
NEWS FROM THE ENGLISH CHURCHES

Bulletin No 1, January, 1974

Better late than never! Like many others throughout the world, we have also been experiencing the effects of the crises. The second "agreed statement" was to be the subject of the subject of the last bulletin of the year; and it was due to be made public in mid-December. By that time, there were some serious delays in the post as a result of problems in England. Then our offices were closed for the last part of December to save fuel. From all our problems we have learned that life still goes on; even if the world will never quite be the same again. Some of those lessons ought to have been learned long ago. Which raises the question why we always have to learn "the hard way". More and more observers are now quite convinced that the whole of the "western world" is currently experiencing some kind of "cultural revolution". This is something which has not happened since the time of the Industrial Revolution; and, before that, the Reformation. This raises the question: How do churches behave in times of cultural crisis? In the past, this has always led to sect-formation and polarisation and schisms. If history repeats itself, leaders both of churches and of the ecumenical movement will have to keep their heads and play it cool. Their position will certainly not be an easy one; and to understand it they will need all the positive help they can get from theologians, historians and sociologists. Does history always repeat itself? Or can we learn from past mistakes? The events of 1974 will almost certainly answer some of these questions. We shall see.

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R.C. and Anglican Theologians Agree on Ministry.

A New Consensus.

The Anglican - R.C. International Commission, which drafted the epoch-making Windsor Statement (1971) on the doctrine of the Eucharist, has now formulated and published its findings on the doctrine of the Ministry and Ordination. After nearly two years of intensive study and deliberation, the new text was completed in September 1973.

The Commission was unanimous in accepting this new formulation. This is a good sign for the future of the Anglican-R.C. dialogue. Given the historical difficulties which are still scattered about in this particular area like mines in an old battle field, it cannot have been easy for the Commission to come to such a unanimous agreement. However, it is not improbable that some people may be tempted to draw the conclusion from this that the more difficult problems - such as the validity of Anglican Orders - have either been minimized or overlooked.

Since the final formulation of the text in September 1973, it has been under consideration by the authorities of both churches, to whom the text was submitted by the Commission together with a request that it should be published as soon as possible so that it might be widely discussed in public in both churches. But, in order to prevent any possible misunderstanding, it should be clearly understood that ^{the} granting of the Commission's request to publish the new text by no means implies that it has already been accepted as an authoritative statement by the leaders of either church. Permission to publish does mean, however, that a text produced by an officially appointed joint-commission of theologians may now be discussed openly and freely in both the churches. For the time being, the new statement has behind it the authority of the joint-commission which produced it. No more. But no less.

The achievement of a new consensus of theological opinion by an officially appointed group of Anglican and R.C. scholars is, however, no mean achievement. Because it means that the way ahead has now been cleared and mapped out in such a way that the decision-making bodies of both churches can now take further appropriate action. If and when they feel free to do so.

What are the benefits of an "Agreed Statement"?

It would be quite incorrect to assume that an "Agreed Statement" has little or no value before there is a recognisable step forward on the part of the leadership in the Anglican and R.C. Churches. First, because a new theological consensus is certainly a significant step in the right direction. Theological consensus is clearly an outward and visible sign of an inward and ecumenical change in the churches. Second, since the publication of the Windsor Statement of 1971, there has been remarkable progress in the whole field of Anglican-R.C. relations. For example, all the various local and national joint-commissions which have sprung up all over the world in the last two years. (see Bulletin no. 8, Oct. 1973). These commissions have two main functions: (i) to disseminate and publicise the work of the International Commission in their own localities; and (ii) to feed back to the Commission any positive or negative comments upon its findings. Most important of all, however, is the fact that these local and national joint-commissions discuss and iron out the various practical problems which arise out of the International Commission's work in such a way that the difficult transition from theological consensus to practical cooperation at the "grass roots" level becomes a real and practicable possibility.

