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The Anglican Consultative Council, Badagry 1984

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The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), conceived at the 1968 Lambeth Conference and brought to birth in 1971 at Limuru, Kenya, had its sixth meeting at Badagry, Nigeria in July 1984. As the child moves through puberty to maturity how is its health? And what are its prospects? Within the family those are questions worth asking. For one thing, the child's maintenance and nurture costs the family a tidy sum, despite most stringent budgeting—how it would now be properly provided for without kind uncles in North America it is impossible to say! But more important the child's progress reflects the state of health, development and sense of direction of the whole family.

As an eye-catching event the Lambeth Conference far outstrips a meeting of the ACC. It can provide the platform for Anglican pronouncements as no other body can, though hitherto the voices have been exclusively episcopal—in 1988, it is good to note, the ACC will join the bishops. The ACC, however, because it meets every two or three years, and comprises clergy and laity as well as bishops, and has a continuous life served by its secretariat and supervised by its Standing Committee, is a clearer reflection of the quickly developing life of the Anglican Communion and its individual member Churches.

Answers to the questions raised in the first paragraph above may be gleaned from a discerning study of *Bonds of Affection*, the Proceedings of ACC-6.¹ This article offers some pointers to those answers in a personal assessment of the more significant developments at the meeting and their

consequences for Anglicanism.

Evaluation

General health and development may be known through a medical examination. The ACC had its medical prior to the Nigeria meeting. ACC-5 at Newcastle in 1981 had asked for an evaluation of the life and work of the Council by a group under the chairmanship of Archbishop Ted Scott, Primate of Canada. It was to be in two phases, the first designed to assist the choice of the next Secretary General (Canon Sam Van Culin was appointed in January 1983), the second to be a process of 'course adjustment' in the life of the Council by reflection on the past, assessment of current trends and needs and recommendations for the future. Both phases involved widespread consultation. The process revealed strengths, achievements, unresolved problems, tensions, expectations, even visions. The overall conclusion of the exercise,

however, was that the 1968 Lambeth vision of a Council enabling the Anglican family to be more closely linked and to consult more regularly and systematically so that, 'it could play a more effective role in the life of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church'² had been sound. ACC-6 agreed that considerable progress towards its fulfilment had been achieved and accepted a number of recommendations to assist further development. So the Council met in Nigeria with increased confidence regarding its role in the Communion, and, be it noted, for this will demand attention shortly, in a Communion that is increasingly conscious of its family unity and of the need to act as a family.

Lambeth Preparation

A further matter of major significance regarding ACC-6 was the deliberate integration of its work with the preparation for the Lambeth Conference. Lambeth 1988 promises to be the best prepared for so far. It will be based on four major themes, under which will be tackled six major issues. Theme one will be Mission and Ministry and under it the issue, the Renewal of the Church in Mission. Theme two will be Dogmatic and Pastoral Matters, with two particular issues, Christian Identity (Belief, Practice and Authority) and Relations with People of Other Faiths. Theme three will be Ecumenical Relations, the issue, the Call to Unity. And theme four will be Christianity and the Social Order, its issues being Peace and Justice and the Future of the Family. The work of ACC-6 in its four sections was divided into those four themes, and in a preliminary way at least touched on the six issues. This was the first time the Council's study had been intentionally planned to lead up to the work of a Lambeth Conference, and coming four years in advance it provides the basis for a Communion-wide preparation in prayer and study. Since in 1988 each bishop has been called 'to bring his diocese with him' to the Conference, the challenge is laid before every diocese to apply its mind to the Lambeth themes. For that task the ACC-6 report provides an excellent starter.

Family Belonging

With a number of the matters arising from the ACC-6 deliberations on the themes mentioned above we will deal in due course. For the present, reflection is called for on the development underlying the two considerations already touched upon and briefly indicated at the close of the last paragraph but one, the Communion's increasing consciousness of being a family and of needing to act as such. We are dealing here with a relatively new phenomenon. There has been an Anglican presence in many parts of the world for varying periods of time, but it is only in the last two or three decades that maturity into autonomous equality has come to all parts of the Communion. Bishop John Howe on his

retirement as Secretary General became the first Research Fellow of the ACC with the commitment to prepare a study of developments in the Anglican Communion 1958-1982. That study under the title 'Highways and Hedges' was presented to ACC-6 and is to be published by the Anglican Book Centre, Toronto. Observing the rapid growth of indigenous Provinces, each with its own Constitution, he writes,

the past twenty-five years has seen the most significant stage in that process whereby the Anglican Communion has changed from consisting of a head office and branch offices to being a worldwide family of equals, held together by a common faith and affection.

