

THE ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
AGREED STATEMENT ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY
=====

by The Reverend Christopher J. Hill
Anglican Secretary to the Joint Commission

Ministry and Ordination

A Statement on the Doctrine of the Ministry, Agreed by the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission was produced at Canterbury in the early autumn of 1973 and published by the SPCK on the 13th December, 1973, with the permission of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Holy See. As well as the Statement itself the Co-Chairmen of the Commission, the Bishop of Ossory and the Bishop of Elmham, wrote a preface noting the fact that the document was offered to the two Churches for discussion and to their authorities for consideration. They indicated their belief that in the Statement on the Doctrine of the Ministry both Anglicans and Roman Catholics would recognise their own faith. An authorised Appendix to the Statement by the Reverend Colin Davey was added to describe the Commission's discussion of the doctrine of the ministry, some critics having felt that the Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine had been published in somewhat of a vacuum as to the precise mechanics of its production. At the request of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity a note on the Status of the Document was also added to clarify possible misunderstanding in the previous Statement and asking for constructive criticism of the document. Commentaries on the Statement on the Doctrine of the Ministry have been written by the Roman Catholic Co-Chairman, the Right Reverend Alan Clark (*Ministry and Ordination. An Agreed Statement of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission* - Catholic Information Office), the Reverend Julian Charley (*Agreement on the Doctrine of the Ministry* - Grove Books) and Fr. Herbert Ryan, S.J. (*The Canterbury Statement on Ministry and Ordination* - "Worship" and "The Catholic Mind"). The Statement has been translated into Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Swahili and Swedish.

Anglican Response

Official synodical comment upon the Canterbury Statement has so far been sparing, though that which has been made has been in the main warm and has generally endorsed the Statement.

The following synodical bodies are known to have made comments so far:

- (a) The Anglican Church of Canada. In June 1975 the Canadian General Synod gave approval to the Eucharist and Ministry Agreements. The Synod recognised an identity of faith expressed in the ARCIC documents.
- (b) The Church of England. In November 1974 the General Synod was addressed by the Roman Catholic Co-Chairman of the Commission on its work. The Synod gave the bishop a standing ovation and subsequently passed a motion welcoming both Statements and commending them to the study of the Church, particularly at the parochial level. The Canterbury Statement was also well received by the Convocations of Canterbury and York meeting separately during the previous month.

551/2

- (c) The Church of the Province of South Africa. The Standing Committee of the Provincial Synod meeting in April last year appointed a committee to examine the Statement with a view to its endorsement by the 1976 Synod.
- (d) The South Pacific Anglican Council. In 1974 the Council issued a statement welcoming the agreement especially in its emphasis on the total ministry of the Church in its mission and on the part the ordained ministry fulfils in this as a focus of leadership and unity. The Council requested a reconsideration of the Roman Catholic decision on Anglican Orders, as expressed in *Apostolicae Curae*, on the basis of the new context to ministry expressed by the Canterbury Statement.
- (e) The Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. In October 1974 the House of Bishops received and endorsed the Agreed Statement and commended it to the Church for study and evaluation, and to the 1976 General Convention for such action as it might care to make. The Bishops saw their own faith and the faith of the Church in the document.
- (f) The Church in Wales. The Standing Committee of the Governing Body requested its Doctrinal Commission to comment on the Agreed Statements. On the Canterbury document the Commission gave welcome and endorsement but asked for an expansion of the phrase, "another realm of the gifts of the Spirit" (13). The Governing Body accepted the comment of the Doctrine Commission in April 1975 and commended the Statement for study in the Church at large.

Less official comment has been more forthcoming and more varied in its reactions to the document. In December 1973 the then Archbishop of Canterbury warmly welcomed the Statement as going behind the controversies of the sixteenth century and seeking to describe the essence of the ordained ministry. Dr. Ramsey saw the Statement as ultimately affecting the decision on Anglican Orders made by the Roman Catholic Church in the Bull *Apostolicae Curae*. He saw the Statement as bringing the day of reconciliation of the Churches nearer. The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. expressed similar sentiments.

On the negative side the total agreement of the Commission has been questioned by an apparent discrepancy of interpretation between the commentaries of the Rt. Rev. Alan Clark and the Rev. Julian Charley over the phrase "another realm of the gifts of the Spirit" (13). The Editorial of the English journal "Theology" drew particular attention to this in its edition of February 1974. Nevertheless the document has received a generally better assessment from Evangelicals than the Eucharist Statement.

Roman Catholic Response

The Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity has invited comment on the Statement from Episcopal Conferences. Distinguished theologians, including several members of the International Theological Commission, have also commented in detail on the Statement. In general informed Roman Catholic reaction has been more specific in its theological criticism both positive and negative.

