

Church Is Impatient for Unity

The following is excerpted from the text of the address given by Pope John Paul II at the close of a liturgy celebrated at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St. George at Phanar in Istanbul by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I.



Very holy and very beloved brother,

"Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!"

These words of the psalmist spring from my heart on this day on which I am with you. Yes, how good it is, how pleasant it is, to be brothers all together.

We are gathered to celebrate St. Andrew, an apostle, the first one to be called, the brother of Peter, the leader of the apostles. This circumstance stresses the ecclesial significance of our meeting today. Andrew was an apostle; that is one of those men chosen by Christ to be transformed by his Spirit, and sent into the world, as he himself had been sent by his Father. They were sent to proclaim the good news of the reconciliation given in Christ, to call men to enter, through Christ, into communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit and thus to gather men, become the children of God, in a large people of brothers. To gather everything in Christ for the praise of the glory of God, such is the mission of the apostles, such is the mission of those who, after them, were also chosen and sent, such is the vocation of the Church.

Today, then, we are celebrating an apostle, the first of the apostles to be called, and this feast reminds us of this fundamental requirement of our vocation, of the vocation of the Church.

This apostle, the patron saint of the illustrious Church of Constantinople, is Peter's brother. Certainly all the apostles are bound to one another by the new brotherhood that unites all those whose hearts are renewed by the Spirit of the Son and to whom the

ministry of reconciliation is entrusted, but that does not suppress, far from it, the special bonds created by birth and upbringing in the same family. Andrew is Peter's brother. Andrew and Peter were brothers and, within the apostolic college, a greater intimacy must have bound them, a closer collaboration must have united them in this apostolic task.

Here again today's celebration reminds us that special bonds of brotherhood and intimacy exist between the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople, that a closer collaboration is natural between these two Churches.

Peter, Andrew's brother, is the leader of the apostles. Thanks to the inspiration of the Father, he fully recognized in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God; owing to this faith, he received the name of Peter, in order that the Church may rest on this Rock. He had the task of ensuring the harmony of apostolic preaching. A brother among brothers, he received the mission of strengthening them in the faith; he is the first to have the responsibility of watching over the union of all, ensuring the symphony of the holy Churches of God in faithfulness to "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

It is in this spirit, animated by these sentiments, that Peter's successor has wished on this day to visit the Church whose patron saint is Andrew, to visit its venerated pastor, all its hierarchy and all its faithful. He has wished to come and take part in prayer. This visit to the first see of the Orthodox Church shows clearly the will of the whole Catholic Church to go forward in the march towards the unity of all, and also its conviction that the reestablishment of full communion with the Orthodox Church is a fundamental stage of the decisive progress of the whole ecumenical movement. Our division may not, perhaps, have been without an influence on the other divisions that followed it.

My initiative is in the line of the opening made by

John XXIII. It resumes and prolongs the memorable initiatives of my predecessor Paul VI, the one that took him in the first place to Jerusalem, where there took place for the first time the moving embrace and the first oral dialogue with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, in the very place where the mystery of the Redemption was accomplished to unite the dispersed children of God; then there was the meeting which took place here, just over 12 years ago, while waiting for Patriarch Athenagoras to come in his turn to visit Paul VI, in his see of Rome. These two great figures have left us to join God: they have completed their ministry, both straining towards full communion and almost impatient to bring it about in their lifetime. As for me, I did not want to delay any longer in coming to pray with you, in your country. Among my apostolic journeys already carried out or planned, this one had special importance and urgency in my eyes. I venture to hope that we will be able to pray together again, His Holiness Patriarch Dimitrios I and myself, and this time at the tomb of the apostle Peter. Such initiatives express before God and before the whole people of God our impatience for unity.

But for nearly a whole millenium, the two sister Churches grew side by side, as two great vital and complementary traditions of the same Church of Christ, keeping not only peaceful and fruitful relations, but also concern for the indispensable communion in faith, prayer and charity, which they did not at any cost want to question, despite their different sensitivity. The second millennium on the contrary, was darkened, apart from some fleeting bright intervals, by the distances which the two Churches took in regard to each other, with all the fatal consequences thereof. The wound is not yet healed. But the Lord can cure it and he bids us do our best to help the process. Here we are now at the end of the second millenium: is it not time to hasten towards perfect brotherly reconciliation, so that the dawn of the third millenium may find us standing side by side, in full communion, to bear witness together to salvation before the world, the evangelization of which is waiting for this sign of unity?

Text of Vatican Declaration on Father Kung

Following is the Vatican's own English translation of the Latin document on the theological opinions of Father Hans Kung.

