



ARCIC I AND II AN ANGLICAN PERSPECTIVE

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At the 1998 Lambeth Conference Bishop Christopher was co-secretary of the section 'Called to be One', under the chairmanship of Bishops Jabez Bryce and Stephen Sykes, which focused on the commitments made in our ecumenical journeys, and reported on the progress made in many areas of ecumenism, seeking to understand the sense of unity that God intended for the whole of humanity and creation.

ARCIC I AND II AN ANGLICAN PERSPECTIVE

by Christopher Hill

1. This paper will concentrate mainly on the work of ARCIC I and on the earlier work of ARCIC II in which I was directly involved, that is to say on the *Final Report* of ARCIC I (1981) its 'reception' and significance for Anglican identity and that of the first two Agreed Statements of ARCIC II, namely *Salvation and the Church* (1986) and *Church as Communion* (1990). This is not to belittle or marginalise what has happened since. The important Agreed Statement *Life in Christ* (1993) breaks new ground ecumenically as well as between Anglicans and Roman Catholics by treating morals within the ecclesial life of communion. It is an important new venture. But it seemed best to me to concentrate, for this paper and on this occasion, on the earlier documents which deal with more familiar ecumenical subjects: the classical areas of faith and order discussion between Christian churches of the West since the Reformation, eucharist, ministry, authority, justification, and behind all of them the understanding of the nature of the Church itself, *communio*.

Membership

2. I will begin with the membership of ARCIC I and II. ARCIC I possessed what must have been one of the most stable memberships of an ecumenical commission on record. The story of the establishment of the membership of ARCIC I is now well recorded after research in the archives at Lambeth (the Counsellors on Foreign Relations – now the Department for Ecumenical Affairs) and the Vatican (the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity – now the Pontifical Council for Unity) by the late Mgr Bill Purdy, for many years my co-secretary on ARCIC I. I know the Lambeth papers well and Bill's account on this issue is both fascinating, eminently readable and accurate.¹

3. There were pressures and doubts on both sides. Archbishop Michael Ramsey and the Lambeth staff of the time were suspicious that the SPCU would bow to pressure from a perceived 'conservative' English hierarchy. As it was to work out, the SPCU would have more to fear from other

Roman dicasteries than from English Roman Catholics. But in 1969 we were still only just out of an era when Belgium was the best place for Anglicans and Roman Catholics to talk to each other because communal antagonisms, rival tribal loyalties, and historical misconceptions had made real conversation in England hardly possible at an official level. Michael Ramsey wanted ARCIC to be an *international* commission so that the Roman Catholic members would have a broader ecumenical understanding than Cardinal Heenan was thought to have. Ramsey was, however, not too keen that ARCIC should be *too* international on the Anglican side! The co-chairman was to be the Anglican Bishop of Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin (later Archbishop of Dublin), Harry McAdoo. But the majority of Anglican members were English, or of English origin (such as Felix Amott, Archbishop of Brisbane). The Americans were miffed at their one member, not then even a bishop, but soon to become one (Arthur Vogel of West Missouri). As it worked out, ARCIC I involved, on the Anglican side, bishops or theologians from England, Ireland, Australia, the USA and South Africa. On the Roman Catholic side England and the USA were spiced by three French members, one of whom taught in Canada (J-M R Tillard), one of whom taught in the USA (Georges Tavard), and the final Gallican being (then) Fr Pierre Duprey of the SPCU in Rome.

What the membership of ARCIC I achieved was not so much international representativeness (though there was major international representation) but theological and historical expertise for dealing with the *particular* questions which had to be addressed. There is an obvious sense in which representation is important for an organ of government or instrument of ecclesial communion. On the Anglican side ARCIC I was often criticised for being 'non-representative' of black-African or Asian Anglicanism, or under-representative of evangelicals, though one in particular, Julian Charley, a curate of the evangelical father-figure John Stott, had been proposed to the Archbishop of Canterbury by Michael Green, still a leading evangelical figure in the Church of England. And ARCIC I had no women members. The issue was focused when ARCIC I came to an end and the time came to constitute ARCIC II. The Anglican Consultative Council asked for a 'widely representative new Joint Commission'.² A debate about 'representativeness' or expertise had been opened.

