



bi-annual Bulletin

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A Center conducted by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement

FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Approximately a year ago **The Anglican Center** and the **Centro Pro Unione** co-sponsored a conference given by Rev. Canon Roger Greenacre, Chancellor of Chichester Cathedral on the subject: "Diversity in Unity: A Problem for Anglicans." We are happy to offer Rev. Greenacre's thought-provoking insights to the readers of our *Bulletin*. Doubtless all will agree that "Diversity in Unity" is not only a challenge to the Anglican Communion but a subject that is currently having its impact on all christian churches. All at the **Centro Pro Unione** are especially grateful to Rev. Howard Root, Director of **The Anglican Center** here in Rome, for making the arrangements that made possible Canon Greenacre's presence at the **Centro**. And since Howard and his charming wife, Celia, will be returning to England next Fall, we would like to take this opportunity to thank them for the splendid cooperation that **The Anglican Center** has rendered the **Centro Pro Unione** over the past years.

Likewise appearing in this issue of our *Bulletin* is the challenging conference given by the Right Rev. Edward I. Cassidy, President of the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*. This was the first time that Archbishop Cassidy spoke at the **Centro** but, needless to say, we hope that he will again be with us many times in the future.

As in the past so now we trust that our making available the materials of ecumenical interest received at the **Centro** will be beneficial to our readers. Any suggestions for improvement will be greatly appreciated. And once again thanks are due to Sr. Mary Peter Froelicher, SHCJ, Signora Olga Beal, and Signor Gabriele Turella for their dedicated work in all that this entailed.

As we go to press we are pleased to inform our readers that on May 28 at 5:30 p.m. we will co-sponsor with the *Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary* a talk in Italian to be given by Prof.ssa Maria Vingiani, Founder and President of the *Secretariato Attività Ecumeniche* (SAI) entitled: "Maria nel Dialogo Ecumenico."

Finally we are very happy to announce that Fr. James Puglisi, SA, who is known to many readers of our *Bulletin* and who has collaborated with the **Centro** activities and research in the past, will defend his doctoral thesis at the **Institut Catholique** in Paris on June 20, 1991. In September of 1991 Fr. Puglisi will assume directorship of the **Centro Pro Unione**. Fr. Puglisi's enthusiastic and creative plans for the **Centro's** future will be shared with our readers in due time. And we are likewise pleased to announce that Fr. Jim will be assisted by a new member to our staff, Fr. David Fitzgerald, SA. In order to give a fitting welcome to both Fr. Jim and Fr. Dave, the **Centro** is planning a reception for the Fall when our supporters and friends in Rome will have the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas.

May all of our readers have a peaceful and relaxing summer.

Kevin McMorrow, SA
Director

DIVERSITY IN UNITY : A PROBLEM FOR ANGLICANS

by

REVEREND CANON R.T. GREENACRE

(a conference co-sponsored by The Anglican Center and delivered at the Centro Pro Unione on Wednesday, May 2, 1990)

Diversity in unity (or, more strictly perhaps, the reconciliation of the need for diversity with the need for unity) has become in the last two decades an acute and critical problem for Anglicans - and particularly for the Anglican Communion. But I must emphasize from the beginning that, in the first place, it is not a problem uniquely peculiar to Anglicans (for all the Churches are wrestling with it in their own theologies and their own structures, and it is one of the major themes of ecumenical dialogue); in the second place, it must also be said that for Anglicans it is not a new problem but one they have had to confront from the beginning. So what I shall now attempt to describe falls into two parts: a first section of an historical and theological character and a second section which concentrates on the recent and present crisis.

I

Historians will of course differ in their analysis of the 16th Century Reformation in England, but they will find it difficult to deny that it was to a very great extent something imposed upon the Church by the State (i.e., the Crown) and that the political considerations of *national independence* (resentment against what was perceived as interference from Rome) and of *national unity* (the will to comprehend all the subjects of the Crown in *one* Church) were predominant. That is not to deny that theologians

like Cranmer and Jewel (to name but two) had a profound influence, but one has only to compare the English Reformation with the Reformation on the Continent (even the Reformation in Scotland) to be struck by the profound difference. The Church of England had no Luther, no Zwingli, no Calvin, no John Knox, and the very words *Anglican* and *Anglicanism* (from the pre-Reformation Latin *ecclesia anglicana*) afford an historical and geographical description but no hint of any distinctive or exclusive confessional feature - though the title Episcopal Church used by some Provinces of the Anglican Communion outside England does indeed suggest a structure, but not an exclusive structure.

From the reign of Henry VIII there existed what some, politely, might call a theological pluralism and what others might call a power struggle. In the reign of Henry VIII one group of bishops, led by Cranmer (Archbishop of Canterbury) was favourable to the Reformation; another group led by Gardiner, (Bishop of Winchester) was profoundly hostile. The triumph of the Reforming party under Edward VI spelt the doom of what might be called "Henrician Catholicism" (a fully mediaeval, traditional conservatism but without the Pope), but it did not mean the end of pluralism under Elizabeth, although most of her earlier bishops were disciples of the Swiss Protestant theologian, Bullinger. There was no more determined advocate of diversity in

unity than Elizabeth herself. She was determined to have a National Church which, although it embraced the main features of the Reformation, could still contain those whose theological, liturgical and devotional temper of mind was basically Catholic. She is reputed to have declared that she did not intend "to make windows into men's souls" (that is to say to pin people down to exact doctrinal standards or to particular stances on the controversial issues of the day): she tried to impose however conformity to the Church of England; to its liturgy, to its episcopal structure, to its appeal to the Scriptures as interpreted by the Creeds and the teaching of the primitive Church as the supreme rule of faith, and to the 39 Articles of Religion - a carefully and deliberately revised form of a set of Articles originally very sharply Protestant.

Much has been written and said about the Anglican ideal of the *via media* - what a smugly triumphalist Anglican bishop of the late 17th century could describe (quaintly but unecumenically) as "that golden mediocrity which our Church observes between the meretricious gaudiness of the Church of Rome and the squalid sluttishness of a fanatical conventicle."¹ Two things need to be said about it today.