For example, since the publication of the Windsor Statement on the Eucharist in 1971, there has indeed been much fruitful discussion at the local level about the problems of and the opportunities for intercommunion. In the practical field, therefore, the results of the Commission's work have been both considerable and remarkable. One should mention here the growing tendency for some bishops of the R.C. Church to admit Anglicans who happen to be either temporarily or permanently deprived of the sacraments in their own church to receive the Holy Communion in a R.C. Church. For example, the directives issued by Bishop Elchinger of Strasburg on November 30, 1972 and January 25, 1973, which allowed Protestants both to take part in and to partake of the sacrament in a Catholic church. In such cases, the criterion is usually "Serious spiritual need". The question of more general (or reciprocal) intercommunion is still very much a matter of discussion.

One of the things which should now accelerate progress towards full sacramental reciprocity is this new agreement on the doctrine of ministry and ordination. Indeed, the importance of this new document will almost certainly be measured in terms of its ability to maintain the momentum towards full intercommunion first set in motion by the publication of the first Agreed Statement in 1971.

What does the new "Statement" say?

The stated aim of the International Commission is to reach "a deeper understanding of Ministry which is consonant with biblical teaching and with the traditions of our common inheritance, and to express in this document the consensus we have reached" (para. 1). The statement "is not designed to be an exhaustive treatment" of the doctrine of the Ministry (ibid); but it is intended to be an expression of "our basic agreement" in those areas of doctrine which have been "the source of controversy between us" (ibid).

Their method was to begin with a general understanding of the various forms of ministry in the life of the church (paras. 2-5); and then to continue with an examination of some of the more specific forms of ministry in the light of the ministry of the apostles and their successors (para. 6 seq.). There are several (unspecified) forms of service which do not seem to require official authorization (para. 2). But there are also other "more specific ways of service" which "may receive a mandate from ecclesiastical authorities" (ibid.). And then there are those ministries which do require authorization in the form of ordination (para. 7 seq.). All these various ministries require the gift of the Holy Spirit and are used by the Holy Spirit "for the building up of the Church (para. 5). But, since the Church is built up by the Holy Spirit primarily but not exclusively through these ministerial functions, some form of recognition and authorization is already required in the New Testament period for those who exercise them in the name of Christ. Here we can see elements which will remain at the heart of what today we call ordination" (para 5).

What distinguished the ministry of the apostles from other ministries was their "special relationship" with the historical Christ; plus the commission which they received from Him" to the Church and to the world" (para. 4). As far as the Church is concerned, it is apostolic "not only because its faith and life must reflect the witness to Jesus Christ given in the early Church by the apostles, but also because it is charged to continue in the apostles' commission to communicate to the world what it has received" (ibid).

But within the New Testament, ministerial actions and functions are varied and not precisely defined (para. 5). However, explicit emphasis is given to the proclamation of the Word and the preservation of apostolic doctrine, the care of the flock, and the example of Christian living" (ibid.). The N.T. also shows "that ministerial office played an essential part in the life of the Church in the first century, and we (= the Commission) believe that the provision of a ministry of this kind is part of God's design for his people" (para. 6).

But despite the diversity which is demonstrated in the N.T. documents, "it is clear that some churches were headed by ministers who were called episcopoi and presbyteroi" (para 6.). Such terms "could be applied to the same man or to men with identical or very similar functions" (ibid.). Nevertheless, "the full emergence of the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon required a longer than the apostolic age. Thereafter this threefold structure became universal in the Church" (ibid.). Like the formation of the N.T. Canon, the process was not completed until the second half of the second century; but afterwards it was quite normal.

The New Testament uses a variety of images to describe this threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons which emerged complete in the second century. An ordained minister is a servant (both of Christ and his Church); a herald (of the Gospel); an ambassador (an authoritative representative of Christ); a teacher (who explains and applies the Word of God to the community); a shepherd (who exercises pastoral care and guides the flock); and a steward (who may only provide for the household of God what belongs to Christ). (See para 8). He should also be "an example both in holiness and in compassion" (ibid.).

