

ANGLICAN / ROMAN CATHOLIC RELATIONS IN THE USA:

A Pastoral Approach to Unity

Introduction

Twenty diocesan Bishops of the Episcopal Church in the USA were asked to contribute to the preparation of this paper by providing anonymous answers to three questions. There are ninety-one diocesan Bishops active in the Episcopal Church in the USA. The twenty selected represent, in the opinion of the author, a cross-section of the House of Bishops. They are representative of age, theological orientation, geography, large and small dioceses, metropolitan and industrial areas and less densely populated rural states. One bishop is a member of ARC, but was away from his office and unable to reply. The other bishops all replied in answers which ranged from one to several pages. Some included short articles already published, or about to be published, on Anglican/Roman Catholic relations, and one a thoughtful article on this subject by another author. Not all the bishops answered all three questions. One bishop, recently consecrated, replied that he lacked sufficient experience to provide an adequate answer to the questions. He reported, however, that he had formed cordial relations already with the Roman Catholic Church and that he believes "the exploration of such possibilities is worthwhile."

We are left, therefore, with the replies of eighteen bishops who have written "off the record" and anonymously on a subject of great ecumenical importance to all Christians. Documentation for each answer can be provided, if required. Answers have been selected for relevance, clarity and directness, and, in the opinion of this bishop, we have here important evidence of the frame of mind of a representative group of the American House of Bishops.

Question I

All three questions were under the general heading, "Have you had any experience which you can share anonymously that indicates an operative way to approach the question of growing together with the Roman Catholic Church in America?" This was the most popular question and fourteen bishops addressed themselves to it as follows:

Bishop _____ "Right now we have formed Christian Associates and the Roman Catholics are a part of it with sixteen other churches and we are at work in all of _____ together. The structure is one of sharing at all levels of action--manpower, financing, concern and issues, but not in worship or on a very deep theological basis."

Bishop _____ "Yes, we have had quite a bit of experience...which might be of interest...Before I became the Diocesan in 1966 we had had for two or three years regular meetings of the Department of Faith and Order of what was then the _____ Council of Churches and the Commission on Ecumenism of the Roman Catholic Diocese of _____. We would meet in various places about every six weeks. We would rotate the chairmanship, and the 'chairman' for the day would prepare a ten-minute paper on some subject of his own choosing--'The Episcopate', 'The Church and Civil Rights', 'Liturgical Change', etc. The floor was then open for discussion, and the only rules were absolute frankness and no holds barred! Then we would have dinner together. It was a lively, delightful and informative fellowship." "In the article enclosed herewith I mention some of the incidents, unthinkable ten years ago, which have dramatized the 'change in climate' in our neck of the woods. There have been others--the participation of Roman Catholic Bishops and Monsignors in our Diocesan Centennial when we were visited by _____, also their attendance at my institution as Diocesan and at the Consecration of _____. When I attended Bishop _____ anniversary celebration, I was placed in the Bishop's throne and was accorded all the usual

episcopal dignities by the thurifer, etc!"

Bishop _____ "I am happy to respond to the question of the 'pastoral union' of the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches.

- 1.) In the Diocese of _____ forms of pastoral union are:
 - a.) A joint secretariat (Diocese and Archdiocese) for the Cursillo Movement.
 - b.) The issuance of a joint social relations newsletter called _____. (Diocesan Department of Social Relations and the Archdiocesan Commission on Social Justice.)
 - c.) Observers from the Episcopal Clergy Association attend meetings of the Clergy Senate of the Archdiocese and vice versa (the above are either 'official' or above-ground i.e. known by the Archbishop and myself).
- 2.) Liturgical relations, which are increasingly visible, include con-celebration of the Eucharist by Roman and Anglican clergy. These are not officially sanctioned by either The Archbishop of _____ or myself. There is some preaching in each others' pulpits on special occasions. I, myself, recently preached at the 'Red Mass' at _____ Church in _____ and on Thanksgiving I preached in a Roman Church in _____.
At the beginning of Anglican-Catholic Cursillo retreats there were two celebrations, one Roman and the other Anglican. This practice has been abandoned in favor of a con-celebration.
- 3.) Episcopal relations. The Archbishop and I are personal friends. We meet once a year alone for what is jokingly called a 'summit meeting'. He is very conservative and prefers the theology of Michael Ramsey to that of Leo Cardinal Suenens! I often call him for advice. I also frequently act as 'go-between' for the Executives of the Protestant Churches in the area. At ecumenical gatherings, he clings to me like a leech. Each year, at his invitation, I spend a day alone with the Seniors in his Diocesan Theological

