

Provincial Responses to the work of the Second Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission: An interim report

I Background

The work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) completed a second phase of its work with the publication of an agreed statement on Mary in May 2005. Over a period of almost 20 years the Commission has published the following agreed statements:

Salvation and the Church, 1987

Church as Communion, 1991

Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church, 1993

The Gift of Authority, 1999

Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ, 2005

There has been no official response process similar to that carried out in relation to *The Final Report of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission* (1983). However, like the reports that make up the *Final Report*, each of the agreed statements of ARCIC II (with the exception of the Mary document only just published) has been sent to the provinces for study and reflection on the advice of Resolutions of the 1988 and 1998 Lambeth Conferences and meetings of the Anglican Consultative Council. The Lambeth Resolutions and the ACC recommendations are to be found in Appendix I.

Attention is drawn to Resolution 15 of ACC-11 which commended *The Gift of Authority* to the provinces for careful and critical study with a view to a report being made to ACC-13 in 2005. The resolution also directed the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (IASCER) to facilitate and monitor the process of evaluation and response. IASCER produced resource materials to aid the study of *The Gift of Authority* including a series of questions and auxiliary resources for cross reference. The questionnaire is to be found in Appendix II.

II Responses received

The Anglican Communion Office (ACO) has received the following responses from Provinces:

<i>Salvation and the Church</i>	4
<i>Church as Communion</i>	3
<i>Life in Christ</i>	3
<i>The Gift of Authority</i>	11

The responses vary greatly in length and style. A few are the result of synodical debate and formal motion, others the work of a special committee set up for the purpose or the work of a permanent committee on ecumenical relations. Others are

reflections or study documents prepared by a national Anglican – Roman Catholic Committee.

- ***Salvation and the Church 1987 (4 responses)***

1. The Church of Ireland

The response was sent by the Standing Committee of the General Synod. It warmly welcomes the choice of subject noting that ACC-5 had expressed concern that this subject be addressed by ARCIC. It is generally appreciative for the clarification of past misunderstandings and for the opening up of the way for a fresh appreciation of the subject of justification and salvation. It also points to areas that might require further study - penitential disciplines and other devotional practices and the status these practices enjoy in relation to salvation. Some felt that there may be still a substantial difference between the two Communion on the role of the Church in salvation. The overall response was that '*Salvation and the Church* does much to allay fears and to establish significant areas of agreement in understanding the Gospel'. Questions are raised in order to further the dialogue as we seek 'full ecclesial communion between us'.

2. The Church of the Province of Southern Africa

The response was made by the Anglican – Roman Catholic Committee of Southern Africa. It found *Salvation and the Church* 'an excellent document, most irenic and showing great openness to the central issues of salvation particularly as seen by evangelicals.' A number of issues were highlighted for future exploration including the role of the saints in intercession and meditation particularly because this relates to the role of the ancestors in African Traditional theology as well as a clear definition of the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.

3. The Church of England

An initial debate on *Salvation and the Church* took note of the report and commended it for study in the dioceses inviting their response. A study guide for the dioceses was prepared by the English Anglican – Roman Catholic Committee. The responses were collated and a further report was prepared by the Faith and Order Advisory Group and circulated to members of the General Synod.

4. The Church of Canada

Salvation and the Church was studied by the Inter Church Inter Faith Relations Committee and a resolution of the National Executive Council called for study and response, though not many responses were received. A survey of 2,500 clergy produced only 50 responses. Of the 25 who had read the report most believed it to be 'compatible with Anglican teaching'.

- ***Church as Communion 1991 (3 responses)***

1. Church of Ireland

The Standing Committee of the General Synod forwarded comments on the *Church as Communion* as the 'official response' of the Church of Ireland. It considers that the

document ‘provides a truly valuable basis for the collection of agreed statements by ARCIC; it stimulates us to press forward to fuller ecumenical life’. Within this general appreciation and the affirmation of many of the aspects of the report, the response raises issues that require further work: the extent of legitimate diversity within ecclesial communion, the matter of Christ’s saving work outside the confines of the Church and more work on universal primacy. The response adds that the degree of communion that *Church as Communion* sees as already existing demands at least some measure of eucharistic sharing.

