

The Ecclesiology of Reconciliation

## 1) SALVATION AND THE CHURCH: GROUP B

The group was impressed with the Final Report of ARCIC-I, especially paragraph 8 of the Introduction which is seminal. And for precisely that reason it is recommended to write a succinct commentary on that paragraph drawing out the rich and important ideas relating to the theme of 'Salvation and the Church' and along the following lines.

1. Several terms such as justification, sacrament etc. have become red flags for historical reasons (cf Authority 2521). To get over this "historical captivity" of many persons, it is, perhaps, best to seek the basic thrust of the message of salvation by grace through faith (cf. Eph. 2:8)

- (a) the paradox of the life of faith, e.g. simul justus, simul peccator, saved but in hope (cf. Rom.); Gratuitous nature of salvation and yet at the same time calling persons to work out their salvation in fear and trembling. Thus salvation is a "kind of continuing acceptance of one's beginning" (cf Chrysostom);
- (b) The diverse images used for the basic concept: Justification, Reconciliation, Redemption, Sacrifice etc. Since an image expresses truth to a context, each image needs to be complemented by others. None of these images must be seen in exclusive terms. Furthermore, there is need for sensitivity to the fact that the choice of an image is often influenced by the context and historical situation. Therefore, there is need for faithfulness to the context, past and present, original and contemporary in interpretation and retranslation. This is a warning against taking passages or ideas in isolation and out of context.

- (c) Faith (i.e. acceptance of the Lordship of Christ) and the expressions and life-forms of it. Faith which finds its necessary expression in life and works, with consequent sharing in God's gift of salvation is displayed in growth in holiness and conformity to the likeness of Christ.
- (d) The Church as "reconciled by God and reconciling the world to God, evangelized and yet also evangelizing for God, gathered by God and yet gathering others for God" (Augustine). The point of this statement is that whatever may be given and done in Christ carries with it a responsibility and necessity on the believer in Christ. Whatever else Salvation may mean, it also involves the people of God continuing the mission of Jesus (cf II Cor. 5:19f). It is in this regard that expressions like 'the Church as a sign', 'the Church as sacrament' etc. have sometimes been used.
- (e) There is need to clean up history - several of our problems have historical components. But when that is recognized, there is need to move into the contemporary world in which some of those historical accidents are no longer really strong.

Papers to be done

1. A historical paper which examines how far historical debates with regard to justification have been overcome today.
2. Justification and Other Images of Salvation. This is to examine how justification relates to other biblical images of salvation and to see whether the images converge in any way.
3. The Church and the dispensation of grace.