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The Church of the Triune God: The Cyprus Agreed Statement of the International Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue 2006

Hugh Wybrew

At the end of January 2007 the International Commission for the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD) launched the dialogue's third agreed statement at a ceremony at Lambeth Palace in London. Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch, was present as guest of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. Completed in 2005 at the Monastery of Kykkos, the Cyprus Agreed Statement is entitled 'The Church of the Triune God', and its publication concluded the third phase of the Anglican-Orthodox international theological dialogue¹. Its principal theme is the doctrine of the Church, but it includes also a study of the ordained ministry of the Church, and deals with the thorny question of who may be ordained to it. It ends by examining two related topics, heresy and schism, and reception in the Church.

Preparation for Dialogue

The *Cyprus Agreed Statement* should be seen in its historical context. Until the twentieth century contacts between Anglicans and Orthodox were mostly at the level of individuals. Official discussions between Anglicans and Orthodox began only in the 1920s, and were pursued in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. It was in 1962 that the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I and the Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey agreed to take the first steps towards setting up a joint commission to examine doctrinal agreements and disagreements between the Anglican and Orthodox Churches. Each Church nominated its representatives, who 1966 began meeting separately, at the wish of the Orthodox, to determine what topics should be on the agenda of the Anglican/Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions (A/OJDD).

¹ *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: The Church of the Triune God. The Cyprus Agreed Statement of the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue 2006*, London: The Anglican Communion Office, 2006.

In the course of the earlier talks from the 1920s onwards a number of topics had emerged as outstanding between the two Churches. These were included in a list, drawn up by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which also contained matters to be examined at the beginning of the dialogue. These included Anglican intercommunion with the Old Catholics, Lutherans and others, the Anglican understanding of 'union in faith with the Orthodox', the way decisions are binding on the whole Anglican Communion, and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. The bishops of the Anglican Communion, meeting at the Lambeth Conference of 1968, wished the *filioque* and the Anglican understanding of comprehensiveness to be added to the agenda, as well as pastoral, liturgical and spiritual issues. In 1971 the Orthodox members, meeting in Helsinki, considered a paper on 'Contemporary Problems of the Anglican Church'. In view of the Orthodox list of topics it is not altogether surprising that the Anglican members of the commission came to feel that they were being examined by the Orthodox to see whether they shared sufficient faith with the Orthodox for the latter to accept them, or whether they were still heretical. It seemed it might not be altogether a dialogue on equal terms. However, after six years of separate meetings, the first full meeting of the joint Commission took place in Oxford in 1973.

The First Phase of the Dialogue

The first phase of the dialogue made good progress. Three sub-commissions worked on topics agreed to be priorities, and produced documents submitted to the full Commission in Moscow in 1976. Statements on 'The Knowledge of God', 'The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture', 'Scripture and Tradition', 'The Authority of Councils', 'The Filioque Clause', 'The Church as Eucharistic Community', and 'The Invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist' were revised, agreed, and published in the *Moscow Agreed Statement* of that year².

² *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: The Moscow Statement Agreed by the Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission 1976 with introductory and supporting material*. Edited by Archimandrite Kallistos Ware and the Reverend Colin Davey, London: SPCK, 1977. [German translation in: Harding Meyer et al. (eds.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung. Sämtliche Berichte und Konsenstexte interkonfessioneller Gespräche auf Weltebene*. Band I: 1931–1982, Paderborn: Bonifatius/Frankfurt a.M.: Lembeck, 21991, pp. 81–89. *Anm. d. Red.*]

Some of these topics arose from the Anglican Church's reformation heritage. The Orthodox were concerned to know the precise status of the sixteenth-century Thirty Nine Articles of Religion, influenced as they were by ideas stemming from some of the continental reformers. Others were simply aspects of Anglicanism's western heritage. Some of the Anglicans were surprised to find themselves defending St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas more often than Luther, Calvin or Cranmer, and so defending the doctrine or practice of the Roman Catholic Church: Anglicans, however interested in the eastern Christian tradition, are western Christians. On the question of the *filioque*, a crucial point of difference between eastern and western Christianity since the ninth century, some Anglican members of the Commission were not so easily persuaded by Orthodox arguments. However, the Anglican members of the Commission agreed at Moscow to recommend to their churches the removal of the *filioque* clause from the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed when they next undertook liturgical revision. They were careful to do so, however, for historical and ecumenical reasons, passing no judgment on the trinitarian theology involved in the debate.

The first phase of the dialogue had done useful work, and had established good relations among the Commission's members. Not of least importance to its work was the practice of beginning and ending each day with morning and evening prayer, celebrated alternately according to the Anglican and Orthodox traditions. But if the Moscow Agreed Statement registered a good deal of agreement on the topics discussed, it also noted areas of difference. 'The Knowledge of God' spoke of divine self-revelation and human communion with God. It noted that the Orthodox Church 'draws a distinction between the divine essence, which remains for ever beyond man's comprehension and knowledge, and the divine energies, by participation in which man participates in God'. Anglicans, it also noted, do not normally use this distinction, although believing that 'God is at once incomprehensible, yet truly knowable by man' (I.2.). Nor do Anglicans normally speak of salvation as *theosis*, divinization by grace, although the doctrine that term seeks to express is to be found in liturgical texts and hymnography. On 'The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture' and 'Scripture and Tradition', both sides agreed that the two are correlative rather than separate sources of revelation. Scripture is the criterion of authentic Tradition, which completes Scripture in the sense of safeguarding the integrity of the biblical message. Differences were however noted about the extent to which Anglicans and Orthodox accept scholarly biblical research.

Both sides agreed too that Holy Tradition is 'the entire life of the Church in the Holy Spirit' (III.10.). While in broad agreement about 'The Authority of the Councils', Anglicans pointed out that their tradition distinguished the first four Councils from the last three of the ecumenical seven, and accepted the seventh in so far as it defends the incarnation. But while 'they agree that the veneration of icons as practiced in the East is not to be rejected, they do not believe that it can be required of all Christians' (IV.15.). In 'The Church as the Eucharistic Community' and 'The Invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist' there was agreement on the role of the Spirit in the eucharistic action, as in the whole life of the Church, and on the Church as a community which becomes fully itself in celebrating the Eucharist, which in turn actualizes the Church.