4. ARCIC II was certainly more representative. The Caribbean, East, West and Southern Africa were added to Canada, Australia, the USA. On the Roman Catholic side the Indian sub-continent was also represented. Two

women theologians joined the team. There were more evangelicals. In fact ARCIC II (in its first phase, for it was reconstituted in 1991) worked well. But only just. To achieve wider representation numbers were increased to 27 compared with 21 of ARCIC I. This made debate more difficult. And some members found the classical agenda frustrating. They had not been chosen for their expertise in the 16th–17th century discussions of grace and justification; their expertise, and it was considerable, lay in more contemporary fields. In 1991 the membership was rearranged – in part due to the sheer cost of getting such a commission together. The second ARCIC II team was smaller but more representative, though the effect of this when the specific subject of morals arose was to use four consultants in addition to the membership and staff. The need for consultation on agenda issues illustrates the problem of a tension between ‘expertise’ and ‘representation’ in ecumenical discussion. Perhaps a distinction needs to be more sharply drawn between an ecumenical *drafting commission* and a *representative steering committee*, which will consider questions of reception, confessional identity and general overall ecumenical policy.³ This is *not* to say a theological commission will necessarily lack a wide representation: for example, if the subject were contemporary theological pluralism, global representation would be absolutely necessary. The *Malta Report* of the Joint Anglican–Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission originally envisaged its successor as such an overall ‘representative’ Anglican–Roman Catholic body. ARCIC I in fact became an expert drafting body dealing with the central *theological* issues, and an overall steering commission was never established. Where then are pastoral, ecumenical issues dealt with today? Only by means of a small *ad hoc* series of ‘informal’ talks. A study of the membership of ARCIC I and II raises important questions about the strategy and tactics of ecumenical commissions.

Method

5. It would be tedious in the extreme to document the progress of all the Agreed Statements.⁴ But the ARCIC Agreed Statements can be used to illustrate important aspects of an ARCIC method. I do not claim the ARCIC method is exclusive to ARCIC: indeed, I would expect to find similar methods in all good ecumenical dialogues. Most notably, ARCIC rarely set confessional positions side by side: the Roman Catholic position is ...; the Anglican position is This is never the case in the work on eucharist and ministry, and only in a limited and narrow sense in the work on authority.

Even where particular, specific Roman Catholic claims are cited, for example about the universal ministry of the Bishop of Rome as understood by Vatican I, these are usually expressed *jointly* by Anglicans and Roman Catholics together. This refusal to set out 'divided' agreed statements has often puzzled both Anglican and Roman Catholic critics of the ARCIC Agreed Statements. They consider it the job of an ecumenical commission to state the *differences* between the communions. But this approach usually presupposes that we know definitely what these differences are *before* a dialogue. And thus this approach presupposes that we *accept* the polemicised half-truths and misunderstandings from our divided communal past in which each tells the 'story' of the other *in absentia* and in which genuine differences of emphasis are exaggerated to the extent that they become communion-dividing. Such a demand to state the *differences* between churches is inimical to the fundamental ecumenical thesis that what Christians have in common is more important than what divides them.

6. So it was that ARCIC always approached a potentially divisive subject from the perspective of what could be said *in common*. In most cases it discovered that what remained over once this exercise had been achieved was a difference of emphasis, spirituality, theology – but hardly of doctrine or of faith. ARCIC, as a Commission, very rarely indeed met denominationally separately. I can remember only once in 15 years as its Anglican Co-Secretary when Anglican and Roman Catholic sides met separately. So what was said about a doctrine of one church was heard by all. And the discussions were rarely denominational. More often than not there would be more than one Anglican emphasis; and just as often there would be more than one Roman Catholic voice. Anglicans of catholic or evangelical tradition would make their distinctive emphases. So also would Jesuit and Dominican theologians. But there is more to be said about this. Why did ARCIC rarely meet or speak separately? Because it became over the years a stable and trusting group of Christian friends, dedicated to the restoration of communion. ARCIC was once allegedly criticised by a distinguished curialist for being an ecumenical 'club'. In a sense it was. A 'club' – at least in English culture – is *not* a secret society dedicated to the overthrow of a regime. Rather it is a group of people, not necessarily like-minded, and certainly not necessarily of one discipline or profession, but having sufficient common purpose and goals to cohere as an 'extended family'. In this sense ARCIC I could have been described as an ecumenical

