

THE DEEPER IMPLICATIONS OF THE ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE*

COMING as it did fifty years to the month after the opening of the Malines Conversations, the 'Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine' published on 31 December 1971 by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, the body officially entrusted with the preparing of the way for organic unity of the two Churches, marks without any doubt a significant step forward in the history of the ecumenical movement. It is quite clear that the drafters of the document did not intend simply to add yet another instance to the already lengthy list of theological discussions in progress. Despite the observations of a certain section of public opinion which has been quick in its analyses and lacking precision in its overall judgement, the Agreed Statement is not a text 'of experts searching for a set of compromises with no practical bearing'. A mere glance at the composition of the Commission shows that it includes a large proportion of bishops,¹ not all of whom are professional theologians. The intention was for pastors, theologians, historians, clerics and lay-people to be represented.

The mandate of the International Commission, set up in 1969 following three preliminary meetings,² the results of which were published in the Malta Report, is clear on this point. The highest authorities of both Churches were to be presented with concrete

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1. It includes seven bishops.

2. These took place at Gazzada (from 9 to 13 January, 1967), at Huntercombe Manor (31 August to 4 September, 1967) and in Malta (from 30 December, 1967 to 3 January, 1968). The Malta Report was published in the *Tablet*, 30 November 1968,, and in *ONE IN CHRIST*, 1969, no. 1, pp. 27-34.

proposals enabling irreversible steps to be taken along the road towards organic unity—a road that was officially opened on 24 March 1966 at St Paul's-outside-the-Walls by the joint statement of Pope Paul VI and of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey. It is a matter of regret that this very clear text was not sufficiently studied and explained at local community level. A quick glance through diocesan documentation of the time reveals that when it is quoted, or often even when reproduced in its entirety, little effort is made to draw out its meaning and its concrete implications. This is true both on the Anglican as well as on the Roman Catholic side. It would seem necessary to recall the main passage of this text :

This encounter of 23 March 1966 marks a new stage in the development of fraternal relations, based upon Christian charity, and of sincere efforts to remove the causes of conflict and to re-establish unity.

In willing obedience to the command of Christ who bade his disciples love one another, they (the heads of the two Communion) declare that, with his help, they wish to leave in the hands of the God of mercy all that in the past has been opposed to this precept of charity, and that they make their own the mind of the Apostle which he expressed in these words: 'Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 3:13-14).

They affirm their desire that all those Christians who belong to these two Communion may be animated by these same sentiments of respect, esteem and fraternal love, and in order to help these develop to the full, they intend to inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed.

The dialogue should include not only theological matters such as Scripture, Tradition and Liturgy, but also matters of practical difficulty felt on either side. His Holiness the Pope and His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury are, indeed, aware that serious obstacles stand in the way of a restoration of complete communion of faith and sacramental life; nevertheless, they are of one mind in their determination to promote responsible contacts between their

Communion in all those spheres of Church life where collaboration is likely to lead to a greater understanding and a deeper charity, and to strive in common to find solutions for all the great problems that face those who believe in Christ in the world today.³

These lines convey the general atmosphere of the meeting. As he received the Archbishop, Paul VI gave expression to his hopes in a few sentences, the English translation of which had been handed to Dr Ramsey (which indicates that there was no improvisation). He said: 'We do not hesitate in declaring the historical importance of this moment in time. To us it seems a great, almost a dramatic moment. It is a happy moment too, when we think back over the long age of strife which is now hereby brought to an end. It is a happy moment when we consider new developments affecting relationships between Rome and Canterbury which may flow from it. From now on it is friendship that must inspire and guide us'.⁴

At Geneva airport on his way back from Rome, Archbishop Ramsey summed up his impressions as he spoke to journalists about the outcome of those days. He made no secret of his keen desire that there should be set up 'as soon as possible the Joint Commission designed to remove the obstacles which still exist between the two Churches'. He made it quite clear that this Commission 'stemmed directly from Rome and from London and not from the respective episcopates'.⁵ The task of pointing out the roads to unity would lie in large measure upon the Commission itself.

This brief look back into history brings out the meaning and the import of this first official document published by this International Commission. The fact that, having been presented to the church authorities, this text has not been taken over by them immediately but is rather seen by them as a preliminary submission for wider discussion in both Churches, far from being interpreted as a sign of suspicion or reservation on the part of these authorities, indicates the importance which they attach to it. We are dealing

3. The text is given (in Latin and English) in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 25 March 1966, p. 1. It may be compared with Dr Ramsey's speech, *ibid.*, 24 March 1966, p. 1. Also in *ONE IN CHRIST*, 1966, no. 3, pp. 276, 274.

4. The text is given in Latin in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 24 March 1966, p. 1, and in English in *ONE IN CHRIST*, 1966, no. 3, p. 275.

5. This statement has been taken from *Documentation Catholique*, 62, 1966, column 686.

with a Statement that in a true sense involves the process of unity. It will receive its final character from the definitive welcome with which the competent authorities of the two Communion will receive it. For the moment its authority derives from the fact that it is the work of pastors and theologians who are reasonably competent, have discussed the questions of Eucharistic doctrine in depth and have gone into every detail⁶ and who have been officially deputed by the two Churches.

