CHAPTER TEN

THE CHURCH AND THE
ORDAINED MINISTRY (ART. 7–18)

The second chapter contains an introductory paragraph (§7) and then consists of four parts: ordained ministry (§8–14), ordained ministry and authority (§15–16), ordained ministry and the priesthood (§17), and the service by men and women in the church (§18).

INTRODUCTORY AND EXPLANATORY LIST OF DEFINITIONS (ART. 7)

Paragraph 7 gives a number of definitions in order to avoid confusion as to the meaning of the core concepts within this text because, up to now, differences in terminology have made the discussions between the churches more difficult. The concepts that are explained here are “charism,” “ministry,” “ordained ministry,” and “priest.”

Preceding History

The 1974 Accra text did not have an explanatory list of definitions. The orthodox theologians were the ones who asked for such a list in order to avoid confusion; in particular, because they always refer to an ordained minister as “priest.”

Discussion of the Paragraph

Paragraph Seven. Differences in terminology are part of the matter under debate. In order to avoid confusion in the discussions on the ordained ministry of the church, it is necessary to delineate clearly how various terms are used in the following paragraphs.

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a. The word ‘charism’ denotes the gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit on any member of the body of Christ for the building up of the community and the fulfilment of its calling.

b. The word ministry in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal Church. Ministry or ministries can also denote the particular institutional forms which this service may take.

c. The term ordained ministry refers to persons who have received a charism and whom the church appoints for service by ordination through the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands.

d. Many churches use the word priest to denote certain ordained ministers. Because this usage is not universal, this document will discuss the substantive questions in paragraph 17.

The definition of “charism” is in agreement with paragraph 5 about the church endowed with gifts bestowed by the Spirit, although the term charism is not mentioned there. The purpose of the gifts—namely, to build up the church and fulfill the calling—corresponds with the aim of building up the community and for the service of the world to which the church is sent (§5).

The English concept of ‘ministry’ incorporates two different aspects, which in other Germanic languages, e.g., German and Dutch, are expressed by two separate words. Ministry, first of all, refers to willingness to serve, to which the whole people of God are called. It is more a state of mind than an indication of a specific task.2 In the second place, the English word ‘ministry’ refers to a specific institutional form that can take on this willingness to serve. For this second meaning the German and the Dutch languages use Amt and ambt respectively.

The third concept, ‘ordained ministry,’ refers to people who have received a charism and whom the church appoints by ordination for ministry while appealing to the Holy Spirit and through laying on of hands. It is not clear what is meant with charism. If it refers to the gifts bestowed by the Spirit that each believer receives as indicated in the definition of charism, then it is not clear why it is mentioned

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2 That is confirmed by the evolution of the text proofs. In the June 1980 version we read: “The word ministry in its broadest sense refers to the service which the whole people of God is called to perform.” In the November 1981 text, the final two words have been omitted. Gromada, *The Theology of Ministry in the ‘Lima Document,*' 313, gives the following comment on this alteration: “... acknowledging the importance of forms of ministry in which being is considered at least as important as doing.”