Elsewhere in the same study he speaks of, 'the maturing of internationalism and universality' in the Communion. 'The great growth that has been observed in Provinces and their autonomy has stressed the extension of God's universal work of redemption throughout the Church in which we have our being'. Right from the first day or two of the first ACC meeting at Limuru, according to John Howe, family self-consciousness was apparent. It must be even more strongly felt today by present members of the Council and any who can visit other Provinces. But how conscious is the average Church of England member of belonging to a world-wide family of equal members? Or, how much attention in practice does the ordinary General Synod member give to Anglican Communion concerns? Not a lot, it would seem, until the shoe pinches—as, for instance, when another Province dares to ordain women to the priesthood!

Disinterest in the Communion could be attributed to English insularity. That is undoubtedly part of the problem. Or, at grass-roots level it could be explained by the survival, in face of all educational efforts, of the old missionary-age concept of the Church being 'here' and the mission fields 'over there'. But scolding for wrong attitudes or mistaken views will achieve little. The Church of England, and all other Provinces for that matter, must be convinced that the development of family unity and common action as a family is what is best for the twenty-eight autonomous Churches. Why is it not sufficient generally to share a common faith in bonds of affection-especially if there are divergent policies on such matters as the ordination of women? Anglicans are not a World Confessional Family as some Churches, for they have no Confession (the Thirty-Nine Articles mean less to most Provinces than to England). Nor do they covet the Roman pattern of unity governed from one headquarters. And, in any case, is not greater cohesion as a worldwide family a deterrent to unity with other Churches at national or local level? The latter point was the basis for a successful motion in General Synod in 1983 during the debate on the Church of England's contribution to the ACC Evaluation. It requested consideration, 'whether there is a tension between working for greater cohesion within the Anglican Communion on the one hand, and encouraging Anglican provinces to work for local unity with other Christian Churches on the other.' The Evaluation Committee's report acknowledged the existence of that tension.

So there is need to stand back and question the growth of greater family cohesion and the policies that further it. Justification chiefly arises from two concerns, ecumenical relationships and mission, in both of which new demands have emerged in recent years.

Ecumenical Relations

Anglicans are involved in a whole series of bilateral conversations—with Rome, the Lutherans, the Reformed, the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox. This in itself necessitates the attempt for Anglicans to speak with one voice. Whatever talks or moves to unity go on at national or regional level the international dimension will always bear upon them. Indeed, with the two largest Churches it will be decisive. In addition, multilateral relationships under the aegis of the WCC have taken a considerable step forward with the BEM report. Here again response by Anglicans must be coordinated. Not only is it necessary to reach consensus among the twenty-eight Anglican Churches but also to ensure consistency of response in the various inter-church dialogues. The ACC has a role in monitoring the reactions to the reports of these conversations across the Communion, so that by Lambeth 1988 a definitive Anglican answer may be given to some at least. All this is in the context of the realization that the way forward in church unity is likely to be by a more gradual process than by such schemes as have previously failed, except in the Indian sub-continent. ACC-6 had before it the report 'Steps Towards Unity', which, reflecting some of the insights of the bilateral conversations, commends a 'unity by stages' approach. The Council urged that the report 'be carefully studied by the member churches and tested against their own experience so that the bishops at Lambeth 1988 can point a coherent way forward towards the fulness of unity.'5

A coordinated Anglican response within ecumenical relations is more than a matter of mere necessity, however. Anglicanism, in its tradition and ethos, has a distinctive contribution to offer to the world family of Churches. At ACC-6 the section responsible for Dogmatic and Pastoral Matters began by looking at the question, what is Anglicanism? Members were conscious of many previous attempts to answer the question but believed, 'the context for efforts to frame better a self-understanding is always changing especially as we enter into deeper exchange with other denominations.' What then does the Anglican family think it can today bring to the Church universal? ACC-6 was led to affirm that,

the Communion seeks to be loyal to the apostolic faith and to safeguard it and express it in Catholic order always to be reformed by the standards of Scripture. It allows for a responsible freedom and latitude of interpretation of the faith within a fellowship committed to the living expression of that faith. 7

