

## *Episcopacy in the Anglican Tradition*

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### *Introduction*

An important question that must be asked at the outset of this exploration into Anglican episcopacy is, why did Thomas Cranmer (d. 1556), Archbishop of Canterbury and architect of early Anglican theology and the Book of Common Prayer, retain an episcopal form of Church government when the Continental Reformers (e.g., Martin Luther and John Calvin) reduced the ordained structure to a twofold diaconate and presbyterate/minister? Moreover, what was the intended role of these bishops in the nascent Church of England?<sup>1</sup> By and large the Protestant Reformers (especially those on the continent) thought of the late medieval Church as corrupt, rejecting the claim that an episcopal succession could be traced back to the apostles themselves. Cranmer too rejected this understanding as unbiblical. As detailed below, Cranmer's understanding of episcopacy is rooted in his Erastianism; that is, that the king of England is supreme in all matters political and spiritual. Despite this, Cranmer (and others) noted that the episcopal office was of divine origin, stating that "the order and ministry of priests and bishops are not of human authority, but by divine institution, as Scripture clearly teaches."<sup>2</sup> For Cranmer, then, the office of bishop was instituted by God and, therefore, should be retained. In fact, "Cranmer desired to give credence to the idea of an ordained episcopate and presbyterate as *sine qua non* within the life of the church."<sup>3</sup> At the same time, however, Cranmer could accept the Lutheran and Calvinistic practice of non-episcopal Church order: "In the admission of many of

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice Elliott, "The 1538 State Paper, 'De Ordine et Ministerio Sacerdotum et Epsicoporum': An Exploration of Its Significance for Reformation Anglicanism's Understanding of Episcopacy," *Churchman* 128 (2014), 317: "The continuing importance of episcopacy after the Reformation is one of the features that sets England apart from Continental Protestantism. It could be argued that the Anglican Church's principal distinguishing feature was its hierarchy operating under the Crown as head of Church and State."

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Cranmer, *De Ordine et Ministerio Sacerdotum et Episcoporum* in John Edmund Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer* (Cambridge: University Press, 1846), 484.

<sup>3</sup> Elliott, "The 1538 State Paper," 321.

these officers be divers comely ceremonies and solemnities used, which *be not of necessity*, but for a good order and seemly fashion.”<sup>4</sup> Cranmer believed that the episcopal office was a secondary matter (*adiaphora*<sup>5</sup>) wherein Christian theologians were free to differ.<sup>6</sup> In any case, the episcopate was established by God, even if it was nonessential. The Church of England chose to retain the episcopacy for “good order and seemly fashion.”

Thus, the *Ordinal* of 1552, which was the work of Cranmer, reaffirms his understanding that episcopacy is of divine origin: “Almighty God, giver of all good things, which by thy Holy Spirit hast appointed diverse orders of ministers in thy Church: mercifully behold this thy servant, now called to the work and ministry of a bishop.”<sup>7</sup> This echoes the Preface to the *Ordinal*, which says that “It is evident unto all men diligently reading holy scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles’ time there hath been these orders of ministers in Christ’s church; bishops, priests, and deacons... And therefore, to the intent these orders should be continued, and reverently used and esteemed, in this church of England.”<sup>8</sup>

It seems, however, in the intervening decade, Cranmer had changed his mind regarding the episcopacy as a secondary matter: “Thus, while the retention of bishops was originally a mere issue of *Adiaphora*, now it is evident that the Archbishop considered it to be much more central. If bishops had been instituted during the apostolic era, then the Church could have no

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Cranmer, *The Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests* 9; Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 116; italics added for emphasis.

<sup>5</sup> See Paul Dominiak, “‘All Things Are Lawful’: *Adiaphora*, Permissive Natural Law, Christian Freedom, and Defending the English Reformation,” *Perichoresis* 20 (2022): 75-103; and Maurice Elliott, “Episcopal Orders: Insights from Cranmer,” *Search* 28 (2005), 80.

<sup>6</sup> Contra the Council of Trent, “Canons on the Sacrament of Order” 6: “If anyone denies that there exists in the catholic church a hierarchy consisting of bishops, priests and ministers, instituted by divine appointment: let him be anathema” (Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Volume Two: Trent to Vatican II* [London/Washington, DC: Sheed & Ward/Georgetown University Press, 1990], 744,

<sup>7</sup> *Book of Common Prayer* 1552.

<sup>8</sup> Printed in Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 519.

right to remove them from its structure of authority.”<sup>9</sup> Cranmer’s theological adjustment regarding episcopacy was likely due to the influence of the German reformer Martin Bucer (d. 1551), who came to England in 1549, becoming Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge.<sup>10</sup> On occasion Cranmer sought out Bucer’s advice<sup>11</sup> and Bucer wrote two works, the *Censura* and the *De Ordinatione Legitima*, that helped to shape the 1552 revision of the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>12</sup> In particular, a “comparison between the ordination rite of the *De Ordinatione Legitima* and the Ordinal of 1550 reveals clearly that there is some relationship between them, and probably that one is directly indebted to the other... the compilers of the ordinal of 1550 made use of Bucer’s treatise.”<sup>13</sup> Before Bucer’s influence Cranmer held that “bishops and priests were at one time, and were not two things, but both one office at the beginning of Christ’s religion.”<sup>14</sup> Following Bucer’s thought Cranmer held to a God-ordained hierarchy of bishops, priests and deacons.<sup>15</sup> In short,

Cranmer was the inheritor of a threefold system of ordained church government which dated back to the early second century but, as with every other aspect of ecclesiastical life, it had suffered much corruption away from its original intention. Cranmer’s decision to retain the order of bishops was initially, at any rate, a matter of pure pragmatism. The

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<sup>9</sup> Maurice Elliott, “Cranmer’s Attitude to the Episcopate: Bishops, Priests and Deacons,” *Churchman* 109.4 (1995), 322.

<sup>10</sup> Howard Dellar, “The Influence of Martin Bucer on the English Reformation,” *Churchman* 106.4 (1992), 351-356; Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Anglican Ordinal: Its History and Development from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: S. P. C. K., 1971), 20-25.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Letter 292: “To these questions, if you will make most brief answer, and send unto me your judgment” (Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 428).

<sup>12</sup> Both are printed in E. C. Whitaker, *Martin Bucer and the Book of Common Prayer* (Great Wakering, UK: Alcuin Club, 1974). According to G. J. Cuming, the “influence of Bucer’s *Censura* on the Book of 1552 is extremely difficult to assess” even though approximately one-third of Bucer’s criticisms led to changes in the 1552 prayer book (C. J. Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy* [London/New York: Macmillan/St. Martin’s Press, 1969], 100).

<sup>13</sup> Whitaker, *Martin Bucer and the Book of Common Prayer*, 6. See also Dellar, “The Influence of Martin Bucer on the English Reformation,” 353.

<sup>14</sup> Cranmer, *The Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests* 10; Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 117. Some scholars believe that in the early Church, the terms ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος were often viewed as interchangeable, which is what Cranmer appears to believe. For early examples see Peter King, *An Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity and Worship of the Primitive Church* (London: J. Wyatt and R. Robinson, 1713) and J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1878). For a thorough critique of this view see Alistair C. Stewart, *The Original Bishops: Office and Order in the First Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 11-53.

