

INTRODUCTION

1. At their meeting in Canterbury at Pentecost 1982, Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert Runcie charged the second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission "to examine, especially in the light of our respective judgements on the Final Report, the outstanding differences which still separate us, with a view to their eventual resolution".

Two topics have already claimed our attention.

2.(i) Readers of our predecessors' Final Report have said that their agreed statements on Eucharist, Ministry and Authority need to be completed by a study of the place of the Church in salvation. Indeed, our predecessors made an initial response to this request in their introduction to the Final Report which included the following important sentences:

"The Church is the community of those reconciled with God and with each other because it is the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ and are justified through God's grace. It is also the reconciling community, because it has been called to bring to all mankind, through the preaching of the Gospel, God's gracious offer of redemption." (Para.8)

3 (ii) It has also been urged that reconciliation between our two communions requires agreement on the doctrine

of justification. This was, in the sixteenth century, certainly a central matter of dispute between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Further, many people believe that this doctrine still raises substantial issues which must be resolved if true reconciliation is to be achieved.

4. Our discussions have convinced us that these two questions, the doctrine of the Church and the doctrine of justification, must be treated together. First, this is a matter of content, in that both are concerned with the nature and manner of our salvation. The individual is brought to faith and salvation through incorporation into the believing community. The individual receives his or her call to witness to the Gospel as a member of Christ's apostolic people. Secondly, reflexion on the history of the Reformation shows that fundamental issues about the nature of the Church and its role lay at the heart of the whole dispute. Protestants felt that Catholic teaching and practice had interpreted the mediatorial role of the Church in such a way as to derogate from the place of Christ as sole mediator between God and man. Catholics believed that Protestants were abandoning divinely appointed means of grace. Protestants expressed a concern for the total gratuity of God's saving action, that is, of grace. Catholics were afraid that this Protestant assertion implied a view of God's justice as that of an arbitrary sovereign and a view of man, his creation, as totally worthless. This, in their judgment, led to the negation of human freedom and responsibility,

and to the denial of the value of works, though supernaturally inspired, as good or deserving of any reward.

5. We are convinced and hope to show that the Reformation controversies in these fields no longer constitute a sufficient reason for the separation of our communions. We have found it possible to express an agreed doctrine of the Church and salvation which meets the concerns of both our traditions.

6. At first sight, because of the form in which we have inherited them, the questions of justification and grace may seem to be of little relevance to most people today. However, we believe that when studied seriously, they raise issues which are of great contemporary concern. These are the issues of modern man's search for meaning and happiness. The common use of the phrase 'one must justify one's existence' is itself revealing. This secular use of the term points to the human need of some kind of validation. Apart from God this quest leads to slavery to lesser goods. Belief in the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ provides the assurance of worth, which every human being needs, both of his or her personal value and of the real significance of all that he or she does in dependence on God. In a deeply fragmented and divided world the Church is called to be a sign and instrument of reconciliation and forgiveness.