

AUDIENCE GIVEN BY POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION, 4TH SEPTEMBER 1980. SPEECH BY THE MOST REVD. HENRY McADOO, ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN, ANGLICAN CO-CHAIRMAN

Your Holiness,

As the work of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission enters its final stages before presenting its completed report to Your Holiness and to His Grace of Canterbury, the members would wish to express their gratitude to Your Holiness for receiving us. We would wish to say what an encouragement this is to us in our work.

The outlines of that task were delineated by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury when by their Common Declaration of 1966 they inaugurated "the serious dialogue" which, they trusted, would "lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed." (Common Declaration 1966)

Between that auspicious beginning and the present time much has been achieved through the grace and guidance of the Spirit in the Church. The first fruits of the serious dialogue, the Malta Report of 1968, was received by Cardinal Bea on behalf of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and by the Anglican bishops assembled from all over the world at the Lambeth Conference of that year.

The Report set out the great extent of our common faith and of our shared Christian inheritance (Malta Report, (3).) It then noted for further joint examination those areas which, in the intervening decade, have constituted the major task of the present Commission.

These areas, Eucharist, Ministry and Authority in the Church, have been the subject of the Commission's three Agreed Statements - a new genre of ecclesiastical documents. It is our conviction that what this examination has revealed is full of significance for the relationship of our two Communion as we face the closing

decades of the twentieth century.

What in fact has been revealed by this careful investigation is a substantial agreement on eucharist, on ministry, and on the purpose of Christian authority which is to maintain the Church in the truth of the Gospel. The instrumentality by which this is sought has been and is both conciliar and primatial. While both emphases are found in each Communion the former has been characteristic of the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the latter of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the light of this agreement in these three areas and against the background of the full agreement in our "common faith" (Malta Report (3),) the Commission respectfully asked our authorities "to consider whether or not they are judged to express on these central subjects a unity at the level of faith which not only justifies but requires action to bring about a closer sharing between our two communions in life, worship, and mission." (Authority in the Church, 26.)

Conscious of our responsibilities to those who did us the honour of appointing us, and conscious of the widespread expectations of the people of God that out of a decade of joint work a real advance should come in the relationships between our two Communions, the Commission in the same paragraph and in the preface to the Venice Statement underlined the Malta Report's theme of "unity by stages."

In our work together, the members of the Commission have become increasingly aware of the healing possibilities of the concept of unity by stages as constituting a live option for the reconciling of our divisions. Together with the vitalising

concept of the hierarchy of truths enunciated in the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism (11) it offers hope to Christ's separated brethren. Likewise, we have found that an ecclesiology of koinonia opens further possibilities for the Spirit's working in the Church. Under His guidance we humbly offer our work to our respective authorities. Accordingly, we would respectfully ask the authorities in both Communion to accept and approve our three Agreed Statements, thus marking an important stage in a developing relationship.

As we gratefully thank Your Holiness for receiving us we trust that the Commission's work will be acceptable to our respective authorities as contributing to a decision by both Communion to bring us a stage closer in Christ Our Lord. We recall the Common Declaration of His Holiness Pope Paul VI and of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1977 that many in both Communion are asking themselves whether they have "a common faith sufficient to be translated into communion of life, "and that the moment of evaluation must "shortly come." (Common Declaration, 4 + 9.)

Your Holiness, the Anglican members of the Commission would particularly wish me to express on their behalf and on my own, our warm appreciation of your cordial reception and of your continuing efforts to further the cause of unity among Christians.

Anglicans have traditionally seen as central to the restoration of communion four basic elements, namely, the Scriptures, the Creeds, the Dominical Sacraments and the Historic Episcopate. This was formulated by the Lambeth Conference of 1888 and re-stated as recently as 1968 by the Lambeth Conference of that year. It is thus within the context of "the faith once for all delivered to

the saints" (Jude, 3) and believing that the elements constituting the koinonia are the apostolic doctrine and fellowship, the sacraments and ministry, (cp. Acts 2: 41-2) that we approach the scandal of our disunity. While Anglicans have no doubt concerning our Orders, it would mean much for our common hope and prayer for the restoration of communion between Rome and Canterbury if the traditional judgment of the Roman Catholic Church in this matter were to be open to reconsideration in the light of the Commission's work.

Whatever interim stage may be on the way which separated Christians are called on to walk together, this will be as pilgrims of unity whose eyes are set on that restoration of communion which alone can bring about the realisation of our Divine Master's prayer that they all may be one.

What first steps will be taken must be decided by the Communion themselves. Many look for an outcome which will have enormous practical bearing on "life, worship and mission" as the Church faces a growing secularism, and which will draw together tragically polarised Christian communities, as in parts of my own land.

We are all profoundly grateful for the new atmosphere created by the initiatives of the Roman Catholic Church in the cause of Christian unity, especially in relation to the Churches of the Anglican Communion. It is unhappily true that there are still places where relationships are difficult because of the policy in regard to mixed marriages. We trust that, if in God's providence we are allowed to grow together, the pain that this problem causes will be removed.

Your Holiness, it remains for me simply to express once more the feeling of gratitude of us all for the honour you have done us in receiving the Commission and we pray God's blessing on your work for Christian unity.