The Moscow Agreed Statement was a positive achievement. But there was a cloud on the horizon. The Commission had agreed at Moscow to continue its work. Three topics had been identified for study: 'The Church and the churches', 'The Communion of Saints and the departed', and 'Ministry and priesthood'. The Orthodox, however, aware of Anglican debates on the ordination of women, passed a resolution, drawing attention to the existence of a grave problem: 'The Orthodox members of the Commission wish to state that if the Anglican Churches proceed to the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate, this will create a very serious obstacle to the development of our relations in the future. Although the Anglican members are divided among themselves on the theological principle involved, they recognize the strength of Orthodox convictions on this matter and undertake to make this known to their Churches.'³

The Ordination of Women

The second phase of the dialogue began the following year, when the Commission met in Cambridge. A report was presented on the current state of the ordination of women in the Anglican Communion. The Orthodox members, sometimes more aware of the Church of England than of the Anglican Communion as a whole, were shocked to learn that the ordination of women was already a fact in the life of some Anglican churches. Some of the Orthodox wished to bring the dialogue to an immediate end, while others wondered what meaning it could now have if it continued. It

³ Ibid., p. 76.

was agreed that a special meeting of the Commission should be held in 1978 'before the Lambeth Conference, in order, by expounding the Orthodox position, to enable their Anglican brethren to come to what, in their view, would be a proper appreciation of the matter. For the Orthodox the future of the Dialogue would depend on the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference.'

In 1978 the Commission duly met in Athens. For much of the time the two sides met separately, working on statements of their respective positions. The Anglican section of the *Athens Report*⁴ recorded the variety of Anglican positions on the issue: there were those who believed that it is 'in no way consonant with a true understanding of the Church's catholicity and apostolicity, but rather constitutes a grave deformation of the Church's traditional faith and order', others who saw it as 'a proper extension and development of the Church's traditional ministry, and a necessary and prophetic response to the changing circumstances in which some churches are placed', and still others who 'see no absolute objection to it' but 'regret the way the present action has been taken and believe that the time was not opportune nor the method appropriate for such action' (IV.2.).

There was only one Orthodox position; and in view of the discussion of this issue in 'The Church of the Triune God', the following quotations from the Orthodox section of the *Athens Report* are worth noting:

'It is important ... to distinguish between innovations and the creative continuity of Tradition. We Orthodox see the ordination of women, not as part of this creative continuity, but as a violation of the apostolic faith and order of the Church' (III.4.).

'By ordaining women Anglicans would sever themselves from this continuity [i.e. in apostolic faith and spiritual life]' (III.5.).

'The ordination of women to the priesthood is an innovation, lacking any basis whatever in Holy Tradition. The Orthodox Church takes very seriously the admonition of St Paul, where the Apostle states with emphasis, repeating himself twice: "But if we, or an angel from heaven, preaches to you anything else than what we have preached to you, let him be anathema. As we have already said, so I say to you now once more: if anyone preaches to you anything else than what you have received, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8-9)' (III.3.).

It was the lowest point in the dialogue.

⁴ 'The Athens Report', partially reproduced in: *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: The Dublin Agreed Statement 1984*, London: SPCK, 1984, pp. 58-63. [German translation of the entire Athens Report in: *Dokumente* (see note 2), pp. 90-97. *Anm. d. Red.*]

The Second Phase of the Dialogue

The Lambeth Conference of 1978 took account of Orthodox objections to the ordination of women, but recognized the right of individual Anglican Churches to make their own decision on the matter. The Orthodox members of the Commission were agreed that the dialogue should continue. In the light of the decision of the Lambeth Conference, some thought the status of the dialogue should be continued only 'as an academic and informative exercise, and no longer as an ecclesial endeavour aiming at the union of the two churches.' Others thought it could continue as before. At a Steering Committee meeting in 1979 it was agreed that the dialogue should continue, but with a different approach to its work:

'The ultimate aim remains the unity of the Churches. But the method may need to change in order to emphasise the pastoral and practical dimensions of the subjects of theological discussions. Our conversations are concerned with the search for a unity in faith. They are not negotiations for immediate full communion. When this is understood the discovery of differences on various matters, though distressing, will be seen as a necessary step on the long road towards that unity which God wills for His Church.'⁵

That decision relieved the Commission of the necessity of trying to solve the question of the ordination of women and other outstanding problems as a condition of continuing the dialogue. As a consequence the second phase of the dialogue, as the Introduction to the *Dublin Agreed Statement* of 1984⁶ said, was 'more free to explore together and understand better the faith we hold and the ways in which we express it.' The first paragraph of that Statement observed that the Joint Commission had tried in its discussion to keep in mind the link between theology and sanctification through prayer, and between doctrine and the daily life of the Christian community.

The Dublin Agreed Statement contained three main sections, 'The Mystery of the Church', 'Faith in the Trinity, Prayer and Holiness', and 'Worship and Tradition'. The first section looked at New Testament im-

⁵ Cf. *The Dublin Agreed Statement* (see note 6), pp. 3–4.

⁶ *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: The Dublin Agreed Statement 1984*, London: SPCK, 1984. [German translation in: Harding Meyer et al. (eds.), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung. Sämtliche Berichte und Konsenstexte interkonfessioneller Gespräche auf Weltebene*. Band II: 1982–1990, Paderborn: Bonifatius/Frankfurt a.M.: Lembeck, 1992, pp. 101–128. *Anm. d. Red.*]

ages of the Church, and at its four credal marks of unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. With regard to unity it acknowledged that 'our divisions do not destroy but they damage the basic unity we have in Christ.' It went on: 'Anglicans are accustomed to seeing our divisions as within the Church: they do not believe that they alone are the one true Church, but they believe that they belong to it. Orthodox, however, believe that the Orthodox Church is the one true Church of Christ, which as his body is not and cannot be divided.' The Orthodox conceded, however, that 'at the same time they see Anglicans as brothers and sisters in Christ who are seeking with them the union of all Christians in the one Church' (I.9.). That paragraph highlights a fundamental issue in all dialogues between the Orthodox and other churches: the Orthodox conviction that they are the one Church of the creed. One of the objections of many Orthodox to the World Council of Churches was precisely the use of the word 'churches' in the plural.

