

COMMENTS ON THE THREE ARCIC STATEMENTS BY THE FAITH AND ORDER ADVISORY GROUP
SUMMARY OF DEBATE IN GENERAL SYNOD, THURSDAY, 22nd FEBRUARY, 1979.

(With the Archbishop of Canterbury's Statement on Tripartite Conversations)

The Bishop of Chichester noted that the Church of England's comments were needed by the Anglican Consultative Council for its meeting in May 1979. Though the Malta Report had envisaged a Permanent Joint Commission to oversee future co-ordination of work between two Communions, ARCIC had acted specifically on doctrine only. FOAG hoped that further ARCIC elucidations would be ready: but Fr. Tillard's comments in paras. 19, 31 and 34 represent ARCIC's new thought both on the eucharist and on the ministry.

On eucharistic sacrifice:

"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."

Again, on the gift of Christ and the reception of his body by faith, ARCIC now 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."

The Bishop felt these new elucidations would help discussions in this country, on reservation and eucharistic adoration.

The first two statements differed from the third, on Authority. The latter began rather than concluding a debate. But the claim, that all that was necessary had now been said on eucharist and ministry, was fair. The elucidations now state that this much agreement having been reached, a new context was created.

"Our agreement ... calls for a reappraisal of the verdict on Anglican Orders in Apostolicae Curae".

FOAG in reviewing the Authority Statement felt that while no agreed assertion conflicted directly with Anglican teaching, yet some statements needed complementing by other truths, or to be put in a wider context.

The openness of Roman Catholic debate was welcome, and Roman Catholic study of synodical procedure specially on the part the laity should play in contributing to authority might be useful - they might better our experience.

The Anglican Communion has so far no generally accepted theory and practice of authority for itself. This problem presses upon us too. In the wider context, something could be learned from secular society eg the international community, United Nations or EEC. Many things could and should be done locally to forward our relations with one another (eg a common eucharistic lectionary).

FOAG drew attention to the value of regular meetings between Roman Catholic and Anglican episcopates, both nationally and locally.

A long period of mutual suspicion had now been followed by much action within a short time, following Archbishop Ramsay's visit to Pope Paul VI. But now the first excitement was over and problems and obstacles could be seen, from a different standpoint than that of 100 years ago. We should encourage our representatives in ACC to press forward on the road to unity.

The Archdeacon of Canterbury spoke of the patience which had been needed in the past 30 years. It was not true the ecumenical movement was 'running out of steam' or 'failing' because everything had not happened yet. It was time for ordinary people to play their part. He called on the Roman Catholic laity to awake. The Anglican Communion had already in many places ratified the ARCIC Statements in bodies comprising bishops, clergy and laity; the Roman Catholic Church had so far only acted through its hierarchies. No Roman Catholic priests or people were yet involved. Anglicans believed authority belonged with the whole people of God; hence we found the Roman Catholic concept of authority defective. Our laity could help the Roman Catholic laity; elsewhere in the world these were far more restive than in England and Wales, which were untypical. We should also listen to the Roman Catholic criticism that Anglicans were an undisciplined lot. No Anglicans felt a specific obligation even to worship regularly; or saw any limit to their right to think and behave as they pleased. However, as nominal adherents depart, this situation was improving. Together we should now live and work at the nature of Christ's continuing authority in the church and world, and how it should be identified.

Miss Howard recalled that ARCIC conversations were only part of a wider movement. Many churches were already in bilateral conversations with each other, and especially in WCC, in multilateral conversation. International dialogues inevitably select a few subjects leaving others undiscussed (eg the nature of the church). When two communions only were concerned, this insensibly shaped the way they related to each other, and could act to the detriment of the wider relationships. We should avoid elevating the ARCIC Statements into one more 'historic formulary of the Church of England'!

In the next stage, both bodies should look at membership of discussions - ARCIC was too exclusively of 'First World' representatives.

Finally, theology only achieves so much - while Anglicans might feel the present consensus 'sufficient' what if the Roman Catholics said 'It is not sufficient for us'? We might differ on how much agreement was necessary. Could the Roman Catholic Church begin to rethink Apostolicae Curae or not?

