

**ROMAN CATHOLICS
AND EVANGELICAL ANGLICAN THINKING**

THE OCCASION

In August 1982 the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, which met from 1970 to 1981, has finished its work, and it has all been published in *The Final Report* (SPCK & CTS, March 1982). The Pope has been to Britain, and he and the Archbishop of Canterbury have signed 'The Common Declaration' in which they have 'agreed that it is now time to set up a new Commission'. This booklet looks back over the last twelve years, and the author reflects, on the basis of his rich experience of working on ARCIC, on the kind of agenda which lies before the two Churches as the task for the next Commission.

THE AUTHOR

Julian Charley was the only evangelical Anglican on ARCIC, and he produced best-selling Commentaries on the three previous major Statements. These are all now out of print. Julian Charley thus brings his own writings in defence of the various Statements up to date in this larger work. In particular he responds to conservative Roman Catholic opinion, and trenchantly restates the full compatibility of the Statements with his own biblical position.

and COMPANION TO THIS
**EVANGELICAL ANGLICANS
AND THE ARCIC FINAL
REPORT: An Assessment
and Critique**

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**Rome,
Canterbury,
and the
Future**

by
JULIAN CHARLEY

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GROVE BOOKS

BRAMCOTE NOTTS.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I owe a great debt to all members of the Commission. And I would add that, personally, I am also most thankful to have spent the past eight years of that period ministering in central Liverpool. Everton is an area where Catholic/Protestant antagonism has a long and bitter history. It is salutary for one who is engaged in theological discussion to be earthed in this way, for ultimately it will be in places like Everton that any decisions about a closer relationship between the two churches will have to be proved workable.

Julian Charley
Liverpool (July 1982)

NOTE ON THE WORD 'CATHOLICS'

The word 'Catholic', used on its own but with a capital letter, is here equivalent to 'Roman Catholic'. If it has any other meaning it is written differently, as, e.g. 'anglo-catholic'.

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PREFACE

It is now over twelve years since I became involved in dialogue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. This did not come about of my own choosing, nor was I in any special sense qualified for such work. When I was invited in 1969 to become a member of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Permanent Commission (as the International Commission—ARCIC—was at first called), I felt duty-bound to accept, not without a considerable degree of diffidence and apprehension. The scale and complexity of the Catholic tradition provided a daunting prospect. Being the only evangelica: appointed, I was all the more conscious of the weight of responsibility laid upon me. In retrospect, I am profoundly grateful for the privilege of having served on the Commission. The work has been demanding, at times very encouraging, at times very depressing; but always the subject-matter has related to issues that have divided Christians for centuries. Others will judge the fruit of our labours: for ourselves the progress is ample reward.

One of ARCIC'S co-chairmen has often described the Commission as a significant '*schola theologorum*'. I believe all the members will endorse that verdict. It has been a theological education in itself. I have certainly been greatly enriched in my understanding of the faith. Such open dialogue can hardly fail to enlarge one's horizons and clarify one's thinking. That has been profoundly true for me, without it altering my basic evangelical convictions. It is not spiritually healthy to become isolated within one's own tradition, bolstered by polemical arguments, without any constructive attempt to understand and learn from those of a rather different persuasion. The Church of Christ is so much bigger than our limited experience of it.

Of course, one cannot engage in this sort of exercise without exposing oneself to misunderstanding and criticism. It has always been the case and always will be. There are some who feel that for an evangelical even to engage in ecumenical discussion with Roman Catholics is wrong in itself. I understand that reaction, as I think I would once have had similar feelings myself, or at least believed that it was a pointless exercise unless used as a platform for evangelism. I am now convinced of the absolute necessity of this painstaking ecumenical dialogue. Its importance far outweighs the pain that will be experienced along the way.