club. Friendship was essential, and led to mutual understanding and trust. When at an early meeting at Windsor Castle a high Anglican gave an elaborate paper on a modern philosophical interpretation of human and sacramental presence, the evangelical Julian Charley felt ill at ease with both the language and concepts of the paper. A certain Dominican theologian – who might be described as being an evangelical Roman Catholic – heard Julian’s anxieties and relieved him considerably by stating that he frankly shared them. Thus began a long-lasting friendship between Jean Tillard and Julian Charley which was to be such a fruitful theological partnership for many years. There were many other friendships. And ARCIC’s manner of working encouraged this. As well as full commission meetings there were (and are) regular sub-commission meetings. These sometimes involved a large number of members of the Commission. In this way many people were involved in preparatory texts, thus assisting their ownership by the whole Commission. But there were also regular ‘drafting’ groups, often six people and no more. Such meetings often took place at the Co-Chairmen’s houses. During the time of ARCIC I, Bishop Alan Clark (Roman Catholic Co-Chairman) made his home at Poringland, Norwich, available to members of the Commission. The practice continues under Bishop Mark Santer of Birmingham (Anglican Co-Chairman) and Bishop Cormac Murphy O’Connor (Roman Catholic Co-Chairman). If in someone’s home as a guest you hear an unacceptable theological statement you don’t anathematize the speaker but ask them *what they mean*. In the explanation of the meaning of a particular theological language used by one Christian tradition ecumenical understanding flourishes, and unfamiliar or uncongenial language is related to more familiar and acceptable understandings of Christianity.

7. There is another related aspect of ARCIC’s way of working which needs to be emphasised. Each day an office is said together and/or the eucharist celebrated, the official rules of sacramental communion always being duly observed. The *experience* of attending but not yet fully participating in each other’s eucharist on a daily basis over so many years explains why ARCIC I was so convinced that it did have a real agreement upon the eucharist and the ordained ministry. The degree of communion already shared in such joint worship is high. And it is within such spiritual communion already shared that ARCIC learned to trust that different emphases as between Anglicans and Roman Catholics were no more indicative of wrong faith than differing emphases within a single communion.

8. My second series of observations about method was foundationally documented in the original Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Michael Ramsey (1966) and has also been endorsed by the present Pope. In an important speech about the method of ARCIC delivered to ARCIC I (1980) at Castelgandolfo in the year before the completion of its *Final Report*, John Paul II said:

I greet you with honour, veterans, seasoned workers in a great cause – that unity for which Christ prayed so solemnly on the eve of his sacrificial death. We know that this cause is the responsibility of all who are committed to Christ (cf. *Decree on Ecumenism*, n. 5). It can be served in many ways; the way assigned to you by the Common Declaration of Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey was that of ‘serious theological dialogue based on the Scriptures and on the ancient common Tradition’. You see that the very words of this programme are revealing. Unity is a gift of our Lord and Saviour, the founder of the Church. Although it was marred by the sin of men, it was never entirely lost. We have a common treasure, which we must recover and in the fullness of which we must share, not losing certain characteristic qualities and gifts which have been ours even in our divided state. Your method has been to go behind the habit of thought and expression born and nourished in enmity and controversy, to scrutinise together the great common treasure, to clothe it in a language at once traditional and expressive of the insights of the age which no longer glories in strife but seeks to come together in listening to the quiet voice of the Spirit.⁵

It is no great secret that the text of this address was drafted by the late Mgr Bill Purdy (Co-Secretary of ARCIC I). The exquisite English would almost give away its author. But its significance is that the Pope accepted and delivered this speech to the members of the Commission.

9. Central to this endorsement of the ARCIC method is the repetition of the original mandate of Michael Ramsey and Paul VI. Dialogue is based on the Scriptures and the ancient common Tradition. This supposes not only that the Scriptures are central to this ecumenical dialogue but also that there is already a *common* Tradition. Already there is some recognition of identity here between present-day Anglicanism and the ancient *Ecclesia Anglicana*. There is thus a presupposition in the original mandate that communion and continuity with the ancient Church were not entirely lost at the English Reformation. Communion (in this case with the past) has not been completely destroyed. ARCIC I and II has acted upon this presupposition. It has been an essential part of its method. Occasionally ARCIC’s critics have been in essence objecting to its original mandate in objecting to its

