 'guides appointed by (Christ)... all holden in a sweet coherence and connexion amongst themselves' (2.7/I.85; all quotations above in this paragraph already cited earlier). The Church is:

nothing else but an orderly multitude of right believers ...collected and gathered in the true faith of Christ, and hope of eternal happiness; which

... cannot be known and discerned from the conventicles of schismatics, by right faith and due use of Sacraments only, without the addition of orderly connexion. (2.4/I.76)

Thus it would be a mistake to think of the unity of the Church as pertaining simply to the company of pastors, for it properly describes the whole company of God's people; yet it is the company of pastors, divinely appointed, whose ministry upholds and preserves the unity, the connection, the order of the Church by their teaching, and by their guiding the people in the truth of the historic, apostolic and Catholic Christian faith.

Later we shall see Field's view of the particular role of bishops in this regard, but for now we move to Field's examination of ministerial orders generally, and of their apostolic and, indeed, divine origin. His assessment of the true ordering of God's people, he claims, 'I have endeavoured by the true description of them out of the Scripture, and the authentical records of antiquity'. (5.ER/III.ix)

An Exalted Understanding of Ministerial Orders

(I)n the Church of God is found an entire profession of the saving truth of God, order of holy ministry, sacraments by virtue thereof administered, and a blessed unity and fellowship of the people of God, knit together in the bonds of peace, under the command of lawful pastors and guides set over them to direct them in the ways of eternal happiness (I .13/I.42).

Evidently, then, Field holds the ordained ministry of the Church in very high esteem, for '(i)t can be no church that hath no ministry' (3.39/I.316), and 'how should there be a Church gathered without a ministry?' (1.10/I.33) In fact, Field devotes an entire book, the fifth out of five, to the subject, having already in the first four given thorough attention to this crucial aspect of the Church – and book five itself is nearly twice as long as the other four put together. So the remaining sections of this study must needs be but a brief summary of Field's assessment of what he calls 'the diverse degrees, orders, and callings of those men, to whom the government of this Church is committed' (1.6/I.25).

At the start of his Book 5, Field presents at length how God established and ordered his Old Testament Church up to the incarnation of Christ, and then sets forth ‘the excellency of Christ our Saviour ... what great things he did and suffered for us, to reconcile us unto God’ (5.22/III.149), and ‘what the benefits are which he procured for us and bestowed on us’ (5.22/III.149). He then proceeds to describe the ordering of ministry in the Christian Church:

(n)ow it remaineth that we see to whom he committed the publishing of the joyful reconciliation between God and man, the conversion of the world unto himself, and the government of such as should by believing become his people, when having finished the great work he came to perform, he was to return back to that God his Father that sent him. (5.22/III.149)

Apostles

Field quotes Ephesians 4:8 etc, (“he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers ...”), and states that

(a)mongst all those messengers of glad tidings, and ministers of Christ, appointed by him for the gathering together of the saints,

- the apostles were chief and principal;
- evangelists were assistants, which they used for the better settling and perfecting of things happily begun by them, and the writing of the evangelical histories concerning Christ:
- the prophets were such as foretold future things, that knew all secrets, and opened the hidden mysteries of God, speaking to the consciences of men in a strange and admirable manner; ...

These were temporary, and to continue but for a time.¹² (5.22/III.150)

The ministry of the apostles is, for Field, foundational for the understanding of later Christian ministry, for (a) the apostles were directly commissioned by Christ, having been direct witnesses of his life, and (b) although the apostles were in a sense irreplaceable, yet the ministry of their successors, the presbyters, and their assistants, the deacons, derives in direct continuation from them, and upon their commissioning, viz:

12 Interestingly, he includes evangelists amongst those who were temporary, that is, for the duration of the ministry of the apostles.

after (Christ) had wrought all righteousness, and performed the work for which he came, he returned back to God that sent him; choosing out some of them that had been conversant with him in the days of his flesh, that had heard the words of his divine wisdom, and were eye witnesses of all the things he did and suffered; and sending them as his Father sent him, who were therefore named *apostles*. These had many excellent pre-eminencies, proper to those beginnings, and fit for the founding of Christian Churches; as

- immediate calling,
- infallibility of judgement,
- general commission,
- the understanding and knowledge of all tongues,
- power to confirm their doctrine by signs and wonders, and
- to confer the miraculous gifts of the Spirit upon other also, by the imposition of their hands.

In which things, when they had finished their course, they left none to succeed them; (5.ER/III.vi)

– by which, of course, Field means that there could be no further apostles. But the continuing Church can and must remain *apostolic*; no further ministers would be apostles, but their ministry can and must remain *apostolic*, as we have seen – every aspect of the authenticity of a present Church is pushed back, by Field, to the apostles.

Presbyters (and Deacons)

Having spoken of the apostles' power and office, and the largeness of that commission, it remaineth that we come to speak of them to whom they recommended the managing of Church-affairs and the ministry of holy things when they left the world. They ... were of two sorts:

first, such as they trusted with the ministry of the word and sacraments, and government of God's people; and
secondly, such other as they appointed to be assistant to them, and to perform the meaner services, though necessary also.