Rather than make a point-by-point commentary on the different paragraphs of the agreed text⁷ it seems to me that it is important to consider the approach that it represents. It would be very wrong in fact to read it out of context, as a sort of *enchiridion* of common faith, or as the result of an effort to arrive at a mid-way point of view in which the faithful of the two Churches could feel at ease at the price of a few concessions.⁸ It would be even more wrong to look here for a new synthesis, such that the findings of contemporary theological research might be made to pass into the two traditions.⁹ This is why it seems out of place to judge the Statement in the light of other documents, such as the eucharistic agreement of Faith and Order ratified by the Congress 6. The sentiments of Bishop Butler, a member of the Commission, expressed in the *Tablet*, 18 September 1971.

7. An explanation of the essential points will be found in our article, 'Catholiques romains et Anglicans: l'Eucharistie', in *Nouvelle Revue Theologique*, 93, 1971, pp. 602-656.

8. Some commentaries do not appear to appreciate that in a text of this nature, it is not a matter of saying everything. A study of the article to which we referred in the preceding note shows, for example, that the theology of the role of the Holy Spirit and of the epiclesis, far from having been absent from the discussions was on the contrary a point on which the consensus relied. However, the Commission did not think it necessary, in this particular context of the eucharistic faith of the two Churches, to emphasize in the Statement this insistence upon the Spirit, as Father M. Hurley would have liked to see, cf. his comment which appeared in *The Furrow*, 1972, pp. 23-6. It does not correspond with the main line of our two traditions. As for the wish to reject all compromise, cf. Julian W. Charley, *The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreement on the Eucharist*, Bramcote, 1971. This commentary written by one of the Evangelical representatives of the Commission shows how the terms and expressions have been chosen with a view to avoiding any flavour of political theology.

9. Bishop Butler, *art. cit.*, has brought out the Commission's purpose very well. It did not look for any model, any exhaustively-detailed pattern to which it might adjust itself. It simply studied our two traditions so as to bring out the essential features, in the light of Scripture.

of Uppsala, or the Lutheran-Catholic agreement, the results of the 'conversations of Les Dombes' or any other document. Not only are the historical and doctrinal contexts different, the intentions are not the same either. To such an extent is this so that in its dialogue with another Church, neither the Anglican nor the Roman Catholic Communion could, without running the risk of misunderstanding, simply use the Windsor Statement.

The nature of the document's approach is suggested by the expression *substantial agreement* with which it concludes and which is designed to indicate the kind of agreement reached: 'We believe that we have reached *substantial agreement* on the doctrine of the Eucharist. Although we are all conditioned by the traditional ways in which we have expressed and practised our eucharistic faith, we are, convinced that if there are any remaining points of disagreement' they can be resolved on the principles here established. We acknowledge a variety of theological approaches within both our Communion. But we have seen it as our task to find a way of advancing together beyond the doctrinal disagreements of the past. It is our hope that in view of the agreement that we have reached on eucharistic faith, this doctrine will no longer constitute an obstacle to the unity we seek.'

Chosen purposely and after much deliberation by the sub-committee more particularly entrusted with the question of the Eucharist, the expression *substantial agreement* is not without theological presuppositions. It is intended among other things to emphasize realistically that the agreement reached is not a *full agreement*. Far from being 'a subterfuge of pure verbal scholasticism', this distinction implies a characteristically ecclesiological approach.

A *full agreement* would mean that on all points, apart from secondary details, agreement was complete. Thus between the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Communion there doubtless exists *full agreement* in the matter of the Trinity, the traditional view of Christology as formulated in the dogmatic declaration of Chalcedon and, notwithstanding the Synod of Westminster (1852), the doctrine of baptism. Differences of expression, of theology or of liturgical practice do not allow one, strictly speaking, to talk of pluralism of doctrine.

This is not the case with a *substantial agreement*. Here, if there exists a deep agreement on what could be called the axis of the faith, the traditions concerned diverge on points closely connected

with this central hub. Such divergences cannot be overlooked, especially when they appear at several different levels: at the doctrinal level, involving the way in which the common faith is officially received and interpreted; at the theological level, on the question of the manner in which each tradition accounts to itself for this belief and for its connection with the data of the Bible; and at the practical level, with the actual putting into practice in the life of the Church of the common faith. We have here evidently something more than a difference of liturgy finding expression in a different set of rites, something more than a difference of emphasis, or Christian feelings that do not entirely coincide. We are dealing with a difference of use that has been made of the same basic data.

One example taken from the Anglican-Catholic file will, it seems, be sufficient to illustrate the different approaches with regard to the mystery of the Eucharist. We purposely select this from among those aspects of the mystery which are giving rise to a certain malaise at the present moment in each of the two Churches. The two Communion are one in recognising that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper become, in the course of the liturgical act, the Body and Blood of the Lord truly offered to those who believe. The Statement is clear on this point. However, while the Anglican tradition, at least as represented by the majority, think that adoration of the consecrated bread and wine, once the celebration has been completed, is very hard to explain in view of the data of the Bible, the Roman Catholic tradition—even as represented by those most reticent and most troubled in the face of developments taking place in the field of eucharistic worship—refuses to question the basis of this practice. It can therefore be seen how, in the case of a very precise point, the same substantial data of faith have been drawn out into a divergent theology and divergent sacramental practice. Anybody who knows the importance that the Roman tradition has attached to the devotion to the Eucharist and at the same time knows how violent was the Reformation reaction on this point cannot honestly, in the context of serious ecumenism, relegate the question to the level of secondary detail. This holds true even if one knows the extent to which Roman Catholic theologians are questioning themselves on this point at the present moment. This would be to choose an easy way out and a refusal to get to the bottom of things. A kind of theological instinct leads one in fact to appreciate that there is more here than a simple

