

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK

TRAVELLING TOGETHER

A discussion on the ARCIC Final Statement

PURPOSE

For the E.A.C. to analyse the value of the book for use in the parishes of the Diocese of Sydney.

DISTRIBUTION

To Members of the Committee.

AUTHORS:

The Rev G Davies

The Rev R Heslehurst

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The volume titled **T r a v e l l i n g T o g e t h e r** is a set of six group sessions. It is intended to be used by groups consisting of Catholic and Anglican lay people. These would be drawn from the equivalent parishes. Its expressed purpose is "to enable them to enter into dialogue at parish level, and to help both groups respond to the question as to whether the Final Report does in fact express their faith on the subjects with which it deals". The Forward goes on to say "while this is essentially a theological conversation, it should be conducted as between friends acquainted with each other and as between brothers and sisters in the faith."

The strength of the material lies in its ability to get a mixed group of people working together. The style and directions are clear and helpful. Even a person unused to groups would not find the programme intimidating. Since the aim of the group is exploration of currently held belief and not alteration of belief it is likely that most people could cope with the groups.

It sees the exercise as a journey rather than a "series of topics for debate". Thus it assumes that there is a common destination to which both sections of the group see themselves travelling. It is just at this point that the material shows its prime weakness. The A.R.C.I.C. material from which the present programme is taken has failed to work on the basis of our relationship to God. The Doctrine of Justification is not covered and thus the basis for regarding each other as brothers in Christ is missing. To start with Baptism may be correct so long as there

is a common belief about this action. It seems to the authors of this report that this is not the case. A.R.C.I.C 2 is taking up the question of justification and it may be that this programme is too early.

It would seem that the groups are not intended to come to a final position on the issues with which they will deal but to see if the Final Report is a basis of mutual recognition as christians and a way to move toward a fuller acceptance of each other. But the issues are not the primary ones. Agreement on Eucharist and Ministry are secondary to the issue of justification. Agreement on authority may be prior but the kind of basis suggested in the **Common Declaration** of "a serious dialogue founded on the Gospels and the ancient common tradition" begs the very question. Why only the Gospels and what constitutes our common traditions. Are they traditions of form or content? We may look the same in style but the tradition of Dogmatic Formulation is very different.

To achieve its ends the book provides a set of six group exercises that are broken onto six segments each. The time for one session is 120 minutes. This is a good arrangement although the section titled "Listening to the Word" is weak. It is rather a reading of the Word and no real interaction with the Scripture is used. The response factor and the truth factor are missing. The word is read but is not allowed to impact upon the following discussion.

The approach allows for the group to come to a real knowledge

of the opinions of its members. It also insure that the group will see itself as a band of christians with different approaches. Importantly it does not give the impression that the two communions agree and that the differences are really only cosmetic yet the irenic statements cloud the difference.

The methods used reflect an explorational model of learning and are therefore consistent with the objectives of the material. There are a couple of quaint exercises such as the prayer/meditation in the first session. To be fair it may just read as quaint and may work quiet well in the situation of the group. Yet one wonders whether these activities are substitute sacraments since we cannot have the real thing.

The exposure to each others liturgy and style we think will both aid and hinder the group in its task. While it is true that Liturgy accurately reflects and ultimately moulds the theological attitudes of its users, the selections used, particularly in the sections on the Eucharist, do not clearly reflect the differences in belief between the two groups. A clear example of this is seen on p30. Here a section of the Second Order AAPB has been printed. Yet in column 2 the printing gives the impression that the post communion prayer is in fact part of the Great Thanksgiving. A section of the thanksgiving has been left out as well as all reference to the Administration. This leaves one with a totally false view of the Anglican position as its formularies state it. The inclusion of the material from the Visitation of the Sick might be to balance this but such method is far to subtle. It may

have been of value to choose to use quotations from the First Order AAPB to highlight more clearly the difference. The same may be said of the use of the words "sacrament" and "sacramental". One feels that the same ambiguity that is in the A.R.C.I.C. papers has been allowed to remain. Similarly in the section on ministry it would have been of more value to use the Bishop's address to the candidate for priesthood (AAPB p609) than the enigmatic word associated with the laying on of hands.

We do recognise that the authors have chosen to concentrate on the things held in common rather than that which is different. Yet to do this requires a clear understanding of the actual differences. While the authors are no doubt fully aware of the nature and form of the divisions this is not clearly expressed in the material. That there are real differences the authors never deny. With out clear guidance those engaged in the sessions may miss the subtle but real differences expressed in the material and be led into believing in "a form of unity but denying the substance". There is nothing to be gained in hiding the historical differences and much to be lost in our common search for the Truth which is in Christ.

To what degree a person might really be able to say that the A.R.C.I.C. Final Report accurately represented their own personal belief would depend not on the group but their own work on the report. It seems that the group will come up with a reasonable response to their own personal belief but may not be able to give sufficient time to the detailed analysis that a comment on the

report would require.

Because the aim of the group is sharing not analysis it seems to us that it will suffer from the same inability as the A.R.C.I.C. Final Report to tackle the historical problems which in fact divide us. The use of language which obscures these differences is no solution, neither is the habit of making similarity identity. It is at this point that it seems to us that **Travelling Together** fails.

Conclusions

It saddens us not to be able to give unqualified support to this material.

Those who authored the material have obviously worked closely together and developed a close fellowship and kinship in their common faith. But we are concerned in this material, not with the fellowship of individuals but the relationship of two denominational structures whose stated beliefs and formulation of Doctrine are clearly in opposition. In its present form the material in **Travelling Together** hides as much as solves the real differences.

It seems to us that the material could profitably be used if those who are to lead the groups were properly briefed by some competent person or persons as to the pitfalls outlined. This would enable an intelligent and informed discussion to take place. Unless such a process was followed the material would fail to achieve its stated aim of gaining a clear picture of the possible

route we may "Travel Together"

Addendum

It is unfortunate that this committee was unable to look at the material before it went to the press and received the public support of the Diocese in the person of the Archbishop. If we are to make a real contribution in the area of our brief then ecumenical programmes should not come before us as past events.