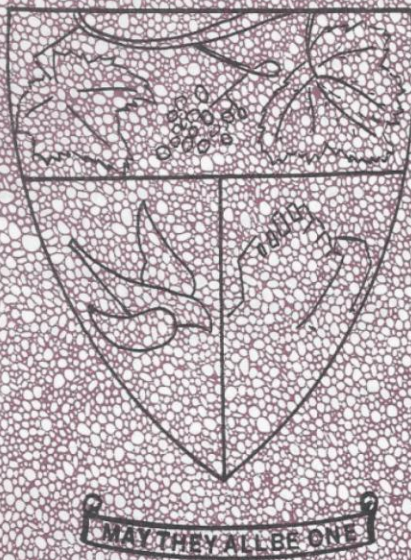


Together in Christ *50p*



Vol 6 No 21

June 1988

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Together in Christ is published by the Ecumenical Commission for the Diocese of Southwark.

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Price 50p per copy, Annual subscription £1.50
For postal subscribers postage extra.

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The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor nor of the Ecumenical Commission.

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EDITORIAL

Following the historic Inter-Church Conference held at Swanwick last September, and the Swanwick Report which announced the proposals for the way ahead for churches in Britain and Ireland together after 1990, a lot of hard work has been going on to take the matter further. Five working parties were set up - one each for England, Scotland and Wales, and one for Britain and Ireland, the fifth being for Prayer, Education and Formation.

The first four Working Parties mentioned have issued Reports contained in a booklet entitled Reports of *Working Parties on Ecumenical Instruments*, published for the Inter-Church process. If you haven't got a copy, do send for one now!

On the back cover of the booklet, we are told that the Reports "spell out ways in which the spirit which animated Swanwick may bear fruit in the life and relationships of our churches. They set out broad patterns indicative of possible new ecumenical instruments for our several nations. They invite responses, in the light of which the Working Parties will revise their reports and make definitive proposals for the future, which the churches will make decisions on in 1989".

We hope that many responses are pouring in and many prayers going up!

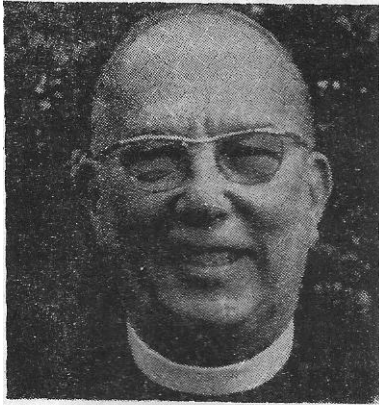
In this (enlarged) issue Canon Clements and Fr Plourde have written with great sensitivity and also with frankness about their ecumenical vocations, Fr Hunt has introduced the 39 Articles to our pages for the first time, - providing a wealth of material to help our understanding of the issue, and Harvey Richardson has given us a most interesting insight into the Methodist Anniversary Celebrations. Other items will serve to build up the picture of ecumenism as it is being lived and developed through local activities. We are most grateful to all contributors and urge you to keep the material flowing in.

For over four years our bulletin has been well served by the Winchester Press. At the beginning of this year, however, Mr Winchester was taken ill, and had to retire. We would like to record our deep gratitude for his meticulous and painstaking work and for the advice he has given us in order to supply a worthy production for our diocese. We assure him of our best wishes and prayers for his recovery and for a happy retirement.

We are indebted to Mr Stratful for printing the February issue at very short notice, and hope he will continue to undertake this work.

ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

The Local Situation— Part 2



Canon Clements

In an earlier article I set out to record, by way of anecdote, my own experience of the progress of ecumenical relations over the years, from CONFRONTATION, through COMPETITION, and CO-OPERATION towards COVENANT and to work for full COMMUNION. This is my story, and it is highly personal. Each has his own tale to tell. Each person and each community is somewhere along that road. Some have hardly started, some are well on the way; for all of us there is still a journey ahead.

Thamesmead

In 1980 I was asked by the Archbishop to become the Catholic parish priest within the Thamesmead Christian Community. The Greater London Council had, fourteen years earlier, published a master plan for building a town for 60,000 people on the abandoned Woolwich Arsenal site and on other reclaimed marshland about fifteen miles east of London on the south bank of the River Thames. From the outset there was a real effort on the part of the various Churches to work together. But the aim was to do more than that. It was to set up ONE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. Obviously there were deep theological and pastoral questions to be debated here, as well as matters of staffing, buildings and finance. We were, in effect, a Local Ecumenical Project. (A *Local Ecumenical Project* is a group of Churches of different denominations working and experimenting together under the watchful eye of a 'Sponsoring Body' composed of local Bishops and equivalent hierarchies. There are 520 such projects in England today. At first Catholics were only willing to become observers, but nowadays, in more and more cases, Catholics are full members.) At Thamesmead we are allowed and expected to experiment prudently, sometimes 'reaching beyond the law' but always needing to feel the support and encouragement of those in authority over us. We need an assurance that we are not "out on a limb" but supported by the whole Church. The whole Church needs to know about us, our ideals and hopes, our successes and our failures, and also the fact that we have a Sponsoring Body over us.

Catholics were first involved in the Thamesmead Christian Community in 1975. The thinking behind this Community was expressed as follows: "Christ's love is for all mankind. Christians ought to love and accept each other in the common task of reaching out to their neighbours with a love inspired by Christ's own love.

