

Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue

British Bishops: The Convergence and Agreement Achieved

"The ARCIC dialogue enables our two communities to question each other as to their belief with a view to achieving agreement at the level of faith," the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales said Dec. 5 in a statement on the Vatican's response to the Final Report of the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. "Clearly more work needs to be done, as ARCIC itself acknowledged," the bishops' statement said. But, it was added, "we commit ourselves to continue to work for the restoration of full communion between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion." The bishops' conference statement follows.

The bishops of England and Wales welcome and have carefully studied the response of the Holy See to the Final Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission I

and reiterate their gratitude and support for the members of the international commission. It is fully agreed that the report represents a "significant milestone" in Anglican-Catholic relations and in the ecumenical movement as a whole. While, in the words of the response, "it is not yet possible to state that substantial agreement has been reached on all the questions studied by the commission," we wish to record our appreciation of the remarkable convergence and agreement that have been achieved.

Clearly more work needs to be done, as ARCIC itself acknowledged. Clarifications are rightly asked for which touch all the three statements, particularly regarding the subject of authority where, indeed, the commission did not claim "substantial agreement."

We note the encouragement given to the commission by the present Holy Father in 1980 when he described

its method as "going behind the habit of thought and expression born and nourished in enmity and controversy to scrutinize together the great common treasure."

The response raises this question of "ecumenical method" and we recognize that this is of great importance for the success of ecumenical dialogue. The ARCIC dialogue enables our two communities to question each other as to their belief with a view to achieving agreement at the level of faith. It is our conviction that these dialogues must be accompanied by an ever-deepening communion of faith and life.

We commend the response for careful study by all who are concerned with Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. As bishops of England and Wales, we commit ourselves to continue to work for the restoration of full communion between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. ☒