

ANGLICAN AND ECUMENICAL AFFAIRS WORKING GROUP  
RESPONSE TO ARCIC-III REPORT, *WALKING TOGETHER ON THE WAY*

JANUARY 2020

The Church of Ireland appreciates the work of successive Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commissions and recognises the importance of ARCIC reports in furthering mutual understanding of our two communions and in deepening our relationship.

In this spirit, the Working Group held a special and well attended open seminar in connection with the report of ARCIC-III, *Walking Together on the Way*, on 9th October 2019 in the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, Dublin, with visiting speakers Bishop Christopher Hill and Monsignor Mark Langham, both with ARCIC experience.

*Walking Together on the Way* rightly recognises both the journey travelled so far by ARCIC, from the establishment of Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue by Archbishop Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI in 1966, as well as the challenges – some of them new - still facing our two communions in terms of their ecumenical commitment (cf. Ch 1, para 5). Its very title is evocative of the pilgrim journey towards that unity which is both Christ's gift and calling for the Church (cf the WCC's 1991 *Canberra Statement*).

*Walking Together on the Way* is characterised by its application of receptive learning, which it describes as “that process whereby each of our traditions asks itself whether instruments of communion and other elements of church life found in the other tradition might suggest a way of furthering the mission of the church in one's own tradition”.

We find this new, receptive approach to ARCIC's work potentially very creative, requiring, as it does, each party to do the work of evaluating the other's practices and adapting them, where appropriate and as necessary, for itself. The approach also is helpful in terms of each side's discerning of its own weaknesses, presenting each communion with a mirror to itself, as it were, as each revisits its core principles.

## CHAPTER I

Looking back, *Walking Together on the Way* notes that our two traditions have, in separation, “to a significant degree developed distinctive structures of authority in response to similar experiences and problems in mission” (para 6). This flags up a major theme in the report and prompts us all to ask precisely how we can evaluate our different approaches.

The following paragraph (para 7) refers to increasing uncertainty in the West with regard to its Christian heritage, with generations growing up “with world-views shaped by secular presuppositions and the immediacy of electronic communication”. The shared challenge of secularism is one of many good reasons for the churches to walk together and to work together. It is impossible to know what the future holds for the shape of Christianity in the West, but perhaps as it faces apparently relentless secularisation the Church will be driven to become yet

more authentic in its life and work.

Despite the challenges facing our relationship as two communions, *Walking Together on the Way* also points to more recent areas of collaboration, particularly in the area of witness for social justice (para 8). Our two communions are indeed working together in many ways, often quite prophetically, out of our common witness to Jesus Christ.

We agree that dialogue around difficult issues is to be welcomed rather than feared (para 12), but this requires a genuine openness to a process of demanding dialogue. Moreover, *Walking Together on the Way* usefully contrasts facing obstacles with sharing gifts, pointing directly at the receptive principle (para 15).

Living together with difference requires mutual attentiveness and this is well illustrated in the report's words: "Walking together means that, as travelling companions, we tend each other's wounds, and that we love one another in our woundedness. This journey that we undertake, which is a walking together into increasing degrees of communion despite difference, bears powerful and urgent witness to the world as to what it means to live difference well for mutual flourishing." (para 21)

## CHAPTER II

At para 35, *Walking Together on the Way* seems to us to conflate the authority of the Jerusalem church with its leaders. In Acts, the Jerusalem church has a natural authority but this is not to be taken in itself as leading to a principle of primacy – Roman primacy appearing only several paragraphs later, at para 42.

Also, regarding para 41 we suggest that I Timothy is not as exclusively episcopal as ARCIC suggests, a more fluid and nuanced being portrayed in the text. At times, it can equally be taken to apply to the role of a priest.

Para 42, referred to above, does not do full historical justice to the story of the rise of Roman primacy and needs expansion. Recognising the nuances of how things developed would help our walking together in difference (cf para 21). This also applies to the approach at para 41.

However, we note that later in the agreed statement, Ch. III paras 72 and 76, together give the report a less monochrome approach to Roman primacy than is found at para 42. For example, at para 72: "Roman Catholic teaching holds that episcopacy, including collegiality, and primacy are essential to the Church. It is important, however, also to note that the specific manner of their structure and functioning can, and has, assumed very different forms and therefore can be renewed and reformed."

