

Dialogue with the Anglican Communion*

1. Writing as I do, not only at the end of a historic phase of this dialogue (that represented by the appearance of ARCIC's final report) but also virtually at the end of my own direct involvement in the dialogue (I retire on December 30), I will need to resist that pull of chronological gravity which makes one look backwards and reminisce. The general title of these talks, reinforced by the exhortations of Fr Angell, directs attention to the present and the future. I thoroughly approve of this. The history of past division and of the origins of dialogue has been often told, and any historical points I make will be merely ones which I consider to have been neglected or overlooked. Perhaps also a man who speaks for the last time from a particular standpoint (or if you like sings a swan-song) may be allowed the touch of prophecy (*not* forecast) which belongs to a *'Nunc Dimittis'*.

2. The Final Report of ARCIC is of course the major achievement of Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue so far — perhaps the major achievement of all bilateral dialogue since Vatican II. It was never my intention to write here simply a commentary on the report. Re-reading it as a whole at some weeks' distance from being closely involved in its completion, I find it not less but much more impressive. But this does not mean I am complacent or over-confident. There are many question marks over what will happen to it and what will be its effect. Some of these I shall touch on. For the moment let me direct you to the third paragraph of the preface: 'The purpose of this preface is to explain briefly the aims and methods of ARCIC as these have matured in the light of our own experience, of the development — in some aspects rapid — within our own Churches in the twelve years of our experience, in response to criticisms we have received and having regard to other ecumenical dialogues'.

We were not like men sitting down to make some machine or piece of furniture in accordance with a blue-print or long-mastered craft. The report, we may say, is as much an act of discovery as of manufacture. The commission was doing something not quite like anything that had been done before, and it has received sympathy in proportion as people have understood that such an exercise could not be carried out entirely with familiar tools, or judged by whether it fitted snugly into familiar moulds. Many people feel comfortable only with the familiar, particularly on religious matters, but surely it can never have been supposed that the healing of Christian divisions would be a comfortable operation? Note too that the unfamiliar is not identical with the new: what is older and better may be just as

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unfamiliar and meet with just as much hostility as novelties do. Much of what has been taken for granted as the inescapable and indisputable language of doctrine is bound up with what the report calls 'the emotive language of past polemics' — adding that to get *behind* this is the only fruitful approach to our past and our future.

3. Of course not all Anglican/Roman Catholic differences can be dissipated simply in this way. Towards the end of its first statement on 'Authority in the Church' (Venice 1976) under the heading 'Problems and Prospects' (a title not dissimilar to that of this series of lectures) the Commission, while claiming a 'consensus on authority in the Church and in particular on the basic principles of primacy . . . of fundamental importance', went on to recognise that the Authority statement differed from its predecessors. It left unsolved four principal questions about Roman primacy, i.e. about the primacy of the bishop of Rome, which certainly no Catholic could regard as secondary, since they all have some place in the dogmatic constitution *Pastor Aeternus* of the First Vatican Council.

4. They are crucial questions in Anglican/RC dialogue. Crucial precisely because of (1) the consensus on the *general principles* of authority and primacy achieved at Venice and (2) the growing readiness among Anglicans to accept the value of a universal primacy in the service of the unity of the Church and to see the See of Rome as the only serious candidate for the position. (It is unnecessary to add that this does not mean they would be ready to accept the primacy of the Roman see in all the details of its modern exercise). This readiness was strikingly voiced in the original draft on papacy by the Lambeth Conference of 1968, though it was toned down in the final draft. (cf. Venice Papers of 1970 in *Theology* Feb. 1971, p. 56). It is the 'style' rather than the content of papacy that worries a great many Anglicans.

5. Nevertheless, paragraph 24 of the statement of 1976 made clear that real problems arose from the way *particular* claims of the papacy have commonly been expressed:

- (1) The weight put on the so-called 'Petrine texts'.
- (2) The use of the term *jure divino* (by divine right).
- (3) The doctrine of infallibility.
- (4) The claim to universal immediate jurisdiction.

The paragraph did add that the 'gravity' of these problems 'will be variously judged'. Nevertheless between 1977 and 1981 they were all given the same treatment: they were handled at the first stage by four sub-commissions after which there was a constant interplay of criticism and suggestion leading through many drafts to the final versions at the Windsor meeting, 1981.

