

The text of a public lecture delivered at the Royal Dublin Society on 23 June 1967. The Archbishop reviews the achievements of the Vatican Council as they bear upon the ecumenical task, calling attention in particular to the balanced paragraphs in the *Constitution* concerning the collegial authority of Pope and Bishops, and discusses the practical steps which Roman Catholics and Anglicans can hope may follow. Dr Ramsey notes the cautious advance towards a new treatment of the Mixed Marriage problem and quotes from the "Directory concerning the application of the decision of the Second Council of the Vatican concerning ecumenical matters" in order to stress the importance for Anglicans to "have an understanding of what Roman Catholics may now do in loyalty to their Church".

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# ROME AND CANTERBURY

A Public Lecture in Dublin  
by the  
ARCHBISHOP OF  
CANTERBURY

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## 1. THE MEETING IN ROME

On the 23 March 1966 there was a meeting, open for the world to see, between Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. The Pope and the Archbishop sat side by side with Michelangelo's great painting of the Last Judgement behind them. They greeted one another in terms of Christian brotherhood. The Archbishop spoke first and said: "I have come with longing in my heart, which I know to be in your heart also, that we may by our meeting together help in the fulfilment of the prayer of our divine Lord that all his disciples may come to unity in the truth", and he went on to say: "It is only as the world sees us Christians growing visibly in unity that it will accept through us the divine message of Peace. I would join my voice to the voice of Your Holiness in pleading that the nations agree to abandon weapons of destruction, to settle their quarrels without war, and to find a sovereignty greater than the sovereignty of each separate State." In his reply the Pope spoke of the rebuilding of a bridge which for centuries has lain fallen between Rome and Canterbury, a bridge of respect, of esteem, and of charity. "We are both happy and honoured to welcome you not as 'strangers and sojourners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God'. Surely from heaven Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Augustine look down and bless."

On the next day the common act of worship took place in the Basilica of St Paul-without-the-Walls. A great congregation joined in a service, with portions in Latin, in Italian, and in English, and both Roman Catholic and Anglican clergy took part. A litany within the service included the petition "that His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Grace Archbishop Michael and every Christian pastor may be faithful servants of the gospel of Christ, let us pray to the Lord". Finally the Pope invited all present to join in saying the Our Father, each in his own language. After the service there was read aloud and signed the Common Declaration.

I ask your attention to some of the phrases of the Common Declaration. In it the Pope and the Archbishop give thanks for

“a new atmosphere of Christian fellowship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Anglican Communion”. It would be wrong to read into this language a form of doctrinal agreement concerning the status of Churches or orders. Yet in the language used the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion greet one another as communities of Christian people between whom a corporate relationship is possible. Then, the Declaration calls upon the members of these two communities to treat one another everywhere with “these same sentiments of respect, esteem and fraternal love”. There follows the call for a serious dialogue; and you will notice the basis on which this dialogue is to be founded—it is “the Gospels and the ancient common traditions”. These words are striking. As to the scope of the dialogue, it should include “not only theological matters such as scripture, tradition and liturgy, but also matters of practical difficulty, felt on either side”. There is no belittling of the difficulty of the obstacles. But the Declaration pleads for their discussion not in animosity but in brotherhood. Its plea recalls the words which the Pope had used the day before in the Sistine Chapel: “Charity can, and must from now on, be exercised between us, and show forth its mysterious and prodigious strength.”

I have recalled these scenes, in the Sistine Chapel and in the Basilica of St Paul, as the starting place of this lecture. But let me say at once that the emotions stirred by those events do not cause me to underrate the difficulties still to be overcome. There remain doctrinal differences between Rome and Canterbury which are formidable. There are practical matters which can give hurt to feelings and consciences on either side. There are, though in some countries more than in others, legacies of bitterness which the wounds of past history have created. None the less the Common Declaration of Pope and Archbishop calls upon Roman Catholics and Anglicans to bring all these matters within the realm of brotherhood, and to treat one another everywhere not as rivals but as brothers and allies within the service of Christ our divine Lord. Already the Common Declaration has been having its influence and its effects. I want

to ask now what are the new developments in thought and act which lie behind it, and what are some of the practical steps which Roman Catholics and Anglicans can expect to follow in accordance with our respective loyalties and our consciences.