2. Church of Canada

Both *Church as Communion* and *Life in Christ* were received by the Inter Church Inter-faith Relations Committee but the major reflection was undertaken by Canadian ARC.

3. The Church of England

Church as Communion was circulated to members of the General Synod as a background document for the debate on *The Gift of Authority*.

• ***Life in Christ: Morals Communion and the Church, 1993* (2 responses)**

1. The Episcopal Church USA

The Episcopal Church sent to the ACO the response to *Life in Christ* produced by the Anglican – Roman Catholic Committee USA. The response compares and contrasts the approach to the moral life taken by *Life in Christ* with that of the Papal Encyclical *Veritas Splendor* published in the same year, concluding that there are formidable points of contrast. In particular there appear incompatible positions regarding the impact of ethical diversity on ecclesial communion and on the appropriate role of ecclesiastical authority in dealing with such diversity. The review concludes that more attention be given to: the significance of divergent Anglican – Roman Catholic positions on absolute moral prohibitions regarding specific categories of human action; the contemporary influence of theological, geographical and cultural diversity in the formulation of Anglican doctrines concerning moral questions, by contrast with the universal teaching that characterises the Roman Catholic *magisterium* and the role of ecclesiastical authority in shaping the formation of moral judgements by individual Christians and by the whole Church. The review also suggests that the issues highlighted in *Life in Christ* are in fact more conflictual both within and between the churches than this agreement suggests. Nevertheless, *Life in Christ* is commended for its ground breaking exploration of the ethical dimension of Christian communion and the response suggests that closer collaboration and consultation between the two communions is more needed than ever.

2. Church of Canada

See above.

3. The Church of England

The document was circulated to members of the General Synod and the English Anglican – Roman Catholic Committee produced study materials for the dioceses including a tape with comment by the Co-Chairmen of ARCIC.

- ***The Gift of Authority* 1997 (11 responses)**

Of the 11 responses two say they had made no study, one commenting further that it is not easy to undertake such study ‘not least because of our national, ecumenical and geographic variety’. Another said it had been discussed in a preliminary way within the local ARC committee and also between a joint meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops but no conclusions were drawn.

1. The Church of Brazil

The responsibility for responding to *The Gift of Authority* was undertaken by the Anglican Studies Centre. *The Gift of Authority* was introduced to three regional meetings of bishops, clergy and laity and a record of discussions taken. These formed the basis for the response which affirms generally the work of ARCIC and stresses the importance of its continuation, and acknowledges the fact that *The Gift of Authority* challenges Anglicans on their own present exercise of authority. At the same time it offers a number of criticisms. *The Gift of Authority* is thought only partially to represent the Anglican view on the relation between Scripture, Tradition and Authority and leans, rather, in the direction of the role of the *magisterium* in the Roman Catholic Church; the position of *The Gift of Authority* on the infallibility of the *magisterium* and episcopal ministry is rejected; the gap between ideal and actual is criticised; the justification for Roman Primacy is considered weak; while the exercise of a juridical authority centralised in the bishop of Rome was thought incompatible with the Anglican concept of dispersed authority. Some thought it possible to accept the primacy of the bishop of Rome, as long as that were an ‘honorary primacy’ but the response questioned *The Gift of Authority*’s conclusion that ‘Anglicans are open to and desirous of the recovery and re-reception, under certain circumstances, of the exercise of universal primacy by the bishop of Rome.’ The response concludes: ‘despite its virtues and disquieting questioning, the document does not totally reflect the diversity of Anglican ecclesiology nor our healthy tradition of ‘dispersed authority’ because of its having been written with Roman presuppositions and directed not really towards the search for unity but rather towards capitulation of the Anglican Communion to the Roman Catholic Church, through an ‘Amen, given not to the authority of Jesus Christ, but to the pretensions of the Roman Curia’. But the report is clear that the conversation must continue but with more attention to the beauty and diversity that is Anglican, upholding the value of the laity.