6. What has been the effect of this process? I venture to predict (as I am sure some other members of ARCIC would) that it will be felt

by the unprejudiced to have a much more serene and harmonious tone and to show a quite remarkable degree of convergence.

7. One last general remark about the work of ARCIC before I pass on to wider aspects of Anglican/Roman Catholic relations. The preface to the report, in illustrating briefly the development of the commission's method, quoted from introductions to the earlier statements, in which the co-chairmen had regularly shown their concern that the purpose of the language of the statements (not precisely that of either tradition) should be understood. In a lengthy commentary on the 'Venice' statement '*Authority in the Church I*' the veteran French ecumenist and theologian Père C. Dumont O.P. had dwelt particularly on this, in mostly favourable terms. More strikingly, Pope John Paul II himself, receiving the Commission in audience on Sept 4th, 1980 (a year before the report was completed) showed his acceptance of the importance of this 'going behind the habits of thought and expression born and nourished in enmity and controversy, to scrutinize together the great common treasure, to clothe it in a language at once traditional and expressive of the insights of an age which no longer glories in strife but seeks to come together in listening to the quiet voice of the Spirit'. Yet it is still possible for critics to ignore this and to speak of 'glossing over problems for the love of facile irenicism, speaking the language of the separated brethren . . .' as though this were the accepted practice of ecumenists (cf. *Osservatore Romano*, 16 Oct. 1981, p. 2) and to declare that *language* which the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 was content to call 'convenient and appropriate' remains so for 'the faithful of the Church in all times and places' (ibid.). It is necessary to bear these things in mind if we are to have a realistic view of future prospects.

Marriage and Mixed Marriages

8. In establishing perspective on this subject it is important to say that the institution of a *dialogue* about it represented perhaps the most important change (or perhaps more accurately, disciplining) of *feeling* in inter-church relations of recent times. Earlier history of exchanges on the subject is hardly more than one of bad-tempered pamphleteering — certainly in Great Britain. The Joint Preparatory Commission recognised the importance of this different approach. (Malta Report n. 16).

9. A joint commission, working quite independently, of ARCIC was set up in 1967 and published its report towards the end of 1975. (Its work was suspended after its second meeting (Nov. 1968) in anticipation of new directives from Rome. This suspension lasted for

three years, since *Matrimonia Mixta* was long in appearing and its local interpretation even longer).

10. Feeling on the subject remains particularly acute in the Church of Ireland (for several understandable reasons). Elsewhere the emotional pressure of the subject varies very considerably, and has usually been effectively reduced where episcopal conferences have taken the trouble to consult with Anglican authorities before issuing local or national directives. In countries where Anglicans and Roman Catholics live side by side in considerable numbers, mixed marriages can be up to two-thirds of all marriages. The resultant problems can be difficult to grasp in countries where the percentage may be less than 1%.

11. I shall attempt here (a) to bring out what seems to me, from my experience of the dialogue, to be the main features of the report; (b) to say something of what few developments there have been since the report was published; and (c) to suggest tentatively in what direction movement may be looked for in the future.

The Report

12. I begin with a quotation from the co-chairmen's introduction: 'when all is said, the sections of this Report are not so many treatises. The whole Report is an attempt, by people of many concerns which are all merged in the pastoral, to explore, in the spirit of the Common Declaration of Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, what we have in common both of doctrine and of disciplinary purpose in a matter which comes home most closely to the lives of men and women and to the health of society. In explaining ourselves to each other, we have made no attempt to obscure differences; but rather, seeing that in the discords which persist over mixed marriages, the differences themselves too easily obscure the common grounds, we have sought to exhibit and, it may be, to reconcile differences without discord'.

13. The co-chairmen's introduction is an important key to the understanding of the report. Not only does it correct some specific misapprehensions which already appeared when the report was read by a number of responsible people prior to publication; it also indicates accurately the shape of the report and the limits of its aims.

14. An important warning to those whose habit is to pick out phrases for purposes of pillorying is that Section A, paras 1-14, describes the progress of the commission's work. Section B, C, and D embody its conclusions and recommendations. However a crucial passage in section A page 4 sets down the three *fundamental theological principles* which were accepted at the first meeting and governed all subsequent discussion.