<sup>15</sup> Elliott, “Cranmer’s Attitude to the Episcopate: Bishops, Priests and Deacons,” 323.

scriptural gospel legislated explicitly neither for or against them. Later, however, in the face of mounting pressure from a nascent non-conformist movement, and in view of the highpoint of his own idealised Erastianism under Edward, he enshrined, within the pages of the Ordinal, the ordained episcopate as a biblical injunction.<sup>16</sup>

This leads us to conclude that early Anglican theology held to the episcopacy as a matter of biblical fidelity. But how bishops were appointed in early Anglicanism raises the rub of Erastianism.

*Erastianism in the Church of England: Medieval Antecedents*

Since the early Middle Ages there has been a distinction between “the sacred authority [*auctoritas*] of priests and the royal power [*potestas*],” to quote Pope Gelasius I (d. 496) writing to Emperor Anastasius I. For Gelasius, the “responsibility of priests is weightier” than the responsibility of emperors “in that they must answer for kings at the divine judgment.” Thus, even emperors need to “bow” their heads “to those who have charge of divine affairs and must seek from them the means of... salvation.”<sup>17</sup> Gelasius’ influence was so great that “All theories of the division of powers were versions of the Gelasian doctrine.” Simply put,

Gelasius posits two powers, respectively royal and priestly. The priestly power is superior inasmuch as its ministers are responsible for the eternal well-being of everyone, including kings, whereas kings are responsible only for their subjects’ temporal well-being. Nevertheless, neither authority should intrude upon the domain of the other. Kings should not interfere in the work of those who dispense the ‘mysteries of religion,’ but nor should priests interfere in secular matters. The model implies that the priestly authority is inferior to the secular authority in the secular domain.<sup>18</sup>

Centuries later, in the early thirteenth century, the English theologian Gervase of Tilbury (d. 1220) began his *Recreation for an Emperor (Otia Imperialia)* with a discussion of the distinction between the priestly (*sacerdotium*) and kingly (*regnum*) powers: “There are two

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<sup>16</sup> Elliott, “Cranmer’s Attitude to the Episcopate: Bishops, Priests and Deacons,” 325-326.

<sup>17</sup> Pope Gelasius I, Ep. *Famuli vestrae pietatis* 2; Leo Donald Davis, trans., *Church and State in Early Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 174.

<sup>18</sup> Philip L. Reynolds, “Medieval Period,” in Brent A. Strawn, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law, Volume 2: MAG-WOM* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 21.

powers... by which the world is governed, the priestly and the kingly. The priest prays, the king commands. The priest forgives sins, the king punishes transgressions. The priest binds and looses souls, the king tortures and kills bodies.” Further, a king “governs earthly affairs and judges creatures of clay... while the priest moulds souls and recreates spirits out of the abundance of divine life.”<sup>19</sup> Gervase goes on to point out that the kingly power is not over the priestly but set alongside it, tying the need for kingly and priestly power to the fact that a human consists of both body and soul, thus the need for the kingly and the priestly powers. Gervase notes that the body was made first (from clay) and then a soul is given to it, suggesting that the kingly power is above the priestly power. Yet, he is quick to say that “the soul, though confined in the prison of the body, should not be subject to the body, but should rather rule the works of the flesh and order them under the guidance of reason.”<sup>20</sup> This does not make the priestly power higher for “this world is subject to two masters, and while the king receives his office through his anointing at the hand of the priest, each actually receives his power from him who is lord of both.”<sup>21</sup> In the end, Gervase is clear that the pope (priestly power) is “after Christ, the head of souls” while the king is “after God, the lord of bodies.”<sup>22</sup> Like Pope Gelasius, Gervase strikes a middle ground wherein both powers are from God and necessary to the proper ordering of bodies and souls. This balance would not, however, remain intact.

By the fourteenth century there was an emerging set of conflicting perspectives regarding spiritual and temporal power because of various conflicts, including that between King Philip IV of France (d. 1314) and Pope Boniface VIII (d. 1303).<sup>23</sup> James of Viterbo (d. 1308), writing in

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<sup>19</sup> Gervase of Tilbury, *Recreation for an Emperor*, Pref; S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns, eds. and trans., *Gervase of Tilbury: Otia Imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>20</sup> Gervase of Tilbury, *Recreation for an Emperor*, Pref; Banks and Binns, eds. and trans., *Gervase of Tilbury*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Gervase of Tilbury, *Recreation for an Emperor*, Pref; Banks and Binns, eds. and trans., *Gervase of Tilbury*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Gervase of Tilbury, *Recreation for an Emperor*, Pref; Banks and Binns, eds. and trans., *Gervase of Tilbury*, 11.

<sup>23</sup> See Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300, with Selected Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 172-192.

favor of the pope in his *On Christian Government (De regimine christiano)*, says that there are two forms of power because Jesus was both God and human. There is a creative power and a governing power. The governing power is differentiated in three ways but James is only interested in the way that the “effects of government can be considered according to those things by which a creature is brought to resemble God. Thus there are two general effects of government: namely, the preservation of things, and the movement of them towards the good.”<sup>24</sup> In the end, it is Christ that exercises all elements of power for he “is the creator of all things... and He is the governor of all things inasmuch as He preserves and moves all things.”<sup>25</sup> And because Jesus is priest and king, he has priestly and royal power in order to be a mediator by way of his human nature and to be king by both his human and divine nature. James goes on to say that the priestly and royal powers “are communicable, and are communicated to men.”<sup>26</sup> In fact, “it was conducive to human advantage that Christ should hand over and relinquish His governing power over men by communicating it to certain men by whom His Church was to be ruled and directed.”<sup>27</sup> And these “holders of priestly and royal power alike are called vicars of Christ and ministers of Christ and co-workers with Christ.”<sup>28</sup> Explicitly rejecting the two powers thinking of Pope Gelasius and Gervase,<sup>29</sup> James argues that one person can be given both powers, and that person in particular is the pope: “the Vicar of Christ is nonetheless said to have fullness of power because the whole governing power that has been communicated to the Church by Christ, priestly and royal, spiritual and temporal, is in the Supreme Pontiff, the Vicar of

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<sup>24</sup> James of Viterbo, *On Christian Government* 2.1; R. W. Dyson, ed., *James of Viterbo: De regimine Christiano: A Critical Edition and Translation* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 85.

<sup>25</sup> James of Viterbo, *On Christian Government* 2.1; R. W. Dyson, ed., *James of Viterbo*, 89.

<sup>26</sup> James of Viterbo, *On Christian Government* 2.2; R. W. Dyson, ed., *James of Viterbo*, 111.

<sup>27</sup> James of Viterbo, *On Christian Government* 2.2; R. W. Dyson, ed., *James of Viterbo*, 117.

<sup>28</sup> James of Viterbo, *On Christian Government* 2.2; R. W. Dyson, ed., *James of Viterbo*, 119.

<sup>29</sup> James of Viterbo, *On Christian Government* 2.2; R. W. Dyson, ed., *James of Viterbo*, 123.

