

Lambeth Conference 1968

Section Report

RELATIONS WITH THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

In the "Common Declaration", signed in Rome on 24 March 1966, the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury gave thanks to Almighty God for the new atmosphere of Christian fellowship now existing between the two Churches, and declared their intention of inaugurating "a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed." This dialogue, they declared, was to include "not only theological matters such as Scripture, Tradition and Liturgy, but also matters of practical difficulty felt on either side."

It was as a result of this Declaration that a Joint Preparatory Commission was set up; and the Section received with gratitude the report issued as a result of the three meetings of that Commission.

Essential to such meetings is the spirit in which they are undertaken. For our part we recognize in penitence that many of our past attitudes and actions have contributed to our unhappy divisions and that there are still many things in us for which we must ask the forgiveness of God and of our fellow Christians. Yet we are thankful for the many signs of renewal of the spirit of unity in ourselves and in others.

Together with the Roman Catholic Church we confess our faith in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as witnessed by the holy Scriptures, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, and by the teaching of the Fathers of the early Church. We have one baptism and recognize many common features in our heritage. At the same time substantial divergences exist, many of which have arisen since the sixteenth century, in such matters as the unity and indefectibility of the Church and its teaching authority, the Petrine primacy, infallibility, and Mariological definitions, as well as in some moral problems. These matters will require serious study so

that they may be carefully identified and, under the guidance of the Spirit, resolved. This task must be undertaken in the light of the challenge to the whole Church of God presented by the modern world, and in the context of the mission of the Church throughout the world and to all sorts and conditions of men.

Signs of Progress

Relations between Anglicans and Roman Catholics are progressing in various ways and to varying degrees in many places. Examples include common services of prayer and thanksgiving, the joint use of churches, the exchange of preachers, co-operation in theological education, and meetings of official commissions and informal groups. With due regard to individual consciences, we endorse and encourage these developments where local circumstances permit the avoidance of misunderstanding.

We rejoice that the new attitude towards Scripture, expressed in the Constitution on Divine Revelation, has led to co-operation in biblical studies and in the work of the United Bible Societies.

Liturgical renewal and reform represent a field where co-operation is urgent. Unilateral action in regard to the liturgical year and the vernacular forms used by our people is to be avoided.

The Christian witness being given by our clergy and laity in many urgent human issues, in many cases in close association with Roman Catholics, claims our support and our prayers. Where such witness may be strengthened by joint or parallel statements by church leaders, these should be issued.

We welcome the increasing signs of mutual recognition, not least in practical acts on both sides, of the reality of Anglican and Roman Catholic ministry in the whole Body of Christ on earth.

A Permanent Joint Commission

We recommend the setting up of a Permanent Joint Commission, our delegation to be chosen by the Lambeth Consultative Body or its successor and to be representative of the Anglican Communion as a whole. This commission or its subcommissions should consider the question of intercommunion in the context of a true sharing in faith and the mutual recognition of ministry, and should also consider in the light of the new biblical scholar-

ship the orders of both Churches and the theology of ministry which forms part of the theology of the Church and can only be considered as such. The hope for the future lies in a fresh and broader approach to the understanding of apostolic succession and of the priestly office. On this line we look for a new joint appraisal of church orders.

Conversations between Anglicans and Roman Catholics should be conducted with due regard to the multiplicity of conversations also in progress with other Churches. In them all we propose to hold fast the principles of Catholic truth as we have been given to understand them, though we realize that, in renewed obedience to the Holy Spirit, we must at all times be willing to go forward adventurously.

Reports of Anglican/Roman Catholic conversations in the several provinces should be made available to members of the Permanent Joint Commission, and information on all these matters circulated by it throughout our communion.

Mixed Marriages

We are aware of the suffering which may arise from marriages in which one partner is an Anglican and the other a Roman Catholic, but welcome the fact that a Joint Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its Application to Mixed Marriages has been set up. The preliminary discussions of this joint commission have shown that the two Churches are close to one another in acknowledging that Holy Matrimony has a sacramental nature, although this is somewhat differently expressed in our respective formularies.

We welcome a suggestion from the (Roman Catholic) Third World Congress for the Lay Apostolate that Anglican priests should be acceptable as the official ministerial witnesses required by the Roman Catholic Church.

We note that the same Congress has asked that the responsibility for the Christian education of the children of a mixed marriage should be regarded as the responsibility of both parents who share in the grace of the marriage sacrament, and note that this is endorsed by the Declaration on Religious Liberty of Vatican II, which states: "Parents . . . have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive."