The four Churches: Catholic, Anglican, U R C, and Methodist therefore commit themselves:

- a) to build up the visible Christian Community, worshipping and serving within the Church, witnessing and proclaiming the Gospel of Christ in the community,
- b) to serve the wider community from within for its own sake." (The meaning of the term "for its own sake" is still being debated by the team.)

The Clergy Team

From 1970 onwards, the clergy of four denominations in Thamesmead have worked together as a team, with an elected Chairman. We meet regularly every Friday for nearly three hours for worship, transaction of business and theological discussion. It is accepted that we are a team, sharing responsibility. A careful process of selection and appointment according to agreed conventions has been established between the Anglican Church and the Free Churches. The traditional Catholic process, by which the Bishop appoints people himself, consulting whom he wishes, according to Canon Law, does not adjust easily to the ecumenical situation. Over the years, the Archbishop, whilst retaining the right to appoint priests to Thamesmead, has increasingly accepted the need to consult the team beforehand. When a Catholic parish sister has been appointed to work in Thamesmead, the Provincial of her order has offered her on the understanding that she would be a full member of the team, and be accepted by them, after interview.

There are, at present, 11 members of the team:—

- 4 Anglican clergy,
- 3 Catholic priests,
- 1 Catholic parish sister,
- 1 Methodist minister (a lady),
- 1 United Reformed Church minister and
- 1 Anglican lady deacon.

In order that we may grow together in mutual love and understanding as a team, it is not enough that we meet and pray and discuss our work together, though all these are necessary. We must be able to speak from our hearts about things where we differ; about our feelings; about things that hurt us, And, what is even harder, we must be able to listen to each other sensitively, to sympathise and to understand. To each member of the team is appointed another member as an assessor, who meets him from time to time to assess with him his ministry, his work and his commitment to the team and to work for Christian unity. Once a year these two prepare an assessment which is placed before the whole team for discussion. A great deal of honesty and candour is required, the ability to criticise oneself, as well as other people, and to accept criticism generously. To facilitate

our growth together as a team, and our relationship with each other we have a Team Consultant who attends our meetings from time to time, reads our minutes, and so helps us to examine and question our relationships and attitudes, to see whether we are really working as a team, with common objectives and strategy, or merely as a collection of individuals each 'doing his own thing'. Once every two months we go away together for a day of reading and prayer. Once a year we go away for a two-day Conference to re-examine our aims and ideals and to re-assess our performance as a team.

Buildings

We now have quite a complex of buildings scattered over about eight square miles: two Catholic Churches; three Catholic schools, one of which is also a Mass centre; one Anglican Church; one Anglican school; one Church shared by Anglicans and Methodists; and lastly St Paul's Ecumenical Centre, shared by Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists and the United Reformed Church.

Shared Worship

The Ecumenical Centre contains two chapels of identical shape and size, separated by a corridor made up of glass partitions which can be folded back (and in the vision of the architect, one day removed altogether). Each chapel has side rooms, with partitions which can be folded back if necessary to enlarge the worship area. It is a multi-purpose building. Each Sunday, two services are held at 10 a.m. In the Catholic Chapel, Mass is celebrated and the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. In the United Congregation Chapel a Eucharist Service is held for Anglicans, Methodists and members of the United Reformed Church, who are one congregation and who, in spite of the failure of the Covenanting proposals some years ago, accept one another's ministry.

Simultaneous Eucharist

About 20 times a year we celebrate a 'Simultaneous Eucharist' following in essence a form originally agreed with the Sponsoring Body. The altars from the two churches are both placed in one sanctuary with the pulpit in between. The Liturgy of the Word is totally shared, the preacher, alternately Catholic or United Congregation, prepares his sermon in consultation with the other celebrant. For the Liturgy Of the Eucharist, to avoid any suggestion of concelebration, the two ministers officiate at separate altars. For the Eucharistic Prayer we have not yet found a form of words acceptable to all (though we hope to achieve this soon), since I, as a Catholic must use one of the forms approved by the Church without alteration. This was stipulated by the Sponsoring Body, who also said that the Catholic priest must read the Gospel and say the Collect, the prayer over the gifts and the Postcommunion Prayer. At present we use the Eucharistic Prayer for Masses of Reconciliation No 2, the celebrants saying all they can together and

pausing for each other where we have to differ. For the sign of peace, which is placed at the end of the Service, the two congregations are encouraged to mix together, and to continue the celebration over coffee.

Some Catholics still find it hard to accept the 'Simultaneous Eucharist', either in principle or because it is distracting. They either go to Mass elsewhere, or attend our evening Mass. But for those who do come, it has become a rewarding experience. It is worth remembering that it has taken ten years of patient effort to be where we are now.

Church Government

The number of meetings can become wearisome. In 1978 an Ecumenical Council was set up with elected members from each congregation within the Thamesmead Christian Community. This Council has as its task the co-ordination of the overall task of the Church in Thamesmead, and leadership alongside the team. The ideal has only been realised very imperfectly up till the present. Some Catholics are suspicious and do not accept its authority. Each congregation has its own Council or Area meeting.

Intercommunion

My friends who are Anglican or Free Church Ministers tell me that they are often welcomed to Holy Communion in Catholic Churches abroad, and sometimes invited to celebrate the Eucharist, or to concelebrate with the local Catholic priest. The accepted discipline of the Catholic Church that Holy Communion may be administered in certain circumstances to baptised persons who are not Catholics. Catholics may, in some special circumstances, receive Holy Communion from a priest of the Orthodox Church. But there is no circumstance in which a Catholic may receive Holy Communion from, or concelebrate with, an Anglican or Free Church Minister. To do so would imply either (a) that the Minister is accepted as a certainly validly ordained priest, or (b) that whether he is, or is not, is a matter of indifference. The practice clouds the issue and raises false hopes. I do not think it would happen if Catholic priests abroad understood the real situation in England.

