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PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC JOINT PREPARATORY COMMISSION

MEETING AT HUNTERCOMBE MANOR

30th August to 4th September 1967

To what extent can or should there be diversity in a united church?

Freedom and Authority.

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Some theological considerations.

In the Creed of Constantinople (381) we confess "Credimus in unam sanctam Catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam"

Ἐκκλησίαν ἁγίαν, καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν
"Ekklesiā"

Credimus, we believe. Though the text of the latin liturgy has the singular, Credo, the original text has the plural Credimus. We are not dealing with an individual. It is a people that believes. The Church, founded by Christ is continually realised afresh in us by an act of faith "Placuit Deo homines non singulatim sanctificare et salvare, sed eos in populum constituere" (Lumen gentium 9)

A people means a multitude, and in a certain sense a diversity, by its diversity of function, by its continuity in history. At the same time a people means a racial, spiritual, cultural unity.

When we speak of the people of God, we mean a people not in the sense of a race of men, but a people by election, by sanctification. In the Old Testament this election was given to the people of Israel, and the People of God was at the same time a particular race, a nation. By the New Testament in his blood, Christ called into being a new people "ex Judaeis et Gentibus". "Credentes enim in Christum, renati non ex semine corruptibili, sed incorruptibili per verbum Dei vivi (Cfr 1 Pt, 23), non ex carne sed ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto (Cfr 103, 5-6) constituuntur tandem 'genus electum, regale sacerdotium, gens sancta, populus acquisitionis ... qui aliquando non populus, nunc autem populus Dei (1 Pt 2, 9 -10) Lumen Gentium n.)

This people, though divine, remains a people made up of men. But unlike a people in the racial or national sense, it is composed "ex omnibus gentibus et tribubus et populis et linguis" (Apoc 7, 9). Cfr Lumen Gentium n.13: "Omnibus itaque gentibus inest unus Populus Dei" "Populus Dei non est tantum ex diversis populis congregetur..."

This 'people' then has a wider and more radical diversity than had the people of the Old Testament; it comprises a multitude of 'peoples' in the ordinary sense and its unity, though indeed visible, since it is made up of men, is not material. It is a unity which can come only from him who "from two hath made one people" (Ephes. II. 14)

Christ has established his new covenant not to destroy the diversity of nations and races or to conquer them in a material sense, but to destroy the barrier that divided the Old Testament people, Israel, from others - to embrace all the peoples of the earth in his redemption and lay open salvation to all, to admit all to the fullness which dwells in himself (Col. 1,19). In other words, the unity of the people of God has no sense except in function of the unity and fullness of the work of salvation willed by Christ, who is Alpha and Omega. All then starts from Christ, and the end of all ecclesiastical institution is to gather all in him.

What are this People's principles of unity?

Holy Scripture shows us, as example and ultimate principle, the unity in the Trinity of divine persons. Christ, sent by the Father "moriturus pro gente, et non tantum pro gente, sed ut filios Dei, qui erant dispersi, congregaret in unum" (Io 11,52) His last prayer was "ut unum sint".

He founded the New Testament in his blood and left to His church the sacramental sign of this covenant in the mystery of the Eucharist by which the unity of the church is signified and brought about.

The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who was sent into the world by the Son, to teach us the fulness of truth, to tell us of the riches of Christ. (Jo. 16,7: 13,15)

He creates in us that new life by which we are the people of God; regenerati ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto: the "aqua" is Our Lord's Tomb, and the Spirit is the source of new life.

Clearly the people of God, divine in origin, is truly a people; built by the sacrifice of Christ and by the Spirit, it is truly an edifice; as the body of Christ, it is a true body. All this concerns an order of execution, of realisation unfolding itself in certain structures. These structures are not left to chance or whim; they are given and established by Christ, priest, king and prophet, and animated by the life-giving spirit. They never take away the nature proper to human life and human society, which is liberty. On the contrary, this liberty is affirmed in the new creature by the Spirit "qui et ipsa creatura liberabitur a servitute corruptionis in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei" (Rom 8.21)

The New Testament covers that period of history which extends from the Pasch of Christ, his redemptive mysteries, to his second coming. This time of the history of the People of God is the time of the Church. At the foundation of the Church are the twelve apostles - among them Peter - whose mission is to carry abroad the gospel i.e. to carry abroad Jesus himself, continually present in their midst through the Holy Spirit