questioning of the validity of processions, benediction or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, which have been solidly embedded in Roman Catholic tradition yet hardly integrated into the current renewal of eucharistic theology. More than this: the Orthodox Churches show yet other differences from the Roman tradition on this point, although they do not see in this diversity of practice the same implications as do many Anglican theologians. Despite this difference, how can one refuse to recognize that, as regards the content of the mystery of the eucharistic presence at its deepest level, Anglicans and Roman Catholics share and proclaim the same faith? Therefore without relegating the points of divergence to realms of meaninglessness or unimportance, one can admit a common faith in the basic foundations of this mystery.

This is what the notion of *substantial agreement* means to express. In the matter of the Eucharist, we have an important analogy in what was for a very long time—until Roman Catholic theology joined again with the eastern teaching¹⁰—the opposition between the Orthodox and the West on the thorny question of the epiclesis. Who, on the Roman side, despite this difference which for the eastern Churches was full of overtones, would have officially hesitated to admit a common point of encounter in the essence of the eucharistic faith? Moreover, while current catechetics and the faith of the average Catholic have not as yet come to appreciate the insights of the anaphora of the new Roman Missal, would anyone presume to refuse to recognize the identity of the eucharistic faith between the eastern Churches and those of the Roman communion?

The Statement then, apparently, may not be seen as a compromise, still less as something intended not to 'hurt the basic convictions of the two Churches'.¹¹ It is intended simply to bring out clearly what they both believe in common, so as to enable them to ask themselves whether this 'community of faith' answers the

10. Cf. J. M. R. Tillard, 'L'Eucharistie et le Saint-Esprit', in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 90, 1968, pp. 363-87, and our part in J. Zizioulas, J. M. R. Tillard and J. J. von Allmen, *L'Eucharistie*, Mame, 1971.

11. The following comment is to be found in *Informations Catholiques Internationales*, no. 400, 15 January 1972, p. 31, which seems to us highly debatable: 'To avoid hurting the basic convictions of the two Churches, the Commission has not always been able to guard against complicated or ambiguous expressions, with the result that the text remains very much "a theologian's document", as Archbishop Dwyer of Birmingham called it.'

demands of that kind of unity which would justify them in presenting themselves to the Christian world as 'sisters in a single confession of Jesus Christ'. A search for the minimum? No. A search rather for what pertains to the essence, and according to which, in diverse forms, the two traditions live. A refusal to advance together towards a fresh discovery of the riches of the eucharistic mystery? No. Rather an honest and humble effort, in the first instance to rediscover what the two Communion were at one in sharing before the break and what the centuries of division have failed to efface of that 'tradition of our common inheritance' issuing from Scripture.¹² Before thinking of assembling the two Communion together in a new vision which would scrupulously take the evangelical features of both Communion into account, it is necessary to be quite clear about the true, living unity that exists *here and now*. Otherwise one would run the risk of building on sand. Two Churches so deeply rooted in their own traditions, histories, customs and particular ways of acting constitute an historical situation that will not be sorted out simply by means of good will, even when haloed by 'prophetic' aims.

It is at this point that the question arises of the ecclesiological implications contained in the very notion of *substantial agreement*. One may well ask if the *agreement* simply means an intermediary stage, a pedagogical stage, towards one day arriving at a *full agreement*, or whether it contains an expression of a doctrinal situation intended to perdure even in the hypothetical eventuality of a reunion of the two Churches? In other words, what does the Commission mean when it states its 'hope that in view of the agreement we have reached on eucharistic faith, this doctrine will no longer constitute an obstacle to the unity we seek'?

This question of capital importance cannot be given an answer in the abstract and be at the same time valid for ecumenical dialogue as such. The very nature of the Anglican Church and its very special relationship with regard to the Roman Catholic Church must be taken into account. Paul VI very delicately mentioned this at the canonisation of the forty English martyrs, when

12. 'An important stage in progress towards organic unity is a substantial consensus on the purpose and meaning of the Eucharist. Our intention has been to seek a deeper understanding of the reality of the Eucharist which is consonant with biblical teaching and with the tradition of our common inheritance, and to express in this document the consensus we have reached' (no. 1).

he stated: 'There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and the worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church—this humble "Servant of the Servants of God"—is able to embrace her ever-beloved Sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ: a communion of origin and of faith, a communion of priesthood and of rule, a communion of the Saints in the freedom and love of the Spirit of Jesus.'¹³

The Anglican Communion in fact represents by virtue of its known wish to remain both 'Catholic and Reformed' a rather special ecclesial body within the Christian world. Its individuality is expressed particularly clearly in what is known as *comprehensiveness*. This may be defined as the existential recognition of very great freedom but within a firm adhesion of faith. This freedom is represented by a diversity of trends in the liturgical life, the personal spiritual life as well as in the Christian commitment of the sincere faithful. Taken by themselves, these trends sometimes show deep differences. Occasionally they are opposed one to another. Nevertheless all recognize one another as expressions of one and the same faith within a fellowship of one and the same Church, itself historically united with the episcopate and the apostolic hierarchy, nourished by eucharistic communion and the Bible, attached to the tradition of the fathers. Supporting these highways, thoroughfares which have been well maintained, a large variety of buttresses have been constructed, using materials derived sometimes mostly from the original Roman main tradition, and at other times mostly from elements of Protestant origin inherited from the Reformation, without any guilt complexes regarding loyalty to the integrity of the faith.