'The Mystery of the Church' dealt at some length with another ecclesiological issue, the question of primacy, a crucial question in all dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church. In the Dublin Agreed Statement Anglicans and Orthodox agreed that primacy, or seniority, should be understood in terms not of coercion but of pastoral service. A primate, at whatever level, had no right 'to intervene arbitrarily in the affairs of a diocese other than his own' (I.25.). They pointed out that neither the Ecumenical Patriarch nor the Archbishop of Canterbury claims a primacy of universal jurisdiction within their respective families of self-governing national or regional Churches. It was felt in some Anglican quarters that the Anglican members of A/OJDD were taking a rather different line from their colleagues on the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).

'Faith in the Trinity, Prayer and Holiness' linked trinitarian doctrine with participation in the grace of the Holy Trinity, and went on to consider the nature of Christian prayer – one of the few dialogues perhaps to do so. A section on the *filioque* included a reaffirmation of the 1976 Anglican recommendation to exclude it from the creed, and noted that some Anglican Churches had already acted on it. 'Worship and Tradition' included an affirmation of the inseparability of faith and worship, and stated that 'all the saving truths of the faith are doxologically and liturgically appropriated' (III.54.). There was a fine sub-section on 'The Communion of Saints and the Departed'; and with regard to icons another sub-section included the statement that 'in the light of the present discussion the An-

glicans do not find any cause for disagreement in the doctrine as stated by St John of Damascus' (III.83.). That represented a remarkable development in Anglican thinking: the Lambeth Conference of 1888 had said that it would be difficult for Anglicans to have closer relations with the Orthodox so long as the latter maintained their use and veneration of icons.

The second phase of the dialogue, like the first, had done useful work. An Epilogue to the Dublin Agreed Statement summed up achievements and issues still to be resolved. Prominent among the latter was the ordination of women. The Epilogue noted that

'We have failed to reach agreement concerning the possibility, or otherwise, of the ordination of women to the priesthood. The Orthodox affirm that such ordination is impossible, since it is contrary to Scripture and tradition. With this some Anglicans agree, while others believe that it is possible, and even desirable at the present moment, to ordain women as priests. There are however many related issues that we have not so far examined in any detail, particularly the following: how we are to understand the distinction within humanity between man and woman; what is meant by sacramental priesthood, and how this is related to the unique high priesthood of Christ and to the royal priesthood of all the baptized; what, apart from the sacramental priesthood, are the other forms of ministry within the Church' (para.103).

If the ordination of women was prominent among the issues still to be resolved, there was another on which it seemed agreement would be hard to achieve. It concerned, as the Epilogue put it,

'the account to be given of the sinfulness and division which is to be observed in the life of Christian communities. For Anglicans, because the Church under Christ is the community where God's grace is at work, healing and transforming sinful men and women; and because grace in the Church is mediated through those who are themselves undergoing such transformation, the struggle between grace and sin is to be seen as characteristic of, rather than accidental to, the Church on earth. Orthodox, while agreeing that the human members of the Church on earth are sinful, do not believe that sinfulness should be ascribed to the Church as the body of Christ indwelt by the Holy Spirit' (para. 99).

The Epilogue expressed the view that none of the points of disagreement it mentioned 'is to be regarded as insoluble, but each is to be regarded as a challenge to this Commission ... to advance more deeply in its understanding of the truth' (para. 114). That challenge was taken up by the third phase of the dialogue.

The Third Phase of the Dialogue

Five years after the publication of the Dublin Agreed Statement, the full Commission met again in 1989 at New Valaamo. In the interval it had been reconstituted, and provided with new co-chairmen. Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamon had been appointed for the Orthodox, and Bishop Mark Dyer for the Anglicans. With these changes came a fresh approach and a changed atmosphere. That new start was symbolized in the new name given to the Commission: the International Commission of the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD). The continuation of the dialogue was agreed, and at the next full meeting in Toronto in 1990 the two co-chairmen presented a programme for the next stage of the Commission's work. It was agreed to study together the doctrine of the Church, its roots in the doctrine of the Trinity, and the relationship of Christ and the Spirit to the Church, including a consideration of Christ and humanity and Christ and culture. Within that context the Commission would study the ministry of the Church, including lay ministries, and the relation of the ordained ministry to the high priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of all the baptized. Within that context there would be a study of the question of who could be ordained to that ministry. Two related issues, that of heresy and schism and that of reception of new ideas and practices in the Church, would conclude this new phase of the Commission's work.

Throughout this third phase of the dialogue there was a sense, not always present in the previous two phases, that Anglicans and Orthodox were studying questions of common concern together. The Anglicans were no longer on trial for the orthodoxy of their faith and their adherence to traditional norms in their church life. In their Preface to the published *Cyprus Agreed Statement* the co-chairmen quote the view of a member of the Commission, who said of its work: 'Now it is a conversation of delight and illumination. Like all true conversations, it has had its moments of surprise and strangeness ... But then it is good to be drawn into a conversation which engages in profound and sustained reflection on what it is that makes the Church the Church and to affirm the hidden life of the Trinity at the heart of our communities'.⁷ 'The Church of the Triune God' is the fruit of that conversation.

⁷ Cf. *The Cyprus Agreed Statement* (see note 1), pp. 9–10.

The Trinity and the Church

This first section of the Statement reflects much contemporary trinitarian and ecclesiological thinking: the Church is constituted by its participation in the life of the Trinity. Quoting 1 John 1.2–3 and 4.13, it begins by affirming

‘that the fellowship or communion (*koinonia*) of life in the Church reflects the communion that is the divine life itself, the life of the Trinity. This is not the revelation of a reality remote from us, for in the communion of the Church we share in the divine life. The communion manifested in the life of the Church has the trinitarian fellowship as its basis, model and ultimate goal. Conversely, the communion of the persons of the Holy Trinity creates, structures and expounds the mystery of the communion experienced in the Church. It is within and by the Church that we come to know the Trinity and by the Trinity we come to understand the Church because “the Church is full of Trinity” (Origen, Fragment on Psalm 23.1, PG 12, 1265)’ (I.3.).

A little later it states:

‘According to Holy Scripture, the revelation unique to Christianity is experienced in the mystery of the communion of grace within the body of Christ between Christians and God the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:13). The mystery of this communion of believers with the Triune God and among themselves is the essence of the Church as the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit’ (I.10.).

