

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL

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COMMENTS ON THE WORK OF THE CANADIAN ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE
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This report covers the period from my previous comments [ARCIC-II 28/2 (84)] in August 1984 to July 1985. It is not an official report from Can A/RC but my own hasty summary. Fr Tillard will be able to correct and supplement what I have to say.

The Context of our Work

The past year has been very exciting for Anglican/Roman Catholic relations in Canada, including some high profile activities as well as our continuing quiet work.

The papal visit in September 1984 was highly successful. John Paul II carefully presented himself as the Bishop of Rome (Praise God) but the population as a whole simply welcomed him as the Pope. He powerfully proclaimed the Gospel and showed great pastoral sensitivity. We were fascinated to watch Roman Catholics and others give most serious attention to what he had to say while they simply assumed the freedom to agree or disagree with him. The cultural context of the magisterium obviously influenced its effect. We cannot claim that this visit had the ecumenical impact of the visit to the U.K. Perhaps that is because our non-Roman Catholic population is fragmented and we lack a media image like the Archbishop of Canterbury. The visit gave Anglicans some idea of what it could be like to have the Bishop of Rome as a focus of unity. We also noticed that Pope John Paul II paid careful attention to the local church and its perceptions of the issues of the day. This is the kind of model to which the Final Report points.

Not long after this visit, in which Anglican Bishops were prominent, we experienced an unaccustomed fiasco. Our national meetings of Roman Catholic and Anglican Bishops are well established and highly valued. Regional meetings usually go well also. But the Ontario Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops managed to have a disastrous meeting - or almost a meeting. The Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops scheduled their Fall meetings to take place in an overlapping time frame in the same downtown Toronto hotel. (This was a great extravagance for the Anglicans who normally meet in the adequate but far more modest setting of a Roman Catholic Retreat House - a full day with the more expensive R.C.s was to justify the expense). For some reason the full day of joint meetings was abruptly cancelled and at the very last moment a poorly planned luncheon was substituted. I do not know whether it is possible to be politely acrimonious but that is my impression of the lunch. The issue of public funding for Ontario Separate (R.C.) Schools was smouldering then. It has since flared up. At a crucial point in the Provincial election campaign, the Anglican Archbishop of Toronto accused the Premier of Ontario of behaving like Hitler. The Conservative government which had been in power for over forty years was ignominiously defeated. Most commentators seem to believe that the issue of school

funding was a major factor in the defeat. The matter is still unresolved and we shall have to tread very carefully to avoid a return to hostile attitudes from the past.

A grave ecumenical disappointment for active ecumenists was the collapse of plans for an Association of Christian Churches of Canada. Only nine of the 24 churches which received the proposal wished to have full membership. The Roman Catholic Church was by far the largest participant in the planning process and it finally decided to seek some form of associate membership in the existing Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) instead of supporting a new and more comprehensive association. The closer relationship of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) with the CCC is in itself a cause for rejoicing. Some reasons for the R.C. reluctance to enter a new association may have been the high cost at a time when national funds were stretched to the limit by the papal visit, and the problems of ensuring a truly bilingual Association, which is essential for P.C. participation. However, the most interesting explanation for the last minute R.C. withdrawal from the scheme was that "the grass-roots were not ready". The CCCB and its Ecumenical Commission had been well informed at every stage in the many years of planning, but the priests, the parishes and the faithful "knew nothing about this and you can't just spring this sort of thing on them." If this is true then we shall need to revise our view of the way authority actually works in the Roman Catholic Church and ARCIC will need to relate more effectively to parish clergy and the laity.

The recent ecumenical climate in Canada has been one of cautious realism rather than euphoria. People wonder if there is not a backing away from earlier enthusiasms. "Has Rome sent out a directive to be careful?" Yet we make progress. We now know and understand each other much better than we did a few years ago. In almost every part of our country we can point to some form of cooperative or joint work in mission, witness, service, prayer, and dialogue.