1. There does seem to be very general agreement among Anglicans (though not total unanimity) that the distinctiveness of the Anglican *via media* lies not in content but in method. According to the late Archbishop Michael Ramsey Anglican theology is, "neither a system nor a confession (the idea of an Anglican "confessionalism" suggests something that never has been and never can be) but a method, a use and a direction".²

More recently this conviction has been given clear and concise expression by Dr Henry McAdoo, the former Anglican Archbishop of Dublin and Co-Chairman of ARCIC I. In one book he wrote:

To return then to what is distinctive in the Anglican tradition: the distinctiveness lies not in the content of the faith but in the *method* by which the Churches of the Anglican Communion make sure that what is being taught and proclaimed at any stage of history is authentic Christianity, 'the faith

once for all delivered'.... The method applies a three fold criterion by appealing to scripture, to tradition and to reason.³

And in a second book he wrote:

Anglicanism is not a theological system and there is no writer whose work is an essential part of it either in respect of content or in regard to the form of its self-expression. Richard Hooker has some claim to be the greatest Anglican writer, but his work was to state a method in theology rather than to outline a system.... The absence of an official theology in Anglicanism is something deliberate which belongs to its essential nature, for it has always regarded the teaching and practice of the undivided Church of the first five centuries as a criterion.... The distinctiveness of Anglicanism proceeds not from a systematic theology but from the spirit in which theological questions are handled.⁴

2. Although some Anglican theologians have tried to pin down this *via media* to a very clear middle road between Rome and Geneva, what F.D. Maurice in the 19th century attacked as the idea of "an invisible equatorial line between Romanism and Protestantism",⁵ and to do so in the interests of either a rather narrow and static anti-Roman High Church theology or in the interests of a more Protestant theology, this argument fails to do justice to the facts of Anglican history and to the continuing reality of Anglican theological pluralism.

Roman Catholics often find Anglicanism a baffling phenomenon; often their greatest problem is to understand how those who are clearly so close to themselves in their theological ideas, liturgical practices and devotional habits can bear to remain members of a Church which contains so many who share none of these. Some catholic-minded Anglicans have indeed never been happy with Anglican "comprehensiveness"; they have obstinately been holding out in a Church which in their own

view has suffered from centuries of hostile occupation, ignoring other Anglicans and longing and working for the day when their own cause will prevail. Others however have tried to hold on to a more positive and more ecumenical vision. They have seen the continued co-existence within Anglicanism of three major traditions - the Catholic or "high church", the Evangelical or "low church" and, (the hardest of all to define) the liberal-Erasman or critical and radical "broad church"; they have seen this co-existence neither as an unlimited blessing nor as a simple disaster but as a *challenge* and a *burden*.

The challenge was expressed by F.D. Maurice. In refusing the idea that the *via media* represented "an invisible equatorial line" between Rome and Protestantism he substituted for it the model of a *union of opposites*, that is to say the holding together of apparent contradictions in the hope and with the intention of working for their resolution and reconciliation. In this understanding, the *via media* is not a claim that Rome is wrong or that the Reformation is wrong; nor is it a claim that Anglicanism has successfully achieved a solution to the problems that divided Western European Christendom in the 16th Century. It is more like an act of hope (maybe a rather blind act of hope), a fairly desperate effort to hold together elements which (at least until the fairly recent past) Christians have separated and set in opposition against each other. The Anglican Church is very much a pilgrim Church, a seeking Church (*ecclesia quaerens*), a Church trying to work through internal divisions to a better unity which at the moment still eludes it. The French Catholic philosopher, Etienne Gilson, once wrote of the opposition within the Roman Catholic Church between Thomism and Augustinianism as follows:

"Adversaries whose conclusions are in conflict must be allowed time to understand each other better, and to be reunited with each other again at a point still undetermined but certainly situated beyond their present positions".⁶ He could have been describing the tensions within Anglicanism!

In this vision the *via media*, the union of opposites, is certainly a *challenge*: it is also a *burden*, a cross willingly accepted for a wider ecumenical good, the reconciliation of the Catholic and Evangelical traditions, the healing of the 16th Century

divisions. This, in my view, has never been expressed better than by Archbishop Michael Ramsey in his classic work *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*:

"While the Anglican Church is vindicated by its place in history, with a strikingly balanced witness to Gospel and Church and sound learning, its greater vindication lies in its pointing through its own history to something of which it is a fragment. Its credentials are its incompleteness, with the tension and the travail in its soul. It is clumsy and untidy, it baffles neatness and logic. For it is sent not to commend itself as 'the best type of Christianity', but by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died".⁷

The vision, I believe, has received considerable justification in the work of ARCIC. The aim behind both *The Final Report* of ARCIC-I and the continuing work of ARCIC-II - the aim which has inspired their method - has been neither compromise ("the invisible equatorial line") nor the capitulation of one side to the other but the reconciliation of two theologies of which it had been believed - mistakenly and too hastily - that they were in formal contradiction the one of the other. Let me briefly give two examples:

1) In its work on *Eucharistic Doctrine* ARCIC-I saw the traditional Catholic doctrine of the objectivity of the Real Presence of Christ and the Protestant insistence on the necessity of faith and of reception in faith not as contradictory but as complementary. The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is both *for* the believer and *with* him.

2) In its work on *Authority in the Church* ARCIC-I saw the need to hold together in the future the Catholic conviction of the necessary role of a primatial ministry of unity and communion in the Universal Church, exercised by the Bishop of Rome, and the Anglican vision of a *dispersed* authority, i.e., of an authority that cannot be attributed to a single source.

"We have already been able to agree", states *The Final Report* in the last paragraph of its last statement, "that conciliarity and primacy are complementary. We can now together affirm that the Church needs both a multiple, dispersed authority, with which all God's people are actively involved,

and also a universal primate as servant and focus of visible unity in truth and love".⁸

II

I move on now to the present critical situation for Anglicans in the hope that what I have said so far will furnish a background for understanding the nature of the crisis. Everybody knows that Anglicanism is in crisis and that this crisis has arisen over the ordination of women first to the priesthood and, more recently, to the episcopate. Not everybody however finds it easy to understand why this particular crisis more than others - e.g., the radical questioning by some of the Virginal Conception of Our Lord and of his Bodily Resurrection - should threaten (or, indeed, be beginning already to operate) the disintegration of Anglicanism.

It is not enough to say that the issue is highly emotive, nor that it involves fundamental questions about *Creation* (the complementarity of man and woman in the purposes of God), about *Redemption* (the significance of the maleness of the incarnate Lord) and about the *Priesthood*. It is not enough even to say that it has introduced new divisions within the ranks both of Evangelical and Catholic Anglicans. It has also to be recognized that because differences of theology in the past have been largely contained within the unity of a common structure, a fundamental change of practice can be more threatening to unity than changes in theology. A male bishop or priest may be judged to hold heretical beliefs but this has not affected recognition of the validity of his sacramental acts. Above all - and this is a point I would want to underline with particular emphasis - this controversy has revealed a weakness in Anglican ecclesiology, long latent but now at last uncovered and laid bare. The Common Declaration of the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury of 2nd October 1989 acknowledged the vital importance of ecclesiology when it affirmed that the "differences of faith" on this issue "reflect important ecclesiological differences."

This weakness is a dual one; a weakness in ecclesiological *thinking* and a weakness in ecclesiological *structure*.

