

PRESS RELEASEFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ON 15TH JANUARY 1970ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

At St. George's House, Windsor Castle, the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission has begun its study of the main points of agreement and disagreement, without offering compromises or concessions on points of essential principle but giving mutual explanations with unembarrassed candour and total friendliness. In 1966 Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury met in Rome, when they agreed to the foundation of a Joint Preparatory Commission. This Preparatory Commission recognising the urgency of its task completed its work in 12 months meeting three times in three different countries. After its final meeting in Malta it issued its report and recommendations. These were submitted to and carefully considered by Episcopal Conferences of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the world, and by the Lambeth Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion in 1968 which made the report the basis of a special study by one of its Committees. A commentary on the report, sent by Cardinal Bea to the Archbishop of Canterbury made it clear that it had received careful study at the Vatican.

The publication of the Malta Report was recognised as marking the end of the initial stage of growing together. At the second stage constant consultation in a variety of forms was envisaged: joint meetings of bishops, clergy and laity, joint committees for pastoral and evangelistic work, theological education, scholarship, co-operation in liturgical reform and joint use of churches and ancillary buildings where advantageous.

The study of the Theology of Marriage and its application to Mixed Marriages was assigned to a special commission. Its first meeting made a comparison of the theologies and disciplines of marriage of the two Churches. On these the special commission found such a substantial agreement that it was able at its second meeting to make urgent and specific recommendations upon which official judgement is still eagerly awaited.

The most important recommendation of the Malta Report was the setting up of a further International Commission to consider fundamental theological and moral questions between us where we need immediately to seek together for reconciling answers. No doubt exists in the minds of any of the members that the final aim of our work is the attainment of full organic union between our two communions.

Theological reflection by the Joint Preparatory Commission had thrown into relief three matters of primary theological importance: Church and Authority, Ministry, and Eucharist. These were the subjects to which the present International Commission first directed its attention, and papers upon each one of them had been prepared, circulated and studied in advance by all its members. A fourth paper addressed itself to the whole field of relations between the two Churches, to the common problems of Christian mission and to those factors which might hinder or promote collaboration.

After some general discussion the Commission divided into three groups whose purpose was to produce the outline for a draft joint statement on each of the first three subjects. The whole Commission reviewed and amended those outlines which will be worked upon over the next six months in Sub-Commissions in three different parts of the world. These Sub-Commissions have been given liberty to enlist expert assistance whenever required.

At our next meeting in Europe from September 21st to 28th 1970, the results of all the work here described including that of the Sub-Commissions will be reconsidered with a view to the publication of agreed joint statements.

We regard it as indispensable that this work should quickly reach a stage at which it can be fully shared by all members of both Churches.

We recognise that by ourselves we cannot even ask the right questions and that we require as much help as possible, human as well as divine if we are to begin to find the right answers. On the other hand the measure of our agreement should be made known and the practical recommendations of the Commission should be promptly and hopefully adopted. The responsibility for searching out ways of promoting our growing together is an integral part of the whole pastoral responsibility of Bishops and clergy and of the Christian vocation of all members of both Churches.

The pace of theological convergence is quickening, but not fast enough to dictate the tempo for our co-operation in joint projects for fulfilling the Church's mission to the world. Men cannot always, with whatever goodwill, set time limits to the resolution of theological differences, but can and should make no delay in growing together by facing together the mounting problems of mission to today's world.

First Meeting: St. George's House, Windsor Castle, 9th - 15th January 1970

The Anglican members of the Commission are:

The Right Revd. H. R. McAdoo, Bishop of Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin
(Co-Chairman)

The Right Revd. J. R. H. Moorman, Bishop of Ripon

The Right Revd. E. G. Knapp-Fisher, Bishop of Pretoria

The Right Revd. F. R. Arnott, Coadjutor Bishop of Melbourne

The Very Revd. Henry Chadwick, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford.

The Revd. J. W. Charley, Vice-Principal, London College of Divinity.

The Revd. Professor H. E. Root, Professor of Theology,
University of Southampton

The Revd. Dr. A. A. Vogel, Professor of Philosophical and Systematic
Theology, Nashotah House, U.S.A.

Secretary

The Revd. Canon J. R. Satterthwaite, Church of England Council on
Foreign Relations

The Roman Catholic members are:

The Right Revd. Alan Clark, Auxiliary Bishop of Northampton
(Co-Chairman)

The Right Revd. Christopher Butler, O.S.B., Auxiliary Bishop of
Westminster.

The Revd. Fr. Barnabas Ahern, C.P. Catholic Theological Union,
Chicago, U.S.A.

The Revd. Fr. Herbert Ryan, S.J., Woodstock, U.S.A.

Prof. J. J. Scarisbrick, University of Warwick.

The Revd. Fr. George Tavard, A.A., Princeton Theological Seminary,
U.S.A.

The Revd. Fr. Jean M. Tillard, O.P., Couvent des Dominicains,
Ottawa, Canada.

The Revd. Fr. T. Stransky, Vatican Secretariat, (replacing for this
meeting only -

The Revd. Fr. P. Duprey, W.F., Under Secretary, Vatican Secretariat for
Promoting Christian Unity).

The Revd. Fr. E. J. Yarnold, S.J., Master, Campion Hall, Oxford.

The Revd. Fr. E. Hill, O.P., Hamanskraal Seminary, South Africa.
(Consultant)

Secretary

The Very Revd. Canon W. A. Purdy, Vatican Secretariat for
Promoting Christian Unity.

World Council of Churches Observer

Dr. Günther Gassmann, Centre d'Etudes Oecuméniques, Strasbourg.