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THE AGREED STATEMENT ON MINISTRY AND ORDINATION (CANTERBURY 1973):  
AN ELUCIDATION

1. After the publication of the Canterbury Statement on Ministry and Ordination, the Commission received comments and criticisms among which it judged the following to be of special concern.

It has been suggested that in the discussion of ministry insufficient attention was given to the priesthood of the whole people of God, so that the document seemed to have too clerical an emphasis. In this connection it has also been said that the distinction between the priesthood of all the faithful and the priesthood of the ordained ministry was not clearly enough explained. Questions have also been raised about the Commission's treatment of the origins and historical development of the ordained ministry and its threefold form; about the Commission's comparison of that development with the emergence of the canon of scripture; and about the Commission's views on the place of episcopacy within episcopate as it is outlined in the Statement (para. 9).

Some have wondered whether the Statement adequately expressed the sacramental nature of the rite of ordination, others whether this aspect has been overemphasised. There have been enquiries about the bearing of the Agreed Statement upon the problem of recognising the validity of orders. The Commission has also been asked to consider the implications of the Statement for the question of the ordination of women.

### PRIESTHOOD

2. In common Christian usage the term priesthood is employed in three distinct ways: the priesthood of Christ, the priesthood of the people of God, the priesthood of the ordained ministry.

Christ is the unique High Priest, who has reconciled mankind with the Father. All other priesthood derives from his and is wholly dependent upon it.

The priesthood of the whole people of God (I Peter 2:5) is the consequence of incorporation by baptism into Christ, the High Priest. The priesthood of all the faithful, dealt with in the Agreed Statement (para.7) is not a matter of disagreement between us. It is not necessary to develop this subject further in a document primarily concerned with the ordained ministry.

The Agreed Statement (para 13) explains that the ordained ministry is called priestly principally because it has a particular sacramental relationship with Christ the High Priest. At the eucharist Christ sacramentally unites his people with himself in his self-offering and they do what he commanded in memory of himself. But it is only the ordained minister who on behalf of Christ and his Church presides at the eucharist, recites in the thanksgiving Christ's words and actions at the Last Supper, and invokes the Holy Spirit upon the gifts and the assembly.

The word priesthood is used by way of analogy when it is applied to the people of God and to the ordained ministry. These are two distinct realities which relate, each in its own way, to the high priesthood of Christ, the unique priesthood of the new covenant, which is their model and their source. These considerations should be borne in mind throughout paragraph 13, and in particular they indicate the significance of the statement that the ordained ministry "is not an extension of the common priesthood but belongs to another realm of the gifts of the Spirit."

In this as in other cases the early Church found it necessary for its understanding and exposition of the faith to employ terminology in ways in which it was not used in the New Testament. Today in seeking to give an account of our faith, both our communions, in the interpretation of the Scriptures, take cognisance of the Church's new understanding of Christian truth (Cf. Authority in the Church, paragraphs 2, 3 and 15).

3. The phrase "in this sacramental act" in para 15 has caused anxiety on two different counts - 1. that this phrase seems to give the sacrament of ordination the same status as the two Dominical sacraments of the Gospel; 2. that it does not adequately express the full sacramentality of ordination.

Both traditions agree that a sacramental rite is a visible sign through which the grace of God is given by the Holy Spirit in the Church. The rite of ordination is one of these sacramental rites. Those who are ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands receive their ministry from Christ through those designated in the church to hand it on; together with the office they are given the grace needed for its fulfilment. (Cf. Canterbury 14). Since New Testament times the church has required such recognition and authorisation for those who are to exercise particularly ministerial functions in the name of Christ. This is what both traditions mean by the sacramental rite of ordination.

Although both of our traditions agree on the nature of sacramentality a distinction has been drawn between those sacraments that are held to have been explicitly instituted by the Lord in the gospel, which are necessary for salvation, and "five commonly called sacraments" (Cf. Canterbury footnote 4). Likewise, both our traditions ascribe unique importance to Baptism and the Eucharist. In our understanding of the sacramental nature of ordination we do not find any significant disagreement.

4. Our treatment of the origins of the ordained ministry has been criticised. While we recognise the inconclusiveness of much of the evidence and hence the grounds for differences of interpretation, it is enough for our purpose to recall that, from the beginning of the Christian Church, there existed episcope in the community, however its various responsibilities were distributed and described, and whatever the names given to those who exercised it (cf. paragraphs 8, 9 and especially 6). It is generally agreed that within the first century evidence of ministerial authorisation such as we have described above is provided by the First Epistle of Clement, chapters 40-44, commonly dated 95 A.D. Some New Testament passages appear to imply the same conclusion, e.g. Acts 14:23. Early in the second century, a pattern of episcopacy as the focus of what we now call the threefold ministry was already discernible, and probably widely found (cf. Letters of Ignatius.....). It was recognised that such ministry must be in historical continuity with the commission given to the apostles (cf. First Epistle of Clement....).

Our intention in drawing a parallel between this emergence of the threefold ministry and the formation of the New Testament canon was to point to processes of comparable gradual development without determining whether the comparison could be carried further. (cf. Canterbury 6). The threefold

ministry remained universal until the divisions of western Christianity in the sixteenth century, though both our communions have retained it.

We both maintain that episcopate must be exercised by ministers ordained in the apostolic succession (cf. paragraph 16). Both our communions have retained and remained faithful to episcopacy as the form in which this episcopate is to be exercised. Because our task was limited to examining relations between our two communions, we did not enter into the question whether there is any other form in which this episcopate can be realised.

5. Since the publication of the Agreed Statement on Ministry and Ordination there have been rapid developments with regard to the ordination of women. In those Anglican provinces where ordinations of women have taken place, the bishops concerned believe that their action implies no departure from the traditional doctrine of the ordained ministry (cf. expounded for instance in the Agreed Statement). The ordination of women has created for the Roman Catholic Church "a new and grave obstacle to the reconciliation of our Communions".<sup>1.</sup> The Commission believes that the principles upon which its doctrinal agreement rests are not altered by such ordinations. It was concerned with the origin and nature of the ordained ministry and not with the question who can or cannot be ordained. Objections to the ordination of women are of a different kind from objections raised in the past against the validity of Anglican Orders in general. The Agreed Statement has no direct implications concerning the ordination of women.<sup>2.</sup>

In answer to the questions concerning the significance of the Agreed Statements for the mutual recognition of ministry, the Commission has affirmed that a consensus has been reached that places the questions in a new context. (cf. Canterbury 17). It believes that the explanation of our agreement on the essentials of eucharistic faith with regard to the sacramental presence of Christ and the sacrificial dimension of the eucharist, on the nature and purpose of both ordination and apostolic succession, is the new context in which the questions should now be discussed. This calls into question the present force of the verdict of Apostolicae Curae with regard to Anglican Orders.

Mutual recognition requires that we fully accept the apostolicity of each other's ministries and we believe that our agreements have demonstrated our consensus of our faith and have led us to the possibility of the mutual recognition of our ministries. For this to be achieved a judgment of our authorities is required. It has been our mandate to offer to our authorities the basis upon which they may

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2. See Report of the Lambeth Conference 1978. Resolution 21.

make this judgment, and proceed to act upon it. The solution of this question is vital towards the achievement of "full communion in faith and sacramental life". (Commission Declaration).