

INTRODUCTION

Para. 1. I had some difficulty with the last sentence of paragraph 1. On a first reading it suggested that basic agreement had been reached "in the doctrinal areas that have been the source of controversy between us". I knew that this could not be the meaning. The questions of Anglican orders and of the Primacy have been sources of controversy, and no agreement has been reached, or attempted, in those matters as paragraph 17 makes clear. Recognizing this, I then find it difficult to discern the distinction between "our basic agreement in the doctrinal areas..." in the first half of the sentence and "the wider context of our common conviction about the ministry" in the second. The two phrases seem to me to speak of the same area of study. In what way is "our common convictions about the ministry" different from -- or wider than -- "our basic agreement" in the doctrinal areas connected with Ministry?

I think the sentence was intended to say something like: "It seeks to express our basic agreement (or our common convictions) about the ministry, a doctrinal area within which there has been controversy between us".

Para 2. I think it would have been useful if something positive could have been said here about the ministry of the whole Church (the priesthood of all the faithful). This doctrine is implied in paragraph 7, and less clearly in paragraph 3. But I should have preferred a brief statement in the introduction about any agreement the Commission may have reached on this subject. It would, I think, have done much to commend the Statement to other Christian bodies (although I am aware that as it stands it has had a cordial reception from some of the "Free Churches" in England.)

I am not very clear as to what this paragraph intends. There are some undefined terms. What is meant by "ministerial service"? It seems to be distinguished from "the ordained ministry". What is meant by "more specific ways of service"? More specific than what? --than the diversity of forms of ministerial service mentioned in the previous sentence? Is the paragraph after all talking about the priesthood of the whole Church, or only about the activities of a limited number of gifted and willing people?

MINISTRY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Para. 3 to 6. My chief comment on this section is that it is a masterly summary of the New Testament evidence about the ministry, its origin and purpose (4), its flexibility and variety (5), its necessity and the normative principles which govern it (6).

Para. 6. Perhaps it is worth suggesting that if it is agreed that "the full emergence of the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon required a longer period than the apostolic age", ordination in the apostolic succession cannot mean what it is so often supposed (erroneously, I think) to mean, namely a succession of monarchical bishops extending all the way back to one or other of the original apostles.

What is said about apostolic succession in paragraph 16 does not seem to me to suggest an answer to the question which might well be put from the cross-benches: In view of what is said at the end of paragraph 6, why does the ordination of a bishop by other bishops "ensure the historical continuity of (the new bishop's) church with the apostolic church and of its bishop with the original apostolic ministry" any more securely than if the bishop were ordained by a representative group of presbyters?