If there is present in Anglicanism as elsewhere a tendency towards Modernism, it would be unjust and historically false to attribute this freedom mentioned to any crypto-Modernist movement. It is based on something quite different. In his small work, *A Brief Sketch of the Church of England*, Bishop Bell,¹⁴ to explain this feature of his Church, makes his own the opinion of Dean

13. At this point the Pope spoke in English. Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 26/27 October 1970, p. 2.

14. Bishop of Chichester and well-known ecumenist. His work was translated into French and incorporated into *Anglicanisme*, Paris, 1939, along with two illuminating appendices by S. C. Carpenter and Canon Milner White.

Church who speaks 'of the generous indifference with which the Reformers accepted the most evident illogicalities and the most obvious anomalies, and of their brave scorn for the protection afforded by systems',¹⁵ and this in the interests both of maintaining historical continuity and at the same time attending to the problems of the moment. It has been this rejection of the system in favour of humble submission to reality which in the Anglican tradition opens up a broad spectrum of variations offering each spiritual temperament, indeed each type of approach to the mystery of Christ, the possibility of finding an ecclesial context which would extend a welcome and enable one to develop without cutting oneself off from other church members who may think differently. This is a situation which brings its own dangers, but at the same time it argues a taking seriously of the freedom of the Gospel.

In matters of faith, taken as a whole, there are especially two tendencies which constitute the two poles of the Anglican balance. Educated Roman Catholic opinion is usually fairly well acquainted with the Anglo-Catholic tendency and rightly holds it in high esteem, for it possesses many letters patent. If it took definite shape especially with Keble, from the time of the Oxford Movement which last century re-awakened the spirit of the liturgy and attachment to high Tradition, the 'Catholic' approach had already numbered among its more notable representatives such 17th century names as Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, Archbishop William Laud, George Herbert, whose positions on numerous points correspond with insights which have become current in present-day Roman Catholic theology. Hence the desire of several to take the lines of convergence and dialogue from this point. However, should we in this way attain true unity?

For the *Evangelical* movement, which is not very well known to the Roman Catholic world which sometimes identifies it without more ado with some extreme Puritan sect, could not especially at the present moment be neglected. If the Anglo-Catholic tendency is to emphasize the *Catholic* angle of that Church which defines itself 'at once Catholic and Reformed', the Evangelical tendency is to adopt above all the *Reformed* angle. Following in the footsteps of the first English Reformers—whose intentions are, it must be

15. *Anglicanisme*, p. 50.

16. Cf. the interesting little book of D. Voll, *Catholic Evangelicalism*, London 1963. Also, S. Neill, *Anglicanism*, 3rd edition, London 1965, pp. 190-4 and 234-43.

owned, difficult to appreciate clearly—but also consistently with the Evangelical call of the 18th century, there is an insistence upon direct contact with the Scriptures, a personal devotion to Christ, the gratuitousness of salvation, respect for the individual conscience and social commitment in the name of the Gospel. This is a spirit which from many points of view appears to us very much akin to that which seized the Roman Church at the birth of certain religious communities crystallizing an awakening to the Gospel. It is true that there is still an attachment to liturgical prayer, episcopacy, continuity with the main Tradition. But the externals of worship are relativized so as to bring out the personal encounter with God, which is nourished by preaching, and the necessity of the realistic and authentic conversion of the Gospel is firmly emphasized. The Methodism of the followers of John Wesley was from the beginning nourished with this same spirit, and the Anglican Communion owes to the Evangelical movement much of its missionary activity and its apostolate among workers. The names of William Wilberforce, the pioneer in the struggle for the abolition of slavery, and of Charles Simeon are sufficient to remind one of the high quality of this movement. It has not produced theological and dogmatic works comparable in profundity and influence to those of the Anglo-Catholic movement. However it has awakened the Christian conscience by recalling it to its responsibilities to the Gospel and to mankind.

The Anglican Communion therefore, at the different levels of its life of faith and witness, is in fact seen as an ecclesial body which wants to be both pluralist and unified, as much one as the other. Pluralist in regard to the diversity of insights, in accordance with the legitimacy, accepted by the Church, of reading the gospel mystery in the light of the suggestions the Spirit makes to each one: a radical unity based on a deep respect for the essential elements of the reality of the Church as handed down by Scripture and living Tradition. At the risk of sacrificing the desirable characteristic of unanimity, the Anglican Communion thus refuses to choose between private interpretation of the Word of God, so stoutly advocated by the Reformers, and firm adhesion to the main line of Tradition to which is joined the '*una, sancta, catholica et apostolica Ecclesia*'. Therefore, in its day-to-day practice it prizes the compatible coexistence of the great sacramental and liturgical traditions, with their emphasis upon the common experience of the God of Jesus Christ and guaranteed by the apostolic ministry, and

more liberal tendencies with regard to the structures of the hierarchy and sacramental life which revolve in particular around the personal assimilation of the contents of the Bible. The whole of this takes the form of ecclesial groupings. Tradition and freedom, authority and individual conscience, not by means of some mediocre *via media* but rather constituting a communion of movements where each one can be true to itself according to the gift of the Spirit—at this level, these are the most striking features of the Anglican Church.¹⁷ In this way, it has for centuries lived in defiance of a deep pluralism which has not been division.

