

# Together

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# Christ

*Vol 4 No 16 Oct 1986*

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We thank all our contributors for the richness of the material they have produced for us, also our subscribers for constant support and prayers.

**YOUR SUBSCRIPTION ALWAYS WELCOME!**

**OFFICERS OF THE AREA ECUMENICAL COMMISSION**

The Rt Rev. C. J. Henderson,      Very Rev. Canon W. Clements

Sister Rosemary, (Secretary)

Mr. S.M. Ratcliff,

THE JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES BEGINS WITH BUT A SINGLE STEP -

so says an old proverb.

If the journey to full unity seems long and its destiny remote, don't be discouraged. Remember the proverb! A regular recommendation by our Ecumenical Commission is: TAKE ONE STEP FORWARD - NOW.



The Commission's visit to Bexleyheath, described in this issue, indicates what sort of step this might be; the "ecumenical memoirs" show the steps that have been taken over the years to bring us to our present position, and Canon Corbishley's article assures us of the goal - "full visible unity in life and mission of all Christ's people."

We also think of steps or stages in spirituality - Sister Elizabeth indicates important aspects of the spirituality of the Desert Fathers. We walk back in history with Sister Catherine to gain a valuable insight into the times of James I.

As always, our contributors deserve our deep gratitude for their hard work and generosity in sharing with us the fruits of their study and experience. We must keep on taking steps on the path to unity for it is Christ who beckons us forward to the ministry of healing wounds and divisions, and to the unity which Will truly reflect that wonderful unity in the Trinity - "May they all be one as you are in me and I am in you." (John 17: 21) what will your single step be?

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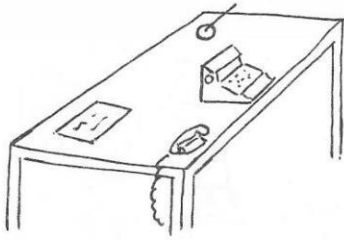
This is our last issue for 1986 and so it is appropriate to say to all our contributors and readers that you Will be in our thoughts end prayers in a special way we rejoice in the celebration of Christ's coming among us, and we wish you a blessed Christmas with Christs precioue gifts of peace and unity.

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PLEASE NOTE THE SPECIAL, IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FROM OUR TREASURER ON PAGE 21 RELATING TO THE INCREASE IN PRICE AND REDUCTION IN NUMBERS OF ISSUES FOR 1987.

## WHAT SORT OF UNITY?

"Don't you get bored with being in an office all day; wouldn't you



prefer to be doing some pastoral work?" This, slightly summarised, is the double-barrelled question that I often get asked, sometimes perhaps as a conversational starter, since I have been working as the Secretary for the Committee for Christian Unity. My reply, at greater or lesser length according to circumstances,

always to say that I regard my work as being entirely pastoral even though it is not parochial - which is not at all the same word - and that I am by no means in an office all day. Whether I would be bored if I was is a question that, in nearly eight years, I have had no chance of answering.

Bishop Alan Clark was on the mark when he described me a year or two ago as a travelling salesman for ecumenism. For my work takes me round the country, attending meetings and conferences and talking to groups of Christian people of all kinds. I say "talking", but in fact I spend at least as much of time listening to views and questions and so getting an insight into the hopes and fears of Christians who are involved in the unity movement. Those last words are important, for with rare exceptions those Christians still opposed to the ecumenical movement do not come anywhere near meetings addressed by the likes of me. So in this article I am talking to people who are not only well disposed to ecumenism but sufficiently concerned about it to give up their leisure for this kind of work.

Yet the question, or the pair of questions which I find myself asking more rather than less as time goes on is this: "What sort of unity do we want?" and more radically: "Do we really want unity at all?" Officially, there is no doubt that the answer to the second question is a clear "yes". When the churches in England made their official responses to the Ten Propositions for Christian Unity, which had been published in 1976, all endorsed Proposition One, which stated that the full, visible unity in life and mission of all Christ's



*Bishop Alan Clark*

people was the will of God. (If one meditates on the implication of the words "full visible unity" it goes some way towards answering the first question as well. But that is taking us too ahead for the moment.)

Where my doubts begin is when we come to ask whether the people of the churches have the same understanding as their leaders; and often I have been forced to the conclusion that they have not. Always excepting the last-ditchers in all our churches who remain totally opposed to the ecumenical movement as it now is, one can say that all Christians rejoice in the remarkable development of friendship between the churches ecumenical work I myself have met with a personal kindness and understanding that cannot be over-praised; and beyond the personal level I have seen a coming-together of the different Christian churches that would have been impossible to imagine a few decades ago.

No one, I believe, fails to rejoice in this; no one would want to go back on it. Indeed most people would regard any attempt to do so as almost a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, whose work has seldom been seen more palpably than in the growth of unity among Christians in this century. So what, then, am I worrying about?

My fear is that there are many people who, even if unconsciously, are being tempted now to rest on their oars rather than continue the hard work of completing the course. It is excellent for Christians to look back on the past and give thanks to God for what has been achieved. But I take very much a saying of Bishop Donald Coggan a decade or so ago, that we must use the past as a springboard and not as a sofa. The good is proverbially the enemy of the best, and there is some danger that the good relations we have built up may be the enemy of the search for full unity. "We have done very well; we are all friendly now; do we really need anything more?" These are words that I hear a little too often for comfort.

Now I think that we - for I take it that the great majority of my readers are Roman Catholics - need to understand the reasons that lie behind what I call the ecumenism of good relations. We are the late-comers in this field of work, our beginnings dating for the most part only from Vatican II. In fact sometimes people notice that Roman Catholics are the optimists of the ecumenical movement; for we have not yet known failure.