15. Although the commission accepted the first part of its brief, a

comparison of the theologies of the two communions on marriage (as well as the related disciplines), it did not see this as committing it to writing a full scale joint treatise, much less two parallel treatises — any more than, for example ARCIC is committed to such treatises in its Agreed Statements.

16. The Commission registered its conviction (para 21) that there is 'no fundamental difference between the two Churches as regards what marriage of its nature is or the ends which it is ordained to serve'. Obviously those who began with the a priori conviction that this is not true would have preferred (though they would hardly have been convinced by) a much longer exposition.

17. The two points on which the claim seems at first sight exaggerated are the sacramentality and the indissolubility of marriage. The second of these is treated at considerable length in Section C, which reveals the somewhat complex history of the Anglican tradition in the matter. Paragraphs 51-2 emphasise the tension implicit in pastoral responsibility concerning marriage today between witnessing to the essential attributes of a Christian marriage and making pastoral provisions in concrete situations — a tension felt in both Churches, though reactions are not identical. The realities of the tension in the Catholic Church came out sharply enough in the last Synod of Bishops in Rome.

18. A part of its report which the Commission regarded as of capital importance (though not likely to meet with much sympathy in curial circles) was paras 22-27 which contrast RC and Anglican attitudes to law, as they are reflected in approaching marriage and in dealing with mixed marriages.

19. This contrast was one we remained aware of in drafting section D of the report on 'Mixed Marriages'. We approached the subject on the understanding that no substantial changes in the regulations of the *motu proprio Matrimonia Mixta* were to be expected in the near future. (Though we tried, with singular lack of success, to induce the commission dealing with Marriage in the revision of the Codex of Canon Law to pay some attention to our work). It remains difficult for Anglicans to see why, when dialogue on age-old doctrinal problems is proving so fruitful, there should be no reflection of this in the Catholic attitude to mixed marriages.

20. There was joint recognition that the fundamental problem in mixed marriage is an ecclesiological one, i.e. it derives from differing conceptions of the nature of the Church, but on the Anglican side there was excessive optimism about the practical weight of the new attitude to the ecclesial status of non-Roman Catholic Churches revealed in *Lumen Gentium* and other Vatican II documents.

21. Section D reflects an intensive dialogue on the principles underlying *Matrimonia Mixta*, and on the significance of the

qualifying phrases *quantum fieri potest* and *pro viribus*. It was a dialogue which, we insisted (para 66) 'could have no meaning except on the basis of mutual respect for conviction' — a point which seems to be ignored by those who (still sometimes) suggest the matter is settled by saying 'most of the non-Catholics who marry Catholics have no serious convictions'.

22. It is clear that a promise about the education of the children being extracted (even in the present attenuated form) as a condition of performing the marriage is psychologically deeply antipathetic to committed Anglicans. It was no less clear to the whole commission that it is not the promise that creates the Catholic's obligation: this is integral to his Catholic conscience. Hence the proposal put forward in para 71: 'An alternative to the Promise', is described as 'a clause by which the Roman Catholic Church can do *what its doctrine requires of it* in a way which encounters less objection'. As will be seen, the proposal is a moderate one, and would not satisfy, e.g. those Anglicans who insist categorically that the matter of the children's upbringing should be left quite simply to the personal choice of the parents. Yet some Catholic members of the commission were unwilling to commit themselves to it — an unwillingness rising perhaps more from *metus reverentialis* than from any deep conviction.

23. The other practical proposal, on canonical form (para 62) was one which caused little difficulty in the commission and was arrived at early in our discussions (cf. para 7). It represents a relaxation which might well be thought a justified reflection of the 'growing together' progress, and it is hard to see official unwillingness to consider it as other than visceral defensiveness — especially since dispensations in the matter are now given regularly.

24. The commission attached great importance to its concluding paragraphs on *joint pastoral care* of mixed marriage families. This is a delicate matter, and its full implications and opportunities are not often understood. It is no mere matter of having two clerical house visitants instead of one. A high level of good will and cooperation, including hard preliminary thinking about the matter, is necessary. Joint pastoral care should be seen as an integral, indeed a central part of ecumenical cooperation and the creation of an ecumenical spirit in the parish or area.

