

ADMISSION TO THE EUCHARIST AND RECIPROCAL INTERCOMMUNION

Bilateral admission to the Eucharist

- (1) If our two Churches arrive at a common declaration on the identity of their Eucharistic faith and if they reach the point of mutual recognition of their ministries, without however entering into full communion, then they will be aliquomodo in a situation analogous to that which now governs relations between the Roman Church and the Orthodox Churches. While recognizing as legitimate diverse doctrinal and theological expositions, we shall be able to speak of a communio satis arcta in rebus fidei and, vi successionis apostolicae, of the possession of an identical ministry in the two Churches. This will permit a wide margin of bilateral admission to the Eucharistic Table of our two Churches. It will be possible to apply to this new case the principles which today govern relationships between the Roman Church and the Churches of the East.
- (2) On the practical level this means that the faithful of one Church will be able to have access to the Eucharist of the other Church, in order not to be deprived of sacramental grace, and this not only in casu necessitatis but also justa de causa. It is therefore a matter of pastoral admission, analogous to that recognized by Intercommunion Today.
- (3) Obviously this admission is based on an already existing unity (substantial unity of faith, single baptism, identical understanding of the Eucharistic ~~mys~~te~~ry~~ and the same ministerial structure), and necessarily signifies this unity. We have noted elsewhere that it is not possible to separate in the sacrament the mark of its signification and that of its efficacy. Furthermore, the grace received will cause the believer to grow towards unity, just as the grace of the sacrament received in his own Church would have done. Yet one must clearly realize that the effect desired per se is not in this case the celebration of the unity existing between the ecclesial community of this particular believer and that in which he receives the sacrament, but the gift of grace to a believer who otherwise would be deprived of it. The fact that he is associated with the act whereby the Church which receives him celebrates its internal unity and its relationship with that Unity willed by the Lord is accidental. It is an abnormal situation, but one explained by a desire for "dispensation" and "economy": since this believer would receive this grace in his own Church, it is not felt right to deprive him of it because circumstances happen to prevent him from having access to the Lord's Supper of that Church.

- (4) In all these cases reciprocity is total. Mutual recognition of ministries removes what, on the Roman Catholic side, constitutes the most difficult obstacle to access by its faithful to the Eucharistic Table of another ecclesial community. It is in fact in strict proportion to the measure whereby it recognizes another Christian communion as being fully a Church that the Roman Church - anxious not to cheat with the law of reciprocity, essential in the present ecumenical situation - practises what we have called pastoral admission, to use the term employed by Intercommunion Today.

Reciprocal Intercommunion

- (5) The demands of reciprocal intercommunion are of a different order. It is one thing to recognize the validity of the ministry, another thing to recognize its full ecclesiality; it is one thing to recognize the preservation or restoration of the "historical" ministry in a Church, and another thing to recognize that this ministry and that of another Church in fact constitute one single ministry of the one undivided Church of Christ. This explains why the Roman Church and the Orthodox Church, from a similar conviction, refuse to practise reciprocal intercommunion. They stop half way in their practice of communicatio in sacris, and this holding back expresses very well the situation with regard to unity existing between them.
- (6) a) In the apostolicity of the ministry it is in fact necessary to distinguish clearly two dimensions, each one as essential as the other. We will indicate them by using the terms vertical and horizontal. On the one hand, the ministry must be in some way linked today (in spite of past historical facts) with the Apostolic experience on which the Church is based. This is vertical apostolicity, through which that which was the Lord's will, understood as such and accomplished by his witnesses, remains honoured among his People. On the other hand, if this will of the Lord is that Apostleship and that which continues it should be the recognized focus of unity (1), then clearly the ministry, in order to have full ecclesiality, demands a horizontal communion with all the members of the episcopal body and with what binds them into unity. Here our two ecclesiologies part company - as also do Orthodox and Roman ecclesiology, though on a different level. From the Roman point of view, the nota praevia which clarifies Chapter 3 of Lumen Gentium is of prime importance here. The effective exercise of the ministerial function, which is conferred at sacramental ordination, demands hierarchical communion with the episcopal College and with its Head. One will note the prudent way in which the text is expressed. There is an explicit refusal "to enter into the questions of licitness or validity, which are left to the discussion of theologians, in particular with regard to the power which is de facto exercised by the separated Orientals". In the hypothetical case of recognition by Rome of the ministry of the Anglican Church we shall have to return to this discussion.

- (7) b) We are at a point which enables us to see more clearly how, in the "Catholic" view (attested by the "approach A" of Intercommunion Today (2)), ministerial communion and Eucharistic communion converge. In his act of presiding, the minister of the Eucharist must bear witness "to the fact that the local celebration in which he participates is at the same time the eucharist of the whole Church, signifying the oneness in faith, worship and life not only of the community in question but of the whole Church" (3). Therefore it is hard to imagine a community taking as president of its Eucharist a minister of a Church not reconciled with its own. The assembly must be able to recognize, in the one who presides, a minister of the Church-in-the-act-of-koinonia, hence a minister linked with the other ministers by a bond of unity which is that willed by the Lord and made explicit by the Apostles. Otherwise there is a disruption of the internal cohesion of the sacramentum unitatis. How can a minister not in organic communion with the ministers of another Church be for this latter Church the sacramentum of Christ giving himself precisely in order to bring about unity? What can be the meaning of an exchange of ministers if there has not been a previous ecclesial reconciliation?
- (8) We should note that the ecclesial unity that is to be celebrated is not first of all eschatological unity, which is that of the depth of grace called to develop into fullness and already capable of including even the non-baptized; it is rather ecclesiological unity, that of the "sign raised up among the nations" constituted by the community of the "brethren" in one same proclamation of faith and one same institution of Salvation. This unity, though always imperfect, is already discernible where on the one hand each local community is firmly linked about its head, and where on the other hand, this head being himself in ecclesial communion with those who preside over the Eucharist of the other communities, these latter thus find themselves in communion.
- (9) c) It is not an exaggeration to state that, if our ecclesiologies differ, this is due in good measure to the idea that we build up for ourselves concerning baptismal unity, and to the link that we place between Baptism and the Eucharist (4). Baptismal incorporation, accomplished in the acceptance of the Word, sealed by the sacramental rite, is actualized in a koinonia which has its place essentially and necessarily on the level of confession of faith and the level of daily life. Unity in confession of faith and unity in existence are necessarily interlocked. Acceptance of the Lord demands obedience, and this obedience involves the actions of the believer's daily life.
- (10) In discussions on the single Baptism there is too great a tendency to see baptismal unity in the light of ritual. There is a neglect of the interior content of conversion to a form of

