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Episcopal Consecration: The Fullness of the Sacrament of Order

'The tract "De Episcopo" has not yet appeared . . . the theology of the episcopate is still to be written'.¹ So wrote Cardinal Saliège when he prefaced a book on the episcopate less than twenty years ago. At that time it was scarcely possible to speak of a theology of the episcopate. The first Vatican Council concerned itself exclusively with the definition of papal prerogatives and gave little place to the role of the episcopate in the Church. The silence of the Council on the episcopate had a lasting influence – an influence which is clearly reflected in the theological writing on the episcopate during the fifty or sixty years which followed the Council. The theological manuals tell us that the bishops are the successors of the apostles but, as one writer has remarked, they are more concerned with indicating the powers of the apostolic college to which they do not succeed than those to which they do. The occasional theological studies of the episcopal office which did appear were limited in perspective, more concerned with certain points of controversy than with establishing a theology of the episcopate, e.g., what can a bishop do that a priest cannot? Is the monarchical episcopate to be found in the Church from the beginning? Does the bishop receive his jurisdiction immediately from God or mediately from the Pope?

Our own time presents a marked contrast. The renewal of ecclesiology and the new understanding of the Church has brought with it in the last decade a new consciousness of the role of the bishop in the Church. It must not be thought that this interest was first roused by the Council; already in 1956, three years before Pope John announced the Council, a well-known theologian could write: 'The theology of the episcopate is the order of the day . . . the theology of the episcopate is now being hammered out'.² The writer could scarcely have imagined, however, what an impetus this theology was to get through the second Vatican Council, already being hailed by the historians as the 'Council of the Episcopate' just as the first Vatican was undoubtedly the 'Council of the Papacy'.

1. A. G. MARTIMORT, *De l'Évêque* (Paris 1946), 5.

2. O. ROUSSEAU, in editorial to issue of *Irenikon* 1956.

The dogmatic constitution 'De Ecclesia' complements the Primacy doctrine of Vatican I with its teaching on the role of the episcopate in the Church. The doctrine of 'episcopal collegiality' is expounded – a doctrine that can best be summed up in two points: 1. the order of bishops succeeds the college of apostles and is the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church provided we understand this body together with its head the Roman Pontiff and never without this head; and 2. it would be wrong to see the whole or even the most important aspect of 'collegiality' in this supreme power alone. Of even more significance for the structure and life of the Church is the attention which the Council wishes to draw to the real and primary meaning of collegiality – the reality of the many in the one, the plurality of the many local Churches within the one Church. The Church cannot be seen in any sense as a monarchical society after the manner of a state; the nature of the Church is something quite different and cannot be compared with the state in this way. 'Collegiality' does not mean that the 'monarchy' is to be helped out with a 'parliament'. 'Collegiality' means that there never can be in the Church such a thing as absolute centralization; that the real meaning of the 'many Churches' within the one Church must be recognized; that the real richness of unity is to be found only where variety also abounds. The college of bishops represents their various Churches all over the world and thereby gives expression to the variety and universality of the people of God.³

Besides its teaching on the collegial nature of the episcopate, the Council also declares that episcopal consecration is a sacrament, in fact the fullness of the sacrament of Order (art. 21). This teaching of the Council has received as yet little attention from the theologians who have occupied themselves for the most part with an analysis of the teaching on collegiality and its implications for the life of the Church. That it is not without importance can be seen from the prominent place it occupies in the Constitution 'De Ecclesia', coming immediately before the teaching on 'collegiality', and also from the very wording of the text: '*This sacred Council teaches that by episcopal consecration the fullness of the sacrament of Order is conferred . . .*' (art. 21). Nowhere else throughout the Constitution will we find a solemn declaration of this kind.

This is all the more surprising when we consider the history of this particular theological question – the sacramentality of episcopal consecration – throughout the ages. Episcopal collegiality presents some difficulties for the historian of dogma in that it was considerably obscured for many centuries in the Western Church, but it was never formally denied or called into question. The sacramental nature of episcopal con-

3. Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Konstitution über die Kirche* (Münster 1965), Introd., 15.

secration, however, was denied almost universally by theologians for a period of six hundred years – from the seventh century to the fourteenth. All the great scholastics followed Peter Lombard in teaching that episcopal consecration was neither a sacrament nor an order; they saw the priesthood as the fullness of the sacrament – the episcopate was but an office of jurisdiction. This clear-cut distinction introduced in the middle ages between ‘ordo’ and ‘iurisdictio’ had regrettable consequences for the later theology of the sacrament of Order, isolating as it did law and sacrament, widening the gap between the power of ruling and teaching, and the power of ‘sanctifying’. The teaching of the Council marks a return to the tradition of the early Church which always saw episcopal consecration as the fullness of the sacrament, and the power of ruling and teaching as given with the sacrament no less than the power of order (cf. art. 21).

It is to this source, too, that the theologian must return if he is to appreciate the full significance of the Council’s teaching. The present article is an endeavour to show, in the light of the tradition of the early Church, what the Fathers of Vatican II meant when they declared episcopal consecration to be ‘the fullness of the sacrament of Order’; that this is not an isolated theological thesis but must be understood as providing the real basis of ‘episcopal collegiality’ within the structure of the Church.

I. THE HIERARCHY OF ORDER IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

It has been contended by many theologians, and with good reason, that the present triple division of the hierarchy of Order into episcopate, priesthood and diaconate with their respective powers may not always have existed in the early Church. As far as the early evidence goes, we can say with certainty that it is already known in the beginning of the second century, but this arrangement does not seem to have been universally accepted until the beginning of the third century. Many theologians, admittedly, would maintain that the present distinction between bishop and priest, as we know it today, has existed in the Church from the beginning. Yet few of them, I think, would claim that this can be convincingly proved. The presentation of their case always seems to take the form of answering difficulties and meeting objections rather than of positive demonstration of their thesis. I do not intend to take sides in this controversy; it is, in a certain sense, irrelevant to the main purpose of this study, since we are concerned here with the place of the bishop within the triple division of the hierarchy of Order as it exists in the Church today, and not as it may have been in the formative years of the apostolic Church. The controversy, however, has its importance, and is not without important consequences for the proper understanding of the sacrament of Order within the Church.

The solution to the controversy turns on the precise nature of the biblical 'episcopoi-presbuteroi'. It is generally admitted by most biblical scholars that the 'episcopoi' and 'presbuteroi' of the New Testament are synonymous terms to denote the same ministers. Their precise standing has always been something of an enigma. The opinion of exegetes, historians and theologians has greatly varied; some have seen the 'presbuteroi' as a college of laymen; others recognize them as bishops. Today theologians are generally content to admit their uncertainty.⁴ Yves Congar sums up their attitude when he admits the considerable obscurity and complexity of the question: 'We are but ill-informed', he says, '— and doubtless always will be so — of the precise relations between bishops and priests in the beginning'.⁵ This uncertainty of the scriptural evidence sounds a note of caution that we should not too readily speak of the present triple division of the hierarchy of Order as stemming from the immediate institution of Christ. Recent exegetical and historical research on the origin and forms of the early Church would seem to favour the opposite thesis, i.e., that the division of the ministry into bishops, priests, and deacons was determined by the Church at an early stage rather than by any positive ordinance of Christ. Though lack of adequate documentation will always leave us with a number of unsolved problems, recent studies have thrown some light on the problem and do present us with a plausible reconstruction of the gradual emergence of the hierarchy in its triple structure as we know it today.⁶ Within the context of the present study it is possible to give only a brief outline of this rather complex development.

The Church's ministry in the early Apostolic Age does not by any means exhibit a uniform universally-accepted structure. There is a fairly marked contrast between the forms of ministry we find in the already stable Christian Jewish Churches and that prevailing in the missionary Church now growing among the Gentiles through the labours of St Paul and the other 'apostoloi'. We find, e.g., the local Church of Jerusalem under the organized government of a college of elders called the 'presbuteroi'.⁷

4. Cf. F. AMIOT, *Catholicisme*, IV, 781–3, art. *Évêque*: 'Les presbytres-episcopes sont-ils évêques ou simples prêtres quant à l'ordination? Nous sommes ici contraints d'avouer notre ignorance'.

5. Y. CONGAR, *Faits, problèmes et réflexions à propos du pouvoir d'Ordre et des rapports entre le presbytérat et l'épiscopat*, *Maison Dieu* (1948), 122.

6. Especially worthy of mention are the following: J. COLSON, *Les fonctions ecclésiastiques aux deux premiers siècles* (Paris 1956); id., *L'Évêque dans les communautés primitives* (Paris 1951); A. EHRHARDT, *The Apostolic Ministry* (Scottish Journal of Theology, Occasional Papers no. 7, Edinburgh-London 1958); P. BENOIT, *Les origines apostoliques de l'Épiscopat selon le Nouveau Testament*, in *L'Évêque dans l'Église du Christ* (Paris 1963), 13–57; W. TELFER, *The Office of a Bishop* (London 1962); A. G. HERBERT, *Apostle and Bishop* (London 1963).

7. Cf. Acts 11:27–30.

This system of collegial government seems to have been taken over from the synagogue by the Jewish Christians – the Synagogue being also directed and governed by a body of elders. Besides this local ruling body it would seem that the apostle James exercised a role of particular importance not just in the Church of Jerusalem, but within the Jewish Christian Church as a whole.