method. The second emphasis the present pope makes is on ARCIC going 'behind' terms and expressions which came into being or were specially emphasised in controversy. It now seems to be accepted that the composite drafters of the CDF's Response to ARCIC had hardly understood this methodology and were seeking the familiar identity and security of Counter-Reformation terminology. It is more than a pity that there was not a better collaboration with their curial colleagues in the Pontifical Council for Unity. The wisdom of avoiding, if at all possible, the neuralgic terms of 16th-century controversy has again been well illustrated by the publication of ARCIC II's *Clarifications* (1993). The CDF asked ARCIC about the 'propitiatory nature of the eucharistic sacrifice'. ARCIC II with the help of drafters from ARCIC I attempted to respond to this request, although going against the normal ARCIC methodology of going behind the language of the 16th century. Despite the fact that the Tridentine use of the term 'propitiation' was carefully nuanced and can legitimately be read as meaning 'intercede' rather than 'placate', and the fact that the term is never used in catholic theology of the eucharist as independent of the Cross, many Anglicans, not only evangelicals, have been disturbed by the re-introduction of a term which 16th-century Anglicanism applied only to the Cross and never to the eucharist. The occasional Anglican use of 'propitiation' of the eucharist in the 17th century has not yet convinced these Anglicans that there can be a legitimate use of the word 'propitiate' of the eucharistic memorial of the unique sacrifice of Christ which does not in some way threaten or qualify the propitiatory value of the Cross itself: the last thing catholic use of the term would wish to do! So – a cautionary tale about ARCIC methodology, or about ARCIC not following its own methodology.

10. My final observation on the ARCIC methodology relates to the nature of the agreement ARCIC has claimed to achieve. The term 'substantial agreement' has been questioned. What does 'substantial agreement' really mean? Is it ambiguous? I do not propose to try and elaborate an epistemological answer to the (admittedly serious) questions raised here and also in relation to 'going behind' certain theological language of a particular past tradition. Nevertheless, the following points would need to be addressed in such a discussion. Can a single meaning exist – almost as a platonic 'form' – externally (so to speak) to a particular theological or philosophical expression? Are not meaning and articulation so closely related that a change of expression must also mean a change in substantive meaning? *Conversely*, can any truth be fully expressed in words or formulae

without remainder? Is there not a greater and more mysterious truth of which *particular* expressions and formulations are but facets and partial glimpses? The ecumenical task for the future will continue to relate to these issues, which will become more prominent as the question of the cultural pluriformity of Christianity inescapably comes to the fore.

Gospel and culture questions have always faced the Church. The meaning of eschatology and the Christ event came sharply into focus as the Church came out of a New Testament Semitic culture into the Graeco-Roman, Hellenistic, world of the Patristic era. This change required *new* language and raised questions of the continuity of meaning between NT language and later creedal orthodoxy. So also today the more we take seriously – as we must – the fact that the Christian Church exists in Europe, Asia, Africa, the New World, the Pacific, the more the issues of meaning, culture and language must be faced. It is against this grand but daunting scenario that we have to place the specific ARCIC and ecumenical questions of meaning and language. The logic of questioning the possibility of going behind particular terminology, or of questioning the achievement of ‘substantial agreement’ without identity of language leads inescapably to the view that there is only one classical dogmatic language possible for Christians: that which emerged in the period of the classical European Christendom period. This is, of course, arguable. It fits in with some post-modernist philosophical thought in which all systems have an inner logic, meaning and coherence, but there is no possibility of interrelating different systems of thought, cultural traditions or philosophies. But then we are left with totally water-tight compartments of separate meaning. With such a view there must either be *one* master Christian culture, or a series of quite *independent* Christian cultures. Neither of these stark alternatives seems right. Nor does this scenario accord with the conviction of the Church through the ages that the Christ of the New Testament is the same Christ as the creeds, and the same Christ as the Church today.

We shall not solve these problems here. But they are raised by the nature of ecumenical agreements in general and the ARCIC texts in particular, and even more significantly by Christian cultural pluriformity.

11. What is clear, however, is that two recent Popes have endorsed the principle of method which looks to substantial (but not identical) agreement as a legitimate goal of dialogue. John XXIII’s original (Italian) draft for his famous opening speech to the Second Vatican Council is well known, even if the official Latin version is weaker than Pope John’s original draft: ‘the substance of the ancient doctrine of the faith is one thing, and the way in

which it is presented is another'. Even less ambiguous, and in a clear ecumenical context, is the remarkable text of Pope John Paul II and the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Zakka I (1984). Speaking of the division between the Chalcedonian and Oriental Orthodox churches they said together:

The confusion and schisms that occurred between (their) Churches in the later centuries ... in no way affect or touch the substance of their faith, since these arose only because of differences in terminology and culture and in the various formulae adopted by different theological schools to express the same matter.

