

190. *Convocation of Canterbury. Resolution on Relations with the Church of Finland*

JUNE 6, 1935

RESOLUTION passed by the Upper House.

Having learnt from the Archbishop of Turku (Abö) that he has authority, after consultation with the Conference of Bishops of the Church of Finland and with the agreement of its Church Assembly, to seek closer relations with the Church of England in response to the Archbishop of Canterbury's invitation (conveyed in pursuance of Resolution 38 of the Lambeth Conference, 1930), this House welcomes the approaches thus made, and expresses the hope that in due course complete intercommunion, based on a common episcopal ministry, may be achieved.

Further, and as a means towards such a complete unity, this House, noting that the Episcopal Ordination of Presbyters is the regular practice of the Church of Finland, and assuming that the Bishops of the Church will take steps to put the practice of the Church of Finland beyond doubt, approve the following recommendations:

That if the Archbishop of Canterbury be invited by the Archbishop of Turku (Abö) to appoint a Bishop to take part in the consecration of a Bishop in the Church of Finland, he may commission a Bishop for such a purpose; and in the same way, if the Archbishop of Canterbury shall invite the Archbishop of Turku (Abö) to take part in the consecration of a Bishop in the Church of England, it is hoped that he would be willing to commission a Bishop for such a purpose.

That members of the Church of Finland may be admitted to communion in the Church of England, provided that they are at that time admissible to communion in their own Church.

Note on Amendment by Lower House: The Lower House concurred in the first two paragraphs of the Resolution of the Upper House, as far as the words 'beyond doubt', following which it amended as follows:

is of opinion:

That if the Archbishop of Turku (Abö) shall invite the Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a Bishop to take part in the consecration of a Bishop in the Church of Finland, he may commission a Bishop for such a purpose.

That members of the Church of Finland may be admitted to communion in the Church of England in accordance with the terms of Resolution 2(a) on the Unity of the Church communicated by the Upper House to this House on 4th June, 1931.¹

191. *Letter from the Archbishop of Turku to the Archbishop of Canterbury*

MARCH 9, 1936

[In a letter of March 9, 1936, the Archbishop of Turku (Dr. Kaiala) transmitted to the Archbishop of Canterbury the official reply of the Church of Finland to the Resolutions adopted by the Convocations of Canterbury and York (*Vide supra*, Documents 189 and 190). After saying 'We gladly acknowledge that in spite of the difference of emphasis observed during the conversations, there is a fundamental agreement in Christian doctrine', the letter continues as follows.]

There is another point, however, where greater differences appear. I mean the question of Church order. I agree with the Bishop of Gloucester that generally speaking 'the Church of Finland at the present time is, like the Church of England, the ancient Church of the country, reformed'. The old Church order has been preserved here in its essentials. For various reasons we also appreciate the laudable desire of the Church of England to emphasize the necessity for a valid ministry in the Church. Undoubtedly, this is a very important point. The Lutheran Church herself lays great stress on this according to Article XIV of *Confessio Augustana*: 'De ordine ecclesiastico docent, quod nemo debeat in ecclesia publice docere aut sacramenta administrare nisi rite vocatus.' Furthermore, during recent years it has been very clearly seen in different countries how necessary it is that the ministry of the Church is based on purely religious and ecclesiastical principles, if the danger is to be avoided of interference from circles which are alien to the real life of the Church. This danger can still arise in many Christian countries. It is certainly also very important that the proved and venerable historical methods of Church government are preserved. Interest for this matter is not lacking in the Church of Finland, nor in Northern Lutheranism in general. So as far as Finland is concerned this is made clear by the Report of the Joint Commission. Having said this, however, I must point out that we cannot in principle look upon the historical episcopacy, on which the Anglican Church lays such great stress, as a *conditio sine qua non* for a valid ministry,

¹ *Vide supra*, Document 171.

