

COPY OF LETTER RECEIVED BY BISHOP CLARK FROM THE RT.REV. ARTHUR A. VOGEL,
BISHOP OF WEST MISSOURI, 415, W.13th St., KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64105,
U.S.A., DATED 15th MARCH 1976.

Dear Alan,

Thank you for sending the results of the latest Poringland Meeting. I read the draft with interest, appreciate the intent of the meeting, and believe that some progress has been made. Our thanks go to you all.

While appreciating what you have done, there are, nevertheless, some difficulties that remain for me. Because the draft is not a final product, I will not go into as much detail as possible about my reactions to it, but I would like to make a few suggestions and indicate, as I said, a few difficulties.

Some splendid things are said about both the Bible and about Ecumenical Councils, but I also think there are some overstatements and inconsistencies in the description of both. Concerning the former, I do not believe line 8 of paragraph 2 is correct: surely "the inspired documents" are not "the authentic foundation of the faith". In the strictest sense, the Bible is not the Word of God; it is about the Word of God. The inspired documents are the norm of the Christian faith experience, not the foundation of that experience.

In the third line from the end of para.3, I believe it would be better to read "... Christ may be mediated through them", rather than "... is mediated through them". Such a change would make the line consistent with the next sentence.

In para.4 the first two "types" of Christians still seem to me to be confused. An "inner quality of life" applies as well to the first type described as to the second. Why not describe the first type by "an inner quality of life" and the second by "a special endowment of the Spirit"?

In para.9, the first description of Ecumenical Councils is good and historically correct: Christians other than bishops have been involved in them. But from that point on, the text reads as if only bishops could constitute an ecumenical council. A way should be found, I think, to be more consistent in the text.

In the second paragraph of para.12, I believe it would be an improvement to have the beginning of the second sentence from the end read: "The teaching of the Councils should be understood as maintaining that communion with the bishop of Rome ..." I do not believe the wording of the councils referred to is as unambiguous as the standing text maintains.

In para.14, I wonder if the Holy Spirit really "constrains the people of God" as claimed. In the last sentence of that paragraph, I believe it would be an improvement to replace the words "ground and inspiration" with the concepts of "norm and consistency". The Holy Spirit grounds and inspires, not the Holy Scriptures.

As a final observation, I am one who would still like to see at least some discussion of the nature of Christian truth and the conditions under which it is perceived (to) precede any discussion of infallibility or indefectibility!

I am grateful for all you have done, and I hope you will extend my greetings and gratitude to those who are working with you....

All best wishes.

In his service,

(signed) + Art

(Arthur A. Vogel)