

GROWTH IN COMMUNION:

Unity in Diversity

Introduction (to be drafted)

I What is Communion?

II Unity, Diversity and Signs of Communion (cf. ARCIC-II 66
(87) sections 3 & 8)

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V Impediments to Communion from the Perspective
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God's ultimate purpose in salvation is to bring men and women into communion with Himself, with each other, and even into a harmonious relationship with the whole of creation. For Christian faith, salvation is the rectification of the disruption of this communion caused by sin. Justification involves both an entry into a relationship of intimacy with God and into a community where barriers of division are overcome (vid. "Salvation and the Church").

Both human happiness and human misery are bound up with the need to live in harmony with our conscience, with one another, with the gifts of creation and supremely with God Himself. Such harmony is the purpose of God for the whole of His creation, a harmony which manifests the Trinitarian nature of the life of God.

Throughout the Bible the hallmark of creation is that everything is made in and for communion. All creation stems from the love of God. The drama of humanity, as unfolded in Scripture, is of the breakdown of communion. In the Book of Genesis Adam and Eve are created to find fulfilment in each other in communion with God. Their disobedience, which causes them to hide from God, also undermines their mutual relationship and disturbs their association with the natural order. The account of Cain and Abel indicates that this is the story of all humanity. Nevertheless, in faithfulness to His eternal purpose, God continues to will the harmony and communion of all His creation. That is the meaning of God's promises made to Adam and Eve and to Noah after the tragedy of the Flood. The barriers

of incomprehension and consequent scattering of the peoples at Babel speak of the fact that this estrangement is not limited to individuals but also involves whole communities. Here also the faithfulness of God to restore communion reappears in that one of the nations, the descendants of Abraham, is called to bring salvation to the nations. The history of this chosen people is continuing evidence of God's will to overcome disunity despite repeated disobedience and unfaithfulness. The God-given structures of ministry and the legislation for the people were provided for this end. Even for this elect people, disobedience led to the tragic division into two kingdoms, which gravely impeded their being the instrument of healing for all the nations that God intended. Nevertheless, God promised repeatedly through the prophets and the priestly tradition that the divine purpose of communion would be accomplished in spite of the failure of his chosen servant. This, is the ultimate intention of the covenant which God made with his people.

The promise of salvation finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, whose obedience to the Father established fullness of communion between God and man. By the gift of His Holy Spirit believers are introduced into communion, being adopted into the family of God. Salvation is more than the mere restoration of a broken relationship. On the return of the Prodigal to the father's house, he discovered and experienced a depth of the father's love that far exceeded anything he had known before, a welcome and honour that was wholly undeserved. Such is the

welcome that our heavenly Father offers to the redeemed. The grace of God in our reconciliation with the Father in Christ is such that we are thereby reconciled also with one another: on the cross all barriers of division were destroyed. Moreover, because our Saviour is the one in and through whom all things were created, our true association with the whole created order is secured. In the final resurrection we shall share in Christ's victory over the powers of death and decay, for he is the Lord of all creation. A true communion between men and women and between them and all creation can only flow from communion with God. Our vocation in Christian life and mission is the recovery and renewal of our human responsibility through communion with the living Christ. We are to share his commitment to the Father, his suffering for the sake of the gospel, and his compassion for the world. That is why love, which is the very nature of God, is the fulfilment of his law. Such love is not in word only but is expressed in the sharing of all that we are and of all that we possess.

Communion is so profound and all-embracing that no one image can adequately illustrate it. God's call is not into a collection of individuals but into a unified community: salvation is never in isolation. The New Testament speaks of the disciples of Christ as being the branches with the vine, the sheep with the shepherd, the living stones with the foundation, the bride with the Bridegroom. In a more specific way the Pauline imagery of the Church as the body of Christ elucidates the way in which the inner life of the redeemed community is essentially a life of communion:

communion of all the members with the Head and of all the members together in mutual inter-dependence. God provides special gifts of ministry to build up the body. According to the Acts of the Apostles the dawn of the Christian church at Pentecost is the reversal of the tragedy of Babel, making a reality what the first Epistle of Peter describes as the new humanity, "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God". (cf. 1 Peter 2:9, 10). In proclaiming the marvellous deeds of God the people are embodying the gift of communion between God and themselves. As a community by their life and proclamation they are the instrument of God for calling the whole of humanity into this communion. The Church is that part of humanity which accepts through the Holy Spirit the call to become this new humanity.