25. Cardinal Willebrands in his foreword points out that 'it is the nature of ecumenical dialogue that the report of a joint commission does not offer the last word on its subject'. The next phase of Anglican-RC dialogue, which will follow (how quickly remains to be seen) the presentation and assessment of ARCIC's final report, will necessarily face up to many of the practical problems which ARCIC never considered. In doing so it is bound to give to the report

'Anglican-Roman Catholic Marriage' more serious attention than it has so far received, besides taking account of the many wider problems of Christian living which the 1980 Synod of Bishops threw into relief rather than solved.

Practical Proposals of the Malta Report

26. Section II of the 'Malta' Report of the Joint Preparatory Commission made a number of practical proposals aimed at stimulating and furthering the process of *growing together*. They included:

1. Periodical joint meetings of Anglican and RC hierarchies (where apposite).
2. Joint committees or at least periodic consultation on pastoral and evangelization problems.
3. Agreement for joint use of churches and other buildings where helpful.
4. Agreement to share facilities for theological education and scholarship.
5. Common retreats.
6. Development of relationships between Anglican and RC religious orders.
7. Cooperation in liturgical revision and reform.
8. Joint or parallel statements giving Christian witness on human issues.

While for most places it cannot be said that any of these have been totally ignored, collaboration in them has been decidedly sporadic both in extent and in intensity. In some of them, notably nos. 3 and 4, even those made by ecumenically-minded bishops have been met with official suspicion and resistance, even where it has been plainly evident that they were in harmony with documents of the Secretariat (e.g. the two parts of the *Directorium*) which have received papal approval.

27. Ecumenical education is no mere matter of providing, in seminaries or colleges, an occasional course in something vaguely called 'Ecumenics'. It is no mere matter of 'economising' by avoiding duplication of teachers and courses in what are thought of as 'safe' or 'neutral' subjects. It is not even a matter of exchanges of teachers and students, which are mostly impracticable on anything more than a limited scale. The Vatican II decree on ecumenism chapter II (especially paras 5-9) uses phrases like 'interior conversion', 'newness of attitudes of mind', 'unstinted love', 'change of heart'. These are not activities or attitudes for the promoting of which we can devise canons. The decree is necessarily hortatory rather than legal. It is not on that account less an integral part of the Church's pastoral

solicitude and policy. In the end it must look forward to the rise of a new generation, of bishops, priests and laity (and, we may add, ecclesiastical bureaucrats) to whom the ideals voiced in the decree will look like ideals and not like dangerous forms of self-indulgence or even disloyalty. Until this happens practical proposals will remain sporadic in their effect.

Setbacks

28. John XXIII stated as one of his aims for the Second Vatican Council that of 'presenting a new and fair image of the Church'. It is no part of my purpose here to discuss how far this aim has been achieved whether in the RC Church or in the Anglican Churches, though I think it would be unfair to doubt that many in both Churches have been concerned with it. I wish to point to some developments first in Roman Catholicism and then in Anglicanism, which have either been clearly set-backs to ecumenical convergence or 'growing together', or over which doubts must persist in this respect at least for the present.

29. It has become increasingly common in recent years for Anglicans (and others, but particularly Anglicans) to come to Rome, in groups of various sizes, for as much as three or four weeks to study the working of the Roman Catholic Church at its centre. They have been received by various departments of the Curia, they have visited universities, they have listened to lectures and joined in discussions. At the end of their stay they have generally spent a morning in the SPCU giving, individually, their impressions of the experience. I have attended all these meetings except one in 1979 when I was long absent through illness, and have notes of many of the reactions.

30. I am led to conclude that the effect of these visits has so far been mixed. There has been much gratitude for the kindness with which they have been received and the generosity with which time has been given to them. With some of what they have seen and heard the visitors have been impressed and attracted. But in every case serious reserves have been expressed about how Roman authority, and in particular Roman magisterium, is exercised, and about how seriously concerned with Church unity some of the most influential, most at the heart of things, really are.