Inter Church Marriages

There a time when marriage between a Catholic and a fellow-Christian of another denomination was considered by the Catholic Church to be 'unlawful and pernicious' and only reluctantly permitted. It was feared that the faith of the Catholic partner would be endangered. Nowadays, a different mentality prevails. It is often a matter for rejoicing that two fellow-Christians of differing denominations find so much in common together. *The Association of Inter-Church Families* has been founded to help such partners to make their marriages more fruitful through their differing understanding of the message of Christ.

The Established Church

Somewhere along the road to Christian unity we shall have to face the anomalous position of the Church of England as "by law established in this realm of England". It is part of history - the growth of nationalism and the consequent questioning of the primacy of the Holy See. In practice the supreme authority of any State in secular affairs can co-exist with the supreme authority of a single world wide Church in spiritual matters. With tact and sensitivity and honesty on both sides, the two can be held together in fruitful tension, each challenging the other. It is the exaggerated claims of the one or the other which cause a break. But the solution is not in a State Church. many Christians, inside and outside the Church of England, feel the embarrassment and apparent contradiction of a Christian Church bound by State Law. Others see it as a necessary compromise. I believe that dis-establishment, though painful, is a necessary step on the road to full Communion. The authority and nature of the Church are in question.

The Local Situation

When I mentioned that I was writing an article on the local ecumenical situation in England, a cynical colleague commented: "It won't be a long article." But in fact the local situation is varied and patchy.

The clergy are the local leaders, and much depends on them. Our own Diocesan Ecumenical Commission believes that its first and foremost task is to win their support. I would say that the same is true within the other denominations. But it depends also on every Christian person. An enthusiastic priest can be strongly resisted, and his work undermined, by a few determined people. my own halting progress along the ecumenical road is probably fairly typical. Others have progressed further; some have not yet started. Some priests and some people are still today where I was as a small boy. I must understand and respect them and their beliefs and feelings; especially their feelings. My fellow-clergy of other denominations have exactly the same problem. We are often hindered by those around us, priests and people, who are not ready for the next step. These include immigrants from other countries where the situation is quite different, and who are totally confused by what they find, for example, in Thamesmead.

But I do find that a big change has taken place since the visit of Pope John Paul to England. I was in Canterbury Cathedral on 29 may 1982, when he walked up the aisle with Robert, Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury. A 450 year old schism still divides our two Churches, but on that day, by coming together, praying together, recognising each other's goodness and faith, they effectively, in the words of a newspaper commentator: "closed the door back". No longer can we retreat into our fortresses. We must go on together, seeking that full unity which is God's will. Since the Pope's visit I have sensed a greater openness among priests and people feeling that we really must do more for Christian unity. Another point worth mentioning is that the Pope is a man like us, making progress along the

road. He came to his high office with a long tradition behind him of the faith and suffering of the people of Poland, still persecuted today. But in his position as Pope, he has listened to the whole Church, and his enthusiasm for, and dedication to Christian unity, has visibly increased year by year. This was also true of his predecessors, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul I. But he is still a man and a Pole, keep him in your prayers.

Local Covenants

Since the Pope's visit Catholic Bishops of England and Wales have encouraged their priests and people to enter into Local Covenants to work for Christian unity (cf. Archbishop Bowen's Pastoral Letter dated 21st November 1982)

Lessons Learned

In my ecumenical journey I have learned a few lessons:

1. Unity from Strength

Christian unity is going to come from a position of strength, not weakness. One of the great snags at Thamesmead is that few members of any denomination feel secure and firm in their own faith. They are uprooted from old, familiar, half-understood things. The better we know and explain our beliefs and feelings to each other, the more likely are we to understand one another, to reach agreement on essentials and to accept, with tranquillity and joy, great variety in non-essentials. It is ignorance which breeds insecurity and the feeling of being threatened by the differing beliefs and practices of our separated brothers. I would say that a Local Ecumenical Project should never 'start from cold'. It should start only where the congregations are already settled, and know each other and have moved away from confrontation and competition through co-existence and co-operation, and are now ready to make a real commitment to work for Christian unity.

There is another view that a fresh start from a new situation, unencumbered by settled attitudes and habits, gives new opportunities for growth. All I can say is that my experience at Thamesmead does not bear this out. Whatever we may think and hope about new opportunities, people come as they are, and it is from there that they grow.

2. Tensions

The commitment will involve tensions, sacrifice and suffering. When I was inducted as parish priest of Thamesmead, I made an 'act of faith' in the presence of Bishop Henderson, in the teaching of the Catholic Church, and at the same service, an 'act of commitment' with the rest of the team to work for Christian unity. I see these two as in tension, seeming to pull me apart, as I cling to them like poles of a mystery. Yet the truth lies in reconciling the two poles. Unity is a mystery.

3. Honesty and Openness

We have to be prepared to be very honest with each other. We must be able and willing to say how we feel about God, and about our beliefs, and about each other. It is not enough to say what we *believe*; it is essential to be able to say how we *feel*. And we must be able to listen, and hear, and understand, and sympathise with the feelings, as well as the beliefs, of others. Why all the emphasis on *feelings*? Because we have inherited our divisions. They are 'in our blood'. They are often irrational, but they are there. We have deep-rooted traditions, family loyalties, emotional attachment to old ways. We have inherited stories of past persecution, hatred and injustice, sometimes within living memory, sometimes, as in Northern Ireland, very real even today. These feelings must be brought to the surface and recognised before they can be overcome. This is uncomfortable, but it has to be done.