1) The weakness in ecclesiological thinking relates to the doctrine of development. At a great

ecumenical service held in Westminster Cathedral in January this year to mark the 25th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism, Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, paid tribute in this centenary year of his death to John Henry Newman. "Many" he said, "have dubbed Vatican II 'Newman's Council'. If that is the case, much must be linked with his pioneering work on the development of doctrine. I am clear", he continued, "that our own Church and most other communions have not yet begun to think seriously about this. Apostolic faith is our gift. But how is it appropriately expressed?"⁹ I find this a very significant admission. But if our own Church, as our Archbishop has said, has not yet begun to *think* seriously about the doctrine of development (and I totally agree with this analysis), has it not already begun to *act* upon it? For one thing surely is indisputable; *if* there is any theological justification for the ordination of women, it can only be found through some theology of the development of doctrine.

The classical Anglican appeal, we have seen, is to the three fold criterion of Scripture, Tradition and Reason - not to three independent and equal sources but to Scripture as primary source, and to Tradition and Reason (the continuous life of the Church and our attempt to understand it and to see how the total sum of human knowledge helps us to interpret it) as ways of making scripture contemporary with us. Though the classical Anglican divines would appeal to "the Scriptures interpreted by the perpetual practice of God's church" - to quote one of them (Herbert Thorndike),¹⁰ - in fact their appeal to Tradition gave a privileged place only to the first four centuries. In case of doubt as to the legitimacy of some doctrine or practice, if it could be found neither in scripture nor in the period of the first four Councils and if it seemed that scriptural and patristic testimony was not merely silent but hostile, then the question was settled. The classical Anglicans used the same word "novelists"¹¹ to describe, not the writers of fiction, but those whom they accused of innovating, whether these innovations came from Papist or Puritan, from Rome or Geneva. Though they hoped for the future possibility of General Councils of the Church there was no real urgency about it. The Church of England as a pure reformed part of the One Catholic Church of Christ had all that was necessary to defend, teach and reaffirm with solid authority what had already been

decided by ecumenical authority.

The emergence of a doctrine of development and its gradual reception throughout the Christian world give ground for allowing that new questions may arise which must be to be answered not simply by an appeal to the past for an answer already given, but by an attempt to discern how from what is already given a new answer to a new problem can still be faithfully rooted in Scripture and Tradition. But a doctrine of development also necessarily brings into play an enlarged role for the Church's *magisterium*, that is to say for a way in which the Church can discern between true and false developments. It also presents a new problem for a Church or a Communion of Churches which does not claim, and never has claimed, that she is the Catholic Church or that the Catholic Church *subsists* in her alone. Defending and reaffirming what is already defined poses no problem but discerning new developments does. If some matters can be authoritatively settled by each Province and others ideally need to be referred to the whole Communion, there must in principle be some, more fundamental, which cannot even be resolved by the whole Communion acting together.

2) It is here that we come to our second problem for Anglicans, a weakness in ecclesiological structure.

It is an undeniable fact of history that the 27 Provinces of the Anglican Communion are strictly autonomous. Lambeth Conferences of all the Bishops of the Communion have met more or less every 10 years since 1867 but the Conference is neither a Synod nor a Council and its Resolutions neither Decrees nor Canons; they have no force of law until or unless they are given legislative shape and force by the Synods of the constituent Churches. In 1867 many bishops (especially in Canada and South Africa) hoped that the Conference would acquire synodical authority, but there were others so hostile that like the Archbishop of York of the time they refused to attend or like the Dean of Westminster of the time they closed the doors of the Abbey against the visitors. In fact the particular relationship of the Established Church of England with the Crown would have frustrated any attempt to give the Conference any real legislative authority. Nevertheless the fact that between the 1968 and 1978 conferences some Churches of the Anglican Communion proceeded to

ordain women as priests - as they were legally entitled to do - and that for the first time in the history of the Anglican Communion some of its ordained ministers were not recognised or accorded the right to minister as priests in some of the other Provinces provoked a real crisis, increased when it became clear before the 1988 conference that some Churches were determined to advance to the ordination of women to the Episcopate. The agonized question began to be asked:

"What credibility can be given to a Communion of Churches which possesses no structure of authority strong enough to maintain it in unity and which in the last resort seems impotent in the face of the threat of its own disintegration?"¹²

Lambeth 1988 was in many ways a paradox. In a masterly opening address on *The Nature of the Unity We Seek* the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, made a strong appeal for a move from independence to interdependence; it is significant that one of the reasons he adduced for "looking critically at the notion of the absolute independence of Provinces" was the nature of our ecumenical dialogues with worldwide communions which "require decision and action at more than provincial level".¹³ But that appeal came too early or too late. Resolution 001, concerned with the Ordination of Women to the Episcopate, confirmed and underlined the principle of provincial autonomy. The Anglican Communion itself, though it had massively approved the ARCIC dialogue, was powerless to act as a Communion to decide the issue of the Ordination of Women. This led one of Anglicanism's greatest, most loyal and most experienced friends, Fr Jean Tillard OP (a member of both ARCIC-I and-II) in a powerful article in the Belgian review *Irenikon* - republished in English in the booklet *Lost in the Fog?* to conclude with great sadness: "At the moment when it seemed that the dossier of *Apostolicae curae* could be settled we have to open the dossier of Lambeth 88. Can I be allowed to say, on the basis of a certain experience of ecumenical questions, that the Lambeth 88 dossier will be more difficult than that of *Apostolicae curae*?"¹⁴

It has to be admitted that what distressed so many friendly observers, especially from the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, was not just the fact that the ordination of

women to the episcopate was now clearly going to take place but the fact that the Anglican Communion could not act as an ecclesial body with any real supra-national authority; it was this second revelation that seemed to put a serious question mark against all dialogues at the international level between Anglicans and other Christians. The question other Churches can no longer avoid asking is precisely what kind of ecclesial consistency the Anglican Communion has and what authority it has to implement any apparent agreement at the international level. In this situation what options are open to the Anglican Communion? Will it try - even at this late stage - to go into reverse and move from independence to interdependence? Will its own clearly perceived lack of any effective ministry of unity and communion be able to prevent communion within and between its member churches from being impaired or destroyed lead Anglicans to re-evaluate more positively the role of the Petrine ministry? Or will each Province go its own way and therefore its own way ecumenically, with some Provinces entering into union with Churches of the Reformation and others examining the possibility of some kind of union with Rome?