If the formulae of an Ecumenical Council such as Chalcedon can be qualified in this way, and in absolutely central areas of faith such as Christology which touch on the *identity* of separated ecclesial communities, then Reformation and later issues between Anglicans and Roman Catholics must also be ultimately resolvable in the way ARCIC deemed possible.⁶

Reception

12. In one paper it is impossible to do justice to the complexity of the reception process of ARCIC (I shall concentrate here on ARCIC I), even within the Anglican Communion. The Roman Catholic reception of ARCIC is in one sense simpler – we can look at the Vatican *Observations* of 1982 and especially the *Response* of 1991. But what of the many responses by Episcopal Conferences which were sent to Rome at the official invitation of Cardinal Willebrands as President of the Council for Promoting Christian Unity? Some were published, before Conferences were requested not to publish them before being sent to Rome. A summary was made of these responses in preparation for the official Vatican response. But it only had significance for the Pontifical Council of Unity and was not taken into account by the CDF or its consultants. Here is an illustration *not only* of a difference of theological method within the Roman Curia but also of the tension between an understanding of the Church as *local* or *universal*; or rather of how the local and universal *relate* in a balanced ecclesiology of *communio*. Anglicans – with their Reformation inheritance of 'national' churches may well have stressed the local/provincial church too much in the past. But is the centralisation of the 19th and 20th century Papacy also not imbalanced? Has the universal been stressed at the expense of the local? This is a question an Anglican must politely ask; just as a Roman Catholic must also ask questions of Anglicans about 'provincial independence'.

13. The official Anglican responses to ARCIC I can be seen at two levels. By 1987 (five years after the publication of the *Final Report*) 19 out of the 29 (national) Provinces of the Anglican Communion had sent synodical (or other official) responses to the Anglican Communion Secretariat. These were described and summarised in 1987 in an official preparatory document for the Lambeth Conference of Bishops which met in 1988. It is well known that the Lambeth Conference declared that ARCIC I's work on the eucharist and on the ordained ministry, as contained in the *Final Report*, was 'consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans'. And that it welcomed the work on authority

as a firm basis for the direction and agenda of the continuing dialogue on authority and wishes to encourage ARCIC II to continue to explore the basis in Scripture and Tradition of the concept of an universal primacy, in conjunction with collegiality, as an instrument of unity, the character of such a primacy in practice, and to draw upon the experience of other Christian churches in exercising primacy, collegiality and conciliarity.⁷

This is both a very positive and a very nuanced resolution. It echoes the original mandate in its reference to Scripture and Tradition; it links universal primacy inseparably with collegiality and conciliarity. It refers to other churches, no doubt especially the Orthodox. It defines the purpose of primacy as an instrument of unity. But there is reference to the actual practice of the primacy – anticipating the important recent lecture by Archbishop James Quinn to which I shall refer later.

14. The draft Resolution was sharply contested by a small minority. The opposition to this 'evangelical' minority was led by the equally 'evangelical' Bishop of Bath and Wells – now the Archbishop of Canterbury – who successfully saw off the minority of sincere but anti-ARCIC Anglicans. So the Resolution was *not* passed 'on the nod'. But what weight should we give to this Resolution? It has often been said that resolutions of Lambeth Conferences have no more than consultative force. This is technically true. If you want juridical responses to ARCIC you must look at the responses of the national Synods. (The mirror opposite of the Roman Catholic juridical position.) But it is not true to think of the Lambeth Conference Resolution on ARCIC as quite without juridical weight or significance. While it is true that most Lambeth Conference resolutions could only have juridical force if accepted later by individual provincial churches, considerable official thought had already been given as to how the ARCIC *Final Report* should be 'received' within the Anglican Communion. In

preparation for the Lambeth Conference the Anglican Consultative Council had asked all the Provinces for their official views on the *Final Report* and asked specifically whether the work on eucharist and ministry 'was consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans' and whether [the work on authority] 'provided a sufficient basis for the next step forward'.⁸ So the Provincial responses provided the basis for the bishops to discern the official consensus of the Anglican Communion. Resolution 8 has thus considerably more than 'consultative' significance. And it is an interesting example of a complex process of listening to the official decisions of provincial churches before the formulation of a wider judgement on behalf of the whole Communion. Thus the reception of ARCIC by the provincial churches and the Lambeth Conference is itself a *development* of the decision-making process of the Anglican Communion; a development away from a purely provincial autonomy towards an interactive decision between local and universal expressions of the Church.