Christ.”<sup>30</sup> Buttressed by James’ argument, Pope Boniface VIII (d. 1303), in November 1302, issued the bull *Unam Sanctam*, claiming that the two swords of power (spiritual and temporal) “are in the power of the church... the one is exercised for the church, the other by the church, the one by the hand of the priest, the other by the hand of kings and soldiers... One sword ought to be under the other and the temporal authority subject to the spiritual power.” Thus, “if the earthly power errs, it shall be judged by the spiritual power, if a lesser spiritual power errs it shall be judged by its superior, but if the supreme spiritual power errs it can be judged only by God not by man.”<sup>31</sup> Boniface VIII unseated Gelasian dualism after nearly nine centuries.

Perhaps unsurprisingly there was a swift response to *Unam Sanctam*, with a cadre of theologians arguing for the conciliarist nature of the Church. The momentum toward conciliarism peaked at the Council of Constance (1414-1418) when it issued *Haec sancta* on April 6, 1415, stating that the council “held its power ‘directly from Christ [and] every man, whatever his estate or office, including the pope, is obliged to obey it in matters concerned with the faith, the extirpation of schism, and reform of the church in head and numbers.”<sup>32</sup> One of the most well-known exponents of conciliarism was Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464), even though, from 1437 on, he “would direct his political energies to the promotion of papal interests.”<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, Nicholas toiled away in 1433 at *The Catholic Concordance (De concordantia catholica)*. Composed of three books, the *Concordance* starts by defining *concordantia* as both the fundamental ecclesiological and cosmological principle wherein “a great differentiated order is maintained.”<sup>34</sup> The second book provides arguments for conciliarism, supported by bounteous

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<sup>30</sup> James of Viterbo, *On Christian Government* 2.9; R. W. Dyson, ed., *James of Viterbo*, 271.

<sup>31</sup> Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300*, 189.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in Paul E. Sigmund, ed., *Nicholas of Cusa: The Catholic Concordance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), xi.

<sup>33</sup> James E. Biechler, “Nicholas of Cusa and the End of the Conciliar Movement: A Humanist Crisis of Identity,” *Church History* 44 (1975), 6.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *The Catholic Concordance* 1.8.42; Sigmund, ed., *Nicholas of Cusa*, 28.

references to ancient and medieval writers. In the last book, Nicholas focuses not on the Church but on the relationship between the Church and the secular powers, specifically the Holy Roman Empire. In short, “Nicholas’ purpose in *The Catholic Concordance* was to make the case for constitutionalism in the Roman Catholic Church by placing limits on papal power.”<sup>35</sup> Nicholas says “that a universal council properly understood, that is, one that represents the whole Catholic church, is over the patriarchs and the Roman pontiff.”<sup>36</sup> For Nicholas the whole is always greater than its parts; that is, a concordance of parts is better than a differentiated order: “Rulership exists for the sake of the unity of the faithful in order to avoid schism. There is for the service and preservation of the unity of the faithful that rulership over individuals exists. From this the union of the faithful which we call the church, or the universal council of the Catholic Church representing it, is superior to its minister and individual ruler.”<sup>37</sup> In saying this, Nicholas does not deny the divine origin of the papacy though he understands “that supremacy of Peter was not a supremacy *over*, but *within*, the church.”<sup>38</sup> Further, the primacy of the papacy was instituted “with the concordant agreement of the apostles.”<sup>39</sup> And lastly, alongside the early Church, Nicholas holds that all bishops of the Church are successors of Peter, not just the Bishop of Rome.<sup>40</sup> All in all, then, Nicholas argues for the superiority of a council above the papacy while not rejecting the divine origin and right of the papacy. It was this milieu of ecclesiology that helped to shape early Anglican theology on the episcopacy.

*Erastianism in the Church of England: Antecedents to Thomas Cranmer*

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<sup>35</sup> Paul Valliere, *Conciliarism: A History of Decision-Making in the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 151.

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *The Catholic Concordance* 2.17.145; Sigmund, ed., *Nicholas of Cusa*, 111.

<sup>37</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *The Catholic Concordance* 2.34.259; Sigmund, ed., *Nicholas of Cusa*, 200-201.

<sup>38</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *The Catholic Concordance* 2.34.257; Sigmund, ed., *Nicholas of Cusa*, 199; italics in the original.

<sup>39</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *The Catholic Concordance* 1.15.61; Sigmund, ed., *Nicholas of Cusa*, 42. Nicholas is borrowing from Jerome’s *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.26.

<sup>40</sup> See Nicholas of Cusa, *The Catholic Concordance* 2.13.118; Sigmund, ed., *Nicholas of Cusa*, 93.



The Protestant Reformation was not uniform nor was it theologically consistent. Not only were there differences from one place to the next but there were differences of opinion in the same place. This was true of Germany, for example, and is just as true for England. “In England,” writes Kenneth Carleton, “the process of Reformation... was allowed to flourish first as the result of a political necessity, rather than a religious conversion.”<sup>41</sup> Scholars recognize a series of reformations (plural) in England, so much so that it is inappropriate to refer to a single “English Reformation.”<sup>42</sup> But theologically speaking, the English Reformation was primarily characterized by a return to the sources, if you will; it was a movement of *ressourcement*. Thus, it was important to early Anglican theology to retain the episcopacy because the “episcopate is key to the Anglican claim to catholicity, to continuity with the past, and to its place as an authentic part of the Church founded by Christ.”<sup>43</sup>

In the late Middle Ages, the church in England had established a working system of episcopal appointments that involved the cooperation of both cathedral chapters and the crown. In the twelfth century, King Henry I (d. 1135) had given cathedral chapters the right to the free election of bishops “but with the king’s effective veto of an unsuitable candidate the choice passed in practice largely into the hands of the crown.”<sup>44</sup> The king would indicate his choice to the chapter, the chapter would proceed with the election and the bishop-elect would be commended to the pope, who more often than not, accepted the king’s candidate. If the pope

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<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Carleton, *Bishops and Reform in the English Church, 1520–1559* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2001), 3. On the overall spiritual and theological health of the late medieval English church see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>42</sup> Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). A similar argument has been made for the Protestant Reformation as a whole in that it was a reformation but a series of reformations. See Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>43</sup> Carleton, *Bishops and Reform in the English Church*, 6.

<sup>44</sup> Carleton, *Bishops and Reform in the English Church*, 7.

opposed the royal candidate, a compromise between the crown and the papacy was reached.

Further, a

mutual understanding had been arrived at by the end of the fourteenth century that if the pope did not oppose the royal nominee, the king would not take exception to the bull of provision, except that the bishop, on doing homage to the king for grant of the temporalities of his see, was required to renounce those clauses in the bull which were seen to be prejudicial to the authority of the crown. This procedure was invariably followed for the appointment of bishops for the English Church up to and including that of Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, when King Henry VIII claimed the right to appoint bishops he was arrogating “to himself a jurisdiction which for many years had *de facto* been exercised by the Crown; the claim was for the *de iure* right to exercise that appointing power.”<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, it is unclear when Henry VIII began to think that he could assume a spiritual authority over the church in England that had historically been afforded to the pope. “During the fifteenth century, Englishmen adhered faithfully to this view [i.e., Gelasian dualism] because as yet there was nothing sufficiently discordant in the relations between the English *regnum* and *sacerdotium* to warrant throwing it over,” concludes Franklin Le Van Baumer.<sup>47</sup> At least since the end of the conciliarist movement in the mid-fourteenth century, there was a renewed understanding that the papacy exercised both temporal and spiritual power. Further, “on the eve of the Reformation there was no belief in absolute monarchy among English publicists—in fact, quite the contrary. The current theory envisaged a king strictly limited in both the temporal and spiritual spheres, and by no flight of the imagination supreme above rival jurisdictions, or

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<sup>45</sup> Carleton, *Bishops and Reform in the English Church*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> Carleton, *Bishops and Reform in the English Church*, 7.