## 2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE COUNCIL

The Common Declaration was the outcome of previous events. The breaking of barriers which is now happening has not come unprepared. I could recall many events and persons, but only some can I mention now. I recall Cardinal Mercier and Charles, Viscount Halifax, who in unofficial conversations at Malines in the 1920s proved the possibility of creative dialogue. I recall the deep and wide influence of the Abbé Couturier in showing to Christians everywhere that the heart of ecumenism is not in intellectual polemics but in prayer and spirituality. I recall the pioneer courage of the Abbey of Bec which practised Roman Catholic-Anglican fraternity in the years when painful discouragement was experienced. I recall the private visit of my predecessor Archbishop Fisher to Pope John, a visit which had widespread influence as an effective symbol. But, immediately and most palpably, it was the Second Vatican Council with the dynamic influence of Pope John at its inception which made the present developments possible.

Is it not true to say that the Second Vatican Council was what it was and did what it did through the spiritual insight of Pope John in drawing together the theme of the Church's unity and the theme of the Church's renewal and reformation? If Christian unity is made a theme in isolation it is in danger of being seen solely in the dimension of dogma and ecclesiastical life, but if it is linked with the theme of spiritual renewal then it comes to be seen also in the dimension of the call to holiness and the call to evangelize the world. Unity is deepened and extended as Christians grow together in the way of holiness, and as they serve humanity in the name of the gospel of Christ. Unity is realized as the Church is in its human elements purged

of blemishes and so enabled to follow better both its heavenly calling and its mission to the world. Such was in essence the message of Pope John, grasped by him and conveyed to thousands of people not by intellectual erudition but by a kind of prophetic insight. As a result the Vatican Council came to effect what it did.

In the renewal of the Church the Vatican Council may have achieved most by liturgical reforms which encouraged worship in the vernacular and did much to draw the laity into closer participation in the liturgy. But let me mention some of those things said by the Council which bear particularly upon the ecumenical task.

In the *Constitution on Revelation* we find the basic themes of theology treated in the categories not of scholasticism but of the holy Scriptures and the Fathers. The revelation in the Bible is described not in terms of verbal literalism but in terms of the divine Word using a variety of human media, each in its own historical setting. The differences between Roman Catholic and Anglican doctrine of course remain, but the mode of discussing divine revelation in the Constitution is well able to assist dialogue based (I quote again the Common Declaration of March 1966) upon "The Holy Gospels and ancient common traditions".

In the *Constitution on the Church* there is an exposition of the doctrine of the Church, again in very biblical terms, and the priesthood of the whole Church is beautifully described as a common life within which the laity as well as the priests and the bishops share in a divine ministry each in their several offices. Within this Constitution comes the discussion of two matters about which conflict has been bitter between Catholics and Protestants in the past: the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the role of the Pope.

As to the Blessed Virgin Mary, it is significant that her role in the process of the redemption of mankind is described within the *Constitution on the Church*. Great as her role is, it is the role of one who is a creature and a role which, filled with celestial glory, is always a reflection of, and never a substitute for, the unique glory of Christ the Divine Son. This is not to

say that the *Constitution* has removed the great difficulty which we Anglicans feel about the modern Marian doctrines, but it is significant that it sets the doctrines in a context which checks the extremes of Mariological development.

As to the papacy, here the *Constitution* does one of the most noteworthy things which the Council accomplished. It sets the authority of Peter not apart from, but within the authority of the whole body of the apostles, and it sets the authority of the Pope not apart from, but within the whole body of the bishops. "Collegiality" is the key word. The balanced paragraphs about the collegial authority of Pope and Bishops (paras. 21-3) need the most careful reading. They cannot fail to give a new context to the discussion of infallibility and authority.