There is then ^{growth} ~~belief~~ and continuity. But there is also freedom for God's intervention in that continuity. This appears in the New Testament itself. There are the twelve but there is also the election of Paul, who is to make known his Gospel through the pillars of the Church. There are interventions of the Spirit, sometimes unexpected. At Pentecost the Spirit "rushes in" (Acts 2,2). But even if the event of Pentecost is altogether singular and therefore foundational for the Church (Cf Acts 1.18) it is also true that the most decisive moments for the nascent Church are marked by the intervention of the Spirit, the mission of Cornelius, when the Spirit falls on those who hear Peter's preaching even before they have been baptised (Acts 10.44 sqq) - which enables Peter to justify the mission to the gentiles. Other passages of Acts could be analysed on the same lines - Stephen's discourse, the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, the conversion of Paul and the baptism of Ananias.

There is some truth then in the thesis of Professor Leuba (A la découverte de l'Espace oecuménique; Delachaux 1967) on the presence in the Church of an 'institution' and an 'event'.

There is continuity in an apostolic tradition which is the Gospel of Christ announced in the Spirit and lived in the Spirit until his second coming: then there is a 'structure' of the covenant in which the apostles are the twelve foundations "inter quos Petrum olegit...Epsso Christo Jesu summo angulari lapido in aeternum manente" (De Oecum n.2) But within this structure there is also the free intervention of the Spirit which diversifies ministries, missions, charismata, and Paul is sent to the Gentiles as Peter is to the Jews; even if the Church of Corinth is a "sick church" (Von Allmen), it witnesses none the less to a diversity of charismata which Paul does not call in question. There is then, alongside institutional structures, a liberty of the Spirit in the history of the Church. He chooses the man for a given mission. He disposes the succession of events and the sociological factors for the fulfilling of the Church's mission (e.g. that Paul accomplishes his mission in a pre-arranged area, the Roman empire, the oikoménè of those days, the Greek-speaking world where the Jews are dispersed. In itself the Roman Empire does not form part of the 'structures' of the Church, any more than does the 'Greek culture' - the background of the New Testament - but these are contingent factors that the Spirit makes use of for the Gospel.

The dialectic "freedom-authority" does not seem to me to enter into the theological aspect of the problem we are discussing. Or rather it arises only secondarily when we have seen that the covenant in Jesus Christ supposes structures and at the same time liberty in the Spirit. Authority itself is submitted to liberty. Otherwise it remains purely in the juridical order.

Some Historical Considerations.

In what way did the Church of the first centuries conceive and realise the principle of liberty? allowing diversity within given structures? Did it admit, as legitimate, differences in the expression of the catholic faith, in its theological exploration? In a study on "The Differences compatible with unity in the tradition of the ancient church down to the 12th century " (Istina 1961-1962 pp 227-253 Fr Lanne, O.S.B. distinguishes three fields
Diversity in unity in the field of liturgical and disciplinary usage.

- " of theological "terminology"
" of theological "systems".
1. Eusebius in his Hist. Eccl. (V,XXIII - XXV) tells of a grave dispute in the ancient Church over the paschal question. Pope Victor of Rome threatened to excommunicate the bishops of Asia who kept to the quartodeciman tradition, against the general usage of the Church. Ireneus of Lyons, writing to Victor in the name of the bishops of Gaul on the question of the date of Easter and the practice of fasting, expresses a very different attitude "The discussion is not only about the day, but also about the manner of fasting itself. Some in fact think they should fast for only one day, some for two, some for even longer. Some reckon forty hours of the day and night as their 'day'. And this variety of observance has not come about now, in our time, but goes back a long way to our ancestors who, without holding to absolute precision, as it seems, have preserved the custom in its simplicity and in its characteristic features and passed it on to us. They were all none the less anxious to preserve peace, and we should keep peace one with another. Difference in fasting confirms agreement in faith." (V, 25, 12-13).

In the same letter Ireneus recalls the story of the encounter between Anicetus and Polycarp. They held to different observances in celebrating Easter. Anicetus could not convince Polycarp nor Polycarp Anicetus. But they kept communion with each other and Anicetus allowed Polycarp to celebrate the Eucharist in his church.