To emphasize this comprehensiveness is not to think naively that its operation is perfect in every detail. Contact with the different Anglican Churches and especially the friendship that has been established with its members whether on the Evangelical or on the Catholic side, has enabled the many limitations, serious problems and distress to be revealed. An immoderate use of 'liberalism' in doctrine often leads to a disquieting relativism. At times, the superiority complex on the part of one tendency pushes the others into isolation. In the Church of England where, although the British Sovereign is not the head of the Anglican Church as such, the Crown appoints Bishops and Parliament makes pronouncements on church law, a margin of freedom can find itself compromised and the political machine can stifle the longed-for spontaneity of the Gospel. Then, an evident lack of cohesion in matters of doctrine makes the more perspicacious want a kind of magisterium. Not everything turns out for the best in Anglican Christianity. But which Church does *not* suffer these days from limits being set on its aspirations? Now it seems to us that the Anglican Communion within the context of the Christian world fulfils by virtue of its comprehensiveness, and despite evident deficiencies, a particular function.

This reminder enables us to divine what the expression *substantial agreement* used by the International Commission in its Statement involves from the point of view of ecclesiological option. Up to now, in fact, in their efforts to attain unity, the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Churches have tended to count almost exclusively on the deep affinity that exists between the *Anglo-Catholic* movement in Anglicanism and Roman thinking. This was true of the Malines Conversations which were badly received not

17. This is brought out clearly by A. M. Allchin, 'Je suis un anglican', in *Unité des chrétiens*, 5, 1972, pp. 4-6.

only by the Roman Catholics of England and their allies in Rome¹⁸ but also by a well-informed section of the Anglican Church.¹⁹ It had been true already of the efforts made in the 17th century by the Franciscan *Sancta Clara* in his *Paraphrastica Expositio* (1633) which should be read alongside William Laud's account, and throughout the dialogue (1717-1720) between the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Wake, and the Gallican Church represented especially by Louis du Pin.²⁰ The important little book of Gerard Francis Cobb, *A Few Words on Reunion and the Coming Council at Rome*, published in London in 1869 on the eve of the 1st Vatican Council clearly takes the same line. The Anglican Communion appears to be summed up from the Catholic point of view.

It is becoming increasingly clear to us that the search for unity with the Anglican Church would be ambiguous, founded on a set of compromises, and that it would even run the risk of leading to new divisions if it were to neglect—most of all at the present time—to take the other movements seriously. That would amount to an explicit rejection from the long sought-after unity of what is without any doubt the most characteristic prize-possession of Anglicanism, and its most specific contribution to the Catholic world, its *comprehensiveness*. That sort of union which would swell the number of Catholics bound to one another in an organic body would in the end have contributed rather little to the *aggiornamento* of the kind being experienced in the Catholic world today. It would in fact leave aside the contribution of a healthy pluralism and, which is more serious, would transform into division pure and simple the balance of forces which till now the Anglican Church has made it a point of honour to preserve and even to promote. It would then be a union involving an impoverishment.

The objection will perhaps be made that all we have here is a Roman Catholic judgement of an idealised situation, and that a union that would take the various tendencies into account appears utopian. By way of reply we would refer to the efforts made inside the Anglican Communion itself by the authors of the report *Growing into Union, Proposals for Forming a United Church in*

18. Cf. J. R. Aubert, *Cardinal Mercier, Cardinal Bourne and the Malines Conversations*, in *ONE IN CHRIST*, 1968, pp. 372-9.

19. Cf. Julian W. Charley, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

20. On this point, cf. Norman Sykes, *William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1657-1737*, London 1957, 1st vol., pp. 308-10.

England.²¹ Written in the aftermath of the difficulties raised by the *Scheme* of union proposed between the Methodists and Anglicans, this work by two Anglo-Catholics and two Evangelicals, highly representative of the most outspoken views of their respective tendencies, is an important witness to the serious and positive nature of the search among Anglicans, not for vague compromises but for unity attained at the very axis of the faith. This is the type of searching to which the Anglican Church sees itself of necessity led by the present-day ecumenical situation, if it intends to dialogue as a body with the other Christian confessions. Of course, this leads the other Christian confessions to count in their turn on this kind of consensus, if they wish to enter into talks not with such and such a group of Anglicans who are most akin to them, but with the Anglican Church as such.

And let us be quite clear about this. The experience of dialogue, inspired by a desire to be honest and to search for the truth, compels Roman Catholics to realize very quickly that there are to be found within their own fold as well the same lines of division which in the Anglican tradition constitute officially-accepted movements. The Roman Catholic block has no longer—if it ever had²²—the monolithic character which spontaneously comes to mind. Hence the debating of questions leads often to a confrontation *not* of the two Churches so much as of two ways of reading the data of the faith or of two ecclesial mentalities present in *both* groups. The Roman Catholic may on a particular point feel more at home with an Evangelical position, for example, than with another, and vice versa.²³ The polyvalence of comprehensiveness thus obliges the Roman Catholic side on the one hand to become more open to a healthy pluralism, admitting that such does not necessarily destroy the unity of the faith and life, and, on the other hand, obliges it to recognize that the time has undoubtedly come to state in the clearest terms that diversity does exist in its own camp—a fact that calls for a clarification of the doctrinal position in

21. C. O. Buchanan, E. L. Mascall, J. I. Packer and the Bishop of Willesden, *Growing into Union*, London 1970.

22. In fact, even on a point as central as the theology of grace (and its consequences in the field of personal behaviour) the Catholic Church has itself had the experience of pluralism. One may think as well of the situation created by the 'uniate' movement which joined to the Roman Church eastern blocks which maintained their own particular vision of the Christian mystery.