The *former* sort are all comprehended under one common name of *presbyters*, that is, fatherly guides of God's Church and people; the *latter* are *deacons*, and such other inferior ministers as attend the necessities of the saints, and assist the principal guides of the Church. (5.25/III.187)

Likewise,

yet out of their more large, ample, and immediate commissions, they (the apostles) authorized others to preach the gospel, administer sacraments, to bind and loose, and to perform other like pastoral duties, sanctifying and ordaining them to this work, by the imposition of hands. These they honoured with the glorious title of *presbyters*, that is, fatherly guides of God's Church and people; and knowing the weight of the burden they laid on their shoulders, added unto them as assistants other of an inferior¹³ degree and rank, whom they named *deacons* or ministers. (5.ER/III.vii)

Field is emphatic that the office of presbyter is an exalted one, and of apostolic and, indeed, of divine commission. It is to the presbyterate that the duty is entrusted 'to teach, instruct and govern His people' (2.6/I.82). Field writes:

the name of presbyter ... in the writings of the apostles doth ever note out unto us a minister of the word and sacraments. The reason why the apostles chose this word rather than the name of *sacerdos*, which we commonly translate priest (though the English word priest come of presbyter,) was, lest there should be a confusion of the ministers of the Old Testament, who were to offer sacrifices unto God, figuring the coming of Christ, with those of the New; and to show that none should be appointed ministers but men of ripe age and confirmed judgment (5.26/III.206),

and, having already separately given us his treatment of deacons, 'it remaineth that we speak of them that are trusted with the ministry of the word and sacraments, and the government of God's people, comprehended under one common name of presbyters, that is fatherly guides of God's church and people' (5.26/III.201). We note that Field uses terminology ('ministry', 'fatherly guides') appropriate to humble service and not to princely rule, a matter which will continue to exercise him, as we shall see. When he uses terms, as he will of presbyters and/or bishops, such as

13 Field's (frequent) use of the term 'inferior' should not be understood pejoratively – it refers simply to a lower rank in what inevitably is an ordering of the ministry of God's Church. We shall not significantly consider the office of *deacon* any further in this study, save to note here the essential difference between this and that of the presbyter – for the difference is marked, and the deacon and presbyter are not to be confused; the deacon is merely an assistant, and may not otherwise do what a presbyter may do, as we shall see.

'superior' or 'eminent' or 'power' or 'government' or 'pre-eminence', it will continue to be in the neutral sense of denoting mere rank within an order and the office appropriate to that rank, and decidedly not, again, in the sense of princeliness – and we shall see this too.

The 'government' of God's people, though noted separately, can hardly be taken as a totally distinct operation, in Field's thought, from that of the ministry of word and sacraments – they are all of a piece; for we have seen already, and will again, that one of the great imperatives for God's Church, namely the preservation of unity, is precisely a preservation in God's Church of the apostolic Christian truth, once delivered to the saints – a universality of truth, a unity of truth, a succession of truth, an antiquity of truth. To govern God's Church is to guard it and guide it thus in fatherly care. This government of the Church by the presbyterate will inevitably entail the giving of direction, and even discipline, to which the people must submit; but the reason is not to bring the Church into subjection to an inappropriate self-serving power, but to guide and preserve the Church in authentic apostolicity.

Field makes a point of emphasizing that there is no third order of ministry, namely lay-elders, lying between deacons and presbyters, who have the government of the Church as their responsibility though not the ministry of word and sacraments, for such is impossible – these ministries belong together; they are inseparable. **'The government of the Church is in respect of (only) two sorts of men, the clergy and the laity. Touching the former, they are to be tried and approved for their life and learning; they are to be ordained with solemn imposition of hands'** (5.26/III.202), and:

that in the Acts, where the apostles are said to have constituted elders in every Church, pastors and ministers are meant, and not laymen, is strongly confirmed by that in the twentieth of Acts, where the elders of the Church of Ephesus converted before Paul are commanded to "feed the flock of Christ, over which they were appointed overseers;" whence it followeth inevitably that they were pastors; (5.26/III.204)

that is, pastors and not laity, not even 'lay-elders'; and yet also pastors and not princely rulers, pastors chosen from among the laity for their 'life and learning' and respect in which they are held ('ripe age and confirmed judgment').

To be ordained is no mere temporary expedient; it is a solemn commission deriving from the perpetual need for the Church to be (perpetually) guarded and guided: ‘the offices of bishops and pastors’ (5.26/III.204) are ‘perpetual’ (5.26/III.204) and not ‘annual and but for a certain time’ (5.26/III.204).

Field concludes, then, quoting Jerome (writing on Isaiah): “We also in the Church have our senate, the company of presbyters” (5.26/III.207), and (writing on Titus): “The Churches were governed by the common advice and counsel of the presbyters” (5.26/III.207).

Bishops

Amongst these fatherly guides of God’s Church and people, for the preventing of dissension, the avoiding of confusion, and the more orderly managing of the important affairs of Almighty God, they (the apostles) established a most excellent, divine, and heavenly order, giving unto one amongst the presbyters of each Church an eminent and fatherly power, so that the rest might do nothing without him; whom for distinction’s sake, and to express the honour of his degree and place, afore and above other, we name a *bishop*. (5.ER/III.vii)

And farther, by a most wise disposition provided, that amongst bishops all should not challenge all things unto themselves, but that there should be in several provinces several bishops, who should be first and chief amongst the brethren; and again constituted and placed certain other in greater cities, who might take care of more than the former. The former of these were named *metropolitans*, the later were known by the name of *patriarchs*, or chief fathers, who also in order and honour were one before and after another. (5.ER/III.vii)

We observe several things. First, Field pushes the foundation of the order of bishops fully back to the apostles themselves (‘they established ...’). Field would not say, as would some these days, that bishops as leaders amongst the presbyters arose *after*, albeit, perhaps, *soon after*, the time of the apostles. And bishops were not merely an apostolic invention, but were an institution in the will of God himself (‘they established a most excellent, *divine*, and *heavenly* order’).