31. Such doubts are of course often expressed by many other people, Anglican and Catholic, who have never bothered to come to Rome even briefly to see for themselves. Hence we must rank as set-backs to Anglican/RC convergence the reactions, sometimes more vociferous than well-informed, to the disciplinary measures (milk compared with those of earlier times) taken against theologians, most notoriously Hans Küng. Note that it is the reactions I am talking about, not the measures. On the latter it is possible to have more than

one opinion; on the effect of the former there can be no dispute.

32. Catholics have not so far as I know made any exactly comparable efforts to see how Anglicanism works, but there is hardly scope for them, since there is no Anglican Rome or Vatican. The Secretariat has regularly sent observers to such important Anglican assemblies as the Lambeth Conference (1968 and 1978) and the Anglican Consultative Council, a smaller body of delegates which meets roughly every two years.

33. But neither of these has executive authority. This brings us to certain Anglican developments which undoubtedly have been seen on the Catholic side as setbacks. Differences of attitude to doctrinal authority and discipline have never been overlooked in the dialogue: they are already quite clearly referred to in para. 5 of the Malta Report and are treated from various points of view in the final report of ARCIC. The essence of the matter may be briefly stated: if Anglicans, looking at Rome are worried about over-centralization, Romans looking at Anglicanism are no less worried about what sometimes looks like doctrinal incoherence. One even hears expressions such as 'the Myth of God Incarnate Syndrome', using the fashionable jargon of today. I do not think the problem can be dismissed as merely imaginary: many serious Anglicans recognise it, and a gifted young Church of England theologian, Stephen W. Sykes, professor at Durham university, has written a book, 'The Integrity of Anglicanism', which tackles the problem squarely.

34. There are twenty-odd Anglican Churches throughout the world which are to all intents and purposes autonomous. Their doctrinal and constitutional bond is what is known as the Lambeth Quadrilateral, that is, they adhere to the Scriptures, the Creeds, the early councils which they recognise as ecumenical and the 'historic episcopate'. They have no equivalent of papal decrees or encyclicals, of Holy Office *monita*, of Denzinger. They have canons, but no Codex. On the other hand the Lambeth Conference (which in part owed its origin in 1867 to a doctrinal dispute which almost amounted to a heresy trial) issues resolutions which have grown in moral authority: delegates from the Churches now meet roughly every two years as the Anglican Consultative Council, and most recently there have been meetings of the primates of the Anglican Communion.

35. While it would be wrong (and unwelcome to many Anglicans) to exaggerate the significance of these developments, they do show some awareness of the problems of authority, something which was very evident at the Lambeth Conference of 1978. This awareness was largely connected with the dissensions within Anglicanism concerning the ordination of women to the priesthood. I have no time to go into the history of the rapid developments in this matter over the past decades, and their ecumenical repercussions. At Lambeth 1978 the

latter, though not excluded, took second place to the internal dissensions. As a very distinguished Anglican said to me, Archbishop Coggan (and no doubt other organizers) came to the conference 'afraid that he had a schism on his hands' and the conference was largely organised to avoid this. In the event, what looked like very determined opposition rather collapsed in the face of some bland and skilful steering. This however left some very awkward questions unanswered about the relation between Anglican Churches where the ministrations of women priests are accepted and those where they are not.

36. Turning to the ecumenical aspects of the question, I find a curious and I think rather dangerous tendency to underestimate the gravity of the obstacle to Anglican/RC relations. Anglicans, even where (as in England) they have not proceeded to the ordination of women, have generally shown a majority in favour of the view that there are 'no fundamental theological objections'. Since they have not been impressed with the weight of Roman contrary arguments, they tend to slip into the comfortable expectation that 'Rome will change its mind'. I stated at the outset of this paper that I would avoid forecasts, but I think one prediction is safe — that any modification of Rome's official position, if ever it comes about, will do so far too late to have any effect on the *present* movement of convergence between Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. On the other hand, I fear that the publication and judgement of the ARCIC report may be the occasion of a strong recrudescence of controversy and a fresh polarization over the issue. This would have the sad effect of obscuring the remarkable achievement represented by the ARCIC document.