Seminary. Each year they (young radicals) corrupt me."

Bishop _____ "First, the area of approach should be in terms of social programs. Second, there could be mutual exchange of facilities for worship. Third, the work in institutions could bear an effective witness and bring us to intercommunion. Fourth, intercommunion would begin to make a real witness and could draw the protestant world toward real Christianity."

Bishop _____ "I'd like to limit my reply to your first question, and particularly to one possible aspect of such 'growing together.' I refer to a possible approach to the bishops of the Roman Church.

It is my experience that they are personally friendly but that the present generation are conditioned strongly by their own education, training and way of life. Most of them have been educated in parochial schools, Roman Catholic colleges, and then often in the North American College at Rome. Most of them have had minimal, if any, parochial pastoral experience. Their careers have been in the curia or in the chancellery offices. They tend to be canon lawyers more than pastors.

Again and again, young Roman priests have come to chat with me not because they wish to enter the ministry of our communion but because, as they said apologetically, their own bishop did not understand the pastoral and parochial problems they were facing.

This problem also relates to the exalted status given to a bishop in the Roman Church and the authority which he possesses. He is not accustomed to participating as an equal with priests or laity. He is threatened by the democratic process.

I would, therefore, suggest as a possible experiment small group meetings of Roman Catholic bishops with our own bishops. After a degree of trust was established, the meetings might be enlarged to include priests and ultimately laity.

I suggest this because I see no possibility of our Church accepting any form of union with the Roman Catholic Church under

its present episcopal pastoral attitudes. We might come to agree on theology but we would stumble badly on pastoral care."

Bishop _____ "It seems to me that the kind of things that we've begun to do already by way of conversations among Roman and Anglican Bishops, and Roman and Anglican clergy, is a kind of first step in this direction. There is still a lot of 'getting to know you' to be done."

Bishop _____ "A more realistic approach is to work on sharing our pastoral ministries on the basis of mutual recognition of those ministries. Shared ministries can take place in the cases of 'Mixed Marriages' especially. This is a natural 'growing edge'. (Baptism of children of 'Mixed Marriages'. Marriage of children of 'Mixed Marriages'. Holy Communion made available to both parties and joint Church membership of both parties encouraged.) Shared Bible Study Classes, Prayer Meetings and Evangelistic Services. Joint retreats of the clergy of both Churches. Mutual approach to wide range of social problems."

Bishop _____ "It seems to me that the operative way that is being pursued by ARCIC is realistic and is bearing fruit beyond all imagination. The report of Eucharistic Doctrine is stunning."

"I feel that continuing these consultations is the real yeast of the matter for now. Besides this, here in _____ and elsewhere, the Roman Catholic Church is becoming increasingly cooperative with Local and State Councils. They seem to have know-how and seem willing to develop the patience necessary for cooperative work in community ministry and joint pastoral work."

Bishop _____ "Short of merger there are many ways we might share resources such as libraries, administrative expertise, audio-visual aids, inner city efforts, some aspects of united ministries in higher education. There might be many aspects of seminary programs and courses of study which could be shared in some kind of reciprocal arrangement.

We in _____ rejoice in the growing warmth of our relation-

ship with our Roman Catholic brothers, particularly the bishops and clergy."

Bishop _____ "I would see the operative approach at this point of time in working for and achieving inter-communion as soon as possible -toward that end-lay discussion groups and joint Episcopal conversation- jointly priestly conversations on a diocesan basis."

