

AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMMON DECLARATION OF POPE PAUL VI AND
THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

English Press reports concerning the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to Rome in Spring 1977 virtually ignored the Common Declaration signed with Pope Paul VI. There was instead a considerable concentration on Dr. Coggan's so-called call for intercommunion and a supposed consequent Papal rebuff. In view of this publicity, before turning to the Common Declaration itself, it may be a helpful preliminary to make a few observations about what the Archbishop said on that occasion, beginning by putting his remarks in their context.

The Archbishop was preaching in the Episcopalian Church of St. Paul 'within-the-walls' in the Via Nazionale. Cardinal Jan Willebrands was presiding with him at a Solemn Evensong during which a pair of bronze doors were dedicated. The doors commemorate the meetings between Pope John and Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher, and Pope Paul and Archbishop Michael Ramsey. The theme of the Archbishop's sermon was evangelization and warm reference was made to (and quotation from) the Apostolic Letter Evangelii Nuntiandi, and the Decree Ad Gentes and the Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium of the Second Vatican Council. With the three Agreed Statements of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission in mind the Archbishop asked whether the joint evangelisation called for in Evangelii Nuntiandi would not be seriously weakened "until we are able to go to that work strengthened by our joint participation in the sacrament of Christ's body and blood?" He noted that sacramental sharing was already taking place in many places around the world, a fact which was especially drawn to the Archbishop's attention during the meeting of the General Synod of the Church of England in February 1977. It will also be remembered that the Archbishop had only recently returned from a visit to Australasia where, especially in Papua New Guinea, he experienced for himself the closeness of Anglican/Roman Catholic pastoral relations. He considered that this would continue whether official permission were given or not. It was in this context that the Archbishop asked whether the time had not come for official sanction for what was already happening.

And so to the Common Declaration, which I hope to show in the following comments is also worthy of very serious attention. Yet even before consideration of its text it may be worth while repudiating the suggestion that it was 'cut and dried' beforehand; this was not the case. Although the Common Declaration had been carefully planned before the visit, it was considerably discussed and modified, and finally agreed

only during the hour and twenty minute meeting between Pope Paul and the Archbishop of Canterbury on the 28th April. It was jointly signed after the service in the Sistine Chapel on the 29th. The titles I have given to the paragraphs of the Common Declaration are taken from the text to highlight its successive themes.

THE VISIT OF ARCHBISHOP RAMSEY

The opening paragraph recalls previous archiepiscopal visits and the hopes expressed in the Common Declaration of Pope Paul and Archbishop Michael Ramsey (1966). This affirmed the goal of that unity in truth for which Christ prayed. The method of its achievement was to be a serious dialogue, "founded upon the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions", and the promotion of "responsible contacts" where collaboration would lead to "greater understanding and deeper charity".

A COMMON FAITH

The second paragraph is essentially a brief affirmation of common belief. In 1968 the Malta Report of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission called for "an official and explicit affirmation of mutual recognition from the highest authorities of each Communion" (7). This would acknowledge that both Communion were one in faith. The Malta Report was accepted in outline by the Lambeth Conference of the same year and also in general terms by the late Cardinal Augustin Bea on behalf of Pope Paul. This paragraph of the Common Declaration goes some way towards the acknowledgement of common faith there called for. It should be closely compared with the Malta Report, from which it draws much of its language:

We record with great thankfulness our common faith in God our Father, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit; our common baptism in the one Church of God; our sharing of the holy Scriptures, of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Chalcedonian definition, and the teaching of the Fathers; our common Christian inheritance for many centuries with its living traditions of liturgy, theology, spirituality, Church order, and mission." (3)

If the implications of this common faith were really accepted by the general membership of both communions Anglican/Roman Catholic relations might well be further transformed. Nevertheless, a common ministry is not yet acknowledged, for it will be observed that the adaptation of the Malta Report found in the Common Declaration significantly omits the mention of Church order.

THEOLOGICAL CONVERGENCES

The third paragraph should be compared with the penultimate paragraph of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission's Agreed Statement Authority in the Church:

For a considerable period theologians in our two traditions, without compromising their respective allegiances, have worked on common problems with the same methods. In the process they have experienced a theological convergence which has often taken them by surprise. (25)

THE ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

Of special note is the definite nature of this fourth paragraph, particularly for a document signed by a Pope. This is the first time there has been explicit public Papal recognition of the work of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, though the three Agreed Statements have been published with Papal permission. (Pope Paul did make an indirect allusion to the three Agreed Statements during Unity Week 1977.) The Pope and the Archbishop here specifically recommend that the work of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission "be pursued, through the procedures appropriate to our respective Communion". Roman Catholic Episcopal Conferences have already received the three Agreed Statements with request for comment from the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. In a similar way the Secretary General of the Anglican Consultative Council has circulated the Agreed Statements for the Churches of the Anglican Communion to make comment to the Anglican Consultative Council. Both Churches have also encouraged joint local discussion.