Eusebius ends his chapter on the paschal question with this note on Irenaeus: Irenaeus did credit to his name—he was a peacemaker in name and in deed; in this fashion did he appeal for and bring about the peace of the Church."

Socrates, the "scholastic" of Constantinople, the continuator of Eusebius' work and like him more of a historian than a theologian, has left us a series of examples which illustrate the liturgical and disciplinary divergencies in the ancient Church. He gives details of the paschal dispute which was prolonged to the end of the fourth century in the Novatian church of Constantinople, the diversity in the observing of fasts, the variations in the days of synaxis, the differences between the several churches regarding clerical celibacy, varieties of usage in administering baptism, in orientating churches, in celebrating the Saturday vigil.

He says "All in all, you would be hard put to it to find among all the communities in the world two churches which in every respect celebrate the liturgy in the same way." (Hist. Eccl., see P.G. LXVII c, 632B.)

At the same time the differences are not arbitrary; each local church clings to its immemorial traditions. The varieties of usage do not argue any difference in matters of faith, or a severing of communion. The apostles, according to the writings of the New Testament, only imposed what was strictly necessary and allowed divergences in local practice.

In the west we have the witness of St. Augustine, theologian and pastor. For him the variety of local usage expresses the richness of the Church, spouse of Christ. As a theologian he acknowledges here a positive value; as a pastor he adds the principle that we should not harm the brethren who follow different usages. Apart from what is prescribed by Holy Scripture, apostolic tradition and the general councils, we should conform to the usage of the local church so as not to arouse vain disputes. He has in mind immemorial local traditions and he opposes innovations introduced by individuals, clerical or lay. The principle of charity, bond of unity, should govern legitimate differences between churches. (Ep. XXXVI to Casulanus, LIV & LV to Januarius. see E. Lanne, l.c.) In all this St. Augustine follows the attitude of St. Ambrose.

At Rome popes Siricius (4th cent.) and Innocent I (5th) show a contrary attitude. In liturgico-disciplinary practices all western churches should strictly follow the Roman usage. The argument is that all the churches of the west were founded by the apostle Peter or by his successors. St. Ambrose and St. Augustine would not have adopted such an attitude.

Nevertheless this rigid line has not always prevailed at Rome. We have the example of Pope Gregory the Great in his replies to Augustine of Canterbury. Against the tendency towards a too narrow fidelity to Roman usages, the pope here recognises and guarantees to a local church the possibility of a liturgy of its own. (Bede, Hist. Eccl., XXVII, 2)

After the patristic period, and above all since the twelfth century, liturgico-disciplinary centralisation takes place around the two Christian capitals, Rome and Constantinople, and creates, above all in the West, the liturgical uniformity we know.

More important perhaps than the field of liturgy and discipline is that of theology. Is there found, at the origins of Christian theology, liberty of thought and expression within the communion of the same faith? Can we discern theological diversity in the profession of the common faith?

From apostolic times the Church knew numerous heresies, and the attitude of the biblical writers as of the early

early doctors of the Church was severe and uncompromising. All the same, when there is no question of the content of the faith but only of explanation or formulation of its mysteries, e.g. the Trinity or Christology, we find in Hilary, Athanasius and Basil a spirit of comprehension and a conciliatory attitude which saved or restored peace in a very grave dispute. They demanded that the Nicene faith should be confessed, that the Arian heresy and those which treated the Holy Spirit as a creature should be anathematised; but nothing more.

Were these theologians conscious of the theological implications of their "economy", which really involves much more than a different terminology and leaves room for a different theological approach to the mysteries of faith? Whatever the answer, there are traces of this in the Creed of Constantinople (381) in which the divinity of the Holy Spirit is not expressed explicitly by the term théos as for the Father and the Son, but in equivalent terms: "Qui cum Patre et Filio coadoratur (simul adoratur) et conglorificatur."