The most explicit expression of the communion of the people of God in all its facets is the eucharistic celebration. "Christ, through the Holy Spirit in the eucharist builds up the life of the Church, strengthens its fellowship and furthers its mission" (Final Report, Eucharist, 3).

II UNITY, DIVERSITY and SIGNS OF COMMUNION

(THE MATERIAL ON UNITY AND DIVERSITY, CRUCIAL TO THE LOGIC OF THE PAPER AS A WHOLE, HAS NOT BEEN RE-DRAFTED AND REQUIRES CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION IN THE LIGHT OF THE OTHER PARTS OF THE PAPER WRITTEN OR RE-DRAFTED AT STORRINGTON. ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO THE IMPORTANT COMMENTS OF CANADIAN ARC, WHICH WILL BE CIRCULATED. THE MATERIAL ON SIGNS OF COMMUNION (cf. MARKS OF KOINONIA IN THE EARLIER SCHEMA) WILL ALSO REQUIRE SOME ATTENTION).

DIVERSITY

Unity and diversity are complementary aspects of life in the koinonia. The Church must be comprehensive in the sense that it must be able to embrace a rich diversity of theological and liturgical expression of a common faith. Christians enjoy a real freedom in the way they understand, appropriate and live out their shared faith. It is the exercise of this freedom that creates diversity. Yet there are limits to diversity which reflect the specific character of Christian freedom. The freedom of the gospel is not libertarianism: it is lived out in obedience to God within the koinonia. We may identify four principles that govern the exercise of freedom in the koinonia and indicate the limits of diversity. The episcopal authority of the Church has the responsibility for preserving and promoting the unity of the koinonia in fidelity to the apostolic tradition which is especially threatened by:

- (i) Affirming or doing anything which threatens to break down the koinonia.
- (ii) Affirmations of a kind that deny the truth about the Trinity and about the Person and work of Christ.
- (iii) Anything which impairs or hinders mission.
- (iv) Affirmations that deny the transcendental character of human destiny.

SIGNS

It is important for the Churches, as they grow into fuller communion, to discover the extent to which they are in fundamental accord and where there remain substantial areas of disagreement and division. Equally it must be borne in mind that some forms of diversity, rather than weakening communion, may be essential and vital to it. Indeed, there are certain signs that enable us to recognise, amidst our differences, where we are in true communion. These signs are:

(i) A common confession of the apostolic faith attested in the Scriptures, proclaimed in the creeds, taught to the faithful.

(ii) A common baptism.

(iii) A commitment to mission, involving both evangelism and engagement in working for the transformation of this world into the world God desires.

(iv) Mutual concern for the spiritual and material well-being of all Christian people.

(v) The recognition of each other's ministries.

(vi) Shared structures of decision-making in matters of faith and conduct.

(vii) The recognition and affirmation of each other's communities and members, together with the invitation, welcome and involvement of members of one community within another's community, without either's loss of identity.

(viii) A shared concern for the moral values implicit in humanity's being created in God's image.

(ix) The integration, celebration and visible expression of all these signs of communion in a shared eucharist.

III COMMUNION BETWEEN ANGLICANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS:

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Anglicans and Roman Catholics already share in a true communion (koinonia) of faith and life. Although not yet the fuller communion we seek, this existing communion must not be ignored or theologically undervalued. Despite the fact that it falls short of that fullness which would allow the mutual acceptance of the members and ministers of our two Churches, such a communion already entails a substantial degree of mutual recognition. It should, however, be recognised that the fullest communion of love with God and with each other will be realised only in the Kingdom of Heaven. In this world, within the Pilgrim Church on earth, we shall always be seeking a fuller expression of communion in charity. Even full ecclesial communion itself can only be a provisional approximation to, not the achievement of, that perfect communion when we shall see God face to face, together with all the saints, and when the need for the sacramental signs of God's presence will have ceased. This eschatological goal of perfect communion is the context in which we set our growth into full ecclesial communion from the true but impaired communion we already share.

