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(GS 394)

THE ARCIC STATEMENTS ON EUCHARIST,
MINISTRY AND AUTHORITY

The Bishop of Chichester, the Right Rev. Eric Kemp

The Commission which produced the three Agreed Statements is international - it represents the R.C. Church as a whole and the Anglican Communion as a whole. We today are asked to give our views on those statements as a contribution to the task of the Anglican Consultative Council at its meeting in May, which is to decide what steps forward in Anglican-R.C. relationships should now be taken. That is the purpose of our debate today.

The Malta Report, reprinted as an Appendix to GS 394, recommended the setting up of a Permanent Joint Commission for the oversight of R.C./Anglican relations and the co-ordination of future work undertaken together by our two Communion. ARCIC has not as things turned out been such a Commission. It has had rather the nature of one of the joint sub-commissions which the Report recommended should be constituted to undertake the examination of particular doctrinal questions. The ACC in May must decide whether it is now appropriate to set up such a Permanent Joint Commission as was recommended eleven years ago. I believe that it is necessary to do so if we are to see any real progress.

FOAG had hoped that before it completed its Report there would have been published the elucidations of the Windsor and Canterbury Statements on which ARCIC was known to be working. Unhappily the session of ARCIC arranged for August had to be postponed because of the death of the Pope, and so those elucidations were not available to us in an agreed form. We had reason to believe,

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however, that the quotations from Fr. Jean Tillard, which we have given in paras. 19, 31 and 34, fairly represented ARCIC's thought on certain important points. I have now been able to read the Elucidations and am glad to find that our assumption was well founded.

I will quote two passages which I think members of the Synod will find helpful in relation to the Windsor Statement on the Eucharist. The first is on the eucharistic sacrifice and runs as follows:

"There is therefore, one, historical, unrepeatable sacrifice, offered once for all by Christ and accepted once for all by the Father. In the celebration of the memorial Christ in the Holy Spirit unites His people with himself in a sacramental way so that the Church enters into the movement of his self-offering. In consequence, even though the Church is active in the celebration, this adds nothing to the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross, because the action is itself the fruit of this sacrifice. The Church in celebrating the eucharist gives thanks for the gift of Christ's sacrifice and identifies itself with the will of Christ who has offered himself to the Father on behalf of all mankind."

The second is on Gift and Reception about which ARCIC says:

"In the mystery of the eucharist we discern not one but two complementary movements within an indissoluble unity: Christ giving his body and blood and the communicants feeding upon them in their hearts by faith. Some traditions have placed a special emphasis on the association of Christ's presence with the consecrated elements; others have emphasized Christ's presence in the heart of the believer through reception by faith. In the past acute difficulties have arisen when one or other of these emphases has become almost exclusive. In the opinion of the Commission neither emphasis is incompatible ^{with} eucharistic faith, provided that the complementary movement expressed by the other position is not denied. Eucharistic doctrine must hold together these two movements since in the eucharist, the Sacrament of the New Covenant, Christ gives himself to his people so that they may receive him through faith."

In para. 21 of our Report we ventured to hope that the Elucidations might help in our domestic discussions of reservation and eucharistic adoration. When the document is published I think this will be seen to be so. I cannot quote that section of it now, but I do

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want to read the last two sentences which bear on the meaning of the expression 'substantial agreement'. "That there can be a divergence in matters of practice and in theological judgments relating to them, without destroying a common eucharistic faith, illustrates what we mean by substantial agreement. Differences of theology and practice may well co-exist with a real consensus on the essentials of eucharistic faith - as in fact they do within each of our communions."

The Elucidations in general also confirm the interpretations which we have put upon various passages in the Canterbury Statement. I refer particularly to what is said about 'priesthood' and the phrase which has caused much debate: 'belongs to another realm of the gifts of the Spirit'. It is pointed out that in Christian usage the term priesthood is employed in three distinct ways: the priesthood of Christ, the priesthood of the people of God, the priesthood of the ordained ministry. Of these the first is unique. Christ is our High Priest who has reconciled mankind with the Father. All other priesthood derives from his and is wholly dependent on it.

The priesthood of the whole people of God is dealt with in para. 7 of the Canterbury Statement and is not a matter of disagreement between the two Communions. The Statement places the ordained ministry firmly in the context of the ministry of the whole Church and asserts that it exists for the service of all the faithful. The Canterbury Statement in par. 13 explains that the ordained ministry is called priestly principally because it has a particular sacramental relationship with Christ as High Priest. We have commented in para. 31 on some difficulties which arise from this language. The Elucidations do, however, seem to follow the ^{helpful} argument of Fr. Tillard, quoted in that paragraph, when they

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say: "At the eucharist Christ's people do what he commanded in memory of himself and Christ united them sacramentally with himself in his self-offering. But in this action it is only the ordained minister who presides at the eucharist in which, in the name of Christ and on behalf of his Church, he recites the narrative of the institution of the Last Supper, and invokes the Holy Spirit upon the gifts." The Elucidations go on to emphasise that the word priesthood is used by way of analogy when it is applied to the people of God and to the ordained ministry. I quote: "These are two distinct realities which relate, each in its own way, to the high priesthood of Christ, the unique priesthood of the new covenant, which is their source and model."]