The Church of Christ has received from God the mandate to keep and to safeguard the deposit of faith so that all the faithful, under the guidance of the sacred magisterium through which Christ Himself exercises His role as teacher in the church, may cling without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints, may penetrate it more deeply by accurate insights, and may apply it more thoroughly to life.

In order to fulfill the important task entrusted to itself alone the church avails itself of the work of theologians, especially those who in the church have received from the authorities the task of teaching and who therefore have been designated in a certain way as teachers of the truth.

In their research the theologians, like scholars in other fields, enjoy a legitimate scientific liberty, though within the limits of the method of sacred theology. Thus, while working in their own way they seek to attain the same specific end as the magisterium itself, namely, "to preserve, to penetrate ever more deeply, to explain, to teach, to defend the sacred deposit of revelation; and in this way to illumine the life of the church and of the human race with the light of divine truth."

It is necessary therefore that theological research and teaching should always be illumined with fidelity to the magisterium since no one may rightly act as a theologian except in close union with the mission of teaching truth which is incumbent on the church itself. When such fidelity is absent, harm is done to all the faithful who, since they are bound to profess the faith which they have received from God through the church, have a sacred right to receive the word of God uncontaminated, and so they expect that vigilant care should be exercised to keep the threat of error from them.

If it should happen, therefore, that a teacher of sacred doctrine chooses and disseminates as the norm of truth his own judgment and not the thought of the church, and if he continues in his conviction, despite the use of all charitable means in his regard, then honesty itself demands that the church should publicly call attention to his conduct and should state that he

can no longer teach with the authority of the mission which he received from her.

Since some of the writings — spread throughout many countries — and the teaching of Professor Hans Kung, a priest, are a cause of disturbance in the minds of the faithful, the bishops of Germany and this Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, acting in common accord, have several times counseled and warned him in order to persuade him to carry on his theological work in full communion with the authentic magisterium of the church.

In this spirit the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in order to fulfill its role of promoting and safeguarding the doctrine of faith and morals in the universal church, issued a public document on Feb. 15, 1975, declaring that some opinions of Professor Hans Kung were opposed in different degrees to the doctrine of the church which must be held by all the faithful. Among these opinions it noted especially, as of greater importance, those which pertain to the dogma of faith about infallibility in the church, to the task of authentically interpreting the unique sacred deposit of the word of God which has been entrusted only to the living magisterium of the church and finally to the valid consecration of the Eucharist.

The canonical mission is in fact a testimony to a reciprocal trust: first, trust on the part of the competent authority that the theologian will conduct himself as a Catholic theologian in the work of his research and teaching; secondly, trust on the part of the theologian himself in the church and in her integral teaching, since it is by her mandate that he carries out his task.

At the same time this sacred congregation warned Professor Kung that he should not continue to teach such opinions, expecting in the meantime that he would bring his opinions into harmony with the doctrine of the authentic magisterium.

However, up to the present time he has in no way changed his opinion on the matters called to his attention.

This fact is particularly evident in the matter of the opinion which at least puts in doubt the dogma of infallibility in the church or reduces it to a certain

fundamental indefectibility of the church in truth, with the possibility of error in doctrinal statements which the magisterium of the church teaches must be heeded definitively. On this point Hans Kung has in no way sought to conform to the doctrine of the magisterium. Instead he has recently proposed his view again more explicitly (namely, in his writings, "Kirche Gehalten in der Wahrheit?" — Benziger Verlag, 1979, and "Zum Geleit," an introduction to the work of A. B. Hasler entitled "Wie der Papst Unfehlbar Wurde" Piper Verlag, 1979), even though this sacred congregation had affirmed that such an opinion contradicts the doctrine defined by Vatican Council I and confirmed by Vatican Council II.

Moreover, the consequences of this opinion, especially a contempt for the magisterium of the church, may be found in other works published by him, undoubtedly with serious harm to some essential points of Catholic faith (e.g., those teachings which pertain to the consubstantiality of Christ with His Father, and to the blessed Virgin Mary), since the meaning ascribed to these doctrines is different from that which the church has understood and now understands.

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the aforesaid document of 1975 refrained at the time from further action regarding the above mentioned opinions of Professor Kung, presuming that he himself would abandon them. But since this presumption no longer exists, this sacred congregation by reason of its duty is constrained to declare that Professor Hans Kung, in his writings, has departed from the integral truth of Catholic faith, and therefore he can no longer be considered a Catholic theologian nor function as such in a teaching role.

At an audience granted to the undersigned cardinal prefect, the supreme pontiff Pope John Paul II approved this declaration, decided upon at an ordinary meeting of this sacred congregation, and ordered its publication.

In Rome, at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on 18 December 1979.

Franjo Cardinal Saper Prefect
Father Jerome Hamer OP
Titular Archbishop of Lorum,
Secretary