Now for *Ecumenism*. Before coming to the *Decree* on the subject we must notice the plea made by Pope Paul at the reopening of the Council after he had succeeded Pope John. It was a plea which set the tone for much which was to follow. It was a plea for forgiveness of the injuries which Catholics and Protestants, and all divided Christians, have inflicted on one another in the past. Greeting the representatives of other Churches present at the Council, Pope Paul said: "If we are in any way to blame for their separation, we humbly beg God's forgiveness and ask pardon too of our brethren who feel themselves to have been injured by us. For our part, we willingly forgive the injuries which the Catholic Church has suffered and forget the grief endured through the long series of dissensions and separations." Would that we could all take those words to heart and carry out their plea, in England, in Ireland, and everywhere!

There had already been, in the *Constitution on the Church*, strong emphasis upon the bond of unity between all who are baptized Christians.

The Church recognizes that she is in many ways linked with those who, being baptized, are honoured with the name of Christians though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter. For there are many who honour sacred Scripture, taking it as a norm of belief and a pattern of life, and also show a true apostolic zeal. They lovingly believe in God the Father

Almighty and in Christ, the Son of God and Saviour. They are consecrated by baptism, in which they are united with Christ. . . . Likewise we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them he gives his gifts and graces whereby he is operative among them with his sanctifying power (*De Ecclesia*, 15).

This affirmation of the meaning of baptismal unity prepares the way for the *Decree on Ecumenism*. This *Decree* also speaks of the reality of divine life amongst separated Christians, and it adds the plea that because of this divine life Catholics can be learning from non-Catholics for their own edification and for their greater understanding of the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Nor should we forget that anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can be a help to our own edification. Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith: indeed it always brings a deeper realisation of the mystery of Christ and the Church (*De Ecumenismo*, 4.)

This ecumenical process can help the reformation and renewal of the Church.

Every renewal of the Church is essentially grounded in an increase of fidelity to her own calling. Undoubtedly this is the basis of the movement towards unity. Christ summons the Church to continual reformation as she goes on her pilgrim way. The Church is always in need of this, in so far as she is an institution of men here on earth. Thus, if in various times and circumstances there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in Church discipline, or even in the way that Church teaching has been formulated—to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself—these can and should be set right at the opportune moment (5).

Thus renewal from within and a reaching out towards separated brethren with reverence for the divine gifts seen in them, go together. There is commendation of acts of common worship on suitable occasions, but these should be careful and not indiscriminate (8). And those who are separated are not only individuals, they are Christian communities. Much is here said about the Holy Orthodox Church. Turning to the West, the *Decree* speaks of Churches which have separated from Rome and says: "Among those in which Catholic traditions and institutions in part survive, the Anglican Communion has a special place."

One word more about the Council. There is the *Declaration on Religious Liberty*. This is very important. It affirms that "the act of faith is of its very nature a free act" (10), and therefore "in matters religious every manner of coercion on the part of man should be excluded". The Catholic Church must ask States or communities to allow freedom for its own belief and worship, and not expect States to use coercion on its behalf. "In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience faithfully, in order that he may come to God, for whom he was created. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters of religion."

### 3. THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE

And now, what? Since the Council there has been a breaking out of new ecumenical activity. Roman Catholics and non-Roman Catholics in many parts of the world have been praying together and working together, though in some countries the new outlook moves very slowly. And as between Roman Catholics and Anglicans the words of the Common Declaration of the Pope and myself have been acted upon far and near. Specifically the Common Declaration called for theological dialogue, for the tackling of matters of practical difficulty and hurt, and for common prayer and service. Theological dialogue has gone forward through the appointment of the Roman Catholic-Anglican Preparatory Commission. It contains scholars of the two communions drawn from many countries, and it had its first meeting in Gazzada in North Italy in January 1967. Its second meeting will be in England later this year. I am glad that a bishop of the Church of Ireland is now a member of the Commission. Of course there are very difficult doctrinal differences: infallibility, the doctrines concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary, the definition of the Catholic Church, the question of Anglican orders. The Anglican witness to the

