

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSIONReactions to the Poringland Draft Statement on
Ministry by The Revd.Fr.Barnabas M. Ahern, C.P.

General Observation: - I do not find this draft satisfactory. It is difficult to discover the inner logic underlying its development, with the result that its affirmations seem to lack strength and cohesiveness.

The paper leaves me with the impression that it does not square with its terms of reference, viz., "to seek a deeper understanding of the reality of the ministry which is consonant with biblical teaching and with the tradition of our common inheritance" (Alan C. Clark, p.2).

Particular Observations: - on "biblical teaching." The New Testament presents certain elements which ~~must~~ feature clearly in a document on church ministry:

- a. Jesus, as Prophet, ^{must} Apostle and High Priest of the New Covenant, exercises a unique and eternal ministry of reconciliation, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor 1:30; Heb. passim).
- b. This ministry of salvation He exercises through the ministry of those who, in the power of His Spirit, serve the Gospel.
N.B. - It would remove a lot of misunderstanding and would help to narrow the focus of our document if we were to face the fact that the New Testament has little to say explicitly about "the ministry of the Church" it almost always speaks concretely about the "ministry of ministers."
- c. The "ministry of ministers" in the NT is multi-faceted; but this ministry is always seen as God's way of radicating the Gospel of Christ in men's hearts and of building up the Body of Christ, which is the Church (Eph 4:11-13; 1 Cor 12:4-30).
- d. Various ministries could be exercised by one and the same person.
- e. Among the ministries there was one type which involved administration, authority and oversight - for the community's fidelity to the Gospel and for the co-ordination of the various aspects of its life in Christ.
N.B. - James in Jerusalem and Paul in the Gentile churches offer classic examples of this ministry.
The Pauline letters show that others also exercised this kind of ministry in the local churches; e.g., 1 Thes 5:12-13; Phil 1:1; 1 Cor 12:28; 16:16; Rom 12:7.
The vocabulary which describes this type of ministry is extensive: episkopoi-presbyteroi, proistamenoí, kyberneseis, poimenai.
The elements which eventually came to the fore in the exercise of this ministry are most abundantly described in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. What is most significant about these letters is the author's confidence that the ministry assigned to Timothy and Titus will not appear to their people as something novel.
- f. The only NT examples of ecclesial endorsement for ministry (by imposition of hands) are confined to those ministries - mentioned in e - which would involve directive and co-ordinating authority in the local churches; cfr Acts 6:1-6; 13:2-3; 14:23; 20:17,28-32; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6.
- g. These facts of New Testament life (and whatever was implicit in NT practice) provided the principles for the particularization of ministry and the development of ministerial doctrine which appear in the Church from the 2nd century on.

Particular Suggestions: - I wonder if the document might not have a closer inner unity if we were to follow this outline:

Intro:- A paragraph expressing the urgency of expressing Anglican-Roman faith in the need for the specially ordained ministry of these churches.

I The Unique and Eternal Ministry of Jesus, Prophet, Apostle and Priest.

II The Exercise of Jesus' Ministry through those whom He "sent" to serve the Gospel - the Twelve, Paul, the Seven, the ministers of the churches of the Diaspora.

- a. The early church was rich with many forms of ministry.
- b. The cardinal element in these ministries was their "service of the Gospel" - viz., their power to diffuse, radicate and render vital the Gospel mystery in the life of the community.
- c. Several ministries could be exercised by one and the same person.
- d. Among the ministries a certain type of ministry (episkopos-presbyteros) involved directive and co-ordinating authority in the community.
- e. At the end of the first century and thereafter, the ministry in d came to be recognised as the ecclesial ministry par excellence.

III Elements in the special ecclesial ministry of "episkopos."

- a. He sacramentalizes the reconciling, uniting and sanctifying ministry of Jesus, especially through eucharistic ministration.
- b. His role in the community must be endorsed by ordination (as already anticipated in the ecclesial endorsement of those NT ministers who were to rule the churches; Act 6:1-6; 13:2-3; 14:23; 20:17,28-32; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6).
- c. Designation for the ministry of episkopos commits a man to the service of the Gospel - as it is authentically taught in all the churches through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- d. The role of the episkopos in the present life of the local and universal church, resulting from his ordination into the fraternity of episkopoi, makes him a "successor of the Twelve".

IV Relation of the other ecclesial ministries to that of the episkopos.

1st August, 1973