37. It would also obscure the issue of how ordained ministries would be reconciled within the framework of the achievement of unity. The ARCIC statement on Ministry and Ordination concluded that it had placed the issues raised by the RC Church's judgement on Anglican Orders 'in a new context'. The commission was well aware that if this were taken simply as an exhortation to Rome to repudiate *Apostolicae Curae* its sole effect would be to arouse violent opposition, and they did not intend it to be so taken. Very few people today would see any profit in renewing the sort of discussions, the sort of gathering of ammunition, which led to and followed *Apostolicae Curae*. If the 'new context' means anything, it means that today any discussion of the matter would be bilateral, and would start from theological assumptions and be animated by intentions very different from those which were decisive in 1896.

38. At the Newcastle meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council last September the debate on the report of the 'Unity' section was marked by some lively exchanges following two strong speeches

from the Church of Ireland delegates. These last threw a lot of cold water on the generally warm welcome given by the section report to Anglican/RC relations. They revealed that behind the repeated rather bland condemnation of violence by Church leaders in Ireland there persists some very marked coolness, even hostility which reflects the wider politico-religious tragedy. What was striking however was the vigour with which these attitudes were repudiated, first by the influential primate of Canada, Archbishop Scott, and more strongly still by several African primates, one of whom spoke of 'the religion of hate'.

39. This is only one of several situations which combine to raise a deep question — how far it is realistic to think of any vast unity project which would embrace every part of the world where Anglicans and RCs live side by side. In a single vast country like USA, for instance, ecumenical maturity varies enormously from region to region or more often from diocese to diocese. It is wholly right that today agreement in faith should be given decisive priority. It is unfortunately true that in many places and in many minds other factors, largely non-theological, will play a disproportionate role.

40. Not that all non-theological factors are negative, of course. In England, for example, the *fons et origo* of Anglican/Roman division and the birthplace of the expression 'No-Popery', it is astonishing, in the perspective of history, to see Anglican leaders as eager and anxious as any that the forthcoming visit of the Holy Father to Great Britain 'will be the occasion for a definite step forward in the relationship between our Churches'. The words are from a unanimous resolution of the Church of England's General Synod, as quoted by the Archbishop of Canterbury in a letter to Pope John Paul II. The archbishop adds this comment of his own: 'Behind this there lies not only a deep longing to heal the wounds of the past but also the desire that your visit should strengthen the mission of all the Churches in this country as they endeavour to present the Gospel of Christ in a pluriform and largely secular society. If your visit is seen in this light, many will be helped to see for the first time the evangelical nature of your universal ministry'. I have good reason to believe that those who are preparing the visit harbour no illusions about it. They recognise its critical ecumenical importance and delicacy. Perhaps the worst that would happen to it would be that it would appear introspective, bland, over-cautious, leaving things very much where they are.

41. We are fortunate enough now to have a pope who has some disposition to boldness of action. This could be a great advantage in England, where Catholic instincts are still predominantly conservative but where part of this very conservatism is a readiness to accept what the Pope does, to follow where he gives a lead. Such a

lead could do much to strengthen ecumenical commitment.

42. Jean Guilton has recalled how often Lord Halifax returned in conversation to this theme of papal leadership. 'He longed for a (pope) who would cast off old habits, who would launch out into the deep: *'duc in altum'* (Dialogue avec les Precurseurs, Paris 1962).

In 1894 Lord Halifax wrote expressing the same aspiration with moving eloquence. The passage is one with which this paper may well conclude: 'have a little imagination, a little faith. We must be daring if we expect great results. To save the world God became man. It seems to me that for the sake of reunion the Holy Father could take steps that could be demanded of no one else. What won't a father do for the good of his children? Oh! we must cast aside conventions, fetters, everything that hinders those steps that people like to call folly, but which are the true wisdom. The age of miracles is not dead ...' (Quoted Hughes, *Absolutely Null and Utterly Void*, p. 208).

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6. In the light of recent ecumenical experience, however, must we not admit that we have been far more effective in describing the goal than in realizing it? Why is this so? Perhaps the major reason relates to the fact that it was necessary for Christ to go on to seal his prayer to the Father with his own death and resurrection. Before unity could be fully realised, Christ's body had to be broken and his blood had to be shed. Only then could the Holy Spirit come to work God's life out of our death, God's pardon out of our sin, and God's unity out of our division. This lively promise is still at the heart of the gospel, the new testament of God's coming kingdom.

'Taking Steps towards Unity'