

THE CHURCH

(Draft Statement)

(There is little here that is not in the Three Agreed Statements or the Elucidations. I have given many references to them (referred to respectively as W, C, V, and S) for the convenience of the Commission; they will probably not be needed in the final document.)

Koinonia

1. God is love. This eternal characteristic of the inner life of the Three in One is manifested in time in God's will for men that they should be united in loving fellowship or communion (koinonia) with one another and with him. This fellowship both reflects the unity within the threefold personhood of God and is a participation in it. Christians through the gift of the Spirit of adoption are made one with Christ and children of the same Father; there is one body and one Spirit, and Christians are urged to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. Rom. 8.15; Eph. 4.3-4).

Reconciliation

2. This gift of fellowship is made to human beings who are divided from God and from one another by sin. It is therefore a fellowship based on conversion and reconciliation, which implies the exchange of forgiveness among men and the receiving of forgiveness from God (C 3-5).

The community of reconciliation

3. This reconciliation, which is accomplished once for all in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is realised day by day in the life of the Church (C3). For the Church is the community of human beings in Christ within which God's Spirit dwells, creating in it a fellowship based on reconciliation for the glory of God and the salvation of men (C5; V¹). These are

some of the ideas which are implied when the Church is called the People of God and the Body of Christ.

A priestly Church

4. In so far as the Church exists to give glory to God through the fulfilment of the Father's purpose and its members are called to offer themselves to God as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12.1), it is a priestly Church. The priestly vocation of all Christians is the consequence of incorporation by baptism into Christ, the unique High Priest. They fulfil this vocation by honouring God through the holiness of their lives as well as by their formal acts of worship (C7, 13; S12). Consequently it is to the Church at large and not just to the clergy that the words of the epistle are addressed: 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' (1 Pet. 2.9).

The missionary and servant Church

5. The Church does not exist only for the sanctification of its own members. It is a missionary Church that seeks to attract those who are not yet its members into its fellowship (C4). It is a servant Church whose members live a common life of loving service of one another and of all men (W2). This call to mission and service originates in the sending of the Son by the Father (C4): 'As the Father has sent me, even so I send you' (Jn.20.21). This mission imposes on the Church the duty of giving witness to Christ before all men, a witness which is performed by the holiness of its members' lives and their fellowship, as well as by their explicit proclamation of the Gospel (C3). The Church is therefore the instrument of God's reconciling purpose in Christ (C3).

Founded on faith

6. The fellowship by which the Church is called to live and which it exists to serve rests on faith in the Good News concerning Christ. This faith is founded on the authority of God's Word, which was revealed in Jesus Christ, witnessed and preached by the apostles and recorded in the scriptures, which provide the norm to which the Church must continually refer its teaching and practice. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of these scriptures and guided the Church to accept them as foundation documents, continues to enlighten the Church so as to produce a common mind in determining how they should be interpreted and obeyed (V2).

7. This faith is not adequately described in terms of intellectual activity, as if it simply consisted in believing that certain statements were true. More fundamentally, faith is a living relationship with God which engages the whole human personality and not just the intellect (V14). Consequently the Christian's response in faith to the Good News is expressed not only in the acceptance of creeds but in his daily life, and this daily life is the chief means by which he fulfils his missionary duty of communicating his faith to others.

8. Nevertheless for the sake of his own clarity of mind and growth in understanding as well as for the sake of communication with others, the Christian needs to express this living relationship with God in language. In order that such verbal expressions of faith may be brought into fruitful contact with the everyday living and thinking of its members, the Church in every age needs to re-express its faith in new conceptual forms. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the Church in the writing and the canonisation of the Scriptures, keeps the Church in living remembrance of Jesus Christ and of the experience of the

apostolic community, and continues to lead the Church into the truth in the unending prophetic work of re-expression and re-application (V15). In performing this work and the Church refers to several norms: the original scriptural witness; past formulations of faith for the truth of which the Church has been confident of the Holy Spirit's guarantee; the Church's continuing experience of Christ, especially in prayer, both liturgical and private.

