

CHAIRMEN'S INTRODUCTION

(Draft)

At their meeting in Canterbury at Pentecost 1982, Pope John Paul II and the present Archbishop of Canterbury, after thanking God for the work of the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC-I), agreed to the establishment of a new commission (ARCIC-II) to continue its work.

Its first task was to examine, in the light of the judgement of our two communions on the Final Report of ARCIC-I, any outstanding differences which still separate us. One particular cause of contention at the time of the Reformation was the doctrine of justification. ARCIC-II judged it right to take up this question both because of its historical significance and because of its importance in Christian doctrine as a whole.

In our work on this subject we have been greatly helped by the statement on "Justification by Faith" agreed by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission in the U.S.A. Indeed, much of the historical perspective needed to grasp the sixteenth century background to this issue is contained in that document. ARCIC-II finds itself in full agreement with its historical and theological analysis in so far as it bears upon our own work.

However, ARCIC-II has viewed the doctrine of justification from a somewhat different perspective from that of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic discussion. We have set justification within the wider context of salvation as a whole. This in turn has involved discussion of the role of the Church in Christ's saving work. Hence the title of our agreement: Salvation and the Church.

The relation between the doctrine of justification and salvation on the one hand and the doctrine of the Church on the

other is of importance because of different perspectives on what was at issue in the Reformation. The Protestant tradition tends to see justification by faith as the issue on which all else depends. The Catholic tradition sees the key issue in the role of the visible and universal Church. Thus the two issues of salvation and the Church hang together.

A question not discussed by the Commission, though of great contemporary importance, is that of the salvation of those who have no explicit faith in Christ. This has not been a matter of historical dispute between us: indeed, in the sixteenth century both sides shared a common Augustinian framework in which this question did not arise. Today, this is a matter of theological study within both our communions.

Nor do we claim to have composed a complete treatment of the doctrine of the Church. Our discussion is limited to its role in salvation. Nevertheless, our claim to a common faith on this matter has major implications for our mutual growth in reconciliation.

If Anglicans and Roman Catholics agree that salvation is a free gift of God's grace; that this is mediated through the Church; and that our free human response, itself a gift of grace, is made within this believing community: then the doctrine of justification by grace through faith need no longer be seen as a barrier to communion between us.

The purpose of our dialogue, reaffirmed by the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury, is the restoration of full ecclesial communion. Our work has recalled for us a still wider perspective - the completion of all things in Christ. We trust that he who has begun this good work in us will bring it to completion in Jesus Christ our Lord.

(27/8/1986)