Now that ARCIC has completed its work and been disbanded, I feel able to speak in my own person about its work and objectives, rather than (as has inevitably been the case) as a representative of the whole Commission. That does not mean that I wish in any way to dissociate myself from the Commission's conclusions. I have often been quizzed as to how I, as an evangelical, could possibly have put my signature to one part or another of one of the Statements. In the Commentaries that I wrote on the first three Statements¹, I sought, in passing, to answer such queries and to show that the statements were compatible with Scripture. That does not mean that they are perfect or are worded in precisely the way that I could always have wished. It is hard for those who have never been involved in this kind of ecumenical work to understand precisely how a Commission such as this is obliged to function and what exactly to expect from it. I hope that what follows will throw some light on that. My prime aim has been to seek to clarify how Anglican/Roman Catholic relations now stand with some constructive pointers for the future.

¹ Grove Booklets nos. 1 (1971), 22 (1973), 48 (1977). All are now out of print.

1. A GROWING MOMENTUM

For most of us memories tend to be short and historical perspectives rather blurred. Situations and attitudes change, and we quickly forget how different things have become. The climate in Anglican and Roman Catholic relations today is hardly that of the Ice Age that ensued after the closure of the ill-fated Malines Conversations in 1926. Undoubtedly the most important factor in this change has been the revolutionary developments within the Roman Catholic church itself. 'Revolutionary' is an adjective that Catholics would disown¹, though the end-results would seem to justify the term. In speaking of the reappraisal of dogmatic definitions by contemporary Catholic theologians, I wrote in a paper prepared for the National Evangelical Anglican Congress in 1977:

'What is evident here is not so much that dogmas have been changed but that they have been shown capable of being re-expressed in a way that alters their whole perspective. They possess an elasticity that had not hitherto been appreciated; it means that they can sometimes be stretched to the point when they are barely recognizable for what they were previously thought to be.'

I am more and more convinced that this is true. It is not quite the kind of straightforward proceeding that non-Catholics would like to see and it leaves some important questions unanswered. Yet change there undoubtedly is, and much more than a mere tampering with detail. This alone has made possible an entirely new openness to ecumenical dialogue since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

What needs to be recognized is the sense of movement in a sphere where, despite a few valiant attempts, there had been an impression of 'no change' for four hundred years. There are many contributory factors. The twentieth-century interest in ecumenism has helped Catholic and Protestant theologians to work in much closer partnership. Historians on both sides have become far less partisan. In Reformation studies there has been a willingness to acknowledge the strengths of the other party and to admit the shortcomings of one's own. This change of attitude makes an approximation to the truth much more feasible. Take, as an example, the great Catholic historian of the Reformation in Germany, Joseph Lartz:

'The genuine Christian conscience, loyal to the Church, was practically forced to protest against many perversions in the Church of the time, precisely in the name of Christianity and the Church. In other words, Catholics must bear a great deal of the responsibility for the revolt.'

The same spirit is evident in the *Decree on Ecumenism* of Vatican II:

'There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart . . . St. John testified: "If we say that we have not sinned,

¹ Hubert Jedin *Crisis and closure of the Council of Trent* (Sheed and Ward, 1967):

'The Tridentine reform decrees also provide clear evidence that no reform in the church is revolutionary, but that every reform must be a combination of what has to be retained from the past and what has to be introduced in the present' (p.168).

² Ian Cundy (Ed.) *Obedying Christ in a Changing World* Vol. 2 *The People of God*, (Collins, 1977) p.153.

³ Joseph Lartz *The Reformation: A Problem for Today* (The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1964) pp.90-91.

we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1.10). This holds good for sins against unity. Thus, in humble prayer, we beg pardon of God and of the separated brethren, just as we forgive those who trespass against us.'

Such humility and openness must be matched on the Anglican side. It creates an air of hope. It is a far cry from the triumphalism of the past.