Theological differences showed themselves more clearly in the Christological controversies between the schools of Alexandria and Antioch in the fifth century. Were the divergences of thought between Cyril of Alexandria and John of Antioch "after all no more than ill-natured quarrels", as Ph. Camelot puts it? ("Ephèse et Chalcedoine", p. 62) Without doubt the Acta of the Council of Ephesus include the third letter of Cyril to Nestorius with its twelve anathemata, but the Council as such did not approve them. (Denz. 252, 111 and note) Yet after the Council, the opposition between the two theologies which had been face to face there remained irreducible. (Camelot, l.c., p. 71) In 433 John of Antioch, to restore peace, wrote to Cyril and sent him his confession of faith. In this letter he expresses all the Antiochean theology on the two natures of Christ, and even aims it explicitly against Cyril's 4th anathema, but he confesses no less clearly the unity of the person (prosôpon) and the divine motherhood of Mary. He accepts equally the deposition of Nestorius. (Letter of John of Antioch to Cyril, in Correspondence of Cyril, Ep. 78: PG 77, 169-173. See below for text)

Cyril replies with true magnanimity. He rejoices at the peace in the Church. "Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad - the barriers of separations are cast down... all dissent is put aside;" (Ep. 39, PG 77, 173-181) and he does not insist on the disputed expressions "single nature", "physical union", "hypostasis".

As Fr. Lanne puts it, "he accepted a profession of faith in which the theological perspective was not his own". (Istina, l.c., p. 249) Pope Sixtus III congratulates both Cyril and John. The Council of Chalcedon later canonises Cyril's letter, "Disengaging from school controversies the common faith of the Church in the Incarnate Word and in the Theotokos." (Camelot, l.c., p. 72)

The peace was insecure. The theologians of both Alexandria and Antioch tried after the Council (451) to impose their own exclusivist theology. In a study of "Les Schismes à l'Époque des Premiers Conciles" Charles Moeller comes to this conclusion about the sixth century:

"The Byzantine sixth century is of decisive importance for the history of the schisms which were to arise later. It teaches us a lesson valid for our time as well as for ancient times: that various theological schools must coexist peacefully within the single tradition of the Faith. The unity of the Church is not to be confused with outward uniformity, no more than with the triumph of one theological school." (see "l'Église et les Églises", Chevetogne, 1964, p. 258)

At the origins of Christianity we find a divergence which was to mark the situation of the Church for four centuries - that between the Judaeo-Christian Church (*Ecclesia ex Judaeis*) and the gentile Christian Church (*ecclesia ex gentibus*). Archaeological discoveries, literature and monuments witness to the survival of Judaeo-Christian communities not merely in the 2nd century but down to the sixth. Fr. Bagatti has given a first synthesis of the data in his recent book "l'Église de la Circon-

cision" (Jerusalem, Imprim. Francisc., 1965) It shows Jewish-Christian communities between the second and fifth centuries in Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Transjordan and Syria. For Asia Minor, Egypt and Rome the problem remains whether such communities were Jewish-Christian in the strict sense or merely under Jewish-Christian influence. In a review of Fr. Bagatti's book, Fr. Danielou describes these communities thus:

"The essential of the Jewish-Christian communities is their fidelity to Jewish observances. They are Christians coming from Judaism, who have refused not only the position of Paul but even that of the Council of Jerusalem, and hence found themselves in a state of schism. For them, a Christian is a Jew who has come to believe in Christ without ceasing to be a Jew by observance. They are thus in a line of continuity with original Christianity. (Bulletin d'histoire des origines chrétiennes; Rech. de Sc. Rel., LV (1967) pp. 88-103.

Here I put a question. Did the Jewish-Christian communities really find themselves in schism? The Council of Jerusalem, in the discourse of James and in the apostolic letter, decided not to lay upon the gentile brethren greater burdens than "these necessary things" (cf. Acts XV, 28 and XV, 19) The Council in fact does not impose on the Hellenists the observances of the Jewish law, but these remain allowed and practiced among the Jewish Christians. The Hellenic Christians were obliged to abstain from certain things simply in order that the Jewish Christians in consorting with them should not incur legal pollution. Thus communion of faith and charity could be maintained between two communities undoubtedly very different in their liturgical and disciplinary practices, in their spirituality and in their thinking about the relation between the Law and the Gospel. St. Paul describes this communion, this unity of two in one body. (cf. Eph. 2, 16) Literary sources and archaeological discoveries offer evidence that Jewish-Christian communities did not persevere in this unity of structure and communion of the New Covenant. It would be interesting to know how long this particular diversity in unity survived, and what was the theology, liturgy and discipline of these communities.

