

# Anglican-Catholic Dialogue, Part II

## Ministry:

*Historical decisions of the past and present give birth to an agreement reached at ARCIC's 1973 meeting at Canterbury.*

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In the 19th century, Pope Leo XIII established a special commission to examine the validity of Anglican Orders. By the end of their examination, the commission was evenly divided: half the members considered Anglican Orders valid; half did not. Nevertheless, in 1896, Leo declared Anglican Orders null and void.

The Archbishop of Canterbury in concert with other Anglican bishops immediately objected and presented their case for validity to Pope Leo and the world. The Pope's declaration, although still in effect, has not hampered the dialogue which began in 1967.

The authors of the Agreed Statement on the Doctrine of Ministry attest: *"We are fully aware of the issues raised by the judgment of the Roman Catholic Church on Anglican Orders. The development of the thinking of our two Communion regarding the nature of the Church and of the Ordained Ministry, as represented in our Statement, has, we consider, put these issues in a new context."*

*"Agreement on the nature of the ministry is prior to the consideration of the mutual recognition of ministries. What we have to say represents the consensus of the Commission on essential matters 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..." (#17)*

With this text and the authors' declaration of a "new context" fresh in mind, recall an account involving Pope John XXIII, the first pope to meet with an Archbishop of Canterbury, since the Reformation. In 1960, a proposed visit by the then Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher to John XXIII raised concerns of protocol within the Vatican.

Should Fisher be received with the protocol proper to an Archbishop or should he be received as a person of note from England?

In the end, Pope John XXIII received Geoffrey Fisher as the Archbishop of Canterbury, representing his predecessors in episcopal lineage as well as the Anglican Communion.

Today the delicate issue of Anglican Orders is complicated by what is regarded to be a serious obstacle: the ordination of women in some provinces of the Anglican Communion. Even more serious as an obstacle is the ordination of women to the episcopacy.

While Anglicans themselves wrestle with this development within their Communion, the Roman Catholic Church through recent Popes has stated that the



Dr George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury (head of the Anglican Church), Pope John Paul II and Metropolitan Athanasios (representing Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians), kneeling before entering the Holy Door of St. Paul's Outside the Walls in 1990. (CNS FILE PHOTO)

Church does not have the authority to expand the apostolic tradition of the three-fold office to include women.

## Into the Breach – Authority in the Church

Catching the light even more brilliantly in the crown jewel is the Agreed Statement on Authority (1976). Authority, no doubt, was one of the pivotal forces during the Reformation and the Post-Reformation periods.

ARCIC took bold steps in exploring the Church's authority, encountering the different levels

of this doctrine and attempting a consensus. To reach the Agreed Statement, the ARCIC members wisely used as their guiding star the ecclesiology common to both groups: *Communio* - the nature of the Church as community, expressing and at the same time sharing in the relational life of the Holy Trinity; and *Koinonia*, the Greek translation of communion which stresses the notion of fellowship and sharing. Seen in this light, authority is the expression of love within the Church.

There is a striking photograph which can easily become an icon for Christian unity. After three years of preparing worldwide for Jubilee Year 2000, the Church beheld three of her leaders on their knees attempting to open the Jubilee Door of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls: Pope John Paul II, George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Metropolitan Athanasios of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The ancient door was reluctant. The Pope said to the others, "Push harder." When they did, the door opened. Jubilee Year 2000 ushered in a "kairos" - a year of grace.

The third section of the statement on "Authority in the Church" presented the ecclesiology of communion within the communion of the churches. Here, the issues of conciliarity, primate authority, and the primacy of Rome were taken up.

Lastly, the statement focused on problems and prospects. Understandably, the

problems center on the exercise of authority of the Petrine Ministry (the Office of Peter) by the Bishop of Rome.

## Statement is hopeful

Nevertheless the statement remained hopeful, concluding: "In spite of the difficulties just mentioned, we believe that this Statement on Authority in the Church represents a significant convergence with far-reaching consequences.... In our three Agreed Statements we have endeavored to get behind the opposed and entrenched positions of past controversies. We have tried to reassess what are the real issues to be resolved.

Phase II of ARCIC II began in 1983, and is still in progress.

Each of our Communion exercises authority within its own historical experiences. Roman Catholic authority is mostly centralized; Anglicans have more diffused authority. Both have their strengths and weaknesses.

In our lifetime we are witnessing authority's exercise in regard to issues of life, issues of gender, issues involving sexuality, race, inclusiveness, etc.

While I have confined my remarks to the international Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, I should also mention that there is an on-going US dialogue, ARC-USA, and, more locally, the Virginia dialogue, "A Call into Covenant, LARCUM."

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## Christmas play

Children from the CICA and first and second grade of the Christian formation program of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha parish in Tabb participated in the hand bell portion of a Christmas play staged by the fifth graders and directed by Catechist Kathleen Stocchetti. The hand bell students were directed by Jamie McDevitt, Debbie Goodman, Connie Topp, Maggie McNamara and Jack McNamara.

