**Gregorian University, Rome, Symposium, 5 October 2016**

**Response to Anna Rowlands by Nickolas Sagovski**

I want to begin by recalling three moments in my life as an English Anglican priest when Catholic teaching in general, and Catholic *social teaching* in particular, made a deep impression on me: 1. During the visit of Pope St John-Paul II to England in 1982, I remember the joy with which I recognised that what the Bishop of Rome was saying in the English context spoke for me and to me.  I could recognise and receive his ministry as he stood alongside Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury.  2. Then there was the publication in 1996 of the Statement by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, *The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching*.  I had never before read such a striking overview of Catholic Social Teaching, all the key points of which I wanted to affirm.  I did not understand then, and I do not understand now, why there was no move to seek ecumenical endorsement of this fine statement.  3. As Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey I had the experience of preaching five sermons in which I was able emphatically to affirm the teaching of Pope Benedict in his Encyclical,*Caritas in Veritate* (2009). It is addressed 'To the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, men and women religious, the lay faithful, and all people of good will ...'.   I found, as an Anglican Christian, hopefully of good will, I could receive Benedict's teaching and commend it to the people of goodwill from many Christian traditions gathered for worship in Westminster Abbey.  And then, a year later, we had the joy of welcoming Benedict himself to lead solemn Vespers in the Abbey alongside the Archbishop of Canterbury. I believe that the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, continued in the recent Encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato si'* (2015), is a gift which can be received by all the churches - and in that spirit I now want to respond to Anna Rowland by making four points.

1. I want first to speak about what was probably the most important example of the reception of Catholic Social Teaching in our time, a political and social development which has benefited both Europe and the wider world. This is the creation of the European Coal and Steel community (1951), which became the European Economic Community (1958) and then the European Union (1993), now enlarged to include 28 nations, with more wanting to join. Despite the justified criticisms of the sheer cost of the European Union, of its army of politicians and bureaucrats, of its neo-liberal agenda and its loss of vision, it should not be forgotten that Europe has enjoyed seventy years of almost unbroken internal peace and growing prosperity whereas in the previous seventy years or so there were three disastrous wars, two of which sucked in the UK, Russia and the United States at enormous cost in lives and resources. The project of a peaceful, integrated Europe was the fruit of a shared conviction amongst the central European nations that ‘never again’ could Europe let itself be drawn into another, similar orgy of self-destruction. A start was made with a system of mutual accountability between six central European nations, notably France and Germany, in the use of coal and steel – the necessary ingredients for the making of weapons. This was the vital first move in implementing the vision for a social democratic Europe, bound together under a common rule of law. It was facilitated by the fact that, at the time of the Paris Treaty in 1951, through which the European Coal and Steel Community was founded, the major European leaders shared a similar outlook, which accorded with Catholic Social Teaching. Jean Monnet (not a believer), as adviser to the French government, persuaded Robert Schuman, the French foreign minister (a devout Roman Catholic) to bring forward a proposal which became known as the ‘Schuman Plan’: in Schuman’s words, ‘The French Government proposes that the entire French-German steel production be placed under a joint High Authority within the framework of an organization which would also be open to other countries of Europe.’[[1]](#footnote-1) Amongst the signatories of the Paris Treaty were a number of Catholics, who shared a broadly similar vision for Europe: Robert Schuman of France; Konrad Adenauer of Germany, and Alcide de Gasperi of Italy. Unsurprisingly, there was some criticism of the ECSC as a Catholic conspiracy but we should note that other ‘founding fathers’ of Europe, such as Jean Monnet and Paul-Henri Spaak, whilst they shared the vision for European interdependence, did not share the Catholic theology that for others undergirded it. This was true of Winston Churchill who spoke after the war of the need for some form of ‘united states of Europe’. Anglicans as well as Catholics should not forget, then, that the post-war vision for a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Europe was deeply indebted to Catholic Social Teaching and later affirmed by sympathetic Protestant politicians like Angela Merkel. In this way, the long shadows of the rent in Europe caused by the Reformation and the Thirty Years War, together with the terrible wars of the twentieth century, were dispersed and a new social democratic basis for European peace and prosperity established. In the Brexit debate, the proven importance of European integration for peace and prosperity was largely overlooked.

2.  Following on from this amnesia about the Catholic, Christian roots of the European project, I want, to agree with Anna's suggestion that there is amongst Anglicans a forgetfulness of the deeper roots of Anglican social tradition by saying that I think the problem is wider than that. There is an extraordinary forgetfulness about the part played by Anglican social teaching in the creation of the British welfare state.  Of the four founding fathers of the welfare state, three were practising Anglicans and the fourth was deeply influenced by Anglican social teaching.  The post-War welfare state in the UK was quite simply the finest product of more than a century of Anglican social teaching.  Its *prophet*was R.H. Tawney, a practising Anglican, who brought his expertise as an economic historian to bear on the materialism and inequality of society between the Wars.  In his three most influential books, he spoke out against what he called 'The Acquisitive Society' (1921), he explored the disastrous influence of the Reformation on the moral critique of runaway capitalism (1926), and he criticised the appalling levels of inequality that were tolerated in the society of his time (1931). For nearly twenty years, Tawney was a colleague at the London School of Economics of William Beveridge, its Director, who was also his brother in law and a devout Anglican layman.  Through the inter-war period, Beveridge was developing the thinking that led in 1942 to his great report *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, which identified five ‘Giant Evils’ in society: squalor, ignorance, want, idleness, and disease, and went on to propose widespread reforms to the system of social welfare to address these evils.  It was Beveridge who was the *architect*of the welfare state that came into being after the Second World War – the architect of the National Health Service we have in the UK today.  Both Tawney and Beveridge were friends of William Temple, who invented the term ‘Welfare State’ and *provided a theological rationale* for it in *Christianity and Social Order*, which appeared in 1942, the same year as the Beveridge Report.  Temple's little book, published when he was Archbishop of Canterbury, is *the*classic statement of Anglican social theology in the twentieth century.  Before publishing it, Temple sent it to John Maynard Keynes for his comments, using him as a kind of *economic consultant*.  Recent work by the Robert Skidelsky has shown the extent to which Keynes, though no Christian, was influenced by Anglican social thought.[[2]](#footnote-2)  What all four thinkers have in common is their belief in the duty of a benign state to provide for the welfare of its citizens – to care for the common good.  The huge swing towards market thinking in the 1980s and the progressive transformation of the welfare state into what has been called a market state has led to a forgetting of the crucial role played in the UK by Anglican social thinking in combating the evils of bad housing, poor education, poverty, unemployment and lack of access to health care.  If we can reconnect with the social tradition that brought about such a remarkable achievement, we will not be seduced into thinking the moral obligation of the state to care for all its citizens can be reduced to a form of market ideology.