Secondly, the bishops are to be chosen from *amongst* the presbyters, and from

amongst the bishops are to be chosen the metropolitans and patriarchs; in other words, an unashamed hierarchy is being formed amongst the presbyterate in Field's scheme, with corresponding terminology such as 'afore', 'above' and 'before'; 'eminent', 'honour' and 'power'; 'first' and 'chief'. Again, we shall conclude that this far from denotes princeliness, but rather denotes merely the place occupied in the hierarchical order, for the emphasis is on 'fatherly' power and 'care'. In fact, Field seems to avoid using terms such as 'hierarchy' and 'hierarchical', preferring instead terms such as his favourites, 'order' and 'connexion', as in 'order and orderly connexion' (2.4/I.75). In using the term 'hierarchy', then, we note that it needs to be understood functionally (for the good order of the Church), rather than ontologically.

Thirdly, the presbyters who are not bishops are subject to those who are; the driving force is the need for order and unity, 'for the preventing of dissension, the avoiding of confusion, and the more orderly managing of the important affairs of Almighty God'. Indeed, the entire hierarchy has unity as its chief aim; for example, we see above that it is the metropolitans and patriarchs whose *modus existendi* is to prevent the appropriation of excessive power by the bishops. Indeed, and this is an important point, whereas the entire presbyterate has the ministry of word and sacraments as its fundamental duty, the structuring of the presbyterate into a hierarchy as above has unity and the avoiding of 'dangerous' or 'damnable schism' (3.5/I.163) as its entire *raison d'être*, for '(s)chismatics are they that break the unity of the Church, and refuse to submit themselves and yield obedience to their lawful pastors and guides' (1.13/I.42). Nowhere, seemingly, does Field ever give any other reason for the apostolic appointments of bishops, etc. We shall return to this theme, but at this point we note an important point: it is the entire 'orderly connexion' of the whole church, people and ministers together, in which unity has its focus, in Field's view.

Fourthly, it is 'for distinction's sake' that the term 'bishop' is chosen to distinguish this role from that of 'presbyter' – Field makes no attempt to equate the two roles with the two respective terms as used in Scripture. He does not even address the question (much debated in the modern era) of whether the terms *episcopos* and *presbyteros* variously used in the New Testament texts are synonymous there (J B Lightfoot advocating this position, for example), or whether instead these terms in New Testament times respectively denoted the prototype *bishop* and *presbyter* as historically understood in the Western world.

Field comments further on the apostles' role in appointing presbyters and bishops:

(w)hen the apostles first founded Churches, and assigned to such as they ordained to the work of the ministry the several parts of the flock of Christ ... they so sorted and divided out particular Churches, that a city and the places near adjoining made but one Church: whereupon we shall find in the holy Scriptures, that to ordain presbyters ... in every Church, and in every city, are all one. Now because Churches of so large extent required many ministers of the word and sacraments, and yet of one Church there must be one pastor; the apostles, in settling the state of these Churches, did so constitute in them many presbyters with power to teach, instruct, and direct the people of God, that yet they appointed one only to be the chief pastor of the place, ordaining that the rest should be but his assistants, not presuming to do any thing without him. (5.27/III.210)

Fifthly, therefore, we note Field's assertion that the bishop is the chief pastor of the local *Church* (and not, for example, of the *See* or *Diocese* – such terms would be anachronistic were they applied to the New Testament origins of the Church). To Field, a Church is local to the extent that it is defined by a city and its environs. There is no discussion in Field's writings of how large a city had to be to have a Church of its own (except by implication; for example, Ephesus, noted below), or on the other hand how small (or how far away) to be included in the remit of a larger nearby city. That the New Testament sometimes speaks of *churches* (plural; for example, the "churches in Galatia", or the "churches of Judea", in Galatians 1:2, 22) is also not observed. So whilst it is clear that to Field the basic unit of the Church is the local Church, with one bishop as the chief of many presbyters, there is no discussion of just how local local is.

Field does not justify his assertion that 'of one Church there must be but one pastor' (5.27/III.210). He does, though, go on to assert that this is the biblical pattern – whereas it 'is not to be doubted but that there were many presbyters' (5.27/III.211), justified from Acts 20:28, 'that is, ministers of the word and sacraments, in so large a Church as that of Ephesus was', (5.27/III.211) yet 'we read in the Revelation of St John, of the Angel of the Church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1), to whom the Spirit of God directeth letters from heaven, as to the pastor of that Church' (5.27/III.211). That is, many presbyters yet one principal presbyter

to whom only the Lord did write from heaven, to whom an eminent power was given, who was trusted with the government of that Church and people in more special sort than any of the rest, and therefore challenged by name by Almighty God for the things there found to be amiss, the rest being passed over in silence. (5.27/III.211)

Likewise the rest of the seven Churches of Asia.

Field seems only to appeal to this one biblical passage in Revelation 1 and 2 to justify the principle of one pre-eminent pastor (and that without justifying his interesting though not unique exegesis, making the ‘angel’ of the Church to be the bishop) – he does not seem to be interested in citing Timothy or Titus, for example, as early examples of bishops. However, he proceeds to show how it has always been thus in the history of the Church. For example, he quotes St Jerome’s testimony:

that in the Church of Alexandria, from the time of Mark the Evangelist, there was ever one whom the presbyters of that Church chose out of themselves to be over the rest.¹⁴ Neither was this proper to the Church of Alexandria, but we can show the successions of bishops in all the famous Churches of the world, even from the apostles’ times; and therefore all admit and allow a kind of pre-eminence of one above the rest in each Church. (5.27/III.211)

Likewise he quotes Cyprian who says that, “one priest in the Church [is] acknowledged for the time to be judge in Christ’s stead” (5.27/III.212).