4. Patience

Because feelings are so deep, we can hurt each other, even unintentionally. There can be setbacks, and we shall be tempted to give up the struggle, to run away back to the herd. We need great patience; we need to remind ourselves all the time that unity is God's will, and must be worked for.

5 Communication

It is no good being in a Local Ecumenical Project if we keep it to ourselves. It is Good News, to be spread abroad. But we must be honest. We should talk of successes and failures, hopes and disappointments, ideals and frustrations. Sometimes, through misunderstanding, our own people may accuse us of watering down the faith, betraying the heritage handed down to us at the price of the blood of the martyrs, and so on. We must go on communicating, explaining ourselves patiently, over and over again. I was doing that just recently, to a group of elderly clergy. One of them said "I admire you for what you are doing, but I couldn't do it myself." I found that a real encouragement; much better than attack or criticism.

6. Study

I should like to mention the Agreed Statements on Eucharist, Ministry and Authority produced by the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), and the Lima Report on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry produced by the World Council of Churches. Both are offered to the Churches for a considered response. Both are the result of immense labour. Yet, so far I have not seen any great general interest among Catholics in these two reports. It would be a tragedy if all this patient study and discussion were ignored and wasted.

7. Prayer

Last, and most important, is prayer. We shall never keep going, and never achieve the goal of unity, without prayer. It is so easy to lose heart and to give up when faced with difficulty. It is so difficult to be honest with ourselves; to face unpleasant truths; to be ready to change ourselves. Only if we keep our inward eye clear, and our heart on fire with love for Christ and His Church, shall we achieve the unity for which He prayed and gave His life.

What of the Future?

Christian unity is a mystery. How it can be achieved is known only to God. But it involves us all being totally faithful to Christ, each following his conscience. For us human beings, as Cardinal Newman reminded us, growth means change, and to be perfect is to have changed often. If we seek Christ together, we shall find ourselves one. may we live to see that blessed day.

(Canon) Bill Clements



METHODISTS CELEBRATE 250 YEARS AFTER JOHN WESLEY'S "CONVERSION"

It is a privilege to be asked to write in *Together in Christ* about the celebrations being observed by the Methodist Church worldwide during the month of May this year.



Harvey Richardson

The Aldersgate Experience

It is an extract from the entry in John Wesley's Journal for Wednesday May 24th 1738, which is at the heart of the celebrations. I quote: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sin, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

These are the words which have been used as witness to John Wesley's 'evangelical conversion'.

They have been described as the experience of grace that was the beginning of Methodism, or the birthday of the movement called Methodism. This is why 24th May is understood rather like a 'red-letter' day for the Methodist Church.

But let's be clear from the outset, this very personal experience of John Wesley was NOT the beginning of Methodism - in no way can it be truly regarded as its birthday. Wesley himself discounts such an idea by referring to the "Holy Club" at Oxford - to which he, his brother Charles, the hymn writer, and other notables belonged - as the first rise of Methodism; and this was much earlier than 1738.

I feel that it must be made clear that the 'Aldersgate Street' experience as noted in John Wesley's Journal is a record of a deeply significant inner spiritual change that revolutionised the life of this one man, this unusually gifted and sensitive Anglican priest. Of course, the way that the People called Methodists followed was (and still is) deeply affected by this inner personal experience of Wesley, but I believe it must be seen for what it was and should not be accredited with honours which are not intrinsic to its nature.

It is quite important to recall that Charles Wesley had already had an essentially similar experience of divine grace three days earlier, while others, notably Howell Harris and George Whitfield, had anticipated them both by as much as two or three years. It is true to say that by May 1738 the wind of the Spirit was already

blowing with its customary wilfulness and the 18th century Evangelical Revival (of which Methodism, however defined, was an important, but not the only, strand) was already under way.

And so, while marking this special time, but not giving it undue credit, what might be the purpose of celebrating the 'Aldersgate Street' experience?

When attempting to answer this, one must be aware of the temptations to overstress the past, misrepresent the present, and ignore the future.

In writing with a Roman Catholic readership in mind, I believe there are certain factors associated with Wesley and Methodism generally which may be of some interest.

1. Wesley had a distinctive concern for Spirituality, and in particular a doctrine which is known variously as "Christian Perfection" and "Perfect Love". The "Aldersgate Street" experience was part of an emphasis in Wesley which blossomed into the conviction that the Christian life should grow and deepen in a life of love which is nothing less than the love of God in Christ. Wesley is frequently quoted as saying: "It is my aim to spread Scriptural holiness throughout this land", and by 'Scriptural holiness' he means the life of Perfect Love as evidenced in the Scriptures.

2. Such a pursuit for holiness inspired a constant "pressing onward" in personal religion and also in social righteousness. One mark of Wesley's genius was his arranging of Methodist people into "Classes", i.e. groups under one leader which would meet regularly to examine one another's spiritual condition and encourage one another in the journey towards Christian Perfection. Such "Classes" were opportunities for fellowship, prayer and Bible study, and they were regarded as something which filled a gap in the life of the Church of the time.