2. The Church of Canada

The Faith and Worship Committee devoted two sessions to *The Gift of Authority* and all dioceses were invited to engage with it but there were few responses. The General Synod in 2004 passed a Resolution thanking ARCIC for its work and adding that ‘the Synod recognizes that *The Gift of Authority* has not found sufficient resonance among Canadian Anglicans for this Synod to be able to say that it has received it’. It also drew attention to the *Response to The Gift of Authority of the Anglican – Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada*, in particular its observation that more work should be done by ARCIC in exploring the practical working out of primacy and synodality as

they express themselves at the local and diocesan levels; and about the place of the laity in decision-making. The substantial response of Canadian ARC also notes that there is a significant advance in understanding the relation between Scripture, Tradition and experience, teaching authority, collegiality, conciliatory, the role of the laity in decision making and the Petrine ministry.

3. The Church of Ireland

The response received from the General Synod Committee for Christian Unity has yet to be endorsed by the Standing Committee of the General Synod which meets in November 2005. The submission is made directly in response to the questionnaire sent out by the ACO in January 2003. It questions the treatment of Scripture and Tradition in *The Gift of Authority* and asks whether the complex dynamic of God's 'Yes' and our 'Amen' can bear the weight that is put on it. It is not convinced that *The Gift of Authority* has the right balance between the complementary relationship between the bishops and the rest of the Church and expresses reservations about what is said about the infallible *magisterium* and notes the conspicuous lack of reference to the Marian dogmas. It sees a lack of clarity on the relation between the pronouncement of a definition by the *magisterium* and the reception of a definition by the faithful. While the response admits that a universal primacy may be desirable in a united church, it is clear that such a primacy should not have magisterial powers, nor be jurisdictional, and should not necessarily be associated with Rome. A universal primacy should be primarily pastoral. The response does not believe that 'Anglicanism has been won over to the concept of a more centralised authority', although ways in which mutual accountability can be developed are welcomed. The response requests that the ACO should provide provinces with a draft communion-wide response *The Gift of Authority* before publishing an official response from the Anglican Communion as a whole.

4. The Episcopal Church USA

Using the questionnaire sent out by the ACO in 2003, the response was formulated by the Standing Committee on ecumenical relations and the office of Ecumenical and Interfaith relations in consultation with diocesan ecumenical officers. The general response is that:

The Gift of Authority contributes one articulation of a way to understand and embody authority and primacy institutionally. The document uses Scripture and some elements of tradition to build and support its argument. It is particularly helpful in uncovering some elements of Anglican lack of clarity on where authority does reside and might reside within the Anglican Communion. However, our general response to *The Gift of Authority* requires us to say that it falls short of its goal in several substantive ways. We conclude that it has not substantively furthered our relationship together or our movement toward the final goal.

At the same time, we do not believe that *The Gift of Authority* marks an end...it raises important issues and questions...challenges the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church to be more self-critical about our theology and praxis of authority...

With gratitude, we acknowledge and accept *The Gift of Authority* as a part of a conversation that is of serious content...and [are] entirely convinced of the necessity of continuing conversation.

Among the things the response questions are: the emphasis placed on the power and decision-making claimed for the office of bishop compared with the underdevelopment of the responsibility of the laity; the use of the dynamic 'God's 'Yes' and our 'Amen'; the failure to deal adequately with the Church's traditional practices of synodal, collegial and conciliar discernment and decision-making over time, practices which involve laity, clergy, deacons as well as bishops. Further, what is said about the exercise of authority is not consistent with an ecclesiology founded in baptism which makes the whole people of God responsible for the exercise of authority. The definition of primacy, the theology growing from that and the praxis of primacy are 'seriously problematic' and believed to be contrary to Anglican identity. The response suggests that *The Gift of Authority* fails to address the Bishop of Rome's exercise of immediate, ordinary and universal jurisdiction. The response does not find the theology of infallibility expressed in *The Gift of Authority* as persuasive and asks whether it would be possible to emphasize indefectibility while not insisting on infallibility for a united church.