Work related to ARCIC-I and the Final Report

In preparation for the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) in 1986 (our General Synod meets for about nine days every third year), the 30 dioceses of the ACC are responding to the two questions about the consonance of the Final Report with the faith of Anglicans and whether we want to take a further step towards unity on the basis of our agreement in faith. So far my impression is that the consensus of our General Synod will probably be an enthusiastic affirmation of what is agreed about Eucharist and Ministry and a guarded acceptance of what has been negotiated about authority, with the strong desire to spell out more precisely where synodical government, the voice of the laity, and the encouragement as well as the protection of diversity, all fit in to the primatial and conciliar aspects of the exercise of authority in the Church.

Individual members of Can A/IC have been active in an explosion of meetings to receive the Final Report. My own most rewarding experience was when an Anglican and a Roman Catholic Bishop with the same geographical jurisdictions asked all their priests to come to a conference with lay representatives from every parish in their dioceses and to work together

on the Final Report. The dynamics of that meeting confirmed my conviction that reconciliation between our Churches is within our grasp. When priests talk alone, or when either community studies without the participation of the other, the discussions are good, but far less exciting.

Two members of Can A/PC, with the support of the Dialogue, prepared a Canadian Study Guide to the Final Report. (Building Bridges by Mac Beath Brown and Brian Prideaux) This guide has been well received and, I think, widely used.

Can A/PC also prepared a reception statement on the Final Report. The final version is dated July 12th, 1985 and has an orange cover! It is very enthusiastic about the Final Report. This has been submitted to ARCIC-II.

Work related to APCIC-II

In my report last year [APCIC-II 28/2 (84)] I mentioned two papers, The Ministry of the Whole People of God: Diversity of Gifts and Roles, by Dr Don Thompson, and Kenosis and Koinonia: The Path ahead for Anglican Roman Catholic Dialogue, by J-M Laporte, SJ. These papers have now been submitted to ARCIC-II together with five others (Coalitions as Vehicles for Unity: The Canadian Experience, by D.F. Thompson, Understanding Peel but Imperfect Communion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, by Margaret O'Gara, a report on Eugene Fairweather's presentation Communion in Faith and Moral Consensus, the Minutes of a Can A/PC meeting (18-19 April, 1985) with a discussion on Brainstorming on Future Directions, and the Reception Statement on the Final Report.)

Perhaps APCIC-II will want Can A/PC to continue to develop the emerging sense of a way forward indicated by these seven papers. Or ARCIC-II may wish to receive them as background studies to be put into the international mix.

My impression is that O'Gara is very helpful about reconceptualizing our relationship. "Looking for the next step," she writes, "we may have failed to notice the small steps that we have already taken toward each other, at least in Canada, so that gradually we have reached a new stage almost without noticing it." In her discussion of Schools of Theology and the Reform of the Church she is indebted in part to Rahner as well as to her experience as a teacher in an ecumenical context. I shall be interested to find out what she thinks of Einigung der Kirchen, Rahner-Fries, which seems to support her approach. You will notice that in these Canadian submissions diversity is not merely tolerated but encouraged and affirmed. We do not see this richness in the Church's life as a threat to unity.

Jean-Marc Laporte's paper has now been published in One in Christ (1985-2) Rooted in scripture and with a perceptive awareness of our contemporary situation, it is a creative and important expression of the need for a strategic spirituality of reconciliation. Thompson's papers deal with

theological reflection on concrete Canadian ecumenical experience. In them theoria is following praxis and pointing the way forward for further growth and risk taking together. Fairweather deals with an issue which will certainly occupy a good deal of ARCIC-II's agenda. How much diversity can there be in moral and ethical decisions without destroying communion in faith?

Conclusion

Can A/FC would welcome a response, comments, guidance or requests from ARCIC-II. We are impressed and encouraged by the convergence which has already happened. We see the need for a profound conversion if we are now to move towards true reconciliation. We are understandably growing impatient with the slowness of change in matters like mixed marriages. We would welcome some dramatic decision and symbolic gesture which would unmistakably signal good faith and firm commitment to the reconciliation of our communities.

John Baycroft