

RESTRICTED

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ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

Fr. George Tavard: A Note on the Poringland Draft: 23.7.73

I have retired for a few days in my brother's Summer house in the Vosges to meditate on the text. And it is with some uneasiness that I have reached the conclusion that the draft does not really do what it intends to do. Specifically, it intends to state a faith, and it remains caught in all sorts of theological problems. Also, it does not seem to follow the announced plan, as it goes back and forth between the present situation and earlier times.

Rather than send detailed correction proposals, I have tried to make my own draft (attached herewith). It follows this plan:

1. Introduction.
2. Statement of intent.
3. Ministry of the Church.
4. Ministry of the Word and the sacraments.
5. Unity.
6. Universality.
7. Holiness.
8. Service.
9. Ordination.
10. Reconciliation of ministries.
11. Conclusion.

The rationale behind it would be that we ought to avoid language that is acceptable only in some theologies of ministry ('co-ordinating' ministry I have problems with...); that we ought to keep to the essentials; that we should not avoid mentioning the thorniest problems, such as the primacy in the Church (which is part of the ministry) or the question of Anglican Orders (if we do not speak of this at all, we will be called naive or dishonest by many); that we ought to follow a plan which is - more or less - self-explanatory.

Tentative draft for a statement on Ministry

1. At Windsor this Commission reached consensus on a statement concerning the eucharist. Our task since then has been to investigate ministry, in a similar attempt to express the agreement of our Churches in their faith. We now present our consensus, in the expectation that it will be seriously studied in our Churches, and in the hope that it will contribute to better relations among their members and to the organic union that remains our goal. As we have made good use of studies on ministry made in several Churches and in different parts of the world, so we wish this agreed statement to help toward mutual understanding and reconciliation among all Christian communions.

2. Our purpose is neither to sort out the different historical hypotheses about the origins of the Christian ministry, nor to show how the threefold ministry relates to the pattern described in the New Testament. Rather, knowing that both our Churches have always intended faithfully to adhere to the traditional form of ministry which they have inherited, we plan to state our common understanding of what our ministers do and are.

3. In the design of God the Father, the Church and its members are called to serve. They serve God by their life of prayer and surrender to the divine grace, and by their careful attention to the needs of all human beings. Guided by the Word of God, they should witness to the liberating action of Christ and assist mankind in its hope for true freedom. In the power of the Spirit they should offer themselves to God in praise and worship, always giving thanks for his glory; and they should devote their energies to bringing mankind the fruits of salvation. The priesthood of all the faithful expresses this commitment to the redemptive mission of Christ. It calls them to responsible discernment of the presence of the Spirit in mankind.

4. The Church is led, in this service, by its ministers of the Word and the sacraments. With the assistance of deacons and other ministers, bishops and priests preach the Word and proclaim the Gospel. Interpreting the Scriptures, they announce the good news of faith, they exhort the faithful to live in agapè, and they prepare the Kingdom in hope by

bringing the Gospel to all nations. They invite the people of God to meet the Lord in the sacraments, which they make available. They preside at the eucharistic worship, in which the Church is renewed in unity, and where its members, finding one another anew in communion, are strengthened for their tasks in the world.

5. Through the many ways in which this ministry has been exercised in different times and places, its purpose has remained constant since its emergence in the early days of the Church. It is destined to be the instrument of the Spirit to symbolize and maintain continuity with the apostolic period. Through it the apostolicity of the Church is preserved and promoted.

6. The ministry of bishops, priests and deacons also contributes to the dimension of universality in each local Church. For each bishop, who, with his priests and deacons, exercises the spiritual oversight of the people of God, also stands in collegial relationship with all other bishops. Our two Churches have structures of collegiality in which bishops consult with each other and can eventually reach decisions as a body. The function of those who are given primacy at the several levels of the episcopal college ought to be envisaged in the context of this universality and this collegiality.

7. The Lord of the Church calls his people to holiness. He invites them to manifest, in the quality of their life, the holiness which he has bestowed on the Church by uniting it to himself. The ministers of Word and sacraments assist the faithful in answering this call. Bishops and priests are at their disposal for encouragement and advice. Mindful of their own state, they strive to build up the body of Christ by edifying one another, and they remind the people of its holy calling by example no less than by words.

8. Bishops and priests are at the service of the people of God for its education in the Gospel. This requires careful attention to the particular needs of our own day. Ministers must promote peace and reconciliation in families, races, classes and nations. Even at the cost of their own comfort, they must show compassion to those who suffer, provide

assistance to the poor, defend the victims of oppression, and promote the ideals of love and justice in the organisation of society.

9. Ministers are called to their task by the Spirit through their ordination by bishops. Ordination is a sacramental act. By ordination, deacons are associated to the ministry of Word and sacraments; priests are given the authority to preside at the eucharist and they are joined to the bishops for ministering the Word and the sacraments; bishops are introduced into the episcopal college, inserted in the apostolic succession, and given the responsibility of leadership in the local Church. Ordination entails the promise of divine grace for the ministers' work and sanctification; the priesthood of Christ is presented to them as a model; and the Spirit leaves his indelible mark upon those he has chosen and consecrated. In both our Churches, ordination is unrepeatable, for it is the work of God, whose choices are without repentance.

10. We are painfully aware of the remaining difficulties between our Churches in the matter of episcopacy and priesthood. We are in profound agreement as to the purpose and the structures of the ministry of the Gospel. Yet disagreement arose in the 16th century and came to a climax in the 19th, as to whether episcopacy had been properly transmitted to the Anglican bishops. While we appreciate the many historical and theological studies that have been made on this question, we encourage further research on the sacraments, and responsible suggestions as to ways of reconciling the estranged forms of the Christian ministry. We note with gladness that the current ecumenical rapprochement is creating a situation where mutual recognition of the validity of our ministries becomes desirable. We look forward to the days when the highest authorities of our Churches will be able to celebrate the eucharist together.

11. This statement is by no means an exhaustive treatment of the subject. We have not attempted to compose a treatise of theology or to solve theological problems. But we have wished to focus our attention on the expression of our

common faith. This allows for a variety of theologies, for diversities in assessing the historical data, for differing emphases and customs in the practice of ministry, for different disciplines in the lives of ministers in keeping with varied cultural and historical traditions. We have only endeavoured to pinpoint the faith which lies at the core of all these pluralities of situation and interpretation in our two Churches and which gives strength and fruitfulness to their ministry.