

RECONCILIATION OF MINISTRIESCommentsGlossary

An ordination is said to be VALID if it enables a person to act in the name of God and the Church.

A ministry can be described as REAL, AUTHENTIC or FRUITFUL if God uses it as a channel of grace, whether or not it has been conferred by what another Church would call a valid ordination.

APOSTOLICITY is the continuity of a church with the apostolic Church in fidelity to the Word, administration of the sacraments, and Christian life. To be fruitful a ministry must be exercised in apostolic continuity. Such a ministry can be called authentic, true or real, since it exhibits significant elements of ecclesiality (cf. LG 8).

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION, within the framework of the apostolicity of the Church, is the succession of ordinations of ministers exercising episcopate: it is a sign of apostolicity, and a means of its preservation.

The question is this: if a fruitful, authentic ministry is exercised by ministers who are not validly ordained in the apostolic succession according to the criteria of another Church, how can this ministry be reintegrated in the apostolic succession?

The two words RECONCILIATION and RECOGNITION grope towards a useful meaning, but are subject to certain difficulties:-

Recognition is unsatisfactory, because

either (1) it seems to be only an external, juridical act producing reintegration in the apostolic succession  
or (2) it seems to be the recognition of an already integrated ministry.

Reconciliation is unsatisfactory because it seems to imply that the ministries have already been recognised.

Therefore we need a new term, which will include in its meaning the performance of an act of reintegration.

Comments on the document

Para. 3, line 2: for 'authentic' read 'validly'.

Para. 6 The proposed mutual laying on of hands, accompanied by prayer that God will grant whatever is needed, was criticised as ambiguous; the Church of England -Methodist scheme, it was said, had been rejected for this reason. To meet this point it was urged that the intention of the proposed rite could be made clear: it would be intended (1) to supply whatever in God's eyes was lacking; (2) to satisfy the scruples of the other Church.

Para. 9 It was suggested that, besides the recommendation of solutions 3 and 4, we should not fail to link these solutions with the recognition of ecclesiality (solution 2).

As a contribution to the healing of the psychological harm done by Apostolicae Curae it was recommended that the documents connected with the 1896 Commission should be published.

Recognition or reconciliation does not by itself imply full communion. It is not an end in itself, but is necessary for the credibility and fruitfulness of the Church's mission.