So, basic to Anglicanism is a commitment to Reformed Catholicism. In the process of continuing reformation, 'the Bible bears a primary authority as containing the foundation documents of the Church and the record of the apostolic witness'.8 But it is recognized that the Scriptures need continual interpretation in succeeding ages, and so in accord with the concept of 'dispersed authority', as expounded by the 1948 Lambeth Conference, tradition, the creeds, reason, the witness of saints, forms of worship and the consensus fidelium all have their place in determining the faith and practice of the Church. Development is thus inevitable and right. The ethos of Anglicanism, 'is a way of thinking and of feeling that has developed over the centuries which calls for an acceptance of measures of diversity, an openness, tolerance and mutual respect towards others'. The section went on to point out that the Reformation arose out of and was influenced by the Renaissance with its new way of thinking and feeling about human experience, while in later generations the Enlightenment and the Romantic Movement have influenced the Anglican tradition. Through the missionary expansion of the Church Anglicanism has been set within a multiplicity of cultures. There is a long way to go in some cultures before it becomes truly indigenized, but the process has begun. 'An ethos tied to Church life in England four centuries ago would be moribund and a denial of the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit in each succeeding age.'10

Tolerance within comprehensiveness may be presented as an Anglican characteristic, but it clearly carries with it a problem, certainly contemporary, and difficult to accept by some ecumenical partners—what are the parameters of comprehensiveness? ACC-6 did not come to grips with it, though many of its members privately expressed concern on the issues raised by the Bishop of Durham. Lambeth 1988 must not dodge the issue. Bishop John Howe expresses the view that in the past quarter of a century the Anglican world has faced two watersheds. One it had crossed, namely the establishment of autonomous new Provinces across the world. The other, he says, it has not yet crossed. He calls it 'an adequate universal agreement on the acceptable limits of faith and practice in the Anglican Communion.' He goes on to speak of the need of other Churches to know more clearly where the Communion stands,

There are dangers that comprehensiveness, developed for whatever reason, can produce excessive diversity which within the one Communion is a hindrance to witness to the gospel; and also hinders acceptance by other Christians that Anglicanism as a whole can be taken seriously.¹¹

Here, then, is unfinished business in regard to the Anglican family's contribution. John Howe is sure it has not been tackled energetically enough.

Turning from what may be seen as a liability to an asset, Anglicanism

has something of value to offer in its exercise of authority in the Church. It is episcopally led and synodically governed. It thus seeks to maintain Catholic order but recognizes that the Church is the whole people of God. 'Church governance should reflect this, with laity, bishops and other clergy participating together and playing their proper roles according to office, authorization and training. 12 For this reason ACC-6, responding to a request from ACC-5 for a study on the terms. collegiality and conciliarity, as used in discussions with Rome, did not find the interpretation and use of those words within Roman Catholicism helpful to Anglican self-understanding. Within the 'wider episcopal fellowship', those Churches that have maintained the historic episcopate, Anglicanism has much to contribute towards a better understanding of what it means to be the people of God, though realism compels the admission that practice does not always match theory. One thing is sure, in discussions with Rome Anglicans must not give way on the principles of synodical government. Those principles go back to the Reformation Settlement itself, by which the lay voice was enabled through Parliament to express itself in the government of the Church. They were maintained in a different form in a totally new situation when Anglicanism, freed from Parliamentary control, established itself on synodical lines in the former American colonies. It is on the issue of the whole people of God being responsible for the governance of the Church that ARCIC I is probably most deficient. And so the response given at Lambeth 1988 must be abundantly clear and firm in accordance with the best insights of the Anglican tradition.