Reformation cannot be belittled. But just because the starting place of dialogue is "the Holy Gospels and the common ancient traditions" the dialogue is worthwhile and we shall all pray that it may be fruitful. Besides the official Commission there are informal conferences between Roman Catholics and Anglicans in many parts of the world, and every encouragement should be given to these.

#### 4. MIXED MARRIAGES

Everyone knows that the most painful matter of practical difficulty is Mixed Marriages. If I say little about it now it is because there is an admirable booklet entitled *Mixed Marriages* published by S.P.C.K. with my encouragement and it sets out the present position carefully.

It is notorious that we Anglicans, like other non-Roman Catholic Christians, have been affronted by the Roman Catholic canon law which treats mixed marriages in our churches as invalid, so much invalid that persons married in our churches have been remarried in Roman Catholic churches after civil divorce. No less have Anglicans been hurt by the requirement that the non-Roman Catholic partner must sign a promise that children of the marriage will be brought up as Roman Catholics. The Vatican Council excited hope that a new handling of the matter was on the way, and many Roman Catholics, bishops and priests as well as lay people, have ardently desired that the law and the practice of their Church be changed. The statement of the Council on the status of baptized Christians as being "united in Christ" and the statements about conscience which I quoted earlier ("a man is bound to follow his conscience faithfully . . . he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience") would seem to call insistently for a new treatment of the Mixed Marriage problem.

On 18 March 1966 there was issued from the Vatican an *Instruction on Mixed Marriages*. This makes some small concessions which leave the main issue unaffected, and while this *Instruction* is very disappointing it is encouraging to note that it

is not a *Motu Proprio* signed by the Pope but has the lesser status of an Instruction signed by Cardinal Ottaviani. The final word of the Vatican is yet to come. But meanwhile it is important to note one new provision within the Instruction:

If the non-Catholic partner feels unable to give such a promise without offending his or her conscience the Ordinary [that is the Roman Catholic authority] must refer the case, with all its details, to the Holy See.

This provision is often not known, and it should be known widely. If it is to be acted upon with success of course the Roman Catholic partner as well as the non-Roman Catholic partner must be ready to welcome the procedure. It has sometimes been used successfully, where the Roman Catholic partner has agreed in wanting to protect the conscience of the non-Roman Catholic partner. Meanwhile Anglicans should always stand firmly by their own consciences. Of course these matters are painful, and they will go on being painful as long as Christians are divided. But the painfulness will be eased when in a mixed marriage the partners can both see one another's Churches in the new and growing spirit of ecumenical charity and respect.

#### 5. WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

I turn now to the growth of occasions when Roman Catholics and Anglicans worship together. In some countries especially Roman Catholics and Anglicans have joined in common acts of worship unselfconsciously, greeting one another in Christ's name and praying together as Christian brethren.

We Anglicans have rules concerning intercommunion, but otherwise we have no bar to participation in worship with members of other Churches. On the Roman Catholic side it has been for the hierarchies in different countries to make rules applying locally the main decisions of the Vatican Council, awaiting however the publication of the "Directory concerning the application of the decisions of the Second Council of the Vatican concerning ecumenical matters". On Whit Sunday

this year the Directory was issued by the Secretariat for Christian Unity, with the signature of Cardinal Bea. It lays down what actions in the ecumenical sphere are allowable to Roman Catholics in every part of the world.

