

Response to the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue regarding the 'Bari Document'

Several years ago, the official Eastern Orthodox/Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States established by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops (SCOBA) and the National Conference of Catholic bishops (NCCB), at its 26th meeting (May 23-25, 1983), prepared a response to the first common statement of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, namely "The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity," the "Munich Statement" (dated July 6, 1982). Our response was sent to the presiding hierarchy of the Joint Commission and was subsequently published in various theological journals.

In the United States Consultation we have followed the work of the International Commission with great interest. In fact, two of the Roman Catholic members of our own Consultation are also members of the International Commission (Msgr. Frederick McManus and Rev. John Long). At the 33rd meeting in our series of consultations that began in 1965, we completed and submitted to the International Commission an agreed statement entitled: "Apostolicity as God's Gift in the Life of the Church" (dated November 1, 1986). This statement was formulated especially with the future agenda of the International Consultation in mind since apostolicity is one of the themes scheduled for study at the International Commission's future meetings.

Since the International Commission recently made public its second common statement: "Faith, Sacraments, and the Unity of the Church," the "Bari Statement" (August 1, 1987), we in the United States Consultation have analyzed the document at several meetings and in private study. We now wish to submit to the International Commission a common response to this latest text.

We would also like to take this opportunity to encourage the International Commission to invite theological faculties and societies, ecumenical associations, diocesan and national ecumenical commissions around the world to respond to its future statements. We also urge the Commission to distribute its texts more widely and in a more official way, with an accompanying letter by the co-chairmen situating the document. The reception and response processes not only will supply local reflections to the International Commission but also will provide opportunities to Orthodox and Roman Catholics to share their Christian faith. Given the importance of its work, the International Commission should seriously consider a future revision of its statements and their publication together for circulation to a much wider audience, perhaps with commentary.

That a second joint statement of the International Commission has been published, despite some delays and set-backs as reported in the press, is a consoling sign of the continuing graces being poured out upon our churches by the Holy Spirit. As does the Munich Statement, this text moves us farther away from our long history of mutual estrangement. We recognize that this common statement does not pretend to be an exhaustive treatment of all the theological issues on these subjects, but addresses rather issues that might hinder mutual understanding and prevent eventual full communion. We hail this achievement and unite our prayers with those of members of the

Joint International Commission as they prepare to meet in June 1988 in New Valamo, Finland to study together the theology of ordination.

Our response to the Bari Statement has two parts: first, some brief remarks regarding its methodology, and some questions for clarification; second, a list of needed corrections to the English language translation of the document made in light of a close study of the French text.

Part One: Our Reactions to the Bari Statement

1. First of all, three preliminary remarks. (a) In our judgment, Sacred Scripture is used too sparingly in the document. Specifically, more attention should have been given to the way that "faith" is described in the New Testament. (b) We applaud the serious effort to avoid polemical or scholastic terms. (c) As was the case with the Munich text, it is not clear for what groups of readers this document is intended.
2. Regarding the theology of faith and of communion (*koinonia*) there is much to be praised in the document. Faith is appropriately described as a "synergy between God's grace and the human being's liberty." That the Church is the locus for the flowering of faith and that the Church's faith constitutes the norm and the criterion of the personal act of faith are carefully stated (no. 5). The importance of the liturgy for nurturing faith is well described. However, the theological explanation of faith in the text is often confusing and incomplete. The term "faith" sometimes is used in such a broad way that it is seen as an equivalent for the notion of the kerygma, the entire Christian message, or even restrictively to a summary of religious truths that Christians include in their recitation of the symbol or creed. Often the text seems to reify faith, to reduce it to an inert deposit which needs only to be handed on (nos. 5, 14, 21, 27). Special clarification also should be given to the document's use of the expression "true faith."

When it is stated that "Faith embraces the totality of doctrine and church practice relating to salvation" (no. 7) this seems too comprehensive. The document is not clear when it states that "faith must be taken as a preliminary condition, already complete in itself, which precedes sacramental communion" (no. 3).

3. Particularly successful in our judgment is the way that the local church is related to the Church universal (cf. nos. 19 and 23). This reflects a sensitive formulation of modern eucharistic ecclesiology. These sections touch on the importance of inculturation and contextualization of preaching and theology; they stress that local churches "...have used varied formulas and different languages which, according to the genius of different cultures, bring into relief particular aspects and implications of the unique salvation event" (no. 10). The text does not, however, take into account the fact that recent official Roman Catholic documents have been preferring the expression "particular church" rather than "local church" so as not to give undue prominence to the geographical factor.