In the missionary Church springing up among the Gentiles we find – as might be expected – a rather different picture of the Church's ministry. Here we have an immediate and direct source in the earlier epistles of St. Paul. The picture we get is that of the wandering 'apostolos' travelling from city to city – his essential task being to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. The earlier and certainly genuine epistles of St Paul provide little evidence that the apostle personally set up a stable governing or administrative body in the communities which he converted. The letters never contain any instructions for a ruling body within the Church; neither is there any command to the faithful to obey those set over them.⁸ It is significant that in the first six epistles of St Paul there is no mention made of either 'episcopoi' or 'presbuteroi'. There must have been some form of organization and government in these early communities, but it is clear from St Paul's own classification of charisms in the Church (1 Cor. 12:28-30) that the administrator does not play the most important role – he is last but one on the list. The reason for this is obvious enough. The apostle considers himself as the responsible head and ruler of all these Churches. He cares for his own Churches directly, staying for long periods in many of them, visiting them all, and counselling and directing them from afar with letters. For this reason he does not unduly stress the importance of having an organized ruling body in the local Church. Another reason, and no doubt an even more influential one, was the apparent conviction of the apostle during the early part of his ministry that the second coming of Christ was imminent. This conviction, which seems evident, e.g., in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, would perhaps explain why the apostle may not have attached such importance to providing his early communities with a stable ruling and organizing body.⁹ The system of Church organiza-

8. Once – in the first epistle to the Thessalonians (5:12) – Paul does refer to 'those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord'. It could not be argued from the context, however, that there is question here of rulers appointed by St Paul himself. If the apostle did provide all his early communities with a definite ruling body, then it is surprising that he does not address them, e.g., in connection with the excommunication of the unclean member in the Church of Corinth (1 Cor. 5:1-5), or in connection with the abuses surrounding the celebration of the Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:17-22). Cf. E. M. KREDEL, art. *Bischof*, in *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* (ed. H. Fries), I, 173-4.

9. It seems difficult to reconcile the testimony of St Luke in the Acts with the more immediate and direct evidence of these earlier Pauline epistles. According to Luke Paul and Barnabas appointed presbyters in every Church during their first missionary

tion adopted by St. Paul was probably very much the same as that of the other missionary 'apostoloi'. The Gentile Church of the *Didache* presents a like pattern of organization; there is little evidence of a ruling college of elders enjoying an authority on a par with that of the presbyters in Jerusalem. The missionary Churches are ruled and directed for the most part by travelling apostles and prophets after the manner of St Paul.¹⁰

The growth of the Gentile Christian communities very soon made it necessary to give them a more stable form of organization, and the later Apostolic Age sees the gradual emergence of a definite ruling body in each local Church. With no synagogal model to copy from the local Gentile Church was more influenced by patterns of civil society in the shaping of its ministry, and we find two forms of office coming to the fore – those of 'episcopoi' and 'diakonoi'.¹¹ St Paul first mentions them in his Epistle to the Philippians when in the prologue he greets the saints of the Church together with their bishops and deacons. In the Pastoral Epistles and Acts of the Apostles we see that these 'episcopoi' are a collegiate body entrusted with the care of the local Church in the absence of the wandering 'apostolos'. It is clear both from the New Testament and the *Didache* that the missionary 'apostolos' remains the real ruler of the Church he has founded, directing it from afar with letters and visiting it occasionally.

Towards the end of the first century there is a gradual coming together of the two forms of ecclesiastical ministry as found in the Jewish and Gentile Churches. The form of missionary organization practised by St Paul is gradually superseded, and the local Gentile Church becomes – like its Jewish counterpart – a self-governing unit. Through the interaction of the two systems upon each other there comes into being a new form of ecclesiastical organization – each local Church being governed and administered by a triple ministry of 'episcopos', 'presbuteroi' and 'diakonoi'; this arrangement was adopted both in the Jewish and Gentile world. The wandering apostle no longer functions as such, but is drawn into the structure of the local Church and appears as the head and centre of the college of presbyters. He is called the 'episcopos' or bishop, and is recog-

journey (Acts 14:23). We hear that Paul on leaving Ephesus addressed the 'presbuteroi' whom 'the Holy Spirit has made episcopoi of the Church' (Acts 20:28). Is it possible that Luke is here projecting the developed community structure of the time of writing on that of an earlier era? Cf. E. M. KREDEL, art. cit., 173–4.

10. The *Didache* probably represents an intermediate stage in the evolution of the Church hierarchy to a fixed form. In ch. 15 the faithful are told to select episcopoi and diakonoi, but it is also clear that these did not play the most important role in the community. The author begs the faithful not to despise them since they hold a position in the Church equal to that of the prophets and teachers.

11. It would be a mistake to identify the 'seven' of Acts 6 with the later 'diakonoi' of the Church. Nowhere in Luke's narrative are the 'seven' called deacons.

nized by all as the ruler and teacher of his people. His office is entirely different from that of the 'episkopoi' of the New Testament, the collegial ruling body of the Gentile Churches, whose office now becomes identified with that of 'presbuteroi' and henceforth bears this name. The authority and position of the bishop within the local Church is really akin to that of the 'apostolos' of earlier times, except that he has now been absorbed within the structure of the local Church and resides there. The bishops of these local Churches understand themselves – and with every right – as the successors of these wandering 'apostoloi'. In the local Church the college of presbyters are chosen and ordained by the bishop to assist him in the care and government of his people. Ranged in turn under the presbyters we find the deacons.

This is the structure of the local hierarchy which we find in the Churches of Asia Minor in the beginning of the second century, as is clear from the letters of St Ignatius. It must not be expected that a similar development had already taken place in all the other Churches. The evidence would rather indicate that vestiges of the earlier arrangement persisted for a while in some places. From the letter of Clement it would seem that the Church of Rome was still ruled by a college of presbyters at the beginning of the second century.¹² The Church of Alexandria did not fall into line until as late as the middle of the third century, if we are to accept the testimony of St Jerome.¹³

From this brief historical sketch at least one thing will be clear. It cannot be assumed that the triple division of the ministry into episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate goes back to an express direction of Christ before or after the Resurrection. As far as the historical evidence goes, the indications would rather seem to be that in the distribution of the ministry there is no question of the early Church, or the Church in later ages, being bound by any fixed direction of Christ.¹⁴ Fr. Congar suggests that Christ left the sacrament of Order – with all that it involves of ministry, grace, character, power – to the Church in a global manner, leaving it to her to regulate and organize the manner of conferring of the sacrament.¹⁵ The

12. Cf. the following texts: 21:6, 44:5, 47:6, 54:2, 57:1.

13. According to Jerome, *Epist. ad Evangelum*, 146, PL 22, 1194, and Eutychius, *Annales*, PG 111, 982, it was the practice of the presbyters following on the death of the bishop to name one among them as successor to the deceased bishop, and to impose hands on him, a custom which had endured from the time of Mark the Evangelist down to the middle of the third century. The majority of scholars are sceptical about the historical value of the testimony of Jerome and Eutychius, but this may be due merely to the embarrassing nature of the evidence.

14. Cf. K. RAHNER, *Schriften zur Theologie* V (Einsiedeln 1962), 309–10.

15. Y. CONGAR, art. cit., 125–6. K. Rahner voices the same idea in a more recent essay, *The Episcopate and the Primacy* (London 1962), 69, n. 4: 'My conviction is that the Church, even as to *potestas ordinis*, can distribute the sacred powers present in her by

study of the manner in which the power of Order is broken up and divided in the different ministries of the episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate leads one to see here something which springs from the institution of the Church rather than any fixed determination of Christ. Yet the triple ministry may be something more than of purely ecclesiastical institution; it may be something more profound than the positive and changing law of the Church. Touching as it does almost on the very structure of the Church, this triple ministry can claim such an early origin and enduring existence as to be considered almost normative for the Church. Yet we can never say that it is absolutely so; for it is always conceivable that the Church, in answer to the concrete needs of a different time and place, could make a new departmental subdivision of her ministry. It would be simply an application of that power with which Christ has endowed his Church over the sacraments, and which was exercised in the beginning in setting up the triple ministry which still exists today.

However, as Congar suggests, it is quite likely that the present triple division of the hierarchy, even though not immediately established by Christ, may well be binding for the Church at all times, if only by reason of its antiquity, stemming as it does almost from apostolic times.¹⁶ As we have already shown, the present arrangement was already fairly widespread when Ignatius wrote his famous letters to the seven Churches. By the beginning of the third century there is no doubt that it was universally recognized as the normal constitution of the hierarchy of the Church.

All we can say then with certainty is that the distinction between bishop and priest as we know it in the Church today has pertained to the hierarchical constitution of the sacrament of Order since the beginning of the third century. Whether, in fact, this distinction is of immediate divine institution or not is not of such consequence for our immediate problem – which is to determine the precise meaning and role of episcopal consecration as conferred in the Church. It is the same episcopate and the same priesthood and the same diaconate whether Christ himself immediately instituted these ministries, or whether he simply authorized the apostles or their successors to hand on limited participations in the sacrament (according to the needs of the Church), such as priesthood and diaconate are. It is no obstacle to the sacramentality of the priesthood to suppose

the will of the founder, in that measure which she finds appropriate at any given time. This possibility of passing on “in doses” the powers inherent in a “perfect society” seems to the author to follow directly from the nature of such a society, even though we can point to no express declaration about it by the founder of this society’. Cf. also H. KUNG, *Strukturen der Kirche* (Freiburg 1962), 190–91.