The Church as a communion of persons united in love is both expressed and achieved in the celebration of the Eucharist:

‘The Eucharist builds up the body of Christ as one single body which transcends the racial, social and cultural diversity of its members, and reveals and realises the gift of trinitarian communion given to the Church by the Holy Spirit. This gift of communion enables human beings to receive forgiveness of their sins and healing of their wounds and divisions, and to experience the unity of God’s kingdom. The Eucharist so understood manifests the way the Church should live if she is to be true to her essential nature. The Church as an institution should always be a visible sign of her inner reality as the mystery of communion with and in the Blessed Trinity’ (I.12.).

In setting out its conviction that the Church is rooted in the Trinity and built up by the Eucharist the Statement also seeks to set the question of the *filioque* in a new and more helpful light. While broadly sympathetic to traditional Eastern views on the subject, it notes that

‘There are however dangers in a one-sided or polemical assertion of the Eastern doctrine that the Spirit proceeds “from the Father alone”. As we have already said, some argue that Greek patristic theology did not deny some kind of dependence of the Spirit on the Son within the immanent Trinity. It is certainly true that we cannot think of the Spirit proceeding from the Father without recognising that the Father is Father of the Son, just as we cannot forget that the Father who begets the Son is also the one who breathes forth the Spirit. The Spirit does not proceed from an isolated divine individual but from a person, a Father eternally related to a Son’ (I.19.).

At the end of Section II, ‘Christ, the Spirit and the Church’, the Statement adds these concluding remarks to its reflections on the *filioque*:

‘A Christology shaped by Pneumatology may help us to avoid misunderstandings that arise in the debate over the *filioque*. Eastern theologians have argued that the *filioque* obscures the distinctiveness of the Spirit, and tends to make the Spirit seem inferior to the Father and the Son. Western theologians, even when admitting the force of such fears, have defended the *filioque* on the grounds that we must never seem to divorce the Spirit from the Father’s purpose of bringing us into the trinitarian communion by adopting us as sons and daughters in the Son’ (II.45.).

‘We have sought to show that Anglicans and Orthodox are agreed about both the inadequacies of the *filioque* and the need to develop Christology and Pneumatology in the closest possible connection. To set aside the *filioque* is not to deny the mutual relation of the Son and the Spirit, in the eternal life of the Trinity as well as in the economy of salvation’ (II.46.).

‘If our trinitarian theology fully expresses the mutual relation of the three divine Persons, we can properly witness to the inseparable connection between the work of the Son and the work of the Holy Spirit in achieving our salvation, without having recourse to the *filioque*. We should never seek to understand the Son and the Spirit in isolation from each other. That would be to deny the fundamental vision of our trinitarian faith’ (II.47.).

The Commission’s eirenic and balanced statement is a valuable contribution to the resolution of an issue which has been contested between East and West since at least the ninth century.

From its trinitarian ecclesiology the Statement draws consequences which have implications for other dialogues, particularly those in which the Roman Catholic Church is a partner. They relate both to the unity of the Church and to the relationship of local churches to the one universal Church:

‘The Church is both a local and a universal reality. As the one God is a communion of three persons, so the universal Church is one communion in Christ of many local churches. She is not a federation of separate parts. The relationship between the local church and the universal Church is determined by the revelation of the life of the Holy Trinity’ (I.23.).

‘The doctrine of the Holy Trinity implies that to be “in the image and likeness of God” is to be in communion, to be simultaneously “one” and “many”. Reflected in the life of the Church, this means that the one universal Church cannot logically precede the multiplicity of local churches. The local churches can be neither parts of, nor derived from, the universal Church; rather, they constitute the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church”. Catholicity is a quality of each local church in communion with the other local churches, just as each Person of the Holy Trinity is a hypostasis of the whole of the divine substance by being in communion with the other two Persons. The unity of the universal Church is the communion in faith, truth, love and common sacramental life of the several local churches. The catholic Church exists in each local church; and each local church is identified with the whole, expresses the whole and cannot exist apart from the whole’ (I.24.).

It is a fact of both Orthodox and Anglican church life that each church is organized on the basis of national or regional local churches. The Statement sets this ecclesiological structure, implicitly contrasted with the centralized structure of the Roman Catholic Church, firmly on the basis of trinitarian theology:

‘Ecclesiology is thus related to the issue of the priority of substance, or *ousia*, in relation to personhood, or hypostasis. If the one God were prior to the Trinity and identical with the one divine substance, then substance and oneness would precede personhood and multiplicity, in the Church as well as in God. The consequences for ecclesiology would be very serious. Not only would the local churches be subordinated to the structure of a universal Church, but equally each human person would be subject to that structure. Universal laws would be imposed upon particular personal beings, and the Church would be a totalitarian authority over the person. But such is not the case. Just as the one nature of God exists, not in the abstract, but only in the three Persons, so the universal Church exists only as a communion of local churches. In this respect there is a convergence between Orthodox and Anglican understandings of the Church. Orthodox and Anglicans agree in rejecting a single centralised authority in the Church. This is not for local and cultural, but for profoundly theological reasons’ (I.25.).

No doubt the Orthodox will urge this view of the Church in the renewed Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue, which has the question of primacy on its agenda. It is not without interest that there has in recent years been

debate within the Roman Catholic Church itself about the relationship between local churches and the universal Church.

Christ, the Spirit and the Church

The second section of the Statement discusses the relationship of Son and Spirit to each other, and of both to the Father. It does so in the context of salvation, and of the participation of human persons by the Spirit in the perfected humanity of Christ, and so of their participation in the life of the Triune God. It considers the relationship of Christ and of the Spirit to the new humanity brought into being by the death and resurrection of Jesus, and includes this affirmation about true humanity:

‘Trinitarian theology has as much to say about humanity as about God. To speak in a particular way of God’s being, on the grounds of God’s action, is to commit ourselves to a particular vision of our calling in the world. This is why the theology of the Trinity is not a matter of detached speculation. The human vocation is defined in terms of Christ, the eternal Word made flesh. Consequently, Godlikeness is never a matter of our independent initiative. There is in God not only perfect giving, but also perfect responding. Listening, receiving, and depending do not contradict divine freedom and creativity. Neither are we obliged to struggle for a life without dependence and receiving in order to be free. Since God is Trinity, and since Jesus embodies the life of God as response, we find our proper creativity and liberty, not by distancing ourselves from others, but by learning to receive from, as well as give to, others in mutual interdependence’ (II.23.).