A few weeks ago my secretary had a problem with a manuscript of mine: there was a word there she did not recognise and could not find in the dictionary; the word was 'subsidiarity'. By a curious coincidence I came across it on Monday on my way out to Rome in the political pages of *The Independent*: British politicians were arguing about it in the context of the relationship between national autonomy and supra-national authority in the EEC. In fact the concept seems to have developed between the two world wars in a social and political context, largely as a protest against the increasing encroachment of the totalitarian state upon the rights of the individual, the family, local and regional communities. It asserts that decisions ought to be taken at the appropriate level, that is to say as low down as possible. From the time of Pius XII, and with increased momentum from the Second Vatican Council, it became clear that the Roman Catholic Church could not preach the principle of subsidiarity to civil society without also applying it to her own life. Here too the rights of the individual, of the family, of the local community, of the diocese and (more recently and more controversially) of the National Episcopal Conference cannot simply be subsumed into the centralized authority of the See of Rome.¹⁵

More recently, in 1988, the Bishop of Birmingham, Anglican Co-Chairman of ARCIC-II, has reminded Anglicans of the complementary lesson of the principle of subsidiarity; that questions which concern the maintenance of unity at a supra-national level should not be decided at a lower level.

Communion between churches, at whatever level, requires more than instruments of consultation. Guidance is at times required, and also decision. Organs of authority must be present, recognised in common as able to speak for and to the churches. In good times, things will be easy - but when there is severe dispute within or between churches, the test is whether its judgements and decisions are accepted even when unwelcome.

As Anglicans we are accustomed (even if some of the machinery is rusty) to such organs of authoritative decision-making at diocesan and provincial level, and have (to my mind) uttered a lot of pious hot air to justify this fact. Before we too readily accept the notion that it is *ipso facto* not Anglican to have organs of authority between national churches, let us not forget that the Thirty-Nine Articles do not repudiate the notion of general councils, and that in point of fact the Jacobean Church of England sent delegates to an inter-church council, namely, the Synod of Dort. The modern doctrine of provincial autonomy is rather a child of the nineteenth century - the fruit of a strange union between English bishops and lawyers who were scared stiff of anything which might appear to impugn the Royal Supremacy over the Church of England and the gut reaction of ex-colonials who did not wish to submit to a religious form of colonialism which their grandfathers had repudiated at a

political level.

In thinking of the exercise of authority, it is always important to remember the principle of *subsidiarity*. If we are concerned with communion in a diocese, only diocesan authority is involved; if with communion at a provincial level, only provincial authority. But if we are talking about those elements in the life of the churches whereby they are able to recognise one another as sharing one communion of faith and life, then some joint organs of authority, recognised by all, are required.¹⁶

At the beginning of 1988 I was privileged to attend as the Anglican observer (nominated, in fact, by the Bishop of Birmingham) a colloquium at Salamanca organised by a number of Catholic universities on *The Nature and Future of Episcopal Conferences*. Diversity in unity, it was clear, is not only a problem for Anglicans; it poses many crucial questions to the Roman Catholic Church also. I hope you will forgive me if I draw this lecture to a conclusion by quoting the concluding paragraph of my own intervention at that colloquium:

I have the impression that we are dealing here with two communions which have trajectories going in reverse directions. Both believe in unity in diversity. It seems to me that the Roman Catholic Church is at this moment aware of the need to put greater stress on diversity and to find more adequate structures for this; the Anglican Communion finds - at least I hope it does - that it needs at this moment to put a greater stress on unity and to find more adequate structures for it. In this situation we need above all to listen to each other, to try to benefit from each other's experience (from the failures as well as the successes), and to avoid whatever might make this mutual enrichment impossible.¹⁷

The final word, however, should surely point to a more positive conception of the relationship between diversity and unity, expressed not so much in terms of a problem to be resolved as in terms of a vision to be realised. In the address which he gave during Vespers at San Gregorio Magno in Rome on 30th September 1989 the Archbishop of Canterbury quoted words spoken by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Sweden: "Unity not only embraces diversity but is verified in diversity".

NOTES

1. Simon Patrick, Bishop of Chichester (1689 - 1691) and of Ely (1691-1707)
2. From an article in *Theology*, XLVIII (1945).
3. *Being an Anglican* (Dublin and London, 1977), p. 13.
4. *The Spirit of Anglicanism* (London, 1965), p. v.
5. *The Kingdom of Christ* (Everyman edition), II, p. 311.
6. As quoted by Yves Congar in *Chrétiens en dialogue* (Paris, 1964), p. 102.
7. op.cit., (London, 1936), p. 3.
8. This first half of the lecture reproduces much material which has already appeared in an article of mine, published in French in *Irenikon* (LVII/2, 1984) and in English in *One in Christ* (XX/2, 1985).
9. cf. *Living Stones* (IV, no. 1, London, 1990), p. 11.
10. cf. *The Works of Herbert Thorndike* (Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology), V, p. 248.
11. e.g., King James I
12. Roger Greenacre: "An Anglican Response" in *The Nature and Future of Episcopal Conferences* (The Jurist, XLVIII, Washington, 1988), p. 394; Italian version, *Natura e Futuro delle Conferenze Episcopali* (Bologna, 1988).
13. *The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988* (London, 1988), p. 15.
14. cf. *Irenikon* (LXI/4, 1988) and *Lost in the Fog?* (London, 1989), p. 4.
15. cf. J. Komonchak: "Subsidiarity in the Church" in *The Nature and Future of Episcopal Conferences*.
16. Mark Santer: "The Way Forward" in *Communion and Episcopacy*, ed., J. Draper (Cuddesdon, 1988), p. 109.
17. Roger Greenacre: "An Anglican Response" op. cit., p. 396.

(The Reverend Canon Roger T. Greenacre is Chancellor of Chichester Cathedral, West Sussex, England.)

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ECUMENISM
AS WE APPROACH THE THIRD CHRISTIAN MILLENNIUM

by

ARCHBISHOP EDWARD IDRIS CASSIDY, A.C.

(an address delivered at the *Centro Pro Unione* on Wednesday, May 8, 1991)

Introduction

I have chosen to speak to you this evening about the present situation, as I see it, of the ecumenical dimension of the Catholic Church's mission in the world, with particular reference to the activity of the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, of which as you know I am the President. Since taking over from His Eminence Cardinal Johannes Willebrands the responsibility for the direction of the Pontifical Council, I have frequently been challenged by remarks to the effect that the Catholic Church - or at least the Roman Curia - has lost some of its former enthusiasm for the ecumenical task.

Remarks have been made and articles published claiming that we are living in a "winter of ecumenism".¹

While I do not find such comments either accurate or indeed very helpful to the ecumenical cause, I must say that from my own experience during these past seventeen months I am concerned about the existence, especially at the local level, of a certain sense of frustration being experienced by many people who very enthusiastically joined in the movement towards Christian unity and who fail now to see realised the practical results for which they had

so ardently hoped.

