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FROM  
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14 April, 1978

The Secretary General,  
Anglican Consultative Council,  
32 Eccleston Street,  
LONDON, SW1W 9PY,  
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19 APR 1978

My dear John,

re: ARCIC Reports

The Provincial Committee on Doctrine and Theological Questions has looked at the ARCIC Reports and made the following recommendation to the General Synod which was accepted by the Synod:

"The Provincial Commission on Doctrine and Theological Questions welcomes the three Agreed Statements of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (on Eucharistic Doctrine; Ministry and Ordination; Authority in the Church). It affirms that the three ARCIC statements are on the whole congruent with Anglican teaching. It would like, however, to point to a prima facie contradiction between what the Statement on Authority in the Church says about infallibility and inerrancy and Articles XIX-XXI of the 39 Articles of Religion. Nevertheless the Provincial Commission affirms strongly that the three ARCIC Agreed Statements do provide a sufficient theological basis for further official dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church with Churches of the Anglican Communion 'United not absorbed' as its goal."

Please find enclosed the detailed report of this Committee.

With good wishes,

Very sincerely,

+ *Alm*  
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Comments on the ARCIC Agreed Statements.1. Eucharistic Doctrine

- A. The statement is theologically balanced and ecumenically sensitive. It endeavours to be pastoral, religious, and faith-centred in tone. The emphasis on the mystery of the eucharist is a welcome corrective to the tendency to define points of eucharistic doctrine with inappropriate precision. Accordingly it avoids the language of controversy wherever possible but at the same time acknowledges difficulties and tries to sketch solutions. "
- B. Particularly welcome is the long section on the Presence of Christ with its linking of the notion of presence with the whole redemptive activity of Christ; and in its linking of the present action of Christ with the whole eucharistic celebration. The Statement goes a step further when in para 9 it firmly links the presence of Christ to the elements albeit in the context of the whole eucharistic action. In this connection the footnote to para 6 opens up the question of how the bread and wine 'become' or are radically changed in their inner reality into the Body and Blood of Christ. Articles XXVIII and XXIX would represent the hesitations of many Anglicans on this point. The issue is not resolved and merits further clarification. Some light can perhaps be thrown on this issue by the eschatological perspective of para 11. There we are told that "In the eucharistic celebration we anticipate the joys of the age to come"; and that "By the transforming action of the Spirit of God, earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine." The agent of change in both man and the material creation is the Holy Spirit, the "powers of the age to come." Here the document would have been strengthened by a reference to the Epiiclesis (cf. Agreed Statement by the Anglican/Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission paras 29-32). This in turn would serve to counteract any tendency to dissociate the experience of the Spirit from the presence of Christ, specially in the Eucharist.
- C. The chief deficiency in the Agreed Statement is in its section on the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of Christ. This needs elucidating and strengthening.

In its use of the language of offering the Agreed Statement repeatedly says that Christ "offers himself to his people" (para 3).<sup>\*</sup> While this emphasis is true it must not be allowed to obscure or displace the complementary truth that not only does Christ offer himself 'to' us but that also 'in' 'with' and 'through' him (cf. Series III Eucharist para 29 ) we offer ourselves to the Father as a living sacrifice. 'To' must be balanced by 'with'. The nearest the Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreed Statement comes to this is in para 5 where the Church is said to "enter into the movement of his self-offering". This could be explored further.

Behind this preponderance of one type of the language of offering may be two models which are not clearly acknowledged or sufficiently distinguished.

- " Further insight into the subject matter can be gained by reading the Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine alongside that on Ministry and Ordination, especially para 13.
- \* Also "He gives himself ..... to his own" (para 6); "the same Lord invites his people to his table ... and gives himself sacramentally" (para 7); "The sacramental body and blood of the Saviour are present as an offering to the believer." (para 8)

(3)

Thus there is an 'encounter' model as in para 8 which speaks of 'a life-giving encounter'. Much more faintly there is a model of 'corporate identification' 'participation' or 'union', a model of doing something 'in' 'with' or 'through' Christ, which is present in the final sentence of para 5. This model needs considerable strengthening and elaboration.