23. Cf. Julian W. Charley, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

regard to its own tradition. All this can only serve to make the Roman Catholic Church more fit to arrive at a deeper understanding and equitable judgements (beyond the case of Anglicanism) of the different options present in the Christian world today.

Such is, from the point of view of the wider context of the Roman Church's universal ecumenical activity, what is at stake in this dialogue towards unity with the Anglican Church. It is forced, under pain of rendering impossible communion with the nearest ecclesial group of the Western Church, to admit the facts and to justify theologically the validity of an explicit pluralism of doctrine and practice within the fold of the *Una Sancta*. In these conditions, it is evident that the sole quality of *consensus*, not only possible—as a 'make-shift'—but positively desirable with the Anglican Communion, should be what we have described as a *substantial agreement*.

When the Statement begins its last paragraph by expressing its hope that the agreement reached be sufficient for unity, it is not asking itself in the words of the second sentence whether a *substantial agreement* is sufficient. It must be owned that the way in which these few words have been drawn up leads to a lack of precision. It asks itself whether what has been established is a valid substantial agreement.²⁴ This is how we understand it. This difference is not a piece of scholastic gymnastics. To refuse that a substantial agreement suffices would be equivalent, it seems to us, to closing the file once again on the unity of the two Churches, and in such circumstances that a decision of this sort would be irreparable and more serious in its consequences than *Apostolicae Curae* in 1896. Why? On account of the special position of the Anglican Communion within the Christian communities. To acknowledge as unsuccessful efforts for uniting with the Anglican Church, as it defines itself in all its complexity, would mean a radical incapability of forming deep ecclesial ties with a vast proportion of the Christian world. It would in fact be clear that progress would have been checked by the presence within Anglicanism of 'Protestant' elements.

The point we have developed shows why and precisely how its nature of *simul catholica et reformata* enables the Anglican Church

24. We admit that the Commission as such did not discuss this point, but there is no doubt that this was the thinking of the sub-committee on eucharistic questions, during its meeting at Poringland (Norwich).

to serve as a bridge in reconciling the *Catholic* tradition with the *Reformed* tradition. Joseph de Maistre explained this function when he said that with one hand the Anglican Church touched Roman Catholicism and with the other the confessions that the latter could not meet. The dialogue with Anglicanism thus serves as a test which could lead to real ecumenical possibilities. How could the 'Protestant' world come to appreciate the validity of 'Catholic' traditions, and the 'Catholic' world come to discern the value of 'Protestant' aspirations, if both one and the other appeared incapable of entering into communion with a Church which seeks in its own life a harmony between *Catholicity* and *Reformation*? In fact, especially since the famous Lambeth Conference appeal of 1920, the Anglican Communion has never ceased working for a unity which, having nothing to do with cheap compromise, would allow each main tradition to live with its own spiritual wealth according to its own past, while consenting to the sacrifices, no matter how demanding they may be, required by the Lord. The report read by Cardinal Mercier at the fourth session of the Malines Conversations, and which was drawn up by Dom Lambert Beauduin,²⁵ simply echoed the noble suggestion of this prophetic *Appeal to Christendom*.

The difficult questions of authority and the role of Peter's successor could be discussed in concrete terms and a sound settlement reached *only* within the context of the kind of communion that one was seeking. In fact it can only be a question of discovering what is intrinsically involved in the unanimous profession of the faith lived at its axis, and at the same time finding a form of ministry which, along with legitimate pluralism, could enable the communion to retain its cohesion. Which straight off emphasizes the function of authority as being a service to the *koinônia* within the framework of a recognized, wholesome diversity. As far as the immediate future of dialogue with Anglicanism is concerned, this question will prove more difficult than that of ministry, and will probably necessitate in the first instance an internal discussion on the part of the Anglican tradition, where the thinking on this matter seems less consistent than in other matters, if one may judge from the Venice meeting and the discussions with the Methodists. Moreover, it is clear that the method used in the question of the

25. Cf. S. A. Quitslund, 'United not Absorbed', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1971, pp. 255-85.

Eucharist could not be put into operation here. With the Eucharist the idea was to bring out the essential truths still held in common despite the rupture. Whereas here, from the very fact that there is rupture, there is of necessity opposition at least at the essential level of doctrine and practice. The task therefore must be one of building together, using materials held in common. This may very well be a long job, since the Commission must refuse to settle for any rickety compromise and cheap unity.

