

DRAFT RESPONSE TO THE MINISTRY STATEMENT: LONDON COLNEY

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

Criticisms and questions received fall mainly under the following headings:-

- (a) The relation between the priesthood of the whole people of God and the priesthood of the ordained ministry.
- (b) The sacramental nature of the rite of ordination.
- (c) The origin and development of the ordained ministry.
- (d) The ordination of women and the question of Anglican Orders.

2. In Christian usage the term priesthood is employed in three distinct ways:-

The priesthood of Christ.

The priesthood of the people of God.

The priesthood of the ordained ministry.

Christ is the unique High Priest, doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves, and all other priesthood derives from his and is constantly dependent upon it.

The priesthood of the whole people of God is the consequence of incorporation in Christ by baptism. He gives us, as members of his body, a share in his priesthood (I Peter 2:4,9).

Paragraph 13 explains that the ordained ministry is called priestly principally because it has a particular sacramental relationship with Christ the High Priest. At the Eucharist, in which Christ sacramentally unites his people with his unrepeatable sacrifice and in which the people of God do what he commanded in memory of himself, it is the ordained minister who repeats the words and actions of Christ at the Last Supper. It is also true that the Christian tradition called the ordained ministry 'priestly' because it was seen as representing the whole Church.

Hence the word priesthood is used analogically: when it is applied both to the people of God and to the ordained ministry it denotes two distinct realities, each of which depends on 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 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."

The early Church found it necessary to employ terminology not expressly used in this way in the New Testament in order to expound its understanding of the faith. In seeking to give an account of our faith today, both our communions, in the interpretation of the Scriptures, take cognisance of the Church's developing understanding of Christian truth (Cf. Authority in the Church, paragraphs 2,3 and 15).

3. With regard to the sacramental nature of the rite of ordination, while the note to paragraph 15 draws attention to the traditional use of sacramental language by Anglicans, paragraph 15 itself clearly expounds what it begins by describing as "this sacramental act". There we affirm that the ordained ministry is a permanent gift of the Lord to the Church.

From the age of the New Testament the Church has required authorisation and recognition for those who are to exercise particular ministerial functions in the name of Christ. Those who are ordained by prayer and the laying-on of hands receive their ministry from Christ through those who have been empowered in the Church to hand it on, and together with the office receive the grace needed for its fulfilment.

These are the essential elements of the traditional sacramental rite.

4. Our treatment of the origins of the ordained ministry has been criticised. While we recognise the inconclusiveness of much of the evidence and hence the grounds for differences of interpretation, it is enough for our purpose to recall that, from the beginning of the Christian Church, there existed an episcope in the community, however its various responsibilities were distributed and described, and whatever the names given to those who exercised it (cf. paragraphs 8,9 and especially 6). It is generally agreed that within the first century evidence of ministerial authorisation is provided by the First Epistle of Clement, chapters 40-44, commonly dated 95 A.D. Some New Testament passages appear to imply the same conclusion, e.g. Acts 14:23. Early in the second century, a pattern of episcopacy as the focus of what we now call the threefold ministry was already

discernible, and probably widely found (cf. Letters of Ignatius). It was recognised that this ministry must be in historical continuity with the commission given to the apostles (cf. First Epistle of Clement ...).

Our intention in drawing a parallel between this 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 could be carried further. The threefold ministry became universal until the divisions of western Christianity in the sixteenth century, but both our communions have retained it. We both maintain that episcopate must be exercised by ministers ordained in the apostolic succession (paragraph 16). Both our communions have retained and remained faithful to episcopacy as the form in which this episcopate is to be exercised. Because our task has been to examine relations between our two communions, we do not enter into the question whether there is any other form in which this episcopate can be realised.

5. Since the publication of the Agreed Statement on Ministry and Ordination there have been rapid developments with regard to the ordination of women. Anglican provinces which have already ordained women to the presbyterate believe that their action implies no departure from the traditional doctrine of the ordained ministry as expounded, for instance, in the Agreed Statement. Though the ordination of women has created a new and grave obstacle to the reconciliation of our communions, the principles on which our doctrinal agreement rests are not altered by such ordinations

because we have been concerned with the origin and nature of the ordained ministry and not with the question who may, or may not, be ordained. Hence, objections to the ordination of women are of a different kind from objections which have hitherto been raised against the validity of Anglican Orders.

Our Agreed Statements and our subsequent discussions on them, have revealed a consensus which places in a new context the question of reconciliation of our ministries, a question not to be considered apart from that of the establishment of full organic unity. The extent of our agreement on the sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist and its sacrificial character, on the nature of ordination and on apostolic succession shows that there is no divergence between us, at least on the doctrine of the Eucharist or Ministry, sufficient to prevent the achievement 'of complete communion in faith and sacramental life' (Common Declaration Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury 1977). Whether this agreement calls for the re-examination of the verdict of 1896 (*Apostolicae Curae*) or whether some other way of reconciling our ministries should now be sought, we do not consider within our terms of reference to decide. It has not been our task to pass judgment upon previous decisions; rather, though aware of their consequences, we have looked to the future and to the next steps towards full organic unity. These, we believe, must include positive initiatives by the Roman Catholic Church and affirmation by the Anglican Communion of its desire to enter into communion with the See of Rome.