- D. Unclarity at a key point in the Agreed Statement is introduced by the phrase 'a perpetual memorial'. It would seem that a genuine problem has been glossed over through the use of a well-known Prayer Book phrase. Once again further light could be thrown on the way in which Christ's redeeming action is present in the eucharist by giving greater prominence to the Epiiclesis and the work of the Holy Spirit as God's Christ-centred action among us. (Para. 5).

(4)

2. Ministry and Ordination: A Statement on the Doctrine of the Ministry.

The document is a strong and coherent one which often succeeds in articulating and synthesizing much of what is best in both traditions. Two points of great importance however need to be made at the outset, the first concerning the laity and the second the ordination of women.

On the first it is noticeable that apart from paras 2 and 7 there is little attempt at a theology of the laity or of ministry understood as the ministry of all the baptized. If it is not the intention of the document to deal with this issue then it should be entitled accordingly - 'Ordained Ministry', or some equivalent.\* If, on the other hand, its intention was to expound a broader-based doctrine of the ministry of the whole Church then further work still needs to be done. In particular the Provincial Commission recommends that future conversations or negotiations try to articulate a theology of the ministry of the whole people of God as the indispensable context for the theological understanding of the ordained ministry. Questions of the interrelationship between lay and ordained ministry within the Church's life and in the Church's ministry to the world are in urgent need of clarification.

On the second any future conversations urgently need to take up the problem not only of the recognition of the validity of Anglican Orders but also the question of the Ordination of women. Is this a barrier to union now that it is a reality in some provinces of the Anglican Communion (U.S.A.; N.S.; Hong Kong; Canada)? Does the Roman Catholic Church regard this as a matter of faith or of order? Might it be seen from the Roman Catholic point of view as part of a permissible diversity amongst local churches in communion with Rome? What is the developing thinking of the Roman Catholic Church on this issue?

The Provincial Commission felt that there was nothing in 'Ministry and Ordination' which would provide grounds for excluding the Ordination of women. Are there grounds which are not specified in the Agreed Statement?

These two preliminary matters apart, the document has a number of strong points. The following ought particularly to be underlined:

(i) The attempt to found a doctrine of ministry on a few "normative principles ..... present in the N.T. documents" is a promising approach which ought to be followed up (para 6 citing Mark 10: 43-45; Acts 20: 28; 1 Timothy 4: 12-16; 1 Peter 5: 1-4). This is perhaps a refreshing contrast to an approach which tries to establish elusive historical facts about patterns of ministry in the early church.

(ii) The linking of the notion of Priesthood to the sacrificial character of Christ's action in the eucharist and to the priestly character of the whole people of God is especially welcome (para 13). Again a valid theological point is made without prejudice to the fact that the actual word 'hierus' (priest) does not occur in the N.T. other than of Christ. At the same time further clarification in the context of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue is probably needed of the traditional concept of 'in persona Christi agere' of the celebrant at the eucharist. For example, the sentence: "There is in the eucharist a memorial (anamnesis) of the totality of God's reconciling action in Christ, who through his minister presides at the Lord's Supper and gives himself sacramentally." It may be that this is only a positive way of making the point which is made negatively in Article XXVI.

\* On a further point of terminology it should be noted that expressions like "ministerial service" (para 2) are strictly speaking tautologous in that one word repeats the meaning of the other and is therefore otiose.

(iii) Also welcome is the teaching of para 14 that ordained ministry is a gift of God to his Church. Though those who are to be ordained into the apostolic ministry are called by Christ in and through the Church their vocation comes from Christ and their ministry is empowered by the Holy Spirit. The laying on of hands, therefore, though it takes place within the Church and with the Church's participation, expresses the Church's prayer that God will indeed grant gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Candidate.

