

2.9.81
9.30.a.m.

ARCIC 218/ Preface/3

PREFACE TO FINAL REPORT

The report which follows is the outcome of work begun at Gazzada, Italy, on 9th January, 1967. A joint preparatory commission met there, in fulfilment of a joint decision by Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey, expressed in a Common Declaration during their meeting in Rome in March 1966. Meeting three times in less than a year, that Commission produced a report which registered considerable areas of RC/Anglican agreement, pointed to persisting historical differences and outlined a programme of 'growing together' which should include, though not be exhausted in, serious dialogue on these differences. It proclaimed penitence for the past, thankfulness for the graces of the present, urgency and resolve for a future in which our common aim would be the restoration of full organic unity.

That report was endorsed in substance by a letter of Cardinal Bea in June 1968 and by the Lambeth Conference a few weeks later. In January 1970 the signatories of the present report met first as 'The Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission'. Eight members of the preparatory commission continued to serve on the new commission.

The purpose of this preface is to explain briefly the aim and methods of ARCIC as these have matured in the light of our own experience, of the developments - in some aspects rapid - within our own Churches in the twelve years of our experience, in response to criticisms we have received and having regard to other ecumenical dialogues.

From the beginning we were determined, in accordance with our mandate, and in the spirit of Phil.3:13, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, to discover each other's faith as it is today and to appeal to

history only for enlightenment, not as a way of perpetuating past controversy. In putting this resolve into practice we learned as we progressed. As early as Venice 1970 our preliminary papers on our three main topics link each of them with "the Church", and this perspective was maintained and is reflected in what follows here: our work is introduced with a statement on the Church, building on the concept of Koinonia. In the statement on the Eucharist of 1971, we went so far as to claim 'substantial agreement' which is consistent with 'a variety of theological approaches within both our communions'. In our Canterbury statement two years later we avowed the belief 'that in what we have said here both Anglican and Roman Catholics will recognise their own faith'. (Introd.)

It was in the Venice statement on Authority in the Church (perhaps the most difficult of our enterprises) that we spoke more fully and revealed a more developed awareness of our aims and methods. Recognising that 'it was precisely in the problem of papal primacy that our historical divisions found their unhappy origin' we pointed to the 'distinction between the ideal and the actual which is important for the reading of our document and for the understanding of the method we have used'. At the same time we spoke of activities called for and gains to be had from the extension, logically demanded, of the Koinonia already existing between us (Preface to the statement "Authority in the Church"). Acknowledging the growing convergence of method and outlook of theologians in our two traditions, we emphasised our avoidance of the emotive language of past polemics and our seeking to pursue together that restatement of doctrine which new times and conditions are, as we both recognise, regularly calling for. (Venice 25). In concluding we felt already able

... the word 'unity' is used in the final document but the word 'unity' is not used in the original document - had the hope of a unity which would bring about a closer sharing...

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to invite our authorities to consider whether our statements expressed a unity at the level of faith sufficient to call for 'closer sharing....in life, worship and mission'.

Some provisional response to this was forthcoming a few months later in the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Donald Coggan, made during the latter's visit to Rome in April 1977. Echoing our original statement of intent, 'the restoration of complete communion in faith and sacramental life', Pope and Archbishop declared, 'Our call to this is one with the sublime Christian vocation itself, which is a call to communion' (cf. I. John. 1:3). This passage (Common Declaration 8-9) provides a striking endorsement of a central theme of our statements, and insists that though our communion remains imperfect it 'stands at the centre of our witness to the world'. 'Our divisions hinder this witness, but they do not close all roads we may travel together'. In other words, the Koinonia which is the governing concept of what follows here is not a static concept - it demands movement forward, perfecting. We need to accept its implications.

This official encouragement has been echoed by many of our critics. We have seen all of them, encouraging or not, as reflecting the interest aroused by the dialogue and helping us to make ourselves clearer, as we have tried to do in the 'Elucidations'.

Paragraph 24 of our statement "Authority in the Church" (Venice 1976) made clear that while we had reached a high degree of agreement on "authority in the Church and in particular on the basic principles of primacy" differences persisted concerning papal authority. A much closer examination of those differences has been our main task since 1976. The results of that work are embodied in the statement "Authority in the Church II" which

is here ^{presented} published for the first time. *see p. 3 (top)*

We believe that growing numbers in both our communions accept that, in the words of the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism (Unit. Red. par.7) 'There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion. For it is from newness of attitudes of mind, from self-denial and unstinted love, that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way'.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that all the criticisms we have received ~~or all the developments in our churches over the twelve years of our work~~ have been encouraging. We are aware of the limits of our work - that it is a service to the people of God, and needs to find acceptance among them.

But we have as much reason now as ever to echo the concluding lines of the Common Declaration of 1977:

"to be baptised into Christ is to be baptised into hope - 'and hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given us' (Rom. 5:5). Christian hope manifests itself in prayer and action - in prudence but also in courage. We pledge ourselves and exhort the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Anglican Communion to live and work courageously in this hope of reconciliation and unity in our common Lord".