One point becomes more and more certain. This work may not be undertaken so long as a preliminary question, implied in the very notion of substantial agreement, remains unresolved. Once we have recognized the common content of our faith and life, which we live out in our different ways, what degree of unanimity of doctrine, of life and sacramental practice appears necessary to enable one to speak of true church unity? In other words, at what point does substantial agreement become organic unity? The question of detailing the different authorities and their roles, and that of the type of relationship which should be set up between the Anglican Church and Rome for there to be *organic unity*, these would be purely abstract questions if they were not written down within an agreement about preliminaries. We are thus back at the ecclesiological question, the consequences of which, it may be supposed, reach further than the particular problem of union between the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Communions. In this respect, ecumenical dialogue should lead to an advance in Roman theology and open new horizons. The ministry of Peter can in the present context be discussed only on the basis of a theology of the communion of ecclesial bodies accepting self-reform but refusing to be purely and simply absorbed one by another. And the price? The Roman Catholic tradition, if it really wants unity, will have to ask itself this question. Otherwise it will close all the promising avenues which are being opened at the present moment.

It could be that some people see in this emphasis on a pluralism intrinsic to unity a panacea designed specially for the needs of ecumenism, and which would permit the neat removal of the external inconvenience of division, without involving too much suffering nor too great change in day-to-day habits. In short, a papering-over of the cracks. This would be to ignore history. The idea that organic unity may be based upon a foundation of common faith, admitting of divergent doctrinal explanations and church practice, is rooted in what was, at times when great

division threatened, the explicit and reasoned practice of the Church.²⁶ When controversy about the Trinity and the person of Christ divided priest and people alike, Basil, Hilary, Athanasius and even Cyril gave their consent to a plurality of doctrines based each one upon a different approach to the reality of the Gospel, so long as the essentials of the faith were not watered down. During the whole period of the main Tradition of the undivided Church, the coexistence of theological mentalities as diverse as those of Antioch, Alexandria and Rome demonstrate that diversity, far from impoverishing the common faith, enriched it and supported it. In certain circumstances the recognition of this state of affairs took the form of official attitudes. Paul VI recalled this in a key passage of his speech to the Patriarch Athenagoras in July 1967. He alluded to points of difference between Rome and the Orthodox Church—which one should not hasten to minimise when it is realised that some of them, such as the *Filioque*, have a bearing upon the understanding of the mystery of the Trinity itself. He stated: 'It is charity that must help us, as it was charity that helped Hilary and Athanasius to recognize the identity of their faith beyond differences of expression, at the time when serious matters of difference divided the bishops of the Christian world. Did not Saint Basil himself, in a spirit of pastoral love, show himself a defender of authentic faith in the Holy Spirit when he avoided using certain words which, no matter how exact, could have been the occasion of scandal for a section of the Christian people? And did not Saint Cyril of Alexandria in 433 resign himself to leaving aside his exceedingly fine theology so that peace might be established with John of Antioch, having ascertained that, apart from difference of expression, their faith was identical?'²⁷

The report of the Joint Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission, known as the *Malta Report*, which mapped out the main lines of the task entrusted to the permanent Commission, echoed this traditional view when it noted: 'We agree that revealed Truth is given in holy Scripture and formulated in dogmatic definitions through thought-forms and language which are histori-

26. Cf. the studies by E. Lanne, 'Les différences compatibles avec l'unité dans la tradition de l'Eglise ancienne', in *Istina*, 1961-2, pp. 227-56; *idem.*, 'Pluralisme et unité, possibilité d'une diversité de typologies dans une même adhésion ecclésiale', in *Istina*, 1969, pp. 171-90, and in English in *ONE IN CHRIST*, 1970, no. 3, pp. 430-51.

27. Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 16 July 1967.

cally conditioned. . . . We should examine further and together both the way in which we assent to and apprehend dogmatic truths and the legitimate means of understanding and interpreting them theologically. Although we agree that doctrinal comprehensiveness must have its limits, we believe that diversity has an intrinsic value when used creatively rather than destructively'.²⁸ Consequently, it proposed among the objects of the dialogue an agreement on this principle, based upon convictions already arrived at in each of the two Churches: 'We propose particularly as a matter for dialogue the following possible convergences of lines of thought: *first*, between the traditional Anglican distinction of internal and external communion and the distinction drawn by the Vatican Council between full and partial communion; *secondly*, between the Anglican distinction of fundamentals from non-fundamentals and the distinction implied by the Vatican Council's references to a "hierarchy of truths" (Decree on Ecumenism, 11), to the difference between "revealed truths" and "the manner in which they are formulated" (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 62), and to diversities in theological tradition being often "complementary rather than conflicting" (Decree on Ecumenism, 17).²⁹

This agrees with the point we were developing just now. The next stage in the discussions, already well advanced at sub-committee level, will in all likelihood (yet without settling the question of Anglican Orders definitively) enable a doctrinal consensus on the ministry to be formulated, of the same type as that produced at Windsor. It will be recalled that in the polemics surrounding this heated discussion the relationship between the ministry of the priest and the offering of sacrifice has, since Cranmer, never ceased to be the central issue. It was on this point, among others, that the discussions which preceded the Bull *Apostolicae Curae* ran into a wall of intransigence constituted by the three English members of the Pontifical Commission (Fleming, Gasquet and Moyses), the three who moreover were to cast a negative vote at the final meeting. Now the Windsor Statement recognizes that despite a difference of approach the two Communions do not, in the essentials of the faith, differ on the sacrificial value of the

Eucharist. The *Answer of the Archbishops of England* to the decision of Leo XIII had vigorously emphasized this, although it was speaking in particular in the name of the Anglo-Catholic movement. One can therefore hope for a substantial agreement on ministry, as an extension of the agreement on the Eucharist. But this done, and before getting on to the question of authority, the project suggested by the Malta Report, the importance of which we have shown, will have to be tackled. It will be the turning point in the work of the Commission. The rest will depend on it.

