

REVISED DRAFTCHAIRMEN'S INTRODUCTION

29th May 1982, the Eve of the Feast of Pentecost, was a day of great significance for the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches on their path towards unity. In the footsteps of St. Augustine of Canterbury whom his predecessor Pope Gregory the Great had sent from Rome to convert the English, Pope John Paul II visited Canterbury. There, in the church founded by Augustine, he and Augustine's successor, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Robert Runcie, along with representatives of the English churches and of the whole Anglican Communion, proclaimed and celebrated the one baptismal faith in which we all share. The Pope and the Archbishop also gave thanks to God for the work of the first Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission (ARCIC-I) whose Final Report had just been published, and agreed to the establishment of a new commission (ARCIC-II) to continue its work.

The primary task of ARCIC-II is to examine and try to resolve those doctrinal differences which still divide us. Accordingly, at the request of the Anglican Consultative Council (Newcastle, September 1981), we have addressed ourselves to the doctrine of justification, which at the time of the Reformation was a particular cause of contention. The request sprang out of a widespread view that the subject of justification and salvation is so central to the Christian faith

that, unless there is assurance of agreement on this issue, there can be no full doctrinal agreement between our two Churches.

We have spent more than three years on this task. The doctrine of justification raises issues of great complexity and profound mystery. Furthermore, it can be properly treated only within the wider context of the doctrine 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 agreed statement: Salvation and the Church. We do not claim to have composed a complete treatment of the doctrine of the Church. Our discussion is limited to its role in salvation.

In our work, particularly on the doctrine of justification as such, we have been greatly helped by the statement on "Justification by Faith" agreed by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Consultation in the USA (1985). This illustrates the interdependence of all ecumenical dialogues - an interdependence which is an expression of the growing communion or koinonia which already exists between the Churches. For the search for unity is indivisible.

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. Our ancestors, though divided in Christian faith, shared a world in which the questions posed by people of other faiths or none, could scarcely arise in their modern form. Today this is a matter for theological study in both our Communion.

Although our first concern has been to state our common faith on the issues in the doctrine of salvation which have proved problematic in the past, we believe that the world, now as much as ever, stands in need of the Gospel of God's free grace. The challenge to Christians is this: how can we bear true witness to the good news of a God who accepts us, unless we can accept one another?

The purpose of our dialogue is the restoration of full ecclesial communion between us. Our work has recalled for us still wider perspectives - not only the unity of all Christian people, but the fulfilment of all things in Christ.

We trust that God who has begun this good work in us will bring it to completion in Christ Jesus our Lord.

+ CORMAC MURPHY-O'CONNOR

+ MARK SANTER

3 September 1986

Feast of St. Gregory the Great

Llandaff

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Any comments (in writing please) to Bishop Santer