4. What is touched upon briefly in the Munich document about faith's relationship to concrete social issues (e.g. II, 4, para. 3) is happily further strengthened in the Bari text by reference to the importance of charitable works of ministers and their response to social problems (no. 35). We would welcome continued development of these themes in future documents.
5. There is sometimes a certain overemphasis on the role of bishops and presbyters in the document to the neglect of the ministry of the entire people of God. In nos. 34-36 it would be well to mention the important task of theologians and the role of the whole church in the process of reception. The bishops' teaching is not performed in isolation from the rest of the Church. Hence we applaud the clarification mentioned in no. 36 that, although the bishop is guarantor and judge of the unity of faith, he is so in communion with his people.
6. An attempt is made in nos. 25-33 to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate developments in the Church. The text implies that this task of distinguishing between them is not difficult, whereas the history of the Church has in fact shown that the process of discernment is gradual and sometimes painful. The three criteria for distinguishing (nos. 29-31) are too vague. Is it clear that everything that meets these three criteria "can be considered a legitimate expression of faith" (no. 32)?
7. Throughout the document, the "sovereign action of the Holy Spirit" (no. 52) is stressed, but the relationship of Son and Spirit has not been explored systematically. There are occasional echoes of the very balanced formulations of the Munich statement (e.g. in the first two sentences of no. 15), but there could have been more precision elsewhere.
8. We commend the statement's affirmation that baptism is the "beginning of a process which continues all through Christian existence" (no. 12). We also welcome the effort to relate historical changes in liturgical practice to the pastoral needs of the Church (nos. 47-49).
9. The text places such a heavy emphasis on the eucharist as to suggest that baptism itself does not already achieve entry into divine communion and participation in the eschatological community (no. 37). Baptism should be given the due prominence which early Christian tradition accorded it.
10. The Bari Statement appeals frequently to the authoritative witness of the liturgy (see especially no. 14). We believe, however, that greater attention to the history of the liturgy of Christian initiation would be desirable. Here we might offer two examples: (a) As the sources indicate, the primitive Eastern (e.g. Syrian) pattern of initiation was different in certain respects (e.g. in the place of anointing) from that presented as "early" and "ideal" by the statement (nos. 39, 40, 46). We believe that this pattern, suggesting as it does a pneumatologically conditioned christology, has important implications for the relationship of Son and Spirit, a subject which we mentioned earlier in point 7 above. (b) In the early Church the bishop may indeed have presided in the baptismal liturgy, but as the historical

evidence suggests others performed many of the sacramental actions. This may have important implications for an issue raised in no. 50 point 2.

Part Two: Improvements Needed in the English Translation

The English translator(s) should be commended of the use of inclusive, non-sexist language throughout.

No. 2: The French word *communément* should be translated here not as "commonly" but as "in common".

No. 5: Correct the English "Faith is not the product of an elaboration or of a logical necessity" to read "Faith is not the product of a logical elaboration and necessity" (*La foi n'est pas le produit d'une élaboration et d'une nécessité logiques*).

No. 9: Correct the English "exists in the single Church" to read "exists in the one Church" (*dans l'unique Eglise*).

No. 10: Correct the English "...an attitude towards the milieu of existence" to read: "regarding existence and the world" (*à l'endroit de l'existence et du monde*).

No. 14: Regarding what is said of the principle: *Lex credendi Lex orandi*, the English translation states that it is "the criterion for the expression of the true faith". Correct to read "criterion for" without the 'the'. (There are other criteria!)

No. 15: Correct the English "The Holy Spirit edifies the Church" to read "The Holy Spirit builds up the Church" (*édifie*).

No. 21: Correct "In this sense the true faith is presupposed..." to read "In this sense true faith is supposed".

Nos. 21-23: "Communion" (*koinonia*) is better translated here and throughout as "sharing" (to avoid confusion with the act of receiving the Eucharist).

Nos. 24 and 25: Because of the possible misunderstanding of the word "identity," use an alternate translation for "Identity of faith..." to read "Sameness of faith..." (*L'identité de la foi*).

No. 28: Correct the English "the content of the doctrine itself" to read "the very content of the doctrine" (*le contenu même de la doctrine*).

No. 29: Correct "in accord and essential continuity" to read "in essential accord and continuity" (*en accord et continuité essentielles*).

No. 37: It is better to avoid the English word "membership" because of the difficulties establishing who is and who is not a "member". Better to say "belonging to the eschatological community."

Also, avoid the expression "specific character" because of possible misunderstanding of the word "character. Better to say with the French "specificity".

Also, do not say "baptism with water and the Spirit" but rather "baptism in water and in the Spirit" to retain the biblical allusion.

No. 38: Correct "The Catholic Church also preserves it" to read "The Catholic Church also maintains (*maintient*) that unity."

Also, as in the previous draft of the Bari statement, the citation from the new Roman Ritual of Initiation is quite inaccurate in the French and consequently the English text. The 1973 text says in no. 2: "Thus the three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combine to bring the faithful to the full stature of Christ and to enable them to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world." This is not exactly what the Bari text says. In fact it is misleading when it says "the mission which, in the world, belongs to the entire assembly..."

No. 43: There is a mistake in the French original which is corrected in the English text: not "*ou par l'un des deux*" but rather "*par les deux*".

No. 50: Avoid in English the word "ordinarily" because of possible confusion with the word "ordinary" in what follows. Better to say "usually."

No. 51: Correct the misspelling in the French text: *latines* not *latine*.

No. 51: Translate "common" (*répandu*) by the English word "widespread".

Also, the French verb *rappeler* (used here in this section twice) first translated as "called for" seems inaccurate: "Disciplinary directives which **called for** the traditional order..." Better to say which recalled the traditional order...". This is how the word is translated later in this section.

No. 52: This section bears the marks of hurried composition. The second sentence is almost incomprehensible (the two items being connected by the preposition "between" are not clear, probably because a word is omitted before the French word for "response"). It is suggested that this section might be rewritten as follows:

At the same time both churches are very concerned that the neophyte receive the necessary spiritual formation in the faith. Both churches share two convictions that follow: (a) that there is a vital connection between the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit effecting (by means of the three sacraments) a person's full incorporation in the life of the

Church and the response to the gift of faith by an individual believer or by the community of faith; and (b) that full illumination into the faith is possible only when the neophyte at whatever age it happens) has received the sacraments of Christian initiation.

No. 53: The last sentence in the document appeals to Mansi XVII, 489 B. In an earlier draft the text was cited verbatim but here is rather confusedly summarized. The word/translation "thrones" probably refers to "[episcopal] sees."

Crestwood, NY

June 2, 1988

36th Meeting