16. Y. CONGAR, art. cit., 127. H. LENNERZ, *De Sacramento Ordinis* (Rome 1953), 122, sees the strongest proof in favour of divine institution in the manner in which the threefold ministry has persisted from the beginning up to the present day.

that the Church may have 'created' this ministry, and determined its scope and powers, once we realize that the Church has been so authorized and empowered by her divine founder.¹⁷ On this hypothesis, however, the constitution, content, and powers of a particular ministry will depend entirely on the will and intention of the Church.

This likely hypothesis, then, highlights the importance of analysing the Church's understanding of these different ministries throughout her history in an endeavour to isolate the real mind and purpose of the Church when she consecrates a bishop or ordains a priest or deacon. Nowhere will we find the mind of the early Church more clearly portrayed than in the liturgical rites and prayers which she has used from the beginning to confer the ministry. The testimony of the liturgy is at once both objective and universal. There is no question here of speculative theory or the personal bias of a theologian, but of rites and prayers which are the authentic witness of the mind of the Church, since they were chosen by the Church herself to confer the sacrament of Order entrusted to her by Christ. In the liturgy we are in direct contact with the living tradition of the Church – with the Church's own understanding of her ministry – the Church giving concrete expression to what theologians will later seek to convey in the technical language of sacrament, order and character. The ministries of episcopate, priesthood and diaconate were part of the life of the Church long before this technical vocabulary of sacramental theology was hammered out. To this living tradition the theologian must always return to find the reality underlying his theological concept.¹⁸

II. THE SACRAMENT OF ORDER

Within the limits of the present study we must confine ourselves to those rites and formularies which represent *the most ancient* and *the most universal* tradition. *The most ancient*: the older the liturgy, the simpler the ceremonial and the consecratory prayers; accordingly it is easier to isolate the essential core and sacramental effect of the rite. This is not to deny

17. St Thomas, e.g., had no difficulty in defending the sacramental nature and character of the minor orders although he knew that these were established by the Church in the third century (*Summa*, Suppl., q. 37, a. 2, ad 2).

18. In recent years there have been some useful minor studies of the sacrament of Order in the early liturgy of the Church: cf. B. BOTTE, L'Ordre d'après les prières d'ordination, in *Études sur le Sacrement de l'Ordre*, ed. J. Guyot (Paris 1957), 13–35; id., Caractère collégial du presbytérat et de l'épiscopat, *ibid.*, 97–124; A. BERAUDY, Les effets de l'Ordre dans les préfaces d'ordination du Sacrementaire Léonien, in *La Tradition Sacerdotale* (Lyons 1959), 81–107; J. LECUYER, Épiscopat et Presbytérat dans les écrits d'Hippolyte de Rome, *Rech. Sc. Rel.* (1953), 30–50; id., *Études sur la collégialité épiscopale* (Lyons 1964), 57–79; id., L'évêque d'après les prières d'ordination, in *L'épiscopat et l'Église universelle*, ed. Congar (Paris 1962), 739–68. The special value of this latter article is to be found in the valuable index of consecratory prayers, pp. 2770–80.

the theological relevance of the rites and prayers which were added later as the rite evolved and became more complex; the later additions often bring out more clearly what was already implied in the more simple rites of antiquity. It is true that in the western Church, where unity has been too often confused with uniformity, a single uniform rite was imposed. But the many earlier rites and formularies now superseded have more than a documentary value; they were for centuries part of a living liturgy. They arose out of, and in turn shaped, the living tradition of the Church. *The most universal*: in the liturgical prayers – just as in the writings of the Fathers – a few isolated texts are not sufficient to constitute a tradition. What we are interested in is the Church's image of the bishop or priest as he is seen in the ensemble of these liturgical rites and prayers. We insist, therefore, only on those points concerning which the different liturgies present a unified testimony. In fact, as might be expected, the most constantly recurring motifs are always the essential ones and those which are naturally of the greatest importance for assessing the true significance of the sacrament of Order in the Church.

I. THE EPISCOPAL MINISTRY

All the early liturgies have one thing in common – they see the ministries of the Church as succeeding to the kings, prophets and priests of the Old Testament. The bishop unites in his person the three distinct ministries of the old dispensation. The episcopal consecration is likened to the anointing of kings, prophets and priests in the Old Testament and is understood as commissioning the recipient to be ruler, teacher and priest of the new people of God. The prayer of the consecrating bishop in the Byzantine rite is perhaps the most eloquent witness of this common conviction: 'O God, Lord of the universe, through the instrumentality of my hands and those of my concelebrants and fellow-bishops here present, empower this [bishop] elect . . . by the advent, and the grace and the power of your Holy Spirit, as you have empowered the prophets, as you have anointed the kings, as you have consecrated the high priests'.¹⁹

The Church is no less conscious of the episcopal ministry as continuing the work and mission of Christ. The bishop represents the invisible Christ who is with his Church to the end of the world. In his consecration the

19. Greek text in J. GOAR, *Euchologion (Rituale Graecorum)* (Paris 1647), 302–3. The Alexandrian liturgy which has come down to us in the Sacramentary of Scrapion is no less explicit: 'Fac, Deus veritatis, et hunc episcopum vivum, episcopum sanctum . . . et da ei gratiam et Spiritum divinum quem largitus es omnibus servis tuis genuinis et prophetis et patriarchis . . .'. Text in F. X. FUNK, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, II (Paderborn 1959), 190.

bishop receives the same spirit which was given to Christ,²⁰ and he is encouraged to follow the example of the Good Shepherd whom he represents.²¹ The tradition of the early Church sees the bishop as the 'vicarius Christi'; the Roman Pontifical, continuing this tradition, sees the authority and power of the bishop as none other than that of Christ. The consecratory preface concludes with the prayer that Christ may always be operative through him: 'Sis ei [Domine] auctoritas, sis ei potestas, sis ei firmitas'.²²

It is but to be expected that the episcopal ministry, as continuing the mission of Christ, should be closely associated in the liturgy with that of the apostles. The earliest rite of episcopal consecration we have – the *Traditio Apostolica* of Hippolytus – makes this quite clear: 'O God . . . pour forth now the power which comes from you, the power of the ruling Spirit . . . which you have given to the apostles who have built up the Church'.²³ The bishops are seen as continuing the mission of the apostles; in the power of the same Holy Spirit they must continue the work begun by them of building up the Church of God. The sacramentary of Serapion from the Church of Alexandria in the fourth century is even more explicit, linking Christ, the apostles, and bishops together, and seeing each newly-consecrated bishop as extending the line of apostles.²⁴ The Chaldean rite sees the bishop as receiving a ministry transmitted from the time of the apostles by the imposition of hands.²⁵ The same idea of the bishop as successor of the apostles is clearly expressed in the prayer accompanying his enthronement in the Roman-Germanic Pontifical in use in the tenth century: '[O God,] in the New Testament through your Son Jesus Christ you chose the holy apostles to be a consolation to all your servants; in the first place you summoned the apostle Peter to a seat of honour, and you also called Matthias to the apostleship and to a seat of honour with Peter . . . O Lord, through your great mercy grant also in this our time a like grace to our brother N. who now can be likened to the holy apostles who sit on thrones of honour and high rank'.²⁶ The reference to the election of

20. Cf. Preface of episcopal consecration in *Traditio Apostolica* of Hippolytus; all subsequent references to this work are to B. Botte's edition, *La Tradition Apostolique de saint Hippolyte* (Münster 1963). For present reference see p. 8.

21. From the Byzantine Rite; cf. J. GOAR, *op. cit.*, 303.

22. This prayer is taken from the Gelasian sacramentary, and is found also, though in slightly different form, in the Gregorian and Leonine. All citations from these sacramentaries are taken from the following editions: *Sacr. Veronense* [Leonine], ed. Mohlberg (Rome 1956); *Das Sakramentarium Gregorianum*, ed. Lietzmann (Münster 1921); *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, ed. Wilson (Oxford 1894). For the present references cf. respectively Mohlberg, p. 120, Lietzmann, p. 6, Wilson, p. 152.

23. *Traditio Apostolica*, 8.

24. Cf. F. X. FUNK, *op. cit.*, 190.

25. J. L. ASSEMANI, *Codex Liturgicus Ecclesiae Universae*, VI (Rome 1766), 63–5.

26. Cited by J. LEGUYER, *Études sur la collégialité épiscopale* (Lyon 1964), 65.

Matthias (which is also found implicitly in the consecratory prayer of the *Traditio Apostolica*) is important in that it shows the consciousness of the Church that through his episcopal consecration the bishop becomes a member of a larger body or college, just as Matthias was accepted in the college of apostles in the early Church.

J. Lecuyer has shown that this consciousness of 'episcopal collegiality' is clearly reflected in the early Latin Liturgy.²⁷ Like the apostles whom they succeed, the bishops too form a 'body' or 'college' which the liturgy calls the 'ordo episcopalis' or the 'ordo pontificalis'.²⁸ Through episcopal consecration one is admitted to this 'ordo' or 'college' of bishops – one is called to share with one's fellow-bishops in the responsibility of building up the Church. This collegial significance of episcopal consecration is clearly brought out in the very ancient custom which has always prevailed of having several consecrating bishops perform the ceremony. Cyprian considers it a 'universal custom that all the neighbouring bishops of the province be present at the episcopal consecration'.²⁹ The Council of Nicea recommends this custom and lays down that there must always be a minimum of three consecrating bishops.³⁰ This number three, which later came to be the custom, must really be understood as the minimum requirement of the Church. The plurality of consecrators is not meant to assure the sacramental validity of the consecration, but rather to give expression to its collegial significance.