We are coming towards the end of the second Christian Millennium, which has been the millennium of Christian division. For the first one thousand years after Christ, the Christian Church was mostly undivided. There had been an important split at the time of the Council of Chalcedon (451), when the Ancient Orthodox Churches (Copts, Armenians, Syrians, Ethiopians) were unwilling to accept the Christological definitions of that Council, but as we shall see later on their problem was not one of doctrine but rather a consequence of the way of expressing the common doctrine held by them and by the other members of the Christian Church.

But during the next one thousand years, the great divisions took place: Rome and Constantinople separated; the sixteenth century saw the breaking up of the Church of Rome, as the Reformation gave birth to new and separate ecclesial communities.

What are the prospects of healing these divisions as we come to the close of this Millennium and look forward to the Third Christian Millennium? Will that be a time of unity?

The ecumenical journey is sometimes compared to the ascent of a high and difficult

mountain. In the early stages of such a climb, one makes rapid and relatively easy progress; then the going gets more difficult and in the final stages every move forward is the result of great effort combined with special technical skill.

I see the ecumenical task of the Catholic Church as a voyage, a voyage to some extent into the unknown. The early stage, in which we sought to know each other better and to rid ourselves of the prejudices that had bedeviled our relationships, proved to be relatively easy. We discovered just how much we had in common, we came to appreciate the gifts which God in his great mercy had bestowed on Churches and ecclesial communities other than our own, we found that we could joyfully pray together and successfully undertake common witness in various fields.

Our ascent of the ecumenical mountain has now entered a new stage and the going becomes more difficult, simply because the ground that we seek to conquer is all the more important for the successful outcome of our endeavours.

Our journey is one of exploration. Nowadays, people set out on a voyage knowing exactly the details of their destination and of the route to be followed. It was not so in former times. Christopher Columbus came upon the Americas by chance; Scott had little to assist him in his attempt to reach the South Pole: even in more recent times Hillary had to face many unknowns on his way to Everest.

We know the destination that we wish to reach; yet there is much about it that is still a mystery for us. The oneness that we seek remains a mystery, just as the oneness of the three persons of the Trinity is a mystery. We know that the Church was one, that it was meant to be one - but one in a legitimate diversity. This harmony between unity and diversity is illustrated in a particular manner in the foundation event of Pentecost (cf. *Acts 2: 1-11*). The apostles spoke in diverse tongues, but unlike the experience of the tower of Babel, they all preached the same message about the marvels of God.

I am convinced that, despite such uncertainties and some frustration within the camp, we are already well into our climb towards the summit of our ecumenical mountain. I shall share

with you the difficulties that I see as hindering our more rapid progress. But I want to leave with you a message that is full of hope. We must never forget that the journey that we have undertaken is one to which we have been called by the Lord. It is he who has sent us on this journey and it is in him that we place our hope - and as we all know well, this is a hope that does not deceive (Rom. 5:5).

The way to unity is a process of collective discernment where all involved have to grow under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the search for truth. In doing so we actually touch the mystery of God himself, who is Truth. Though no one can ever possess the Truth (God), all can be possessed by the Truth.

I. The Point of Departure

Let me first of all remind you of the point from which we set out on this journey. Memories tend to be short and I find that one of the reasons for frustration by those engaged in ecumenical work is the tendency to forget just how far we have actually come in the twenty-six years since the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*. It can be very misleading to judge the present position without keeping in mind the situation that existed before the Second Vatican Council. This is a mistake that many do make and so I take the liberty of reminding you briefly of the radical change in direction which the Catholic Church took during the Second Vatican Council.

Those of you who remember as I do the years before the Council will recall that in general, members of the Roman Catholic Church and those of other Churches and ecclesial communities tended to dwell in splendid isolation at the best or at the worst in a state of suspicion, distrust and conflict.

That has changed radically over the past twenty-six years, there is now generally a spirit of trust and sincere cooperation. New relationships have been established; we come together to pray, especially for Christian Unity; we find occasions to give together common witness to our faith in the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and in the Incarnate Son of God as our one Redeemer and Lord; Christians of different denominations work together in the defense of the human person, the promotion of the blessings of peace, the application of the Gospel

principles to social life, the relief of hunger, poverty and all the afflictions of our times. There are many wonderful examples of this at the local, national and international level.

There is no doubt that the relationship of the Catholic Church with other Churches and ecclesial communities began to change soon after the promulgation of the Council documents. Some Catholics couldn't wait to set out on the mountain ascent and hurried forward leaving the others behind - often with results that in the long run did more harm than good to the great cause they were seeking to promote. Others again were rather reluctant to begin the journey, feeling more secure and comfortable in their traditional attitudes. Yet as a whole the Catholic Church set out with determination and sincere commitment on the way which the Council had indicated.

Essential to the ecumenical thinking of the Second Vatican Council was a new Catholic theological understanding of other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities.

I do not intend to examine closely the documents of the Second Vatican Council - that would be a lecture on its own - but it is true to say that the changes which were made in the various Council documents during the Council opened the way not only for the type of ecumenical activity to which I have referred, but enabled the Catholic Church to enter into meaningful theological dialogue with the other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities.

To take just one, but very important example, namely the change that took place between 1962 and 1964 in the Council's document on the Church, which began with a statement of **exclusive identity** between the Church of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church and approved in the final document a much different statement, namely that - and I quote - **this Church (i.e. the one and only Church of Jesus Christ) subsists in the Catholic Church governed by the successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with him.** While this is a positive assertion about the Catholic Church, it does not say or imply that the Church founded by Christ continues to exist nowhere else than in that Church. It leaves the question open. Hence, practically all commentators have seen in this change of wording a

significant opening towards the recognition of ecclesial reality in the non-catholic world.

The ecumenical position or profile adopted by the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council may be articulated theologically in terms of **koinonia** or **communio**. Those who are baptised into the Body of Christ and profess the same faith in the Trinity and in Jesus Christ as Saviour share a real communion. Certainly we cannot describe this as full communion when **unity of faith** is not complete, and it is of such full communion that Eucharist-sharing is a sign and ideal expression.

II. The Ecumenical Journey

I made the claim earlier on that we are well into our climb towards the summit of the ecumenical mountain. I could give you many examples of the growing relationships at the international, national and local level that can be gathered together under the title of **dialogo d'amore - dialogue of charity**. These contacts and the wide cooperation that exists in so many fields are of great importance, but if we wish to examine the most significant indicator of our progress in this regard, then we must turn to the theological dialogue.

It is by means of such discussion above all else that a more adequate appreciation of the distinctive doctrines of the various Christian Churches is acquired and efforts are made both to define common elements of faith and distinguish areas of real divergence. It is the theological dialogue that can make it possible for us to progress further along the way that we have taken, though not of course in isolation but in constant company with the other means of ecumenical activity already mentioned.

Besides the multi-lateral theological dialogue within the *Faith and Order Commission* of the World Council of Churches, there are a number of bi-lateral theological dialogues in which the Roman Catholic Church is engaged.