Finally, in respect of ecumenical relationships, the Anglican experience over the past decade or so of an evolving system of authority Communion-wide, dispersed between four centres, is worth commending to other Churches. There is the Lambeth Conference, the ACC, the Primates' Meeting, also every two or three years, and there is the Archbishop of Canterbury. Without diminution of the autonomy of each Church or Province we have in those four centres the facility across the Communion for episcopal leadership and synodical consultation, and within that total context the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury as a focus of unity, enabler and encourager, agent in emergencies and, as necessary, voice for the Communion. Our growing experience indicates that it is only when authority is dispersed, and thus provision is made for the counsel of the whole people of God to find effective expression, that the concept of a Universal Primate becomes a possiblity.

Mission

The assertion was made earlier that greater family cohesion in the Anglican Communion can be justified from two concerns, each with new demands today, the first being ecumenical relationships, the second mission. Mission is here understood in its widest sense, as comprehending proclamation and evangelism, caring service, to the needy and

deprived particularly, and the transformation of the unjust structures of society. For some time there has been a bad conscience in the Communion about failure to give mission the priority it demands. ACC-5 requested the setting up of an international Mission Issues and Strategy Advisory Group (MISAG). It reported to ACC-6, the title of its report being 'Giving Mission its Proper Place'. One sentence that stands out maintains that.

though there are notable exceptions, the dominant model of the Church within the Anglican Communion is a pastoral one. Emphasis in all aspects of the Church's life tends to be placed on care and nurture rather than proclamation and service. ¹³

How may mission be given its 'proper place'? Basic to the task is the recognition that mission is one throughout the world. All Churches are in a missionary situation. That represents a development in understanding of mission, and of the world in which mission must be carried out, and of the Church come to maturity across the world, which has emerged in modern times. ACC-2 at Dublin in 1973 had said that 'the responsibility for mission in any place belongs primarily to the Church in that place.'14 But the Council then went on to stress the necessity of sharing with Christians 'from each and every part of the world with their distinctive insights and contributions'. The Church in any place could not 'go it alone' in its mission, even though it bore the primary responsibility. There is much in the New Testament to back that up. The sharing of resources across the Christian family in its task of mission is of the essence of the gospel. So ACC-2 proposed 'new styles of cooperative partnership through a process of joint consultation between Churches'. It called it 'Partnership in Mission'. Behind the concept lay an exercise launched at the Anglican Congress in Toronto in 1963, called 'Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ'. The idea had been sound, but in practice MRI had degenerated into a system of financing projects in Third World Churches, thus creating a 'shoppinglist mentality', from which the Communion is not yet fully freed. The basic fault was that the old division between the 'giving' and the 'receiving' Churches had not been left behind.

The Partnership in Mission (PIM) Consultation process was intended for all Churches and Provinces, old as well as new. There was to be an opening of the books on policies and methods of mission in the Church concerned and on resources for mission both from within and from outside, and then a reassessment of mission strategy with available resources allocated accordingly. To share in such an exercise with Christians from other parts of the Communion, and with partners from non-Anglican Churches, was seen as a profoundly Christian activity. If entered into fully it both depended upon, and in the process was bound to increase, a sense of family-belonging in the Communion. After twelve years, in which all Provinces have had at least one PIM Consultation and some two or three, what progress towards a better prosecution of mission can be seen?

The MISAG report presents a patchy picture. Provinces have gained in confidence by the knowledge that others are able and ready to lend support in facing their problems. Partial success is noted in building cooperation between various dioceses of a Province and in developing a mission strategy and priorities, as opposed simply to facilitating transfer of resources, human and financial. Less successful has been the creation of trust and openness, the full disclosure of information and resources on the basis of better relationships between Provinces. Less successful still has been the attempt to improve cooperation between mission agencies. 'Churches and agencies guard their own turf with a lack of transparency and trust (which leads to concentration on methods rather than goals) and free consultation about mission is inhibited.'15 To quote the report further, 'there should be accountability by donors no less than to them by receivers. Openness and accountability between donor and receiver need to be supported by the same qualities between donor and donor, and between receiver and receiver.'16

A coordinated approach to mission strategy in the Communion now demands priority attention, if the resources in and from any part are to be geared to priority needs. The principle of mission in partnership must be firmly established, and thus the PIM Consultation process, with all its unresolved problems and its varying degrees of success, developed more conscientiously. The principle,

involves mutual sharing of God's gifts to his Church whether they are spiritual, intellectual, gifts of wisdom and skill, experience, vitality, institution and educational amenities, human energy or material wealth. It is based on the belief that all these things belong to the Church as a whole and are held in common.¹⁷