Canon P. Boulton spoke to his amendment, adding a new paragraph:

"(d)therefore expresses its conviction that the Anglican Communion should now proceed to the implementation of the stage-by-stage progression to full communion with the Roman Catholic Church recommended by the 1968 Malta Report, particularly by the appointment of the Permanent Joint Commission for continuing oversight of official Anglican/Roman Catholic Relations.

Both bilateral and multilateral conversations often stopped at the theology stage: this amendment would carry the work over towards the office-holders and humbler people; it would implement the Synod's 1977 resolution about the need for action to bring about closer sharing. The 1977 Common Declaration of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope had said "the respective authorities must evaluate the conclusions" of ARCIC soon but required a context in which further work could succeed. Despite obstacles seen, a relationship at all levels was then sought. Again, Cardinal Hume in 1978 had hoped for evaluation as soon as possible, reminding Anglicans of the koinonia between our two Churches. ARCIC and the Joint Marriage Commission should have been sub-commission to the wider Commission envisaged at Malta. He felt the Anglican Consultative Council in May would be helped by a more specific note in the Church of England's recommendations. It was a matter too important for either of the Secretariats to work on alone.

The Bishop of Guildford praised the ARCIC methodology. It had escaped polemics and each church had sought to accept the experience of another church, of the living Christ within it. A new 'hallmark of the Church' might be seen as Christ's presence in the life of the Church. This should apply to our relations to all other Churches.

Mr. Persson hoped for further investigations eg. on scripture and tradition, justification by faith, and authority.

Canon Free commended the recent ECEW document on 'Local covenants'. Some steps not yet internationally possible were possible locally. But the Church of England should not imagine its presence in ecumenical discussions was essential to understandings eg. between the Roman Catholic Church and other Churches. However, local ecumenical projects provided a rounded ecumenism; unfortunately Roman Catholics were seldom involved.

Lt.Col.Taylor spoke to his amendment which requested opinions to be obtained from the dioceses on the Authority Statement. Authority presented an ongoing challenge unlike the subjects of eucharist and ministry. There were special constitutional problems in England which would require unravelling not only in the Church context but by the State, specially the Act of Supremacy.

The Bishop of Derby applauded the method whereby ARCIC had put the best expressions of opposing viewpoints together. The three Statements were thus the right way to proceed. But he was disquieted by

- (a) a complaint heard from the CNI lest the Anglican Communion was giving up interest in the non-Roman Churches, and
- (b) by the very one-sided fear of prejudicing union with Rome shown in the debate about ordaining women.

We seemed to cold-shoulder those with whom we had resolved to covenant.

We should act in the context of devotion to union in every part of Christendom, not direct exclusive attention to one Church.

Prebendary Boyd wished to request, "through the Anglican Consultative Council, the ARCIC to initiate a joint study of the doctrine of the Church with a view to producing an Agreed Statement, in order to provide an overall context for its three previous Agreed Statements". He cited some Roman Catholic doubts about Anglican baptism, due to doubts about the theology of the Church. His proposals might clear this suspicion, and was in line with Cardinal Hume's point that 'a theology of the Church still needs to be considered and completed'.

The Bishop of Chichester responded. He valued the wider context invoked by Miss Howard, and considered the approach of local ecumenical projects of the utmost importance. But in order to keep the variety of relationships with all churches he deprecated any local projects where eg. the Roman Catholics were on one side and the Anglicans with the Free Churches on another, thus polarising attitudes. He saw a tripartite relationship as the best. He would accept Mr. Boyd's and Canon Boulton's amendments but wish to resist those concerning study of justification and authority.

ARCIC would in fact be working on a statement in the areas covered by these motions.

The basic motion spoke of sufficient congruence with Anglican teaching. This meant, not agreement with every word or phrase in the Statements, but enough for more action.