What is essential in the ordained ministry? Its responsibility for oversight (or episcopé). This responsibility involves: (i) "fidelity to the apostolic faith"; (ii) "its embodiment in the life of the Church today"; and (iii) "its transmission to the Church of tomorrow" (para. 9). Presbyters (or priests) share both the oversight of the church and the ministry of the word and sacraments with the bishops; they may preside at the eucharist and pronounce absolution (ibid.). Deacons also "assist in oversight"; and are "associated" with the presbyters and the bishops in their ministry with the presbyters and the bishops in their ministry of word and sacrament (ibid.). The "source and ground of their preaching and authority" is to be found "in the original mission and witness recorded in Holy Scripture" (para. 10).

These ministers (i.e. bishops and deacons presbyters) normally administer baptism, admit converts to the communion of the faithful and restore the lapsed (para 11); whilst authority to pronounce God's forgiveness of sin is given to bishops and priests at their ordination (ibid.). Evidence from as early as the time of Ignatius (died c. 107 A.D.) "shows that at least in some churches, the man exercising this oversight presided at the eucharist and no other could do so, without his consent" (see para 12, with reference to Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 8.1). Thus, "the man who has oversight in the church and is the focus of its unity" should be the one who presides at the eucharist (ibid.).

In as much as the eucharist is a sacramental memorial (anamnesis) of the unique sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his priestly rôle "is reflected in these ministers"; though they are never called "priests" (hiereis) in the New Testament. This is why both Anglicans and Roman Catholics "commonly use priestly terms in speaking about the ordained ministry" (para. 13). "Such language", however, "does not imply any negation of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ by any addition of repetition" (ibid.).

Entry into this specific apostolic ministry is by ordination. Furthermore, "every individual act of ordination is ... an expression of the continuing apostolicity and catholicity of the whole Church" (para. 14). Just like the original apostles, they receive their commission from Jesus Christ. They did not choose themselves. They are called "by Christ in the Church and through the Church" (ibid.). Their vocation comes from Jesus Christ; but "their qualification for exercising such a ministry is the gift of the Spirit" (with reference to 2 Cor. 3.5-6). This is expressed at the time of ordination by the bishop's invocation of the Holy Spirit and signified by the laying on of hands.

Both presbyters and deacons are ordained by bishops and their ordination is unrepeatable (see paras. 15 and 16). But the presbyters join in the laying on of hands when new presbyters are ordained by the bishops in such a way that "the shared nature of the commission entrusted to them" is signified (para 16).

When a new bishop is consecrated, other bishops lay hands on him and thereby invoke the gift of the Holy Spirit upon his ministry (para. 16). Thus, they receive him "into their ministerial fellowship". Their participation in his ordination signifies that the new bishop and his church are within the communion of churches " (ibid.); and also "ensures the historical continuity of this church with the apostolic church and of its bishop with the original apostolic ministry". (Because the bishops represent the fidelity of their churches to the teaching and mission of the apostles).

"The communion of the churches in mission, faith, and holiness, through time and space, is thus symbolized and maintained in the bishop. Here are comprised the essential features of what is meant in our two traditions by ordination in the apostolic succession" (para 16).

What is not said in the new "Statement".

The International Commission was quite well aware of the importance of the negative judgement upon Anglican Orders once formulated by Pope Leo XIII, whose Bull of 1896 ("Apostolicae Curae") declared Anglican Orders to be absolutely null and utterly void because of alleged defects of "form" and "intention". Since that time, the question of the validity of Anglican orders has constituted the major obstacle to good relations between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. But, since the Second Vatican Council, there has been less and less polemical discussion of this particularly pressing problem and much more positive and constructive thinking. For example, it is both widely claimed and sometimes even acknowledged, that the participation of Old Catholic Bishops in Anglican ordinations and consecrations since 1932 has at least partially removed some of the remaining doubts and fears in Roman Catholic circles about the alleged loss of the apostolic succession in the Church of England (eg. JES 4(1967), pp. 21-25).

