

## Catholic-Anglican Relations

The year 1986 saw considerable activity in the field of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. Of special note are: the publication of the correspondence between Cardinal Willebrands and the co-Chairmen of the second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC-II) on the question of reconciliation of ministries, the publication of the correspondence between Pope John Paul II, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Willebrands on women's ordination; the finalizing of the first report to be produced by ARCIC-II, entitled *Salvation and the Church*; the position taken by the General Synod of the Church of England on the Final Report of the First Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC-I).

March saw the publication of the correspondence between Cardinal Willebrands on reconciliation of ministries. In his letter to the co-chairmen, Cardinal Willebrands referred to the claim made by the ARCIC-I Commission to have reached substantial theological agreement on the question of priestly ministry. Cardinal Willebrands made the point that further progress towards reconciliation of ministries would depend on both Communion being able to ratify and confirm that Anglicans and Catholics now share the same faith in priestly ministry. Such confirmation and ratification would be a considerable step forward, since Leo XIII's negative verdict on Anglican Orders in *Apostolicae Curae*, 1896, was based on the judgement that at the time of the split between the Church of England and the Catholic Church, Anglican doctrine on Eucharist and ministry was in conflict with Catholic faith. Cardinal Willebrands's letter opened up the possibility of a new context emerging for dealing with this issue. The co-chairmen of ARCIC-II, Bishop Cormac Murphy-O'Connor (Catholic) and Bishop Mark Santer (Anglican) responded gratefully to the Cardinal's letter and committed the Commission once more to the work of reconciliation.

In July a correspondence on the ordination of women was published. The correspondence consisted of a letter from the Pope to the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dec. 1984); two letters from the Archbishop of Canterbury, one to the Pope and one to Cardinal Willebrands (Dec. 1985); a letter from Cardinal Willebrands to the Archbishop of Canterbury (June 1986). In his letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope reiterated what Pope Paul VI said in 1976, namely that the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Anglican Communion is a fresh and grave obstacle to reconciliation of ministries. Before formulating his reply to the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury consulted all the primates of the Anglican Communion. It was at their request that he reported in his letter to Cardinal Willebrands the theological reasons why some in the Anglican Communion see women's ordination as not only theologically possible but even required. In his reply to the Archbishop Cardinal Willebrands restated the theological grounds on which the Catholic Church sees women's ordination as not being possible.

In August the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC-II) met in Wales and finalized

its first report entitled *Salvation and the Church*. The members of the Commission claim in this document to have realized substantial agreement on the theological issue of justification which was such a source of conflict and controversy at the time of the Reformation. As with the report produced by the first Commission (ARCIC-I) this document has now been submitted to the authorities of both Communion for them to give a judgement on it. The report is to be published during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 1987, and it is hoped that the document will receive wide attention.

It is envisaged that both the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion will, by 1988, have delivered a definitive verdict on the ARCIC I Final Report on Eucharist, Ministry and Authority. In the Anglican context it is up to each province of the Anglican Communion to give its own judgement on whether or not the report is consistent with Anglican faith. In November 1986 the Church of England's General Synod passed three resolutions. It decided that the report on Eucharist and ministry was consonant in substance with Anglican faith. They also decided that the report on authority (which opens up the possibility of Anglican recognition of the universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome) constituted a good basis for further study and exploration of this matter.

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission now awaits the judgement of the Catholic Church on the ARCIC I Final Report, as well as the judgement of the Anglican Communion as a whole. It is envisaged that at the Lambeth Conference in the Summer of 1988 the position of the Anglican Communion will be made known. The future agenda of the ARCIC will depend importantly on these two judgements.

More widely, there are many other things that could figure in a report of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations over the last twelve months. Here we may just record one. The Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi on 27th October was a remarkable event in many ways. One of the television images that most lingers in the mind is that of the Pope walking through the streets of Assisi flanked always by Archbishop Methodios on one side and the Archbishop of Canterbury on the other. Another image is of the same three figures standing together on the platform as they prayed together for peace. Back in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury recalled the occasion in his speech to the General Synod of the Church of England and invited his audience to reflect on the character of the universal primacy exercised by the Pope on that day. Assisi was indeed an occasion of inspiration, of joy and of hope.

KEVIN McDONALD

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MARIO AGNES  
*Editor-in-Chief*

LAMBERT GREENAN O.P.  
*Editor English language edition*