without abandoning our fundamental doctrinal basis. I might refer here to the Reply of the Lutheran Bishops of the Church of Sweden in the year 1923, where they say: 'No particular organisation of the Church and of its ministry is instituted *inve divino*'—'Our Church cannot recognize any essential difference, *de inve divino*, of aim and authority between the two or three Orders into which the ministry of grace may have been divided, *inve humano* for the benefit and convenience of the Church. The value of every organization of the *ministerium ecclesiasticum* and the Church in general, is only to be judged by its fitness and ability to become pure vessels for the supernatural contents, and a perfect channel for the way of Divine Revelation unto mankind.' We agree with this statement. The Church of Finland appreciates the historical episcopacy very highly as a singularly valuable form of Church supervision and as an outward sign of Church unity through the ages as is clearly seen also from her own history; but she differs from the standpoint represented by many Anglican churchmen and emphasized also during the conversations concerning closer union with the Church of Finland, according to which the historical episcopacy is necessary for an ordered ministry. We see in the historical episcopacy an order 'not divinely instituted, but divinely used and blessed', and the authority of it, strengthened by a long history from the early Church until the present age, full of God's merciful guidance, should not be shaken. Another thing must be made clear. The Church of Finland has invited bishops from neighbouring Churches in Sweden and Estonia to her Consecrations not in order to restore her broken outward succession, but as the late Bishop of Tampere, Dr. Gummertus, put it during the conversations in 1933, 'above all, as an act by which both churches witnessed to the unity of the Body of Christ'. We shall be happy to welcome an Anglican Bishop to a Finnish Consecration, when the time for such a step is suitable, on the understanding that reciprocity will follow, and that the Archbishops of Canterbury and of Turku (Abb) will agree on details. The Church of Finland gladly looks forward to such a widening of her relations with other Churches and to a fresh opportunity to promote the unity of the Universal Church.

As to the other question which has caused much discussion; I think that all that can be said at the present time concerning the canon of the Finnish Church Law (116), which permits ordination by a Dean or an older 'Assessor of the Chapter' has, as a matter of fact, already been said during the conversations. There is nothing

essential to be added to the statements of the Finnish delegates published in the Report of the Joint Commission. It seems to me, that there should not be anything to prevent the suggested arrangements, if it be understood that we do not therewith imply any definite theory about episcopal ordination.

As to granting communicating members of the Church of Finland the right to communicate in the Church of England, our Church acknowledges with deep gratitude the decisions made by the Conventions of Canterbury and of York. These decisions include practically the same as is involved by the following canon in the Finnish Church Law (121): 'Upon a person of another confession the priest shall not press priestly duties, but if the priest is voluntarily asked to perform a priestly service for a person who confesses another faith, he shall not refuse to do this, in so far as such a performance is not an infringement of the general law, and this being the case, the priest shall perform the function according to the Manual of the Lutheran Church.' It has for a long time been tacitly understood in our Church that all Lutheran communicants may communicate in the Church of Finland. According to the canon quoted, however, our priests may administer to Christians of other confessions the holy rites of our Church in cases when they are voluntarily asked for them. The general law of Finland is to be specially observed, e.g. as to marriage. Yet, it is understood, that if a person who confesses another faith is permanently living in this country and wishes to be served by our priests, he should become a regular member of our Church in course of time, but there is, of course, no compulsion. Thus it appears that nothing at present hinders Anglican communicants from communicating in our churches, when they wish to do so. We welcome them most heartily to the Lord's table. With great gratitude we shall duly inform our parishes of the decisions of the Anglican Church regarding the right of our communicants to communicate in the Anglican Church. This will be a real privilege for our countrymen, who are living in the British Empire or travelling in other countries where there are no churches of their own, but where there is an Anglican church, as is the case, e.g. in many places in Switzerland. We also gladly see in this step an advance towards a time when the Holy Communion, instituted by our Lord as an instrument of *communio sanctorum*, will no longer be a sign of division.