As a result of this, Wesley demanded of his leaders and preachers a standard of commitment and flexibility of deployment which was then equalled only in the Christian world by the friars and the Jesuits of Rome. It was Lord Macaulay who first pointed out that John Wesley would have made an excellent leader of a religious order in the mould of Ignatius Loyola. It has even been suggested that Wesley's relations with his many female admirers would have been less tortuous if he had been within the discipline of a celibate rule!

3. Wesley was deeply concerned for the unity of all Christian people even though, ironically, one result of the Methodist movement was an autonomous Church, now with some 25 million confirmed members throughout the world, fully separated from the Church of England. Wesley's Letter to a Roman Catholic and his sermon entitled *The Catholic Spirit* are still valuable documents for



John Wesley

ecumenical contemplation. The persistent efforts of the Methodist Church to seek out opportunities for co-operation with other Churches represent a commitment to Christian unity which, we believe, grows out of Wesley's own catholic spirit.

4. Wesley's passion for evangelism and for the sacramental life are matters worthy of attention. Perhaps a careful reflection upon a selection of Charles Wesley's hymns gives a clue to the zeal the Methodists have for both word and sacrament. 250 years on, there are few Christian Churches which do not sing some of the hymns of Charles Wesley, but it is not generally known that between them, the Wesley brothers produced over 6,000 hymns (the vast majority from the pen of Charles, but with a little vetting from brother John now and again!) . The Eucharistic hymns of Charles Wesley have occasionally resonated in the hearts of Roman Catholics.

Regrettably, space is prohibitive for me to do full justice to the many faceted effects of the 'Aldersgate Street' experience. However, the Methodist Church believes whole-heartedly that God raised up John and Charles Wesley to spread Scriptural Holiness through the land. The celebrations this year give a wonderful opportunity to give thanks to God for their lives, their devotion and their example, and I for one, am bold enough to say that it is a delight to know that Methodists are not alone in this offering of praise and thanksgiving.

(Rev) Harvey Richardson,

Welling, Kent.

(Mr Richardson is presently Superintendent of the Shooters Hill Circuit of the Methodist Church. He was also present at the Swanwick Conference)

SILENTLY RETREATING

The beautiful priory of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Sussex was the perfect setting for our ecumenical retreat from 22/24 April. We were Anglicans, Methodists and Catholics from the Bostall Park (Kent) area and all of us accepted gratefully the invitation of the sisters to join their community at worship - at the Masses and the hours of the Divine Office, in addition to our retreat programme. In our worship together, there was a deep sense of unity and love. The pain at the separation at the Eucharist may spring to mind; yes, it was there, but as one retreatant said: "We must face it and pray about it". Silence was observed by the retreatants from Friday evening until Sunday teatime. The silence was fruitful, prayerful, meditative, restful and as our director put it, it was an adventure, an opportunity to know God and ourselves better.

In his four splendid talks on the theme "Fit for a challenge", the Rev Harvey Richardson gave us a wealth of material for prayer, and action. Christian unity was one of the challenges; surely, an ecumenical retreat is one of the best ways to keep fit and meet it!

UNITY CONTACTS

Each of the three Area Ecumenical Commissions is making progress in the building up of Unity Contacts in the parishes (as outlined in *Together in Christ*, June 1988 in an article by Miss Celia Blackden), but there are still several parishes where this important link has yet to be established.

Under the guidance of Bishop Charles Henderson, Chairman of the Commissions, the officers of the three Commissions considered, at their last meeting, the listing of possible tasks for unity contacts. The following is a provisional one, indicating some of the areas where the help of the unity contact is urgently needed:

To pray for the fullness of unity and ask others to pray for unity every day.

To be helpful to the parish priest in keeping him informed of all events promoting Christian unity.

To prepare notices, newsletter inserts and other items which foster interest in the parish.

To support the diocesan ecumenical bulletin *Together in Christ* through promoting interest and gathering subscriptions, through sending news of parish ecumenical activity and, if possible, suitable articles to the Editor.

To set aside occasions, e.g. one day a month, when those interested in Christian unity may gather in the Church for Mass or prayer together for unity.

To have Masses said for unity.

To keep abreast of the Church's teaching and the developments in matters of Christian unity.

To be able to advise on what literature is available to enquirers.

To ensure the CTS pamphlets on unity are available in the rack. To be aware of the Area Ecumenical Commission and its activities and know how to contact the members from each of the deaneries.

To be as resourceful as possible in promoting true awareness of the responsibility of all Catholics towards unity.

The co-operation of the priests in this matter is most gratefully appreciated. Priests are invited to suggest suitable persons, and any one who would like to volunteer to act as a Unity Contact is asked to get in touch with their parish priest and with the Secretary of their Area Ecumenical Commission (see inside front cover for their names).

'That they all may
be one'



REVISE THE 39 ARTICLES

During November 1949 there was an important correspondence in *'The Times'* contributed by a number of distinguished ecclesiastics and laymen under the general title "*Catholicism Today*", The correspondence was subsequently published by "The Times" in booklet form. It was sparked off in an article by a special correspondent on 31 October. The article assessed problems and prospects of the Catholic Church in Europe and ventured criticisms of its methods, The correspondence that followed was concerned with "Catholicity" and its place in the current interest of the possibility of reunion.

It is not the purpose of this article to revive the arguments, for and against, raised in these letters to the Editor. Many of them have been superseded with at least partial solutions and some far-reaching efforts towards Christian Unity during the intervening years, The purpose here is to remark on the fact that in the correspondence there is no mention at all of the important matter of the *'Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion'*, which are the "official formularies" of the Church of England. Surely a continuing irritant to the cause of Ecumenism for both Anglicans and Catholics? Indeed, since the 16th Century, the Thirty-Nine Articles have twice been the focal point in major attempts to reunite the Church of Rome and the Church of England.