The episcopal consecration is not a purely personal act by virtue of which one individual communicates to another the powers he possesses. It is a collegial act of the whole episcopal body receiving into the 'ordo episcoporum' a new colleague who is to share with them the responsibility of building up the Church. The individual bishop is destined for the charge of a particular Church, but this commission must be fulfilled not in isolation but rather in communion with his fellow-bishops. The unity of the episcopal college – of all the bishops scattered through the world each in his own Church – is at once both the sign and assurance of the unity of the whole Church. The importance of the episcopal office for the unity of the Church was clearly seen by Cyprian: 'The Church is both catholic and one; it is not divided but is organized and united by the linking bond of bishops in communion with one another'.³¹

(i) *The bishop as ruler*

That the bishop is appointed by God to be the ruler and shepherd of his

27. Op. cit., 57–79.

28. Op. cit., 75–6.

29. Cyprian, *Epist.* 67, 5 (ed. W. Hartel, 739). Cited by B. BOTTE, art. cit., 111.

30. Mansi II, 669 (cited by BOTTE, art. cit., 112).

31. Cyprian, *Epist.* 66, 8 (Hartel, op. cit., 733). Cited by BOTTE, art. cit., 117.

people in his consecration is the constantly-recurring theme of the early consecratory prefaces. It is clearly expressed in the *Traditio Apostolica*. B. Botte says of the prayer of episcopal consecration which is found here that 'it is never equalled by any of those which succeed it, and nowhere else will we find the theology of the episcopate expressed in such clear liturgical formulae'.³² This first Roman Ritual presents the bishop as the leader [archon] of the people of God, receiving in his consecration a special spiritual gift which empowers and fits him to rule his people. This spiritual gift the consecratory preface calls 'the power of the ruling Spirit' [τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ πνεύματος].³³ The prayer seems to visualize a special gift of the Holy Spirit – the conferring of a grace and power which links the recipient with Christ and the apostles and makes him a ruler in the Church of God. The preface goes on to make it quite clear that he is called to rule the Church not as a monarch, but as a shepherd; his ministry is to be one of service to the people, not of domination: 'Da, cordis cognitor Pater, super hunc servum tuum, quem eligisti ad episcopatum, pascere [ποιμαίνειν] gregem sanctum tuum'. This figure of the bishop as the shepherd is the constant theme of all the liturgies. The Coptic rite, just like the *Traditio Apostolica*, sees the episcopal consecration as a commission to be a shepherd of God's people, a commission implied in the conferring of the grace of the Holy Spirit.³⁴ The Roman Pontifical, reflecting the content of these older prayers, visualizes the recipient of episcopal consecration as being thereby commissioned and empowered to rule the Church: 'Tribuas ei, Domine, cathedram episcopalem ad regendam ecclesiam tuam et plebem sibi commissam. Sis ei auctoritas, sis ei potestas, sis ei firmitas'.³⁵

(ii) *The bishop as teacher*

Commissioned as a shepherd, the bishop has the duty not only of leading, but also of pasturing his flock, i.e., of providing his people with the spiritual nourishment of the Word. The bishop is commissioned by his consecration to be prophet and teacher of his people. The Byzantine rite sums up what is a common feature of all the liturgies: 'Make, O Lord, this [bishop] a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, a light in the world'.³⁶ The imposition of the book of the Gospels on the head of the bishop is

32. B. BOTTE, *Le Sacre épiscopal dans le Rite Romain*, *Quest. Lit. Par.* (1940), 23.

33. *Traditio Apostolica*, 8.

34. Cited by J. M. HANSENS, *Les oraisons sacramentelles des ordinations orientales*, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 18 (1952), 314.

35. Cf. note 22 above.

36. J. GOAR, *op. cit.*, 303.

almost certainly a symbolic expression of his prophetic status. This ceremony is found in practically all the liturgies after the *Traditio Apostolica* and goes back at least to the fourth century. Severien of Gabala gives us an early commentary on this rite, and his interpretation is generally accepted.³⁷ The imposition of the book of the Gospels represents the descent of the tongues of fire on the apostles at Pentecost; the bishops, just as the apostles, are sent out as teachers of the whole world. The later rite of the anointing of the bishop's hands was also interpreted in a similar sense; the prayer which accompanies this rite in the present Roman Pontifical emphasizes that the bishop is thereby consecrated king and prophet: 'Ungantur manus istae de oleo sanctificato et chrismate sanctificationis, sicut unxit Samuel David in regem et prophetam . . .'. All the rites which were added later and are now included in the present Roman Pontifical – the anointing of the head and hands, the handing over of the crosier and the book of the Gospels – all these have only served to highlight more and more the triple commission for which the bishop is consecrated and empowered – to be the leader, prophet and also the high priest of his people.

(iii) *The bishop as high priest*

According to the *Traditio Apostolica* the bishop is pastor but he is also high priest of his people. The dual ministry of the Old Testament (king and high priest) is united in the Church in the one person of the bishop. The one gift of the Holy Spirit constitutes the bishop at the same time both spiritual leader and high priest of his people.³⁸ The idea of the bishop as 'high priest' or 'summus sacerdos' is a recurring one in practically all the early rites.³⁹ An explicit witness is the Leonine sacramentary where the consecratory prefaces of both episcopal and presbyteral ordination envisage the bishop as alone holding the fullness of the priesthood – 'summi sacerdotii ministerium'.⁴⁰ These consecratory prayers have been taken over by the present Roman Pontifical.

In what does this 'summum sacerdotium' consist? The offering of the Eucharist seems to be the central aspect of his high priesthood in all the liturgical prayers. This basic sacerdotal power of offering the Eucharist is as essential to the understanding of the episcopal office as his commission

37. Severien of Gabala (IV century), PG 125, 533. Cf. J. LECUYER, Note sur la liturgie du Sacre des Évêques, *Eph. Lit.* (1952), 369–70.

38. *Traditio Apostolica*, 8. Elsewhere Botte comments: 'De même que l'onction du Christ était à la fois sacerdotale et royale, de même le grace de l'épiscopat est une grace de prêtre en même temps que du chef' (*Bull. Th. Anc. Med.*, VI, n. 2000).

39. E.g., Byzantine Rite, J. GOAR, op. cit., 302–3; The Syrian Rite of Antioch, cited in *L'Épiscopat dans l'Église universelle*, ed. Congar (Paris 1962), 777.

40. MOHLBERG, op. cit., 119–20.

as *pastor ecclesiae*. The bishop cannot be defined solely in terms of either; he is truly pastor of his flock only if he is also teacher and priest, providing his people with the spiritual nourishment of the Word and the sacraments. There is no evidence at all here of that tight compartmentalization of the Church's ministry into the power of sanctifying (*potestas ordinis*) and the power of ruling (*potestas jurisdictionis*) which first appeared in the middle ages. According to the perspective of the early liturgy the bishop is the 'summus sacerdos' simply because he is also the 'summus pastor'.

For this reason we can agree with J. Colson when he says that the consecratory preface of the *Traditio Apostolica* 'sums up all the theology of the episcopate'.⁴¹ This first Roman Pontifical presents his consecration as deputing and empowering a bishop for his role as pastor and high priest in the Church – as bestowing a gift of the Holy Spirit which is at once a power of leadership (ἡγεμονικόν) and a high-priestly power (ἀρχιερατικόν). The present Roman Pontifical has remained faithful to this wide perspective of its ancient and distinguished predecessor. The formula which accompanies the imposition of hands consecrates and empowers the bishop for the full pastoral ministry of the Church – 'Comple in sacerdote tuo ministerii tui summam . . .'. This is the figure of the bishop which emerges from the early liturgy: the man to whom the fullness of the Church's ministry is entrusted in his consecration – the pastor of the Church and high priest of the people of God.

2. THE PRESBYTER – ASSISTANT OF THE BISHOP

In turning from the liturgy of episcopal consecration to that of presbyteral ordination, we find ourselves on an entirely different level. The presbyter is ordained to play a role in ruling the Church, but he is not the chief ruler; he is not the successor of Moses, but only of the seventy elders who shared in his leadership. The presbyter is sent to preach the Word of God, not, however, independently and in his own right, but as the representative of the bishop, as the preacher of second rank. The presbyter is a priest, but not the high priest; he is not the successor of Aaron, but only of his sons who shared in the high priesthood of their father; he is priest only because he receives a share in that 'summum sacerdotium' which the bishop possesses. These are the comparisons which dominate the consecratory prefaces of presbyteral ordination in the early Church.

The *Traditio Apostolica* is again our most ancient witness. The rite follows the same pattern as that of episcopal consecration – imposition of hands with a single brief consecratory prayer. In the case of episcopal consecration we were explicitly told that the presbyters had no part in the

41. J. COLSON, *Les fonctions ecclésiastiques aux deux premiers siècles* (Paris, 1957).

ceremony – ‘presbyterium adstet quiescens’.⁴² In the ordination of the presbyter, however, the ordaining bishop is assisted by the presbyters of the Church. They impose hands with the bishop though they have not themselves the power to ordain.⁴³ In doing this they acknowledge and approve the ordination of a colleague who is to share with them their dignity and responsibility as the special group of collaborators whom the bishop gathers around him to help him fulfil his mission as pastor of the Church.⁴⁴ This participation by the other presbyters in his ordination emphasizes the fact that the newly-ordained presbyter is being received into a ‘collegium’, a ‘presbyterium’. For the presbyterate, like the episcopate, has an essentially collegiate structure; the priest is always a priest with others; his mission is to be exercised not in isolation and autonomy but within the college of presbyters.