Towards the end of this section comes this summary of the relationship of Christ, the Spirit and the Church:

‘So we arrive at an ecclesiology by way of a Christology conditioned by Pneumatology. The New Testament’s description of Christ as Isaiah’s “Servant of God” or Daniel’s “Son of Man” can only be understood in terms of Christ’s relational existence. Both images relate Christ to others: the Servant shed his life for the “many”, and the Son of Man is the eschatological figure who brings with him the “saints”. Christ, then, as head of the ecclesial body, is inconceivable without the many: they are part of his identity’ (II.38.).

‘The question arises as to how the “many” who live here and now relate to an individual who lived in first century Palestine. For some the answer is primarily ethical, consisting in the imitation of Christ and obedience in faith to what he said or did. For others worship is the means to bridge the gap, for we meet him through prayer. In both cases, Christ risks being understood as an individual and not as a person. Yet Christ transcends individualism and indi-

vidualization by being personal. We need to recover an understanding of Christ as a person who includes us in himself, who is “one” and “many” at the same time. Such an understanding presumes a Christology conditioned by Pneumatology that de-individualizes Christ and makes him a true person. So the gap between the Christ of the first century and ourselves is filled through Christ’s relational being, which in his grace and love and true personhood reaches out to include us in himself. It is the Spirit that makes the Church what it is, the body of Christ. As such the Church is an indispensable part of Christ’s identity’ (II.39.).

Christ, Humanity and the Church

The Statement goes on in its third section, Part 1 of ‘Christ, Humanity and the Church’, to discuss the relationship between Christian faith and culture, an issue relevant to Anglican-Orthodox dialogue, and particularly to the issue of Christ, Humanity and the Church. Its conclusions will later be related to the discussion of the ordination of women, although it has far wider application. Among its concluding paragraphs are these:

‘From the time of the New Testament to the present, Christology has never developed in a cultural vacuum, but always in relationship to a particular culture or grouping of cultures. The distinction between the Gospel and culture must not be ignored or blurred. There should be vigorous interaction and dialogue between them. There can also be a convergence between them, rooted in God’s creation of human beings and their re-creation in Christ. That is why we need a theological interpretation of culture that will help us to understand it, and the part it can play in the life of the Church’ (III.33.).

‘Particular doctrinal definitions are not necessarily restricted to the cultures in which they emerge. The New Testament’s and the Ecumenical Councils’ affirmations of Jesus Christ as truly divine and truly human remain the foundation, touch-stone and nourishment of the Church’s life and proclamation of the Gospel in every culture and in every age. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church becomes a source of creativity in the cultures in which it is present’ (III.35.).

‘At the same time, cultures affect the articulation of the Gospel and Christology, and may prompt the Church to listen afresh to the Gospel, and perhaps hear it in new ways. That does not mean that culture will determine the meaning of Jesus Christ. It is vital to engage with the Scriptures and the living tradition of the Church, in order to ensure that faithfulness to Jesus Christ accompanies inculturation, and that cultures themselves are transformed’ (III.36.).

‘Christians need to address the particularity of each culture as they seek to bear witness to the Triune God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Christians have a primary responsibility for expressing the Gospel of Jesus Christ within their cultural setting. This obligation cannot be imposed from the outside, even though it does not take place in isolation. There is a necessary process of discernment, for which the local church is accountable to Jesus Christ and responsible to the whole Church. The articulation of Christology in worship, teaching and the arts within a particular culture needs to be tested sympathetically but critically, to discern whether it remains true to Scripture and falls within the Church's living tradition. This same process of discernment is also required in our ecumenical dialogues, so that we can discern each other's standing in the faith' (III.37).

Part 2 of 'Christ, Humanity and the Church', the fourth section of the Statement, moves on to a discussion of the significance of Christ's humanity. It looks at the use of gender language in theology, and emphasizes the symbolic, or 'iconic' character of such language when used of God. Great stress is laid on the inclusive character of Christ's humanity:

'The importance of stressing the humanity of Christ, rather than his maleness, cannot be exaggerated. The New Testament witnesses to the universality of his redemption. In St. John's Gospel, for example, our knowledge of the Father comes through the Son as we are drawn by the Spirit into the truth of what he has done and taught us (John 1.18; 15.26; 16.13ff). Such personal knowledge springs from the mutual indwelling of believers and the Son, through which they are taken up into the eternal life of the Godhead (John 6.56f; 17.3). In this process, Jesus' humanity plays a central role: "the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6.51). What believers must eat is the restored humanity of the Son; and those who receive it will be given power to become children of God. All believers are called into the relationship with the Father which Jesus actualizes in his own human life, and are to be taken up into the divine life through their personal relationship of love with Jesus Christ, which is expressed and realized in the eucharistic life of the Church: "he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him". In all this there is not the slightest hint that any distinction is to be drawn between the way in which women and men share in Christ's new humanity, and so enter into the life of the divine communion' (IV.12.).

This too will contribute to the discussion of the ordination of women, as will this section's concluding affirmation of the Christian community's eschatological character. Christians are baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ, and celebrate the Eucharist 'as the messianic banquet, in which we are renewed and re-affirmed as the people of God, called to participate in Christ's mission to the world' (IV.20.). There is an affirmation, too, of the transformation in the resurrection life in Christ of the

distinction between male and female. This is not to say that the distinction is blurred, for 'The Fathers look forward, not to an androgynous future, a humanity stripped of the distinctive qualities of men and women, but to a perfect communion in which human diversity is affirmed and glorified' (IV.14.).

Episcope, Episcopos and Primacy

In its fifth section the Cyprus Agreed Statement takes up a topic on which the Dublin Agreed Statement had already registered considerable agreement between Anglicans and Orthodox. The introduction reaffirms the primary significance of the local church:

'In the Anglican and Orthodox vision the primary way of ecclesial being is the local church. Existing agreements have recognised this fact and its ministerial implications. Ecclesiologically, the Reformation in the Church of England was a reassertion of the national or local church's right to govern itself within its conciliar relationship with the world-wide Church. The great schism of 1054 resulted from a rejection of the Western Patriarchate of Rome's claim to jurisdiction over the Eastern Churches. Historically and theologically Orthodox and Anglicans share a commitment to the scriptures and ecumenical councils as decisive elements in their ecclesiology' (V.2.).