<sup>47</sup> Franklin Le Van Baumer, *The Early Tudor Theory of Kingship* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 16.

possessing unlimited sovereign power.”<sup>48</sup> Yet, in England, by the 1530s it was clear “that the bishops had become entirely dependent on the King for the exercise of their power.”<sup>49</sup> In fact,

By the year 1540, the bishops and leading divines of the English Church had reached a turning point in the relationship of ecclesiastical ministry to civil authority in the person of the king. It was becoming clear that the breach with Rome was, if not final, at least some way from healing, and that many leading churchmen considered that it was not England but Rome which would have to change in order to heal the rift. The bishops no longer looked to a foreign power for the source of their authority to govern the Church. The gap left by the pope was amply filled by the supremacy, which by 1540 was consolidating its position as the source of power both temporal and spiritual.<sup>50</sup>

Several documents illuminate this development in England: 1) the *Collectanea satis copiosa*; 2) the so-called Bishop’s Book<sup>51</sup>; and 3) the King’s Book.<sup>52</sup>

The *Collectanea* is a collection of over 200 scriptural, patristic and medieval citations that support the royal supremacy. It was made in 1530 by Edward Foxe (d. 1538), provost of King’s College, Cambridge. The text supports a view of the crown suggesting that not only does episcopal power derive from God but from the king as well. The *Collectanea* says that bishops of the church in England are dependent on the king for the exercise of their office in that the episcopal *potestas iurisdictionis* is of human origin and proceeds from the king to the bishops.<sup>53</sup> The text “proceeds to establish, from scripture first and then from a variety of authors, certain principles of Kingly power; then it retraces its steps to show how those principles have been employed by past English Kings in their dealings with the Church and clergy.”<sup>54</sup> It argues that the kings of Israel exercised divine law by reforming worship and the clergy, and includes

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<sup>48</sup> Le Van Baumer, *The Early Tudor Theory of Kingship*, 18.

<sup>49</sup> Carleton, *Bishops and Reform in the English Church*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> Carleton, *Bishops and Reform in the English Church*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> The full title is *The Institution of a Christian Man; containing the Exposition or Interpretation of the Common Creed, of the Seven Sacraments, of the Ten Commandments, and of the Pater Noster, and the Ave Maria, Justification, and Purgatory.*

<sup>52</sup> The full title is *A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man; Set Forth by the King’s Majesty of England, &c.*

<sup>53</sup> Carleton, *Bishops and Reform in the English Church*, 10-11.

<sup>54</sup> Graham David Nicholson, “The Nature and Function of Historical Argument in the Henrician Reformation” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1979), 82.

comments such as, “if a king can abrogate what had once been ordered by God, how much greater is his power over mere human precepts.”<sup>55</sup> The king’s office is referred to “as god in the world” (*sicut deus in mundo*) and it is repeated a number of times that the pope borrows his authority from the king. In fact,

This idea of borrowed office is most important in the ‘Collectanea satis copiosa’. It was obviously a nonsense to suggest the Church had never legitimately exercised jurisdictional or coercive authority; it did so day by day in the courts Christian [*sic*], and when it enacted constitutions in Convocation - both of which were activities recognized and accepted by the Crown from time immemorial. Rather the compiler makes out a case... for the God-ordained sovereignty of the King, a part of which authority he may from time to time ‘lend’, without loss of rights, to the priesthood.<sup>56</sup>

The *Collectanea* relies on the two spheres theory of Pope Gelasius I and, in turn, comes to make use of Gervase of Tilbury as well. From Gervase it takes the idea that though Moses, as the figure of the king, did not enter the Holy of Holies nor become a priest, it was he who anointed Aaron and invested him with the *ornamenta pontificalia*. As well, it was Moses, as king, who declared the law of God to the people, not Aaron as high priest. This reading of the text limits the priest to mere sacerdotal functions and gives all other power to the king. Thus, all clerical powers devolve from the king, including the Church’s spiritual power.

By the time that the Bishop’s Book (compiled by a committee of English bishops) was published in 1537, the arguments of the *Collectanea* had become largely accepted in England.

The Bishop’s Book holds that both the priestly and the kingly offices are of divine origin:

As touching the sacrament of holy orders, we think it convenient, that all bishops and preachers shall instruct and teach the people committed unto their spiritual charge, first, how that Christ and his apostles did institute and ordain in the New Testament, that besides the civil powers and governance of kings and princes, (which is called *potestas gladii*, the power of the sword), there should also be continually in the church militant

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<sup>55</sup> Nicholson, “The Nature and Function of Historical Argument in the Henrician Reformation,” 82-83.

<sup>56</sup> Nicholson, “The Nature and Function of Historical Argument in the Henrician Reformation,” 84.

certain other ministers or officers, which should have special power, authority, and commission, under Christ.<sup>57</sup>

These “ministers or officers” have a number of specific ministries: to administer the sacraments (e.g., baptism); to consecrate the “sacrament of the altar;” to absolve the penitent; to excommunicate the impenitent; to “order and consecrate others in the same room, order, and office;” “to feed Christ’s people, like good pastors and rectors... with their wholesome doctrine;” and “by their continual exhortations and admonitions, to reduce them from sin and iniquity, so much as in them lieth, and to bring them unto the perfect knowledge, the perfect love and dread of God, and unto the perfect charity of their neighbours.”<sup>58</sup> The power that these ministers, including bishops, possess, says the Bishop’s Book, is a “limited power, restrained unto the execution of a special function or ministration.”<sup>59</sup> In Scripture it is called gift or grace or the power of the keys but, again, it is “a limited power and office, ordained especially and only for the causes and purposes before rehearsed.”<sup>60</sup> This power and office should be preserved for three reasons: 1) it was commanded of God; 2) there are no other means appointed by God to reconcile sinful humanity to God; and 3) “the said power and office, or function, hath annexed unto it assured promises of excellent and inestimable things.”<sup>61</sup>

The Bishop’s Book continues by stating, again, “That this office, this power, and authority was committed and given by Christ and his apostles unto certain persons only, that is to say, unto priests or bishops, whom they did elect, call, and admit thereunto, by their prayer and imposition of their hands.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore, and this is important, that the process of laying on of hands, this “sacrament of order may worthily be called a sacrament, because it is a holy rite or

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<sup>57</sup> Cited in *Formularies of Faith Put Forth by Authority During the Reign of Henry VIII* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1856), 101.

<sup>58</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 101-102.

<sup>59</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 102.

<sup>60</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 103.

<sup>61</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 103-104.

