

1/9/77:5.30 p.m.

ARCIC 173/Venice/5

The group wished to put on paper for the convenience of the members the outline of the possible contents of a 'final' document, as sketched by the Archbishop of Dublin on Wednesday August 31st at the plenary session.

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1. The document would begin with a reaffirming of the Commission's goal of full organic unity and of the necessary relationship to this of the Malta Report's key-concept of unity by stages as noted in Venice (26). It would then refer to the quest for theological convergence and to the discerning and uncovering of agreement in faith as an important element in the process. The bearing of the work of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission in delineating areas of full agreement (see Malta Report) and of ARCIC in noting areas of substantial and of partial agreement (see three Agreed Statements) on the process of seeking unity by stages would then be noted. In particular, the way in which degrees of agreement in faith could imply or require a changed inter-church relationship can refer directly to the goal of reaching organic unity by stages (cp. Venice (26) and Co-Chairmen's preface: 'We are convinced, therefore, that our degree of agreement, which argues for greater communion between our churches...')

2. The document could then take the three agreed statements and show how they tie in with one another, noting that the joint statement is a new genre and that some criticisms of the statements from both sides seem to proceed from ignoring the fact that these are joint statements. By a joint statement we do not mean one which seeks for a compromise formula, but one which seeks a fresh approach

to what has in the past been judged to be a barrier to communion.

3. The next section would take the three agreed statements separately, noting the main objections raised and attempting to assess their seriousness in the context of the Commission's objective, 'unity by stages'.

4. This might best be done by three sub-commissions which would approach the criticisms, bearing in mind the point raised by Jean Tillard that the criticisms often revealed deeper underlying problems and the point raised by Julian Charley about what people didn't understand and the need for keeping the general membership of parishes and congregations in view.

5. A certain amount of 'preface material' for the beginning of the document is bound to arise in the course of the sub-commissions' work on the criticisms of the statements. This would have to be collected from the groups and then, after discussion in plenary session, some of it will almost certainly raise matters which should go into the introduction.

6. The final section, suggested by another member of the Commission, 'Where we are now and where are we going?' will obviously be very important, and like (5) will only take shape as material emerges from the groups and is dealt with in plenary session.