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An introductory statement to be delivered by the Rt Rev Alan Clark, Roman Catholic Bishop of East Anglia and Co-Chairman of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission at the press conference on Monday, March 29, at 12 noon at Lambeth Palace. Please check against delivery.

ARCIC FINAL REPORT

My Co-Chairman has given, within the short time available to him, an historical conspectus of the work of ARCIC from its inception, marked by the publication of the MALTA REPORT, 2nd January 1968, to its conclusion in the FINAL REPORT (which you have before you), completed by the Commission on the 3rd September 1981. In a few days time this Report will be a public document offered for judgement to the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. He concluded his presentation by asking two important questions to which they are asked to respond, — not just whether we recognise in one another an identity of faith in matters which admit of no disagreement, but whether this fact demands a new relationship between our churches. Where do we now stand? What should we now do to further our reconciliation as we reach out to the goal: full communion in organic unity?

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ARCIC FINAL REPORT (Continued)

The theology of the Church embodied in the documents of the Second Vatican Council has led Roman Catholics to re-examine the doctrine of papal infallibility and to require more accuracy in its presentation, — and an understanding more in line with the doctrine as it is stated in the actual words of the famous definition of the First Vatican Council. The Commission, in its carefully balanced statement on the exercise of a universal primacy, is at one in its requirement that, in a united church, there must be a balance between conciliarity and primacy if the teaching authority, which properly belongs to the Church's structure, is to be rightfully exercised.

I would like to underline once again the way the Commission has had to work, identifying the ideal while knowing that the reality seldom measures up to it. The "actual" discloses all too often where the ideal is betrayed. But surely this is the inevitable result of sin, and, even though the Church is obviously peopled by sinners, the power of Christ is such that his authority is nonetheless mediated through them. We are still compelled, therefore, to search for those understandings and structures which most respond to the mind of Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our plea is that the readers of our statements will weigh our words carefully and give no more nor less force to them than we intended.

However, it would be unrealistic of me not to comment in some way on the question posed in the section on Infallibility (Authority II para 23). This reflection, where divergence is apparent, must be put in the context of what the Commission sees as required in a united church not yet obtaining. These requirements may yet need to be realised. For example, there is a constant emphasis throughout in both Authority I and Authority II which requires a development, in particular on the Roman Catholic side, of Vatican II's exposition of collegiality — which means that the teaching office of the Church rests with the episcopate as a whole, a collectivity, even though need is seen for the exercise of a universal primacy

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ARCIC FINAL REPORT (Continued)

and the appropriateness of this petrine ministry being located in the bishop of Rome. At the same time it should be repeatedly emphasised that the whole Christian community — the People of God — is the bearer of the Gospel tradition in whom one recognises what is traditionally called the sensus fidelium (the believing mind?), and that it is not the exclusive possession of the episcopate whose function it is to preserve this tradition in its integrity and, where necessary, to give authentic articulation to it.

These comments are not irrelevant theological glosses. They are the meagre outline in what is said by the Commission in this section, which contains strong statements on the activity required by the Church to develop its understanding of the Revelation committed to it and preserve it from fundamental error.

The operative question is, therefore, put :-

“We must ask whether there is a special ministerial gift of discerning the truth and of teaching bestowed at crucial times on one person to enable him to speak authoritatively in the name of the Church in order to present the people of God in the truth.”

(Authority II para 23)

The following paras, ie paras 24-29, are a statement of significant agreement. Not only councils but universal primates “can make a decisive judgement in matters of faith and so exclude error.” (Para 26). We are speaking of definitive judgements. The primate is speaking not for himself but for the Church, and if the question is put in terms of infallibility, then the universal primate, in personally intervening in a definitive way, is doing no more than and no less than articulate the infallibility proper to the Church. This is the carefully worded doctrine of Vatican I.

MORE.....

ARCIC FINAL REPORT (Continued)

Where then is the disagreement? It is broached in the last two sentences of para 29. For Roman Catholics a definitive declaration can be made when certain stringent conditions laid down in Vatican I are fulfilled — and from this judgement Roman Catholics affirm error is excluded. But “if the definition proposed for assent,” the paragraph continues, “were not manifestly a legitimate interpretation of biblical faith and in line with orthodox tradition, Anglicans would think it a duty to reserve the reception of the definition for study and discussion.” This is not outright rejection but explicit reservation! The obvious example of the Marian dogmas is set out in para 30 which effectively shows that the lack of obvious Scriptural support is a real obstacle to their reception by the Anglican Communion as a whole. A pertinent question is further asked whether subscription to these Roman Catholic dogmatic declarations would be required of Anglicans in our future union.

Paragraph 31 is required reading, especially with its emphasis on the need for “reception”, an inherently difficult problem for both (and other) churches. The whole problem is sensitively set out, but, at the end, Anglican doubt is expressed as to the necessity of “a special charism guarding the judgement of the universal primate.”

But the debate is far from over. The final paragraph (Authority II para 33) is a succinct summary of where the Commission stands in 1982:-

- (a) We are agreed that conciliarity needs primacy, and primacy needs conciliarity.
- (b) We affirm together, at the end of our long search for mutual understanding of Christ’s will for His Church, that there is need both for a multiple, dispersed authority, involving all, and a universal primate as “servant and focus of visible unity in truth and love.”
- (c) We are not fully agreed on the nature and, may one say, acceptability of a petrine ministry and office in the Church ascribable to this universal primate.

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ARCIC FINAL REPORT (Continued)

But we can see that, given greater agreement, we can both accept that "it inheres in his office that he should have both a defined teaching responsibility and appropriate gifts of the Spirit to enable him to discharge it."

- (d) Finally, we need to live together more closely if at least some of our difficulties are to be resolved.

If I have laboured through this section, it is surely because — perhaps regrettably — it is the question of the hour. But it must be apparent to you — and contemporary comment by church leaders substantiates the claim — that no such profound agreement could have been possible without a mutually acceptable theology of the Church of God based on the central idea of koinonia. (cf the Introduction p 5). It is when the Church of God is seen as a communion of local churches, each recognising in the other its own identity as the Church of God, of which a universal primate is the focus and servant of its unity and catholicity, that doctrinal agreement is possible and a significant step, to use an understatement, is made towards the realisation of Christ's own will for His Church — that it should express in some measure the unity that exists between Him and His Father, a unity He reveals in His own Person. All doctrine is a humble attempt to put into words who he is and the implications of this Revelation of God in the Person of His Son for the life of His brethren.

ENDS.