If this were not to have been so, both Jerome and Cyprian say, it would be the cause of ‘as many schisms as priests’ (5.27/III.212). Field claims:

the best learned in our age ... ingenuously confess it to be an essential and perpetual part of God’s ordinance, for each presbytery to have a chief amongst them; the necessity whereof we may learn from all societies, both of men endued with reason, and of other things also, to which God hath denied the light of understanding. (5.27/III.212)

Jerome said that just as “the dumb beasts, and wild herds, have their leaders

14 Note that in post-apostolic times it was the presbyters who elected the bishop.

which they follow”, (5.27/III.212) so also “every Church hath her own bishop, her own archpresbyter, her own chief deacon; and all ecclesiastical order consisteth herein, that some do rule and direct the rest” (5.27/III.212). This state of affairs, that is, ‘in each Church, a pre-eminence of one above the rest of the presbyters’, (5.27/III.213) attested to from that one place in the Bible and the various Church fathers, is what ‘all confess’ (5.27/III.213) and ‘always hath been’ (5.27/III.213).

Thus Field appeals to unity yet again, and will do so still further, to justify his understanding of the order of bishops. And it is a strong appeal indeed, for otherwise there would be ‘as many schisms as priests’.

Power of order, power of jurisdiction, power of exercise

There is no doubt but that Field ascribes some kind of ‘pre-eminence’ to the bishop:

therefore, though they be many presbyters, that is, many fatherly guides of one Church, yet there is one amongst the rest, that is specially pastor of the place, who for distinction(s) sake, is named a bishop; to whom an eminent and peerless power is given, for the avoiding of schisms and factions; and the rest are but assistants and coadjutors, and named by the general name of Presbyters. (3.39/I.320)

He certainly has a high view of the office of bishop, even over and above an already high view of the office of presbyter. And further, this pre-eminence amounts to a power, in some sense, over the other presbyters: ‘the fathers describe unto us such a bishop as hath eminent and peerless power, without whose consent the presbyters can do nothing’ (5.27/III.213). Field quotes Cyprian, Ignatius, and then Jerome: “the bishop must have an eminent and peerless power, or else there will be as many schisms in the Church as there are priests” (5.27/III.214). Likewise Tertullian ‘showeth, that without the bishop’s leave and consent no presbyter may baptize, minister any sacrament, or do any ministerial act’ (5.27/III.214).

We must now show just in what sense, and why, the bishops have a power the other presbyters do not have, and we turn to another assessment by Field of the meaning and importance of ministerial orders. He notes that

three things are implied in the calling of ecclesiastical ministers.

- 1 First, an election, choice, or designation of persons fit for so high and excellent employment.
- 2 Secondly, the consecrating¹⁵ of them, and giving them power and authority to intermeddle¹⁶ with things pertaining to the service of God, to perform eminent acts of gracious efficacy and admirable force, tending to the procuring of the eternal good of the sons of men, and to yield unto them whom Christ hath redeemed with his most precious blood, all the comfortable means, assurances, and helps that may set forward their eternal salvation (this is what Field means by *power of order* – see below).
- 3 Thirdly, the assigning and dividing out to each man, thus sanctified to so excellent a work, that portion of God's people that he is to take care of, who must be directed by him in things that pertain to the hope of eternal salvation. This particular assignation giveth to them, that had only the *power of order* before, the *power of jurisdiction* also, over the persons of men. (3.39/I.319)

The first of these, 1, reasserts the high view Field has of ministerial order, and indicates the need for careful choice, according to principles already given, of those who are thus to serve. For 'the ministry and dispensation of the Word and Sacraments ... pertain only ... to such as are lawfully called thereunto' (1.11/I.38).

The second, 2, introduced Field's distinction between two powers: 'the whole ecclesiastical power is aptly divided into the *power of order* and *jurisdiction*' (3.39/I.318).

The *power of holy or ecclesiastical order*, is nothing else but that power which is specially given to men sanctified and set apart from others, to perform certain sacred supernatural and eminent actions, which others of another rank may not at all, or, not ordinarily, meddle with: as, to preach the word, administer the sacraments, and the like. (3.39/I.319)

In other words, *power of order* is what an ordained minister has by virtue of his

15 Field uses terms such as 'ordain', 'consecrate' etc somewhat interchangeably, and does not reserve them separately for the 'ordination' of a presbyter, and the 'consecration' of a bishop, as we might do today.

16 'Intermeddle' is not a pejorative term.

ordination.¹⁷ Field will proceed to show, very significantly, that a bishop has no greater *power of order* than has any other presbyter, as we shall shortly see.

But 3, above shows how the *power of jurisdiction* is a separate issue. In being ordained, a presbyter, or bishop, is not only given a *power of order* by virtue of his ordination, but is also assigned a place in which to exercise his office, and correspondingly a 'portion of God's people' amongst whom to exercise it. For:

the schoolmen note that there is a two-fold *power* found in the ministers of the Church of God,

- the one of *order*,
- the other of *jurisdiction*.

