

Tues. 8th September

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Reconciliation of Ministers

Full ecclesial communion between our two Churches requires not only substantial agreement about the understanding of ordained ministry, but also the recognition by each of our Churches that the other's ordained ministries in fact possess the reality of the ministry. While the Final Report registers substantial agreement on the first issue, the Roman Catholic Church has not been able to recognise the reality of Anglican Orders, and in 1896 judged them to be invalid, though the Final Report claimed that its agreed understanding of ministry put the question of validity in a new context.

In accordance with the Decree of Ecumenism the Roman Catholic Church acknowledges that the ministries of other Churches have a fruitfulness which belongs to them ecclesially, and not in a totally uncovenanted way. For Roman Catholics the question is whether this fruitfulness springs from an authentic ministry in the apostolic succession. Part of the problem is to decide by what criteria this question can be settled.

Two possible ways forward suggest themselves.

(1) The first is to seek mutual recognition of the ecclesiality of the two Churches on the understanding that recognition of the validity of ministries would follow at once from mutual recognition of ecclesiality. (2) The second way would be to seek to recognise the presence of the essential marks of a Church, including an authentic embodiment of the apostolic ministry, in each of the two Churches, before proceeding to the recognition of the Church as such.

In each of these approaches care would have to be taken

of the two senses of recognition: (a) It can mean the identification of objective elements already existing; (b) it can mean the formal creation of those elements if they are not already present.

Each of these two interpretations of recognition could be applied to both approaches, so that in fact we would have four approaches: (1a) We would seek acknowledgment of the reality of the Church in one another's Churches. Unless one can rely on "charismatic validation" - by their fruits you shall know them - this would necessarily involve an understanding of the marks of the Church, of which a true ministry would be one, and the acknowledgment of these marks in the other Churches. This approach then has much in common with approach (2a).

(1b) We could aim at performing one all-embracing act of mutual creative recognition of Churches, which would ipso facto heal whatever needed to be healed in our two ministries.

(2a) We could seek mutual acknowledgment of the reality of ministries in our two Churches, unless again charismatic validation were thought to be sufficient. This work would involve the process of examining the ordinals currently in use, as recommended by Cardinal Willebrands. Moreover, as the Cardinal indicated, the question of apostolic succession would still remain.

(2b) We could aim at a sacramental act which would create whatever needed to be created in the ministries of each of our Churches. It would, however, still be necessary to approve one another's ordination rites for the sake of future ordinations. Thus the work suggested by Cardinal Willebrands would still

need to be performed unless new ordination rites were introduced.

The question of the recognition of ministries is compounded by the different views on the ordination of women in our two communions. Some provinces of the Anglican Communion have already ordained women to the presbyterate; whereas the Roman Catholic Church judges that it is not entitled to change the apostolic tradition of an all-male presbyterate and episcopate.

Because of its bearing on the recognition of ministries, this question of the ordination of women has been placed on the agenda of our Commission by our respective authorities. Perhaps eventually we shall be required to seek agreement on the fundamental question whether the presbyteral ordination of women is possible; for the purposes of this document, however, we shall confine our attention to other, less fundamental questions:

- (1) Can we still say, with ARCIC I, that we have an agreed doctrine of ministry while we are not agreed whether maleness is an essential qualification for ordination?
- (2) What degree of koinonia is possible when our two Churches have differing convictions and practice over the ordination of women? These differences do not perhaps impair the communion in so far as it exists on the basis of faith, hope and love; but what effect do they have on communion in so far as it exists on the basis of the sacramentality and authority of the Church?
- (3) Could there be mutual recognition of male ministries, without prejudice to differing views on the ordination of women?
- (4) Should the Commission urge the Anglican Communion, for the sake of koinonia, not to enlarge the problem by ordaining women bishops, or by increasing the number of provinces which ordain women presbyters?