After an historical analysis of the development of *episcope* and its focus in the *episcopus*, the Statement looks at certain ecclesiological issues which arise from the historical review. Recognising that modern scholarship suggests there was no fixed and normative structure of ministry in the apostolic and sub-apostolic periods, the report registers an agreement that 'episcope, exercised personally by a bishop (*episcopos*) is accepted not only as a development which serves the needs of the Church, but also as a mark of catholicity and unity within the apostolic Church, together with the holy scriptures, the creeds and the sacraments' (V.13), and that 'In the early centuries there was the closest possible link between local churches and *episcope*: neither could exist without the other' (V.14.). Later developments may have obscured the primary claim of the local church, but it remains strong.

There is emphasis on apostolic succession as a succession of communities represented by their bishop, on wider councils as a means of maintaining their unity in faith, and on the bishop as the normal president of the eucharistic assembly. The Statement recognizes that in this respect it challenges both Anglicans and Orthodox – and by implication other churches

as well – to examine their current practice of episcopacy. It acknowledges too a divergence between Anglicans and Orthodox in their current practice of synodality. While the Orthodox regard the bishop in synod as representing his whole community, Anglican practice gives the laity an important place in synodical structures in the life of the church.

The *Final Report* of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, while stressing the inseparability of primacy and conciliarity, suggested that a ministry analogous to that of Peter in the early Church might help to meet the needs of the Church now, and that the historical development of the Petrine ministry might be seen as guided by the Spirit⁸. The Cyprus Agreed Statement is more cautious. It affirms that any form of primacy has to take into account the significance of the local bishop with his community as the primary expression of church life (V.20.). But that does not rule out a universal primacy:

‘The theological argument for primacy begins with local and moves on to regional and global leadership. Primacy thus receives increasingly wide expression through episcopal representation of the Church’s life. This ensures a proper balance between primacy and conciliarity; and the primate is the first among equals in synods of bishops. Primacy should not be seen as the prerogative of an individual, but of a local church. In the case of the universal primacy this would mean the primacy of the Church of Rome’ (V.21.).

Recent Anglican developments, as well as practice in other episcopal churches, are challenged by the agreement of Anglican and Orthodox members that ‘bishops do not form an apostolic college apart from and above the local churches. Bishops are an integral part of their respective churches. Such an understanding precludes any form of centralised universal episcopal jurisdiction standing apart from the local churches’ (V.22.). If primacy must be complemented by conciliarity, its authority must also be subjected to the test of reception by the local churches: bishops, including primates, are not independent of their local churches, even when meeting in apparently ecumenical councils.

The eirenic character of the discussions of which ‘The Church of the Triune God’ is the fruit is illustrated by a concluding paragraph of this section:

⁸ *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: The Final Report*. Windsor, September 1981, London: Catholic Truth Society/SPCK, 1982, pp. 84–85. [German translation in: *Dokumente* (see note 2), pp. 133–190, here 179–180. *Anm. d. Red.*]

‘The ecumenical journey of our two churches is bringing them new insights and bearing fruit, and is indeed vital for them. Searching questions about the eschatological, christological and local character of the Church require a fresh assessment of current patterns of ecclesial life. Mutual questioning in charity and ecclesial fellowship reveals aspects of church life which may need to be changed. Since each church is facing difficult issues including those of unity and diversity, and orthodoxy and dissent, this process may open up new horizons; and we may be able to help each other more than we can imagine’ (V.24.).

That applies, of course, not only to Anglicans and Orthodox: it is of significance for all Christian communities.

Priesthood, Christ and the Church

From its examination of aspects of ecclesiology the Statement moves on in its sixth section to consider the ministry of the Church and its priestly character. Priesthood is related both to Christ and to the Spirit:

‘There is one priesthood in the Church, the priesthood of Christ. From the beginning Christian priesthood has been understood as a living witness to the presence of Christ in the Church. It has been seen as a sign of the Paschal mystery, bestowed on all Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit. Priesthood, closely related to the work of the Holy Spirit, is an integral part of the life of the Church’ (VI.2.).

Priesthood should not be understood as ‘an autonomous office belonging to the ordained individual. It is rather a ministry belonging to the entire ecclesial body, always related to the saving communion of the body and blood of Christ’ (VI.3.).

But if priesthood is essentially the priesthood of Christ, it is also essentially related to the work of the Spirit, since

‘the work of the Son and the Spirit are not independent divine actions. The Son enters into human life “incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary”; the Spirit, sent by the Son, enters into the world to be an unceasing witness to the Son’s work and to be the unfailing ground for realising Christ’s ministry in his body. It is through the Holy Spirit that Christ’s priestly work is present in the life of the Church, and the priestly character of the Church is related in the Spirit to the priesthood of Christ’ (VI.9.).

So priesthood, like the Church itself, is a trinitarian reality:

‘The Father bestows his grace through the work of the Son, and that grace shows itself in the praise and thanksgiving offered through the Son by those who have been fed by the living bread from heaven. Both the feeding and the thanksgiving are made possible by the Spirit, who is sent into the world by the Son. The Trinitarian foundation of priestly order reveals not only the divine origin of Christian priesthood, but the inseparable connection of this priesthood with the divine *koinonia*’ (VI.10.).

Within the priesthood of the whole Church there is the priesthood of the ordained ministry. The Statement emphasises the ecclesial character of the priestly ministry: the mission of bishops and presbyters is inseparably related to the specific community they are ordained to serve. That is why ordinations should never take place without the consent of the community as a whole, a principle which finds expression in both Anglican and Orthodox ordination rites. Ordained ministry is also inseparable from eucharistic communion. Ordinations take place in the context of the eucharistic assembly, and eucharistic presidency is central to the ministry of bishops and presbyters. But such presidency is not a personal prerogative of the minister.

‘... the Eucharist is not the action of an ordained individual but that of a community; it is celebrated by priest and people together. The Eucharist is a liturgical action which is the work of the people, not of a minister apart from the ecclesial community. Ultimately the celebrant of the Eucharist is Christ himself, acting through the presiding bishop or presbyter and the community to build up the body of Christ’ (VI.18.).