The Directory should be studied carefully by Anglicans engaged in ecumenical approaches towards Roman Catholics. After an introduction recalling the ecumenical principles set forward by the Vatican Council it proceeds to four parts. The first part deals with the setting up of Ecumenical Commissions in each Roman Catholic diocese or in groups of dioceses. The second part deals with Holy Baptism. It emphasizes that baptism can be conferred only once and is "the sacramental bond of unity, indeed the foundation of communion among all Christians". The baptism of a person baptized in another Church must therefore be accepted by the Roman Catholic Church unless there are real reasons for doubting its validity in any case. Baptism may properly be by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling, together with the Trinitarian formula; and the authorized rites of other Churches should suffice to show the character of the baptism which they administer. The detail and thoroughness with which the Directory deals with this matter should go far to eliminate the rebaptism sometimes practised by Roman Catholics without any serious ground for questioning the validity of the original baptism. Rebaptism, which is still liable to occur without reasonable cause, has been a scandalous and painful denial of a principle which the Vatican Council asserts.

The third part of the Directory deals with the fostering of an ecumenical spirit amongst members of the Roman Catholic Church, and the fourth part deals with the very important subject called "Sharing of spiritual activity and resources with our separated brethren". I note some of the provisions which concern us Anglicans.

"In certain special circumstances, such as prayer services for unity and during ecumenical gatherings, it is allowable, indeed desirable, that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren" (32). The occasions mentioned as suitable are those of "prayer for any common concern in which they

can and should co-operate, for example peace, social justice, mutual charity among men, the dignity of the family, and so on", or occasions such as a national feast day or time of disaster or mourning (33). But common prayer is specially to be concerned with the restoration of Christian unity (34). The form of the service should be planned jointly by the different ministers participating, who should share between them prayers and readings (35). And "there is nothing in itself which prevents holding the common service in the church of one or other of the Christian communities concerned" (36), nor is there anything against the use of choir dress if there is common agreement among the participants (37).

As to sharing in *liturgical* worship, naturally the Holy Orthodox Church, whose orders are recognized by Rome, is given a special position. As to other Churches, it is now allowable for "separated brethren" to be given the Sacrament by the Roman Catholic Church in certain conditions of urgency and hardship. On the other hand, Roman Catholics may not receive Communion from the Anglican Church. There is no surprise in this provision, as we know that our orders are not recognized and the question of intercommunion has not yet been solved. But while there can be no mutual reception of Holy Communion it is now possible for Roman Catholics to attend Anglican and other non-Roman Catholic eucharistic services "occasionally", and they may take part in "the common responses, hymns and actions of the community of which they are guests so long as these are not at variance with the Catholic faith". More still, "this participation should lead the participants to esteem the spiritual riches which we have in common and at the same time make them more aware of the gravity of our separations" (55-9).

I have quoted at some length from the Directory as it is very important that we Anglicans should be aware of its provisions and should have understanding of what Roman Catholics may now do in loyalty to their own Church. Common prayer and worship is now possible on a large number of occasions, and the more those occasions are used the more will Christians be showing their brotherhood in Christ.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, it seems clear that already there is much fulfilment of the hope set forward in the Common Declaration of the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury that Roman Catholics and Anglicans shall treat one another with "respect, esteem and fraternal love". In some places the bitterness derived from past history dies slowly; but nowhere today can a Christian merely be standing still, for each of us is in danger of being an apostate from the Spirit of Christ unless he is being drawn nearer to Christ in holiness and charity in a way which must needs affect his relation to other Christians of whatever allegiance.

None of us wants indifferentism about the truth as we believe it, and Roman Catholics and Anglicans will continue to cherish their distinct doctrines. But they can both believe that the finally united Church will be a Church so purged of the present blemishes of all Christians that it may seem to be a Church different from any that we can see today. It is that hope which can humble us and help us, in the midst of distinctive beliefs and loyalties, to treat one another not as enemies and rivals but as allies in Christendom in the war against materialism and secularism, and as brethren together in our response to Christ's call to a holiness which none of us has attained. "Sirs, ye are brethren." We believe that unity in truth and holiness will come because Christ prayed for it, and it is his will that it shall come.