The last sentence of paragraph four will reassure Anglicans who fear possible ecumenical inertia: "The moment will shortly come when the respective authorities must evaluate the conclusions." For Anglicans the evaluation called for can only be made ultimately by the various General Synods, though the Anglican Consultative Council is the body which is responsible for pan-Anglican dialogue. To the Anglican Consultative Council in 1979 might come responses to the three Agreed Statements, as also the opinion of the Bishops of the Lambeth Conference of 1978. If response was generally positive the Anglican Consultative Council might then request of the General Synods some endorsement of the Statements as a basis for Anglican discussion with the Roman Catholic Church having visible unity as its goal.

The Malta Report spoke of unity by stages. The Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission saw its own task as a

first stage; the isolation of the most serious problems (Eucharist, Ministry, and Authority). It saw the theological resolution of those problems as a second stage, and subsequent discussion towards visible unity as a third. If General Synods were to endorse the work of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission as a basis for discussion with visible unity as its goal, then indeed the third stage of the Malta Report would have been reached: "the final stage in our quest for the full, organic unity of our two Communion." (17) It was at this stage in the context of commitment for unity that the Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission envisaged some measure of sacramental intercommunion apart from visible unity.

For Roman Catholics the response of Episcopal Conferences and Theological Commissions will be important but a final evaluation would still be made in Rome. The Roman Catholic decision would not be made solely by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity; certainly the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Secretariat of State would also be involved. Commenting upon the last sentence of paragraph four, the Rome correspondent of the Tablet expressed concern at the possibility of a premature negative Roman reaction. (Equally, not all Anglican evaluation would be positive at the present time, especially in relation to the Statement on Authority.) On the other hand Roman Catholic theologians have generally commended the Statements, and some General Synods have gone as far as to say that the two earlier Statements are acceptable as Anglican teaching (e.g. Canada, South Africa and the USA). The Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission now works on the clarification of the document in response to serious criticism and the remaining problems outlined in its Agreed Statement: Authority in the Church. (24)

PASTORAL COLLABORATION

In the fifth paragraph collaboration and response at all levels is enjoined, with the role of the laity emphasized by quotation from the Second Vatican Council. The immense change which has come over ordinary Anglican/Roman Catholic relations in the last eleven years is briefly but warmly alluded to. Examples of pastoral co-operation might have been cited: common prayer; biblical, evangelistic and liturgical co-operation; exchanges between seminaries; parish and diocesan covenants (USA); joint declarations in common areas of Christian concern (South Africa); shared churches and schools; and the mutual

pastoral care of isolated faithful. The list could be expanded, though progress is not uniform everywhere. The general commendation of such co-operation may be a stimulus where little has yet taken place.

MIXED MARRIAGES

The sixth paragraph opens with a welcome recognition of the difficulties of inter-Church families at the Eucharist. It then moves on to the encouragement of the joint pastoral care of mixed marriages by quotation from the Apostolic Letter Matrimonia Mixta of 1970 (14). At this point it is worth recalling the emphasis the Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its application to Mixed Marriages also put on the necessity for such collaboration. (74) The Pope and the Archbishop then speak explicitly of the misconceptions which have been cleared away by the work of the joint Commission on the Theology of Marriage, though it is noted that "important differences persist, particularly regarding re-marriage after divorce." Controlled canonical admission of divorced persons to re-marriage in church during the life-time of former spouses is already permitted to Anglicans in Australia, Canada, Central Africa, New Zealand, South Africa, and the USA, whatever may be the outcome of the expected Church of England Marriage Commission. However, on this issue it is again worth while referring to the work of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its application to Mixed Marriages. The Commission saw recent Anglican changes in matrimonial discipline and modern Roman Catholic developments (the decisions of tribunal and rotal courts) in the field of nullity as pursuing

"A common end, namely the continuance of the Church's pastoral responsibility for its members in a situation which because of sin, inadequacy or weakness or for whatever reason, the sign of marriage is already marred and in which no course absolutely consonant with the first order principle of marriage as a lifelong union may be available." (49)

The two traditions were seen to approach the problem of defective marital situations in different ways, but both were recognised to be seeking a consistent pastoral solution.

Paragraph six ends very positively with the statement that Anglicans and Roman Catholics "have a common duty to defend" the Christian ideal of marriage "and the moral values which derive from it." This does not suggest that Anglicans and Roman Catholics have an essentially different attitude to Christian marriage.

COMMUNION IN FAITH AND SACRAMENTAL LIFE

Though short, the seventh paragraph is important for its unequivocal re-iteration of the declared aim of the serious dialogue inaugurated in 1966. Those who fear what "the restoration of complete communion in faith and sacramental life" might imply should be reassured by Pope Paul's formal words of greeting to the Archbishop of Canterbury on the 28th April 1977. On that occasion the Pope (referring to the celebrated paper prepared by Dom Lambert Beauduin and read by Cardinal Mercier during the Malines Conversations) spoke of the history of increasingly good relations between Anglicans and Roman Catholics:

The pace of this movement has quickened marvellously in recent years, so that these words of hope "The Anglican Church United not Absorbed" are no longer a mere dream.