Between now and then, it is the wish of both Churches that the texts of the Commission should be seen as submissions for discussion by theologians, clergy and faithful of each Communion. This is a wise measure. It derives from an accurate view of the conditions upon which unity may be sought. There would in fact be a danger of ecumenical dialogue being restricted to discussions among theologians and specialists without the individual member of the faithful, of average Christian education, ever coming to grips with what is at stake in these discussions and understanding the implications of the desired consensus. What would be the value of a church union born merely of the toil and love of a little group of experts?

Universal participation is especially important in this particular case, in view of the situation of the two Churches in England. There remain the marks of centuries of struggle and of persecutions which have produced martyrs in both groups. Moreover, while Roman Catholics retain the bitter memory of what they consider a terrible injustice, repaired by the official restoration of the Roman hierarchy in 1850, Anglicans of all shades have not forgotten the smack in the face they received in 1896, following discussions from which they had been excluded, despite the wish of the three non-English members of the Commission (Duchesne, De Augustinis, Gasparri). The dialogue between the two Churches should take these traumatic experiences into account. Theology can see them in proportion, but not popular feeling. The Commission has prepared through one of its sub-committees, a plan of common action aimed precisely at reaching the level of pastoral action and the most interested parties, with a view to deepening appreciation of the meaning of unity and the need for it. The road to real reconciliation passes of necessity through such grass-roots activities. To facilitate this, the possibility has not been excluded of a large-scale sociological enquiry which on the one hand would arouse

28. 'Malta Report', I, 5, as given in the *Tablet*, 30 November 1968, p. 1201; also in *ONE IN CHRIST*, 1969, no. 1, p. 28.

29. *Ibid.* I, 6.

interest, and on the other allow one to discover spontaneous reactions and the main obstacles to be overcome. However, such an enquiry, if accepted, would involve great expense. The question is asked inside the Commission whether, when millions live in need, one can in conscience make such an investment. There is no easy decision on this.

Such a programme, the complementary parallel of the research proceeding at the higher theological level, should, according to the recommendations of the Malta Report and the desire of the majority of the members of the Commission, be able to rely on 'an official and explicit affirmation of mutual recognition from the highest authorities of each Communion'.³⁰ What does this somewhat confused sentence mean? The reference is not as yet to a full and explicit entry into organic communion. It simply envisages a statement that there is unanimity of faith on the central points on which there is (to use once again our terminology) *full agreement*. The Malta Report states: 'We recommend that the second stage in our growing together begin with an official and explicit affirmation of mutual recognition from the highest authorities of each Communion. It would acknowledge that both Communions are at one in the faith that the Church is founded on the revelation of God the Father, made known to us in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, who is present through the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures and his Church, and is the only Mediator between God and man, the ultimate authority for all our doctrine. Each accepts the basic truths set forth in the ecumenical Creeds and the common tradition of the ancient Church, although neither Communion is tied to a positive acceptance of all the beliefs and devotional practices of the other'.³¹ One could add faith in baptism and in the mission of the Church, on which there appears to be total unanimity.

The Windsor agreement is enough to show that this common move, on the part of the highest authorities of both Churches, would in no way be imprudent. It is to be hoped that it will be done without too much delay. Even supposing that we still have to mark time for a long while, it no longer appears possible to go backwards. The ecumenical attitude of the Roman Church with regard to communities which have issued from the Reformation would, as we said, be compromised by a realisation that it had

30. *Ibid.*, II, 7.

31. *Ibid.*

found it impossible to enter into communion with that western Church to which it is most akin. Unless, that is, the obstacles came from the latter. In which case, the ecumenical vocation of the 'bridging Church' would have been seriously brought into question.

Even if we must one day find that our two Communions cannot forge a truly organic unity between themselves, which seems improbable, the current efforts to bring out the main lines of convergence could not be declared useless. It would be a very grave mistake to think that the choice is between all or nothing. Communion has degrees. We should then have to discover together, in the friendship and brotherly sympathy which henceforward mark our relationship, the degree of communion and the form of co-operation that the kind of unanimity attained would permit. In this way, who knows but that the wound may finally heal over? It appears clear to us that in fact from now on, if the two Churches take seriously the stages already passed, they can no longer, even in the difficult situation that the past has created in certain areas, be content merely to live side by side, showing only the ties of neighbourliness, politeness and Christian civility. The crisis through which the Gospel is passing with regard to the world obliges them to join forces and witness 'together' to the God of Jesus Christ. This is where their faithfulness to the Spirit is revealed. It is our firm hope that this 'togetherness' will take the form of true, organic unity, one which will shine forth when our work is done.

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The ecumenical movement must first of all be understood, not as a piece of ecclesiastical joinery, a process of constructing unity in committee, but as the effort to give adequate human expression to the deep and God-given unity that exists already; and, of course, progressively to increase both the reality of the inner unity and the fullness of its outward expression. In both cases it is God's initiative: it is God who unites and man who divides; it is God the Father who draws us, and all men through us, into the unity of his Son, by the power of his Spirit. Our effort is to respond to God's initiative, to respond better than we have done.

Why Christian Unity?, p. 2