In spite of these and other criticisms of the document the response is clear that there must be future discussions which might lead to consensus on both the possibility and the desirability of a form of primacy exercised in both Communion dependent on an agreement not so much on the necessity of communion with the Bishop of Rome for visible unity so much as a persuasive account of the benefits of such communion.

5. The Anglican Church of Australia

The response received was in the form of a study guide on authority prepared by Australian ARC which draws upon *The Gift of Authority* but is not a direct response to it. The aim is to develop a common understanding of ecclesial authority in the Australian context.

6. The Church of England

The General Synod debated *The Gift of Authority* in light of a report prepared by the Faith and Order Advisory Group and passed the following motion:

That this Synod:

- (a) re-affirm the Church of England's commitment to work with all its ecumenical partners towards the full visible unity of the Church of Christ;
- (b) recognise the significant role of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) and the International Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) in progressing the search for unity;
- (c) recognise the pioneering work of ARCIC in developing an ecumenical method which seeks to get behind the language of division and to express the common faith in fresh ways;
- (d) welcome the witness of *The Gift of Authority* that 'authority rightly exercised is a gift of God to bring reconciliation and peace to humankind' and its emphasis on

the synodical nature of the Church as the form in which ‘believers and churches are held together in communion’;

- (e) acknowledge that differing convictions about issues of authority are best explored in the context of shared church life and collaboration in mission;
- (f) believing that any search for theological agreement on universal primacy requires that the contested claim of universal, ordinary and immediate jurisdiction for the Bishop of Rome be resolved, and noting that *The Gift of Authority* does not refer to this issue, request that it again form part of the agenda of ARCIC;
- (g) observing that *The Gift of Authority*’s treatment of the teaching authority of the Bishop of Rome is not sufficiently clear, request that ARCIC clarify in what sense this is ‘a gift to be received by all the churches’; and
- (h) affirm the ecumenical texts proposed for agreement by the Church of England should be consonant with the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it and with existing ecumenical agreements, especially when these have already been agreed by this Synod.

7. The Church in Wales

A Working Group was set up to report to the Bench of Bishops on *The Gift of Authority*. The group offered a number of general comments. It found the study of *The Gift of Authority* ‘thoroughly rewarding’, ‘imaginative in its use of Scripture’, but felt that its conclusions did not necessarily follow from the ground work. In particular the report found that *The Gift of Authority* consistently uses indicative statements to describe aspects of church life that ought to obtain but in practice do not necessarily obtain. Secondly, throughout the agreed statement it is never clear how exclusively the Roman Catholic Church applies the word ‘Church’ only to those in communion with the Bishop of Rome and thirdly, *The Gift of Authority* may be taken to imply that Anglicans are separated from the Universal Church and, therefore, need to be integrated. In particular the response suggests that more work is needed on the Petrine ministry of Universal Primacy, in particular in establishing the conditions under which the Roman Catholic Church might offer such a ministry to the whole Church of God and Anglicans might be able to receive it. It is recognised that *The Gift of Authority* has specific challenges to both Communion. In particular it points to ‘the need for the Roman Catholic Church to give expression to its lay voice and for the Anglican Church to give greater emphasis to developing means of encouraging unity between provinces.’

8. The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia devoted considerable time to the study of *The Gift of Authority* together with *The Virginia Report*, the report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission. It sought the opinion of 13 episcopal units and in light of the discussion the General Synod passed a motion relating to both documents which includes the following:

- i. We note that this is not the time to expect organic unity and full communion between the churches of the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church.