Professor H. Gazelles has studied the idea of the People of God in its Jewish and Christian contexts, trying to reconcile the two by an appreciation of the Torah as the gift of God, regarded by both communities as divinely inspired. (H. Gazelles, "The People of God", in Encounter Today, II (1967) pp. 13-15) He concludes by relating the problem of Jewish-Christian divergence within the structure of the People of God to the Church's situation today:

Doctrinally speaking, if one sees in the Bible nothing more than conditions set by God for men to reach eternal happiness, then the two interpretations of the Torah, the Jewish and the Christian, appear at loggerheads as two opposite types of observance. But if one regards the Bible as bearing witness to God's creative action, calling for the faith of believers in the midst of the universe in order to "purchase" (I Pet. 2, 9) a people for himself, then a symbiosis seems possible in view of St. Paul's principle, that "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable". (Rom. 11, 29) Indeed the gift of God made to mankind and of course also to Israel (by the redeeming action of the Word Incarnate, the heir to God and the heir to David) does not cancel the gift of law: the Torah was not abolished, as stated clearly by Matthew (5, 17) and St. Paul (Rom. 3, 31) though to anyone who has met Christ in his Church it is obvious that the Torah does not bring us what we receive from Christ.

This theology should condition our practical attitudes on both sides:

A Christian should regard the structure of the People of God living under the Law as legitimate and acceptable to God who gave them the Torah.... But the Christian should beware of ascribing to the Law what it does not claim to give: the Law is a precondition for salvation and a pedagogue (or schoolmaster) (Gal. 3, 24): it does not possess the same power for grace and salvation as the Christian finds in Christ...."

So as regards the Jew, it would seem right for him to follow the example of Rabbi Gamaliel (cf. Acts, V, 34-39) who took the defence of the early Christians in Jerusalem against the Saducees, and admit the existence of a Jewish-Christian Church in the sense of the Church of St. James, which was fully faithful to Jewish observance, Temple worship, fasting and vows, and at the same time fully believing in Jesus Christ.. However, a revival in some shape or other of the Church of St. James would be at the present moment unthinkable: in the first place because the Vatican Council has not yet born all its fruits among Christians and secondly because there is too much anti-Christian resentment among Jews." (Cazelles, l.c., pp. 12-13)

In a note Prof. Cazelles adds: "The Jewish world no doubt consider such a restoration (of the Church of St. James) as a subtle form of proselytism and many Christians would regard it almost as a form of apostasy if a Christian of Jewish descent had his son circumcised - which to my mind would be quite normal." (l.c., p. 13)

The Present Problem.

History then shows that not merely liturgical and disciplinary differences but also those of terminology and even of theology are found at the ecclesial level itself, within the reality of the local Church. They are found within a unity of faith, of sacramental life, of structure.

The Second Vatican Council has recognised and emphasised the legitimate differences which have existed ab origine between the Churches of East and West. The Council did not merely describe the differences as they exist in fact, but in the historical spirit traced them to their source, which reveals the reason for them and sets them in a total context, which is that of the local Church. Between local Churches there should be fraternal relations in the communion of faith and charity, as between sister-churches, and this within the perfect communion of all with the apostolic see of Rome, which is at the same time the visible sign of communion between all the local Churches.

This reality of the local Church is one of the fundamental notions of Vatican II, which sets out the doctrinal basis of it in *Lumen Gentium* (23-27) in the constitution on the Liturgy (41) in the decrees *Christus Dominus* (11) *Ad Gentes* (18-20) and *Unitatis Redintegratio* (14-17)

If early Church history necessarily presents to us the local Church mainly as coterminous with the city state of late antiquity, we should not suppose that the Council is being unrealistic and antiquarian and merely looking backwards to these precedents. Historical precedents can give us some guidance in the present search for unity - in our approach to contemporary pluralism which is of many and diverse kinds. Today a single diocese, even a single parish can embrace a bewildering variety of races, beliefs, social traditions etc., but equally the religious tradition of, say, a country or group of countries can be a powerful and complex unifying force, not always on the conscious level.