The following Episcopal Conferences are known to have made comments so far:

- (a) Episcopal Conference of Argentina. The Conference offered a synthesis of the views of theologians and generally welcomed the document as positive and expressing Catholic doctrine, though using untraditional language. An absence of proper treatment of Order as a sacrament was regretted.
- (b) Episcopal Conference of Belgium. In the summer of 1974 the Belgian Hierarchy commented favourably on the Agreed Statement whilst posing certain questions. Their comments showed considerable familiarity with traditional Anglican thought and it was recommended that the document be published for study. In the light of the Statement they felt there was a real possibility of fruitfully opening the question of Anglican ordinations.
- (c) Episcopal Conference of Canada. The bishops' own responses, together with those of other competent individuals and groups, went into a composite set of "Observations" on the Statement in March 1974. A third accepted the Statement without qualification whilst the bulk accepted it with some reservations and a small minority rejected it. In general those who welcomed the document saw it as a solid theological foundation for mutual discussion and understanding of the doctrine of the ministry. Criticism of a lack of precision was made and it was felt by some that there were important lacunae. Some specific suggestions were made as to rewriting.
- (d) Episcopal Conference of England and Wales. In April 1974 after consideration by the Theological Commission of the Hierarchy, the Conference resolved to receive the Statement for study, noting that it was deserving of serious consideration. They also asked for clarification both of divergent interpretations and in the light of *Mysterium Ecclesiae* with regard to the role of the ordained minister as a sacrificing priest.
- (e) Episcopal Conference of Ireland. The Irish Theological Commission was given the task of commenting upon the Statement and its findings were accepted by the Conference in March 1974. The reaction was generally favourable but doubts were expressed as to whether it would carry the Evangelical wing of Anglicanism. It was also questioned whether the doctrine of the ministry as expressed in the Statement was sufficiently set in a sacramental theology of orders. The nature of the ministry as priestly was felt to be essential to any expression of the doctrine of ministry.
- (f) Episcopal Conference of Rwanda and Burundi. The Conference wrote to the Secretariat to say that the Statement had caused some discussion.
- (g) National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the U.S.A. The Committee on Doctrine of the National Committee of Catholic Bishops reported a firmly negative judgment on whether the Statement expressed Catholic doctrine. One of the general objections to the document was that it made no appeal to the teaching authority of the Church. However the Commission for Doctrine, Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops commented very positively in February 1975. With considerable positive criticism there was also the request for further study about the Church's role in the abiding offering of Christ. The Commission felt that the Statement opened the way to a reconsideration of Anglican Orders.

- (h) Episcopal Conference of Zambia. At the July 1974 Episcopal Meeting approval was given to the Statement with a reservation on divergent interpretations and a request for clarification on the priesthood of the faithful and the ordained priesthood, the priest as not merely chosen to preside at the Eucharist and on Apostolic Succession.

Comments by individual Roman Catholic theologians naturally vary from person to person. One of the more significant contributions came from Fr. Yves Congar, O.P. He asked whether the Statement satisfied the demands of the Catholic faith. He saw these as ordination to a specific (special) ministry, in succession to apostolic faith, which is unrepeatable, in the service of the unity and harmony of the Church. He saw these questions answered affirmatively by the Statement. Not all Roman Catholic theologians commented so positively as Congar, but most welcomed the Statement as a significant advance.

National Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission's Response

Naturally national Anglican/Roman Catholic groups can be considered to be interested parties. Nevertheless the universal welcome and general endorsement of the Statement by such groups would appear to be significant. This has taken place in: Australia, Belgium, Canada, East Africa, England, France, Japan, Papua New Guinea, Scotland, South Africa, the South Pacific, Uganda and the United States of America. In many cases these national groups have taken steps to encourage more general study of the Statement sometimes in the form of a discussion pamphlet or the organisation of conferences.

The Present Work of the Commission on Authority.

Though some work had already been done on the question of authority (represented in the 'Venice Papers' Section I) the Commission began its work on authority in earnest at Grottaferrata, near Rome, in the autumn of 1974. There three sub-commissions worked on the themes of the New Testament and Authority, Ecclesiology and Koinonia, Infallibility and Indefectibility. The sub-commissions produced working papers on these three themes which were then considered by the whole Commission. A number of significant papers were prepared for the meeting by individuals and groups and the Commission itself commissioned four papers on Authority in the New Testament, Primacy, Infallibility and Jurisdiction in preparation for its meeting in 1975. During the Commission's meeting at Grottaferrata it was received in audience by His Holiness Pope Paul VI at Castelgandolfo.

A sub-commission met in London during the early summer of 1975 and produced a preparatory schema for the full Commission treating of authority up to, but not including, the problem of Primacy and Infallibility. The schema included discussion of the fundamental authority of Christ, the Scriptures, the baptised Christian vis-à-vis the world, holiness and special gifts and within the latter the particular authority of the ordained ministry, the local churches in Synod and Council, and the authority of the consensus of the People of God. The aim was to allow the full commission to move straight into the heart of the problem by continuing the discussion from that point onwards.

The Commission met in Oxford during the autumn and considered the commissioned papers and the sub-commission's schema. The Commission split into two sub-commissions, one to deal with Primacy and the other Infallibility. The first sub-commission continued on from the preparatory schema and dealt with Primacy producing an incomplete draft under the general title "Unity". The second sub-commission in dealing with Infallibility produced an incomplete draft under the general title "Truth". Two memoranda were commissioned for the 1976 meeting, one on the compatibility, or otherwise, of some form of universal primacy with Anglican ecclesiology, the other on the understanding of the Roman primacy as *de fide* for the Roman Catholic. During the Commission's Oxford meeting both the Secretary General of the Anglican Consultative Council and His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury visited it during its working sessions. A sub-commission will be meeting in England in the early summer to complete and put together the two drafts produced at Oxford in 1975 in preparation for the full Commission meeting in Venice in the autumn of 1976. It is still an open question whether a consensus on authority can be achieved at this meeting. It is also open whether such a document would reflect total agreement or contain two statements side by side on the question of Primacy and Infallibility. Nevertheless the Commission remains hopeful of a common answer to the basic question as to how the Christian Church is maintained in the truth of the Gospel, even if in the past Anglicans and Roman Catholics have explained this process in different ways.

* * * * *