Bishop _____ "We have excellent relations with our Roman Dioceses in this part of the Church, so much so that the local Roman Bishop and I are jointly inviting _____ as the key speaker for our Cathedral Centennial which is about to occur. We also do sharing of facilities and while he has ten communicants to my one operate, more or less, as brothers in Christ."

Bishop _____ "I begin by saying that I earnestly yearn for an Anglican-RC merger in this country, and anywhere else it can be had. As to any experiences I've had, they have been at the local level. The local RC Bishops have come to my installation, and I've sat in the sanctuary at some of their functions. The other day a _____ Jesuit conducted our retreats (clergy and lay) and concelebrated with one of our men each morning, and heard anyone's confession. The last day, he said Mass out of the 'Green Book' (Trial Use), and all communicated."

Bishop _____ "For thirteen years the Roman Catholic Bishop of _____ and the Episcopal Bishop of _____ have had a joint dinner meeting to which each Bishop has invited four priests and two laymen. This gives a dinner party of twelve, and we have had papers on various subjects of mutual interest including a report from the Roman Catholic Bishop on the Vatican and from me on Lambeth in '68. We also deal with such matters as the Church's responsibility to curb crime, we have dealt with questions of the needs of young people, drug abuse, etc."

Bishop _____ "I have worked intimately with the three R.C. Bishops in _____ for nine years, but have discussed your questions with only one _____. Our basic opinion is that 'inter-communion'

comes first. So that would be our answer to your first question on 'operation'."

Question II

The bishops gave briefer answers to the second question which was, "Have you had any experience which you can share anonymously that indicates how the United Church would be structured?" Understandably, their answers were not as clear.

Bishop _____ "What I am saying is that pastoral union is coming about, pushed by grass-roots forces. If we agree on the Eucharist and if the question of Orders can be resolved, I would see the two Churches growing together. I would hope organizational unity would take place only on a pragmatic basis. Ultimately, I would look for some kind of Uniate relationship with Rome. This seems to me to be the best form of Church Union in existence at the present time."

Bishop _____ "My hope and prayer is that we shall have some years of doing the above things (working together) and not attempt to develop a structure. If we could have intercommunion, mutual recognition of ministry, even exchange back and forth and years of working together, the hierarchy of each church would, at the local level, develop a united structure which would go to the top.

If we start talking of structure, we will kill our chance of getting together, even as COCU was killed by structures."

Bishop _____ "I am deeply interested in ecumenism and most of our program in this area is on an ecumenical basis. However, I do find myself growing more and more anxious about the possibility of some super-structure. I sensed that this was what many of the bishops were feeling at our recent meeting (re:COCU). I see the coming great Church not so much as some 'umbrella' kind of thing, but, rather, open, sincere and committed intercommunion. The Diocese of _____ has had 'open Communion' ever since I have been here and, even though it is against the directive of the Archdiocese, we have it

subrosa with Roman Catholics, clergy and laity, all of the time. I think I would want to _____ push for an openness about this relationship with the Roman Church, so that our people and their people may be welcomed respectively at each other's altars.

The report which Art Vogel gave at the Pocono meeting (Document on Eucharist) I think leans very much in this direction and I believe that this would be a signal contribution to our respective churches, and to humanity as well, if and when this can be achieved. I certainly, in any foreseeable future, would not want to find myself or the Anglican Communion enmeshed in the legalism, structure and the current tensions of the Roman Catholic Church as I see it. I think we can be of more help to them as friends outside their structure than within; and perhaps vice versa, too."

Bishop _____ "Down the road a way, it would seem to me, at least on the basis of the conversation we had at Kansas City with Roman Bishops, that the model that they seem to feel most appropriate, and I think perhaps would work very comfortably with us, is that of the uniate relationship. It might well be that it would be possible for us simply to have a joint recognition of priesthood and some kind of form of intercommunion, either as a stage in the way, or perhaps as a maximum goal."