(iv) The points made in paras 15 and 16 should be read in conjunction with the other agreed statement 'Authority in the Church'. Both paragraphs contain emphases which are common to the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.

At the same time the document contains some material which is weak or debatable.

- (i) Para 4 says that the original apostles all had "a special relationship to the historical Christ". The meaning of this phrase needs clarifying particularly in relation to the calling of the Apostle Paul.
- (ii) Though para 10 as it stands contains a well-balanced theology the Provincial Commission felt that greater care could have been exercised over expressions like 'Word of God' 'true faith' 'correct beliefs'. What, for example, is the relationship between 'true faith' and 'correct beliefs'? Also the phrase 'the Word of God' without due qualification can all too easily mislead into a propositional theory of revelation. An initial interpretation of the Word of God as God's whole self-communication to man might have safeguarded the Statement against possible misunderstanding.
- (iii) The underlying theology of the document is almost exclusively church-centred (paras 3; 5; 7; 10). In para 3 the purpose of "all christian ministry" is said to be "always to build up the community (koinonia)" by which is presumably meant the christian community. This is far too sweeping nor does it make clear whether or not 'all christian ministry' is intended in fact to refer to 'all ordained christian ministry'. This is a crux: is ministry, in so far as it is a participation through Christ in God's loving ministry to the World, a ministry to the whole of God's world; or is it more geared to building up community within or apart from the 'world'? The sentence 'Because God's concern .... humanity' in para 10 gives some evidence of the former view. In para 7 there is an attempt to confront the whole issue by means of a clergy-laity distinction. Is this coherent or valid? For example: is it the task of the ordained ministry to assist and equip lay ministries in the world? Or is its function primarily to build up the laity into a community? A strong theology of the laity is lacking.

(6)

### 3. Authority in the Church.

This statement is a fine piece of work which takes into account much recent work on the role of Councils in the life of the Church.\* It represents a substantial degree of agreement especially when read in the light of the other two agreed statements on Eucharist and Ministry. The document certainly forms an encouraging basis for further official dialogue and growing co-operation between the two Churches. At the same time it is clear that the degree of agreement represented by the Statement is not such as to permit full institutional unity at least for the time being. Further work needs to be done particularly on the Primacy and Jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome; the Conciliar structures of the Church; and the Infallibility which is linked to the Primacy. To take each of these in turn:

#### (i) Primacy and Jurisdiction.

Apart from para 17 which perhaps gives an oversimplified and idealized picture of the de facto historical primacy which the See of Rome came to enjoy there are valuable sections which try to define what Primacy is and is not (paras 12; 24(d)). But in particular need of clarification is (A) whether the Bishop of Rome is seen as Patriarch of the West; or whether implicit in the claim of universal jurisdiction is one of primacy and jurisdiction over the Eastern Orthodox Churches (cf. paras 23, 24 and preface p.2). This needs to be thought out in close connection with the Anglican-Orthodox conversations.

(B) What is actually meant by jurisdiction as distinct from questions of its extent. Does it, for example, include the power to appoint Bishops? Or, is it rather seen as a point of arbitration in doctrinal disputes (cf. para 17)?

#### (ii) The Conciliar Structure of the Church.

This is the most promising aspect of the Statement. Nevertheless further work needs to be done especially on the participation of the laity in the conciliar life of the Church. This is nowhere made clear in the Statement. Thought might also be given in this connection to the elaboration of a concept of shared authority in relation to doctrine in the Church which is not centred exclusively on the Bishops. Starting points can be found in paras 18 and 22. There are also other important questions which bear on the form the conciliar structure of a reunited Church might take. Would churches in communion with Rome (in the future) work on a national conciliar or synodical pattern which would include the Roman Catholic community at this local, national level? Would the calling of an international, ecumenical council or synod be a regular feature of the Church's life or only a rare event in response to crises? (cf. para 9). What would be the relation of national synods or councils to the Roman See? What would be their respective jurisdictions? How far would the Apostolic See (in Roman parlance) include the Roman bureaucracy i.e. the Curia? Also, besides the question of the relation of national synods or councils to the centre in Rome there is in addition that of their lateral relation to each other. How can national or local councils or synods remain in communion and co-operation with one another? Is this dimension of their life the particular responsibility of the Bishops? Might this be exercised through regional international councils? Thought also needs to be given to the question of what the conciliar structures of the Church are for. The view of the statement is largely that they are the Church's visible means of maintaining its unity in diversity and of articulating its true faith. The statement also envisages an on-going concern with the proclamation of the Gospel through its contextualisation in different cultures (para 15). Another dimension would be ways in which the Churches could act and speak together whenever the need arose.