## CHAPTER III

We see para 52 as flagging up, for both our communions, the issue of lay involvement: "All the baptized are initiated into the *tria munera Christi*, that is, the threefold office and mission of Christ as prophet, priest, and king, and each is called to an active sharing in that ministry."

Para 64, regarding 'Worldwide communion for Anglicans with the Archbishop of Canterbury', indicates: "There are also provincial churches in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury which claim communion with other churches that are not in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. For Anglicans all of these situations are anomalous, and some are deeply painful." The right of Anglican churches to be in communion with others that are not in communion with Canterbury is not necessarily to be seen as negative. It can be part of a growing walking together of all Christians if there is an impetus to move beyond anomaly, as for example happened with the Church of South India and the Church of North India.

Para 70 suggests that the Anglican Communion Covenant is an ongoing process whereas its rejection by the Church of England had led to the quite widespread impression that this was not the case. However, we note that paras 77 and 137 footnote 49 refer to it as an ongoing process.

Para 71 refers to the bonds of affection among Anglicans and notes that, within those bonds, Anglicans "are seeking more robust forms of mutual accountability". It goes on to comment: "The question remains to what extent these instruments of communion need to be both *affective* (i.e. focused on transmitting a loving spirit of communion and ecclesial cooperation) and *effective* (i.e. implying practices of mutual accountability, shared governance, and decision-making)." It is not always easy to move from 'affective' to 'effective' but we do recognise that both belong together. There is something lacking if the 'affective' is not 'effective', and, of course, *vice versa*.

(Our comment on paras 72 and 76 can be found in the context of our comment above on Ch II, para 42.)

#### CHAPTER IV

Para 98 states: "Though the Lambeth Conference has eschewed parallel jurisdictions, they are now to be found within the Anglican Communion. The Catholic tradition may offer ecclesial models in which to place parallel jurisdictions but only on the premise of full communion between them." We believe this is a potentially very significant observation, with the important rider of the premise of full communion. However, we suggest that the term 'full communion' needs further exploration and, ultimately, clearer definition.

At para 102 there is a reference to the Roman Catholic Church's "priestly ordination of mature married men (*virii probati*)", and we would appreciate further explanation of this situation.

#### CHAPTER V

With reference to para 120, we believe that Anglican provinces could benefit considerably from visits from representatives from outside particular provinces in order to assist in self-examination and in promoting local mission. The Partners in Mission programme could be re-evaluated in order to establish the most useful way of forwarding this process. We understand that ARCIC here does not have in mind an Anglican equivalent to the role of Papal Nuncios, which is based on a different structure of ecclesial authority.

Para 121 usefully points to the strengthening of the episcopal teaching role in particular.

## CHAPTER VI

Regarding the Lambeth Quadrilateral, to which reference is made at para 124, we suggest that it is a document of its time and note that it omits all reference to the laity, a topic which is so important in *Walking Together on the Way* and in the life of both our communions today (cf also para 156).

Para 126 refers to the subject of dogmatic definition in the Roman Catholic Church: “Although authoritative, most magisterial teaching at the universal level is not definitive. Nevertheless, in certain circumstances, the magisterium can resolve matters of faith and morals definitively.” We believe it would be helpful if the Roman Catholic Church could be clearer about when it considers the Pope to be making an infallible pronouncement.

At para 127, *Walking Together on the Way* indicates: “Inherent in the life of the Church is a continuing dynamic of conciliarity and primacy, no matter what the particular historical or cultural setting of a church may be.” We would caution that denominations other than our two communions may not have comparable understandings of primacy in particular, but nonetheless they remain part of the one Church of Christ.

We consider that para 130's note 48, referring to past Anglican global congresses - comprising bishops, clergy and laity - is an important indication as far as Anglican self-understanding is concerned. The note aptly points out: “The most famous of these [Anglican congresses] was held in Toronto in 1963. Its message succinctly epitomized the nature of global Anglican ecclesial relationships: ‘Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ’. Whatever the political realities, there was here a defining moment in Anglican ecclesiology: autonomous churches were nevertheless to be mutually interdependent rather than independent.”