The *power of order* is that whereby they are sanctified and enabled to the performance of such sacred acts as other men neither may nor can do; as is the preaching of the word, and ministration of the holy sacraments. This *power (of order)* is to be exercised orderly,¹⁸ and the acts of it to be performed in such sort that one disturb not another. (5.27/III.209)

17 Even heretics and schismatics have a valid power of order if they have been validly ordained, according to Field, though not a valid power of jurisdiction: 'schismatics, notwithstanding their separation, remain still conjoined with the rest of God's people, in respect of the possession of the whole saving truth of God, all outward acts of religion and divine worship, *power of order*, and holy sacraments, which they by virtue thereof administer, and so still are and remains parts of the Church of God' (1.13/I.42), and 'in respect of the profession of sundry divine verities, which still they (heretics) retain in common with right believers, in respect of the *power of order* and degree of ministry, which receiving in the Church they carry out with them, and sacraments which by virtue thereof they do administer, they still pertain to the Church. But ... though they have *power of order*, yet have no power of jurisdiction, neither can perform any act thereof' (1.14/I.43).

18 Field uses the terms '*order*', '*orderly*', '*ordering*' in various ways. Use of the term will often signify ministerial *order* and *orders*, as in '*order of ministry*' (1.10/I.31), and as in the term '*power of order*'; but equally it might simply signify good *order* (and this also discipline in the Church, as in '*power of the Church in ordering offenders*' (1.16/I.51) or '*in the ordering of sinners*' (1.16/I.52). Sometimes these uses may be close (for a prime purpose of ministerial orders is to preserve unity, or *orderliness*, in the Church), or it may be somewhat unclear as to which of these meanings is intended, or both meanings may be implied, as perhaps in '*without order or ministry*' (1.10/I.35), or in his defining the Church as '*an orderly multitude of fight believers*', but almost immediately adding there that '*it cannot be known and discerned from the conventicles of schismatics, by right faith and due use of Sacraments only, without the addition of orderly connexion*', (2.4/I.76) by the last phrase of which he must surely mean both order of ministry (comparing this with his 'notes' of the Church), but also good *orderliness* in the Church. Context will usually determine the meaning (or both meanings) intended.

What this means, and Field is about to show, is that different ministers will exercise their ministry in a particular 'place', and amongst their particular portion of God's people, such that generally speaking they will not encroach upon one another's arenas of ministry.

He shows first that the apostles, 'though equal in the *power of order* and *jurisdiction*', (5.27/III.209) 'divided amongst themselves the parts and provinces of the world', (5.27/III.209) so that 'they might not hinder one another' (5.27/III.209). The apostles then 'divided the parts of the world converted to Christianity into several Churches' (5.27/III.209) and assigned these separate Churches to their assistants and, ultimately, successors, to whom 'they so gave authority to such as they made choice of for this work, to preach, baptize, and do other acts of sacred ministry (which are to be performed by virtue of the power of order)' (5.27/III.209). That is, they appointed presbyters to assist and then succeed them and these presbyters each had a church 'wherein he should preach and minister sacraments' (5.27/III.210).

'This assigning of men having the *power of order*' (5.27/III.210) to be presbyters over individual Churches 'gave them the *power of jurisdiction*' (5.27/III.210) which they had not before. Field emphasizes that whereas 'the *power of order*' (5.27/III.210) 'is not included within any certain bounds', (5.27/III.210) the use of this *power of order* and thus their *power of jurisdiction* is limited 'within certain bounds' (5.27/III.210). Thus 'the one of these kinds of power', (5.27/III.210) namely the *power of jurisdiction*, 'they have not at all without the extent of their own limits', (5.27/III.210) and 'the other' (5.27/III.210), namely the *power of order*, they do not have 'lawful use of' (5.27/III.210) outside the bounds of their own limits. Field gives an example: if, say, a bishop should

do any act of *jurisdiction* out of his own diocese, as to ex-communicate,

Other examples already quoted elsewhere of where both meanings are intended are, '(a)mongst these fatherly guides of God's Church and people, for the preventing of dissension, the avoiding of confusion, and the more *orderly* managing of the important affairs of Almighty God, they established a most excellent, divine, and heavenly *order*, giving unto one amongst the presbyters of each Church an eminent and fatherly power, so that the rest might do nothing without him; whom for distinction's sake, and to express the honour of his degree and place, afore and above other, we name a bishop' (5.ER/III.vii). And likewise, '(t)his power is to be exercised *orderly*, and the acts of it to be performed in such sort that one disturb not another' (5.2/III.209).

absolve, or the like, all such acts are utterly void, and of no force; but if he shall do any act of the *power of order* in another man's charge, as preach or minister sacraments, (5.27/III.210)

then although it is an offence if he does this without consent, yet the act done is not void and of no force; for example, 'the sacraments thus ministered' (5.27/III.210) are 'truly sacraments' (5.27/III.210).

All this is, says Field, according to the 'resolution of the divines' (5.27/III.210).

Equality of *Power of Order*

We now proceed to show how the bishops have a higher, or wider, *power of jurisdiction* than the other presbyters, or, to use an almost equivalent term, a wider *power of exercise*,¹⁹ but most definitely not a higher *power of order*, in Field's view. For in the realm of ministerial orders a bishop is still a presbyter, and thus the *power of order* possessed by a bishop is none other than, and thus no greater than, the power conferred on him by his ordination to the presbyterate. If a bishop has authority to do that which any other presbyter may not, it is because of his *power of jurisdiction/exercise*, not his *power of order*.

