

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

Second Meeting - Venice: 21st - 28th September 1970

CHURCH AND MINISTRY

(This document was submitted to the full Commission by the Sub-Commission on Church and Ministry)

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 symbol of faith, 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. Scientific, scriptural and historical studies have shown that 'ministry' (diakonia) has taken many forms. 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. Thus its rhythm of life, like that of its Saviour, is one of death and resurrection. A guardian of an inheritance but also a pilgrim through history it must be ready when the Holy Spirit prompts for the pain of giving up the mere accretions of history if in that way it may renew itself for the fulfilment of God's plan and the service of his people. 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 a gift of Christ through his Spirit which 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, while sharing deep understanding of the nature of ministry, differ on the question of where full and true ministry may be found.

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

8. We wish to emphasize the new character of the present situation - a situation in which the problem of ecclesial unity is central. A primary responsibility of ministering to the people of God is promoting unity. In his great

prayer for unity, the Lord prayed first for the apostles. The responsibility of the ordained ministry in the two Churches for promoting unity can only be fulfilled when bishops with their clergy take the lead in the search for ways and means of healing the divisions which afflict the people of God.

The Apostolic Ministry

9. The ordained ministry exists and acts in and for the Church. Its authority is derived, however, not from the whole body of Christians by delegation, but from Christ through the apostles whom he chose and commissioned. The historical relation of the traditional threefold ministry to the apostles has not yet been traced in any detailed way, but in both our Churches the several orders of that ministry are accepted, as sharing, in varying degrees, in the apostolic commission, and the episcopate is recognised as bearing a distinctive responsibility and exercising a distinctive authority.

10. Differences arise at the point where we begin to consider the relation between the episcopate as a whole and the Bishop of Rome, for whom Roman Catholic dogma claims a unique position in the Church - a position founded on the unique role of Peter among the apostles. Anglicans commonly question both the historical succession of the Roman bishops from Peter and the exercise by the latter of a distinctive office to which anyone might have succeeded. They believe that the "Petrine office", rather than being limited to Peter himself, was shared by his fellow apostles, and indeed, in some way, by the whole community, to which the power to bind and loose was entrusted by the Lord (in Matt.18), and that this office is inherited in a general sense by the whole Church, and in a particular sense by every bishop of the ecclesia catholica. In their view, the Petrine duty of shepherding the flock is fulfilled by every act of the teaching ministry of the Church, whether exercised by individual bishops in their own dioceses or by bishops in council. As a bishop of the universal Church, the Bishop of Rome certainly inherits the Petrine office, though not in such an exclusive sense that he possesses it as no other bishop or council of bishops can. It may

indeed be possible to envisage a papal primacy of honour and service, but such a primacy can ultimately be justified only as a useful historical development within the life of the Church.

11. It can hardly be doubted that the view just outlined expresses the broadest Anglican consensus. Nonetheless, at the present time some Anglicans would raise such questions as the following, with some expectation of an affirmative answer.

(a) In the light of modern scholarly exegesis must we not reconsider the refusal of some Anglicans to see in the New Testament texts a primacy of responsibility and service entrusted to Peter? To put the point more strongly, is there not a basis in the New Testament for speaking of a Petrine office, peculiar to Peter himself, within the apostolic college and community?

(b) While the claim that the Petrine office has been transmitted to the Roman bishops presents historical difficulties which to Anglicans may seem insuperable, can we not recognize that, in the age of the fathers, the Roman primacy, exercised as a primacy of responsibility and service, played a providential role in the Church's life, and that it may well be called to play a similar role in the new and critical situation of our own time - and indeed in the future? Furthermore, in so far as this primacy reflects the model of the original Petrine office, may it not be acknowledged as (by imitation, if not by direct succession) truly "Petrine"?

12. Whatever answer is given to such questions as these, there would seem in any case to be some basis for dialogue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics on the existence of a special papal ministry within the Church. Further exploration of this issue should, in our view, be treated as urgent.

13. In the closest conjunction with such a study, attention should also be given to those disputed questions which bear on the nature of the papal ministry. We refer here to such points as the "infallible magisterium" and "universal jurisdiction" claimed for the Bishop of Rome by the Roman

Catholic Church.

14. In urging immediate and serious study of the various problems connected with the papal ministry in the Church, we recall the words quoted in the Joint Declaration of Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury: "...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which are before..."

The Problem of Orders

15. 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.

16. The question here is whether the new situation with which we are faced - a pastoral situation - calls for a new policy in the Roman Church. 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 by Vatican II would have to be shown to be consistent with the principles which had supported a quite different practice in the past. Change of practice of such magnitude could occur in the Roman Church if it were shown clearly that doctrinal development had taken place and that a new pastoral situation required that practice be changed to make it consistent with doctrine. But Roman Catholic doctrine only develops properly if it remains consistent with the dogma of the Catholic Church. If a consistent development of doctrine is to be demonstrated, we must show that no dogma has been denied, but that theological presuppositions have been changed.

17. 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

Roman Commission of 1896 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 Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion to permit them to see one another as sharing fully in the reality of the one Church.