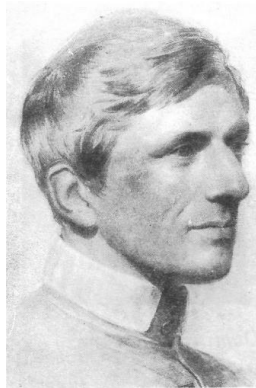
In 1643 Antony Chard published *Deus, Natura, Gratia* by Fr Christopher Davenport, a Franciscan friar, who was attached to the chaplaincy of Queen Henrietta Maria.

The book was, surprisingly, dedicated to King Charles I. In the dedication Fr Davenport (who was known as Santa Clara) recalls St Augustine's statement that "kings serve God by enforcing good and prohibiting evil, both in the affairs of human society and religion, by a real title granted to them by God through the prophet Isaiah: Kings shall be your nursing fathers and Queens your nurses. (Is 49:23) Tutors and nurses correct the errors of their charges and promote good conduct. "So what must we do, most serene King", he writes "to prevent the lamentable laceration of the Mystical Body of Christ from spreading over the whole earth? Is it not right that I should address Your Sacred majesty to come the immediate relief of the Church of which you are appointed the nursing father by

God and the Defender of His Vicar?" The work that follows sets out the way in which the errors may be corrected and the good conduct promoted. The disease (of disunity) is most difficult to heal, but the remedy, an efficacious one, is that prescribed for the Samaritan (leper), "Tell the Church. Therefore I propose to Your Majesty the definitions of the Church, the explanations of its Fathers and Doctors, and the quibbling of reformers. Sheltering in Christ, I humbly suggest the remedy not by amputation, but by gentle bathing: I wash in order to cleanse..."

This approach is made clear by Fr John Berchmans Dockery OFM in these extracts from his biography '*Christopher Davenport*' (Chapter V p. 84):

"The spirit in which he addresses himself to the work for reunion is summed up in his conclusion to '*Deus, Natura, Gratia*', where, imitating St Paul he declared for a peaceful reconciliation ... To appreciate fully the discussion, it is necessary to remember that the points of the controversy in those days were not infallibility and other doctrinal differences so much as royal jurisdiction '*in foro ecclesiastico*' and the validity of Anglican ordination."



Cardinal Newman

"...obviously for the attainment of reunion it was necessary to clarify the relations between the Pope as Head of the Church at Roma and the King as Governor of the Church of England. Santa Clara set himself to elucidate this complex problem. He had to move delicately, but he showed that he could tread firmly and without shiftiness and at the same time be able to avoid blundering into offence. in his interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles, he was undoubtedly rather laboured and a little artificial at times, but he was, of course, well aware of the fact. He could have said more but here he was concerned only in showing that a catholic understanding to the articles was not absolutely impossible, although the document was the most Protestant of all the declarations

of the Established Church. Santa Clara thought that if Canterbury and Rome really believed the same fundamental truths, the difference between them was one largely of words, then, that being so, the first hurdle was past."

In 1841 Newman's interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles was basically the same as Fr Davenport's in appealing to the "Fundamental truths" : ("The doctrine of the Old Church") as a basis. But whereas Davenport was urging the King, however gently, towards reunion with Rome, Newman's original purpose in writing Tract 90 was to provide arguments to keep his followers from becoming Catholics! It was only later that a tendency developed to regard it as 'a positive note' against Anglicanism. In his *Apologia*, written many years after, Newman

explained the situation that caused him to write Tract 90. He maintained that "Anglicanism" held: "that the Church of England was nothing else than a continuation in this country (as the Church of Rome might be in France or Spain) of that one Church which in old times Athanasius and Augustine were members. But, if so, doctrine must be the same; the doctrine of the old Church must live and speak in the Anglican formularies -the Thirty-Nine Articles. Did it? Yes it did: that is what I maintained; it did in substance, in a true sense. Man had done his worst to disfigure, to mutilate, the old catholic Truth; but it must be shown ... And I believed it could be shown; I considered that those grounds for justification, which I gave above - when I was speaking of Tract 90 - were sufficient to the purpose ... I had in mind to remove all obstacles as lay in the way of holding the Apostolic and Catholic character of the Anglican teaching: to reassert the right to all who chose to say in the face of day: "our Church teaches primitive ancient faith. I did not conceal this; in Tract 90 it is put forward as the first principle of all. It is a duty we owe, both to the Catholic Church and our own, to take our reformed confessions in the most catholic sense they will admit; we have no duties towards their framers ... that, whereas it is usual at this day to make the particular belief of their writers the true interpretation, I would make the belief of the Catholic Church such. That is, as is often said, that infants are regenerated in baptism, not on the faith of their parents but of the Church, so, in like manner I would say that the Articles are received, not in the sense of their framers but (as far as the wording would admit or any ambiguity required) in the Catholic sense." Both these brave attempts by two men of eminent intellectual ability and Christian integrity failed to effect reconciliation, but today it is not a question of the 'Catholicity' of the Thirty-.Nine Articles. Since the publication of Tract 90 a much happier and very different situation has developed.

Controversy has given way to dialogue and co-operation in a spirit of charity. Yet all the clergy of the Church of England and many officials are still bound by oath "to maintain" these articles! A survey of what this means in the event might produce some surprising results as might an enquiry into the number of Anglicans or Catholics who have ever read them!