\* cf. Vatican II; and Faith and Order. Councils and the Ecumenical Movement. World Council of Churches Studies No.5. Geneva. 1968.

## (iii) Infallibility.

The statement in 24(c) that the Pope's definitions 'do no more but no less than express the mind of the Church on issues concerning the divine revelation' is an admirable and frequently expressed view in modern Roman Catholicism. It may be doubted however whether it does full justice to Vatican I's "..... eiusmodi Romani Pontificis definitiones ex sese, non autem ex consensu Ecclesiae, irreformabiles esse". \* Further thought, perhaps in the light of the method outlined in para 15, needs to be given to this point. \*\*

In paras 18-19 various bits of terminology are used: infallibility; indefectibility; and, by implication, inerrancy. What is the difference between these and the relationship between them? Here the Anglican-Orthodox conversations' preference (para 17) for 'inerrancy' should be borne in mind.

There are however deeper and more radical questions about the whole concept of infallibility or whatever. From the point of view of the historical-critical method can any statement be regarded as infallible or irreformable? Is there not a danger here of the Church usurping the authority which properly belongs to God alone? In this connection there is a reminder in para 7 of the limitations and sinfulness of human authorities in the Church. What are the implications of this for claims to infallibility? Also the sections on Infallibility in the Statement need to be read by Anglicans in conjunction with Articles XIX-XXI; XXXIV. Of particular importance - though Anglicans might disagree as to how much - are Articles XIX, XX which declare not only that general councils must be called by 'Princes' but also that 'they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God.' Finally there is the fundamental issue raised by Professor Lampe in *Theology* (Sept. 1977 p. 362) as to the nature of the revelation on the basis of which any authority must be exercised - What is revelation? This is in part the question of the relation between scripture and tradition a discussion of which, so the Provincial Commission felt, ought always to be together with any discussion of authority. More radically it is the question of the authority of any alleged authority and the problematical nature of the concept of infallibility.

Nevertheless an important suggestion that might be considered is to take the conciliar structure of the Church with radical seriousness as it involves the exercise of primacy and infallibility. Might it not be a step forward if the Primacy and infallibility of the Bishop of Rome could only be exercised in concreto in the gathered Conciliar context? Primacy, collegiality, infallibility might be a genuine Anglican - Roman Catholic prospect if always exercised in an open way in Council (cf. especially paras 20-21). Thus a possible meaning of infallibility or inerrancy for the future might be that which is exercised by a universal ecumenical council in matters of faith, a council presided over by the Bishop of Rome and subject to Scripture and Tradition and the reception by the Churches. To this could be added the further proviso that doctrinal statements issuing from this matrix would be regarded as authoritative and binding until further clarification is offered by a subsequent council."

" Compare Anglican-Orthodox Conversations para 17. "Both Anglican and Orthodox agree that infallibility is not the property of any particular institution or person in the Church, but that the promises of the Christ are made to the whole Church. The ecumenicity of Councils is manifested through their acceptance by the Church. For the Orthodox, the Ecumenical Council is not an institution but a charismatic event in the life of the Church and is the highest expression of the Church's inerrancy.

\* Denzinger-Schönmetzer. *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum at Declarationum*. 34th ed. 1967. No.3074.

\*\* "... restatement always builds upon, and does not contradict, the truth intended by the original definition."