<sup>62</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 104.

ceremony instituted by Christ and his apostles.”<sup>63</sup> So, here we see that the bishop’s who authored the text thought that this office and attendant powers, albeit limited, were sacramentally communicated manually through the laying on of hands.<sup>64</sup> Further, these power are of “two parts”: *potestas ordinis* (e.g., rebuke sin, excommunicate obstinate sinners and bar from Communion the unrepentant, etc.) and *potestas jurisdictionis* (e.g., the authority to approve or reject men nominated to Holy Orders).<sup>65</sup> Notice that the *potestas jurisdictionis* is only a power to “approve and admit” or “reject and repel” for “the presentation and nomination of the bishoprics appertaineth unto the kings of this realm.”<sup>66</sup> In this way the Bishop’s Book is simply following historical precedence, going back to King Henry I’s practices in the twelfth century, discussed previously. Priests and deacons could be nominated by the king, or “other noble men,” bishops or patrons of benefices but nominations to the office of bishop were a royal prerogative.<sup>67</sup>

Furthermore, the authors insist that bishops only have the power granted to them “by the authority of the gospel” and by “permission of kings and princes.”<sup>68</sup> They do not have “the whole monarchy of the world” in their hands and thereby they cannot “lawfully depose kings and princes from their realms.” For a bishop to think that he has such a power is “utterly false and untrue: for Christ never gave unto St. Peter, or unto any of the apostles, or their successors, any such authority.”<sup>69</sup> After a brief historical overview of true and false claims of papal authority, the text concludes that none of the apostles or their successors “should, under the pretense of the

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<sup>63</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 104.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Cranmer would come to reject this “unsubstantiated Roman belief in a line of unbroken descent from the time of Christ himself” (Elliott, “The 1538 State Paper,” 324).

<sup>65</sup> On this distinction see Elliott, “The 1538 State Paper,” 321-322.

<sup>66</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 109.

<sup>67</sup> This practice is consistent with the oldest extant ordination rites preserved in Hippolytus’ *On the Apostolic Tradition*: “Let the bishop be ordained as we appointed above, *having been elected by all the people*” (Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Tradition* 2.1; Alistair Stewart-Sykes, trans., *Hippolytus: On the Apostolic Tradition* [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001], 56; italics added for emphasis).

<sup>68</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 116.

<sup>69</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 116.

authority given unto them by Christ, take upon them the authority of the sword.” Rather they must exercise only those temporal powers “committed unto them by the ordinance and authority of kings, or other civil powers.”<sup>70</sup> Just as Christ never sought to exercise temporal kingly powers, so “priest or bishop will arrogate or presume upon him any such authority.”<sup>71</sup> It concludes,

the truth is, that God constituted and ordained the authority of Christian kings and princes to be the most high and supreme above all other powers and offices in the regiment and governance of his people; and committed unto them... the cure and oversight of all the people which be within their realms and dominions, without any exception. And unto them of right, and by God’s commandment, not only to prohibit unlawful violence, to correct offenders..., to conserve moral honesty..., to defend justice, and to procure the public weal, and the common peace and tranquility in outward and earthly things; but specially and principally to defend the faith of Christ and his religion, to conserve and maintain the true doctrine of Christ, and all such as be true preachers and setters forth thereof, and to abolish all abuses, heresies, and idolatries...; and finally, to oversee and cause that the said priests and bishops do execute their said power, office, and jurisdiction truly, faithfully, and according in all point as it was given and committed unto them by Christ and his apostles.<sup>72</sup>

In the end, the Bishop’s Book shows itself to be in continuity with much that had come before it.

*A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man*, or the King’s Book, was published in 1543 under Henry VIII’s name. It begins its section on “The Sacrament of Orders” by saying that “order is a gift or grace of ministration in Christ’s church, given of God to Christian men, by the consecration and imposition of the bishop’s hands upon them.”<sup>73</sup> Thus, priests and bishops are of divine origin and are made through the laying on of hands by others in holy orders. But though “this form... is to be observed in giving orders, yet there is no certain rule prescribed or limited by the word of God for the nomination, election, presentation, or appointing of any such ecclesiastical ministers; but the same is wholly left unto the positive laws and ordinances of every Christian region, provided and made or to be made in that behalf, with

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<sup>70</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 119.

<sup>71</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 120.

<sup>72</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 120-121.

<sup>73</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 277.

the assent of the prince and ruler.”<sup>74</sup> Straightaway, then, the King’s Book claims the right of Henry to appoint and/or approve the men nominated to serve as bishops in the Church of England, which is consistent with “The Supremacy Act” of November 1534 that stated: “the king’s majesty justly and rightly is and ought to be the supreme head of the Church of England... [and has] full power and authority from time to time to... order” the “*Anglicana Ecclesia*.”<sup>75</sup> After a long discourse rejecting papal supremacy, the text returns to the right of “Christian kings and princes” to exercise the power given to them by Christ and “used in the primitive church.”<sup>76</sup> And that power is the right to govern the church in his realm through the right of appointment or refusal of appointment to bishoprics. Though the King’s Book strikes a harsh polemical, anti-papal note (when compared to the Bishop’s Book), its teaching concerning the episcopacy consistently follows the *Collectanea* and the Bishop’s Book.

*Erastianism in the Church of England: Thomas Cranmer*

Given the precedence set by the *Collectanea*, the Bishop’s Book and the King’s Book, it is not surprising that Cranmer’s theology echoes that which came before.<sup>77</sup> In *The Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests* (from 1540), Cranmer writes, “All the said officers and ministers [i.e., civil ministers and ‘ministers of God’s word’]... be appointed, assigned, and elected in every place, by the laws and orders of kings and princes.”<sup>78</sup> Moreover,

A bishop may make a priest by the scripture, and so may princes and governors also, and that by the authority of God committed to them, and the people also by their election: for as we read that bishops have done it, so christian [*sic*] emperors and princes usually have

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<sup>74</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 278.

<sup>75</sup> Cited in Henry Gee and William John Hardy, *Documents Illustrative of English Church History* (London: Macmillan and Col, 1914), 243-244.

<sup>76</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 287.

<sup>77</sup> This is certainly not surprising given Cranmer’s role, though not always fully understood, in both the Bishop’s Book and the King’s Book. See Thomas Cranmer, “Three Discourses of Archbishop Cranmer, Occasioned upon his Review of the King’s Book, intituled, ‘The Erudition of a Christian Man’” in John Strype, *Memorials of the Most Reverend Father in God Thomas Cranmer, Vol. I* (Oxford: T. Combe, 1848), 448-456.

<sup>78</sup> Cranmer, *The Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests* 9; Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 116.



done it; and the people, before christian [*sic*] princes were, commonly did elect their bishops and priests.<sup>79</sup>

But Cranmer goes a step further than the other texts by saying that a bishop does not even require consecration “for election or appointing thereto is sufficient.”<sup>80</sup> This would seem to remove the role of both the Church and her rites to make a bishop and goes against the New Testament teaching (cited by the Bishop’s Book<sup>81</sup> and the King’s Book<sup>82</sup>) setting forth the imposition of hands (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14 and 5:22). But Paul Bradshaw ably shows that for Cranmer there is a difference between “consecration” and the “laying on of hands.” He writes, Cranmer “saw a distinction between ‘consecration’ and ‘ordination by imposition of hands’, and did not regard the former as applicable to the New Testament practice... Moreover, in his manuscript *De Sacramentis* he clearly regards ordination by imposition of hands as the normal New Testament practice, if not absolutely necessary.” Thus, “if he thought any ceremonies at all were essential, they were prayer and the imposition of hands.”<sup>83</sup> Cranmer extends this thinking when he questions whether, in a land where there are no bishops or where they have all died, a king “should make bishops and priests to supply the same”? His response, “It is not forbidden by God’s law.”<sup>84</sup> So, not only do kings have the right to nominate their candidate for an open bishopric, he can even go so far as to make a bishop himself, and certainly so in extreme situations where there are no current priests or bishops.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Cranmer, *The Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests* 11; Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 117.