The simple consecratory preface makes no attempt to delineate the powers or functions of the presbyter. His ordination is understood in a most general way as a gift of the Holy Spirit consecrating him to lead his people: ‘O God . . . look upon this thy servant, and impart to him the spirit of grace and counsel, that he may share in the presbyterate and govern thy people . . .’.⁴⁵ The spiritual gift or power which the presbyters receive is one which commissions them to act jointly in counselling and assisting the bishop to govern his Church. It is surprising to find no explicit mention of the presbyter’s cultual role. In this connection the

42. *Traditio Apostolica*, 4.

43. The ancient custom whereby the presbyters impose hands together with the bishop in the ordination of a priest may have more significance than is usually assigned to it by the theologians and liturgists. J. Colson (op. cit., 307–8) points out that when the *Traditio Apostolica* says that the presbyters have not the power of ordaining (ed. Botte, 24), all that may be meant is that they cannot exercise this power individually and on their own initiative; it does not deny that a presbyter could ordain a fellow-presbyter in special circumstances. Colson seems to think that in fact the presbyters do so ordain as a college when under the bishop and together with him they impose hands on the ordinand. M. SCHMAUS, *Kath. Dogmatik*, IV, 1, 658, n. 282, thinks that it may well be that the bishop speaks the form alone on behalf of all, and that the presbyters who impose hands actually do ordain with him, even though without him their laying on of hands would not have such sacramental efficacy. He cites a somewhat parallel example from another sphere of theology; the case in point is an interesting one – the charism of infallibility as enjoyed by the Pope and the College of Bishops. Just as with the bishops and presbyters and the power of ordaining, the Pope has the charism of infallibility even when he acts on his own initiative, the college of bishops have this power only when they act as a college together with the Pope. Cf. A. G. HERBERT, *Apostle and Bishop* (London 1963); also H. KUNG, *Strukturen der Kirche* (Freiburg 1962), 190–95.

44. In the ceremony of ordination to the diaconate the deacons too are presented as being ordained to help the bishop, but they hold a more limited participation in his mission than that of the priests: ‘Diaconus non in sacerdotio ordinatur sed in ministerio episcopi’. The same teaching is found in the *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua* and has been taken over into the Roman Pontifical.

45. *Traditio Apostolica*, 20.

evidence of the eastern liturgies is particularly striking in that they present the presbyter as sacramentally consecrated not only for the cultual but also for the pastoral and teaching ministry. The Byzantine rite envisages the priest as above all ordained for the ministry of the Word.⁴⁶ The prayer of ordination from the Alexandrian Church expressly connects the coming of the Holy Spirit not only with his priestly role of reconciliation, but equally with his teaching and ruling mission: 'Manum extendimus, Domine . . . super hunc hominem, et oramus, ut Spiritus veritatis ei adveniat; sensum ei largire et cognitionem . . . fiat in eo spiritus divinus, ut possit administrare populum tuum et dispensare verba tua divina et reconciliare populum tuum tibi Deo increato'.⁴⁷

In all these prayers of ordination one cannot help noticing the absence of any concentration on the cultual powers of the presbyter as the most important or the most essential. As B. Botte rightly remarks, the cultual element is not even to the fore in the great majority of ancient texts and prayer-formularies.⁴⁸ As we have already noticed in the case of episcopal consecration, the formulae of ordination equally envisage the gift of the Holy Spirit as empowering and commissioning for the ruling and teaching no less than for the strictly cultual functions.

We have to wait for the Leonine Sacramentary before we get a more explicit testimony on the relation between bishop and priest than that set out in the *Traditio Apostolica*. The presentation is essentially the same – that of the presbyterate as a lesser participation in the fullness of the episcopal ministry; here, however, it is more explicitly unfolded, and is enriched with a new terminology and a greater insistence on the secondary and subordinate status of the presbyter. The testimony of this sacramentary is of considerable value, having the force of a tradition in itself, since the formularies found here were incorporated in the present Roman Pontifical, and have been used by the Church for many centuries. They constitute the clearest evidence of the understanding which the Church has of her presbyterate. The relation of the bishop to his presbyters is illustrated (as in the *Traditio Apostolica*) in terms of the relationship between Moses and the seventy elders in the Old Testament. The ordination preface goes on to develop this idea; in contrast to the bishop who is called the '*Summus Pontifex*' and alone has the exercise of the '*summum Sacerdotium*', the presbyter is never given the title of *summus*: he is but the *secondary* priest, the *secondary* minister. This significant title '*secundus*' is given to the presbyter no less than four times in the course of the one consecratory preface of ordination. The prayer calls them '*sequentis ordinis*' and

46. Cf. J. GOAR, *op. cit.*, 293: the priests are seen as those 'who have been found worthy'.

47. F. X. FUNK, *op. cit.*, II, 189–91.

48. B. BOTTE, *Études sur le Sacrement de l'Ordre*, ed. J. Guyot (Paris 1957), 33.

'secundae dignitatis viros'. After the bishop they hold the office of second rank – 'secundi meriti munus'. They are subsequently called the 'secundi praedicatores' – the preachers of second rank.

The cumulative effect of these prayer-texts is most impressive. The present Roman Pontifical echoes this same liturgical tradition. The words which accompany the imposition of hands on the presbyter describes his commission in precisely the same terms: 'Da quaesumus, omnipotens Pater, in hunc famulum tuum Presbyterii dignitatem . . . ut acceptum a Te, Deus, secundi meriti munus obtineat'. The 'dignitas presbyterii' is defined – in the very words which confer it – as 'secundi meriti munus', the ministry of second rank. The presbyter is essentially a helper of the bishop sharing in his priestly and pastoral mission but not to the same extent or fullness. The presbyterate cannot be adequately defined simply in terms of this or that particular power which the presbyter holds, because there is no question of a ministry existing of its own independent right, but rather a ministry which derives its origin, its powers, and its whole *raison d'être* from the episcopate. The presbyters must always be seen in union with their bishop around whom they form an auxiliary presbyteral college. They are, in the words of the Pontifical, the 'adiumenta' of the bishop, 'co-operatores ordinis nostri' as they are called by the ordaining bishop.

According to the early liturgy, then, the distinction between bishop and priest is not to be found in any one particular cultural power isolated from the rest which the bishop may possess over and above the priest, such, e.g., as the power of confirming and ordaining. The *Traditio Apostolica*, e.g., in listing the prerogatives of the bishop, mentions four without claiming to be exhaustive: the remission of sins, the ordination of clerics, the power of ruling, and the offering of the Eucharist. There is no indication at all that the power of ordaining is a more distinctive trait of the 'summum sacerdotium' than any of the other powers mentioned. The perspective of the early liturgy is a very different one – something which is of no little consequence for a proper understanding of the nature of the sacrament of Order. What distinguishes the bishop and priest is that episcopal consecration and presbyteral ordination consecrate the respective recipients for diverse ministries in the Church; episcopal consecration commissions the bishop for the fullness of the ministry – to be successor of the apostles, 'summus Pastor', 'sacerdos primi ordinis'; presbyteral ordination, on the other hand, being only a limited participation in the sacrament, commissions the presbyter for the lesser ministry of subordinate auxiliary to the bishop, 'sacerdos secundi ordinis', the priest of second rank.

III. EPISCOPAL CONSECRATION IN THE ORDINALS

In presenting episcopal consecration as a commission for the fullness of

the ministry the Leonine Sacramentary is equivalently saying that the bishop alone receives the fullness of the sacrament, the fullness of the priesthood. This has been strikingly confirmed by some recent research in the liturgical practice of another era. From his study of the Roman Ordinals of the early middle ages,⁴⁹ M. Andrieu has established beyond all doubt that it was the common practice in the Roman Church to have deacons – and in a few cases even lectors or laymen – directly consecrated bishops. The presbyteral ordination was bypassed, it being taken for granted that was included in the episcopal consecration as a part in the whole. Between the end of the second and the beginning of the tenth century, the author cites no less than 34 popes who were consecrated bishops without any previous ordination to the priesthood. The vast majority of them were deacons at the time of their episcopal consecration, but at least two were laymen. M. Andrieu names all of these, and lists the sources of his information.⁵⁰ For some of the popes of the earlier period the evidence is not always quite conclusive, but it cannot be doubted that from the sixth century on it was the normal practice that the pope was chosen from among the deacons; from the sixth to the eighth century it was almost inevitably a deacon who was elected; the choice of a priest was quite unusual, and the selection of a bishop as pope was forbidden by law.⁵¹ All these deacons were immediately consecrated bishops, bypassing ordination to the presbyterate. On this latter point, as M. Andrieu remarks, there cannot be any longer the slightest doubt.⁵² The rite of episcopal consecration used was exactly the same whether the bishop-elect was a priest or only a deacon. It is clear that the deacon received the sacramental orders of presbyterate and episcopate in the one ceremony of episcopal consecration.⁵³

49. M. ANDRIEU, *Les Ordines Romani du haut Moyen Age* (Louvain 1951). The data recorded here have been taken from his account of episcopal consecration in the medieval Roman Ordinals, op. cit., III, 570–73, and the appropriate *Ordines*, 603–13; also from an earlier article – *La carrière ecclésiastique des Papes et les documents liturgiques du Moyen Age*, *Rev. Sc. Rel.* (1947), 90–120.