The momentum of change was apparent from the moment of Pope John XXIII's declared intention of calling a Council. A section of a book written by Hans Kung in anticipation of the Council was entitled, 'Catholic steps towards positive fulfilment of the valid demands of the Reformers.'² Amongst other things he listed Catholic appreciation of the *religious* motives in the Protestant Reformation, a growing regard for the Scriptures, the development of Catholic liturgy into a people's liturgy, and an understanding of the priesthood of all the faithful. The Council itself brought into the open a major rift between the conservatives and the progressives. On the whole, it was the progressives who won the day: their consternation now is that the conservatives have subsequently succeeded in delaying the full implementation of so many of the pronouncements of the Council. Something of the 'elasticity' of dogma, as mentioned above, can be clearly seen in the Constitution on the Church. Over against *Pastor Aeternus* of 1870, defining Papal authority in the most Ultramontane way, *Lumen Gentium* locates the Bishop of Rome's authority firmly in the context of the whole college of bishops. It is an ecclesiological turn-around making the 'minority' view of 1870 that of the 'majority, at Vatican II.'³ Even that may not be the last word: Dom Christopher Butler described *Lumen Gentium* as 'a stepping stone and not a final accomplishment'. Possibly it is in the *Final Report* of ARCIC in 1982 that this 'elasticity' is most evident: to this we shall return in greater detail.

For our purposes, the most important Decree is that on Ecumenism. It spoke of separated *churches* as well as separated *brethren*. That recognition has been the mainspring for Catholic ecumenical dialogue with many churches beside the Anglican. We have also seen in the last two decades an ever-increasing range of joint activities by Catholics with other Christian bodies—shared social action, shared buildings, shared worship. The Charismatic Movement has brought Catholics and members of Protestant churches together on a devotional level that was a rare phenomenon previously. So we might go on. Now there is always a danger that when a movement gathers momentum, it may carry people along with it without their quite realizing what is happening. That is why firm theological foundations are essential to every ecumenical enterprise; but it must not be an abstract theology divorced from devotion. We are dealing not just with theological systems but with *people* committed to those views. That underlines the need for people to meet each other in order to acquire genuine mutual understanding. For lack of that so much polemical writing of the past has fallen on deaf ears amongst those for whom it was hopefully intended.

¹ *De Ecumenismo*, 7.

² Hans Kung *The Council and Reunion* (Sheed and Ward, 1961) pp.145-161.

³ See J. M. R. Tillard *L'évêque du Rome* (Cerf, 1982): "'La minorité" de Vatican I est devenue la "majorité" de Vatican II . . . Vatican I et Vatican II s'inscrivent dans une unité dialectique que veut qu'il l'un soit interprété par l'aut.'" (p.55).

1982 may well prove a watershed with regard to Anglican/Roman Catholic relations. First, there was the publication of ARCIC's *Final Report*.¹ Although much of it had been published previously, the entirety of the Commission's work in one slim volume has made it much easier for the reader to appreciate the full scope and direction of its thinking. A regrettable delay in publication caused an unintentional leak on the Continent, which resulted in much unfortunate speculation and scare-mongering. By the time the Report was published there had been created an atmosphere of suspicion, which did not encourage an open-minded assessment—hard enough for anyone, when the subject concerned was so hotly controversial. Nevertheless it has been given considerable attention. An additional misfortune in the delay over publication was to bring its appearance very close in time to the visit of the Pope to Britain. Some Protestants saw in all this an under-hand plot to sell out the Church of England to Rome. In fact, it was entirely coincidental that the two events occurred in the same year.

The significance of the Pope's visit to Britain cannot be easily evaluated so soon after it has taken place. Its importance did not lie so much in anything specific that was said (there was, for instance, no reversal of Leo XIII's declaration on Anglican Orders, as some had optimistically hoped). Such an occasion was hardly appropriate for any such statement to be made, nor is the Roman Catholic Church yet in a position to do so. What stood out was the symbolic nature of the presence and actions of Pope John Paul II. Although he came primarily on a pastoral visit to the Catholic flock, the ecumenical dimensions of his visit were enormous. His warm personality, his obvious godliness, and his deep concern for peace, have all captured the public imagination. The symbolic importance of the service in Canterbury Cathedral, the spontaneous welcome given in the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral (a rebuff to the disgraceful anti-Papal disruptions of services in Liverpool previously), his reception by the Queen at Buckingham Palace—all were indications that Anglican/Roman Catholic relations in England would never be quite the same again. By dint of the nature of the office that the Bishop of Rome holds in Catholic eyes, his very presence in England spoke more, perhaps, than any number of documents could ever do. The Common Declaration of the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury, indicating their intention to set up another International Commission, showed that determination of both sides not to let things rest. They spoke of 'the next stage of our common pilgrimage in faith and hope towards the unity for which we long.'²