What does the Commission say about this? What did the Commission leave unsaid? And why? These are the questions which the new text will doubtless raise in many peoples' minds.

"We are fully aware of the issues raised by the judgement of the Roman Catholic Church on Anglican Orders. The development of the thinking in our two Communion regarding the nature of the Church and of the Ordained Ministry, as represented in our Statement, has, we consider, put these issues in a new context. Agreement on the nature of the Ministry is prior to the consideration of the mutual recognition of ministries. What we have to say represents the consensus of ^{the} Commission on essential matters where it considers that doctrine admits no divergence. It will be clear that we have not yet broached the wide ranging problems of authority which may arise in any discussion of Ministry, nor the question of primacy. We are aware that present understanding of such matters remains an obstacle to the reconciliation of our churches in the one Communion we desire, and the Commission is now turning to the examination of the issues involved. Nevertheless we consider that our consensus, on questions where agreement is indispensable for unity, offers a positive contribution to the reconciliation of our churches and of their ministries" (para. 17).

What the Commission has said here is that their statement has placed the issue of the validity of Anglican Orders in a new context; because the new theological consensus has created a new situation in which the recognition of the ministries and the reconciliation of the churches is a real possibility.

However, the Commission did not say explicitly that it is possible now at the theological level to recommend the recognition by the R. Catholic Church of the validity of Anglican Orders. Why? First, because they consider their business to be the achievement of consensus in theological matters. As they see it, it is the business of the leaders of the Church to make such ecclesiastical decisions. They will not usurp these functions. Second, because - as they say in paragraph 17 - the question of the primacy has not yet been discussed and the question of authority has not yet been thoroughly treated. This discussion will doubtless clarify the problem of who has the "last word" on such matters in both churches. Third, because the theological adequacy of their statement has not yet been fully discussed in and accepted by the churches. But what they do say - and imply - is that if their reasoning is acceptable, the way is now open for "the reconciliation of our churches and of their ministries". As the appended note on the status of the document makes abundantly clear, the document has been published "so that it may be discussed by other theologians". "It does not authorize any change in existing ecclesiastical discipline" (ad loc.).

It is always possible, however, to ask whether it might have been possible for the Commission to state explicitly even at this stage that as they now see it there are no theological objections standing in the way of an eventual recognition by the leaders of the two churches of each others' ministries. (In effect this would mean the recognition by the R.C. Church of the validity of Anglican Orders since Anglicans already accept the validity of R.C. ordinations).

The answer to this particular question must be twofold. First, the Statement does appear to say as much as this already; but in a very cautious way and implicitly rather than explicitly. Secondly, the Commission may have had tactical and strategical reasons for not spelling this point out more directly. For example, festina lente; bearing in mind that lente can mean both slowly and with due consideration. Ultimately, only the Commission itself can say why they chose to say this cautiously and implicitly, rather than directly and explicitly.

What J.J. Huges wrote in 1967 is very pertinent here: "Individual theologians, and groups of theologians, (R.C.) will continue to arise who are prepared to take a more positive view of Anglican Orders. But theologians cannot change the practice of the church. They can merely provide more or less cogent reasons for doing so" (JES 4 (1967), p. 18). The reasons formulated by the commission do appear to be more rather than less cogent; but also less rather than more explicit.

But there is also another, much more interesting possibility. If the goal of the Commission is to bring about "the reconciliation of our churches and of their ministries"; would it be easier to achieve this goal without the R.C. Church going through the motions of withdrawing or repudiating the Bull of 1896? And without the Anglican clergy repudiating their ministries and the ministries of their predecessors? Such a reconciliation could conceivably be brought about simply by saying that the ministry of the Anglican Church now bears all the characteristics of the catholic ministry. No more; no less.

