



NEWS

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BISHOPS' SPOKESMAN HAILS REPORT OF ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMISSION

WASHINGTON--The Catholic bishop who chairs the Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States hailed publication of the Final Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, noting the document may serve as a springboard to a new stage in the quest for "organic unity" between the two bodies.

"If the Final Report is widely accepted, the separation of the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church would be more easily overcome because there would be no doctrinal reason why these Churches would not be in full, canonical communion with one another," said Bishop Raymond W. Lessard of Savannah.

Bishop Lessard noted the Final Report does not specify what organizational form such a canonical communion would take and does not offer a plan for the mutual recognition of the ordained ministries of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

"The Final Report is only an instrument to initiate the first stage of a complex process of a world-wide growth into

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organic unity of Roman Catholics and Anglicans who for four centuries have believed that their Christian integrity demanded their separation," Bishop Lessard stated.

"The Final Report is offered as a text to be studied, scrutinized, prayed over and discussed by Anglicans and Roman Catholics in a world process of mutual investigation and discernment," Bishop Lessard said.

The 20-member Commission, made up of 10 scholars drawn from the worldwide Anglican Communion and officially appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and 10 Roman Catholic scholars appointed by the Pope, released their final report, March 31 in Rome and London. The Commission said it had come to unanimous agreement on the divisive theological issues of Eucharist, the Nature of the Ordained Ministry and Authority in the Church.

The document is being co-published in this country by Forward Movement Publications, Cincinnati, and the Office of Publishing Services, United States Catholic Conference.

Following is the text of Bishop Lessard's statement:

The Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission has just released its Final Report. The twenty member Commission, made up of ten scholars drawn from the worldwide Anglican Communion and officially appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and ten Roman Catholic scholars appointed by the Pope, has come to unanimous agreement on the divisive theological issues of Eucharist, the Nature of the Ordained Ministry and Authority in the Church.

The Final Report is the result of twelve years of study, prayer, research and dialogue. The Report is not easy reading: It is lengthy, more than one hundred printed pages, closely argued and carefully written. The Report is meant as an instrument to bring the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church to a new stage in their joint quest for organic unity. The Final Report is offered as a text to be studied, scrutinized, prayed over and discussed by Anglicans and Roman Catholics in a worldwide process of mutual investigation and discernment. The Final Report maintains that despite differences of vocabulary and theological emphasis the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church are in fundamental agreement in the three areas on which since the sixteenth century Anglicans and Roman Catholics have maintained they differ from one another so sharply that in conscience their Christian communities would have to remain officially separated from one another. If the Final Report is widely accepted, the separation of the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church would more easily be overcome because there would be no doctrinal reason why these Churches would not be in full, canonical communion

with one another. The Final Report does not specify what organizational form this canonical communion would take and it does not offer a plan for the mutual recognition of the ordained ministries of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. The Final Report is only an instrument to initiate the first stage of a complex process of a worldwide growth into organic unity of Roman Catholics and Anglicans who for four centuries have believed that Christian integrity demanded their separation.

To aid the process of mutual study and discernment the Final Report's Introduction provides a context and underlying theme for the rest of the Report. The Introduction develops the idea that the Church is the mystery of the communion of God's people with Him and with one another in Him. Eucharist is seen to signify and produce communion. The pastoral care exercised by the ordained ministry is meant to serve communion and episcopal primacy in the Church aids in focusing communion and serves the unity of the Church.

The Final Report gives the text of Commission on Eucharistic Doctrine which was agreed to at Windsor, England in 1971 and Elucidations on the "Windsor Statement" which the Commission drafted at Salisbury, England in 1979. The Final Report contains the text of the Commission on Ministry and Ordination which was written at Canterbury in 1973 and Elucidations on the "Canterbury Agreement" which the Commission composed at Salisbury, England in 1979. The Report contains the text of the Commission on Authority in the Church which the Commission accepted at Venice, Italy, in 1976 and Elucidations on the "Venice Statement"

which the Commission drafted at Windsor, England, in 1981. The Report also contains the second part of Authority in the Church which the Commission accepted at Windsor Castle in 1981. Authority in the Church II deals with the so-called "Petrine texts," the primacy jure divino of the Bishop of Rome, the meaning of jurisdiction, and infallibility in the Church. The Final Report contains a brief Conclusion which calls for "the establishing of a new relationship" between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church "as a next stage in the journey towards Christian unity."

Printed with the Report are important Appendices: A summary of the thirteen meetings of the Commission, a list of the members of the Commission, the 1968 Report of the Preparatory Commission which gave the International Commission its agenda and the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury in 1966 and the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Donald Coggan of Canterbury in 1977.

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