<sup>80</sup> Cranmer, *The Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests* 12; Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 117.

<sup>81</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 104-105.

<sup>82</sup> *Formularies of Faith*, 277-278.

<sup>83</sup> Bradshaw, *The Anglican Ordinal*, 15-16.

<sup>84</sup> Cranmer, *The Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests* 14; Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 117.

<sup>85</sup> Elliott, “Episcopal Orders: Insights from Cranmer,” 80.

To further elucidate Cranmer's thinking on episcopacy, at least in the late 1530s, one needs to look at his slightly earlier *De Ordine et Ministerio Sacerdotum et Episcoporum* (written in 1537/8), a document penned as part of the ongoing discussion leading to the King's Book.<sup>86</sup> It appears that Cranmer was operating on the Hieronymian misunderstanding that the order (i.e., *De ordine* – a singular noun) of priest and bishop was the same with a bishop's superiority rooted in an understanding of *primus inter pares*. That withstanding, he begins the treatise by saying, as he does in *The Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests* that “the order and ministry of priests and bishops was not instituted by human authority but by divine authority.”<sup>87</sup> It is Christ himself who gives bishops and priests power to minister the Word of God and sacraments for eternal life rests upon these two functions: “For through this administration of the Word and the sacraments the Holy Spirit is bestowed, and so many generous gifts of the same Spirit are given to the believer, thus both justification and eternal life are given to us.”<sup>88</sup> The salvific necessity of the preaching of the Word of God and the sacraments makes the office of bishop soteriologically necessary too.

Like *The Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests*, the *De Ordine* offers an apology for the right of the king to act as head of the Church, and thereby to appoint and/or make bishops. As Maurice Elliot remarks, “In place of the pope Cranmer the Erastian sought to ground ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the civil governance of the state and, more especially, in the divine right of kings.”<sup>89</sup> In Cranmer's words, “For indeed it is very true that God instituted and ordained that the authority of kings and Christian leaders in the government

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<sup>86</sup> Malcolm B. Yarnell, III, *Royal Priesthood in the English Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 182-184.

<sup>87</sup> Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 484; translations my own.

<sup>88</sup> Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 485.

<sup>89</sup> Elliott, “The 1538 State Paper,” 321.

of the people should be supreme, and it should stand out above all other powers and offices.”<sup>90</sup> Coupled with the previously discussed works and the Act of Supremacy, one could conclude that the king is the *summus episcopus*, if you will.<sup>91</sup> If Rome believed that wherever the pope is, there is the Church (*ubi papa, ibi ecclesia*) then perhaps it is fair to say that for Cranmer and the Church in England wherever the king is, there is the Church (*ubi rex, ibi ecclesia*).<sup>92</sup> Like his later work, Cranmer concedes in *De Ordine* that the bishop has a right to ordain and to institute them to their “cure and responsibility.”<sup>93</sup> In the end, the *De Ordine* is rather consistent with Cranmer’s *The Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests*, the *Collectanea*, the Bishop’s Book and the King’s Book. Elliott rightfully concludes, “With its insistence upon biblical authority for ordained ministry in general, and the acceptability of ordained episcopacy in particular, it paved the way for Henry’s *ecclesia* to stake a claim to catholic authenticity.”<sup>94</sup>

#### *Subsequent Development under Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth I*

Thus, by the mid-1540s it is clear that the Church of England held to a theology of episcopacy that they believed was rooted in the Scriptures and of divine origin. Further, it was clear that the crown was involved in the appointment and/or approval of bishops. What is also clear is that Cranmer’s thinking that a bishop did not need to be consecrated, merely appointed by the king, was never put into practice. The Ordinal continued to be used and men continued to be consecrated bishops through the laying on of hands. This was clearly codified under Elizabeth I (d. 1603), with the publication in 1571 of the Articles of Religion:

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<sup>90</sup> Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 489; translation in Elliott, “The 1538 State Paper,” 321.

<sup>91</sup> Elliott, “The 1538 State Paper,” 322.

<sup>92</sup> See E. T. Davies, *Episcopacy and the Royal Supremacy in the Church of England in the XVI Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1950), 59.

<sup>93</sup> Cox, ed., *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, 485.

<sup>94</sup> Elliott, “The 1538 State Paper,” 327.

The Book of Consecration of Archbishops and Bishops and ordering of Priests and Deacons, lately set forth in the time of *Edward* the Sixth and confirmed at the same time by authority of Parliament, doth contain all things necessary to such consecration and ordering; neither hath it anything that of itself is superstitious or ungodly. And therefore whosoever are consecrate or ordered according to the rites of that book, since the second year of King *Edward* unto this time, or hereafter shall be consecrated or ordered according to the same rites, we decree all such to be rightly, orderly, and lawfully consecrated or ordered.

The aforementioned “Book of Consecration” of Edward VI (d. 1553) is the Ordinal of 1549, which states, “Then the Archbishop and Bishops present shall lay their hands upon the head of the elect Bishop, the Archbishop saying, ‘Take the Holy Ghost, and remember that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee, by imposition of hands: for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and of soberness.’”<sup>95</sup> Bishops were consecrated by other bishops with the imposition of hands, just as imagined in the Bishop’s Book, the King’s Book and, likely, in Cranmer.

The Anglican Ordinal is a direct descendent of the early and medieval Roman Rite, Gallican Rite, Sarum Rite and the ordination services set forth in various Pontificals.<sup>96</sup> Its genesis lies in a bill authorizing “such form and manner of making and consecrating of Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, deacons and other ministers of the Church... shall be devised.”<sup>97</sup> Like the ancient ordination rites, the Anglican Ordinal focused on three elements: 1) the election of candidates; 2) the prayer of the people; and 3) the ordination prayer during the imposition of hands. The last element was the most important, as “the compilers of the Ordinal regarded the imperative formulas which they included at the imposition of hands as the essential sacramental

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<sup>95</sup> Henry Baskerville Walton, ed., *The First Book of Common Prayer of Edward VI. And the Ordinal of 1549, Together with the Order of Communion, 1548* (London/Oxford/Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1869), n.p.

<sup>96</sup> See Roger E. Reynolds, “Ordinatio and the Priesthood in the Early Middle Ages and Its Visual Depiction,” in Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson, eds., *A Companion to Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 43-69.

