

CHAIRMEN'S INTRODUCTION

At Windsor, in 1971, the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission was able to reach an Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine. In accordance with the programme adopted at Venice in 1970, we have now, at our meeting of Canterbury, turned our attention to the doctrine of Ministry, specifically to our understanding of the Ordained Ministry and its place in the life of the Church. This present document is the result of the work of an officially appointed Commission and is offered to our authorities for their consideration. At this stage it remains an agreed statement of the Commission and no more.

What we have to say on the doctrine of Ministry represents the consensus of the Commission on all points where it considers that doctrine admits no divergence. It will be clear that we have not yet broached the wide-ranging problems of authority which may arise in any discussion of ministry, nor the question of primacy. We are aware that present understanding of such matters remains an obstacle to the reconciliation of our churches in the one Communion we desire, and the Commission is now turning to the examination of the issues involved. Nevertheless we consider that our present consensus, on questions where agreement is indispensable for unity, offers a positive contribution to the reconciliation of our churches and of their ministries.

Throughout our discussions we have been deeply conscious of the ecumenical concern of all Christian communities regarding the mission of the Church to our contemporary world. In sharing that concern, we express the hope that our understanding of ministry will be of service to those who do not necessarily share our convictions about its place in that mission.

We have submitted this Statement, therefore, to our authorities and, with their authorisation, we publish it as a document of the Commission with a view to its discussion within our churches. We believe that, in what we have said about the doctrine of Ministry, both Anglican and Roman Catholic will recognise their own faith.