

Britain: The Talk Is About or Around Unity

By JOHN A. GREAVES

LONDON — (NC) — Talking about or around Christian unity has become a major preoccupation in Britain this spring.

All such talks whatever else they achieve are successful in that they help sustain and boost the urge for friendship and understanding enlivened here so dramatically by the impact of Pope John XXIII. But they also indicated something of the practical difficulties facing even the most obvious mergers inside Protestantism, let alone union between Protestantism and the Church of Rome.

Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists were all involved with an eye on Easter Day, 1980, which the non-Catholic Churches set last year as a target date for reunion. Other important talks were being held in mid-May at meetings of the Convocations of Canterbury and of York, the two provinces of the Church of England.

The preceding week's talks brought into focus the following picture:

1. METHODISTS AND ANGLICANS: The reunion of these two great British churches appears at present to be the most practical and the most likely, with both sides having in the recent past made great efforts to reach agreement. Local Methodist synods voting on the official report on these talks showed overwhelming acceptance of "closer relations" though some called for fresh negotiations. An ultimate decision may be made at the annual Methodist conference in July.

In the same report on relations between the two churches, the Church of England (the Anglicans) indicated generally that it is not yet ready to give unqualified acceptance of the proposals for union in the precise form drawn up by a joint committee of the two denominations in six years of discussions.

The problem was to be further debated during the Anglican convocations. The greatest practical obstacles are the actual merger of Methodist churches into the state-established religion and the thorny problem, in the case of full communion of ordinations.

2. PRESBYTERIANS AND CONGREGATIONALISTS: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of England is already engaged in negotiations for unity with the Congregational Church. At its May meeting the Presbyterian Church supported a resolution "to examine the possibilities of union on a wider scale."

In Scotland the Assembly of the Congregational Union agreed to resume conversations with the Church of Scotland — Scotland's State Church, which is Presbyterian — with a view to producing a plan for a basis of union. It reversed a decision last year to postpone such bilateral talks in favor of multilateral talks with

various denominations.

But the Scottish Congregationalists also proposed to meet other denominations in Scotland and "to pray and work for the inauguration of union by a date agreed among them" adding that they "dared to hope" this would be later than the target date of Easter, 1980.

3. BAPTISTS: The Assembly of the Baptist Union supported a motion calling for a closer associa-

tion of the Baptists with "current theological discussions on Christian unity."

Anglican Archbishop Frederick Coggan of York addressed the 2,000 delegates on the final day of their assembly as representatives of the 300,000 Baptists in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Their annual report, read at the assembly said: "Baptists have been somewhat slow to engage

themselves in the current theological discussions. There are marked differences of emphasis and opinion among the... as there are indeed in many other Christian bodies but in the case of Baptist denominational unity is not maintained by creed, hierarchy or liturgy. This means, however, that on the basic issues Baptists have testimony of their own to give as well as testimony to which they should be ready to listen."

Archbishop Coggan told them: "God is summoning Christians to unity and we dare not shut our eyes to that summons."

The Anglican Church has about three million practicing members in England and Wales and about 100,000 in Scotland.

The Methodists number about one million regular churchgoers; the Presbyterians about 1.5 million; the Baptists 350,000 and the Congregationalists 250,000.

Prelate Asks Racial Peace

BOGALUSA, La. — (NC) — Bogalusa is "not a city which illustrated what is wrong with our past, but rather what can be right about our future," Archbishop John P. Cody said in a sermon at racially-tense Bogalusa.

The Archbishop of New Orleans spoke at Annunciation church where he conferred the sacrament of Confirmation upon an integrated class of children.

"No one can, with good conscience, deny that the Negroes of Bogalusa — the Negroes of all Louisiana — have been denied the rights, the opportunities, the human dignity accorded to other men," the Archbishop told the children and their parents and others packed into the church.

"But men of good will," he continued, "have set a course in Bogalusa to right those wrongs and put Louisiana on a new path of freedom for all."

Bogalusa, a lumber mill town of 21,000 persons 50 miles north of New Orleans, has been the scene of civil rights demonstrations and a counter rally and march by white "conservatives."

James E. Farmer, national director of the Congress of Racial Equality, has made several appearances at Bogalusa to lead the Negro demands for equal opportunities.

Conversion 'Ugly Word'

LONDON — (NC) — Conversion is now an "ugly word" and repugnant to many, according to John Cardinal Heenan of Westminster.

Writing in the Catholic Gazette, a monthly published by the Catholic Missionary Society here, the cardinal said: "In our uncomplicated way of thinking, conversion to us has meant turning to the true Faith from any form of belief or, indeed, from unbelief. We now know that for the Protestant, conversion has a much more restricted meaning."

"To him conversion is the turning from evil to good, from infidelity to faith, from Mammon to God. When therefore we described a former Anglican or Methodist as a convert, we were thought to be equating Protestantism and paganism."

"The fact is that we have no other word but 'convert' to describe people admitted in adult life to membership of the Catholic Church. Until recent months, nobody thought the title strange," he said.

Cardinal Heenan also said: "The dialogue of course does not yet consider reunion. It would be idle to expect non-Catholics to enter a dialogue if its primary object were to convert them to Roman Catholicism. . . The work of conversion is entirely different."

Movie Set Now Church

ORCHID ISLAND, Formosa — (NC) — A church built as a movie set on this tiny island off the southeast tip of Formosa is now being used regularly as a place of worship by the aboriginal inhabitants.

A film company asked Father Alfred Giger, a young Swiss priest of the Bethlehem Mission society, to play the part of a Catholic missionary in a movie being made on the 27-square-mile island. In gratitude for his cooperation the company

constructed a sturdy wood building and donated it to the priest when shooting of the film was completed.

Some 800 of the 1,600 Yami tribe aborigines of the island, 40 nautical miles from Taitung, have been converted to Catholicism by Father Giger during the last 10 years.

The Yamis, like all aborigines of Formosa, are of Malayan stock, and isolated on the island famed for an abundance and variety of orchids, are the most primitive.

Truth an Issue As Archbishop Debates Rabbi

TORONTO, Ont. — (NC) — When there are contradictory beliefs, both cannot be right, Coadjutor Archbishop Philip M. Pocock of Toronto stressed here in a dialogue with a Jewish rabbi.

"Tolerance has nothing to do with a denial of logic and metaphysics," the Catholic prelate said.

The archbishop took speedy issue with a statement by Rabbi Reuben Slonim that, for the sake of tolerance and a better ordered society, church and synagogues should de-emphasize theology in relation to one another, and concentrate on ethical behavior.

Archbishop Pocock stressed the objectivity of truth. He said: "I do not believe that contradictory statements can both be true, Christians believe that Jesus Christ is Divine. Jews believe that he is not Divine. There are two contradictory statements. If Christians are right, Jews are wrong; if Jews are right, Christians are wrong. We are not both right, and tolerance has nothing to do with a denial of logic and metaphysics."

They agreed on many points in the dialogue on Christian-Jewish relations at the Primrose Club here. The event marked publication of Rabbi Slonim's book, "In the Footsteps of Pope Paul."

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