III. The Theological Dialogue

In the first instance, the purpose of dialogue is to understand and to make oneself understood. Vital to this process is the distinction between the deposit of faith and the formulation of faith. This is not a distinction to cover up real differences, but is

an essential element of the ecumenical endeavour as found in the total context of the Second Vatican Council and explained at the beginning of the Council by Pope John XXIII himself:

This certain and unchangeable doctrine to which faithful obedience is due, has to be explored and presented in a way that is demanded by our times. The deposit of faith which consists of the truths contained in sacred doctrine, is one thing, the manner of presentation, always however with the same meaning and signification, is always something else.²

This statement was made in relation to the overall theological renewal which the Council sought to implement. The principle was applied explicitly to ecumenism by Pope John Paul II in an address to the members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission in 1980:

Your method has been to go behind the habit of thought and expression born and nourished in enmity and controversy to scrutinize together the great common treasure, to clothe it in a language at once traditional and expressive of the insights of an age which no longer glorifies in strife, but seeks to come together in listening to the quiet voice of the Spirit.³

A good example of the fruitfulness of this process is the *Joint Statement* made in 1973 by Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda, the head of the Coptic Church. The Coptic Church is one of the Ancient Orthodox Churches which as already mentioned did not accept the christological definition of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, to which the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches are committed. The definition of Chalcedon speaks of the **one and same Christ in two natures....united in one person and one hypostasis**. The Holy Father and Pope Shenouda were able in their common statement to express what both Churches actually believe in common about Jesus Christ, but without using the particular

formulations (the words **nature** and **person**) to which exception was taken by the Copts in the past. Similar declarations have since been made by the Roman Catholic Church and the Syrian Church, and more recently by the Roman Catholic Church and the Syrian Church of India.

It may be of interest and encouragement for you to know that important bilateral theological dialogues are in progress at the international level between the Catholic Church and the following Churches or ecclesial communities:

- the Orthodox Churches
- the Anglican Community
- the Lutheran World Federation
- the World Methodist Council
- some Evangelicals
- the Baptist World Alliance
- the World Alliance of Reformed Churches
- the Disciples of Christ
- the Pentecostals

Then within the **Joint Working Group** of the World Council of Churches, dialogue also takes place and theological papers of ecumenical significance have been published.

The *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* is in regular, official contact with other international ecclesial bodies as well, and there are of course hardly less important theological dialogues taking place at national and regional level, as for example in the United States of America between the Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Lutheran Church.

To give you some idea about this vital aspect of ecumenical activity, I should like to discuss just three of the above points of contact, namely the cooperation within the WCC Faith and Order Commission; the Catholic-Orthodox International Commission; and ARCIC.

What is known as the **Faith and Order Commission** is the body within the WCC responsible for theological dialogue and has been involved in some of the most important ecumenical developments up to date. Although not a member of the World Council of Churches, the Catholic Church seeks to foster close cooperation with that body in many ways; presence of observers at the WCC's Assemblies, a Joint Working Group appointed by the WCC and the Pontifical Council, and participation through twelve

theologians with full voting rights in the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. After several years of discussion, this Commission produced a document of special significance for the ecumenical movement, the **Lima statement on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry**. It is not an agreed document on these three issues which have seriously divided the Churches, but rather a statement of such convergence as actually exists at present. While setting out the different positions on each of the subjects indicated, it enables them to be studied in relation to one another. It also attempts - and this is probably the most controversial aspect of it - to suggest how the Churches might reflect critically on their own position in the light of arguments presented for differing understandings of the same doctrine. The Churches were asked to respond to this document, stating the degree to which they found that it expresses "the faith of the Church through the ages".

The Catholic Church gave a detailed and official response, which affirmed the text where possible, criticized it where necessary or appropriate, and identified several items considered essential to further ecumenical progress.

The **Faith and Order Commission** has recently published the replies received, as well as an analysis of these replies, and it is interesting to note that the issues identified in the Catholic response correspond in general to those now proposed for further study by the **Faith and Order Commission**. These issues are mainly concerned with the **sacraments and sacramentality; scripture and tradition; ecclesiology**.

That these are basic questions for ecumenical dialogue has been borne out also by the bilateral dialogues in which the Catholic Church is engaged. During the visit of Pope John Paul II to Istanbul in 1979, it was agreed by His Holiness and the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I that a theological dialogue should be undertaken by a special **Mixed Catholic-Orthodox International Commission**, representing the pan-orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

This Commission, which is made up of fourteen Metropolitan Archbishops representing each of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches, together with fourteen Orthodox theologians, and on the Catholic side by fourteen Cardinals and Bishops, plus

fourteen Catholic theologians. The dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches is a theological exploration by two Sister Churches who recognise and therefore respect each other's ecclesial identity. The Commission met for the first time in Rhodes in 1980, and has since produced three agreed documents. The first, finalised at Munich in 1982 was entitled: **The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the light of the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity**.

Then followed a document on **Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church** (Bari 1987), and another dealing with **The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church with particular reference to the importance of Apostolic Succession for the Sanctification and the Unity of the People of God** (Valamo 1988).

A fourth document on the **Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Structure of the Church, Conciliarity and Authority in the Church** is ready for discussion and should have been approved in June of last year at a meeting in Freising, Germany, but the new tension caused by the return to normal existence of the Catholic Churches of Eastern Rite in the Western Ukraine and in Romania did not allow the Commission to carry out its scheduled programme.

The process adopted in this dialogue illustrates well the step-by-step approach which is characteristic of our theological dialogue. This does not mean that one conceals or puts to one side issues about which there is disagreement. Rather one seeks to build up in progressive stages an understanding of related issues that it is hoped will provide a solid basis for a fruitful discussion of more difficult points of division. The dialogue with the Orthodox did not commence with a discussion about the difficult question of the primacy of the bishop of Rome but sought to develop an agreed vision of the Church in all its aspects, so as to arrive at a study of the position of the bishop of Rome in that overall framework.

The Anglican Communion

The relations between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion have been greatly influenced by the visits which various Archbishops of Canterbury have made to Rome and by what Pope

John Paul II has described as his "pilgrimage" to Canterbury.

While Geoffrey Fisher was the first Archbishop of Canterbury in modern times to visit a Roman Pontiff - he made a private visit to Pope John XXIII in 1960 -, the decisive change in Catholic-Anglican relations came as a consequence of the visit of Archbishop Michael Ramsey to Pope Paul VI in 1966. Together they established the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, and committed the two parties to seeking together "unity in the truth".

Archbishop Coggan was twice received by Pope Paul VI and in 1982 Pope John Paul II on his historic visit to Canterbury established with Archbishop Runcie the Second ARCIC.