Others have. In 1972, at a time when Catholics were only beginning to get involved in things ecumenical, the first stage of the Anglican/Methodist scheme of union narrowly failed to win sufficient acceptance

in the Church of England General Synod. Ten years later the Proposals for a Covenant among four English Churches did not come to fruition.

And if the past has had its failures, the future has its obstacles which may look daunting; this time Roman Catholics are very much involved. To take the highly important Anglican/RC dialogue, the work of ARCIC as an instance. You have only to mention the question of the ordination women on the one hand, or of some questions concerning the use of papal authority on the other to be reminded of the hard work that lies ahead of us. It may be tempting to fall back on our sofa of past achievement. To say in effect that we have been brought a long way; may it not be enough for the present at least to stay as we are, to worship, to receive communion together, to witness together and to let another generation, in a different atmosphere, take up the work that remains

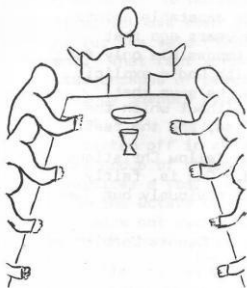
It must be added that some Christians would go further than this. They would alter my last sentence by omitting all references to possible future work. They believe not so much that no further theological agreement is possible as that it is not desirable; that our present diversity gives glory to God; that they almost fear any greater unity because it might lead to uniformity and a lessening of freedom.

There are opinions here which must be respected, though in fact some of them have been anticipated. The present Pope has made his own the principle of unity without absorption, and prominent churchmen and theologians have spoken frequently enough about the diversity that they see as one of the characteristics of a united church. I think that Roman Catholics in the past, and some in the present, have allowed too little for diversity and freedom. Not a little of the unease in some quarters with liturgical developments is due to a nostalgia for a golden age when "everything was the same" all over the world. Like a lot of nostalgia, notably that for the long, hot summers of one's childhood, this one often owes more to imagination than to memory, but there it is.

But I think we in turn are entitled to ask some of our brethren whether they are entirely consistent in their emphasis on diversity. The reactions to the Lima paper on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry show a great deal of understanding that more hard theological work remains to be done. Before that, while the spotlight of public attention on the debate about the Proposals for a Covenant in this country was focussed on the General Synod of the Church of England, we need to remember that a substantial minority in the United Reformed Church declared its opposition to the episcopal form of government being proposed. In other words, we may

get on very well with Christians whose theology differs from ours in serious matters, but the differences stubbornly remain.

When we speak of Christian unity, we are forced back to the words of our charter, in the prayer of Jesus to his Father at the Last supper. The Lord prayed not that his followers might get on very well with one another, but that they might be one, and one with the unity he had with his Father. I never get tired of pointing out that this is a daring



comparison that only he could have made. But we need to remember that this comparison has two wings to it, both of which need our attention.

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us of the diversity that exists within the godhead, a diversity which we should rejoice in when we find it within the Body of Christ. The failure of much pre-conciliar Catholicism to tolerate diversity was at root a failure to take seriously the doctrine of the Trinity. At the same time the unity within the Trinity is a very close unity indeed, so close that it cannot be used to justify the "reconciled diversity" which is sometimes used as the description of the sort of unity Christians ought to be aiming at. As the Archbishop of York said, we need to establish the limits of diversity.

Critics of this article may well say that I have spent rather a lot of time on what I find fault with in other people's answers to the question, "What sort of Unity?" without attempting an answer of my own. I have loosed off one barrel at the over-rigid preconciliar Catholic and another at the "reconciled diversity" school of thought, while carefully avoiding (or so it seems) setting up any target of my own for others to shoot at. But the answer is that I have no detailed plan and would very much doubt if anybody has. God, I believe, started us on the path to unity and gave us a work that is one of the great privileges of our generation. But he has the habit of leading us step by step, not of giving us blueprints or target dates.

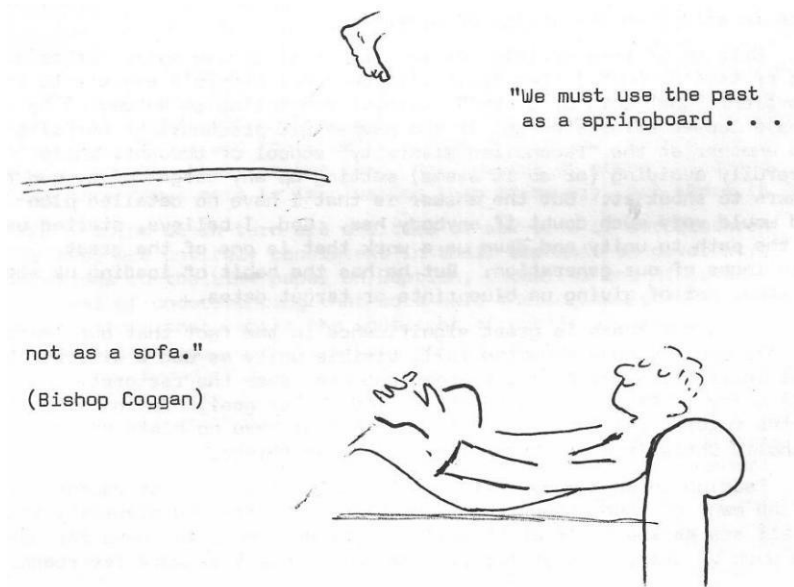
I believe there is great significance in the fact that our leaders in this country have accepted full, visible unity as God's will for them; that internationally ARCIC, to name but one, sees the restoration of full unity in faith and sacramental life as its goal. The details lie in the future, but that is not to say that we have no hints of how Catholic Christians are beginning to look at things.