If we understand the reality of the local Church merely as a somewhat superficial difference of liturgical and disciplinary forms within a unity and uniformity of spiritual life and theological vision, we shall certainly not grasp the richness and depth of its ecclesial life. This is the criticism of the too juridical and disciplinary conception which has developed among us Roman Catholics of the Eastern Catholic Churches.; it has perhaps developed equally in the Anglican and Lutheran Churches at times with regard to those ritualist tendencies which borrow liturgical forms from Rome. The notion of 'rite' simply does not explain the full reality of a local Church - unless indeed it be understood as embracing everything in that Church which is essential and vital: its own proper way of embodying the preaching of the Gospel and the celebration of

worship and sacraments in a determined local community in communion with other local Churches. This truly implies a liturgy, a discipline, a spirituality and a theology which are proper to it.

The local Church is a 'portion of the People of God', (Christus Dominus, 11) having all the gifts of grace by which the Church, a chosen people, is built and grows. (Unitatis Redint., 15) As people of God it is a people "in sociali vita iam radicata culturaeque loci aliquatenus conformata (Ad Gentes, 19) where mystical riches are dispensed and find expression pro cuiusque gentis ingenio et indole. (ibid, 18) These are highly significant expressions, stressing the genuine and positive elements that can exist in national tradition. It is thus that, at the beginning of this paper, we have conceived the People of God as made up of a multitude of peoples. The Vatican Council has well disclosed the manifold richness in the structure of the unique and universal Church in conceiving the episcopal structure as collegial and in establishing episcopal conferences. It is thus that within the framework of a universal structure there has been achieved freedom for the proper development of local Churches. I may perhaps quote from the Resolutions of the preparatory commission of theologians and canonists for the pastoral council of the Church of the Netherlands: No. 3 says: "The Church in the Netherlands bears in its entirety its own responsibility for the concrete expression of the Church among the Dutch people. Thus it contributes in its own way to realising the catholicity of the one Catholic Church. (cf. Lumen Gentium, 13.) No. 4 states that "Both the care for unity and the care for its expression are the responsibility of the Catholic Church in the Netherlands at all levels."

Can theological considerations about the nature of the People of God, together with the lessons of history, guide us in solving the problems set by the present situation of a divided Christianity?

We are confronted with what Paul VI has called "pluralism which extends to essentials and is therefore intolerable". (Speech of 28 April, 1967 to Secretariat for Prom. Christian Unity.) We have lived disunited for centuries. We have created doctrines and structures which have not remained within the communion of faith and charity but have broken it. Christianity no longer manifests the varied richness of a communion of sister-churches - it presents to the world "incomprehensible sectarian exclusiveness". (Paul VI, ibid)

Yet we have seen Mons. Moeller plainly insisting on the relevance of sixth-century Byzantium to our own situation - unity is not uniformity now any more than it was then, and diversity may well become richer within a more striking and edifying unity. A deeper understanding of ancient history and of our own situation may reinforce each other: provided we are not siding with Cyril or John to reinforce our own prejudices, they may both guide us to find our way to peace out of a seeming impasse without forsaking either steadfastness or magnanimity.

Whatever the situation, all Christian dialogue presupposes a certain measure of communion. The dialogue of charity, which is much more than a relation of courtesy and friendship, will bring us to recognise and accept legitimate and authentically Christian differences which have developed during the centuries of separation, in the spirit of Cyril and John. The dialogue of truth will unite us in the mystery of faith, worship and sacraments. If we say that there will be tension, or rather dialectic, between structure and liberty - both of them given and guaranteed by Our Lord Jesus Christ - this is not a form of words to slide round our difficulties, but a reminder to maintain our perspective in facing them.

Omnes suam fidelitatem voluntati Christi examinant atque, ut oportet, opus renovationis necno reformationis strenue

aggregiantur". Now, Christ did not will the schisms and ruptures which we have dragged on with for so many centuries. But he did will diversity within communion. Is it not a sign of new development that in 1967 we celebrate at Rome the centenary of the martyrdom of the two apostles Peter and Paul, whereas in 1867 only the martyrdom of St. Peter was commemorated? This diversity of local Churches within a unity has been the great theme of the messages and speeches of Pope and Ecumenical Patriarch since the recent meeting in Constantinople. Dialogue is not enough. To renew oneself, to reform oneself means to sacrifice oneself. "To find ourselves one in diversity and in fidelity", said the Pope at Constantinople "can only be the work of the Spirit of love." (Oss. Rom. 27.7.67.)