50. Among others he includes the following (art. cit., 91–3): Callixtus (217–222); Stephen I (254–57); Damasus (366–84); Leo I (440–461); Gregory I (590–604); Boniface IV (608–15); Gregory II (715–31); Hadrian I (772–795).

51. It was decided at a Roman Council in 769 that henceforth only priests or deacons would be eligible for election as supreme Pontiff (M. ANDRIEU, *Ordines Romani*, I, 19–20; art. cit., 110): ‘Summus Pontifex eligitur unus de cardinalibus – aut presbyter aut diaconus; nam episcopus esse non poterit’. This ruling was in accordance with the Council of Nicea which looked with disfavour on the translation of a bishop from his diocese.

52. M. ANDRIEU, art. cit., 99–100.

53. I have concentrated on the evidence of the Roman Church, because it is at once the most remarkable and the most continuous. It has since come to be recognized that this practice of directly consecrating deacons, and even laymen, was quite a common one in many parts of the Church; cf. the examples cited by J. LECUYER, *Le Sacrement de l'Épiscopat*, *Divinitas* (1957), 242.

What conclusion can be drawn from this evidence? Yves Congar sums up after examining this new evidence: 'The episcopal consecration was carried out in the same manner whether the bishop-elect was already a priest or simply a deacon. This liturgical evidence seems to warrant at least this conclusion: the episcopate is the sacrament of order in its fullness'.⁵⁴ This has been the unanimous conclusion of all authors who have assessed the theological significance of this recent evidence.

IV. BISHOP AND PRIEST IN EARLY LITERATURE

To determine the early Church's understanding of episcopal consecration we have concentrated chiefly on the liturgical rites and prayers of this period. The liturgy provides the most direct and immediate evidence on the nature of those ministries which it was instrumental in handing on. The proper complement of this liturgical study would be a parallel enquiry into the teaching of the Fathers of the early Church on the status of the bishop. Clearly any such undertaking would be completely outside the limits of the present work. The role of the bishop in the writings of any one of the great Fathers of antiquity – Ambrose, Augustine, Cyril, Chrysostom, for instance – would provide enough material for several volumes. Here we have to be content with a very general survey.

Concerning the particular problem in which we are interested – the nature and effect of episcopal consecration – none of the Fathers provides anything like the direct testimony of the liturgy. The nature of the distinction between bishop and priest became a matter of theological controversy only towards the conclusion of the great patristic era as a result of the unusual position taken up by St Jerome which we will discuss later. Jerome, perhaps, was unaware that he had a none-too-illustrious forerunner in the person of Arius who proposed that bishops and priests were really equal. In the great controversy which his Trinitarian views raised, this minor question went almost unheeded. In the east his claims were decisively refuted by Epiphanius,⁵⁵ in the west they were scarcely known; St Augustine mentions his teaching, equivalently classifying it with some other errors of his: 'The Arians had their origin with a certain priest Arius who became angry, it is said, at not being ordained a bishop. Having fallen into the heresy of the Arians, he added some other teachings peculiarly his own: he said that Mass should not be offered for the dead, that fasting should not be demanded by law . . . he also said that no difference should be recognized between bishop and priest'.⁵⁶

Apart from Epiphanius's refutation of this latter thesis of Arius, there

54. Y. CONGAR, art. cit., 128.

55. Epiphanius, *Adv. Haereses*, 75 (PG, 42. 508).

56. Augustine, *De Haeresibus* (PL, 42. 53).

is no *ex professo* treatment of the distinction between bishop and priest before Jerome. It is quite clear, however, from the general remarks of the early Fathers concerning the episcopate that the prevailing concept of the bishop was that which we have just seen verified in the early liturgical rites and prayers. Though we should not look for theological precision in the eloquence of St Ignatius, it cannot be denied that we find here the same teaching. Each Church is presented as a gathering of the people of God led by their priest and pastor, the bishop, the image of the Father, perfect representative of Christ, surrounded by his presbyteral college of subordinate collaborators.⁵⁷ P. Spicq sums up the content of St Ignatius's teaching on the episcopate when he says that he sets forth in clear concrete terms what theology would later recognize as the fullness of the priesthood in the bishop.⁵⁸ In like manner St Cyprian presents the bishop as the priest and pastor of his Church. The bishop is especially the custodian and guarantee of unity; the Church of God is to be found where we find a people united to their 'sacerdos', a flock attached to its 'pastor'.⁵⁹

It is noteworthy that Cyprian here uses the word 'sacerdos' to designate the bishop. It is a significant fact – and one which further bears out what we have seen above – that the word 'sacerdos' is practically synonymous with 'episcopus' in all the writings of the early Church. The theologians and historians of the sacrament of Order have not failed to take note of this surprising usage. 'For the first eight centuries', writes P. Broutin, 'the bishop is *the* priest. In all documents and institutions, in written work as well as in the popular opinion, the word "sacerdos" is applied first and properly to the bishop alone'.⁶⁰ Priests, by contrast, are rarely called 'sacerdos'; it is nearly always 'presbyteri' which is used. If the priest does happen to be called 'sacerdos' it is practically always with some qualifying phrase such as we have already seen in the liturgy – 'presbyteri in secundo sacerdotio instituti', 'secundi sacerdotes', 'sacerdotes minoris ordinis', 'sacerdotes minoris meriti'.⁶¹ This exclusive appropriation of the title

57. Ignatius, *Epistolae*; cf., e.g., Smyrnaeans VIII: 'Wherever the bishops shall appear there let the people be; just as wherever Jesus Christ may be, there is the Catholic Church . . .'. Philadelphians IV: 'There is only one Eucharist, there is only one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . as there is but one bishop together with the presbyterate and the deacons . . .'. Ephesians IV: '... the presbyters are tuned to their bishop as strings to a lyre'.

58. P. SPICQ, *Les Épitres Pastorales* (Coll. Études Bibliques, Paris 1947), 96.

59. Cyprian, *Epist.* 66, 8 (ed. W. Hartel, vol. III, 733): 'Et illi sunt ecclesia – plebs sacerdoti [i.e., episcopo] unita et pastori suo grex adhaerens. Unde scire debes episcopum in ecclesia esse et ecclesiam in episcopo . . .'.
60. P. BROUTIN, *Le Pasteur de l'Église au cours de l'histoire*, 4 (cited by A. M. CHARUE, *Le Clergé Diocésain* (Malines 1961), 91. He suggests that St John Chrysostom's *De Sacerdotio* really means *De Episcopatu*.

61. Cf. P. M. GY, *Remarques sur le vocabulaire antique du Sacerdoce Chrétien*, in *Études sur le Sacrement de l'Ordre*, ed. Guyot (Paris 1957), 125–45, 21, 2015

'sacerdos' by the bishop expresses in its own way the truth which emerges so strikingly from the texts of the liturgy – that the bishop alone has the fullness of the priesthood. The bishop is *the* priest – the others are priests only because they participate in his priesthood.

The Fathers of the Church have a vocabulary of their own to express this same teaching. It would be difficult to find a more explicit testimony than that of the *Didascalia*; contrasting the ministers of the Old Testament with those of the Church, it says: 'Those who were the priests and the levites then are now the deacons and the presbyters . . . but the high priest is the bishop'.⁶² Leo I contrasts the 'episcopalis excellentia' and the 'presbyteralis honor';⁶³ the bishops are the 'summi antistites', the presbyters the 'sacerdotes secundi ordinis'.⁶⁴ Innocent I declared that the presbyters do not enjoy the same perfection of priesthood which the bishops have: 'presbyteri, licet secundi sint sacerdotes, pontificatus tamen apicem non habent'.⁶⁵ Cyprian calls the episcopate 'sacerdotii sublime fastigium';⁶⁶ Optatus of Mileve calls the bishops 'apices et principes omnium', and speaks of the priests and deacons as holding the 'second' and 'third' priesthood respectively.⁶⁷ St Gregory the Great says that it is the duty of the bishops to ordain, i.e., 'to fill others from their own fullness' – 'de sua plenitudine replere alios'.⁶⁸ The Council of Sardinia (343) requires that clerics must first pass through the orders of lector, diaconate and priesthood before being ordained 'ad episcopatus fastigium', which is called the 'maximus honor', the supreme participation in the priesthood.⁶⁹ Almost two centuries later this same teaching is echoed in the writings of Cassiodorus – 'episcopatus summus in Ecclesia gradus est'.⁷⁰

Such then is the exalted pre-eminence of the episcopate as presented in the writings of the early Fathers. The vocabulary of sacramental theology is yet to be hammered out, but it is none the less evident that the patristic tradition presents us with the same teaching as emerges from the rites and texts of the liturgy – that the bishop alone holds the fullness of the priesthood, the fullness of the powers and graces of the sacrament of Order, of which the presbyter enjoys only a limited participation – a partial communication of the sacrament deputing him to a lesser and subordinate

62. F. X. FUNK, *op. cit.*, I, 103–4.

63. Leo I, *Epist.* 14, 4 (PL 54. 672).

64. *Id.*, *Sermo* 48, 1 (PL 54. 298).