This existing communion has been recognised on a number of occasions, notably in the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Donald Coggan) in 1977:

"As the Roman Catholic Church and the constituent Churches of the Anglican Communion have sought to grow in mutual understanding and Christian love,

they have come to recognize, to value and to give thanks for a common faith in God our Father, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit; our common baptism into Christ; our sharing of the Holy Scriptures, of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Chalcedonian definition, and the teaching of the Fathers; our common Christian inheritance for many centuries with its living traditions of liturgy, theology, spirituality and mission."

As well as areas of agreement in faith, Anglicans and Roman Catholics also share the inheritance of a common tradition of theological interpretation. Even after the break of the sixteenth century, our theologians drew upon the same resources and inhabited a world of common discourse. In recent years, the work of theologians has transcended ecclesiastical barriers. We share a common inheritance of spirituality, and in modern times have been enriched by one another's traditions of hymnody and spiritual writing. In recent centuries we have lived in the context of a common intellectual culture which has presented all Christians, especially in the West, with serious questions concerning faith and history. Both Churches also experience the richness as well as the tensions which arise from the presence of a wide variety of cultures within one communion.

Our existing communion is also expressed in other areas of common work and life. Above all, Anglicans and Roman Catholics are united in prayer with and for each other; the common worship

in Canterbury Cathedral in May 1982, led by Pope John Paul II and the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Robert Runcie), being the most striking example.

In parishes there is considerable local co-operation, joint prayer and shared worship. In some countries there are shared Church buildings and joint schools. In universities and seminaries there is often co-operation in theological training and increasingly integrated theological resources, especially in the areas of biblical, patristic and liturgical scholarship. There are joint meetings between religious, clergy and laity - often for co-operation in mission and evangelism.

There are regular meetings between bishops at local, regional and national levels which address contemporary moral, social and political issues. There is also regular co-operation between many Roman Catholic Episcopal Conferences and Anglican Synods, and national Anglican-Roman Catholic Commissions exist in several countries. Our two Churches also collaborate within the wider ecumenical framework of Councils of Churches. Internationally, the symbolic significance of meetings between the Archbishop of Canterbury, and other Anglican Primates, with the Bishop of Rome has also been an important pointer to the existing communion between our Churches.

No less important is our largely convergent liturgical practice and eucharistic spirituality. Our religious communities, though different in size, also to a large extent share a common ethos and spirituality. Nor must we underestimate the theological and sacramental significance of inter-church families who live in the hopes as well as the difficulties of the path to

Christian unity. Such a living-out of our present communion leads in many instances to a keen desire for further growth in communion and an expectation of the wider church's reception and appropriation of the unity already experienced.

But however important this existing partial communion of faith and life may seem, Anglicans and Roman Catholics believe it falls well short of true Christian unity. Our two Churches have therefore been committed to the search for visible unity since the inauguration in 1966 by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Michael Ramsey) of that "serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed".

In the intervening years the Final Report of ARCIC-I has been completed and is being evaluated by our two Churches. While some important matters remain for further elucidation and discussion - especially in relation to authority - it is the Commission's hope that our two Communion are now agreed that they substantially share the same eucharistic faith and a common doctrine of the ordained ministry.

This substantial agreement includes matters such as the relation of the eucharist to the one sacrifice of Christ and the manner of Christ's presence in the eucharist; the episcopate of the ordained ministry within the Church in continuity with the apostles, the relation of the ordained ministry and the whole Church to Christ's high-priesthood, and the sacramental nature of ordination.