3.  The Anglican contribution to the creation of a welfare state in the UK was made possible by the distinctive position of the Church of England as the established church in England.  The relation of the churches of the Anglican Communion around the world to their respective governments differs greatly to that in England – especially in the United States where constitutionally there can be no established church.  The close historic relation of Anglicanism to the spread of the British Empire meant that in many parts of the world, such as Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, there has been a real need for repentance and reconciliation in the relation between Anglicans and indigenous peoples.  For many indigenous peoples, the power of the state, with which Anglicans have often had far too cosy a relationship, has been anything but benign.  Perhaps the most striking example of a state that was institutionally *malign* towards indigenous peoples was the apartheid state in South Africa.  Amongst the leading opponents of apartheid were Anglicans like Bishops Trevor Huddleston and Desmond Tutu, and Catholics like Archbishop Denis Hurley.  As Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Tutu led a project based on Christian values which helped to avert the bloodshed that many expected after the ending of apartheid. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission itself became a model for other similar commissions round the world and an inspiration for the reconciliation work which has been a major strand in the ministry of Archbishop Justin Welby.

4.  I want to finish with an example of theologically inspired praxis which has meant a great deal to me personally: the ministry of David Sheppard and Derek Worlock in Liverpool from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s.  Their story is well-known.  Sheppard was Anglican Bishop of Liverpool from 1975 to 1997; Worlock was Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool from 1976 to 1996.  From the beginning of their time together in Liverpool they sought in every way to build a true episcopal partnership – one that they shared with successive Moderators of the Free Church Council.  Their iconic working relationship was grounded in shared Christian discipleship and deep personal friendship. Both made their unique episcopal partnership a priority in their busy working lives.  This was an extraordinarily difficult moment in the life of the city.  The port was running down and heavy industry was being closed.  There was a long history of sectarian violence in the city and in 1981 there were serious race riots.  The city council was in the hands of the extreme left and from 1979 the central government was led by Margaret Thatcher with her commitment to a thoroughgoing market ideology.  Derek and David make it their business to minister together within the city and to represent the needs of the city to central government whenever they could.  They were involved in maintaining inner city communities rather than relocating them to estates on the periphery; in courageously walking the streets of Toxteth after the riots of 1981; in the founding of the Liverpool Law Centre; in working with business leaders to create new job opportunities; in the founding of an ecumenical school and an ecumenical college that has now become Liverpool Hope University, the only specifically Anglican-Catholic University foundation in Europe.  The best known of their books, which tells the story of their partnership, is entitled *Better Together* (1988).In 2013, a conference was held at Liverpool Hope to celebrate their legacy and to reflect on what it might mean for today.  Out of that conference one major question was to what extent people of other Christian traditions and even other faiths could confidently use the insights and language of Catholic social teaching, especially the language of the common good.  With my Catholic colleague at Liverpool Hope, Peter McGrail, I edited a collection of essays, *Together for the Common Good* (2015), which explore this question.  Anna was one of our contributors.  That exploration has convinced me – if I needed any more convincing – that in our shared concern for human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good, Catholics and Anglicans, together with many other Christians and people of other faiths, are at one.  The role model that Derek Worlock and David Sheppard provided for twenty years can, I am sure, be a real inspiration to all those Catholic and Anglican bishops who walk together and work together in the way of unity.

I would like to conclude with one more personal reflection. During my last year as a theological student at St John’s College, Nottingham, I was invited to be one of the first two Anglican students to spend a semester at the English College, Rome. The project came out of the friendship between Father Edward Malatesta SJ, who taught here at the Gregorian University, and Canon Ronald Coppin of the Church of England. They believed that if young Catholics and Anglican seminarians could simply be *friends* a whole new era in ecumenism would open up – and they were right. That winter semester in 1973-4 changed my life. One of my most treasured memories is of listening in awe, in a packed *aula*, possibly this one, to a small woman in white and blue talking with utter simplicity about what it meant to follow Jesus. The woman of course was Mother Teresa. She called us to a path of discipleship I recognised completely. That was forty-two years ago. I never dreamt then that I would have the opportunity of publicly giving thanks in this same university for all the riches I have received through the kindness, friendship and encouragement of Catholic friends. I pray that, empowered by the work of ARCIC and IARCCUM, we can find new ways of following Jesus and serving our societies together, and that as we walk the path of unity we shall draw yet closer to the one Church fully reconciled for which we long and we pray.

1. Quoted, Tony Judt, *Post-War, A History of Europe since 1945* (London, Vintage Books edition, 2010), p. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Robert Skidelsky, *Keynes, The Return of the Master* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), pp. 150-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)