65. Innocent I, *Denz.* 98.

66. *Epist.* 55, 8 (ed. W. Hartel, III, 629).

67. Optatus of Mileve, *Contra Parmenianum Donatistam*, I, 13 (ed. Ziwsa, CSEL, 26, 15). Cited by J. LECUYER, *Le Sacrement de l'Episcopat, Divinitas* (1957), 228.

68. Gregory I, *In I Regum*, V, 3, 3 (PL 79. 482).

69. Council of Sardinia, can. 10 (Mansi 3, 14). Cited by J. LECUYER, *Le Sacerdoce dans le Mystère du Christ* (Paris 1957), 361.

70. Cassiodorus, *In Psalterium*, 108, 6 (PL 50. 784).

ministry. The recent studies of J. Colson on the early ministry of the Church bear out this conclusion. He sums up the teaching of the early Church on the nature of the distinction between bishop and presbyter as follows: 'The presbyters form around the bishops the one collegiate priesthood of which the bishop is at once the centre, the epitome, the full expression and the sacramental personification. . . . The bishop concentrates in himself the fullness of the ministry of Order. The priests of second rank who participate in Order do so precisely in order to cooperate with the bishop. . . . The character with which they are marked is precisely the character of co-operators . . . "co-operatores ordinis nostri" – the words which the Pontifical places on the lips of the ordaining bishop'.⁷¹

V. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY

In our study of the liturgy of Order we have seen how the bishop and priest are presented not merely as ministers of cult, but also as rulers and teachers who are deputed and empowered for this triple role by their sacramental ordination. In a recent study of the sacerdotal ministry in the writings of the Greek Fathers, J. Daniélou advances some conclusions which confirm what we have seen so clearly expressed in the prayers and rites of the liturgy.⁷² He insists that the ministers of the Church cannot be defined solely in terms of their cultural functions and powers; the commission which they receive in the Sacrament of Order must be defined in the very widest terms, embracing all the three functions of priest, prophet and ruler, yet exhausted by none of them; they are the instruments of the Holy Spirit in the building up of the Church, in the working out of the economy of salvation; they are the sacramentally-empowered 'co-operators of God' [συνεργοὶ Θεοῦ] in all this work.

It is not possible here to show in any adequate way how the early Fathers present this wide concept of the Church's ministry. The few general indications and individual citations which follow are offered merely in confirmation of something already testified to so eloquently by the early liturgy. Already in the New Testament the first thing that strikes us in this respect is the diversity of names by which the ministers of the Church are designated: evangelists, prophets, teachers (διδασκάλοι), pastors (ποιμένες), bishops (ἐπισκόποι), presbyters, leaders (ἡγούμενοι), presidents (προιστάμενοι), stewards (οἰκόνομοι), apostles, deacons. Apostles and deacons are the only two titles of a general indeterminate nature; all the others refer explicitly to either an office of ruling or teaching. Nowhere

71. J. COLSON, *Les fonctions ecclésiastiques aux deux premiers siècles* (Paris 1956), 303–9.

72. J. DANIELOU, *Le Ministère sacerdotal chez les Pères Grecs*, in *Études sur le sacrement de l'Ordre*, 147–65. Downloaded from itq.sagepub.com at NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIV LIB on June 21, 2015

in the New Testament are the ministers of the Church called 'priests' [ἱερείς]. This surprising fact may be partly intelligible on the hypothesis that this title was reserved for Christ, the great High Priest. Yet it must be admitted that it is not until the epistle to the Hebrews written in the late apostolic age that we first find Christ designated as ἱερεύς. It would be nearer to the truth to say that the ministry of the new dispensation presented such a striking contrast with the priesthood of the temple that it was not even considered that the ministers should be called priests or ἱερείς; firstly, in order that this new priesthood might not be likened to the ancient and outmoded priesthood of the Old Law; but secondly, and even more so, because the new ministry was much more than a merely cultual priesthood such as that of the Temple; the ministers of the New Israel unite in the one vocation the three roles of priest, prophet and king of the old dispensation; Jesus Christ sends his ministers not only to confer the sacraments, but also to preach the Gospel and govern his Church.

The early Fathers are very conscious of this triple nature of the ministry. From the beginning the very choice of the words 'presbuteroi' and 'episcopoi' seems to highlight the ruling functions as the principal role of the first ministers of the early Christian community in Jerusalem. In the writings of St Clement the 'episcopos' is understood to have two chief functions – ruling the flock and offering sacrifice; the former gets if anything the greater emphasis. At Alexandria on the other hand the principal function of the ministry appears to be the preaching of the Word, if we are to judge by the writings of Origen and Clement. St Ignatius of Antioch stresses the cultual functions of the Church's ministers, but lays equal emphasis on the governing role of the bishop and his senate of presbyters.

Practically all the early Fathers understand the ministers of the Church as empowered and commissioned through their ordination not only for the administration of the sacraments, but also for the function of ruling and teaching. Again, it is possible to give only some brief references. For St Cyprian, as for St Ignatius, the bishop is the visible vicar of Christ in all his functions – 'vice Christi fungitur'.⁷³ The bishop is never alone; Christ who has chosen and ordained him always works with him – 'gubernanter inspirans et subministrans'.⁷⁴ The bishop is aided, inspired and directed by Christ in his role of chief, pontiff and prophet; it is the invisible Christ who governs the Church through the bishop – 'arbitrio et nutu ac praesentia . . . ecclesiam cum propositis gubernat'.⁷⁵

The *Didascalía* insists that the bishops are consecrated to play the same role in the Church as the priests, prophets and kings of the old dispensa-

73. Cyprian, *Epist.* 48, 4 (ed. W. Hartel, 608).

74. *Id.*, *Epist.* 63, 14 (Hartel, 713).

75. *Id.*, *Epist.* 66, 9 (Hartel, 733).

tion: 'Today it is you, the bishops . . . who are for your people priests, prophets, princes, chiefs and kings . . . you are the mediators between God and his people. It is you who receive and announce the Word of God'.⁷⁶ The text goes on to present the bishop as the divinely-constituted teacher and ruler of the Church – the instrument of God for ruling and teaching his people: 'The priests and the levites [of the Old Testament] are now the deacons and presbyters . . . but the high priest is the bishop. To him belongs the ministry of the Word; he is your mediator and your teacher . . . he is your chief, your leader and your powerful king'.⁷⁷

It is well known that St John Chrysostom presents the ministry of the Word as the first function of the ministers of the Church: 'The Word is the greatest, the holiest, and the best of all sacrifices'.⁷⁸ Commenting on St Paul's description of his own ministry as the 'priestly service of the Gospel of God' (Rom. 15:16), he says: 'My priesthood is to preach and announce the Gospel; this is the sacrifice which I offer'.⁷⁹ Origen, too, regards the preaching of the Word as a priestly task: 'The announcing of the Gospel is a priestly work'.⁸⁰ St Gregory Nazianzen speaks of the 'dispensing of the Word' as that function 'which is primary in our ministry'.⁸¹ For St Gregory of Nyssa the change effected in the priest by his ordination has as great a bearing on his work as teacher and ruler as that of priest: 'The efficacy of the divine word (i.e., the sacramental form of ordination) makes the priest awesome and venerable, segregating him from the general run of men by a special consecration. Yesterday he was still one of them; but now he is constituted leader, president, teacher and master of sacred worship . . . by invisible power and grace'.⁸²

It is clear that the Fathers of the Church, no less than the liturgy, did not regard bishops and priests as primarily ministers of cult. Neither is defined in terms of his cultual powers alone, but only in terms of the full ministry to which he is commissioned and sent by his sacred ordination. The strictly priestly function of offering sacrifice and administering the sacraments is but one function of this ministry; the ministers of the Church are sent also by God to build up the Church through the preaching of his Word and the service of his people. The minister of the Church becomes by virtue of his ordination the 'vicarius Christi' – he represents Christ, he is his 'instrument' in the building up of the Church. The idea of instrumental ministry which we associate today with the power of Order

76. F. X. FUNK, op. cit., I, 95–6.

77. Ibid., 103–4.

78. John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 cum presbyter fuit ordinatus* (PG 48. 694).

79. Id., *In Epist. ad Rom. 15:16* (PG. 60. 655).

80. Origen, *Comm. in Rom. 10:2*.

81. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio 11, 35* (PG 35. 442–3).

82. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Baptismum Christi*, (PG, 46, 581).

should not be exclusively confined to cultural functions alone; according to the mind of the early Church this instrumentality is operative in his whole ministry though necessarily in somewhat varying degree in his different role of priest, teacher and ruler of the Church. O. Perler, writing of the role of the bishop in the early Church, sums up the teaching of the Fathers: 'The bishop is the visible prolongation in time of the Messiah who is both king and priest. The salient concept is that of the bishop as representing the presence of the heavenly Christ. The bishop is his visible image, his human representative, his tangible "vicar"; he is his instrument, we might say almost his "incarnation", or, at least, his "sacrament". For it is Christ who acts in him and through him'.⁸³

VI. CONCLUSION

Such, then, is how the early Church saw the sacrament of Order when she conferred it on her ministers or reflected on it in her preaching and teaching. In conclusion I wish to draw attention to three points which seem to emerge with particular clarity from this living tradition of the early Church, and which seem to me to be of considerable importance if we are to have an adequate understanding of the place and significance of the sacrament of Order in the structure of the Church.