'Touching the pre-eminence of bishops above presbyters, there is some difference among the school-divines' (5.27/III.215), writes Field, but he claims that 'the best learned amongst them are of opinion, that bishops are not greater than presbyters in the *power of consecration or order*, but only in the *exercise* of it and in the *power of jurisdiction*' (5.27/III.215). That is, there is nothing a bishop can do by *power of order* that a presbyter cannot do by *power of order* – after all, 'presbyters may preach, and minister the greatest of all sacraments, by virtue of their consecration and order, as well as

¹⁹ Field does not use the term *power of exercise* as much as the term *power of jurisdiction*. Technically, the difference, though subtle, is as follows: *power of jurisdiction* refers to the place (and thus portion of God's people) assigned to the presbyter/bishop, within which he is to exercise his office, and carries in some sense a legal force (for example, the bishop has his diocese, the presbyter his parish); the *power of exercise* refers to the sorts of duty which the bishops may perform by virtue of their office, rather than by virtue of their assigned place, but which the presbyters may not ordinarily. For example, 'so far for order(s) sake is he (the bishop) preferred before the rest, that some things are specially reserved to him only, as the ordaining of such as should assist him in the work of his ministry; the reconciling of penitents; confirmation of such as were baptized, by imposition of hands; dedication of churches; and such like' (3.39/1.320).

bishops' (5.27/III.216). Field quotes Durandus:

“Touching the *power of consecration or order*, it is much doubted of among divines, whether any be greater therein than an ordinary presbyter: for Hierome seemeth to have been of opinion, that the highest *power of consecration or order* is the power of a priest or elder; so that every priest, in respect of his priestly power, may minister all sacraments, confirm the baptized, give all orders, all blessings and consecrations; but that for the avoiding of the peril of schism, it was ordained that one should be chosen, who should be named a bishop, to whom the rest should obey, and to whom it was reserved to give orders, and to do some such other things as none but bishops do” (5.27/III.216)

Field quotes the opinion of Jerome again:

amongst them who are equal in the *power of order*, and equally enabled to do any sacred act, the apostles (for the avoiding of schism and confusion, and the preservation of unity, peace and order) ordained that in each Church one should be before and above the rest, without whom the rest should do nothing, and to whom some things should be peculiarly reserved. (5.27/III.216)

– for example, dedicating Churches, reconciling penitents, confirming the baptized and ordaining ministers, of which the first three were reserved to the bishop “rather to honour his priestly and bishoply place, than for that these things at all may not be done by any other” (5.27/III.217); and even ordination might be carried out by presbyters ‘in cases of extreme necessity’ (5.27/III.217), for example, when all bishops are either ‘extinguished by death, or, fallen into heresy’ (5.27/III.217) (we will address the question of heresy shortly).

Even Stapleton:

seemeth to agree, saying expressly ... that “In respect of sacerdotal order, and the things that pertain to order”, they are equal ... *potestate*, though not *exercitio*; that is in power, though not in the execution of things to be done by virtue of that power: ... bishops, who have the *power of order* in common with presbyters ... excel them in the execution of things to be done by virtue of that power, and in the *power of jurisdiction* also. (5.27/III.217)

Field quotes Bellarmine, however, as dissenting: namely that ‘the catholic Church acknowledgeth and teacheth, that the degree of bishops is greater than of presbyters by God’s law, as well in *power of order as jurisdiction*’ (5.27/III.218); but Field answers to the effect that it was ‘for the avoiding of confusion and schism’ (5.27/III.218) that the ‘honour of ordaining’ (5.27/III.218) was reserved ‘to bishops only (unless it were in the case of extreme necessity)’ (5.27/III.218), and that this power of the bishops ‘might make the ordinations of all other to be void, though equal with them in the *power of order*’ (5.27/III.218). In other words, Field considers that Bellarmine is (mistakenly) declaring to be an act of *power of order* that which actually is an act of *power of jurisdiction* or *exercise*.

To grasp this point about the equality of *power of order* in all presbyters (bishops and non-bishops alike), is a vital key to understanding Field’s view of the particular role of bishops, I believe, and it needs prominent and careful attention. Although Field holds bishops and their status in high esteem, their purpose and role is very specific (essentially the preservation of order and unity); and their power, though wide, is nonetheless strictly limited. Bishops do indeed hold a high office, with an appropriate dignity and honour, and with a corresponding ‘eminent and peerless power’. But this is *power of jurisdiction* and *exercise*; bishops do not have a *power of order* above or beyond that of the presbyters.

Whether we conclude that, in Field’s estimation, there are two or three ‘orders of ministry’ will depend on just how the term ‘order of ministry’ is used. If ‘order’ as in ‘*power of order*’ is in mind, then, as we have seen, the answer is most definitely two: the deacons and the presbyters, the latter including the bishops. But if it’s not *power of order* that is in mind, but rather *power of jurisdiction* or *of exercise*, so that by ‘orders on ministry’ we mean accordingly the several rankings of presbyters, each to be counted separately, then the answer would be three, or perhaps five if, to be consistent, we count the metropolitans and patriarchs separately.

‘Wherefore to conclude this point’, Field writes, ‘we see that the best learned amongst the schoolmen are of opinion, that bishops are no greater than presbyters in the *power of consecration or order*, but only in the *exercise* of it and in the *power of jurisdiction*’ (5.27/III.217); and quoting Jerome, “Therefore a presbyter and bishop are all one” (5.26/III.207); ‘all comprehended under one common name of presbyters’ (5.25/III.188); A

bishop is 'one amongst the rest' (3.39/l.320).

Validity of Orders, and the Danger of Heresy

The Romanists say 'it is easy to prove that the reformed churches are not the true churches of God', because they do not have true succession, Field reports. 'It can be no church that hath no ministry' (3.39/l.316), he quotes, with obvious approval, from Jerome, and similarly from Cyprian. But the Romanists use these authorities to argue that because the Protestants have no ministry (because 'no lawful calling to the work of the ministry' (3.39/l.316)), therefore they are not churches.