<sup>97</sup> Statute 3 and 4 Edw. VI. c. 12; Bradshaw, *The Anglican Ordinal*, 18.

form.”<sup>98</sup> Thus, no matter how one was appointed a bishop, one was made a bishop sacramentally through the laying on of hands in continuity with preceding Christian history:

the imperative formula at the imposition of hands... seem to suggest that the compilers of the Ordinal did believe that at their consecration bishops receive grace, further power which they had not had as priests... the function for which bishops were commissioned was thought of as the pastoral oversight of the Church, as it had been in the medieval rites.<sup>99</sup>

### *Contemporary Pastoral Government of the Church*

Though the areas of oversight of bishops has changed over the years, the core remains the same: pastoral oversight – that is, the care of those in Holy Orders and all the People of God. To quote Vatican II’s *Christus Dominus* on the Pastoral Office of Bishops: “The bishops themselves, however, having been appointed by the Holy Spirit, are successors of the Apostles as pastors of souls.” The language of “pastor of souls” is an apt description for bishops at all times and in all places, including today.<sup>100</sup> The Collect in the *Book of Common Prayer 2019*, the official prayer book of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), for an episcopal consecration reflects this central role of a bishop: “Almighty God, who by your Son Jesus Christ gave many excellent gifts to your holy Apostles, and charged them to feed your flock: Give your grace to all Bishops, *the pastors of your Church*, that they may diligently preach your Word, duly administer your Sacraments, and wisely provide godly discipline; and grant to your people that they may obediently follow them, so that all may receive the crown of everlasting glory; through the merits of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.”<sup>101</sup> The texture of this servanthood is distilled in the words of the

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<sup>98</sup> Bradshaw, *The Anglican Ordinal*, 25. See also W. K. Lowther Clarke and Charles Harris, eds., *Liturgy and Worship: A Companion to the Prayer Books of the Anglican Communion* (London. S. P. C. K., 1936), 666.

<sup>99</sup> Bradshaw, *The Anglican Ordinal*, 33.

<sup>100</sup> Canon 27 of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 referred to the care of souls as the “art of arts” (*Cum sit ars atrium regimen animarum*).

<sup>101</sup> *Book of Common Prayer 2019* (Huntington Beach, CA: Anglican Liturgy Press, 2019), 500; italics added for emphasis.

Archbishop when he presents a Bible to the new bishop: “Be to the flock of Christ a shepherd, not a wolf; feed them, do not devour them. Hold up the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring back the lapsed, and seek the lost. Do not confuse mercy with indifference; so minister discipline, that you forget not mercy; that when the Chief Shepherd appears, you may receive the never-fading crown of glory.”<sup>102</sup>

That being said, the spiritualities of a bishop remain the same for Anglican bishops as they are for Roman Catholic bishops, including (but not limited to) defense of the faith, the laying on of hands in ordination and confirmation, governing a diocese in a conciliar manner and administering discipline as needed. According to the ACNA Ordinal, a bishop declares that he believes “the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and to contain all things necessary to salvation.” Further, he declares that he will conform himself “to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of Christ.”<sup>103</sup> He also is called upon at the Exhortation and Examination to admit that he will, with God’s help, “faithfully study the Holy Scriptures,” calling “upon God by prayer for the true understanding of them, so that [he] may be able by them to teach and exhort [God’s people] with wholesome doctrine.”<sup>104</sup> Thus, a bishop’s defense of the Christian faith begins with his own assurance that he himself is in agreement with the faith of the Church, which is rooted in the Holy Scriptures, the Creeds and the Christian tradition. This defense of the faith manifests itself when a bishop diligently preaches God’s Word and when he banishes and drives away “all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God’s Word.”<sup>105</sup> A bishop then must be a student of God’s Word but also committed to the ongoing study of theology: “Give heed to reading, exhortation, and doctrine. Think upon the things contained in

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<sup>102</sup> *Book of Common Prayer 2019*, 507.

<sup>103</sup> *Book of Common Prayer 2019*, 499.

<sup>104</sup> *Book of Common Prayer 2019*, 503.

<sup>105</sup> *Book of Common Prayer 2019*, 504.

this Book [of the Scriptures].”<sup>106</sup> In his letter to the Trallians, Ignatius of Antioch (d. 108) urged the Christians at Tralles to “keep away from every strange plant, which is heresy.” To do that he tells them that they must “cling inseparably to Jesus Christ and to the bishop and to the commandments of the apostles.”<sup>107</sup> Notice the parallelism: Jesus Christ — the bishop — commandments of the apostles. It appears that Ignatius is drawing a line between Jesus Christ who is the Λόγος of God, the commandments of the apostles (i.e., the Scriptures) and the office of the bishop.<sup>108</sup> Thus, there is an innate and intimate connection between the office of the bishop and Christian orthodoxy. The bishop stands in the place of Christ among his flock in order to ensure that they rightly believe and are obedient to the commandments of God. It is the bishop’s job to ensure that only orthodox theology is taught and believed in his diocese. He is a defender of the faith: bishops “are to... guard the faith.”<sup>109</sup>

Additionally, in Anglican faith and practice, the bishop is the administer of confirmations and ordinations.<sup>110</sup> According to the ACNA’s catechism, *To Be a Christian*, “Confirmation is the laying on of the bishop’s hands with prayer for strengthening by the Holy Spirit, following a period of catechetical formation.”<sup>111</sup> Though the development of the sacrament of Confirmation is complex,<sup>112</sup> the ACNA understands it to be a moment wherein by the laying on of the bishop’s hands the confirmand makes “a mature confession of faith, publicly renewing the vows and

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<sup>106</sup> *Book of Common Prayer 2019*, 507.

<sup>107</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Trallians* 6-7; Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Text and English Translations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 163.

<sup>108</sup> See also Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Ephesians* 3: “For Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the mind of the Father, just as the bishops appointed throughout the world are in the mind of Christ” (Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 139).

<sup>109</sup> *To Be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism*, q. 143: “What is the work of bishops?” Available online at <https://anglicanchurch.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/To-Be-a-Christian.pdf>.

<sup>110</sup> Contrary to the Roman Catholic Church’s provision that confirmations may be performed by presbyters. See *Code of Canon Law*, “The Sacrament of Confirmation” (Cann. 879-896).

<sup>111</sup> *To Be a Christian*, q. 137: “What is confirmation?”

<sup>112</sup> See Peter J. Jaeger, *Christian Initiation 1552-1969: Rites of Baptism and Confirmation since the Reformation Period* (London: S. P. C. K., 1970); Aidan Kavanagh, *Confirmation: Origins and Reform* (New York: Pueblo, 1988); and Paul Turner, *Sources of Confirmation: From the Fathers through the Reformers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993).

promises made at Baptism” as well as a moment where the confirmand is “further empowered and gifted by the Holy Spirit for daily growth in wisdom, courage and humility.”<sup>113</sup> In a similar way, Anglican bishops are ministers of the sacrament of Holy Orders: “Ordination is the laying on of the bishop’s hands with prayer, which confirms the gifts and calling of the candidates, consecrates them, and grants them authority to serve Christ and his Church in the office to which they have been called.”<sup>114</sup> A man can only be made a deacon or priest by the bishop, through the laying on of hands and the use of the proper rite.<sup>115</sup> With the laying on of hands, the bishop creates unity in the Church and demonstrates that he stands in the place of Christ<sup>116</sup> with the deacons and presbyters gathered around him like the apostles: “do everything in godly harmony, the bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles and the deacons.”<sup>117</sup>

This unity between the bishop and his clergy results in a relationship wherein the diocese is ordered in a conciliar manner. Conciliarity has been a hallmark of Anglican ecclesiology since the sixteenth century<sup>118</sup> and Cranmer was partial to it<sup>119</sup> but the idea of a conciliarity between a bishop and his presbyters goes back to the earliest Church. Some early Christian believers thought circumcision was necessary for salvation, regardless of whether one was Jew or Gentile. Others, disagreed. In Acts 15 we learn that a council was called in which the “apostles and the elders were *gathered together* to consider this matter” (15:6; italics added). This theological

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<sup>113</sup> *To Be a Christian*, qq. 137-138: “What grace does God give you in confirmation?”