Such a strategy could well be justified on other grounds; for example, the fact that our historical and doctrinal understanding of ministry has changed considerably since 1896. One could refer her to the discovery of new liturgical texts (such as the Sacramentary of Serapion, which was discovered in 1898); to E. Schweitzer's thesis that everybody in the primitive church who performed a function was first called by the Holy Spirit before he was recognized by the Church as a minister; to von Campenhausen's thesis that the apostles were unique and that no doctrine of ministry is formulated in the New Testament; to R.P.C. Hanson's thesis that no such thing as "succession" existed in the primitive church; to the growing scholarly consensus that there was a pluriformity of ministry in the early church; to J.J. Hughes' convincing - if not conclusive - argument that the evidence in favour of the validity of Anglican Orders outweighs the arguments expressed in the Bull of 1896; to E.P. Echlin's arguments that the historical evidence does not permit a firm verdict one way or the other; and to the growing consensus - even amongst R.C. Scholars - that the traditional Catholic Theology of orders is probably now inadequate and that in consequence the doctrine of the ministry needs to be reexamined; especially in the light of ecclesiology and eschatology.

It is also necessary to say a few things about the notion of the "priesthood of all believers", since it appears to get scant attention in the new statement. For example, in para. 13 we read: Christian ministers are members of this redeemed community. Not only do they share through baptism in the priesthood of the people of God, but they are - particularly in presiding at the eucharist - representative of the whole church in the fulfilment of its priestly vocation of self-offering to God as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12.1). Nevertheless their ministry is not an extension of the common Christian priesthood but belongs to another realm of the gifts of the spirit. It exists to help the church to be "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called (them) out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2.9).

This is one problem which the reader cannot solve simply by working through the list of papers mentioned by Mr. Davey in his appendix (see below); though those who do work through all the papers will find the answer in due course. The Commission has clearly been influenced at this particular point by a recent study of I Peter 2.4-10 from the Lutheran scholar Dr. J.H. Elliott (The Elect and the Holy, = Supplements to Novum Testamentum, No. 12, Leiden 1966). This particular text, as Dr. Elliott rightly noted, is not only the locus classicus for the notion of the "universal priesthood", but has also played a considerable rôle in post Vatican II thinking in the R.C. Church.

Now that Dr. Elliott has put forward an alternative exegesis which calls in question the widely accepted notion of the "priesthood of all believers", this particular doctrine has itself become a major theological problem. Now, without going in detail into the validity of this revolutionary interpretation, one should at least indicate here that the acceptance of this thesis by a considerable body of scholarly opinion has certainly influenced at least one of the theologians on the commission, Fr. J.M.R. Tillard. His paper entitled "What Priesthood has the Ministry" was originally prepared for The Gazzada meeting of September 1972 (published in Nouvelle Revue Théologique, May 1973, pp. 451-514 in French and in One in Christ, 9(1973), pp. 237-269 in English). On the basis of Dr. Elliott's work he concluded: "To see in the "royal priesthood" the power which every Christian possesses by the very fact of his baptism to take an active part in the ritual cult, and especially in the eucharist as a fully accredited member, is to falsify the thought of the text" (*ibid.*, p. 249). Furthermore: "Peter does not seek to explain how this "holy priesthood" of believers could be a kind of transmission of the priesthood of Christ into the Church. Such a question does not enter into its frame of reference" (p. 250). Incidentally, readers who wish to know more of the biblical background to this statement and its use of a "sacerdotal" vocabulary should consult this important and influential paper by Fr. Tillard.

The Strategy of the International Commission.

There appears to be a well-planned strategy behind the Commission's work: (i) deal with those outstanding theological problems which still stand in the way of intercommunion and (ii) full-communication; (iii) and then with those problems which ultimately stand in the way of some kind of complete union ("the one Communion we desire", para. 17). In practice, this would lead first to limited intercommunion; then to unlimited intercommunion (or reciprocal communion); then to full-communication (which implies the interchange of ministers); and finally to the complete integration of ministries.

