

CJH/AFT

22nd December 1977

Bishop Howe will have told you that I am taking up your letter of the 13th December on the Anglican/Roman Catholic Ordination of Women Consultation. Practical matters first.

I have just heard from Bill Purdy of the Vatican Secretariat for Unity that the Consultation will take place at: La Communauté des Diaconesses, 10 Rue Porte du Buc, Versailles. This is a short journey from the Gare de Montparnasse, and will I think be convenient for all.

The other Anglican members will be: Bishop Donald Cameron, Assistant Bishop of Sydney; Bishop Barry Valentine, Bishop of Rupert's Land; Professor Edward Fashole-Luke, Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone. Professor John Macquarrie has been asked, but we are still in a state of uncertainty. (You will know that he is in the States.) I shall be acting as Secretary.

You may be interested to know the Roman Catholic team. This is not absolutely certain, but may well be: Fr. Yves Congar; Fr. Hotchin (Secretary of the United States Bishops' Ecumenical Commission); Fr. E. Doyle, OFM; Fr. Pierre Duprey and Mgr. William Purdy.

It is hoped that there will be a circulation of background material by the end of January.

Originally it was hoped that John Macquarrie might provide a short Anglican position paper in just the sort of area you outline in your letter. Communication being what it is, even if we heard he could come, I now doubt whether there will be time for the sort of thing John Howe envisaged. In my view there is a consensus in the Anglican Communion (which it would be possible to document from Synods) that the ordination of women is indeed a theological possibility. That being said, there are different responses on the practical application of such a view. In other words, whether some churches ordain women or not is a second order matter. It is therefore possible to have differences of practice and still be in communion because the first principle issue has been decided in favour. The attitude of the Central African bishops is indeed germane, as is the discussion behind Limuru and Dublin. I therefore do not think it is an old boy network. I agree that the Anglican team will have to put some theological reasons forward for its pluriformity on this matter; in my view they might be on the above lines (but I have not seen it worked out on paper). Perhaps you would respond?

Thank you very much indeed for the two Statements of Dr. John Cockburn which are certainly charitable and conciliatory. I enclose a copy of my Note on the two American dissidents who were recently in England. I should say that Bishop Allin's response to their presentation of the Bishops taking legal proceedings is one sided. He also clarifies their presentation of the movement as essentially a lay one. I found that somewhat doubtful myself.

Miss Christian Howard.

Continued

81
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On the Polish Mariavites, the ODCC is not all that helpful, but start there! They were at one time in communion with Utrecht until their marital canons went well beyond anything recognisably Christian. They also ordained women to all three orders. There are now two branches of Mariavites, one very small (it may not even continue to exist) continuing fairly esoteric practices. However there is another branch (reformed) and this is now very similar to the Polish National Catholic Church in Poland and there are reasonable relations between them. There is even better co-operation between the Roman Catholic Church and the reformed Mariavites. At one time it looked as if the reformed Mariavites might come into communion with Utrecht and Bishop van Kleef paid a visit to Poland in this connection a few years ago. Nevertheless, it was not felt desirable to have two Old Catholic Churches in one country. For more information on the earlier fascinating but fairly way-out history, I would recommend Jerzy Peterkiewicz's book The Third Adam.

With my warm best wishes for the New Year,

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ENCS. 2