Reading through many of the most prominent writers of recent years, I find many of them agreed about the blend of unity and diversity that we all see as the fruit of Christ's prayer and about the need for seeing the work of unity as a priority. The second point is more far-reaching than it may appear, for if we once get this conviction of the priority of unity it helps to concentrate the mind on some debatable points. Jean Tillard O.P. said in a lecture in Rome some years ago that "unity between ecclesial groups can be declared impossible only for major reasons which involve some contradiction with God's explicit will for his people ..." A little further on, he says that "there must be a clear distinction between that without which the gospel of salvation would be irremediably falsified, and the rest."

In other words, when we are in dialogue with fellow Christians there are two questions that need to be answered. One is, fairly obviously, "can we agree?"; the other, much less obviously but just as importantly, is "do we need to?"

(Canon) Dennis Corbishley

(Canon Corbishley is the Secretary of the Committee for Christian unity of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.)





## ECUMENICAL MEMORIES, MARK II \*

It would have been about the time that Canon Mitchinson was heading for the Veld (1970)\* that I became involved with the Ecumenical movement. That fact speaks volumes for the power of the Holy Spirit, I mean, two decades of proclaiming Roman Catholic apologetics from a soap box on windy corners provides no sort of apprenticeship for a wouldbe ecumenist.

I started off in a modest way, supporting the joint ventures of our local group of churches. We developed the custom of having four joint services a year, one in each of our churches, with our turn always coming in the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity. At first, our own services were not even held in the church, but in the parish hall and the order of those early services make strange reading now. For example from the first one, for 1973, we read:

"Reading No 1: Mr S Ratcliff of the host parish will read an extract from the 1965 Decree on Ecumenism. It will be followed by a short silence for reflection."

The next year it was even stranger:

"Reading No 1: Mr S Ratcliff of the host parish will read an extract from Archbishop Cowderoy's Pastoral for Rosary Sunday last year.

About two minutes of silent reflection."

I wonder what it was I read? As the good Canon pointed out, Archbishop Cowderoy was not noted for his ecumenical fervour.\*

By 1978 we were having the services in the church. Among the Bidding Prayers for that year, the one given to the Anglican vicar to read was:

"For the Anglican communion's faithful preservation of some Catholic traditions and institutions:

Let us thank our Heavenly Father.

*R.* We give you thanks, O God."

He was a great man. He read it without a tremor, and continued to associate with us afterwards! But minds started broadening after that and now it is usual for a visiting minister to give the homily.

The Bexley Fellowship for Christian Renewal had an organising committee of about six ministers; when our assistant priest was transferred, my wife and I were asked to join them as Catholic members in view of our ecumenical bent. It seemed odd at first, two Catholic lay people with a group of evangelically orientated clergymen, but they accepted us fairly happily. The Fellowship lasted about 8 or 10 years, finally folding up following frequent changes of ministers.

For two years I had the task of arranging for speakers to come and address the monthly public meetings organised by the Fellowship. I remember one such, an evangelical Free Church minister, just back from one of the new African states, giving us a fascinating talk about his experiences in the mission field. When he had finished, he commended to us a pamphlet he had prepared. This document just repeated more or less what he had said, but it also gave his statistics of the religious affiliations of the local population, to which he had tactfully not referred in his talk. I don't remember the exact figures, but they went something like this:

Animists	47%
Mohammedans	44%
Catholics	7%
Christians	2%

Very ecumenical! But this only capped something I had heard the very same day about a Roman Catholic priest who doubted that any non-Roman Catholic would be saved!

Perhaps there is room for just one more memory from those days. Our most successful venture was the introducing to an audience of about 400 in the local Anglican church of a musical gospel feature called "The Invitation", presented by a team called "Galilee." During the interval the leading dancer came and greeted me and we discussed the performance thus far. She told me afterwards that someone had approached her and said: "Don't you know that that man you kissed is a Roman Catholic?" to which she replied: "Oh dear, I have done worse than that, I have prayed with him!"

A little after the Fellowship ceased to function, we were invited by our Dean to represent the Deanery on the Area Ecumenical Commission. As I have said, minds are becoming more open and I find the post of treasurer on that Commission far less adventurous and demanding than the earlier activities, as befits my advancing years. But the goal remains the same.

Sidney Ratcliff

\* cf. "Ecumenical memoirs" by Canon Edward Mitchinson;  
Together In Christ No 12, Oct. 1985.

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*'That they all may  
be one'*



## THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE REIGN OF JAMES I 1603-25

In England the Reformation had resulted in the monarchy's assumption of supremacy over the Church, which became the ecclesiastical department of the State. In secular and religious matters the Crown was now supreme and this supremacy was welcomed by the vast majority of Englishmen. The Elizabethan Settlement of the Church imposed a system requiring conformity but designed "not to make windows into men's souls". It was the failure of this settlement to satisfy the demands of a vocal minority of Englishmen which led to the unsettled condition of religion in England at the beginning of the Stuart period, 1603. Moreover, political opposition to Tudor government found in the religious dissatisfaction the banner under which to express its political and social ambitions. At first these two lines of criticism of the Crown's supremacy were distinct, but by the end of the Elizabethan reign they were coming together and by the time of the Civil War they had merged, only to separate again when victory over the King had been achieved.

