

ANGLICAN - ROMAN CATHOLIC JOINT PREPARATORY COMMISSION
"PRACTICAL PROPOSALS".

The seven proposals set out below were first drafted at Gazzada, (Jan.1967) slightly modified at Huntercombe (Aug.1967) and given general approval by the Holy Father and the Archbishop of Canterbury. At the end of 1967 they were circulated to R.C. episcopal conferences with a request for the latter's views on them.

Fifty conferences replied. Those of India and South Africa sent in separate replies from each diocese. In view of the size and diversity of the subcontinent of India, I have treated the twenty-seven Indian replies separately.

The following is an analysis of this material :

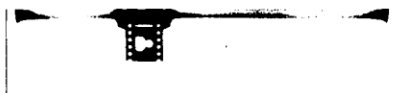
1. That the bishops of both Churches should meet more often both socially and for discussion of problems which they have in common.

No conference rejected this in principle: In some cases it does not apply (No Anglican bishop..) or is not practicable (Kashmir). A fair variety of existing practice (or lack of it) is revealed. Some are against rigid arrangements (England, Ireland); some would like specific agenda for discussions.

2. That the clergy of both Churches should meet, for example in deanery chapters, for the discovering and study of their common heritage and responsibility in Christ.

Only one conference, Kenya, rejected this outright. Again, a variety of existing practice. Some mentioned difficulties - of travel, (Zambia) of disparity of numbers or competence. Some would have only qualified clergy (?) some would not have clergy without laity. Some prefer only multilateral meetings. It is not clear whether the motive for this last is a desire for a broader approach or a hope of avoiding getting down to brass tacks.

3. The formation of local groups of clergy and laity together meeting for prayer, for (a) common study of the Bible and of each other's beliefs and ways of worship and for (b) Christian witness in social, charitable and educational fields and in any other areas where common action seems possible.



Only three rejections : Kenya, Formosa, Thailand. But many juxta modum votes. Some gave different answers to the two halves of the proposal: social cooperation is easier and more frequent, common study develops more slowly and with more reservations. The latter, some point out, must be well prepared, well organized, with selected, competent personnel. It calls for a certain development, hence missionary lands have more reserves about it.

Numbers, balance of numbers, distance for travel, the primitive character of some peoples, are advanced as limiting factors. But there is also plenty of support for the proposal.

4. The fostering of ecumenical cooperation at universities and colleges, for Christian witness and service, with the support of the respective chaplains.

Only one negative: "Harmful in Kerala (India) under present circumstances". (not explained why.) In a number of places it does not apply, either because there is no university or similar institution or because Anglicans and RCs are not present together. On the whole, very few reservations about this. "It is going on vigorously - some think too vigorously!" (England)

5. The furtherance of Christian Unity and mission by the joint use of churches and ancillary buildings wherever possible.

(Note : The proposal itself is qualified by the two last words, showing awareness of difficulty in some places.)

There are twelve negatives, but not all are clearly rejections in principle : "not ready for it yet" is a common formula, especially about churches. One (Indian) says "immense harm would result"; another, that people would be "shocked".

The rest raise no difficulties about ancillary buildings.

About churches the difficulties are :

- a) practical - clash of times, local legislation.
- b) psychological: attitudes existing, likely to be obstacles.
attitudes resulting, and undesirable.

these may be enduring or temporary - removable by education, dialogue. Many reiterate that decisions should be left to episcopal conferences or even local ordinaries...



6. To stress the urgent need to work for common texts in those prayers and formulae which are in use in both churches.

(A list of texts is included as an appendix to the Malta Report.)

One Indian bishop would confine this to the Our Father and to Bible texts. Otherwise, general acceptance, with few qualifications. There are special difficulties in some places (Japan) e.g. with languages (India)

7. To urge a greater measure of collaboration in seminary and theological college training and in faculties and departments of theology in universities.

Only two outright rejections : (there are of course many places in which it doesn't apply) but many juxta modum votes.

Some want clarification of what is envisaged in practice. (The directory, part II, will of course be relevant here.) Some put in caveats - no eclecticism, no dogmatic laxism (Ireland). Some see the proposal as premature. Some conferences (England) are not unanimous about it.