'The defects they suppose to be in the calling of our bishops and ministers are twofold:' *first*, 'they that ordained them ... had no power so to do' (3.39/l.316-317), for, in the Romanists' estimation, '(n)o bishop may be esteemed and taken as lawfully ordained, unless he be ordained of three bishops at the least; and they, such as have been ordained in like sort; and so ascending till we come to the first' (3.39/l.317); that is, according to the Romanist view of succession – and because some of 'our' bishops were not thus ordained, but, in some cases, by presbyters alone, or by one bishop and presbyters, so 'our' bishops are not valid bishops.

On this *first* alleged defect, Field notes that even 'Bellarmine (a papist advocate) and his fellows do not think that this number of bishops imposing hands to be absolutely and essentially necessary' (3.39/l.317) (one sometimes being sufficient with other presbyters, on this view). But fully to establish the authenticity of the English bishops, he examines 'whether the power of ordination to be so essentially annexed to the order of bishops, that none but bishops may in any case ordain' (3.39/l.318). He concludes that even ordination of bishops by presbyters might alone be sufficient, arguing as follows (much being a rehearsal of what we have noted already):

- 1 the *power of ecclesiastical or sacred order*, that is, the power and authority to intermeddle with things pertaining to the service of God, and to perform eminent acts of gracious efficacy, tending to the procuring of the eternal good of the sons of men, is equal and the same in all those whom we call presbyters, that is, fatherly guides of God's Church and people: and that, only for order[']s sake [that is, good order

in the Church], and the preservation of peace [and thus unity], there is a limitation of the use and exercise of the same.

- 2 Hereunto agree all the best learned amongst the Romanists themselves, freely confessing that that wherein a bishop excelleth a presbyter, is not a distinct and higher order, or power of order, but a kind of dignity and office or employment only ... an eminence and dignity only, specially yielded to one above the rest, for order[‘s] sake, and to preserve the unity and peace of the Church.
- 3 Hence it followeth, that many things which in some cases presbyters may lawfully do are peculiarly reserved unto bishops, as Hierome noteth: ... “Rather for the honour of their ministry, than the necessity of any law.” (3.39/I.321-322)

Hence the power of ordination is proper to the presbyter, not to the bishop alone; and so ordinations of bishops by presbyters are valid acts of order, in Field’s view, and presbyters may at times confirm, absolve, and do any act of *power of order*. Supporting this, Field notes that it is understood that a presbyter who is ordained presbyter without having been a deacon, can do the work of a deacon, because of his higher order, but a bishop who is ordained bishop without having been ordained presbyter (a situation not without precedent) cannot do anything a presbyter can do – such a bishop cannot even preach or administer the sacraments.

Such ordinations of bishops by presbyters are not ordinarily permitted, but only in cases of necessity, such as when all the bishops are fallen into heresy. This was the situation pertaining in England at the time of the Reformation. For we must remember that Field addresses a situation in his own day where he is firmly convinced that the Church of Rome is apostate, and that the Protestant Church in England is the true Catholic Church. Having written with unqualified approval of the apostles’ ordering of ministry in God’s Church (with a presbyterate ordained to teach, guide and govern the Church, and amongst the presbyterate a unity-preserving hierarchy – or ‘*connexion*’ – of presbyters, bishops, etc), he laments, ‘This order continued in the Church from the apostles’ times, and wrought excellent effect,’ (5.ER/III.viii) until (Field writes) first the bishop of Constantinople and then the Bishop of Rome began to appropriate for themselves excessive power and honour. This

brought ‘horrible confusion in the Christian Church, and almost the utter ruin and desolation of the same’ (5.ER/III.viii). It is no mere hypothetical situation of heresy in the Church (or Rome) which Field addresses.

Thus if all the bishops:

become enemies to God and true religion, in case of such necessity as the care and government of the Church is devolved to the presbyters remaining Catholic and being of better spirit, so the duty of ordaining such as to assist or succeed them in the work of the ministry pertains to them likewise. For if the *power of order* and authority to intermeddle in things pertaining to God’s service be the same in all presbyters, and that they be limited in the execution of it only for order(’s) sake, so that in case of necessity every of them may baptize and confirm them whom they have baptized, absolve and reconcile penitents, and do all those other acts which regularly are appropriated unto the bishop alone; there is no reason to be given, but that in case of necessity, wherein all bishops were extinguished by death, or, being fallen into heresy, should refuse to ordain any to serve God in his true worship, but that presbyters, as they may do all other acts, whatsoever challenge bishops in ordinary course make upon them, might do this also. (3.39/I.323)

Field proceeds to show that the fathers and schoolmen allow the force of this argument themselves, and that the practice of the Roman church in sundry ways has allowed it too.