1. THE ECCLESIAL CHARACTER OF THE SACRAMENT OF ORDER

The early liturgy of the Church sees the sacrament of Order in a very different perspective from that of the current theological textbook. In the latter the sacrament is usually defined in terms of certain specific cultural powers accorded to the individual by the ordaining bishop. The priest, e.g., is one who has power to offer the Mass and forgive sins, the bishop one who has the power of confirming and ordaining. The perspective of the early Church on the other hand is quite different; it is not personal, but ecclesial; the sacrament is not seen as a personal possession, as the privilege of an individual, but is given its place in the structure and constitution of the Church. The ultimate meaning of episcopal consecration is not just that it confers the power of ordaining but that it provides a sacramental basis for the 'ordo episcoporum' in the Church. The meaning of the sacrament does not consist merely in the conferring of this or that particular power or privilege; it must first of all be seen as a 'missio Dei'; God chooses a man and commits him irrevocably for the highest ministry

83. O. PERLER, *l'Évêque, représentant du Christ selon les documents des premiers siècles*, in *l'Épiscopat et l'église universelle*, ed. Congar (Paris 1962), 31-66. To this article and that of J. Daniélou (cf. note 72) I am indebted for many of the above citations.

in the Church – to be a member of that college to which Christ committed his Church: to work in communion with his fellow-bishops for the growth and unity of the Church. His mission has an essentially universal character in that he is sent by God to assist in building up the whole Church, a mission which he holds as a member of the college of bishops and only together with the college. In highlighting its ecclesial and collegial character, the early liturgy sets episcopal consecration in the only perspective in which it can be adequately understood – as a sacrament within the Church giving the Church her divinely-instituted structure and organization.

2. BASIC UNITY OF ‘POTESTAS ORDINIS’ AND ‘POTESTAS JURISDICTIONIS’

We have already remarked that the New Testament does not ever call the ministers of the Church ‘priests’ (ἱερεῖς), probably in order to avoid the suggestion of any identification with the despised ‘priesthood’ of the gentile religions, or the purely cultual ‘priesthood’ of the Temple. The liturgical prayers of the early Church do use the words ‘priest’ and ‘priesthood’, but they make it quite clear that there is no question here of a mere ministry of cult. The laying on of hands and the gift of the Holy Spirit which it conveys are linked with the ruling and teaching role of the bishop and priest no less prominently than with the cultual. The grace and power of the Holy Spirit which the bishop receives in his consecration is at once that of ruler and high priest (ἡγεμονικὸν καὶ ἀρχιερατικόν);⁸⁴ the advent of the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hands is described as being at once the commission of a prophet, the anointing of a king, and the consecration of a high priest.

It is clear that the charism of the sacrament of Order must not be understood in terms of a mathematical enumeration of certain powers. The liturgy sees it as a consecration which effects a radical transformation of the recipient – the forging of a new bond with the Holy Spirit so that he is empowered to act as his instrument in that ministry to which his ordination deposes him.⁸⁵ This same fundamental concept of the sacrament dominates all the early liturgies and more especially the liturgies of the Eastern Church. It is very evident in the prayer of episcopal consecration in the Chaldean rite: ‘Deus noster . . . oramus omnes conjunctim pro eo [i.e., episcopo] ut veniat super eum gratia Spiritus sancti illapsu . . . perficiatque et sanctificet, et consummet eum in opere perfecto huius ministerii magni et excellentis, ad quod praesentatur . . .’.⁸⁶ In the Syrian rite the bishop

84. *Traditio Apostolica*, 8.

85. Cf. A. BERAUDY, art. cit., 82-9.

86. J. ASSEMANI, *op. cit.*, 65.

declares that the recipient of ordination 'segregatus est, perfectus est, et consummatus est in opus ministerii ecclesiastici . . .'.⁸⁷ This is a wider concept of the sacrament which does not see it merely in terms of certain cultural powers which it confers; through the sacrament of Order the recipient is 'set aside, sanctified, and perfected' – for the whole ministry to which he is called. This ministry is a varied one embracing the different functions of priest, pastor and prophet; its basic unity, however, is rooted in the sacrament which confers it. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit in the imposition of hands the bishop and priest are consecrated and commissioned by God for all the work which their ministry will bring them; they are sent not only to confer the sacraments, but also to preach the Gospel and have the care of His people.

It is quite clear that the early Church does not know anything of the sharp distinction between the power of order and the power of jurisdiction which came to be commonly accepted by the canonists and theologians of the Western Church in the middle ages. According to this neat departmentalization of the Church's ministry the power of sanctifying (*potestas ordinis*) is isolated from the power of ruling (*potestas jurisdictionis*), the former alone being conferred by sacrament, the latter by law or precept. The basis for this distinction as elaborated by the scholastics is to be found in the fact that the power of Order is related to the 'true Body of Christ' in the Eucharist, the power of jurisdiction on the other hand to the 'mystical Body of Christ'. As we shall see in a further article it was precisely this isolation of Eucharist from Church, of the power of Order from the power of jurisdiction, which led all the great scholastics to deny the episcopate was a sacramental order. For the scholastics the episcopate was merely an 'officium jurisdictionis' because it gave the recipient power only over the mystical Body but not over the eucharistic Body of Christ. The better understanding of both Eucharist and Church and their inseparable connection with one another which theologians have today has revealed the inadequacy of this rather artificial distinction. In highlighting the interrelationship of Church and Eucharist recent biblical and patristic studies have helped to restore something of that basic unity between sacrament and jurisdiction of which the early Church was always conscious.

3. THE BISHOPS, SUCCESSORS OF THE APOSTLES, HAVE THE FULLNESS OF THE SACRAMENT OF ORDER

The mind of the early Church on the significance of episcopal consecration can be best summed up in the words of the Dogmatic Constitution *De Ecclesia* of Vatican II: 'The sacred council teaches that by episcopal con-

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

secration the fullness of the sacrament of Order is conferred, that fullness of power, namely, which both in the Church's liturgical practice and in the language of the Fathers of the Church is called the high priesthood, the supreme power of the sacred ministry. . . . For from the tradition, which is expressed especially in liturgical rites and in the practice of both the Church of the East and of the West, it is clear that, by means of the imposition of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred and the sacred character so impressed, that bishops in an eminent and visible way sustain the roles of Christ himself as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in his person' (art. 21). In these words the Council Fathers are giving precise theological expression to something which has always been part of the life and practice of the Church from the beginning. The bishop alone holds the fullness of the sacrament of Order because he alone is commissioned by God for the fullness of the ministry in the Church as a successor of the apostles.

We have already seen that it is not quite certain that the present triple division of the hierarchy of Order so pertains to the constitution of the Church as to be absolutely binding at all times. It is always possible that the Church may be empowered by her divine founder to make a new departmental division of her ministry in answer to the special pastoral needs of a future era. But no matter what the Church may decide to do in the future – to keep the existing degrees of the hierarchy (which seems most likely and which may be normative) or to institute a new pattern in her dispensation of the sacrament, there will always be one order which will remain unchanged and its powers undiminished. For there must always be successors of the apostles who hold the fullness of the sacrament of Order as it has been instituted by Christ.

In the final analysis all the prerogatives of the bishops are based on their position as successors of the apostles. Even though the name 'bishops' may change, yet the Order which they constitute, the content of their ministry, these can never change, since there must always be in the Church successors to the apostles holding the fullness of the sacrament of Order, the fullness of the priesthood, the fullness of the ministry. This is the position which the bishops hold today; the episcopal order stands at the head of the hierarchy of order consecrated and commissioned by God for the fullness of the ministry of the Church; it is only in relation to this fullness that the other orders of presbyterate and diaconate can be defined as so many subordinate, dependent and limited participations.

It is only in this perspective that the traditional title of the episcopate – 'the fullness of the priesthood' – takes on its full force. The episcopate is not just an order, it is the supreme order including all others 'eminenter'. The bishop alone receives the full sacramental commission for the due

execution of that ministry to which the Church deposes him as 'summus sacerdos, pastor et propheta'. The presbyter is essentially defined as his co-operator also sacramentally consecrated for this triple ministry, though only as a minister 'secundi ordinis'.

It will be immediately obvious what a very different perspective we usually get in the theological manuals. There it is the presbyter who occupies the central position; he is defined (correctly but inadequately) in terms of his power to consecrate and forgive sin. It is only after this precise definition of the presbyter in terms of his cultual powers has been established that the bishop is considered in this same narrow quantitative context to determine what powers or perfection he holds over and above that of the presbyter. This erroneous perspective led naturally to a very impoverished concept of the episcopate as being no more than a kind of glorified presbyterate ('presbytérat auréolé' as one French theologian aptly styles it), or even, for some theologians, as the same priesthood plus a grant of superior jurisdiction. From what we have seen of the early tradition of the Church it will be clear that this approach to the episcopate 'from below' is entirely false and misleading. The only valid approach to the Sacrament of Order is to start 'from above' – with the episcopate which is the full communication of the sacrament in which the presbyterate is but a limited participation.

How did the episcopate come to lose its traditional position of pre-eminence in the hierarchy of Order? How was it that a theology of Order developed which was built, not around the episcopate but around the presbyterate? What led all the great scholastics – Peter Lombard, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, etc. – to maintain that the episcopate was neither a sacrament nor an order? To the analysis of this particular 'pseudo-tradition' of the middle ages and its regrettable consequences for the theology of the sacrament of Order up to the present day it will be necessary to devote a further article.