A visible Church

9. The Church is not an abstraction which enjoys only a heavenly or eschatological existence; nor is it a hidden Church consisting only of those who in the secrecy of their hearts respond to Christ in faith and love. Being a real fellowship in effect and not just in name, it must be a visible Church with a recognisable membership. Moreover Christian fellowship is not simply a notional quality, but needs to be actualised in space and time as a series of events. Hence it is essential for the Church to assemble so that its identity may be realised; the Church needs to be gathered. The basic unit of the Church is therefore the local community (V8), especially when it is gathered in the celebration of the Eucharist (W3-4) in which Christ fulfils his promise of presence when two or three come together in his name (Mt. 18.20).

The sacramental nature of the Church

10. The Church is therefore a sacramental Church in the sense that it continues to embody God's promise of salvation in Christ. In the sacramental order the realities of faith become present in visible and tangible signs (S6). The original sacramental sign is Christ himself, for in his person the divine saving action was completely manifested in history. Through his body the Church, he continues to be the sign of salvation for those who have not seen but believe (cf. Jn. 20.29). The Church

therefore is itself the fundamental sacrament. It exercises its sacramental activity through the sign given by the Christian lives of its members as well as by its liturgical sacramental celebration, especially in baptism and the Eucharist. The notion of memorial (anamnesis) helps to clarify the sacramental nature of the Church; for the liturgy, above all the eucharistic celebration, is the memorial of God's saving work in Christ's life, death and resurrection, and in it these past events of salvation become effective in the present through the action of the Holy Spirit (W5; S5).

11. The Eucharist is therefore central in the Church's life. In it the community is knit together as one body in Christ (C13). In it Christ through the Holy Spirit builds up the life of the Church, strengthens its fellowship and furthers its mission (W3). In it the Church's members give liturgical expression to the priestly sacrifice of their Christian lives, entering into the movement of Christ's self-offering and identifying themselves with it (W5; S5). 'The Eucharist actualizes the Church' (Anglican-Orthodox Moscow Statement, 24).

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The Church at local and universal levels

12. The fellowship of the Church accordingly exists at two levels. The ^{first} ~~primary~~ level is that of the local community, in immediate relation to which the members of the Church live their Christian lives, and assemble to hear the word of God and to worship. The ~~secondary~~ level is the universal fellowship of the local communities with one another (V8). In the New Testament the term 'Church' is generally applied to one or other of these two levels. Later convention has also applied it to intermediate levels, e.g. the 'ecclesia Anglicana' (in its different senses before and after the Reformation), the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A., the Church of South India, the Greek Orthodox Church.

The 'four marks' of the Church

13. Most of the features of the Church which have been described above can also be expressed in terms of the traditional four marks of the Church. The Church is one: a fellowship in Christ, created by the action of the Holy Spirit, actualised and nourished through the celebration of the Eucharist, and manifested in a God-given unity of faith, service and witness. The Church is holy: not only are its members called to holiness and given the means of holiness by the working of the Holy Spirit, but the victory of God's power in the Resurrection of his Son is the source of the Christian hope that this power will actually succeed in sanctifying the lives of the members of Christ's body. The Church is catholic: its mission and its good news are for all men of all ages in all situations; it proclaims not an escape from life but the means of bringing every aspect of life under the authority and transforming grace of God. The Church is apostolic: its faith is based on the apostolic witness and its mission is derived from that entrusted to the original witnesses.

The ordained ministry

14. One consequence of the visible, social reality of the Church is its needs for a structure of authority. Like any human community the Church requires a focus of leadership and unity, which the Holy Spirit provides in the ordained ministry (C7). This ordained ministry, therefore, is part of God's design for his people (C6), and is intrinsic to the Church's structure according to the mandate given by Christ and recognised by the community (V5). It exists to serve the priesthood of all the faithful (C7), by building up the Church to be the reconciled and reconciling community for the glory of God and the salvation of men (C5). The ordained minister's role is described by such terms as leadership and service; his duty is to promote, guide, co-ordinate and discern the initiatives of the faithful (C7). It involves

the ministry of the word and sacrament (C10-11) as well as pastoral authority. This ministerial responsibility in all its aspects is traditionally denoted by the word 'oversight' (episcope) (C9).

15. The commission of the ordained minister, like that of the whole Church which it exists to serve, is derived from the original apostolic commission (C4, 16). The authority is vested fundamentally in the local bishop; presbyters and deacons assist the bishop in his oversight of the local church (C9). Each bishop is also responsible for preserving his local church in unity with the universal Church in faith, Christian life, worship and mission (V8, 10).