The convergence on authority is centered on the

confession of Jesus Christ as Lord of the Church. To this the apostolic preaching in the Scriptures bears witness. This teaching remains normative for the Church. Within the Church's living proclamation and interpretation of the Gospel the ordained ministry has a special responsibility. The episcopate, in particular, serves the communion of the Churches in the maintenance of apostolic continuity and as the link of unity between the local and universal Church. So the two Communion are evaluating the agreement on the need for a proper balance between episcopal collegiality, conciliarity and a universal primacy, with the participation of the whole people of God.

Even before the evaluation of the Final Report, the work of ARCIC-I was such as to inspire sufficient confidence for the joint establishment of its successor by Pope John Paul II and the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Robert Runcie). The mandate of ARCIC-II is:

"to examine, especially in the light of our respective judgments on the Final Report, the outstanding doctrinal differences which still separate us, with a view towards their eventual resolution; to study all that hinders the mutual recognition of the ministries of our Communion; and to recommend what practical steps will be necessary when, on the basis of our unity in faith, we are able to proceed to the restoration of full communion." (Common Declaration 1982).

The issues which are still divisive for Anglicans and Roman Catholics, differing in kind and importance, include the following:

(i) Difficulties relating to the nature and exercise of authority in the Church. From the Roman Catholic point of view, there are difficulties with Anglican structures of decision-making in matters of faith and order (including the role of the State in England). On the Anglican side, despite the work of ARCIC-I, there are still difficulties about Papal Primacy and about the role of the laity in decision-making.

(ii) Difficulties relating to formal decisions made by one or other Communion which, because made in a state of mutual separation, or even opposition, are felt to have hardened division. Examples include, on the Roman Catholic side, the Marian Dogmas of 1854 and 1950, the definition of Papal Primacy of 1870 and the Bull Apostolicae Curae of 1896; and on the Anglican side the decision and the fact of the ordination of women to the presbyterate.

(iii) Difficulties about the limits of tolerable diversity of belief and practice in the Church. Roman Catholics pose questions to Anglicans about the liberty of interpretation open to those who exercise a teaching office within the Church. Anglicans pose questions to Roman Catholics about the compatibility of some devotional practices with fundamental Christian doctrine.

(iv) Differences in discipline, for example, with regard to marriage, divorce, annulment and re-marriage.

(v) Differences on questions of morals. These bear on the relationship between faith and morals, on the nature of the Churches' authority in matters of morals, and on the way to approach specific moral issues.

Related to all the above are differences of culture or ethos that result from our having lived in separation for several hundred years. This has bred different habits of mind and action as well as mutual mistrust and suspicion which are in themselves a major hindrance to fuller communion. Not all differences between us are necessarily obstacles to fuller communion. Some are instances of the diversity that must always characterize koinonia. It is important to identify as clearly as possible those differences which are in fact instances of proper diversity, and those which are real impediments to communion. Growth towards fuller communion cannot be achieved without a process of growth and change within each of our Communion. Inner conversion is required for ecumenical advance.

IV COMMUNION BETWEEN ANGLICANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS:
PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

The work of ARCIC-II so far completed on Salvation and the Church will, if accepted by our Churches, show that the area of our substantial agreement in faith also extends to the difficult topics, much disputed in the past, of justification and sanctification, divine grace and human response, freedom, merit and reward, and the role of the Church in the mediation of Salvation.

For the next steps along the road to fuller communion the dialogue between our Churches must build upon what has been so far achieved. At every step, progress will depend upon growth in mutual knowledge and trust. If a new relationship between our Communion is to be effected, this will require major theological work on issues relative to the reception of ARCIC-I, not least, a deepening of the study of authority in the Church; on moral and ethical issues which ostensibly divide our Churches so sharply; on the reconciliation of ministries on the basis of our agreement in faith on the doctrines of the eucharist and of the ordained ministry; and on the theological question and actual fact of the ordination of women to the presbyterate in some provinces of the Anglican Communion. Such work must be set in a coherent overall framework. We believe that an ecclesiology of communion provides the necessary perspective in which to view those issues which continue to impede our growth in communion.