

## PAPER I

The Church as Koinonia

by

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All reflection upon the nature of the Church as a Communion should be set within a context larger than that of the Church itself. God has created a world marked both by multiplicity and unity. The work both of Christ and of the Spirit, is a work of reconciliation, of bringing many together into one, in a communion in which the distinctness of each is fulfilled and not destroyed. Communion in the Church is rooted in the communion of man and God in Christ, their mutual participation and co-inherence. It is communion in the Holy Spirit. The Church as a communion in some way reflects and expresses the communion between the three persons of the Godhead. This communion is an active, dynamic reality drawing into unity all mankind, and indeed all those created things for which man has responsibility.

"The Church is called to be the foretaste of a redeemed creation, a sign of the coming unity of mankind, a pointer to the time when God shall be all in all. We may not speak of the limited task of manifesting a greater unity between separated Christians here and now, unless we always do so in the context of the unfathomable unity of the Godhead, communicated by the Spirit as the Church is renewed in all its members in holiness and truth for mission and service to all mankind, and as it awaits the final summing up of all things in Christ." (Lambeth Conference, 1968, p. 122.)

Thus unity in the Church will always be Christological, a unity which while maintaining distinction, yet reconciles those who are opposed to one another. Communion in the Church will always be Pneumatological, drawing all into unity, and at the same time conferring different gifts on each one. While it will be necessary to speak of the Church in juridical, canonical and sociological categories, these must never take priority over theological, sacramental and personal categories. At the same time in our own century the Church must be ready to discern in the many pressures towards human unity in the world, signs of the activity of God, which suggest that in the future, God calls us to a communion wider and deeper, closer and yet more diverse than the forms of communion which have so far been realised in those parts of our globe which have been Christian.

a) The communion which exists within the Church is of its nature both visible and invisible. Visible because the Church on earth lives an embodied, fully social existence; invisible because this communion stretches across the line of death, and includes all who live to God in Christ. It is invisible also because it is a communion in man's inward as well as in his outward existence, a communion in faith and hope and love. It involves unity of faith, sharing in prayer in a common hope and living together in a life of ordered love, around a ministry whose authority is the authority of service and love. This unity of faith will allow for many theologies, this common liturgical expectation will find many expressions; within the order of the

Church's love will be many and varied gifts of ministry.

b) This conviction about the one and the many in the Church is expressed in Anglican practice, by the constant recognition of the autocephalous character of the different Church Provinces, as witnessed by the terms 'Anglican Churches' and 'Anglican Communion'. This does not mean that each Church is separate or self-sufficient. It does mean that no one Church has jurisdiction over another. There is thus an essential equality between the provinces of the Anglican Communion, and in some sense, between the dioceses within a province. Again this does not mean that there can be no primacy. While each Bishop has direct oversight within his own diocese, each bishop shares, by virtue both of his office and of the Catholic nature of each local Church, in "a concern for the well being of the whole Church". The primate or president of a particular province, the primate or patriarch of a group of provinces, has a special share in this concern, by virtue of his presidency. This involves a special share in the service, responsibility and authority common to all the bishops. ( Cf. Lambeth Conference 1968. p. 137).

Anglicans need not deny "that Peter was first among the apostles, nor that the bishop of Rome should be, in some analogous way, first among the bishops. But they cannot believe that the primacy of the bishop of Rome is of the same order as the Lordship of Christ within the Church." ('Primacy and Collegiality: an Anglican View', in Lambeth Essays on Unity (1969) edited by the Archbishop of Canterbury. p. 20). They believe that the essential life and unity of the Church is of a sacramental order, manifest wherever the Eucharist is duly celebrated, in particular where it is celebrated in communion with a bishop who stands within his Church as the symbol of its unity with the Church of all times and places. There in the power of the Spirit, Christ is present, and where Christ is present, there is the Church.

c) Anglicans find in the Roman Catholic Church, the presence of Christ and the grace of the Spirit. In particular the primatial see of Canterbury recognises in Rome the Church to which it owes its birth. Although separated from Rome in the sixteenth century, the Anglican Churches have never ceased to recognise in the Roman Church, a true Church, with which we share a common tradition of faith, worship and ministry.

Anglicans do not find in the Roman Church a sufficiently clear recognition of the priority of Scripture as witnessing to the Lordship of Christ in the Church, nor of the freedom which the Spirit brings; not only to each local Church, but also to each Christian within the communion of the whole body, in which alone the act of faith can have its full significance. If the Anglican Churches were assured of these two essential points then full communion could be restored by the solemn celebration together of the mystery of Christ's presence with his Church.