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Group D

Communion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics - The Present Situation

Our fullest communion with God and with other human beings will be realised only in the Kingdom of Heaven. Within the Pilgrim Church on earth Christians are obliged to seek continually deeper communion with God and with one another; but such communion can be only a provisional approximation to that which will be granted when, together with all the saints, we see God face to face, and when all need for sacramental signs of God's presence has ceased. This perfect, eschatological communion is the assured hope to which we refer our growth into full ecclesial communion from the true but incomplete communion we already share.

Ecclesial communion will not be complete until it embraces all Christian Churches. The development of the communion between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, which is the goal of our dialogue, is only a part of this wider growth in communion. We see our dialogue as an opportunity, given by God, to continue to make a contribution to the communion of all Christian people.

The list of issues which divide our two Churches shows only too well that this communion is not yet complete. Nevertheless Anglicans and Roman Catholics already share to a large extent in a true communion (koinonia) of faith and life. Many of the signs of communion set out in a previous section are already visible in the relationship between the two Churches.

(i) There is a communion in faith. We acknowledge one Lord Jesus Christ. Our churches share the same scriptures,

apart from minor differences over the status of the 'apocryphal' or 'deuterocanonical' books of the Old Testament, hold them to be inspired, and often produce and use the same translations. On the foundation of these scriptures, our churches profess the same apostolic faith, which is formulated in common creeds. In addition, the two churches' official responses to the Final Report of ARCIC-I show that they share substantially the same faith concerning eucharist and ministry, so that what divergences remain are not church-dividing and can either be resolved or contained within the framework of the agreement achieved. The responses to the Final Report have also revealed considerable convergence on the doctrine of authority in the Church: e.g. that authority is based on the confession of Christ as Lord as witnessed in the scriptures; and that ordained ministers have a special authority for the living proclamation and interpretation of the Gospel, so as to enable all Christians to use the gifts of the Spirit which they have received for the enrichment of the Church's common life.

(ii) Since baptism in each of our two churches is recognised by the other, it constitutes for us the sacramental bond of unity (cf. Vat. II, Decree on Ec., 22).

(iii) Concerning common mission, in their Declaration of 1977, Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Donald Coggan pledged the two churches to 'collaborate more earnestly in a greater common witness to Christ before the world'. This common witness implies joint striving for the conversion of men and women to Jesus Christ and for the transformation of society, and shared concern for moral values. Not all parts of our two

Churches, however, have been able to respond to this initiative with equal speed.

(iv) Although the two Churches do not yet possess shared structures of decision-making, on the regional and local levels they have sometimes achieved close and trusting co-operation in serving the society in which they live.

(v) The two Churches recognise and affirm one another's members. First of all Anglicans and Roman Catholics are united in prayer with and for each other, the common worship in Canterbury Cathedral in May 1982, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Robert Runcie and Pope John Paul II being a most striking example. Nor should we ignore the countless number of Anglicans and Roman Catholics throughout the world who meet frequently with other Christians, for prayer and to foster a common Christian witness. This mutual affirmation is also expressed in joint bible study and other forms of discussion which are widely practised.

Nevertheless two of the most important signs of communion between our two churches are absent. First, the mutual recognition of the ordained ministry has not yet occurred. However, the fact that Anglicans recognise Roman Catholic ordinations, even though the reverse is not the case, is a true element of communion between our two Churches. Second, as a consequence of the lack of mutual recognition of ministries, mutual eucharistic sharing, the highest expression of ecclesial communion, is not permitted.

Further to the signs already referred to, our existing communion also finds expression in other areas of Christian life, in liturgy, in pastoral co-operation and common service,

theological reflection, and spirituality.

Liturgical renewal in both communions has brought a convergence in our forms of worship, which has enabled the members of each Church to feel a sense of welcome and of being at home in one another's services. This is particularly evident in the celebration of the Eucharist with its heightened emphasis on the liturgy of the Word and the proclamation of the Gospel. There remains however a great variety of worship, including the old and the new in each of our Churches, a variety which should be valued and preserved. The spiritual core of the ecumenical movement consists in public and private prayer for the unity of Christians accompanied by a change of heart and holiness of life.

Regarding pastoral co-operation, there are, in many places, regular meetings between bishops at regional and national levels for prayer and for the taking of common counsel about contemporary moral social, economic and political issues. Our two Churches often collaborate in a wider ecumenical framework, such as membership of or association with national Councils of Churches. In a world of inequalities and disasters, natural or man-made, common Christian action for relief and projects for development have drawn our two Churches together in active co-operation. Internationally, the symbolic significance of meetings between the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Anglican bishops with the Pope have emphasised and enhanced the existing communion between our Churches. In some countries there are shared church buildings and joint schools. There are joint meetings between religious, clergy and laity often for co-operation in missions and evangelism.

Anglicans and Roman Catholics share the inheritance of a common tradition of theological interpretation: even after the break of the sixteenth century, our theologians drew largely upon the same sources, particularly the Church Fathers, and thought and wrote in the same concepts. In recent years, especially, the work of theologians and scripture scholars has crossed ecclesiastical barriers. In universities and seminaries there is often co-operation in theological training, especially in the areas of biblical, patristic and liturgical scholarship. Today in each region the churches' proclamation is shaped by the need to respond to the same challenge made by the secular culture in which they exist side by side.

