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1. The intention of the Commission in The Agreed Statement on Ministry and Ordination is set out in its first paragraph.

Criticisms received fall mainly under the following headings:

The origin and continuity of the ordained ministry.

The necessity of an ordained ministry.

The relation between general priesthood and ministerial priesthood.

2. The question of the origin of the ministry is a complicated one much discussed among specialists in all churches. It is not our task to take up positions on such historical and exegetical questions. It is enough for our purpose to establish that, from the time of the first communities, there existed a ministry of oversight. This was a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care, whatever the names given to those who exercised it and however the various responsibilities were distributed. (cf. Canterbury Statement paras. 8 & 9). By the beginning of the second century, the pattern of ministry which we now call the threefold ministry was already discernible, and probably generally found. (cf. Letters of Ignatius). It was further recognized that the ministry of oversight must be in historical continuity with the commission given to the apostles. (cf. Pastoral epistles, First Clement).

3. Such a ministry of oversight, serving the truth revealed in Jesus, and promoting the perseverance in faith, charity, and unity of the eucharistic community of the baptized, is essential to the church.

4. The term priesthood is applied to three distinct realities:

The unique priesthood of Christ.

The general priesthood of the people of God.

The ministerial priesthood of the ordained ministry.

The priesthood of Christ is unique, and all other priesthood is dependent on it. The common priesthood of the people of God is the consequence of the reality of their incorporation in Christ. We are members of his body and thus associated with his priesthood. The ordained ministry can be called priestly to the extent that, as is explained in para. 13, the minister has a special sacramental relationship with Christ the high priest. The word priest is used in an analogical way, which means that when we use it to speak of the people of God and of the ordained ministry, we designate two essentially different realities, which have nothing in common but their dependence on the priesthood of Christ, the unique priesthood of the New Testament. These considerations must be borne in mind throughout paragraph 13, and in particular in respect of the statement that the ordained ministry "is not an extension of the common Christian priesthood but belongs to another realm of the gifts of the Spirit."

5. Since the publication of the Agreed Statement on Ministry and Ordination there have been rapid developments with regard to the ordination of women. Several provinces of the Anglican Communion are already committed to this in principle, and some have already carried out such ordinations. Other provinces will undoubtedly follow their example.

Reactions, both within and outside the Anglican Communion, have been mixed. Many regret - on theological or other grounds - that this step has been taken, and in particular without previous consultation with other churches with whom Anglicans are already engaged in serious dialogue. Conflicting attitudes demonstrate the need for deeper and wider anthropological as well as theological thinking than this matter has as yet received.

It is important to recognize that supporters of the ordination of women believe that this step implies no change in the doctrine of the ordained ministry as this is expounded in the Agreed Statement. They affirm, for example, that it is not as male or female that a priest represents Christ, but as a human person. This is a question which requires resolution.

What effect will this development have on Anglican/Roman Catholic relations and on the relations of both with the Orthodox and the Old Catholics? Is it possible for a church which ordains women to be in communion with a church which has made it clear that it is not prepared to do so? These, too are urgent questions which must engage the attention of all who are concerned with the search for reconciliation and unity.

6. The commission has throughout its work been aware of the historical circumstances and the doctrinal divergences which lay behind the Roman Catholic Church's judgement on Anglican orders at the end of the 19th century. Agreement in faith is the essential foundation of mutual acceptance of ministries. We think that the process of convergence

to which our three statements have contributed will continue to that point where it will be our common concern to examine possibilities of achieving a mutual acceptance of ordained ministries. This is a prospect about which we should already be thinking.

Of the solutions which are commonly canvassed, we believe that the one most likely to be broadly acceptable on both sides is that of some commission of the kind sketched in the Appeal to all Christian People of the Lambeth Conference of 1920:

"VIII We believe that, for all, the truly equitable approach to union is by the way of mutual deference to one another's consciences. To this end, we who send forth this appeal would say that if the authorities of other Communion should so desire, we are persuaded that, terms of union having been otherwise satisfactorily adjusted, Bishops and clergy of our Communion would willingly accept from these authorities a form of commission or recognition which would commend our ministry to their congregations, as having its place in the one family life. It is not in our power to know how far this suggestion may be acceptable to those to whom we offer it. We can only say that we offer it in all sincerity as a token of our longing that all ministrations of grace, theirs and ours, shall be available for the service of our Lord in a united Church."