ACC-6 welcomed the MISAG report and urged all local churches, deaneries or archdeaconries, dioceses and Provinces to carry out a 'mission audit'. It authorized its Standing Committee to reconstitute MISAG with more detailed terms of reference designed to promote a more coordinated strategy for mission across the Communion, and in particular asked for a conference of mission agencies and representatives of areas in which they operate in order to lay a foundation of greater trust and understanding. This is now to be held in Australia in December 1986. Before it takes place efforts will be made to collect as much data as possible on present bilateral funding and personnel sending activities and the policies that govern them. Therein lies a challenge for missionary societies. Are they willing to open the books completely, to review existing policies and accept a re-direction of their resources, if in consultation with members of the Anglican family outside the ranks of their own society membership it appears right in the interests of a more coordinated strategy? The tighter a society's churchmanship tradition the harder will be the decision. Parishes and individuals of a distinctive tradition have long comforted themselves that their voluntary giving

through their chosen agency will go to those of like mind overseas. But it is a fact, of course, that their voluntary giving at home to their diocesan quota has no strings attached and supports the Church throughout their diocese and at national level. Can giving to the mission of the Anglican family across the world be as free of conditions?

Better strategic planning for mission touches agencies besides the traditional missionary societies. If mission is seen holistically, the relief and development agencies come into the picture. They are, admittedly, interdenominational, but in so far as they intermesh with mission by Anglican dioceses their participation fully and transparently in the developing PIM process is essential to its success. It has been the hope from the launching of PIM that ecumenical partnership should be involved as far as possible. ACC-6, incidentally, added its weight to the trend to use the term transformation instead of development to describe the social responsibility dimension in mission, quoting the Report of the International Evangelical Consultation in its definition of transformation.

as a change from a level of human existence that is less than that envisaged by our Creator, to one in which man is fully human and free to move to a state of wholeness in harmony with God, with fellow human beings and with every aspect of his environment.¹⁸

Most of the issues related to the social order dimension in missionon the ACC agenda for the first time and destined to continue through ACC-7 to Lambeth—require a Communion-wide network of study and response. Such are issues of peace, refugees, the family with all the changes and pressures upon it. Even when one area of the Anglican Communion faces such a problem as polygamy (referred to ACC-6 by Kenya) it needs consultation with the rest of the family. Or when one area is experiencing oppressive conditions, as, for instance, in Namibia and Central America, support and possibly weighty action by and on behalf of the whole Communion are required. The Christianity and the Social Order section of ACC-6 was conscious that, 'in nearly every part of the world, tensions between State and Church are becoming a reality.'19 As a way of making a family response to social problems, world-wide and local, more informed and effective ACC-6 gave its support to the request initiated by the Primates in 1983 for NGO (nongovernmental organization) affiliation with the United Nations. This has recently been granted

Other Council Concerns

The main thesis of this assessment of ACC-6 has been a justification of the developing sense of unity and common action in the Anglican family and the place of the Council in the process. To some of the implications and consequences we will return in the concluding part. Before doing so, a brief mention of a number of the other matters dealt with at ACC-6 may be helpful. Under the Ministry section there was exploration of

Non-Stipendiary Ministry and Local Ordained Ministry in the context of shared ministry of the whole people of God. ACC-6 preferred the ordination of local priests to lay presidency. It expressed a desire for further study on the admission of children to Holy Communion before Confirmation. Recognizing the widespread concern for a proper role for the Diaconate, it asked for priority consideration at ACC-7.

The Dogmatic and Pastoral Matters section and the Ecumenical Affairs section both looked at Full Communion and recognized it must involve the mutual acceptability of ministry and regular organs of consultation. The former has implications within the Communion in respect of women priests and towards the Church of South India, the latter towards United Churches 'in full communion' in respect of their relationship to the ACC, Lambeth Conference and Primates' Meeting.

As in its previous meeting the Council continued to struggle with Spiritual Renewal. If defined broadly it may cover Christianity in all its manifestations, if narrowly and with reference to the Charismatic Movement it exposes sharp divisions in theological understanding. New Testament interpretation and relationships in local churches. The ACC is looking for guidance to the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England following the House of Bishops' referral of the matter.