We share a common inheritance of spirituality, and in modern times have been enriched by one another's traditions of hymnody and spiritual writing. In some parishes there is considerable co-operation, joint prayer and shared worship. This has often been deepened by renewal movements which have strengthened members of both our Churches in their common love for Jesus Christ. In some countries, religious communities, both Anglican and Roman Catholic, though differing in size and influence from place to place, have inherited a common spiritual tradition and profoundly enriched the life of both our Churches.

The marriage of a committed Catholic and a committed Anglican, sometimes described as an "inter-church family", provides a particular opportunity for ecumenical growth. The hopes and the difficulties of such families express poignantly the pain of division and the urgent desire for further growth in communion.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE EXISTING COMMUNION BETWEEN OUR TWO CHURCHES

Our commission has been requested to propose possible next steps on the journey to full reconciliation (Common Declaration 1982). Of the steps which suggest themselves some can appropriately be taken as things now stand, others will belong more naturally to the period following on the reception of the Final Report by our two communions. We suggest the following as steps to be encouraged under present conditions. Some of these have already been taken in a partial way in some areas of the world where our two communions live side by side; but our experience of them is still very limited. We urge local churches to consider them as a range of dynamic options for action now.

1. Pastoral consultation between Anglicans and Roman Catholics at national, regional and parochial level (Malta Report 8, 9a). These may include joint consultations of laity where that is appropriate. Apart from the constructive value of such consultations, they will serve as a lightning conductor for scandal, confusion and misunderstanding such as arise from time to time.
2. The extension of the other cooperative ventures mooted in the Malta Report (9b, c, d); joint use of church buildings, joint theological training, collaboration on theological projects.
3. The production of joint Bible-study material, and the encouragement of joint Bible-study groups locally.
4. Shared retreats and retreat-resources to foster common prayer at every level.
5. The Malta Report (14) proposed the making of joint statements on "human issues", i.e. moral and social questions. This has hardly yet been attempted at a formal level, though individual bishops have cooperating with each other and single-issue coalition groups (e.g. promoting human rights or the right to life) have now become common. It would greatly increase mutual understanding if regional and local churches sought participation from the other communion in all studies

leading to pronouncements on social, economic and political issues.

6. Special initiatives in mission should be undertaken on a broad ecumenical front involving our two communions and the other Christian churches.

7. The education of children (including the policy of admission to church schools and the syllabus for Religious Education where appropriate) needs to be examined to ensure that we are assisting each other to bring up our children as Christians in a non-Christian world.

8. Special ministries addressed to particular pastoral needs and community services in a locality should be shared where at all possible.

9. The equipment of lay people for lay ministry (e.g. the training of hospital visitors, marriage counsellors, study-group leaders, catechists, youth workers, etc.) may often be undertaken more fruitfully in common.

10. Local hierarchies should be encouraged to produce joint guidelines for the joint pastoral care of inter-church marriages.

11. Women's groups should be encouraged to share common activities; and there may be other occasions on which the women of our two communions could profitably consult with each other as well as by their natural participation in the consultations already mentioned.

THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR A NEW RELATIONSHIP

For the next steps along the road to fuller communion the dialogue between our churches must build upon what has been so far achieved. Our predecessors claimed, in the conclusion to the Final Report, that "the convergence ... would appear to call for the establishing of a new relationship between our Churches" (p.99). The response of our two churches to their work enables us to suggest new steps. We hope that the authorities in our two communions who have the responsibility for deciding on such matters will give these suggestions their careful consideration.

1. Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics should be encouraged, where the services of their own church are not available, to attend the worship of the other church, even though they may not be able to receive communion.
2. In 1968 the Malta Report proposed (12) the exchange of preachers for the homily during the celebration of the eucharist "without prejudice to the more general regulations contained in the Directory". Our new relationship offers the opportunity to realise this aspiration.
3. The promise currently required of the Catholic partner in an inter-church marriage could be replaced by a joint promise in which the couple undertake together to bring up their children as Christians and to be receptive to the ministry of both churches as it is offered to them. This proposal presupposes a commitment to joint pastoral care (10 above).
4. From time to time reasons of conscience and personal growth in faith lead an individual Roman Catholic to become an Anglican or an Anglican to become a Roman Catholic. Such an event need not be an obstacle to ecumenical goodwill. The two churches should at this stage review the ritual and pastoral conduct of Receptions, to ensure that any triumphalist note is avoided.
5. It would be appropriate for other Primates in the Anglican Communion beside the Archbishop of Canterbury to meet the Pope from time to time as occasion may arise.
6. The Roman Catholic Church may grant permission in general terms for Anglicans to receive the Holy Communion on special occasions or in special need. Further progress on eucharistic sharing must wait upon a fuller recognition of the Anglican ministry by the Roman Catholic Church. This question, therefore, becomes the major issue which demands the speediest possible resolution.

To inaugurate this new phase in our relationship a suitable liturgy along the lines of that used in Canterbury Cathedral in 1982

could be published for wide use in cathedrals and parish churches. This might also be an appropriate moment for a new Common Declaration by the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury, involving bishops from each communion, affirming publicly the faith we hold in common on the eucharist, ministry and authority in such terms as the reception of the Final Report permits.