

10.1.80
6.30 pm.

ARCIC 217/A & B/3.

INTRODUCTION

1. Christ's will and prayer are that his followers should be one. Christians, who have received in Christ the same truth, cannot without disobedience to him acquiesce in a state of separation. Unity is therefore of the essence of the Church, and that unity should be visible. Our two communions, however, have been separated for 400 years, and our separation has been aggravated by mutual intolerance and theological polemics. Nevertheless, although our unity has been impaired through separation, it has not been destroyed. Many bonds still unite us: in particular we have received the same Spirit, shared the same faith in the same Lord, and undergone the same baptism.
2. Controversy between our two communions has centred on doctrine relating to the Eucharist, the ordained ministry, and the nature of authority in the Church. The Agreed Statements represent our conviction that substantial agreement in these three matters is now possible. Nevertheless for various reasons we remain unable as yet to receive Holy Communion together. Since the Reformation Rome has not recognised the validity of Anglican ordinations and celebrations of the Eucharist and has denied full ecclesial status to the Anglican Communion; Anglicans for their part have not acknowledged the universal primacy, authority and jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome, nor any obligation to be in communion with him. Full organic unity which is our goal cannot be restored without mutual acceptance of ordained ministers and sacraments, together with the common recognition of a universal primacy within a complementary pattern of conciliarity. (Authority Statement para.23).
3. In producing the three Statements we have tried first to take serious account of the issues that have divided us and then to seek a solution by re-examining our common inheritance, above all the Scriptures. We have been concerned not to evade the difficulties but rather to avoid the controversial language in which they have sometimes been expressed. We have sought to uncover the basic themes which hold together apparently contradictory doctrines. The subjects which we were charged to consider all relate to the true nature of the Church.
4. Our consideration of these subjects has confirmed our original conviction that the significance and reality of Koinonia are the key to the understanding of the mystery of the Church. This was clearly also a conviction of the early Christian tradition. Although Koinonia is never equated with "Church" in the New Testament, nor do we ever find the two words directly related to each other, it is the concept that most aptly expresses the mystery revealed under the various New Testament images of the Church. When, for example, the Church is called the people of the New Covenant or the Bride of Christ, the context is primarily one of communion. Although such images as the Temple, the New Jerusalem, or the holy priesthood may contain institutional overtones, their primary purpose is to depict the Church's experience as a

partaking in the salvation of Christ. When the Church is described as the Body of Christ, the household of God or the holy nation, emphasis is placed upon the mutual relationships between its members as well as with Christ.

5. Koinonia is used in various ways in differing New Testament contexts. In our use of the term we mean a relation between persons resulting from participation in one and the same reality (cf. I John 1.3). Because God in Christ Jesus partook of our human nature, we have been enabled to receive the Spirit of God's Son, who makes us members of the Body of Christ in such a vital communion that we too may call God 'Abba, Father'. This union with God in Christ is the heart of the Christian Koinonia; but sharing in the same Holy Spirit whereby we are members of the same Body of Christ and sons of the same Father, we are also bound to one another in a completely new relationship. Koinonia with each other necessarily follows from our Koinonia with God in Christ. This is the mystery of the Church.

6. The Church of God is not a mystery which is wholly invisible: it is a community to be realized under human conditions in history. In the intention of Christ this fellowship must therefore be given visible expression in worship and charity; and the channels through which God gives his grace need to be such as can be clearly recognized by the community. It is through these channels of grace that the Spirit of Christ builds up the local churches, in each of which these means are present and effective. Communion with the other churches is essential to a local church. The local churches, since they participate in the same realities of this world used by the Spirit as means of grace, are united with one another in a true Koinonia which needs to be recognisable at the universal level. Although their independence is always limited by their mutual care and respect for each other and their autonomy can never be complete, the local communities are still the basic units of the Church. When members of a local community are gathered in the Eucharist their unity with one another and with the whole people of God is characteristically actualised. By its very nature Koinonia entails universality. Even when division exists, this Koinonia is never entirely destroyed, provided there is true faith in Christ.

7. The visible Church is the sign and means whereby all people are called to enter into this Koinonia of the spirit. It is a community of those who, reconciled in Christ with God and one another, can effectively proclaim the gospel of reconciliation to the world. It is a community of those who, themselves redeemed from sin, are committed not only to fighting against sin in their own lives but as partners with God to advancing his kingdom by promoting justice, peace and compassion in his world.

8. This concept of Koinonia, which involves both our fellowship in Christ with God and with one another and its manifestation through the means of grace, is the underlying theme which gives unity to our statements.