It a must therefore be asked whether in their present form they do not still as the "official formularies" of the Church of England" pose difficulties for both Anglicans and Catholics in the new ecumenical climate of friendly dialogue.

Would one way to avoid recurrence of such difficulties be to "look at them again" with a View to possible revision?

Lucian Hunt OFM

ECUMENICAL VOCATION

"Bishop, I object to the presence of that Romish priest!"

With these less than auspicious words, the service of welcome was interrupted at St Alban's Cathedral on 8th October 1983. Bishop John

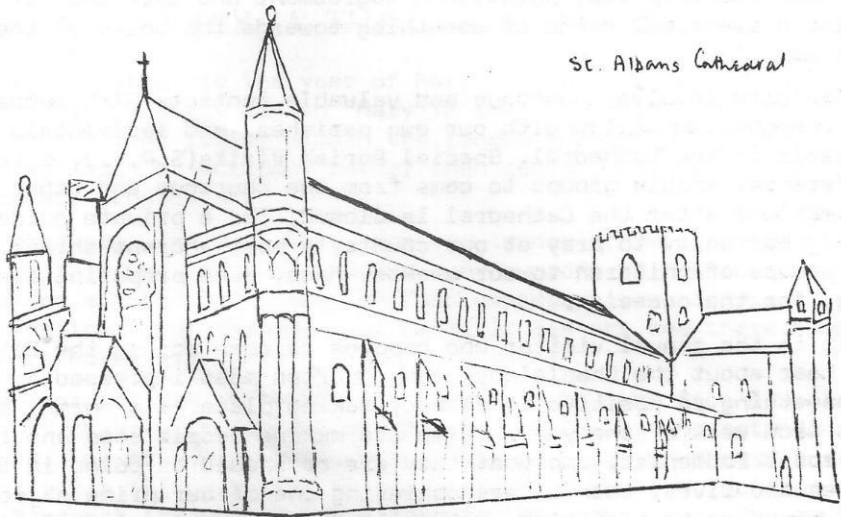
Taylor of St Albans had only got as far as saying: "We welcome the Rev Donald Lee and Father Robert Plourde when a member of the Protestant Reformation Society made his strident intervention. With wisdom that was born of experience, the Dean had told us to remain silent should there be any protests, and that we did, and the gentleman, having made his statement, left the Abbey Church. The Bishop then made a masterful response, saying how the time was right for a further step along the road towards that unity for which Christ prayed, and that what we were doing was the fruit of much deliberation and prayer, and was an experiment which time alone would prove to be either of God's or Man's making.

The history of St Albans Ecumenical Chaplaincy has its roots spreading back over many years, and in part is the coming of age of the tireless endeavours of the Dean, the Very Rev Peter Moore, who expressed his hopes and beliefs on the occasion of the inaugural mass of the Hertfordshire Area, celebrated by Bishop Butler some years earlier, when he greeted the assembled congregation and their new Area Bishop with the words: "Welcome home!" These words express a deeply held desire for full unity and, on a practical day to day level, the wish to provide all available facilities for a further practical step forward along the path of Christian unity.

The "imminent causes" for the establishment of the Ecumenical Chaplaincy find their roots in the pioneering work on the Catholic side done by Father Joe Gardner, the founding priest of St Bartholomew's Parish, and of his successor, Father John Galvin. Previous Anglican leaders in St Albans, including the present Archbishop of Canterbury, had been very much involved in fostering unity among the local churches, and with the vacancy at St Bart's in the summer of 1983, I was appointed a parish priest and Ecumenical Chaplain at the Abbey.

My own involvement with St Albans had begun through vocation work, and the organising of two pilgrimages to the shrine of the First martyr in 1982, after the Pope's visit and the following year as part of the first national pilgrimage to the martyr's shrine, both pilgrimages had the special intention of the unity of the church, and vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. It had always struck me that, in the heart of the Diocese of Westminster, we had our own shrine, where for 1600 years people have come to pray at the tomb of Alban, saint and martyr of

the undivided Church - where better to return, in our own age of great need, as we seek for the unity for which Christ prayed, and for faithful witness to work in the master's harvest.



Since the Welcome Service, which had a counterpart in a protest service held outside the Abbey, we have had a weekly Mass on Friday at noon in the Lady Chapel just beyond St Alban's Shrine. The first Mass on October 14th, 1983, was marred by four different protests, but since then we have been blessed with peace. The objectors in fact did us a good deed, since a number of our brethren from the Abbey and other churches felt they had a duty to attend the first Mass, since in no way did they wish to be associated with the small but vociferous group, but rather with their support for this new and exciting venture.

So what has happened since then?

As a member of the Abbey's staff, I attend the regular meetings that plan and monitor the life of this 900 year old House of God. It is a place of prayer, worship and of great faith, as well as promoting the Arts, especially music, both sacred and secular. In this vibrant community, there is a definite contribution that can be made by an Ecumenical Chaplain from a Catholic or Free Church standpoint, but above all else, it is a regular contact and the common interest and involvement in the life of the Abbey and the city that binds us together in a united body, working for the greater glory of God and the unity of His Church. It is not all talk, but very

much a growing together which occasionally can be painful, as we face the very real points of disagreement and division. It is above all else a practical doing of something towards the unity of the Church in our day.

The work involves numerous and valuable contacts with members of other churches, as well as with our own parishes, and individuals who visit or worship in the Cathedral. Special Parish Visits (S.P.V.), a tour with a difference, enable groups to come from the churches and other organisations after the Cathedral is closed, for a private guided visit, and an opportunity to pray at our country's most ancient shrine. Schools bring groups of children to our weekday Mass, some preparing a special liturgy for the occasion.