Co-responsibility

16. The ordained minister exists for the service of the people, and not vice versa (C7) and his responsibility for the Church is shared with them (V5). For example in fulfilling his responsibility as a teacher of the Gospel, expounding the word of God and applying it to the situation of the community, the minister is not to seek to impose alien or arbitrary principles on the people, but to discern and express the faith which the people already hold, though perhaps in a less articulated form, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (V6).

17. Episcope therefore exists to help the people to be obedient to their call to fellowship in faith, worship and Christian living, and is abused if it stifles the people's co-responsibility and stunts their growth to Christian maturity. So too within episcope itself there are the complementary elements of primacy and conciliarity (V22); the role of the regional or universal primate is to help the other bishops in their task of apostolic leadership, and to help the churches listen to one another, to grow in love and unity, and to strive together towards the fulness of Christian life and witness (V21).

18. The responsibility of the ordained ministry can be described as that for helping the Church to preserve and develop its four marks: unity, by acting as a focus of leadership; holiness, by teaching the Good News of salvation, giving an example of Christian living, and presiding at worship and the celebration of the sacraments which are the means of holiness; catholicity, by providing a visible link for holding together the Church in all its breadth in space and time, and in the rich variety of the manifestations of the Spirit; apostolicity, by symbolising and maintaining the continuity of the local church with the apostles in mission, faith and holiness (C16).

A Church in history

19. Mention has been made of the Church's need to make new expressions of faith for the needs of men of each place, time and situation (paras. 6-8). The Church is therefore a developing Church according to Newman's principle that life implies growth. This is true not only of the Church's statements of belief, but also of its forms of ministry and worship. It is a false and unnecessary apologetic which attempts to prove that all important features of church life were present from the very beginning (C6; S14). Such features as the canon of scripture and the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, as well as certain formulations of faith, were achieved only after decades and even centuries of deliberation and development. Some of these developments (such as the canon of scripture) have become permanent endowments of the Church. Whether all other developments (such as the threefold ministry) which are considered indispensable to our two communions now, are of similar permanence, or may later be superseded by a further development, or could be allowed to exist side by side with other patterns of church order, is an issue which the Commission did not feel called upon to examine, even though the question will have to be discussed by those

responsible for relations between episcopal and non-episcopal churches.

Indefectibility

20. The New Testament contains the promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church, that Christ will be with his people always, and that the Holy Spirit will lead them into all truth. Though each individual Christian, whether ordained or not, may stifle the work of the Spirit by sin and errors of judgment, and though the four marks of the Church are only imperfectly realised in history, the divine promise, grounded in the resurrection, is the source of Christian confidence that the Holy Spirit will overcome human weakness and malice (V18). In particular we believe that the Holy Spirit preserves the Church from error when in ecumenical council bishops pronounce judgment on fundamental matters of faith for the whole Church (V19).

The eschatological Church

21. As has been said, the Church in this world is in a state of growth. It exists now in the intermediate period when Christ's triumph, which has already been achieved in the resurrection, has not yet been fully realised in the history of the Church. The Church exists to promote the full coming of the Kingdom for which all Christians pray in the Lord's Prayer (VI). The Church is, however, not only the instrument and the guarantee of the final coming of the Kingdom; it is already the anticipation of that Kingdom. This is especially true of the celebration of the Eucharist, in which the Church receives a foretaste of the joys of the Kingdom to come, and looks forward to Christ's final appearing in the fulness of the Kingdom (W4). By the transforming action of the Holy Spirit, earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine, the eschatological banquet for the new man: elements of the new creation become

pledges and first fruits of the new heaven and the new earth (W11).

The divided Church

22. St. John's Gospel contains Christ's will and prayer that his followers should be one. Visible unity is therefore an essential property of the Church. Christians are united by receiving the same Spirit, sharing the same faith in the same Lord, and undergoing the same baptism. When Christians are divided by schism, as is sadly still true today, this unity is weakened but not totally destroyed. Christians have no right to acquiesce in a schismatical situation, as it is a state of disobedience towards Christ. Full organic unity, served by a universal primate within a complementary pattern of conciliarity (V23), is the object which we see ourselves obliged to seek.

Howard 2/6/68