15. What of less explicit reception? Archbishop Michael Ramsey, commenting in 1971 on the publication of the very first Agreed Statement, *Eucharistic Doctrine*, said that he hoped that it would eventually become catechetical material for the two churches. That would indeed be reception in the fullest sense. To a limited extent this has happened, especially in relation to *Eucharistic Doctrine* and *Ministry and Ordination*. These documents are almost invariably referred to today in Anglican circles whenever the eucharist and ordained ministry are discussed. I take a recent quite random example. A short article appeared recently in the *Expository Times* on the purpose of the Church. It was not startlingly new but a useful summary of the position of the Parish Church in the Church of England in a secularised society. Reference was made in passing to priesthood, and ARCIC was referred to. In more official documents, for example the important Church of England document *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry*⁹ the influence of ARCIC is abundant and acknowledged. A forthcoming paper by the House of Bishops of the Church of England (not yet published) on the Presidency of the Eucharist will also show not only compatibility with ARCIC but also that ARCIC thinking on the priesthood of the ministry is becoming fully part of Anglican identity.

16. This may sound optimistic as there is another side to the picture. There is something of a revival of 'Reformation' polemics in some quarters of Anglican evangelicalism. And people in such a tradition still remain very suspicious of the ARCIC statements. I have already referred to the

hesitations about *Clarifications*. But there is a more subtle negative. The very widespread perception that the Roman Catholic Church is now in ecumenical 'retreat' has to some extent marginalised the relevance of the ARCIC documents. Because many believe that for the foreseeable future the Roman Catholic Church is not likely to advance ecumenically at an official level, people are less interested in the ARCIC Agreements. There is a danger that they will be regarded as significant 'might-have-beens', even as we must now see the Malines Conversations: visionary but out of touch with the real world of practical ecclesiastical politics.

ARCIC's significance: Anglican identity

17. Paradoxically, although substantial agreement was not claimed for its work on authority, ARCIC has, I believe, significantly begun to develop Anglican identity. Before ARCIC the notion that Anglicans could talk calmly about agreement in faith with the Roman Catholic Church and about the possible reintegration of universal Primacy was rare and only found among Anglo-Catholics. The original Anglican conversationalists at Malines, though not all alike, were very much in a minority in even being able to think about universal Primacy as an Anglican possibility. Today ARCIC has not convinced everybody, for there are still some Anglicans who react like Luther to the Papacy. But it is now *mainstream* to talk about a potential universal Primacy, balanced by conciliarity and collegiality, as an Anglican possibility. ARCIC has actually affected Anglican identity in a most significant way. Archbishop Robert Runcie addressed the General Synod of the Church of England in 1989 on his return from his meeting with Pope John Paul II. He referred to the words he directly addressed to the Pope on the Primal ministry: these I will quote first as the background to the Archbishop's address to Synod:

At the same time from our dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church ... [w]e are also discovering the need for wider bonds of affection. Gregory's example of a primacy for the sake of unity and mission – which we also see embodied in the ministry of his successor, John Paul II – is beginning to find a place in Anglican thinking ... But for the Universal Church I renew the plea that I made at the Lambeth Conference: could not all Christians come to reconsider the kind of Primacy the Bishop of Rome exercised within the early Church, a 'presidency in love' for the sake of the unity of the churches in the diversity of their mission.