But even the most limited degree of intercommunion would require prior agreement about the true nature of the sacrament. This is why the Commission began with the Eucharist. Reciprocal communion and full-communication would also require prior agreement on the nature of the eucharistic ministry (and also the mutual recognition of ministries). This is why the Commission turned secondly to these questions. Finally full-communication and "the one Communion which we desire" could not be attained without some kind of agreement about the nature and source of authority in the Church; and also the rôle of the Bishop of Rome in the United Church of the Future. This is why the Commission will now go on to deal with these questions once the problems of the ministry in the Church have been clarified and rectified.

Some Preliminary Comments

The first Agreed Statement on the Eucharist was - in the best sense of the word - a sensational document; it was truly an epoch-making event. In this light, the second Agreed Statement on the Ministry was almost certainly doomed to be a disappointment to some people; almost from the start. This disappointment is certainly reflected in some of the comments which have been made at this particular stage. However, having said this, one should then go on to make the point that inasmuch as people have been disappointed, that tells us more about the frailties of human nature than about the document itself. However, it is indeed a very good sign that the International Commission did not try to anticipate this by striving artificially to produce a new text which would have had the same psychological impact as the first.

It is a fact that people sometimes expect too much. This is understandable; but to say this is not the same thing as asserting that this ought to be so. It is something which human beings have to learn to live with as best as they can. It is quite clear that some people have been disappointed; because they expected something equally sensational to keep up the initial momentum of the Windsor Statement. And that "something" was probably expected to be some kind of explicit validation of Anglican orders. However, those who were disappointed because of this cannot have fully understood the rôle of the Commission; because the Commission understands its rôle to be that of formulating the maximum degree of consensus in those theological matters which still divide Anglicans from Roman Catholics. What happens next is for the Churches themselves to decide.

There are also indications that some theologians and churchmen may be thinking that this new document is a little too weak on the historical and theological side for their liking. For example, Desmond Fisher, the former Editor of the Catholic Herald, who now writes from time to time in the Church Times, has stated that the new statement "contributes little new theological or ecclesiological understanding of the ministry" (see Church Times, December 14, 1973); whilst the Church Times editorial writer in the same issue has also complained that the Commission has not dealt with the vital problem of "authority" in the church.

When a new document appears in this particular field, there are two quite distinct levels of comment. First, the initial reactions of journalists and those churchmen who are asked by the church press for the statements. This all takes place during the two or three weeks when a new document or statement is still "hot news". Then there follows a second wave of scholarly criticism in the more academic journals. This second reaction is, as one would expect, somewhat delayed. Because scholars naturally require more time in which to digest the contents of such documents; and also to dig up the background material. Their comments and reactions generally appear in monthly and quarterly journals about six months after the publication of a new text. Now the dangers of what is disparagingly called "instant comment" are real dangers; because there is always the possibility that there is just not sufficient time to do enough "homework". When this happens, the comments of the weekly papers are more likely to reflect the shortcomings of the journalists than the shortcomings of the people they are writing about. This is doubly dangerous when it happens; simply because once one has had the time to consider things in depth the original story may no longer be newsworthy. Sometimes, for that very reason, it does not get properly corrected in the popular press.

Now there are several ways of avoiding these dangers, the best of which is to commission someone who is actually involved to write a feature article. This sensible solution was adopted by the Catholic Herald, which carried an article by Bishop Alan Clark of Northampton in the issue which went out on December 14, 1973 ("Reconciliation in Faith"). This very useful article actually clears up several points which have clearly bothered other commentators.

For example, he explains here that the Commission originally decided to deal with what it considered to be the three fundamental issues: (i) the Eucharist; (ii) the Ministry; and (iii) authority. In that order. This particular selection and rank order had been decided as long ago as 1967/8. These preliminary decisions were formulated in the so-called "Malta Statement", which was leaked to the press and published not only in The Tablet (November 30, 1965), and One in Christ (1969, No. I. pp. 27-34), but also in the Church Times.