- ii. We do not see the model of a single spokesperson for the universal church as the only instrument of unity.
- iii. Our three Tikanga Church...enshrines a diversified model of unity and we affirm that plurality is as much a gift as a threat and should not be suppressed.
- iv. We affirm a theologically grounded adherence to the traditional Anglican understandings of dispersed authority and of synodical government of the church by bishops, clergy and laity, as enshrined in our own formularies and constitution.
- v. We hold a view of the church that recognises its fallibility and provisionality both in its pronouncements and its structures, in the light of which we affirm our commitment to openness and divergent views, and a reluctance to embrace over-centralised authority.

9. The Church of the Province of Southern Africa

The Gift of Authority was studied by a sub-group of the South Africa Anglican Theological Commission (SAATC). Its substantial response follows the questions sent by IASCER. The response begins with a general statement of appreciation for *The Gift of Authority* for the ‘significant measure of theological convergence registered, for situating the question of authority ‘within the framework of mission and service’ and a ‘promising perspective of witness and love’ and the opportunity to reflect on areas which require exploration ‘on the path to potential consensus’.

It welcomes the biblical foundation for understanding authority but questions the assumption that the church’s teaching is always assumed to be a faithful reflection of Christ’s teaching, commenting that ‘Anglicans have never accepted a form of *magisterium* that claims to provide final answers’. It agrees with much that is said about Tradition but points to the problem when there are different interpretations of tradition as in the ‘awkward scenario’ of both churches claiming to be faithful to the Tradition in relation to women’s ordination. Similarly it appreciates what is said about diversity but suggests that ‘Anglicans struggle with the issue of centralised authority in Roman Catholicism, which seemingly invalidates the integrity of diversity.’ It welcomes the affirmation that the whole people of God is the bearer of Tradition but are not convinced that this ideal is readily discerned in Roman Catholicism. The report appreciates the use of synodality where all walk together on the way but feel that in practice bishops and pope often overlook subsidiarity and communality.

The report welcomes the emphasis on indefectibility of the Church, the confidence in Christ’s promise and, while agreeing the seminal role of the Bishop of Rome, does not agree with the claim of infallibility and is happier with ARCIC I’s treatment of infallibility. However, the report underlines the importance of the papal ministry to the mission and communion of the Church. It agrees that if the papacy is willing to change then Anglicans might potentially accept the petrine ministry but that requires being clear that Anglicans would be partners in the reformation of the Petrine ministry. Then the petrine ministry could serve Anglicans as ‘gift of God’. *The Gift of Authority* also challenges Anglican structures of authority and decision-making in the Communion and the report identifies a number of those challenges.

The report concludes with appreciation for ARCIC's work 'as well as a continuing commitment to dealing with old problems in fresh and creative ways towards visible unity and joint witness.'

It is difficult to draw conclusions from such diverse Responses made by theological commissions, ecumenical groups and official synod motions. What is clear is that there is generally appreciation for the work on authority; conviction that it has not reached a conclusion and needs to be continued and suggestions for future clarification. There is also a recognition that the GA contains relevant challenges for both Communion to be addressed both separately and together. There is in almost all responses a concern to safeguard the role of the laity in the exercise of authority and an appreciation for the ministry of primacy of the Bishop of Rome though a need to spell out further the particular nature of that ministry.

III Final reflections

There have been relatively few direct responses to the second phase of ARCIC's work. However response to the documents comes in many other ways. The reports are often used in theological colleges and university courses, by ecumenical groups and local groups of clergy in different parts of the world. The reports often influence the work of other bilateral and multilateral conversations. There is a growing academic literature on ecclesiology and doctrine that takes account of these documents. The work of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission is preparing a Declaration which will draw upon the results of ARCIC. This is another way in which the theological conversations between our two Communion may be received. Official response may well come in relation to the work of IARCCUM rather than in response to the separate documents of the ARCIC Commission. In this way the fruits of the theological conversations of ARCIC may become the basis for closer co-operation and shared life. In this way the convergences of theological agreement may become the basis for a secure convergence in life and mission.

i. The Resolutions of the 1988 and 1998 Lambeth Conference

The 1988 Lambeth Conference passed a resolution which:

warmly welcomes the first Report of ARCIC II, *Salvation and the Church* (1987), as a timely and significant contribution to the understanding of the Church's doctrine of salvation and commends this Agreed Statement about the heart of Christian faith to the Provinces for study and reflection.