Bishop _____ "I do not believe the time is yet ripe to work for a possible merger of the Episcopal Church with the Roman Catholic Church in the USA. Attempting to 'structure' such a merger would repeat the 'COCU' approach. Structure must come after mutual working together."

Bishop _____ "As for your second question, frankly, I feel haunted about any questions concerning the structure of a United Church. The structures of both Churches are complicated, and must be opened up. It seems to me it would be doing better to pray and work for intercommunion, as we have, ever since the time of the Lambeth Quadrilateral. This, in itself, would be a Miracle and a Blessing."

Bishop _____ "It seems to me that there are parallels in the action taken by the Eastern Churches 'in communion with Rome which yet retain their respective languages, rites and canon law...' and the prospect of our own entry into some kind of union with a segment of the Roman Catholic Church."

Bishop _____ "The structure of a possibly merged Church would be Collegial Episcopacy with the Pope as 'First Among Equals' and presiding over the College."

Bishop _____ "For myself, I'd be happy to join with them and retain the papacy under some sort of defined 'Primus inter pares.' If we could start with a mutual recognition of ministries; I'd not expect them to do things 'our' way--in fact I can see lots in Anglicanism I'd not like to perpetuate."

Bishop _____ "Our answer to your second question would envision a structure similar to the Uniat arrangement in many parts of the world."

Bishop _____ "If Rome does recognize our Orders, which I feel she will do through essential agreement between the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury, centering in the real presence of our Lord at the Eucharist, then I would hope in some way we can respond in terms of the Pope as first among equals. This creates no problem with me and I have believed it for years."

Bishop _____ "I suppose that the Union would be structured more at the top than at the bottom. I mean, that the Anglican Rite bishops would be members of the RC House of Bishops too. There would have to be regional association. But generally speaking, the modern Roman idea is to leave the Rites alone to live their lives as they want to. So, in Winnipeg, I knew Ukrainian Catholics who had never been in a Roman Catholic church, and had no idea of going into one. I believe that there would be a direct link with Rome through an Apostolic Delegate, or through an Exarch. I think Anglicans would have to brace themselves for the discovery that

they were very much the junior partner, and would find that their toes were often trodden on, unwittingly."

Bishop _____ "As with COCU I am not enthusiastic about attempts to 'structure' Church Unity with Roman Catholics at this point in history. I think the situation may radically change in five or ten years. For the present I think we should concentrate on dialogue and incidents where we can demonstrate our already existing unity without forcing issues which are apt to backfire before there has been a general acceptance of principles."

Bishop _____ " I may be completely mistaken but I see this heading toward an organizational, structural plan and quite frankly, this leaves me cold in our present situation. As a matter of fact, I think we'd be making a great mistake in trying to formalize any relationship at the moment, short of the happy time when we can declare ourselves in communion with each other. I think that any other plan, no matter how good its intentions, might be misinterpreted and in the long run could be a detriment to inter-communion of these two branches of the Church. Where happy relationships exist, they do better on an informal rather than a structural basis. The moment we start setting down guidelines and rules we are going to find ourselves ham-strung and much of the creative and sometimes spontaneous effort of a cooperative nature would be stymied."

Question III

The bishops' answers to the third question are briefer still: "Have you had any experience which you can share anonymously that indicates what the two churches would accomplish united that they are not already accomplishing separately?"

Bishop _____ "I think the most obvious thing it would accomplish is that it would help to reduce the division that frustrates most Christian enterprise. It seems to me that it is futile for us to talk to black people and white people about being reconciled

if we can't reconcile with our brother Christians. I think, again and again down the line, in stewardship, social witness, etc., our divisions undercut anything we try to say to society, and anything that we can do to reduce those divisions, it seem to me, helps to strengthen Christian witness in our world."

Bishop _____ "Intercommunion, or some kind of United Church, would accomplish what our Lord prayed for in the Garden of Gethsemane. This is a very serious matter for all Christians. I make no predictions as to how or when His Spirit, and history, and our own response will bring us to a United Vocation to serve God and World. I do not think any of us are really the Church we ought to be, unless we are willing to pursue every possible course for understanding, increased charity and common ministry."