The seventeenth century in England gives us the story of the rise, eclipse and resurrection of Anglicanism. This fluctuation was very largely due to the close association of the Church and Crown under the Stuarts. The members of that dynasty were essentially foreigners with Roman Catholic queens, and their disasters were largely due to that double fact, together with a certain infatuated and obstinate temperament that seemed characteristic and ineradicable. The Church accepted their theory of divine right, which logically included legitimism, absolutism and passive obedience, and identified the seat of authority in the Church with the throne itself. The Stuarts on their side saw in the Church the mainstay of their rule - "No bishop, no king."

The seventeenth century was a time of great change - rise in population, economic change, the rise of the middle class, changes in authority and above all changes in the Church. Pressure for change was felt at the time of James I's accession to the throne in 1603. The way was, however, prepared for this during the reign of Elizabeth.

James was a Calvinist and he was welcomed by the Puritans (those who wanted reform within the Established Church.) On his way south from Scotland he was presented with the Millenary Petition, so called because it was supposed to represent the views of a thousand clergy men. It asked for the abolition of certain "abuses" in public worship, such as the use of a ring in marriage and the sign of the cross at Baptism, the wearing of a surplice and the rite of Confirmation. James' main concern was his own security and survival and so he cleverly "put it off" until he had time to think. The

petition was well calculated to appeal to James; it made no extreme demands: Archbishop Whitgift saw to that. James was known to have a high opinion of his own ability as a theologian.

"The Hampton Court Conference was called in 1604 to discuss the petition. James presided over the Conference. This Conference marked the end of the first great Puritan effort to obtain ascendancy in England. The Conference lasted three days and it was perfectly clear that James was on the side of the Established Church and that he expected others to conform, crying out that if they failed to do so 'I will harry them out of the land or else do worse.' "



*(Church History of Britain, by T. Fuller)*

The positive results of the Conference were a few minor additions to the Prayer Book, including the last part of the Catechism and the plan for a new translation of the Bible, which appeared in 1611 and is known as the Authorised Version.

Some Puritans in disappointment fled to Holland and on September 6, 1620 sailed from Plymouth in "The Mayflower" to New England.

In the same year 141 canons were drawn up by Convocation and confirmed by the king. James saw himself as Head of the Church and so with power to pass these canons. This was technically right, but it did not endear him to the Commons.

The man who did most to strengthen the organisation of the Church after the Hampton Court Conference was Richard Bancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury. It was he who had developed the High Commission Court for the purpose, and when his proposals were defeated in Parliament, he carried them through by his visitatorial system organised with the power of the Court behind him. He was merciful to the Puritans and maintained that the clergy were only nonconformist through ignorance. If, on the other hand, he succeeded in placing coercive power in the hands of the bishops, he also showed considerable sympathy for the clergy, who at this time were in great poverty. They were mostly paid a servant's wage. The remedies adopted were the uniting of benefices and the partial restoration of tithing in kind.

James, himself, was sympathetic and did not rob the Church as his predecessors had done, but restored ecclesiastical property where he could. He appointed Bishops to vacant sees. Anglicanism entered upon a phase of optimism.

The Anglican Church was steadily consolidating its position under the leadership of Bancroft, Hooker and Andrewes. Scholarly, devout, dignified, conservative, the Anglican Church stood for the ideals which appealed most

to the new King. Though the son of a Catholic, James had little sympathy for the papal party, whose loyalty he suspected. He had enough of the Scottish Presbyterianism to know that Puritanism would do him no good. He therefore entered into a close alliance with the established Church which he found ready enough to support the theories and policies which he held as important. In the eyes of the King, episcopacy and monarchy stood together. The King ruled by divine right and it was the duty of the Church to support him as he would support the Church. "The country had one day to learn the corollary 'No King, no Bishop'." (*History of the Church in England, by J. Moorman*).

On the death of Bancroft in 1611, Abbott was appointed Archbishop. He was a Calvinist. James thought that he would be the right man to win over the Scottish to his proposals of a revived episcopacy. However, he was a sign of the weakness yet to come. He proved to be a severe Puritan and he only widened the breach that Bancroft was beginning to heal.

Lancelot Andrewes was a leading figure in the Church of the day, being successively Bishop of Chichester, Ely and Winchester. J. W. Wand says of him : "He loved everything pertaining to worship, from the smallest prayer to the last candle." "As a scholar he had no equal in the English Church. He converted Isaac Casaubon to Anglicanism." (*History of the Modern Church by J.W.Wand*).

Cardinal Bellarmine of the Catholic Church attacked the Oath of Allegiance. James, "the wisest fool in Christendom", attempted to answer him but failed. Andrewes was called in, and in his *Tortura Torti*, he helped to maintain the Anglican Theology on that high level to which Hooker and Jewel had raised it.

George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, rose to power in the reign of James. He tried to arrange a marriage alliance between the Prince of Wales and a Spanish princess. This alliance would have to mean toleration for Catholics. On the grounds of religion it did not succeed.

William Laud, Dean of Gloucester, saw his role as an ecclesiastic working through the King. He was influenced by Abbott, who encouraged ecclesiastics to be courtiers like himself. Laud was ambitious and tried to support the King in order to be favoured. However, Anglican ecclesiastics at court were not respected by laymen. Laud was one of the chief Arminians. This was a group, taking its name from a Dutch theologian, Arminius, which appeared as a definite school of churchmanship within the ranks of the Anglican clergy. In essence their position stemmed from an attempt to find a half-way house between Protestantism and Catholicism. This was always a clerical movement. Their program involved magnifying the power of bishop and priest, bringing order into ritual and insisting on the laws of the Church.

Whereas Puritans wished to rid themselves of Rome and all its works and to introduce a lay element into the government of the Church, the Arminians desired the outward order of the Roman Church without the Pope, and the principle of episcopal authority throughout the Church under the godly prince.

