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ARCIC/173/Canterbury/7

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 ordained 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 word, sacrament and pastoral care, however its various responsibilities were distributed and described, and whatever the names given to those who exercised it. (cf. Canterbury Statement paras. 8 & 9). Within the first century evidence of ministerial authorisation is provided by the First Epistle of St. Clement, chaps. 40-44, commonly dated 95.A.D. (cf. also Acts 6:1-6; Acts 13: 1-3; Acts 14:23; I Tim 4:14; II Tim 5:22; II Tim 1:6; II Tim 2:2. Early in the second century, the pattern of episcopacy as the focus of what we now call the threefold ministry was already discernible, and probably generally found (cf. Letters of Ignatius.) It was recognized that this ministry must be in historical continuity with the commission given to the apostles.
3. Such a ministry, 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.

Our intention in drawing a parallel between the emergence of the threefold ministry and the formation of the New Testament canon was to point to processes of comparably gradual development without determining whether the comparison can be carried further. The threefold ministry was universal until divisions of western Christianity in the sixteenth century, and both of our communions have retained it

4. In Christian usage 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 apostle Paul understands his missionary preaching as a priestly, sacrificial task. (Rom. 15:16).

The same language is rightly applied to the ordained minister at the Eucharist, in the action of which Christ sacramentally unites his people with his unique, unrepeatable sacrifice.

The word priesthood is used in an analogical way: when it is applied both to the people of God and to the ordained ministry, it denotes two essentially different realities each of which depends upon the high priesthood of Christ himself, the unique priesthood of the new covenant. These considerations must be

borne in mind throughout paragraph 13, and in particular they indicate the precise significance of the statement that the ordained ministry "is not an extension of the common 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 to the priesthood. Several provinces of the Anglican Communion are already committed to this in principle, and some have already carried out such ordinations. It is probable that other provinces will follow their example. It is important to recognize that churches which are already proceeding to ordain women believe that this step implies no change in the doctrine of the ordained ministry as this is expounded in the Agreed Statement. Nevertheless fears have been expressed that this action could be a new and serious obstacle between our churches. Conflicting attitudes demonstrate the need for further consideration to be given to the theological and other issues raised by this development.

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 at an opportune moment the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion will jointly examine the possibility of achieving mutual acceptance of ordained ministries.

The following four notes to the text are also suggested

Para 3 after "koinonia":

Koinonia is not used as synonymous with community. It is in and through the Church as visible community that there is manifested the koinonia of believers with the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, and with each other. This community is also the normal milieu in which and through which we are enabled to enter into and to grow in this koinonia.  
(cf. I John I,3)

Para 4.

After 'all ages: cf. para 16, where this is developed further

Para 7. after "role" (five lines from end)

It is not intended to suggest that this role is exclusive to the ordained minister, even though he has a distinctive responsibility in this respect.

Para 11.

Last sentence: cf. John XX, 21-3.