

Comments by Fr. Georges Tavard on the Draft Paper on
"Ministerial priesthood in relation to Christ and the Church"
drawn up by the North American Sub-Commission

In general, this document is extremely weak, if not confused. The center of it seems to be the notion of "royal priesthood", which appears on p. 1, p. 2, p.3 and, in the expression "priesthood of the people", on p. 4. But it is explained only on p. 3, in a way which is quite unsatisfactory, as it takes no account of the meaning of the expression in the New Testament.

Furthermore, what is said about "sacrifice" on p. 3 ("obedient self-offering", does not tally with what is said of the "memorial" on p. 4 (to do what Christ did on the Cross). I note that memorial is not taken in the sense of the Windsor Statement: it is related, not to the semitic ziggaron, but to the Greek anamnesis. This gives it a liturgical reference which is interesting, but softens the reality of participation expressed by the ziggaron.

Several points may be mentioned:

- no sufficient distinction is made between the two senses of priesthood: ministerium and sacerdotium;
- no sufficient distinction is made between the priesthood of "all members of the Church" and that of those "in holy orders": the assertion of the first sentence would seem to imply that, in spite of Vatican II, there is no essential difference between them. I note that the quotation from Lumen gentium n.31 is incorrect: the text does not say that the faithful "are established among the People of God", but as the People of God;
- the "democratic" language, that bishops and presbyters are responsible... "to the People" (p.1, line 7 from the end) is very misleading;
- on p. 2, line 7, the expression "prophetic Word of God" seems peculiar, as the prophetic dimension is more customarily connected with the Spirit. I do not see what "prophecy" brings to this passage; likewise, line 9, the expression "Lord and King of the world" jars with the New Testament usage concerning the world, whose Prince is the Devil. (James 1,22 does not mention a prophetic word.)
- the footnote on the threefold office ought to justify abandoning this typology, which is traditional only quodammodo, and unduly restricts the Christology of the Scriptures and of the early Church;
- the reference to "ancient priestly systems", on p. 3, assumes a great deal about comparative religion, and throws very little light on the sacrifice of Christ. Furthermore, that true sacrifice is obedient offering of self was not revealed by Jesus Christ, but by the Old Testament prophets;
- I do not see the point of the section on forgiveness, at least as it is written: it assumes a view of the sacrament of penance on which we have no unanimity,