Under James, the Arminians made little headway. James, for all his hatred of Presbyterianism, was a Calvinist theologian and in 1618, he personally instructed the English representatives of the Synod of Dort, which had been called by the Dutch Calvinists, to crush their own Arminians. Although James looked with favour on the Arminians' view of royal supremacy, he never promoted them to high offices in the Church.

Laud insisted that Bishops reside in their diocese. The worldliness of so many of the Jacobean Bishops and their greed and secular interests led many sincere men to doubt the state of the Established Church.

James' reign came to an end in 1625 leaving the unsettled question- "Who rules the Church?" - King, ministers, Bishops? James held to the notion of Divine Right. James kept putting off decisions and in a dishonest way, he found escape routes in hunting, sickness and recreation. His main objective was personal survival. His successor had to suffer the consequences of this. Outwardly the established Church seemed supreme and the ordinary citizen conformed. "He might grumble at the government, but as letters and diaries of the time show, he continued the everyday round of life unaware of revolutionary ferment and usually unconcerned with greater issues." (*W. A. Barker, Religion and Politics*) Unknown to themselves, the Puritan preachers were fostering an individualism, which working beneath the surface, was to burst forth in 1640.

In some ways, James strengthened the Anglican Church. At the end of Elizabeth's reign there was a stable situation, but people were waiting for change. By 1603 the Church of England was well established. However, there was dissatisfaction - the poverty of the Church, so much property 'assed to lay hands, clergy serving more than one district and thereby acquiring extra money and the ignorance of the clergy was all adding to the dissatisfaction. James strengthened the Church by putting an end to plundering Church property. He forbade Bishops to sell Church property from their sees. He filled vacant sees. He refused money for appointments to ecclesiastical offices. The Puritans wanted to take property from Bishops and give it to lower clergy. The King backed the Bishops against the Puritans.

The Puritans were born of discontent with the Elizabethan settlement. With the failure of the Millenary Petition, the Puritans lost ground. James disliked the Catholics, and the Gunpowder Plot widened the division. He was

regarded by Papists and Puritans as their deadly foe. From 1611 onwards under George Abbot there was a lessening of tension. However the controversies of Anglicans and Puritans continued during James' reign. James brought a measure of order and peace to the Church unknown since before the Reformation. "By reasoned discussion and minor compromises and by distinguishing between godly and subversive Puritans, he won over the majority of Nonconformists. His episcopal appointments reflect this emphasis on moderation. His Bishops did not arouse much enthusiasm, but neither did they arouse hatred." (*James I, by Houston*).

James protected the Church courts against the common lawyers and time was taken to decide whether cases came under temporal or spiritual jurisdiction.

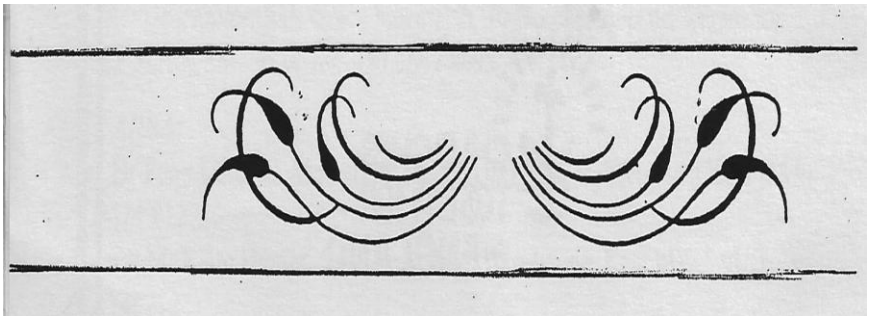
"In the 1630s Englishmen would look back on James' reign as the Golden Age of the English Church, during which time a sublime vernacular Bible was produced, learning and godliness flourished and preachers as diverse as Andrewes, Preston and Donne received royal encouragement. There were no harsh controversies over ceremonies and Church government. Criticisms, of course, there were, but these by and best seen as signs of vigour, not chronic discontent." (*James I, Houston*).

Sister Catherine

(Sister Catherine is a Sister of Mercy at the Convent, Bridge Gate, Derby. She was formerly Secretary of the S.E. Area Ecumenical Commission.)

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"Whoever would bear reconciliation  
cannot waste a moment finding out  
who was wrong and who was right;  
we must forgive, and move on."



## THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE DESERT FATHERS

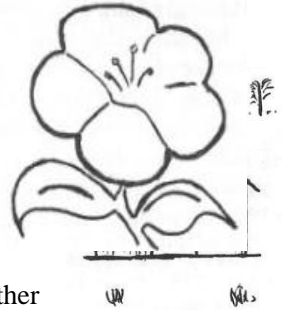


The Church has seen many revolutions. People have heard God calling them, and have been led into an ever increasing variety of life styles. In this way the Spirit is expressed in human lives more and more richly. Some three hundred years after the death of Jesus, a revolution happened in the Church: men and women began to leave civilized life and move into the Egyptian desert in an attempt to live a life focussed on God. Gradually these hermits began to share their life with one another, in worship, fellowship and mutual guidance. From Egypt they spread abroad to Syria, Asia minor, Italy, Ireland and Gaul. Their way of life became the foundation for the future development of Christian lifestyles in the East and in the West. Their pithy sayings were popular in the Middle Ages, and they are worth examining today.

