

MINISTRY, OR CHRIST WITH HIS CHURCH

- 1) "Christ's Church militant here on Earth " we believe to be a unique and visible Communion of men and women, incorporated sacramentally into Christ, living in the Spirit, entrusted with the proclamation and ministering of the Gospel. This Gospel is, ultimately, Christ himself and the truth about Him; or, more simply, Christ Himself as the Revelation of God and Saviour. Christ Himself lives in and with His Church, His Body, as it passes through time to the End, in such a way that He is always both the Lord of the Church and its Saviour.
- 2) Tensions within the Church in the Course of its history have caused the People of God to find the focus of their unity at different points (the apostolic message, the episcopate, the papacy etc.), and to stress this or that point as an indispensable 'mark' of fellowship or communion. We are not agreed on the precise forms in which such 'marks' of the Church are to be understood or received, but we are agreed on the necessity of an understanding of the Church which is centred in Christ Himself, through whose unique mediation and advocacy all graces come to the Church, including the grace of 'ministry'.
- 3) We understand 'ministry' after the pattern of Christ's own ministry recorded for us in the Gospels, and mediated both to us and to the world in and through the ongoing corporate life of the Church. The Church witnesses in the world to the presence within itself, in a unique way, of the Lord of the World who is also the world's Redeemer. This witness is made primarily in terms of ministry, or diakonia, undertaken by the People of God as they listen to the world, learn from the world, and make accessible to the world 'the unsearchable riches of Christ'. Salvation is not merely proclaimed in words, but effected in liturgy, pastoral care and the simplicity of service. As the sphere and instrument

of God's Salvation, the Church is chosen not for its own sake alone, but for the ministering of salvation to the world. As such its (destiny,) the rhythm of its life, like that of its Saviour, is one of death and resurrection. The life by which it lives and which it shares is the life of Christ, so that ministry as service to the world is to be understood as the vocation of all the baptized.

4 The vocation to the Sacred Ministry, or to Holy Orders, we understand to be a special vocation accompanied by a special grace given by Christ Himself, through His Spirit, for the work of building up His Body from within.

5 The priesthood of Christ is shared in a special way by those who have received holy orders. This is not only a gift of Christ through his Spirit but carries with it the privilege and obligation of serving the eucharistic community in the ministry of Word and Sacrament and by the witness of a sacrificial life. Priests are men of the Church, called to a special mission to fulfil the Father's will of salvation in the continuing work of the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. They give a life-time commitment to a sacramental ministry in the community of the Church and service for all mankind.

6 It is sad that Anglicans and Roman Catholics thus share a deep understanding of the nature of ministry, while differing on the question of where full and true ministry may be found.

7 The urgency of the new situation here is that (many) Anglicans and Roman Catholics none the less feel impelled to practice communicatio in sacris, though the prevalence of this varies greatly in different part of the world.

8 We wish to emphasize the new character of the present situation in which a powerful impulse of love draws Christians towards one another - a situation in which the problem of unity

is central. In such a situation a primary element of the responsibility of ministering to the people of God is the promotion of unity. Christ's great prayer for unity in the first place referred to the apostles. In the past the function of the ordained ministry in this aspect has often been conceived (altogether too) statically, as though the papacy or episcopate were no more than a focus or rallying point for unity, while those who resisted its magnetic force were simply the objects of condemnation.

9 Today, the responsibility of the ordained ministry for promoting unity can only be fulfilled when his clergy take the lead in the search for ways and means of healing the divisions which afflict the people of God.

The Papacy in the United Church

9 We cannot envisage a United Church without the Papacy which will be the centre of unity and possessed of a unique role in the life of the Church.

10 The Petrine Office is one of special leadership and trust, an office of humble service to the Lord, an office of mission and the spreading of the Gospel.

11 We see this especially in the light of Acts 11 where Peter, moved by the Spirit, proclaimed the Gospel of Salvation to the Gentiles and baptised Cornelius and his household. Peter explained his action to his fellow-apostles, confirming them in that special love that they, on Christ's command, owed to one another, for they too had received the command to go and teach all nations.

12 Thus the Petrine Office, which has manifested itself in various ways during the centuries, cannot be understood apart from the mission of the Church as a whole, the office of a bishop in the Church of God, and the role of the Holy Spirit working in the pilgrim community of faith which is the mystical Body of

Christ.

13 The Petrine Office is, above all, a service of love, support and leadership of the Church and of prophetic proclamation to the whole world.

14 In the united Church we see the Petrine Office serving the infallible Spirit of God (in a special way.) Because this is also a service to the whole Church we see it being exercised only in loving fellowship with the College of Bishops.

15 We look forward to a growing understanding of "universal jurisdiction" as pastoral care and guidance for the purpose of strengthening the brethren.

16 We remember the words quoted in the Joint Declaration - "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which are before."

17 Hence, acknowledging the new situation in which we find ourselves, we dare to hope that, under the Holy Spirit, we may together come to recognise the Petrine Office as a special gift of Christ to his Church.

The Problem of Orders

18 As we grow in awareness of the Holy Spirit abiding in the Church and moving members of both our Communion towards that unity of which he is the source, we also become increasingly aware of the problems raised by the bull *Apostolicae Curae*. This doctrinal pronouncement depends upon a theological judgment which is expressed in the technical language of Roman canon law, and which rests upon certain theological principles.

19 The question here is whether the new situation we have described - a pastoral situation - calls for a new policy. To show this, we should have to show that a development of

doctrine has occurred with regard to the theological presuppositions of the bull. This development, like that of the doctrine of religious liberty, would have to be shown to be consistent with the principles which had supported a quite different practice in the past. Change of practice may occur in the Roman communion if it is shown clearly that doctrinal development has taken place and that a new situation requires that practice be changed to make it consistent with doctrine (as now taught). But doctrine only develops properly if it remains consistent with the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. If a consistent development of doctrine is to be demonstrated, we must show that no dogma has been denied, but thereby that theological presuppositions have been changed.

The nature of the study we would recommend here would be circumscribed historically and theologically: historically, it would involve tracing which of the arguments from the Commission found their way into the bull *Apostolicae Curae*.

theologically

it would involve

- (a) analysing the arguments to see what the theological assumptions behind them were.
- (b) examining whether Roman Catholic theology can show a genuine and consistent development of doctrine with regard to those assumptions from 1896 to the present.

This study would be a contribution to that wider judgement which we hope will eventually be made - whether there is sufficient doctrinal convergence between the two communions to permit them to see one another as ~~two communions~~ subsisting in the one Church.

The one true Church of Christ