Bishop _____ "There would be many institutions we could do together, if everyone recognized everyone else in the two Churches. Especially could we do educational efforts in a combined way, from kindergarten to seminaries. And all new things we could plan to start together."

Bishop _____ "We conceive of 'Mission' to be our common concern: word and sacrament to those persons and places where it is not now offered."

Bishop _____ "I feel we need each other and Christ's Body ought to be healed and could in togetherness express His love in a far more beautiful way than we are today."

Bishop _____ "I think that the main advantages would be: our non-Episcopal friends could see that union with Rome need not mean the obliteration of everything that is truly characteristic of an Apostolic church of non-Roman character. This would encourage the move towards unity. We should be the showroom window of unity. Second, it would make it possible to conduct a stronger apostolate to the educated classes in our community. This would bring dangers too, but they would have to be reckoned with. We stand to gain enormously. But so do the Romans in the USA."

This concludes the contribution by the bishops. The words are their own. Great care has been taken to reproduce their statements as submitted. In a few instances a bishop has used words that are direct and strong, but each was asked to be honest and, in order to achieve frankness, was assured of anonymity. No letter had any tone of bitterness. All the bishops who replied indicated they enjoyed cordial personal relations with their Roman Catholic counterpart. If a group of Roman Catholic bishops were asked the same questions, it is conceivable and desirable that they would be at least equally as frank and direct. If there is to be any real growing together, there will be times of pain and anguish as prejudices and fears give way to a new life together.

Observations and Conclusions

Before writing this paper I was engaged in the continuation of a personal study of Church and Culture. This brought me into consultation with professors of philosophy and theology at Oxford, Cambridge and Louvain as well as professors of other disciplines. There were also opportunities to meet with Anglican and Roman Catholic clergy, laity, young adults, students, and religious at convents and monasteries in the USA and Europe. Some study was given to movements within the two churches such as The New Pentecostalism, Yoga, ecumenical prayer groups, and the Focolare Movement. This study and experience, together with the data gathered from the American bishops, lead me to the following observations and conclusions about the relations between the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in the USA.

1. Prior to the release of the Document on the Eucharist there was a growing practice of intercommunion and con-celebration by Anglicans and Roman Catholics in the USA. Clergy and laity of both communions felt that the experience was so authentic that the practice did not really need the approval of a commission or a hierarchy to be valid, as important and desirable as that might be. However, when the Document on the Eucharist was made public, many people on both sides

felt that they had received all but the final official approval for reunion. This Document had more of an authority and gave more inspiration and encouragement to move ahead rapidly than ARCIC may have anticipated or intended. This should not surprise us since the Eucharist is a symbol of Christian Unity and at the same time a means to that unity.

2. The reports that have been released by ARCIC and ARC have generated an optimism and an expectancy that have in effect established a time table for reunion. People frequently say, "It is just a matter of a few years." As each paper indicating agreement by ARCIC has been released, a new relationship, a step toward unity, has been experienced in the USA. First, it was Baptism. This brought a cautious hopefulness. The Eucharist paper was, as one bishop described it, "stunning" and many sceptical leaders of both churches believed that the ring which the Pope gave to the Archbishop of Canterbury as a sign of an engagement really meant both Communion had declared to the world that they were at a point of no return. The present climate of relationship between Roman Catholics and Anglicans in the USA is almost one of 'Kairos.' If there should be a paper indicating agreement on Ministry, the impact will be far greater than the Eucharist paper and will be interpreted as intercommunion.

3. There are many theologians and philosophers who believe that the main branches of Christianity in America have been engulfed by a 'religion' of secularism that has grown out of scientific and technological progress as well as out of the political and social tensions of our day, like the Vietnam War and the struggle for civil rights. There is a large theological vacuum, a new theology of political power, and not a few exclusive spiritual movements which find some of their greatest support in the Roman Catholic Church. One is reminded that a man is more a son of his culture than he is of his father. This gives credibility to the position that, if institutional Catholic Christianity is to be a live option in the USA, there must be a united witness by Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

4. The American Episcopal bishops are in substantial agreement that the efforts of the COCU commission to develop a structure were accountable for the great loss of Anglican support for reunion in that direction. On the other hand, they appear ready and desirous for official intercommunion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics and offer the Uniate relationship as a possible form of relationship in the future.