First, each man built his hut. This was the place where he would discover himself and discover God. "A brother went to Father Moses and asked him for a good word. And the elder said to him : 'Go, sit in your hut, and your hut will teach you everything' ". It was not a good idea to move house. "An elder said : 'Just as a tree cannot bear fruit if it is often transplanted, so neither can a monk bear fruit if he frequently changes his abode'" If you stayed away from your hut, you would die like a fish out of water: "Father Anthony said, 'Just as fish die if they remain on dry land, so monks, remaining away from their huts, lose their determination to pray' ".



However, you had to learn more about your new lifestyle somehow. You had to go and ask advice from those older and wiser than you. Dorotheus of Gaza said : "To stay in one's hut is one half; and to go and see the old men is the other half." It was a good idea to start off living as a disciple of one of them, so you could get a good grounding which would last a lifetime. "Father Isaiah said to those who were making a good beginning by putting themselves under the direction of the holy fathers, 'As with purple dye, the first colouring is never lost'" And later on, if you began to lose your sense of direction and became hardened, it was a good idea to go and join a wiser person than you: "A brother asked Father Paesios, 'What should I do about my soul, because it is insensitive and does not fear God?'. He replied, 'Go and join a man who fears God, and live near him. He will teach you also to fear God'". But, in general you should work out your own spiritual way, ascetic or less so, according to your temperament. "Father Mark once said to Father Arsenius, 'It is good, is it not, to have nothing in your hut that gives you pleasure? For example, I once knew a brother who had a little wild flower that came up in his hut and he pulled it out by the roots.' 'Well' said Father Arsenius, 'That is all right. But each man should act according to his own spiritual way. And if one were not able to get along without the flower, he should plant it again.' " Above all, you should trust your own judgement, and not let an unwise person harm you by his guidance: "A brother asked Father Poeman, 'I am losing my soul, living near my father; should I go on living with him?' The old man knew that he was finding this harmful, and he was surprised that he even asked if he should stay there. So he said to him, 'Stay if you want to.' The brother left him, and stayed on. He came back again and said, 'I am losing my soul.' But the old man still did not tell him to leave. He came back a third time and said, 'I really cannot stay there any longer.' Then Father Poeman said, 'Now you are saving yourself; go away and do not stay with him any longer.' He added, 'When someone sees that he is in danger of losing his soul, he does not need to ask advice'."



So one should make prudent decisions about people, but one should refuse to condemn them. Our own sin is all we are to condemn: "One of the brothers had sinned, and the priest told him to leave the community. So then Father Bessarion got up and walked out with him saying, 'I too am a sinner'. We should love everyone as if they were saints: "Father Poeman said, 'That man hates evil who hates his own sins, and looks upon every brother as a saint and loves him as a saint.'" We should all think first of one another's

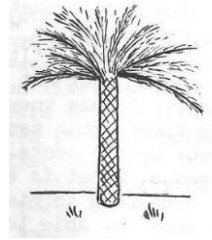
needs: "A brother brought a bunch of grapes to Father Macarius, but he took it to another brother who seemed more sick. The sick man thanked God for his brother's kindness, but took it to someone else, and he did the same. So the bunch of grapes was passed all around the huts, scattered over the desert, until at last it reached Father Macarius again."

Such generosity was not achieved without a struggle, and it was never achieved completely. "Father Abraham said : 'The passions live. In the saints they are only to some extent bound.'"

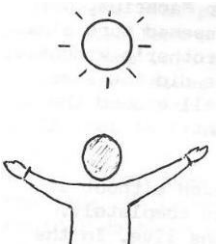


Struggle was constant, and to be expected. "A brother who was disturbed in mind went to Father Theodore of Pherme and told him he was troubled. Father Theodore said, 'Tell me now, how many years have you worn the habit?' The brother answered, 'Eight'. The old man replied, 'Believe me, I have worn the habit seventy years, and have not yet found peace for a single day. Would you have peace in eight?'"

You could best find peace if you remained silent and unknown: "Once the judge of the province came to see Father Simon. The old man took off his leather girdle, and climbed a palm tree and began to prune it. When the people came up to him they said, 'Where is the old man who lives in solitude here?' Father Simon answered, 'There is no solitary here'. The judge went away." It was better to be silent even than to discuss spiritual things. "Three fathers used to go and visit blessed Anthony every year, and two of them used to discuss their thoughts and the salvation of their souls with him, but the third always remained silent, and did not ask him anything. After a long time, Father Anthony said to him, 'You often come here to see me, but you never ask me anything'. He replied, 'It is enough for me to see you, Father!'"



In your silence, prayer could flourish. Prayer would teach you everything: "One of the elders said, 'Pray attentively, and you will soon straighten out your thoughts.' The more space you could create in your life for prayer, the better: "It was also said of Father Arsenius that on Saturday evenings, preparing for the glory of Sunday, he would turn his back on the sun and stretch out his hands in prayer towards heaven, till once again the sun shone on his face. Then he would sit down." But no one should be forced to stay awake and pray: "Some old men came to see Father Poeman and said to him, 'When we see the brothers who are dozing at prayers, should we wake them up so they will be more



watchful?' He replied, 'Well, when I see a brother who is dozing, I put his head on my knees, so he can rest'."

In the end, love was the only thing that mattered, love from the heart: "Father Pambo said, 'If you have a heart, you can be saved'."

Love knows no smallness, no half-measures: "Father Lot came to Father Joseph and said, 'Father, according as I am able, I keep my little rule, and my little fast, my prayer, my meditation and contemplative silence; and according as I am able, I strive to cleanse my heart of thoughts; now what more should I do?' The old man rose up in reply and stretched out his hands to heaven, and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire. He said: 'Why not be totally changed into fire?'"