On the *second* of the alleged defects ‘in the calling of our bishops and minsters’ referred to above, namely that ‘no man may be ordained but into a void place’ (3.39/I.317), and thus ‘our first ministers ... had no lawful ordination, because they were not ordained and placed in void places, but intruded into Churches that had lawful bishops at the time of those pretended ordinations’ (3.39/I.325), Field answers ‘that the Church is left void, either by death, resignation, deprivation, or the people’s desertion and forsaking of him that did precede’ (3.39/I.325), the last of these being the case in point here with the reformed churches, in that:

the people, or at least that part of the people that adhered to the Catholic verity, who have power to choose their pastor, to admit the worthy, and

refuse the unworthy, did forsake the former that were wolves and not pastors, and submitted themselves to those of a better spirit. (3.39/I.325)

In justification of this, Field cites the precedent of Cyprian *et al*, who once had occasion to encourage the ‘people of the Churches in Spain’ (3.39/I.325) to separate themselves from idolatrous bishops who had denied the faith under persecution, assuring them that generally speaking holy and God-fearing people ‘may and ought to separate themselves from impious and wicked bishops’, (3.39/I.325) and also of Athanasius:

sometimes errors and heresies so much prevail, that the most part ... even of them also that hold and possess great places of office and dignity in the Church of God, either for fear, flattery, hope of gain, or honour, or else misled through simplicity, or directly falling into error or heresy, depart from the soundness of Christian faith ... This was the state of the Christian world in the time of Athanasius, when ... all the bishops of the whole world (carried away with the sway of time²⁰) fell from the soundness of the faith, only Athanasius excepted, and some few confessors. (1.10/I.33)

Quoting Occam, “If the pope and principal bishops of the Christian world do fall into heresy, the power of ecclesiastical judgment is devolved to the inferior clergy, and people, remaining Catholic”, (3.39/I.326) he concludes:

(f)or if it do fall out, that the bishops and a great part of the people do fall into error, heresy, and superstition ... the rest are bound to maintain and uphold the ancient verity; who being not so many nor so mighty as to be able to eject those wicked ones by a formal course of judicial proceeding, what other thing is there left unto them, but ... to separate themselves, which is the thing our adversaries except against in the people of our time. Now having separated themselves from their former supposed and pretended pastors, what remaineth but that they make choice of new to be ordained and set over them. (3.39/I.326)

Field considers, in fact, that ‘there is, and always hath been, a visible Church, and that not consisting of some few scattered Christians without

20 Arianism

order or ministry, or use of sacraments', (1.10/I.35) though he notes that 'some few have been of opinion, that though all others failing from the faith, the truth of God should remain only in some few of the laity, yet the promise of Christ concerning the perpetuity of his Church might still be verified' (1.10/I.35).

Field is clear, therefore, that the possibility of the bishops, or some of them, falling into heresy is not a mere academic point – it has happened on various occasions, and most pertinently in the late medieval Church of Rome. It is precisely the apostasy of the Papal See that provides Field with his ratification of the Church of England's bishops and ministry. One suspects he would admit the possibility that a similar situation, on whatever scale, might happen again.

■ First Among Equals – a High Dignity of Office, but *not* a Princely Power

The dignity of office of the bishop is real, and to be acknowledged; bishops are to be obeyed and respected for their role in the Church. However, Field is cautious in his use of terminology, qualifying it where necessary. Earlier, for example, we noted his conclusion that 'therefore all admit and allow *a kind of pre-eminence of one above the rest in each Church*' (5.27/III.212) – not an absolute preeminence, but one strictly limited in scope: Field consistently avoids implications of princely status:

Yet on the other side, we make not the power of bishops to be princely, as Bellarmine doth, but fatherly: so that as the presbyters may do nothing without the bishop, so he may do nothing in matters of greatest moment and consequence without their presence and advice. (5.27/III.214)

And he cites the council of Carthage as having voided 'all sentences of bishops which the presence of their clergy confirmeth not' (5.27/III.214).

Also (again against Bellarmine) presbyters themselves do have a real power of jurisdiction alongside the bishops, and in support of this he notes that presbyters were present at all synods and councils except general councils, and even in these the bishops brought the 'resolution and consent of the provincial synods of those Churches from whence they came, in which synods presbyters had their voices, ... and nothing was passed in them without their concurrence' (5.27/III.215).

Field continues this theme by observing that in resolution of differences between a bishop and his presbyters ‘a certain number of presbyters also out of each Church’ (5.27/III.215) as well as other bishops were to be involved at provincial synod level, and in any case ‘no sentence of the bishop was of force’ (5.27/III.215) ‘without the concurrence of his own clergy’ (5.27/III.215) even in the ‘causes of other inferior clergymen’ (5.27/III.215). It is such a procedure as this that properly guards against ‘any breach in the Christian Churches’ (5.ER/III.vii) and against fear of ‘any wrong, injustice, or sinister proceedings in the hearing of causes, and determining of controversies’ (5.ER/III.viii), with the hierarchical structure within the presbyterate allowing for various kinds of appeal to higher levels, and with appeal to a general council as a final resort. Thus in Field’s view the bishops, either individually or as a collective body, have neither existence nor operation independent of the presbyters.

So as we conclude, we recall that Field’s overarching view of ministerial orders is that they were established by the apostles in the divine will to teach, guide, guard and govern God’s Church in the ways of the apostolic Christian truth – antiquity of truth, succession of truth, unity of truth, universality of truth and catholicity of truth. Field has set out ‘to speak of the diverse degrees of honour and pre-eminence found amongst’ (5.27/III.209) those who ‘were appointed to teach and govern the people of God’ (5.27/III.209).

Thus were things moderated in the primitive ages of the Church; and though bishops have power over presbyters, yet was it so limited, that there was nothing bitter or grievous in it, nothing but that which was full of sweetness and content. (5.27/III.215)

By means of this order established by the apostles of Christ among the guides of God’s people, and received and allowed by the first and primitive Christians, unity was preserved, the parts of the Church holden fast together, in a band of concordant agreement; questions determined, doubts cleared, differences composed, and causes advisedly and deliberately heard, with all indifferency and equity. (5.ER/III.vii)

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