5. The youth of America and many older people, as well as influential leaders of society, are impatient for the Church to match its own life with the Gospel. This makes the matter of unity an urgent one. We must move positively and creatively, even with some risk, or those who are looking to the Church for leadership, as well as the Church itself, may be forced by history into uncreative and unimaginative answers to the problems of our day.

6. In evaluating the religious situation in the USA much thought must be given to the colonization of the country, its history, and its tradition. The early settlers sought religious and political freedom from the religious and political life of the Old World. Each of the major wars in which the nation has been involved has been fought, rightfully or wrongfully, on the basis of securing and maintaining freedom. The educational policy of public instruction has indoctrinated not only the students but the parents of the students with a doctrine of freedom. All social change brought about by students, labor unions, civil rights movements, or political parties has been on a doctrine of freedom. It is, however, not always clear as to what the freedom is or is from. However, the tradition is so great and effective, in spite of current disorders, that the USA means freedom to the majority of its people. The effect this has on the church and churchmen is so strong and deep-seated that if given the choice between being an American or an Anglican, or an American or a Roman Catholic, the answer more often than not would be, "If I can't be both, then I choose being an American." This says something all too briefly about authority. The question of authority speaks to the current practices between the two

churches and to any plans for structuring a United Church.

7. There are some areas which need immediate attention which would serve to prevent irregular practices and would further Christian unity. They would be given the following priority:

A. Regional meetings of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops with an agenda or format designed to help them know one another as bishops and as persons.

B. Diocesan meetings of Anglican and Roman Catholic priests with an agenda or format designed to help them know one another as priests and as persons.

C. Encourage the religious communities of both churches in the USA to continue their present practice of meeting together and to invite others who are not already doing so to attend.

D. Small meetings of Anglican and Roman Catholic adults on a parochial basis designed to help them know each other as Christian people in their community and as parents facing similar problems in developing and maintaining a Christian home. The young people might do better to meet separately, but with a similar program.

E. Cooperation in the development and management of social service agencies, homes for nursing care and the aging, hospitals and educational institutions, which are all in need of greater support from both churches, could be arranged as bishops, clergy, and laity began to know one another better.

F. The cooperation between seminaries of both churches has already begun in several places, but needs to be extended. It is in the seminary that the mind-set of the clergy is formed. As they are educated together, they will naturally grow together. There are areas where the Roman Catholic faculties could strengthen the Anglican seminaries, such as sacramental theology and spirituality, and Anglicans could contribute to the understanding and development of the pastoral studies.

G. The development of a common spirituality and the instruction of bishops and clergy of both churches in this spirituality, which would include:

(1) A common translation of the Bible with common footnotes.

(2) The encouragement of a wider use of the ICET texts and instruction in that which is common in the new liturgies of both churches. Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics are shocked when they first learn of what appears to be common material in the new Roman rite and the Second Service of The Trial Use in the Episcopal Church. There is an evangelical slogan in the States which says, "Families that pray together stay together." This may hold a lesson for us. Common retreats, Bible study, prayer meetings, and the development of a Christian life-style are all essential not only to the unity of Anglicans and Roman Catholics but to the mission of the Church.

8. Spiritual communion among Christians is essential if they are ever to reach a unity of mind. The pastoral approach to unity between Anglicans and Roman Catholics in the USA will be very much like a marriage where two people make a sincere effort to know each other and give to each other the freedom to preserve their individual identity, but will build up over the years a deep and abiding relationship as the two become 'one flesh.'

St. Anselm gives us inspiration for our common task with the thought that man must strive to overcome the evil that he has brought upon himself, so that God may restore us to the blessedness for which we were created.

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