We could never live like these fourth-century people of the desert, but let us aim, like them, to be changed into fire.

Sources: *The Desert Fathers*, trans. Helen Waddell.

*The Wisdom of the Desert*, trans. Thomas Merton .

*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Benedicta Ward.

Sister Elizabeth Rees

(Sister Elizabeth is a member of the Parish Team at Sts. Mary of the Angels, Bayswater, London.)

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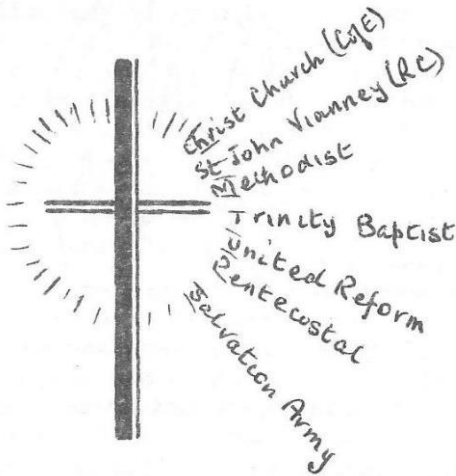
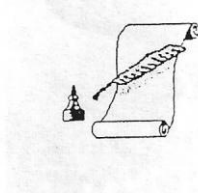
"WHAT KIND OF A CHRISTIAN ARE YOU?"

Some are like wheelbarrows — they do not move unless pushed.  
Some are like kites — they fly away unless kept on a string.  
Some are like kittens — — — — — content if they are fed and petted.  
Some are like balloons — — — go off with a bang at the slightest prick.  
Some are like trailers — — — — — only travel when towed.  
Some are like custard — — — — — they fall out over trifles.  
But some are like good watches — open faced, pure gold, quietly busy and full of good works.

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"In the desert of the heart, when all doors seem closed, the moment comes when without knowing how, you are brought back to what is uniquely essential: in following Christ, you are there 'to give your life, to serve, not to

be served' (Matt. 20: 28). No one can find a stronger meaning to existence, nor a greater love. (from a Letter from Taizé)



### THIS IS WHAT IS HAPPENING IN BEXLEYHEATH

The S.E. Area Ecumenical Commission visited the parish of St. John Vianney, Bexleyheath last June, and they were delighted to hear of the ecumenical progress which has been made, and of the hope for even more in the future.

The Churches mentioned have joined together to form the Bexleyheath Broadway Fellowship of Churches. The following list of joint activities was included in a leaflet prepared

by the parish and distributed at all Sunday masses on June 8th:

Regular meetings of the lay committee  
monthly meetings of all the local clergy  
Combined celebration of the great Christian Festivals —

- Carol singing at the Broadway Centre
- Stations of the Cross in Holy Week
- Good Friday Procession of Witnesses
- Easter Sunrise Service at Gravel Hill
- Whitsunday celebration in Danson Park

Lenten Housegroups

Week of Prayer and Annual Service for Christian Unity

Exchange of pulpits in Christian Unity week

Joint publicity for Christmas and Easter services

Co-ordinated effort for Christian Aid Week

Regular prayer meetings

Day of discussion, prayer and reflection for the local Clergy

Inter-Church "Mastermind" Quiz evening

Annual "Ecumenical" Barn Dance

The leaflet also posed the question : "Do you have misgivings about the Catholic Church's role in the search for unity?"

Reassurance followed : "Take heart from the words of the Holy Father":  
'From the beginning of my ministry as Bishop of Rome, I have insisted that the engagement of the Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement is irreversible and that the search for unity was one of its pastoral priorities.'  
(Pope John Paul to the World Council of Churches at Geneva)

Parishioners were given this invitation: "If you would like to ask questions, need reassurance, or would like to find out more, come to the follow-up meeting in the hall on onday, 23rd June at 8 p.m.

On that occasion, many questions were indeed put forward and doubts were frankly expressed. Responses were given by the parish priest and members of the Ecumenical Commission, with all present having the opportunity of sharing their views.

The commitment of the Catholic Church to ecumenism was strongly affirmed. One or two people spoke of areas of disquiet, including: the fear of watering down the faith of Catholics; misunderstanding about the use of the term "transubstantiation"; whether or not it is believed "that the Catholic Church is the one, true Church."

For future action, the meeting decided to concentrate on developing a few particular areas, — Prayer; Seeking God together; Continuation of Housegroups; exchange of pulpits; inviting another Christian as Observer on the Parish Council; social functions, including walks.

We hope this account of a visit to one parish will illustrate the nature and purpose of such a visit. The Commission tries to support and encourage existing activity in the ecumenical field, or to suggest initiatives that may be taken. Everyone is especially urged to pray daily for the fulness of unity.

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## WANTED

More people to inspire others with confidence

Fewer to throw cold water on anyone taking even one step in the right direction

More people to point out what's is right with the world

Fewer to keep harping on what's wrong with the world

More people to be interested in lighting candles

Fewer to blow them out.

## A SERMON ON THE A-MOUNT



When Together in Christ was in its embryo stage about four and a half years ago, the planners hoped that the proposed price of 40p per copy would be adequate to cover the cost of production and distribution. Inflation being what it is, this soon proved not to be the case, but as we are in the business of disseminating information and not in the business of selling magazines, we were content to shake our begging bowls to make up the deficits.

As all our contributors, typists, promoters and distributors give their services free, the major cost of production is for printing the bulletin, and during the last four years the cost of paper and other printing sundries have been increased on several occasions: in fact the situation for the year 1987 is such that shake we our begging bowls never so vigorously, we will not make ends meet.