COMMUNION

Pope Paul and the Archbishop of Canterbury, like the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, stress the concept of koinonia, and in this eighth paragraph link it to the question of ecclesiology. Ecclesiological questions lurk behind many other ecumenical problems and there is here a clear recognition that the issue must now be faced. With an ecclesiology of koinonia such a dialogue could be very fruitful, for such an ecclesiology would begin with the local rather than the universal church. It would suggest a model of the Church far removed from the monolithic pyramid which Anglicans have traditionally seen in Rome, yet not a model which would suggest that one local church can exist in isolation from another.

COMMON WITNESS

The logic of the ninth paragraph is the natural progression from communion to mission. It is perhaps the most original part of the whole Declaration and could certainly be the most important if implemented. The theme of joint evangelism was, as has already been seen, the subject of the Archbishop's sermon at St. Paul's. The same theme was heard again in Pope Paul's allocution to the Archbishop when they worshipped together in the Sistine Chapel on the 29th April. Both felt the matter to be at the heart of the search for unity. But in their Declaration they say more than this. There is the specific statement: "It is our desire that the means of this collaboration be sought". This could be a mandate for Roman Catholic discussion and collaboration with Anglicans on common evangelism on the basis of Evangelii Nuntiandi. It offers an opportunity which

should be grasped at all levels. Again the Malta Report comes to mind with its recommendations that there should be a regular meeting of the bishops of each Communion in every region where they are found together and that there should be constant consultation on evangelistic problems. (8 and 9)

Collaboration and dialogue are to be pursued side by side and it is recognised that such collaboration is both a means of unity and a sign of its achievement; "it will create the climate in which dialogue and doctrinal convergence can bear fruit". For the time being obstacles remain and some of these are "of recent origin." This is a clear but unexplicit reference to the Anglican ordination of women to the presbyterate in Canada and the USA. Its studied low-key tone is noteworthy. With this should be seen the recent agreement of the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council and the Plenary Meeting of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity to hold a consultation to consider to what extent and in what ways churches with women priests and churches without can be reconciled in sacramental fellowship. Such an Anglican/Roman Catholic consultation indeed is not without relevance within the Anglican Communion.

The Declaration notes that many Anglicans and Roman Catholics are asking whether there is already a sufficient common faith for 'intercommunion'. The phraseology is largely taken from the final sentence of Authority in the Church (26). The answer to the question (posed by the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission in the context of a request for consideration of its three Agreed Statements) does not receive a direct negative. Much therefore will depend upon each Communion's evaluation of the Agreed Statements at an official level. The last sentence of this paragraph, though indicating that the moment has not yet come, is by no means pessimistic of the outcome. There is a quiet confidence in the hope of a decision "not obscured by the enmities, the prejudices, and the suspicions of the past". Not all Anglican/Roman Catholic debate has been conducted in this spirit.

CHRISTIAN HOPE

The two final paragraphs are not entirely formal. There is an eschatological note in their stress on hope, and all Christian eschatology has some element of the 'realised'. There is also the strong juxta-position of prudence and courage, and there is the final powerful exhortation to live and work (with courage again) in the "hope of reconciliation and unity".

In the analysis above I have tried to show something of the content and background of the themes of the Common Declaration. I hope it will be seen that it is far from being without substance. It will be remembered that the earlier Common Declaration between Pope Paul and Archbishop Michael Ramsey inaugurated the 'serious dialogue' which is recognised particularly in the work of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission. The present Common Declaration reflects the hopeful situation eleven years after the beginning of that dialogue; it may be seen as a mid-term report, an interim assessment of how Anglican/Roman Catholic relations have progressed. But there is also a look to the future in the insistence that the dialogue of the last few years must be both pursued and evaluated in order that both Communion may be led to unity; the prognosis is positive. Furthermore, the Declaration points to the necessity for a joint approach to evangelism, and so marks a new departure in Anglican/Roman Catholic relations. If the Declaration does not go as far as some would wish, it must be honestly admitted that not all in either Communion, whether people or prelates, yet desire a closer relation. From the Common Declaration (with the call to recognise common faith and theological convergence, and the encouragement of collaboration and common witness) it is clear that Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Donald Coggan are not among them.

CHRISTOPHER HILL

Note: The full text of the Common Declaration may be found in Pilgrim for Unity, CTS/SPCK. The full text of the Malta Report may be found in Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue, Clark & Davey, Oxford. The Report of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its application to Mixed Marriages is published by the CIO in conjunction with the Catholic Information Office. The Three Agreed Statements of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission are published by CTS/SPCK.