

COMMENTS ON ARCIC DRAFTS ON MINISTRY

from

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There are three issues which most readers of any document we produce on Ministry will expect to find explicitly discussed:

1. Is episcopacy of the esse, plene esse or bene esse of the Church?
2. What does 'apostolic succession' mean in relation to 'valid' orders?
3. Does ordination confer a permanent 'something' on the ordained?

We may regard these questions as old-fashioned, etc., but many will argue that they are crunch questions. They do not receive adequate treatment here. Indeed, these drafts are either somewhat evasive or else anodyne. Thus:

1. We hear only of 'the historic threefold ministry'. But 'historic' is, historically, a deliberately ambiguous word. It allows (and has allowed) bishops to be among the adiaphora and all 'polities' to be a matter of de facto evolution, convenience, etc. Our document must get off the fence - else informed folk will reject it as disingenuous. I appreciate the difficulties of NT evidence, etc.; but I think we have to be a bit more explicit.
2. We are told that the ministry is not delegated by the faithful, simply. We cannot support a crude pipeline theory. So what is the succession positively? In view of the intense controversies in the past no document would be worth producing which did not explain more explicitly in what the succession consists.
3. For historical reasons we cannot ignore the need to comment on the idea of permanence of the 'character' of the sacrament. This is a test question; a nettle that must be grasped.

Two other general points:

1. The documents seem a bit inward-looking. Perhaps more could be said about the ministry to the world.
2. Perhaps the Godward aspect of ministry (general and special) could be stressed a bit more. T.S. Gregory complained, somewhat unfairly, that the Agreed Statement was all about us; he could say the same about these drafts,

SOME COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL TEXTS

1. THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD IN RELATION TO CHRIST, ETC.

It seems to me that Tillard's distinction between the priesthood of all believers and the special ministry is obscured here. I find the penultimate para. on p.3 ('Mankind is called, etc') unsatisfactory, the sentence beginning on I.I2 on p.4 ('By sacramental action, etc') misleading and the last para. on p.4, as the note suggests, inappropriate.

2. ORDINATION

Top of p.2: but the changing form of the diaconate is not an example, surely, of the volution of varied patterns of ministry' - at least, it is not what most people will think of first nor the most important. Surely we have to say something about the emergence of the threefold ministry in the first centuries (mysterious though it may be), acknowledge it as in some sense now God-given. On p.1 the last sentence of the first para. ('the community created, etc') should surely be the opening line of the whole document and go on to give some authority to thr structure that both communions now live with.

P.5, para 1, l.7: ('The sacramental nature, etc'). Is this a happy way of expressing it?

I wonder if the document should not refer more to the holiness of life required of the minister (& which is first source of his authority); on healing, in its largest sense; and even more than it does, on the ministry of the Word.