On this he said in Synod:

We also touched on my words about an 'ecumenical primacy' for the Universal Church. This is a new thing for a Pope to consider. It was also raised during his recent visit to Scandinavia by the Lutheran bishops. He was fascinated that other Christians should be looking to the Bishop of Rome for this ecumenical leadership. It must be for ARCIC to continue to explore how future ministry can best be served by what I call the recovery of an earlier Primacy. I was looking for a Primacy to serve mission and unity rather than an office dependent on ultra-montane centralisation.¹⁰

That was in 1989.¹¹ The Pope's reported 'fascination' with the idea of an 'ecumenical primacy' was no invention of Robert Runcie. Last year we saw the publication of the Pope's letter *Ut Unum Sint*, and in it the question of an ecumenical primacy comes to the fore¹² and other churches are invited to make their contribution to and criticism of the office of Universal Primate. It has now become the subject of wider ecumenical study through the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.¹³

18. I do not think it is too much to claim that the ARCIC discussion of authority has been a major catalyst for this openness to an ecumenical vision of the universal Primacy. If this is true, it is a most significant example of reception. But with an open ecumenical discussion of the Primacy comes another question. It has recently been put gently but very effectively by Archbishop John Quinn, until last year Archbishop of San Francisco, in a lecture at the centennial of Campion Hall, Oxford, on the feast of Peter and Paul. Archbishop Quinn stressed that the relation between the bishops and the Pope was not only a matter of *personal* collegiality but also what he called *structural* collegiality. The Roman Curia was seen 'as exercising oversight and authority over the College of Bishops'. Quinn takes up the ecumenical discussion of Primacy invited by the Pope. He remarks perceptively:

Yet many Orthodox and other Christians are hesitant about full communion with the Holy See not so much because they see some doctrinal issues as unsolvable, not because of unfortunate and reprehensible historical events, but precisely because of the way issues are dealt with by the Curia.¹⁴

Alongside issues to do with authority, Scripture and Tradition, I believe Archbishop Quinn's call for an examination of 'centralisation' versus subsidiarity is also an essential part of the ecumenical agenda. How does an ecclesiology of *communio* actually work when there is an equilibrium between local and universal? And how can it work at all if

there is not? This is the nuanced agenda of the Lambeth Conference when it speaks of 'collegiality' and 'the character of ... primacy in practice'.

This is not the first time such things have been said here in Malines. In 1925 at the penultimate Malines Conversations Cardinal Mercier delivered the famous paper, drafted by Dom Lambert Beauduin, *L'Église anglicane unie non absorbée*. Some of its detail and ethos today seem quite out of place: the stress on the Pallium, and especially the lack of seriousness about the English Roman Catholic tradition. Nevertheless, the substantive question remains as relevant as ever. It is clearly expressed in the concluding words of his paper: it is the same question as that raised by the Lambeth Conference and by Archbishop Quinn.

What will Rome think of this plan? It is clear that it suggests a principle of decentralisation which is not in accordance with the actual tendencies of the Roman Curia, a principle that could have other applications. Would it not be a good and a great good? Yet would Rome be of this opinion? Nothing can allow us to foresee what would be the answer.

The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood

19. Two opposite views may be taken about the relation between the ordination of women to the presbyterate (and now episcopate) and the work of ARCIC. On the one hand it is still possible to argue that this is a separate and distinct question unaffecting the work of ARCIC. Today this sounds bland. As can the words of ARCIC in 1979 which believed

that the principles upon which its doctrinal agreement rests are not affected by such ordinations; for it was concerned with the origin and nature of the ordained ministry and not with the question of who can or cannot be ordained. Objections, however substantial, to the ordination of women are of a different kind from objections raised in the past about the validity of Anglican Orders.

All this remains technically, theologically true. And yet it is not possible to separate issues quite so easily in real life. The fundamental official objection of the Roman Catholic Church to the ordination of women to the presbyterate (and episcopate) is that the Church has *no power* to authorise such a development. Questions are therefore raised in the area of authority, Scripture and Tradition and theological method. There are also important related issues to do with eucharistic presidency. In what sense does the priest speak and act in the eucharist '*in persona Christi*'? Does this

representational role have to be enacted by a male priest, or can Christ's risen and ascended High Priesthood be represented by an ordained woman as well as a man? The *effect* of the ordination of women on ARCIC is to take the question of the reconciliation of ministries out of the realm of immediate possibilities. Issues to do with the concerns of *Apostolicae Curae* are now, at least in principle, resolvable. Cardinal Cassidy's letter¹⁵ to the Archbishop of Canterbury indicates that 'no further study would seem to be required at this stage' on the areas of eucharist and ministry. Nevertheless, the question of the ordination of women is so sensitive and raises so many *other* questions that the issues raised a century ago by *Apostolicae Curae* become more academic.¹⁶