From September 29th to October 2nd, 1989, Archbishop Runcie returned the visit of Pope John Paul II. These were days of great warmth and openness, with particular stress placed on prayer together. A moment that stands out in the memory is the celebration of Evening Prayer by the Pope and the Archbishop in the Church of S. Gregorio. There were also times for conversation together and at the end of the visit a common declaration that was at once honest about the differences existing between Catholics and Anglicans, yet hopeful about the ecumenical course that is being pursued. It was acknowledged, for instance, that the ordination of women constitutes a serious obstacle on the path of reconciliation, but the statement also declares that "the ecumenical journey is not only about the removal of obstacles but also about the sharing of gifts".

The Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue is different in character from the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue in that it has been charged with the task of addressing quite specific doctrinal differences which either played a role in the break between Rome and Canterbury in the sixteenth century, or have since developed into divisive factors. ARCIC I presented to the Churches a Final Report, in 1982, which contained an agreed statement by the members of the Commission on three such topics: **eucharist, priestly ministry and authority in the Church**. The Commission claimed to have reached agreement on the essentials of faith in respect of doctrine on eucharist and ministry; and to have arrived at a

genuine degree of convergence on authority.

The 1988 Lambeth Conference, after consultation with the member Churches of the Anglican Community, resolved that the Final Report's statements on the Eucharist and the Priestly Ministry were "consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans". The Conference found the statement on Authority in the Church to be "a firm basis for the direction and agenda of the continuing dialogue" on this question.

In 1982, the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* issued a statement which indicated serious concern about certain areas of the Final Report. There has since been much consultation world-wide within the Catholic Church and in Rome, and a fuller more-detailed response is eagerly awaited and expected in the very near future.

The question of the ordination of women to the priesthood, and in some cases to the episcopate, within the Anglican Communion has created new difficulties for this dialogue. Not only does this development have a serious effect on the Anglican understanding of ministry, but it has resulted in widespread disillusionment in some Catholic circles and divided the Anglican Communion itself. This together with certain remarks made by the recently-enthroned Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, show very clearly that future Roman Catholic/Anglican dialogue will have to delve much more deeply into certain underlying ecclesiological questions, such as authority in the Church, apostolic succession and primacy. The lack of a coherent moral theology within the Anglican Community is also seen by Catholics as a problem for our dialogue.

In the meantime, a second commission - ARCIC II - was set up in 1982 and given the mandate "to examine, especially in the light of our respective judgements on the Final Report, the outstanding doctrinal differences which still separate us" and "to study all that hinders the mutual recognition of the ministries of our communions".

This task has been somewhat delayed by the fact that the official response of the Catholic Church to the Final Report has not yet been given. ARCIC II has nevertheless been at work in the meantime and has finalised a study on justification in the report entitled **Salvation and the Church**; and just recently

it published a statement on **The Church as Communion**.

IV. Preparing for the Future Ascent

I have sought in this lecture to give you some idea of the present situation of ecumenism as seen from the perspective of the Catholic Church. There can be no doubt about the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church. Pope John Paul II made this abundantly clear in June 1985 in an address to the Roman Curia, when he stated:

I must affirm that the Catholic Church is committed to the ecumenical movement with irrevocable decision, and it desires to contribute to it with all its possibilities.....It is an obligation that I have to carry out in a particular way, especially by virtue of the pastoral responsibility that pertains to me.⁴

But how are we to carry forward the great work that has already been done? Remember that we are seeking to respond to a command from the Lord himself, who prayed on the night before he suffered:

As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth. I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one! (John 17, 18-21).

What we are seeking is not a vague expression of affective unity, but **unity in the profession of faith:**

Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you

and this:

so that the world may believe that it was you who sent me (John, 17, 21).

Pope John Paul has articulated this position clearly:

Unity in the profession of faith is the fundamental element in the manifestation of ecclesial communion.⁵

The unity of faith signifies a rediscovery of a common heritage of faith, achieved in concert with other Christians. Nothing less will do! This is not only a necessary dimension of evangelization, for which the Church exists, but seems to His Holiness to be a vital factor for peace and harmony in the new Europe.

We cannot and must not seek to hide the pain of division. There are practical day-to-day problems that urge us on towards the summit of perfect understanding in faith, problems such as mixed marriages and inter-communion. People would like quick solutions to such problems, but such solutions would be a denial of our whole understanding of Church and Tradition, and delay rather than hasten our ascent of the mountain.

What do I see as the main obstacles that we have to overcome if we are to hasten our progress?

As already mentioned, over the past year I have frequently come across expressions of frustration at what is conceived as the slow pace of ecumenism. There is mounting disillusionment in many quarters in this connection. Documents are seen to mount up endlessly, meetings take place, nice words are spoken, but it can appear that nothing really worth-while has been achieved.

Some of this frustration comes from a lack of information about or appreciation of the tremendous progress that has been made in the past twenty-six years. Then there is a failure on the part of many to understand the ecumenical method, which as I have said sets out from what the parties have in common, or more or less in common, and then proceeds, step by step, in an endeavour to build up a firm theological basis on which to tackle the more difficult and divisive elements of doctrine and discipline.

One result of this frustration is a tendency to abandon the search for a unity of faith and to settle

for a merely affective communion. "We are getting on so much better now, praying together, giving common witness, contributing by our joint efforts to the social welfare of humanity and to justice and peace in the world. Let us then have eucharistic hospitality and be satisfied with that".

This is not a position that we can ever accept, for as the first President of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, Cardinal Bea, stated during the Council:

Nothing is more foreign to the spirit of ecumenism than doctrinal indifferentism.

Is there anything we can do to counter-act such frustration? This brings me to the delicate question of reception, which has recently become a frequently-mentioned term in ecumenical circles.

For the Catholic Church, decisions concerning the official reception of dialogue documents are made finally by the Holy See, and this is not being questioned in any way. What I am wondering is how to bring the dialogue which is taking place at international level between the Catholic Church and various ecclesial communities or Churches more to the knowledge of the Church in general. There seems to be too little discussion going on about these documents within the Church and much of their impact is, I feel, being lost.

I know of course that there can be serious problems in respect of this kind of discussion about documents that have not been officially approved, and I most certainly do not advocate indiscriminate discussion among those not properly formed for such a task. I am thinking mainly of Episcopal Conferences and bodies officially charged with dialogue. Of particular importance in this connection are the ecumenical dialogues carried out at the local level - in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Scandinavia, and elsewhere.

While the question of reception is particularly delicate for the Catholic Church, it is in many ways even more a difficult problem for many of our ecumenical partners. Yet if the theological dialogue is not taken up at the local Church level, and studied, criticised and perhaps even rejected under certain aspects, I fear that much of the effort

that goes into it will have been in vain and the frustration already referred to grow even greater.

