

Degree of Communion between Churches

1. Between our two Churches there exists what we might call communion of baptism and faith. This permits members of the two Churches to share in one another's worship (communicatio in spiritualibus), but not, however, to share the reception of the Eucharist.
  
2. Between Roman Catholics and Orthodox a closer communion is possible, at least as far as theological eointentions go. For the R.C.'s recognise the validity of Orthodox orders. R.C. discipline therefore allows R.C.'s to communicate at Orthodox liturgy in pastoral need and vice versa. Agreement of the Orthodox Church concerned is of course a condition, which has been given, at least by the Russian Orthodox Church. This degree of communion between Churches might be called communion of baptism, faith and ministry.
  
3. Our avowed aim is full, organic unity. This would certainly require mutual acknowledgement of faith and ministry, but also some common structure of church government. Within this organic unity, the two Churches could exist side by side as separate patriarchates, with separate discipline and liturgies, but there would presumably have to be some institutional focus of unity, and machinery for uttering a common declaration of faith when circumstances demanded it. This organic unity by patriarchates can admit of varying degrees of apartheid. For example, the members of one patriarchate may be obliged to receive communion in their own rite. It is doubtful whether such separateness would suit our case.

Between 1) (our present state) and 3), our goal, an intermediary stage may be possible, uniting us closer than Degree 2). It would be acknowledged that we could not yet agree on every point of our beliefs, and could not yet achieve a common structure of government, even on the pattern of a patriarchate. It might, however, be thought desirable to make it possible for us to share the Eucharist either regularly or in particular, defined circumstances. To achieve this degree of unity it seems necessary that we should produce: -

- a) an agreed confession of faith in the Eucharist
- b) an agreed confession of faith in the ministry
- c) a way of abolishing or bypassing Apostolicae Curiae.

This degree of communion might be called imperfect eucharistic unity.