

199 Peace and Truth

In last week's Reflection we came across the need for God's people, of both the Old and New Covenants, to shun godless ways and live in steady obedience to the Lord. This need to keep to the Lord's true paths in the light of His Word applies not only in our personal discipleship but also in the life of Christ's Bride, the Church. It is in this latter case that there is now real cause for concern, due to the current enthusiasm within various Protestant churches to engage in close dialogue with the Church of Rome.

Now let two things be stressed about the Church of Rome before we go any further: first, within her ranks there are undoubtedly some true Christians in the Biblical sense, for whom we thank God; and second, Rome tends to take a commendably clearer, truer line on current social and educational issues than do the Protestant Churches.

Then we come to the "But", which we need to be aware of concerning the current "close dialogue" between Canterbury and Rome. For example here are extracts from a recent Press Release from "Anglican News": "IARCCUM 2016 has been an extraordinary, historic summit, rich in symbolism and significance for the Anglican Communion and Catholic Church It brought together 36 bishops from around the world for a week in Canterbury and Rome to celebrate the deepening relationship between the two traditions over the past 50 years and to find practical ways to work together to demonstrate that unity to the world and address its social and pastoral issues....". The Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury jointly led a service, and exchanged gifts "as a sign of friendship". There was a "formal presentation of a document detailing 20 years of work on reconciling the two traditions by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission" "The bishops engaged in everything in a way that was beautiful to see They are inspired now to go out into the world and work together for unity and common mission."

We get the message! - and at first glance it all seems very "mother-and-apple-pie-ish", for who could possibly object to the desire for "unity and the common mission" within the Church?

The answer to that question is very simple: these discussions are fine if both participants are "singing from the same hymn sheet", that is, preaching the same - Biblical - Gospel, and of course we all know that that is not the case here. While it is unfashionable to speak of such things in these ecumenical days, the Church of Rome does not preach the Biblical Gospel, and never has done; indeed her track record is one of terrible treatment of Bible-believing Christians, for which she has not repented for a moment. Rome's idea of unity, and hence her

keenness on ecumenism since Vatican II, is that all will finally "see the light" and come under Rome and the Pope. And this coming-together project extends beyond the Anglican Communion to include the Lutherans, the Orthodox, Islam and Judaism. Let there be no doubt that Rome's great goal is a One World Religion with You-Know-Who at its head. It is therefore rather important, to put it mildly, that we know what is going on and express our Bible-based protests in appropriate ways depending on our local situations. People may not like what we are obliged to point out, but so be it: they didn't like what Martin Luther had to say either.

Besides preaching a false, works-based "Gospel", Rome has various other home-made doctrines that are either anti-scriptural or extra-scriptural (Matthew 15.9b comes to mind). She has not changed her doctrines one jot - indeed she cannot do so because of the extraordinary doctrine of the Pope's infallibility. I gather that any Roman bishop, before being allowed to participate in ecumenical talks, has to pledge that he will not alter Roman doctrine in the slightest. In the light of all this, what this "ecumenical dialogue" means in practice is a one-way, ratchet-like process in favour of Rome, which is precisely what we see has been happening for years. What is more, Pope Francis is a Jesuit, (the first Jesuit ever to be elected as Pope), who as such has taken fearsome vows and is presumably still keeping to them.

We are thus right to suspect that this cosying-up to the Pope by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Justin Welby) springs from either a most alarming ignorance and naivety, or perhaps, which is worse, a desire for the Church of England to return to the Roman fold with all that that would involve for the Gospel, for the Church of England and for our country.

The old saying comes to mind, "Peace at any price - but Truth at all costs". It is high time that Mr Welby reads the Thirty Nine Articles once again, and the rest of us might care to do the same!