For this reason the Statement denies that bishops and presbyters possess an indelible mark,

‘as if ordination were a magical seal granting them personal power to celebrate the Eucharist or any other liturgical action, apart from the ecclesial body. The priestly ministry is rather a charismatic gift, enabling those who receive it to serve and build up the body of the Church. It is a permanent order of service only in union with the Church and by its discerning authority. Any notion of “indelible mark” would imply that the ordained individual possesses forever this peculiar mark of priesthood, which can never in any circumstance be removed or surrendered. Such a doctrine absolutizes priesthood and isolates it from the community of the Church’ (VI.22.).

That affirmation certainly expresses Orthodox teaching. There are Anglicans who hold the traditional Roman Catholic view of the indelibility of orders. It has not been prominent in traditional Anglican teaching, although not long ago the indelibility of orders slipped almost unnoticed into the Church of England via a new canon.

In the Statement's understanding of priesthood there is a certain difference of emphasis from that of *The Final Report* of ARCIC I. Like the Anglican-Orthodox report, ARCIC I's statement on Ministry and Ordination closely relates the ordained priesthood to the priesthood of the whole Church. Christian ministers, it affirms, share in the priesthood of the people of God, and are representative of the whole Church, particularly when they preside at the Eucharist. But it adds, 'Nevertheless their ministry is not an extension of the common Christian priesthood but belongs to another realm of the gifts of the Spirit'⁹. There has been some discussion of what precisely this means. 'The Church of the Triune God' prefers to emphasise the ordained ministry as one of the many gifts of the Spirit to the Church. '...we may conclude that priesthood is in no way a ministry which involves division or classification within the ecclesial body. The distinction between a priest and a lay person is not one of legal status but of distribution of the gifts of the Spirit' (VI.25.).

Women and Men, Ministries and the Church

There is a sense in which this might be said to be the central section of the Statement, for which its previous sections had been preparing the way. The ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate had proved highly contentious in the dialogue from 1977 onwards. The Commission wished to discuss it not only in the context of the doctrines of the Church and of Christian priesthood, but also in that of the range of ministries which serve the Church in both the Orthodox and Anglican traditions. So there is a survey of the various lay ministries in both Churches, perhaps more broadly developed among Anglicans than in Orthodoxy, but nevertheless of great significance for both. Agreement is also registered on the importance of the diaconate as a distinct order in both Churches, to which there is no disagreement women may be ordained. Such ordination is practiced in the

⁹ *Final Report* (see note 5), p. 36. [German translation in: *Dokumente* (see note 5), p. 153. *Anm. d. Red.*]

Anglican Church, and its restoration in the Orthodox Church has been called for in recent decades.

It is on the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate that Anglicans and Orthodox have not yet reached agreement. But it is noteworthy that the discussion of this issue in the third phase of the dialogue has taken place in a very different atmosphere from that which obtained in earlier discussions. Instead of confrontation there has been a willingness to debate the matter theologically, as well as to try to evaluate the significance of disagreement.

‘Our present aim is therefore to understand each other’s theological position on the place of women and men in the presbyterate and episcopate. Our initial task is neither to prove nor disprove each other’s position, but to commit ourselves to the more difficult task of asking whether our differences point to a deeper theological division, and whether our differences in theology and practice are sufficiently serious to divide us as churches. We have to ask whether the ordination or non-ordination of women is such a weighty dogmatic issue that it justifies division in the body of Christ’ (VII.24.).

This section of the Statement reviews earlier discussions of the inclusive humanity of Christ, Christ and culture, and the equality of men and women within the eschatological people of God, renewed in its identity in the celebration of the Eucharist. Anglican and Orthodox however draw different conclusions from these agreed premises. On the one hand,

‘In the light of what has been said above about the transformation of gender in the new life of the kingdom, many Anglicans hold that there are compelling theological grounds for ordaining women as well as men to the priestly and presidential ministries of presbyter and bishop, or at the very least that there are no compelling theological reasons against doing so’ (VII.36).

On the other, however,

‘While the Orthodox subscribe fully to the biblical and patristic teaching that the salvation Christ offers to humanity through the Incarnation is extended equally to male and female, they distinguish this from the ministerial, and especially the eucharistic service of the Church. Faithful to tradition, which consistently from the very beginning of the Church’s life has reserved the ministry of eucharistic presidency to male members of the Church, they see no convincing theological reason for the decision of the Anglican and other Western Churches to deviate from this age long tradition by ordaining women to the eucharistic priesthood’ (VII.37.).

Among the reasons given for Orthodox objections to the ordination of women are the belief that the eucharistic president acts ‘in persona Christi’, and the insufficiency of sociological considerations alone in deciding the issue. They also consider the possible pastoral gains to be outweighed by the adverse consequences of causing schism or perpetuating division. But while stating their position, the Orthodox members of the Commission regard the ordination of women as an open theological question, on which more reflection is needed, particularly regarding the role of culture in the decision to ordain, or not to ordain, women, and the theological reasons for disagreement on this issue between Anglicans and Orthodox. Given that there is no conciliar teaching on the matter, further consideration is needed as to whether the ordination of women constitutes, from the Orthodox point of view, a heresy, and if it does not, to what extent the ordination or non-ordination of women affects communion between Anglicans and Orthodox. If it should appear that differences on the issue can be contained within Christian communion, then Anglicans and Orthodox can and must ask what the next steps might be on the way to unity.

The Cyprus Agreed Statement presents a striking contrast to the official attitude of the Roman Catholic Church, for which the ordination of women is a change the Church has no authority to make. The Statement invites the Orthodox to further theological consideration of the issue, and implicitly invites other churches which oppose the ordination of women to do the same. That invitation is of course extended to Anglicans still opposed to women’s ordination.

Heresy and Schism, and Reception in the Church

The two final sections of the Cyprus Agreed Statement deal with these two topics. Since some reckon the ordination of women as heretical, the Commission thought it necessary to give some consideration of what constitutes a heresy. The Commission had in mind, too, the way in which members of all churches frequently level charges of heresy against those with whom they disagree. Anglican and Orthodox members agree that ‘current imprecise and imprudent uses of the word “heresy” may lead to the perception that the word is more of a problem than a help in dealing with emerging theological restatements or reconsideration, and the recovery of certain practices’ (VIII.6.). They suggest that the word should be used only in its classical sense, meaning a denial of the apostolic faith.

This affirmation is important in view of the Statement's recognition that, as the Dublin Agreed Statement had said, local churches, 'each of which, being in eucharistic communion with all the local churches, manifests in its own place and time the one catholic Church ... in faithful response to their own particular missionary situation have developed a wide diversity in their life. As long as their witness to the one faith remains unimpaired, such diversity is [to be seen], not as a deficiency or cause for division, but as a mark of the fullness of the one Spirit who distributes to each according to his will' (VIII.1).