The Windsor and Canterbury Statements differ in an important respect from the Venice Statement on Authority. This last is admittedly incomplete, the beginning rather than the conclusion of a debate. The other two, while not claiming to have said all that can be said about the doctrines of the eucharist and the ministry, do nevertheless claim to have said all that it is necessary to say on questions where agreement is indispensable for unity.

We have to ask ourselves whether we can endorse para. 12 of the Windsor Statement: "We believe that we have reached substantial agreement on the doctrine of the eucharist....It is our hope that, in view of the agreement which we have reached on eucharistic faith, this doctrine will no longer constitute an obstacle to the unity we seek." And para. 17 of the Canterbury Statement: "What we have to say represents the consensus of the Commission on essential matters where it considers that doctrine admits no divergence."

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The importance of this is stated categorically in the Elucidations in relation to the question of mutual recognition of ministries which the Commission believes can now be placed in a new context. "Our agreement on the essential of eucharistic faith with regard to the sacramental presence of Christ and the sacrificial dimension of the eucharist, on the nature and purpose of priesthood, ordination and apostolic succession, is the new context in which the questions should now be discussed. This calls for a reappraisal of the verdict on Anglican Orders in Apostolicae Curae."

The FOAG Report devotes rather more space to the Venice Statement than to the other two put together, partly because the Statement is itself longer and covers a wider range of themes, but chiefly in the hope of being able to contribute to the continuing discussion. We have to say that while on careful examination we do not see any agreed assertion which directly conflicts with any main point of Anglican teaching, there are several places where statements need to be complemented by other truths or put in a wider context. On the other hand we must note with real gratitude that the R.C. discussion of this crucial problem is now conducted with an openness that would not have been possible before Vatican II. On one very important matter, how the voice of the laity should be expressed in contributing to authority, Roman Catholics are looking closely at the workings of Synodical Government, and it may be that in due course they will produce something better, having learned from our experience.

Justified as we are in criticizing many aspects of both the theory and the exercise of authority in the R.C. Church, we need to remember, as paras. 41 and 42 of our Report point out, that the Anglican Communion has as yet found no generally

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accepted theory and practice of authority for itself, and that even within its constituent parts the problem of authority is one which continually presses itself upon us, as some of the issues with which this Synod has had to deal make very plain.

We must also look at the question of authority in a wider context. The Church must not, it is true, allow its doctrine to be shaped entirely by secular thought, but neither should it blind itself to what may be learned from the experience of secular society. Wherever we look, whether at our own social and industrial problems, or at the international community - the United Nations or the E.E.C. - the problem of authority, its nature and its exercise is there. Christian thought should have an important contribution to make in these spheres, but the Church can also learn from them. We should remember that historically the origins of Canon Law and of International Law are intertwined.

The fact that the Venice Statement is full of unresolved problems should not prevent us from welcoming it, as this Synod has already done, and regarding it as a valuable basis for the next stage in the coming together of our two communion.

Our Resolutions have been framed with the May meeting of the ACC principally in mind, but we must ^{remember} ~~not forget~~ that the Malta Report, particularly in paras 8-15 lists a number of things that can and should be done locally to help forward our relationships with one another. One of these suggestions, a common eucharistic lectionary, is before th Synod later this week. Among these proposals FOAG has picked out for special comment the suggestion of regular meetings between R.C. and Anglican episcopates at both national and local level. I was a member of the Com-

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mission responsible for the Malta Report and I remember well the conviction we all had (and none more strongly than the two English R.C. bishops on it) that nothing would really happen on the ground until the bishops of the two Churches came not only to know one another personally but to consult together regularly. The dioceses of London and Westminster have made a start in this. May they be followed by others. A meeting also of bishops at the national level is long overdue and need not be incompatible with those other relationships that we have in the Council for Covenanting and the Anglican-Orthodox dialogue.

Mr. Chairman, a hundred years ago any group of Anglicans who attempted to discuss with R.C.s the subjects of the Agreed Statements would have been regarded with deep suspicion in our Church. Little more than fifty years ago the Malines Conversations had to be undertaken in secrecy and were brought to an abrupt end by authority. Even in the years following the Second World War those who tried to undertake such dialogue were apt to meet with official disapproval. When Archbishop Fisher visited Pope John XXIII he took a brave and risky initiative, one which perhaps only he could have done, but it was an essential preparation for the visit of Archbishop Ramsey in 1966 and the start of the present dialogue, and for the visits of the present Archbishop of Canterbury. With the publication of the Agreed Statements we have come a long way in a short time, but now the first wave of excitement is past, the golden mist has cleared and we see again many of the familiar problems and obstacles which still lie ahead. But we see them now from a different standpoint and with a more surely based confidence that they can and will be overcome. Now is the time when we should encourage our representatives in the ACC to press forward to the next stage on the road to the unity for which we pray.