Conclusion

20. Perhaps this is no bad thing. It would *probably* have been a mistake to rush forward towards the reconciliation of ministries in advance of closer pastoral relations on the ground and further agreement on authority and the nature of the Church. Though a dramatic reconciliation of ministries would have been psychologically satisfying to ecumenists, would it have been ecclesially proper, in advance of the reconciliation of churches? The Bonn Agreement between Anglicans and Old Catholics in 1931 remains a cautionary tale. There was a mutual recognition of ministries, but no real reconciliation of the life of the churches. The result was a 'paper communion', technically correct but far from real ecclesial unity, communion and reconciliation which must be the aim of the Ecumenical Movement. ARCIC I and ARCIC II – so far – represent essential Foundational Chapters. But there is more work to be done, pastorally on the ground and theologically in terms of authority, Scripture and *living* Tradition – and also on the practical implications of the Primacy. A century after *Apostolicae Curae* and seventy years after the end of the Malines Conversations there is still much work to be done. But we must not allow the work done so far to disappear into the sand. *Provisionally* speaking we *have* achieved sufficient agreement (I do not now use the disputed word 'substantial'), sufficient agreement on eucharist, ministry, grace and justification and on the Church as communion. A very important foundation has been laid. But there remain issues to do with doctrinal development and authority. How does the Church today articulate a Tradition which is in true apostolic continuity but also points to the living Christ who is the Omega as well as the Alpha of history? And what are the

practical implications of a Primacy when detached from monolithic centralisation and unhelpful practice and intervention? Here are major matters for examination with wider ecumenical relevance. Other ecumenical partners will need to be consulted about them. But the major enemy is a kind of ecumenical *accidie*, a failing of the spirit. One hundred years ago Halifax and Portal did not despair when *Apostolicae Curae* was promulgated. Twenty-five years later they went on with Cardinal Mercier to initiate the Malines Conversations. Today, the context of Anglican–Roman Catholic relations is infinitely more positive. If there is an apparent setback or hesitation, today must be seen as a privileged special time for strategic reflection and renewed ecumenical commitment to a fuller, broader and lasting series of agreements which will enable full ecclesial reconciliation: in which both Anglicans and Roman Catholics, together with other Christians, will have a better vision of what it is to be the Church of Christ, both locally and universally.

Notes

1. cf. William Purdy, *The Search for Unity* (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1996). Nevertheless, I concur with the remark in Fr J-M R Tillard's paper that on some other matters the necessary editorial curtailment of Purdy's mss. may leave more to be told.
2. ACC, Canada, 1979
3. Some such arrangement is in fact now being considered after the meeting between Pope John Paul II and Archbishop George Carey in Rome, December 1996.
4. In the *Final Report*, as originally published, there is appendix material on how each Agreed Statement was drafted.
5. Cited in Edward Yarnold SJ, *They are in Earnest. Christian unity in statements of Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II* (St Paul Publications, 1982).
6. For two perceptive comments on the above methodological issues cf. Edward Yarnold, *Roman Catholic responses to ARCIC I and II*, and *Anglican–Roman Catholic Consultation in the USA: Agreed Statement on the Lambeth and Vatican Responses to ARCIC I*, both in *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity*, eds C. Hill and E. Yarnold (SPCK, 1994).

7. Lambeth Conference 1988: Resolution 8.
8. ACC, Newcastle, 1981.
9. Faith and Order Advisory Group of the General Synod of the Church of England 1986.
10. For both texts see *One in Hope*, CTS, London, 1989.
11. To these texts we must now add all those published on the recent visit of the present Archbishop of Canterbury to the Pope, already referred to.
12. Paras 88f.
13. cf. 'Confessing the One Faith to God's Glory', in T.F. Best and G. Gassmann (eds), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia. Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order* (Faith and Order Paper 166, Geneva, 1994), pp. 277-82.
14. The full text of Archbishop Quinn's lecture has not yet been published; extracts in an interview can be found in *The Tablet*, 6 July 1996. But see J.R. Quinn, 'The Claims of the Primacy and the Costly Call to Unity', in *Briefing* 26 (1996, no. 8) 18-29.
15. March 1994.
16. Though not without fascination. An English version of all the vota and official summary, with other documentation, is to be published in 1997, *The Documents in the Debate*, eds Christopher Hill and Edward Yarnold SJ (Canterbury Press, Norwich).

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