life desired by Jesus Christ. Is baptismal unity preserved intact where Christians are in opposition on essential points (of doctrine and life) in a way that seems to them irreconcilable? Does the Eucharist truly celebrate baptismal unity if the members of the assembly, who have not been reconciled before it, again find themselves unreconciled once the celebration has ended?

- (11) Furthermore, baptismal koinonia, even looked at from the angle of its essential demands, is directed to Eucharistic koinonia. The two are not purely and simply identical. Throughout Tradition the Christian initiation is thought of as an organic whole with its point of departure in Baptism and its seal in the Eucharist. The latter does not therefore celebrate baptismal unity pure and simple but rather this unity as lived and made real. This accounts for the insistence on Confirmation, which is so strongly attested in the Anglican tradition. The baptismal koinonia, with its tendency towards the Eucharistic event, embraces and carries forward the unity of life of which we were speaking. Since the Lord's Supper accomplishes what Baptism began, one cannot state categorically that, if there exists unity of the baptismal rite, there exists from this very fact the unity required for for a celebration of the Eucharist in truth. What comes between - existence in koinonia - must also be taken seriously. Otherwise one falls back into a magical interpretation of ex opere operato.

- (12) All this leads to a question. How can one justify reciprocal intercommunion between two Christian communities which have not yet in some way set the seal on their organic unity? Is it not true to say that "the Eucharist should never be celebrated merely as a gesture of good will, or as an expression of ecumenical aspiration"? Is it not necessary to hold that "the Eucharist which proclaims the good news of God's reconciling work in his Son should be celebrated by those who live in continuing unity"(5)? In saying this we do not wish to question what we have said on pastoral admission. We must discuss this point with great lucidity.

- (13) What is to be done in the present situation?

The preceding shows that we have to take official steps towards reconciliation and communion before there can be a common Eucharist. The working out of our points of agreement in doctrinal matters seems to us of capital importance in this regard, and it would be very wrong to minimize this work.

- (14) What is to be done in the meanwhile as far as the Eucharist is concerned? On the Roman Catholic side, it is difficult at the present moment to envisage the granting of official authorization to communicate at the Table of an ecclesial community, the validity of whose ministry has not yet been officially recognized. We certainly know that some Roman Catholic theologians - we personally are of their number - think that it would be impossible to

refuse to recognize any Eucharistic reality in the Lord's Supper celebrated by the communities that sprang from the Reform; they likewise hold in particular that the Eucharist celebrated by the majority of the Anglican communities is the sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood. We have also stated above that Roman Catholic theology is deeply involved in research concerned with rethinking the nature of the ministry and the requirements for its validity. But the conviction of theologians is one thing, and the official acceptance of their thought another. We have also noted that other theological elements are involved here. If then the Roman Church is not yet ready to accept reciprocity, can the Anglican Church accept that the Roman Church should in certain circumstances welcome to its Table Anglicans, who are confirmed and who would be admitted in their own Church? The great ecumenical law of reciprocity would be seriously violated here, in the view of many of the faithful. A precedent exists, that of the decision of the bishops of the Fiji and Gilbert Islands in the Pacific. What should our attitude be to this (6) ?

- (15) The great similarity of our two traditions without any doubt makes it possible to envisage (but, we think, still within the bounds of non-reciprocity) a broadening of the discipline sanctioned by the Directory. Within the principles governing admission, the Anglican communion should have the right to special treatment, and several cases of pastoral economy could be envisaged. But the fact that the law of reciprocity should not come into play is even at this level a grave infraction of ecumenical fair play. And this faces us with a problem.

General Conclusion

- (16) We were asked to present simply a considered status quaestionis of everything that, in the area of Eucharistic doctrine, is involved in our desire for full communion. We can sum up our reflections in a few lines, which are supported by everything that has gone before:

- On the level of a doctrinal deepening and of sacramental practice our ways do not at this point approach so closely that we can already speak of conjunction, at least on essential points. We have spoken of a substantial consensus.

- Nevertheless, the Eucharistic question will only be fully resolved between us when we have carried out concrete acts of ecclesial reconciliation.

- (17) Full Eucharistic communion can only have meaning for us if, far from concealing our divisions with an apparent solution, it opens the way to a process of profound encounter in doctrine and in life.

NOTES

- (1) Report on the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission, I - The Ordinal, London, 1968, 3, p.11.
- (2) Intercommunion Today, Nos. 77-93, pp. 46-54; no. 225, p. 128.
- (3) Ibid., no. 83, p.50.
- (4) See G.H.Tavard, Does the Protestant Ministry have Sacramental Significance? published in Continuum, 1969, 260-268.
- (5) Intercommunion Today, nos. 91 and 93, pp. 53 and 54.
- (6) Cf. E.P.S., 17th July, 1969.
