

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

SUB-COMMISSION ON THE MINISTRY

The Ministry

Christ washed the feet of his disciples before instituting the Eucharist. Ministry is always Diakonia. In the whole life of the Church Christ's disciples die with him and rise again to share his new life. Those whom he has called to the ordained ministry must especially bear within their body the dying of the Lord Jesus; for only so can they become renewed through the presence of Christ within them. Some of the structures of the Church, as we know them, must also be affected by this process of death and renewal if we are to fulfil our Diakonia of service and mission both to the people of God and to the world at large.

1. The Essence of Ministry

(a) The wider context Ministry is concerned with salvation. Supremely this is focussed in Christ himself. The Church as a whole enjoys and diffuses the benefits of his salvation. Subordinate to this function of the whole Church is the ordained ministry within it. The ordained ministry serves people within the Church, but also in leadership shares with the whole Church in its ministry to the world.

(b) The Crisis of Ministry This exists on two fronts. One derives from the difficulty in an hierarchical church of defining the implications of 'the minister as representative of the eucharistic community'. The other is conflict between internal, liturgical tasks and the external responsibility to the world.

(c) The Distinctiveness of the Ordained Ministry One view sees its distinctiveness in its sacerdotal character, another emphasizes rather pastoral oversight. A distinct function of the minister would still be seen in his eucharistic role and in absolution (certainly as normative, even if exceptions might be cited). The evolution of the threefold ministry and the history of the diaconate within it suggest at least some flexibility.

2. Ministry in a Divided ChurchValidity

This is a juridical term. It has been applied to the sacraments as indicating the certitude of their effect. Apostolicae Curae argued a defect of form and intention in the Edwardine Ordinal, because of the deliberate exclusion of the sacerdotal character of priesthood. Today, however, the criterion of validity may change with the new emphasis on 'episcopate' alongside the 'sacerdotal' character, and thus a different starting-point might lead to a different view of transmission of Orders. But how can validity be guaranteed?

(1) By mere examination of the historical problem. This inevitably leads to an impasse.

(2) By theological reinterpretation of Orders as it bears on past events.

(3) By the Roman Catholic Church recognising an authentic eucharistic doctrine and practice where it had not previously discerned them and proceeding officially to recognize also the Orders of the church concerned.

The implications for valid ministry of the references in De Ecumenismo to 'churches and ecclesial communities' (19) and in particular to the Anglican Communion (13) demand exploration.

3. Renewal and Service

There is much sharing in Diakonia which need not wait for the resolution of the problems we have outlined. There is urgent need for both churches separately and together to re-examine the scope of mission and the consequent practical policies.

What aspects of our respective ministries have contributed to the increasing alienation of the church from society? To be the ministers of God's word and sacraments should induce humility rather than pomp and arrogance in the minister. Is there not often a confusion between proclaiming God's word and assuming an air of omniscience? We have too long clung to the means of influencing and fashioning society which history formerly gave us but has long been taking away. It is time to come together to find new ways of leavering society so that it might better reflect God's will for man. A close co-operation of Anglicans and Roman Catholics in such matters would effectively contribute to the renewal of ministry and to further developments on the way to unity.

(This document contains the text of the paper on "The Ministry" prepared at the first meeting of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission at Windsor in January 1970 and the amendments made at the plenary session there.)