And this brings me to mention another attitude within the Catholic Church itself that tends to dampen somewhat our hopes and aspirations. I think we are all well aware of the abuses that have occurred, and continue to take place, within our Church in respect of ecumenical activity. The over-enthusiastic Catholic ecumenist who neglects the clear directives of the Church is truly an enemy of the very unity which he or she so ardently desires to promote. From such action confusion follows and one soon senses a reaction setting in by which the ecumenical movement as such is discredited and there is a desire to stress rather what is termed sound Catholic teaching and practice that prefers approaches and terminology more suited to pre-Vatican II days. This attitude can be found in varying degrees, from the extremes of Archbishop Lefebvre to a mild, and quite understandable preference simply not to get involved in ecumenical dialogue.

The activity of the sects in many countries is also causing confusion within the ecumenical movement and resulting in some reluctance on the part of Bishops and priests in certain areas to foster inter-Church contacts.

We are obviously in a difficult period of transition from those early years of general enthusiasm when the obstacles to be tackled were more psychological and emotional than theological. We seemed then to surge forward with great strides, raising false hope that we might soon reach the summit of full and perfect unity at least with one or other Church or ecclesial community. Now we see ourselves having to make each step forward only after much deep reflection and consultation, while the old clouds of suspicion and conflict have not given way fully to the light of Christ. Yet each step forward that we take at this stage is an important one and signifies real progress towards the common goal.

We need patience, but above all we need faith in what we are doing. If we lose the vision given to us by the Second Vatican Council we would be failing in our duty to read the signs of the present time. I was deeply impressed by some words of the new Archbishop of Armagh, when he stated during the homily for his installation as successor to St. Patrick on December 16th last that:

one cannot be authentically Catholic without the ecumenical spirit.⁶

Difficulties in the work of ecumenism should not discourage us. We have confidence in this activity of the Church, because we have confidence in God. He gave us the faith and he gave us the Church. These great gifts are not the result of human achievement. So it will be with Christian unity. It will be a gift from God and it will come in his good time. Our task is simply to be the courageous and well-tuned instruments of his will.

But lest I send you away discouraged, let me stress that really important progress has been made in many of our theological dialogues. We have a long way to go, it is true, but there is now a new willingness for some of the heirs of the Reformation to speak positively, and even to suggest that there could be a role for this ministry in a future unity of Christians. Archbishop Robert Runcie of Canterbury, during his visit to Rome in 1989, said specifically in the presence of the Pope:

....and for the universal Church I renew the plea I made at the Lambeth Conference: could not all Christians come to reconsider the kind of Primacy exercised within the early Church, a presiding in love for the sake of the unity of the Churches in the diversity of their mission?⁷

What can be done to further our cause?

I do not intend to mention now a great number of the initiatives that the Pontifical Council would wish to see undertaken by the local churches. As you know, a new *Ecumenical Directory* has been drawn up and is awaiting final approval before being made available to the local Churches. It is this document that forms the official response to the abuses that occur, but which more importantly indicates the many steps that can be taken lawfully in order to advance the unity of Christians.

There are, however, two such initiatives that I wish to stress as being of fundamental importance for the work of promoting Christian unity.

One of the urgent tasks before the Catholic

Church in this regard is undoubtedly the correct formation of our priests, seminarians and lay people in the principles and spirit of the Second Vatican Council, in so far as they project the Catholic ecumenical position.

For this I appealed during the recent Synod on priestly formation for our seminary training not only to include the study of the relevant Council documents but to have an ecumenical perspective in all aspects of intellectual and pastoral formation.

The other initiative refers to the enthusiastic involvement of the national and diocesan ecumenical commissions. I have already indicated their importance for the reception process of the dialogue at the international level. The new *Ecumenical Directory* will rely on these commissions for its implementation in many respects. Without their deep involvement it will remain a dead letter as far as the respective nation or diocese is concerned.

It is interesting in this connection to note that in some 35 countries, the Conference of Catholic Bishops is a member of a body representing the various Churches of that country, and only recently the Catholic Church in England, Scotland and Wales established with the other Churches of these countries common ecumenical bodies enabling them to work together. The particular concept and method of realization of this manner of coming together is of special interest and may well help to provide a solution to other local Catholic Churches which have so far preferred a presence in common Church organizations that is usually defined as observer status.

But let us not leave the ecumenical task to the Commissions or to those involved in dialogue. The journey is for all of us and not just for an elite group of specialists. There are two ways in which each and every Christian can participate: by prayer and by personal conversion.

We must place our faith and trust in the Holy Spirit, seeking his strong intervention in constant prayer. I repeat what I have said already. Christian Unity is God's will; it will be his gift. Christ is at the very centre of our ecumenical commitment. Our response to the challenge that this poses for us is the same that Our Lord gave to his Father's will: **Yes, Father - Thy will be done.** Our

prayer is simply to ask that the day of unity will come soon - not as a result of our poor efforts, important though they be, but as the fruit of the action within the Churches of the Holy Spirit.

Together with prayer, we need to open our hearts to the will of God, to be ready to listen to what the Spirit is saying, to throw off the chains that bind us to old memories, pre-established notions, prejudices and suspicion. Pope Paul VI declared in Rome, in 1967, in the presence of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I:

The Spirit produces another fruit which is a prerequisite for our drawing closer to one another: change of heart (*U.R.* 7). Without this effort, which must be unceasing, to be faithful to the Holy Spirit who transforms us in the likeness of his Son, there can be no true lasting brotherhood. It is only by becoming sons in the Son that we can also truly become in a mysterious manner brothers of one another.⁸

It is this change in attitude that we need in order to make real progress up to the heights of the ecumenical mountain. And this change of heart we cannot leave to others. It is for each one to take this challenge to heart, so that we may see in Church relations the kind of miracle that we have witnessed this past year in the European context - a great leap forward just when it is least expected.

NOTES

1. *The Tablet*, 13th January 1990, p. 35.
2. Allocution of Pope John XXIII at the opening of the Second Vatican Council, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. LIV, 1962, p. 792.
3. Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity *Information Service*, n. 44, 1980/3-4, p. 90.
4. Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity *Information Service*, n. 59 1985/3-4, p. 5.
5. *Ibid*, p. 3.
6. *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 29, 1990.
7. cf. *The Final Report of ARCIC-I*, in the section "Authority in the Church", nos. 19-23; the 1972 *Malta Report* of the Lutheran/Catholic dialogue, n. 66, and the 1981 report of the same dialogue *Ministry in the Church*, nos. 67-73; and the 1986 Methodist/Catholic document *Towards a Statement on the Church*, nos. 39-75.
8. Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity *Information Service*, 1967/3, p. 17.

(His Excellency, Archbishop Edward Idris Cassidy, A.C. is President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.)

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