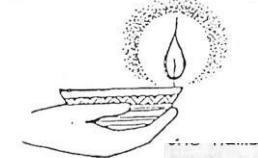
The situation was considered at a full meeting of all the Diocesan Ecumenical Commissions on 13 September when the available options were considered. The following plan for 1987 was decided:

- a) To increase the price of each issue to 50p, and
- b) To reduce the number of issues for the year to three.

It should be noted that the increased cost will still not cover our total expenditure, thus the omission of one issue will obviously reduce our potential deficit. It was our subscribers' cash will be reduced.

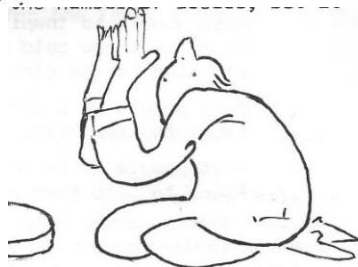
This is not a fixed the whole question will time.

Needless to say, no one at the meeting liked this decision. No one wanted to increase the cost or



noted that over the year outlay on the magazine

pattern for the future — be reviewed in a year's



reduce the number of issues, was recognized that life being what it these days this was the best solution.

Together in Christ has been produced to a very high standard and it has been commended by our own Archbishop, other bishops and the secretary for the Committee for Christian Unity. We have been well served in this regard by The Winchester Press. The question of reducing this standard was not even considered.

Obviously an increase in the number of subscribers would help to ease the situation and so any missionary work you can do in this regard (one, two, ten extra readers?) would be very welcome. Also, if you wanted to pay more than 50p for your copy, no one would prevent you

With so much new material coming along we feel that the need for our publication is as great as ever, and so, first things first, we invite you to pray for the continuing effectiveness of Together in Christ, adding at the end of your prayer that of St Thomas More:

"The things I pray for, good Lord, give me the grace to work for."

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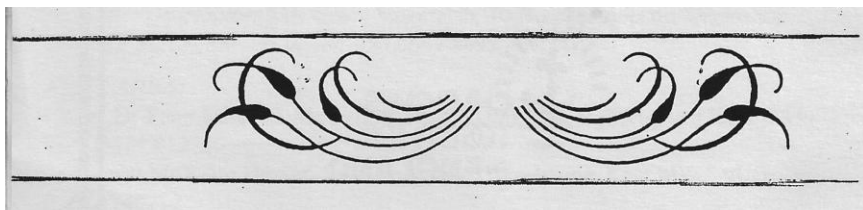
#### AGREEMENT WAS REACHED. .

When the summer holiday season was drawing to its close, with a spell of beautiful weather to give us a healthy tan and touch of sunburn, came the news that ARCIC II, meeting at Llandaff from 26 August to 4 September had completed its agreed statement on Justification. With excitement and joy, we await its publication.

The subjection of "Justification by Faith" considered to be "the article by which the Church stands or falls" has been considered 'in the wider context of the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of the Church. So, the document is called "Salvation and the Church", with the word "justification" absent from the title.

In commenting on the report, the editorial in The Tablet queried: "Is the Reformation over?" Something to think about there!

Let us praise God for the work of the Holy Spirit enlightening the minds and hearts of the members of ARCIC II who tackled this daunting task, and pray that this work may be received with humility and understanding as a giant stride forward on the unity pathway.



## "VIEWS FROM THE PEWS"

This is the title of the eagerly awaited report of the response to the Lent '86 course. The book will be launched on October 27th, so watch out for its appearance shortly afterwards.

### DAY OF PRAYER, 13 SEPTEMBER

There is a hymn which starts: "O for a thousand tongues to sing your praises with": well I could paraphrase that and say for a lot more space to write about the Day at Emmaus House. But I have only one tongue, and only one page of this bulletin, so I must be selective.

Aubrey Pallatt (Baptist), David Lemmon (Methodist), Brian McHenry (Anglican), Mavis Richmond (URC) and Pauline Sexton (Roman Catholic) formed a panel which dealt with a series of questions for the first session. The questions were clearly carefully selected and allocated to each speaker as representing a major area of importance to him/her and on which we would wish to understand more. I mean, such questions as the authority of Scripture (dealt with by Aubrey Pallatt), the Anglican Church and the Sacraments (Brian McHenry) and so on which in the past have provoked so much heated and unproductive argument are given a new understanding when calmly expounded in an atmosphere of charity. That's what ecumenism is all about, isn't it?

The rest of the morning was taken up with the AGNI for Commission members and a video show for others.

The afternoon was devoted to a series of meditations based on that lovely passage from St Paul's epistle to the Philippians, Ch 2, vv 1-1. Each of the morning speakers, with the exception of Brian McHenry, who was replaced by Jean Griffiths (Anglican) conducted a 20 minute meditation, and how moving it was.

David Lemmon provided one of the highlights for me. In dealing with verses 5-8, he told us that one Christmas someone gave his Church a crib and wanted it placed on the altar. The question then arose, what to do with the crucifix? It was eventually placed on top of the crib, and David said it transformed their Christmas, bringing out the fact that Christmas is a



preparation for Easter. He pointed out that the spot where all Christians met was at the foot of the Cross. Great stuff!

But my abiding memory was provided by Mavis Richmond. It was fascinating the way she brought the statue of Christ the King over the altar into her thought, and at the end she had every man-jack of us raising our hands to heaven to confess that: "Jesus Christ is Lord, the glory of God the Father." (v.11)

Thanks to the Committee for providing such a generous feast, and a special tribute to Bishop Henderson who, as master of Ceremonies, so ably squeezed the quart of goodies provided by his Committee into the pint pot of time available.