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The report by FOAG was received and the amended motion reads as follows:

"This Synod:

- (a) endorses the opinion of the Faith and Order Advisory Group that the three Agreed Statements are 'sufficiently congruent with Anglican teaching to provide a theological basis for further dialogue';
- (b) draws the attention of the Anglican Consultative Council, and through it, the attention of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission to the comments and the requests for clarification contained in this Report;
- (c) requests, through the Anglican Consultative Council, the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission to initiate a joint study of the doctrine of the Church with a view to producing an agreed statement, in order to provide an over-all context for its three previous Agreed Statements on Eucharist, Ministry and Authority;
- (d) further draws the attention of the Anglican Consultative Council to the fact that "doctrinal agreements reached by theological commissions cannot by themselves achieve the goal of Christian Unity"; and
- (e) therefore expresses its conviction that, in consultation with the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion should now proceed to the implementation of the stage-by-stage progression to full communion recommended by the 1968 Malta Report, particularly by the appointment of a joint commission for continuing oversight and development of official Anglican/Roman Catholic relations."

STATEMENT BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
TO THE GENERAL SYNOD

Tuesday, 20th February, 1979.

In the course of the debate on the ordination of women on 8th November last, the Bishop of St. Albans made the suggestion that it would be fruitful to initiate talks on a tripartite basis between our own Church and the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.

The Standing Committee, in giving consideration to this suggestion, asked me if I would have a preliminary informal discussion with Cardinal Hume. This I was glad to do, and the discussion took place at Lambeth Palace on Friday, 12th January. The Bishop of London was also present.

I reminded the Cardinal that the Synod had, in its debate on the ordination of women to the priesthood, been much impressed and influenced by what he had said in his address to it on 1st February 1978. It had noted the warning he had given about deciding to ordain women unilaterally, and also his observation that in the Church of God the faith and its formulation, tradition and ministries should be decided in consultation with other local Churches. I hoped, therefore, that since the Synod has postponed a decision, he would be able in due course to give us his guidance as to how the dialogue should continue. The Cardinal gave me assurances that he would discuss the whole question with the Pope in the near future.

As to the Orthodox, I am glad to tell the members of the Synod that the Bishop of St. Albans, in the course of a period of sabbatical leave, is, in his capacity as Chairman of the Anglican/Orthodox Conversations, visiting the Patriarchates in Istanbul, Jerusalem, Cyprus, Athens, Alexandria, Belgrade, Sofia, Bucharest and Moscow. During these visits he will take the opportunity of discussing the matter of the ordination of women with leaders of those Churches.

When Cardinal Hume has been able to consult with the authorities in Rome, and when the Bishop of St. Albans has been able to report on his visits to the Orthodox, we shall be able to see our way forward more clearly. We must also, of course, continue to keep in touch with the Old Catholics.

It would seem to me also to be the course of wisdom, not to say of courtesy, to keep in close touch with those Churches, such as the Methodist, and the Lutheran and other Churches of the Reformed tradition, which already ordain women in their ministries.

It is for the Anglican Communion as such, and not for the Church of England as one part of it, to enter into dialogue with other Churches. In pursuance of the Lambeth Conference Resolution 21(5), "promotion of dialogue concerning the ordination of women" is on the agenda for the Anglican Consultative Council which meets in May in London, Ontario.

The ordination of women raises theological questions of fundamental importance. We must remember that theological discussions have been proceeding for many years with other Churches, of which the ARCIC discussion is one notable example. We see its fruit in the three Agreed Statements, on Eucharist, Ministry and Authority. These reveal a sufficient consensus to give us hope that a new discussion on such matters as the place of women in the Christian life and ministry can be profitably pursued.

I would also remind the Synod that much more than theological discussion was intended. The Malta Report itself envisaged co-operation in the pastoral, social and educational fields. We do well to listen to the conclusion of the final Agreed Statement:

"Doctrinal agreements reached by theological commissions cannot, however, by themselves achieve the goal of Christian unity ... a unity at the level of faith which not only justifies but requires action to bring about a closer sharing between our two communions in life, worship and mission."

This has been taken up in the FOAG Report which the Synod will be debating on Thursday. I very much hope that action will be taken along these lines, both in England and elsewhere, as well as maintaining and developing relations with other Churches.