Relations with Islam have for long been the most pressing issue in the inter-faith area. While remaining committed to the over-all concept of dialogue ACC-6 was deeply aware of the intolerable pressures in some places, notably in the Sudan at the time of the meeting, through the resurgence of a militant Islam. When human rights are denied, and Sharia (Islamic) Law imposed on Muslim and non-Muslim alike, it is of little benefit, the Council believed, to urge on Christians suffering such pressures the way of dialogue. To sit where some of the Anglican family sit is to find a greater realism concerning dialogue than is apparent in some Christian thinkers in the luxury of western academic cloisters. Much discussion focused on the book *Towards a Theology of Inter-Faith Dialogue* prepared for the General Synod, the main criticisms being an inadequate emphasis on the doctrine of redemption and questionable exegesis and selectivity in regard to the Scriptures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what implications and consequences may be seen to derive from the development of the Anglican Communion as evident at ACC-6? Three may be highlighted. In a harmonious and maturing family there is need for good communication, for a willingness to seek a common mind as far as possible without suffocating individuality, and for a commitment of each member to the well-being of the whole.

By the creation of the ACC and the Primates' Meeting communication between the Churches and Provinces has greatly increased. But in an electronic age far greater facility for communication than ever before has become available. The Secretary General, Canon Sam Van Culin, comes from a part of the Communion already well advanced in the use of the most modern means and, it should be said, has been able to benefit the ACC, and through it the whole family, by touching the generosity of American churches for equipment ACC-6 welcomed the progress and encouraged the development of an efficient communications network.

Bishop John Howe's call for agreement on the acceptable limits of faith and practice in Anglicanism has already been noted. A common mind within which individual insights and cultural expressions may flourish is now seen as a pursuit requiring urgent endeavour. An Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, broadly based, reported to ACC-6 on its progress, to the Council's approval. It had its third meeting in July 1985 and will shortly publish its work on the Church and Kingdom in Creation and Redemption. Because it will represent pan-Anglican thought it will, it is hoped, express a consensus of the various theological traditions that have a fair claim to the name Anglican. Further, and this is something Anglo-Saxon Anglicans need to keep in mind, it must represent the distinctive view of Christ and his gospel that each culture can bring. The African, the Asiatic, the South American ways of doing theology must not be dominated or inhibited by the older western way but have scope to contribute to the total Anglican way of thinking.

Finally, commitment of each part of the Anglican family to the well-being of the whole is more than ever needed. To the Church of England this presents a particular challenge. As one of its greatest friends, Archbishop Ted Scott of Canada, put it in an address to the General Synod in July 1982, the Church of England sometimes appears to think it owns the Communion. It is also true that it can for much of the time ignore it. The immense contribution it could make is not made because it does not listen enough to the rest of the family, and thus when it does speak is not heard as it should be. All Anglicans, whatever their churchmanship, culture or colour, need to come to terms with what it means to be in the same family.

NOTES

- 1 Bonds of Affection, ACC-6, ACC, London, 1984.
- 2 Ibid., p 37.
- 3 Church of England General Synod, Report of Proceedings 14, 1983, p 218.
- 4 World Council of Churches, Faith and Order Paper No. 111, Baptism Eucharist and Ministry, WCC, Geneva 1982.
- 5 Ibid., p 90.
- 6 Ibid., p 72.
- 7 Ibid., p 72.
- 8 Ibid., p 73.
- 9 Ibid., p 73.

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Ibid., p 73. 10

- This was first given as a paper at ACC-6 and has since been published 11 under the title: Highways and Hedges: A Study of Developments in the Anglican Communion 1958-82, Anglican Book Centre, Toronto 1985.
- 12 Bonds of Affection, p 74.

13 Ibid., p 46.

Partners in Mission ACC-2 SPCK, London 1973, p 53. 14

- Giving Mission Its Proper Place, Report of MISAG, ACC, London, 1984, 15 p 10.
- Îbid., p 13. 16

17

Ibid., p 16. 'The Nature and Mission of the Church', Wheaton, Ill 1983. 18

19 Bonds of Affection, p 113.

Church of England General Synod Board For Mission and Unity, Towards a 20 Theology For Inter-Faith Dialogue, GS 625, CIO, London 1984.

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