



NEWS

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DATE: December 30, 1977

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FOR RELEASE IN A.M.S OF
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4

ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC GROUP WELCOMES STATEMENT ON AUTHORITY

WASHINGTON--In a response to a 1977 international Anglican-Roman Catholic statement on authority in the church, the Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States (ARC-USA) has welcomed that declaration and urged further study of issues it raises.

ARC-USA's response is a commentary on the so-called Venice Statement published January 20, 1977, by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). Expressing a "consensus on authority in the church" among the participants in ARCIC, the Venice Statement envisaged a united church with "universal primacy" centered in the Bishop of Rome.

While this "does not wholly resolve all the problems associated with papal primacy," the Venice Statement said, "it provides us with a solid basis for confronting them."

The U.S. Consultation's response reflects the views of its 19 Anglican and Roman Catholic participants. Co-chairmen of the group are the Rt. Rev. Arthur A. Vogel, Episcopal Bishop of West Missouri, and the Most Rev. Raymond W. Lessard, Roman Catholic Bishop of Savannah, Ga.

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A week ago the same group issued a report summarizing its progress in official dialogues since 1965. Referring to the Anglican and Roman Catholic denominations as "sister churches," it asked for a further mandate and directives from the participants' respective sponsoring bodies.

In their response to the Venice Statement, the ARC-USA participants note that Anglicans and Roman Catholics "share a long period of common history in which a universal primacy functioned in the West; to this extent we should be able to recognize our common heritage."

The participants also cite "the evolution that has occurred in both our Churches since our division."

"Anglicans have moved towards a gradual acceptance of the fact that the quest for Church unity cannot ignore a Church whose membership includes half of the Christians of the world. The entry of Rome into the ecumenical movement has encouraged Anglicans and other Christians in the West to consider the positive values of a universal primacy in a reunited Church.

"Roman Catholics have, since Vatican II, come to value the collegial exercise of authority by the bishops of the Church which has been characteristic of the Anglican tradition. The developing role of the Synod of Bishops is one indication of such movement; the role now played by national and regional bishops' conferences is another. Steps toward making the Roman curia more representative of the worldwide Catholic Church as well as the establishment of new norms for the selection of bishops are still further indications of a general trend to decentralize the governance of the Roman Catholic Church today."

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The consultation participants point out that "a particularly troubling question to Anglicans is that raised by the issue of papal jurisdiction, specifically should it appear to bypass the local bishops."

But, they say, "the important point in this regard is the increasing obvious desire and intent in the Roman Catholic Church to resolve matters within a nation or a local church through the bishops' conference or by the particular bishops...."

"A more appropriate exercise of authority affecting individual jurisdiction might be along the lines of an ultimate court of appeal which could well serve Anglican as well as Roman Catholic churches, such as the papacy served both East and West during the days of the undivided Church."

The response also notes "the Anglican difficulty with" the doctrine of papal infallibility, while calling attention to continuing theological reflection upon the doctrine's precise meaning.

"Contemporary Roman Catholic theology has done much to clarify the careful limitations placed by the First and Second Vatican Councils on the papal exercise of the infallibility which belongs to the Church as a whole," it says.

"It is to be hoped that ARCIC will facilitate greater agreement between our two churches on the question of infallibility by taking these and similar considerations into account."

The Episcopal members of ARC-USA are Bishop Vogel; Dr. V. Nelle Bellamy, Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, Tex.; Peter Day, Ecumenical Officer with the Episcopal Church, New York; Prof. Eleanor McLaughlin, Andover-Newton

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Theological School, Newton Centre, Mass.; the Rev. Prof. Charles P. Price, Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, Va.; the Rt. Rev. David B. Reed, Bishop of Kentucky, Louisville; Prof. Henry B. Veatch, Dept. of Philosophy, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.; the Rt. Rev. William G. Weinbauer, Bishop of Western North Carolina, Black Mountain, N.C.; and the Rev. Prof. J. Robert Wright, General Theological Seminary, New York.

The Roman Catholic members of ARC-USA are Bishop Lessard; Sister Sara Butler, Mobile, Ala.; the Rev. John F. Hotchkin, Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Washington, D.C.; the Rev. Allan Laubenthal, St. Mary's Seminary, Cleveland; the Most Rev. Daniel E. Pilarczyk, Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati, Cincinnati; the Rev. Msgr. John R. Portman, Sacred Heart Parish, Coronado, Calif.; the Rev. Prof. Herbert J. Ryan, S.J., Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles; the Rev. J. Peter Sheehan, Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Washington, D.C.; and the Rev. Prof. Georges Tavard, Methodist Theological School, Delaware, Ohio.

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