While it is true, as *Walking Together on the Way* states at para 133, that many Anglicans “recognize the gift that a Petrine ministry, exercised in fidelity to Scripture and Tradition and in service to the Church universal, can be”, referring to the ARCIC-II report, *The Gift of Authority* (1999), in this context, there are many who are wary of the concept. In the Church of Ireland's response to *The Gift of Authority*, reference was made to ambiguity occurring in several places in the text and in particular in relation to the role of scripture and tradition. The Church of Ireland concluded that it was not of the view that the document represented a “generally satisfactory conclusion” on the topic (*General Synod Reports*, 2001, p. 166).

Para 145 raises interesting issues for us. There are aspects of what holds the Roman Catholic Church together at universal level which remain insufficiently explored within Anglicanism, e.g. in the liturgical, catechetical and canon law spheres. We note in particular that at the Anglican Consultative Council Meeting in Hong Kong in April and May 2019, the Inter-Anglican Liturgical Consultation presented *Praying with one voice - Common Liturgical Resources for the Anglican Communion*. This work was carried out at the request of the Primates' Task Group and includes a Eucharistic Prayer intended for use at Anglican Communion events. It has been commended by the Anglican Communion's Department for Unity, Faith and Order to the Primates' Task Group.

As referred to at para 148, we agree that there is a need for clearer definitions of the roles of

inter-Anglican structures, for example regarding the role of the Anglican Communion Standing Committee. Yet, at the same time, we note considerable resistance across the Communion to both greater centralisation and to greater emphasis on episcopal involvement in Communion governance.

## CONCLUSION CHAPTER

Para 157 states: “The discernment of proper teaching, sound governance, and appropriate pastoral care requires a healthy and open conversation in the Church. In the judgement of the Commission, the Roman Catholic Church can learn from the culture of open and frank debate that exists at all levels of the Anglican Communion, evidenced by the *indaba* process, for example.” We would point out that a listening process requires that an end point of resolution is reached and that *indaba* has not been particularly successful in this regard.

Regarding Anglican receptive learning from the Roman Catholic Church (para 158), we agree that receptive learning for Anglicans from Roman Catholic ecclesial life “begins with an appreciation for the depth of commitment to the unity of the universal Church”.

Also at para 158, ARCIC-III recommends the use of at least one common, modern Eucharistic Prayer across the Communion. There are alternatives within the Church of Ireland's prayer book. A common Anglican prayer would be acceptable to us as an option, but not in place of local prayers.

Para 158's suggestion of an approved common Anglican catechism; could be a useful process, and we would suggest that sections 1-3 of the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant could be a good starting point. Some common expression of Anglican self-understanding as a point of reference would be useful, but individual Anglican provinces should retain the right to have their own catechisms.

Again, para 158 suggests the formal reception of the *Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion*. While we have no objection to affirming the principles, we are wary of one code of canon law being developed for the whole Communion.

We feel that para 158's suggestion of further exploration of the role of the See of Canterbury and its cathedral as the seat of the Archbishop as a focus of unity is worth further exploration.

Regarding the paragraph's suggestion of the practice of pilgrimage visits by bishops to meet with the Archbishop of Canterbury for prayer and consultation, we believe that care would need to be taken not to create a sense of the Archbishop of Canterbury having jurisdiction outside the Church of England. However, we believe it is important to create opportunities for the Archbishop to meet bishops from across the Communion, although these meetings need not necessarily be in Canterbury itself.

For receptive Anglican learning from Roman Catholic expressions of episcopal leadership, reflection is suggested at para 158 on “diverse communities in full communion with one another in the same region” and “clarity of recognized processes for discernment, communication, and reception of authoritative teachings and decision”. Regarding the former, we believe this could

be useful to Anglicans in relation to some of the Anglican Communion tensions, for example in continental Europe. Regarding the latter, we note that some ACC and ecumenical reports and resolutions are not studied as widely as anticipated and that we could learn more from Roman Catholic practice in this area.

Para 161 refers to Eucharistic sharing. We hope Anglicans and Roman Catholics will not resign themselves to the current situation and that there will be a renewed effort at resolving the issue. *Walking Together on the Way* indicates at various places the importance of repentance in our ecumenical life (cf. paras 150, 152, 155 and 161). We believe this should be a spur to resolving remaining contentious issues.