

THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN and GROWTH IN COMMUNION;
ADDITIONS IN LIGHT OF DEBATE ON FRIDAY 26.8.1988

I
Situation

1. Anglicans and Roman Catholics already share a real but partial communion. This involves a mutual responsibility to reflect and comment upon issues which might in the past have been regarded as of solely internal concern.
2. The statements and decisions of both Communions on the ordination of women, and their practical consequences, do not destroy this imperfect communion but do create further difficulties. Their impact on growth towards fuller communion must be explored.
- 3.a) The official Roman Catholic position as stated in Inter Insigniores is that the Church does not consider itself authorised to change an unbroken tradition of the Church, universal in the East and in the West.
- b) Anglican Provinces which have ordained women to the priesthood see this as an authentic development of the tradition and actually required both by the mission of the Church and by a proper understanding of the relation between salvation and creation. No other Anglican Provinces have broken communion with them (1).
4. The conclusion of ARCIC-I may be seen in a new light after the resolution of Lambeth 1988 on the subject of the ordination of women to the episcopate (2).

(1) see note at the end of this document

(2) cf. ARCIC I, Final Report p. 44.

II
Interpretation

5. These positions will preclude the full recognition and interchangeability of ministers, even if other obstacles can be overcome through the reatification of agreement in faith on eucharist, ministry and ordination, together with the resolution of the question of apostolic succession. Nevertheless, these positions do not necessarily preclude some development in relation to eucharistic discipline based on agreement in faith on eucharist, ministry and ordination.
- 6.a) For Anglicans, the fact of the ordination of women is to be seen in the context of a continuing open process of reception by the Anglican Communion and by the universal Church.
- b) For Roman Catholics, the fact of the ordination of women in some parts of the Anglican Communion has stimulated continued reflection on this issue; results of such reflection are already evident in Inter Insigniores and the correspondence between Rome and Canterbury.

III
Agenda

7. The role (3) of women and the theological basis of that role is a vital issue requiring urgent study both within and between our two Communions. So also is existing practice and the relation of that practice to the fact of ordination or non-ordination. Anglicans and Roman Catholics are both committed to this study.
8. Any Anglican/Roman Catholic discussion of the

(3) See note at end of this document.

ordination of women must consider how the relationship of gender to the ordained ministry touches the belief and the tradition of the Church (4). Also to be weighed are the differing implications for communion of our two Churches posed by the ordination (or non ordination) of women to the diaconate, prsbyterate and especially episcopate. Further, discussion must also take account of the wider context of ecumenical experience and dialogue Orthodox and Protestant - in relation to ordained ministry understood as sign and focus of communion.

9. Continuing dialogue is itself a sign of our intention to nurture our growth in communion.

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NOTES

- (I) Future discussion would need to begin with a consideration of the context of the question: both the relationship of women and men in contemporary cultures and the developing role of women in both Communions, e.g. the Churches' experience of women's extended sacramental, teaching and pastoral functions.
- (II) Examination of how the relationship of gender to the ordained ministry touches faith would need to consider biblical interpretation and the question of the openness of tradition in the light of perceptions of revelation, christology, anthropology, symbolism, sacramental representation, and the Church as a sign of the Kingdom. This extended and "in-depth" study is not ARCIC II's job, but ARCIC should encourage and promote it.

(4) See note at the end of this document.

- (III) Attention should also be paid to matters relating to authority and ecclesiology. This would involve study of Anglican provincial autonomy [see point (VII) below] and interdependence and how decisions on matters of faith and order are made and received when there are divisions amongst the Churches. The differing implications of the ordination of women to the diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate demand consideration of the unique role of the episcopate as the link of communion between the local and universal Church.
- (IV) Permeating the whole question is the intimate relationship between truth, communion and unity. The debate emphasised the need for clarity in the use of the word "faith" in this context, and the difference between "faith" and "order", and between "dogma" and "theology". The point was expressed by one speaker in the following phrase: "We use the phrase de fide when to change it is to touch the nerve centre of salvation". cf, para. 8 above.
- (V) Attention was called to other projected, or actual studies of the subject, especially:-
- the commission which Lambeth 1988 mandated the Archbishop of Canterbury to establish;
 - the Faith and Order study group (ref. J. Tillard);
 - the proposal made at Lambeth by Zizioulas (ref. his speech, p.6)
- A proposal for the plan of such studies which would center on the concerns expressed above in N.(II) was made as follows: work on
- (a) The image and likeness of God as maintained in changing society and in the Church;
 - (b) The nature, role, shape and place of women in

the community of faith.

- (VI) Need was felt to find a better expression than "role" in several places in the document, especially in para. 7. It was pointed out that a question of power is involved, in the sense of exonsian which the English word "power" does not satisfactorily represent; the ideas of experience and the taxis of creation are also involved; words like "role" and "place" are too static. (cf. para. 7 above).
- (VII) Anglican structures means that a positive synodical decision would be required formally to excommunicate another province. It was pointed out, however, that failure to act in recognizing the ordained ministers of other provinces would certainly produce a deterioration of communion. (cf. para. 3.b above).