This observation takes some of the sting out of the Church Times' Editorial of December 14, 1973, which complained about the "nettle ungrasped". For the question of authority was not overlooked at that stage; rather, it was the next item on a well-considered agenda. Further more, the Commission was also quite well aware of the fact that all these key-questions overlap and interlock. For example, the problems of the Eucharist cannot be finally resolved until the question of the eucharistic ministers has been finally settled; but the question of the eucharistic ministers cannot be settled until the question of the source of authority in the Church has been answered.

Adverse comments about the Statement's lack of historical and theological depth again reveal a certain lack of understanding about how the Commission works and publishes its findings. Behind this new document, there lies a whole fund of thinking and published work. It is both remarkable and considerable. An excellent and very useful account of how the Commission came to its final formulation may be found in the appendix compiled by the Rev. Colin Davey, (Assistant Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Counsellors on Foreign Relations and Secretary of the International Commission). This paper enables the careful and thoughtful reader to find his way through the maze of preliminary papers and other relevant literature. Some of these papers, plus a short history of the Commission's work, have also been recently published in a book entitled "Anglican / Roman Catholic Dialogue: The Work of the Preparatory Commission", edited by A.C. Clark and C. Davey, Oxford University Press, 1974), which will be reviewed in a later issue of this Bulletin.

By working through these books, the reader will soon be able to familiarize himself with the theological, historical and biblical thinking which underlies this new document.

The paucity of comments from church leaders ^{in the weeklies} is also quite remarkable. This is not easy to explain, given the tremendous interest which was generated in 1971/72 by the publication of the first Agreed Statement. This could reflect the fact that Church leaders have recently been too preoccupied (as they ought to be) with the crises presently rocking the whole of western society. But it could also be a reflection of the fact that they themselves have realized that "instant criticism" is not always helpful and therefore taking more time to digest its contents intelligently in order subsequently to make helpful and well-informed comments up on its contents. Alternatively, the lack of comment could well suggest that this new document was not quite the one which church leaders were expecting. This would also account for their silence at the present moment.

Some of the First Reactions

"The whole document is a matter of deep thanksgiving not only for what it is but for the hopes it extends for future development". The reference to the ministry as a ministry of "the word and the sacraments" not only accords with Anglican formulas, but enables us to keep in mind at the same time our discussions with the protestant churches. "The modest approach to critical questions of the historical origins of the ministry is an improvement on the formulas of both churches without in any way invalidating the fact that the threefold ministry became the universal norm at a very early stage". The Commission "has followed the traditional Anglican model of a primary reference to Scripture, to the teachings of the Classical Fathers and to the practice of the primitive Church".

(Canon B. Pawley, former Cision officer in Rome of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York; in the Church Times, Dec. 14, 1973).

"The Nettle Ungrasped"

"The two Churches are faithful to the same Catholic creeds. They maintain and use the same sacraments. They both value episcopal order as essential to the good government of the Church. The one thing which keeps the two Churches apart in disagreement over who is to be accounted a true priest of the Catholic Church". But, despite the publication of this new statement; "the practical question which divides Rome and Canterbury has yet to be faced". The document stops well before it gets to "the crux of the matter". That is: By what authority is a priest ordained? Consequently, although this new statement is a step forward in the direction of ecumenical progress, its importance is somewhat restricted.

(Church Times' Editorial, Dec. 14, 1973).

The Catholic Herald.

After a reference to "certain activists" who had already begun to attack the agreement "before even reading it", the editor makes the point that "the obstructionists have been completely disarmed by the scholarly but carefully defined scope of the agreement as finally published". The work of the International Commission is a "bold but balanced attempt" to cut away what is called "dead wood". The "polarising tendencies" of the reformation are, at long last, being reversed. The summary of the early development of priestly-episcopal concept is said to be "masterly". Finally, the document is formulated in such a way that there is now a precisely formulated framework in which the question of the validity of Anglican Orders can again be asked.

(Catholic Herald, Dec. 14, 1973).

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