We also welcome the movement towards joint pastoral care of all concerned both before and after marriage by the clergy of the two Churches. Such joint pastoral care is an expression of the theology of Holy Matrimony which both Churches share.

EPISCOPACY, COLLEGIALITY, PAPACY

The Anglican tradition has always regarded *episcopacy* as an essential part of its Catholic inheritance. We would regard it as an extension of the apostolic office and function both in time and space, and, moreover, we regard the transmission of apostolic power and responsibility as an activity of the college of bishops and never as a result of isolated action by any individual bishop.

In the discharge of his episcopal responsibility, the bishop is the guardian of the faith, the father of his people, and the driving force of mission in his area.

Traditionally the bishop is father in God to the clergy and laity of a territorial diocese, and part of his vocation is to represent the Catholic Church in his diocese and, conversely, to represent his diocese within the councils of the wider Church.

While we have no wish to diminish the importance of this traditional pattern, the demands of a new age suggest the wisdom of also consecrating bishops without territorial jurisdiction but with pastoral responsibility, directly or indirectly, for special groups such as the armed forces, industry, and particular areas of concern within the mission of the Church. This principle would simply be the extension of the widespread current practice of appointing suffragans, auxiliaries, and assistants. We submit that all such bishops, by virtue of their consecration as bishops in the Church of God, should have their due place in episcopal councils throughout the world.

The principle underlying *collegiality* is that the apostolic calling, responsibility, and authority are an inheritance given to the whole body or college of bishops. Every individual bishop has therefore a responsibility both as a member of this college and as chief pastor in his diocese. In the latter capacity he exercises direct oversight over the people committed to his charge. In the former he shares with his brother bishops throughout the world a concern for the wellbeing of the whole Church.

Within the college of bishops it is evident that there must be

a president. In the Anglican Communion this position is at present held by the occupant of the historic see of Canterbury, who enjoys a primacy of honour, not of jurisdiction. This primacy is found to involve, in a particular way, that care for all the Churches which is shared by all the bishops.

The renewed sense of the collegiality of the episcopate is especially important at a time when most schemes for unity are being developed at a national level, because the collegiality of the episcopate helps to stress the worldwide and universal character of the Church. This collegiality must be a guiding principle in the growth of the relationships between the provinces of the Anglican Communion and those Churches with which we are, or shall be, in full communion. Within this larger college of bishops, the primacy would take on a new character which would need to be worked out in consultation with the Churches involved.

As a result of the emphasis placed on collegiality at the Second Vatican Council, the status of bishops in the Roman Catholic Church was in great measure enhanced, though the teaching of the First Vatican Council on the infallibility and immediate and universal jurisdiction of the Pope was unaffected. We are unable to accept this teaching as it is commonly understood today. The relationships between the Pope and the episcopal college, of which he is a member, are, however, still being clarified, and are subject to development. We recall the statement made in the Lambeth Conference of 1908, and repeated in 1920 and 1930, "that there can be no fulfillment of the Divine purpose in any scheme of reunion which does not ultimately include the great Latin Church of the West, with which our history has been so closely associated in the past, and to which we are still bound by many ties of common faith and tradition." We recognize the Papacy as a historic reality whose developing role requires deep reflection and joint study by all concerned for the unity of the whole Body of Christ.

Although the declaration and guardianship of the faith has traditionally been regarded as belonging fundamentally to the episcopal office, the collegiality of the episcopate must always be seen in the context of the conciliar character of the Church, involving the *consensus fidelium*, in which the episcopate has its place.

Lambeth Conference 1968 Actions

The Roman Catholic Church

52. The Conference welcomes the proposals made in the report of Section III which concern Anglican relations with the Roman Catholic Church.

53. The Conference recommends the setting up of a Permanent Joint Commission, for which the Anglican delegation should be chosen by the Lambeth Consultative Body (or its successor) and be representative of the Anglican Communion as a whole.

54. In view of the urgent pastoral questions raised by mixed marriages the Conference welcomes the work of the Joint Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its Application to Mixed Marriages, and urges its speedy continuance.

Collegiality

55. The Conference recommends that the principle of collegiality should be a guiding principle in the growth of the relationships between the provinces of the Anglican Communion and those Churches with which we are, or shall be, in full communion, and draws particular attention to that part of the Section III report which underlines this principle.