(Resolution 8)

Similarly the 1998 Lambeth Conference passed a resolution which:

encourages the referral of *Salvation and the Church* (1987), *Church as Communion* (1991), *Life in Christ* (1994), and the anticipated completion of ARCIC's work on authority in the Church to the Provinces for study and response back to the proposed Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations and (through the Primates' Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council) to the next Lambeth Conference.

(Resolution IV.8)

ii. Recommendations of the Anglican Consultative Council from 1987-2003

- ACC-7 1987

'warmly welcomed' *Salvation and the Church* and commended it to the Churches of the Communion for study and evaluation hoping that there would be some provisional response by 1988.

- ACC-11 1999

passed Resolution 15: *The Gift of Authority*:

The Anglican Consultative Council, recalling that the 1988 Lambeth Conference encouraged ARCIC "to continue to explore the basis in Scripture and tradition of the concept of a universal primacy" and that areas for further work identified at that time included the relationship between Scripture, tradition, and the exercise of teaching authority; collegiality; conciliarity; and the role of the laity in decision making; and the Petrine ministry of universal primacy,

1. welcomes the publication of the report entitled *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III* and all other reports of ARCIC II, which have yet to be considered;
2. expresses its appreciation to ARCIC for these agreed statements, in particular for *The Gift of Authority*, which seeks to address the issues identified at Lambeth 1988 and to deepen the agreement expressed in previous statements on authority;
3. commends these reports to the provinces for careful and critical study over the next five years, particularly with a view to considering any outstanding issues of ecclesiology and authority;

4. directs the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations
 - i. to facilitate and monitor the process of response to *The Gift of Authority* and the other reports that the member churches of the Communion will undertake;
 - ii. to ask helpful questions to the member churches of the Anglican Communion based on the suggested questions circulated to the Primates in May 1999 and those offered by ACC-11; and
 - iii. To report to ACC-13 in 2005.

ACC-13 in 2003 requested response from provinces to *The Gift of Authority* and suggested a number of questions to guide a province in making its response.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY BY THE PROVINCES

1. ***With regard to the relation between Scripture and Tradition and the exercise of teaching authority:***
 - a) To what extent does *The Gift of Authority* reflect the understanding and practice which the Anglican Communion has received?
 - b) What fresh insights into, or challenges to that understanding are suggested in *The Gift of Authority*?
 - c) What consequences does the understanding in *The Gift of Authority* have for deepening Anglican-Roman Catholic relations in the future?

2. ***With regard to collegiality, conciliarity and the role of laity in decision making:***
 - a) To what extent does *The Gift of Authority* reflect the understanding and practice which the Anglican Communion has received?
 - b) What fresh insights into, or challenges to that understanding are suggested in *The Gift of Authority*?
 - c) What consequences does the understanding in *The Gift of Authority* have for deepening Anglican-Roman Catholic relations in the future?

3. ***With regard to the Petrine ministry of universal primacy in relation to Scripture and Tradition:***
 - a) The Lambeth Conference of 1998 resolution III.8 (h) requested study “on whether effective communion, at all levels, does not require appropriate instruments, with due safeguards, not only for legislation, but also for oversight, as well as on the issue of a universal ministry in the service of Christian unity”. What fresh insights into or challenges to this area are suggested in *The Gift of Authority*?
 - b) How can these insights or challenges be accepted into the life of the Anglican Communion?
 - c) What consequences does the understanding in *The Gift of Authority* have for deepening Anglican-Roman Catholic relations in the future?

Responses to the study to be sent to
The Director of Ecumenical Affairs and Studies
Anglican Communion Office by 31 October 2003