It is the casual visitor who happens to come across the Friday Mass, or to hear about the Chaplaincy, who is often most impressed by the fact that something so positive is already taking place as a normal matter of course each week of the year. If we are making people stop and think about Ecumenism, and what they are or should be doing in their own parishes and lives, then we are achieving one of our prime objectives, and I hope, doing something worthwhile for the cause of Christian Unity. The annual highlight of the year is the national pilgrimage, held in September, when thousands of people descend upon the Abbey for a day of celebration. A small but increasing number of Catholic parishes are this making an annual fixture, and with the facility for the celebrating of Mass at midday being provided, we expect even greater numbers this year.

St Alban's is alive and very much a place for the Pilgrim Church to express its faith and its hopes for the future, as well as sorrow for past misunderstandings and division. The Abbey welcomes all who come in the name of the Lord, and through the Ecumenical Chaplaincy, seek to widen the scope of everyday Christian life. That surely is the whole object of the Lord's prayer for the unity of his followers.

Finally, the words of Gamaliel provide us with our inspiration and guide for the present time:

"If this enterprise, this movement of theirs, is of human origin, It will break up of its accord; but if it does in fact come from God you will not only be unable to destroy them, but you might find yourselves fighting against God." (Acts 5:39)

Fr Robert Plourde

MARY IN THE SCRIPTURES

Our contribution to the year of Mary in the Greenwich Deanery has been to organise a Study Day on "Mary in the Scriptures" for the clergy of all denominations living within the London Borough of Greenwich. It happened seemingly by accident rather than design, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

The speakers were Mari Ponticaccia, a leader of the Focolare movement in Great Britain and Ireland, and Rev Ken Howcroft, a Methodist minister and Scripture scholar. 24 clergy of four denominations took part, along two Anglican lady deacons, two Catholic Sisters and three members of the Focolare movement.

In the morning Ken Howcroft unfolded for us how the four Gospels, in order of their writing, showed an ever increasing understanding of Mary's role. For him, the familiar Marian texts posed a number of questions. Mari Ponticaccia followed with an explanation of how the founders of the Focolare movement tried to put the Gospels into practice. The movement spread, not as propaganda, but as life lived, and the members found themselves 'reliving Mary' in the world today.

The ladies of St Paul's Thamesmead, where the Study Day took place, provided an excellent lunch, with a glass of wine to celebrate the Feast.

In the afternoon, Mari gave us a meditation of Chiara Lubich on Mary and Ken spoke movingly and convincingly of what Mary meant for him:

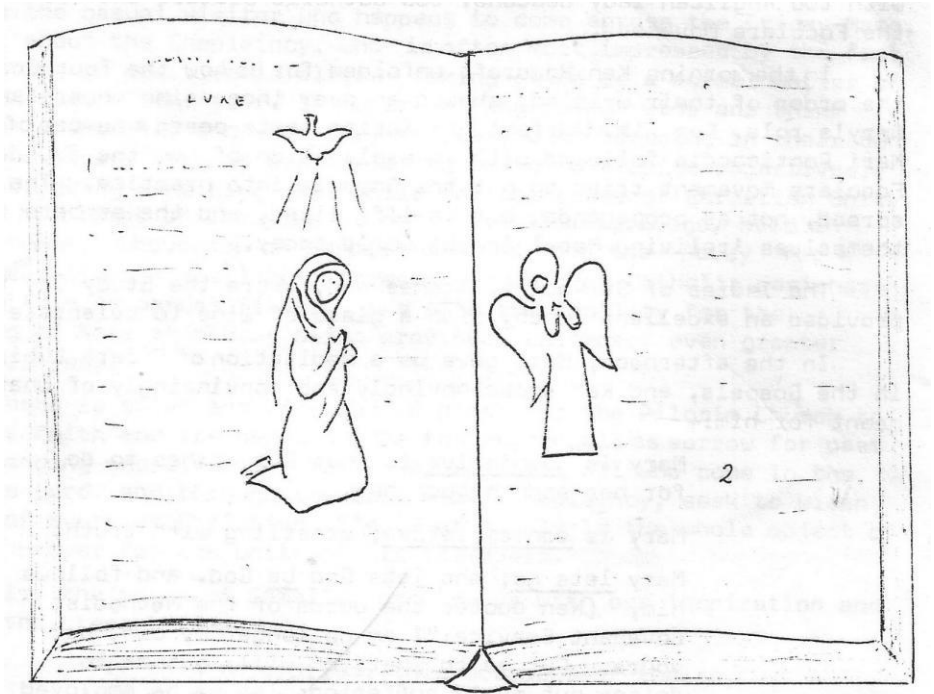
Mary is **submissive** to what God wishes to do for her and through her,
Mary is **contemplative**; wrestling with truth,
Mary **lets go**; she lets God be God, and follows him, (Ken quoted the words of the Methodist Covenant Service: "I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing...")

Mary **watches** and **waits**,
Mary brings God to birth, makes him real in the world,
Mary is **challenged to obedience** over and over again.

Each talk was followed by group and general discussion, and the day ended with a ten-minute service.

Those who took part all felt that the meeting was well worth while. We came close together in our understanding of Mary, and love of her suffused the whole day.

Canon W. Clements



**Blessed is she who believed
that the promise made her by the Lord
would be fulfilled. (Luke 2:46)**