Given such diversity, the Commission's consideration of heresy and schism leads to a consideration of reception in the Church. The Church is constantly receiving and re-receiving the gospel message, but within this general sense 'reception' came to acquire a more specific meaning, mainly associated with the decisions of the Councils of the Church. Their decisions had to be received by the people of God, and were not authoritative simply because they were made by the bishops assembled in synod. The situation is more complex when Christians are divided. But the Commission is clear that the classical model of reception can still be helpful. In setting out its basic features, the Statement affirms among other things that '[r]eception is a matter not only of texts but of churches and people', that '[a]ll churches need to question their own tradition and re-receive it, realigning themselves with the original apostolic community', that '[r]eception cannot be accomplished by individuals or authorities in isolation: it must be an act of communion. Ecclesial reception happens within ecclesial communion and is itself a constitutive element of such communion', and finally that 'Scripture and Tradition have to be received. In specific instances that process may be completed. But in general transmitting what is handed on is a continuous process: receiving and re-receiving is a process which is never finished. To speak of an open process of reception is to acknowledge the exigencies of historical existence' (IX.15.).

The Statement points to the important distinction between the reception of new ideas, and that of new practices. The former can be a lengthy process, which does not affect the structures of the Church. The latter immediately affects those structures. Among these it includes new developments in the papal ministry, as well as the ordination of women. The Statement's concluding paragraph acknowledges this difficulty, while again recognising that as a doctrinal issue such ordinations are an open question.

‘Whether or not such ordination contradicts the dogmatic teaching of the Church already transmitted and received, and so is heretical, can remain open to discussion and to an open process of reception. But the recognition and reception of the ministry of women presbyters and bishops is a question which concerns the practical life of the ecclesial communities involved, including sacramental communion. While questions of faith can be the subject of lengthy discussion, issues of order and ministry are matters of practice, and so they affect reception in an immediate way. From this point of view the ordination of women to the episcopate is more problematic with regard to reception than their ordination to the presbyterate, for the churches receive one another at the level of structure through the bishop. The ultimate goal of all official theological dialogues, including our own, is the reception of our churches by one another, in ministry and church structure as well as in faith. In all their discussions, decisions and actions, our churches must keep this goal constantly in mind’ (IX.29.).

‘The Church of the Triune God’ is a remarkable fruit of the third phase of the Anglican-Orthodox international theological dialogue. It registers much theological agreement between its Anglican and Orthodox members. Where it notes continuing disagreement, it does so in a spirit of mutual respect, and with an emphasis on the need for continuing theological investigation. Its vision of the Church as a communion of local churches, each proclaiming the one Gospel in ways adapted to its historical and cultural context, is relevant not only to Anglicans and Orthodox, but to all Christian communities. The Statement has itself now to be submitted to a process of reception in both churches. Whatever the outcome, it embodies, in a time of growing religious extremism and intolerance, a reasoned and reasonable approach to the faith and life of the Church, and to the search for the unity in diversity of all disciples of Jesus Christ, whose faith is in the one God, revealed to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Der neue von der Internationalen Anglikanisch-Orthodoxen Kommission veröffentlichte Text mit dem Titel «Die Kirche des dreieinigen Gottes» steht in Kontinuität mit früheren gemeinsamen Feststellungen wie dem «Moscow Agreed Statement» von 1976 und dem «Dublin Agreed Statement» von 1984. Diese fielen in die Zeit, da die von anglikanischen Kirchen beschlossene Einführung der Ordination von Frauen zum priesterlichen Dienst auf harsche orthodoxe Reaktionen stiess; diese Umstände liessen auf den Dialog, dessen Vorstufen in die 1920er-Jahre (und noch weiter) zurückreichen, einen atmosphärischen Frost fallen. Wertvolle Einsichten in die den beiden Kirchen gemeinsame Glaubenstradition, welche die beiden Texte formulierten, blieben so in der weiteren kirchlichen Öffentlichkeit kaum beachtet.

Der jüngste Text ist das Ergebnis der Arbeit einer Kommission, die 1989 mit einer erneuerten Zusammensetzung unter der Leitung von Metropolit John Zizioulas und Bischof Mark Dyer (ab 1990) zu arbeiten begann, und zwar in einem fühlbar anderen Geist. Die Frauenordination ist in einem gewissen Sinn auch das unterschwellige Hauptthema – da es ja nach wie vor um einen Dialog mit dem Ziel kirchlicher Gemeinschaft geht –, aber es wird eingebettet in eine weit ausgreifende theologische Besinnung über die Kirche, die im dreieinen Gott gründet und von daher in all ihren Aspekten in gemeinschaftlich-synodalen und -personalen Vollzügen lebt. In dieser ekklesiologischen und anthropologischen Reflexion auf einem anspruchsvollen Niveau werden auch im universalen ökumenischen Horizont kontroverse Fragen wie das *filioque*, die Beziehung von Ortskirche und überortskirchlicher Gemeinschaft sowie von Primat und Synodalität der Bischöfe als Vorsteher von Ortskirchen berührt, ebenso aber Fragen, wie der in Christus, im menschengewordenen Logos, erlöste Mensch in seiner geschlechtlichen Differenziertheit zu sehen ist; damit werden auch Aspekte der je aufgegebenen Inkulturation und Hermeneutik der Tradition thematisiert. Diese Fragen werden dann zugespitzt auf den Dienst in der Kirche, der das Priestertum Christi repräsentiert, und die weiteren Ämter in der Kirche. Hinsichtlich der Ordination von Frauen zum priesterlichen Dienst gibt es keine gemeinsame Auffassung, aber

im Rahmen einer weiteren Besinnung darüber, was Schisma und Häresie im eigentlichen Sinn konstituiert und was der Prozess der Rezeption in Gang setzt, kommt es doch zu einer bemerkenswerten Feststellung: Es kann offen bleiben, ob die Frauenordination der im strikten Sinn dogmatischen Lehre der Kirche widerspricht und mithin häretisch ist oder nicht; vielmehr bleibt dies einem – freilich für das Bischofsamt besonders schwierigen – Prozess der Rezeption oder Nichtrezeption unterworfen.