<sup>114</sup> *To Be a Christian*, q. 140: “What is ordination?”

<sup>115</sup> *Book of Common Prayer 2019*, 470: “no one shall be accounted to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon in this Church, or allowed to execute any of the said functions, without first being called, tried, examined, and admitted to such office according to the form set forth in this book.”

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Ephesians* 6: “we must regard the bishop as the Lord himself” (Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 141).

<sup>117</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Magnesians* 6; Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 153.

<sup>118</sup> Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church: Theological Resources in Historical Perspective, Revised and Expanded Edition* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 26.

<sup>119</sup> Paul Avis, *Beyond the Reformation? Authority, Primacy and Unity in the Conciliar Tradition* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 134-141.



matter would be decided by the apostles and elders together, setting the framework for the conciliar nature of Christian ecclesiology. Further, we see this conciliarity referenced in the above quotation from Ignatius of Antioch: “the presbyters in the place of the council” (συνεδρίου τῶν ἀποστόλων). This governing conciliarity is rooted in a communion ecclesiology, which says that “the church is most itself when, as a community centered around its bishop, it celebrates the Eucharist. At that time the church expresses in visible form its essential reality, which is salvation in the form of communion.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, every priest is given permission by the bishop to serve in his diocese and to celebrate the sacraments as a duly ordained priest in the Church of God. This communion is then extended into the overall life of the diocese as a bishop invites his priests into the decision-making elements of the diocese. This process is akin to that laid out in the sixth-century *Rule of Benedict*, a text well-known to Cranmer, where “the abbot shall call the whole community together and himself explain what the business is; and after hearing the advice of the brothers, let him ponder it and follow what he judges the wiser course.”<sup>121</sup> This conciliarity is also evidenced in the ACNA’s Collect “For a Provincial or Diocesan Convention or Synod”:

Gracious and everliving Father, you have given the Holy Spirit to abide with us for ever: Bless, we pray, with the Holy Spirit’s grace and presence, the Bishop(s), Priests, Deacons, and all the Laity who assemble in your Name; that your Church, being preserved in true faith and godly discipline, may fulfill the will of him who loved her and gave himself for her, your Son Jesus Christ our Savior; who now lives and reigns with you and the same Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Nicholas M. Healy, “Communion Ecclesiology: A Cautionary Note,” *Pro Ecclesia* 4.4 (1995), 443, summarizing the thought of Jean-Marie Tillard, O.P. See Jean-Marie Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992).

<sup>121</sup> *Rule of Benedict* 3.1-2; Timothy Fry, ed., *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1981), 179.

<sup>122</sup> *Book of Common Prayer 2019*, 648.

This prayer asks that the Holy Spirit guide everyone assembled together: bishop(s), priests, deacons and the laity. The conciliar nature of the assembly is encapsulated in the prayer for both matters of faith (à la Acts 15) and for discipline.

Discipline is also part of a bishop's ministry in the Church so much so that he is asked by his consecrators, "Will you maintain and set forward, as much as you are able, quietness, love, and peace among all people, and diligently exercise such discipline as is, by the authority of God's Word and by the Order of this Church, committed to you?"<sup>123</sup> Discipline is the result of love (cf. Heb. 12:5-11), and rooted in mercy, so a bishop's power to discipline needs to be rooted in love and grow out of love for the Church and for the individual under discipline: "minister discipline, that you forget not mercy."<sup>124</sup> Episcopally administered discipline was a concern to Cranmer and other early Anglican divines, though attempts at instituting a reformed Anglican canon law ultimately failed.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, the *Reformatio legum ecclesiasticarum*, largely written by Cranmer says,

That all in the Church should strive for peace, and should incline as far as possible toward concord, toward the bishop who presides over the Church, not only the dean, the archdeacon, the archpriest, and the rest of the ministers. All the members of Christ committed to his care will conform themselves to his will, so that in those things which he commands according to the Word of God, and also in those things which he shall command for Christian discipline, and pertaining to our ecclesiastical laws, they behave most readily.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Book of Common Prayer 2019*, 504.

<sup>124</sup> *Book of Common Prayer 2019*, 507.

<sup>125</sup> See Leslie Raymond Sachs, "Thomas Cranmer's *Reformatio legum ecclesiasticarum* of 1553 in the Context of English Church Law from the Late Middle Ages to the Canons of 1603" (D. C. L. diss., Catholic University of America, 1982).

<sup>126</sup> *Reformatio legum ecclesiasticarum*, "De ecclesia et ministris ejus, illorumque officiis," Ch. 11: *De obedientia episcopis exhibenda*; Edward Cardwell, ed., *The Reformation of the Ecclesiastical Laws as Attempted in the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Elizabeth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850), 104: Omnes in Ecclesia cum pacem sectari debeant, et ad concordiam quantum licet incumbere, episcopo qui Ecclesiae praeficitur, non solum decanus, archidiaconus, archipresbyter, et reliqui ministri parebunt, sed omnia etiam Christi membra ejus curae commissa sic ad ejus se voluntatem accommodabunt, ut et in his quae juxta verbum Dei praecipunt, et in illis etiam quae mandabunt ad Christianam disciplinam, et ad nostras ecclesiasticas leges pertinentis, paratissime morem gerant.

Thus, it is the bishop who both commands discipline and enacts it, in accordance with the Word of God.

### *Conclusion*

Over the centuries the Church of England has become a global communion of provinces, each retaining the threefold order of deacon, priest and bishop. Bishops continue to exercise the twofold *potestas ordinis* and *potestas jurisdictionis*, acting as the servants of the servants of God. Collectively the bishops of the ACNA constitute a College of Bishops, with the Archbishop elected by the bishops from among the bishops for a five year term, renewable only once. The College's "chief work... shall be the propagation and defense of the Faith and Order of the Church, and in service as the visible sign and expression of the Unity of the Church."<sup>127</sup> In more recent times, various provinces of the Anglican Communion have come together in fraternal relationships (often based on shared doctrinal commitments and/or geographical location) for common mission. The ACNA is a constituent member of GAFCON, "a global family of authentic Anglicans standing together to retain and restore the Bible to the heart of the Anglican Communion,"<sup>128</sup> and the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches, "a worldwide fellowship ('koinonia') of orthodox Anglican Provinces and Dioceses within the Anglican Communion" that includes twenty-five Anglican provinces.<sup>129</sup> In short, episcopacy in the Anglican Church of North America is seen in the same terms as it has been seen throughout history, in a consistent line of succession.

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<sup>127</sup> Anglican Church of North America, Constitution and Canons, Article X.1; <https://anglicanchurch.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ACNA-Constitution-and-Canons-June-2019.pdf>.

<sup>128</sup> <https://www.gafcon.org/about>

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.thegsfa.org/>