The third milestone that has been reached in 1982 concerns the *Covenant Proposals*, affecting Anglicans, Methodists, United Reformed and Moravians. With the United Reformed and Methodists having voted to proceed with the Proposals, everything hung upon the decision of the Anglican General Synod. It was already well-known that there was a sharp difference of opinion among Anglicans. One argument against acceptance of the Covenant that had been frequently voiced was that to proceed with it might well jeopardize Anglican/Roman Catholic relations, when they had reached a most important stage. It has always

¹ *The Final Report* (CTS, SPCK, 1982).

² Full text in *The Times* 31 May 1982.

seemed to me a very dubious procedure to hold back from something, if it seems right in itself, for fear it may damage relations or impede progress on another front. David Sheppard, the Bishop of Liverpool, argued in favour of the Covenant Proposals precisely *because* he wished to see progress in Anglican/Roman Catholic relations at the same time. The failure of the House of Clergy to attain the required two-thirds majority on 7 July 1982 has caused deep distress among the other participating churches. Since they had conceded the acceptance of episcopacy into their system, they could naturally have hoped for some comparable concessiveness on the Anglican side. The two main reasons for the anglo-catholic lobby against the Covenant raise major difficulties in themselves. The one concerns the nature of the ordained ministry—a rigorous interpretation of the necessity for the historic episcopate: the other concerns candidature for the ministry—the ordination of women. The first argument regarding episcopal ordination is one which evangelicals cannot accept, as it must in some degree 'unchurch' others by a refusal fully to recognize non-episcopal orders. The second argument concerning the ordination of women involves a rearguard action against what is already a *fait accompli* in parts of the Anglican Communion (e.g. Hong Kong, New Zealand, U.S.A., and Canada) with whom we are actually in communion. The Church of England itself has agreed *in principle* to the ordination of women. From the point of view of Anglican/Roman Catholic relations, it would be foolish to imagine that this rejection will make progress easier. Any closer links between Roman Catholics and Anglicans will involve the Anglican Communion, not the Church of England alone, so that the ordination of women to the priesthood is already an inescapable factor. If the recognition of Anglican Orders by the Roman Catholic Church would necessitate an exclusively anglo-catholic view of orders, then evangelical ranks will close in opposition.

One of the greatest difficulties in ecumenical relations is the problem of comprehensiveness. The Anglican church has tended to regard comprehensiveness as an ideal, while seeking to set certain limits in the area of teaching and churchmanship. Historically it has proved notoriously difficult to draw those lines with much clarity. The result has been an impression often conveyed to Catholics that Anglicans are largely indifferent to doctrine. 'Private judgment', a much-lauded Anglican principle, has its obverse side. On the other hand, the centralized authority of Rome has long given to non-Catholics the appearance of a rigid uniformity. The heavy-handed way in which those who step out of line have been dealt with has strengthened that impression. One has only to think of the recent disciplining of Professor Edward Schillebeckx and of Hans Kung. Yet we are also well aware that there is a great diversity of opinion freely expressed by Catholic theologians on every subject imaginable. The spirit of *aggiornamento*, or up-dating, of the church, as expressed in Vatican II, has involved a searching critique of the church's teaching, including a re-examination of its earlier formularies. Much of the energy of Catholic scholars in recent years seems to have been devoted to a reassessment of the text of both Vatican I and the Council of Trent in the light of the new stances taken up by Vatican II. Inevitably this has resulted in a great diversity of interpretations. This is where the 'elasticity' of what once seemed wholly unchangeable comes into play. It is especially necessary now that ecumenism has come into its own

The Holy Office, set up in the sixteenth century, was intended to defend orthodoxy and to act as the final court of appeal in alleged cases of heresy. Its descendant today is called 'The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith'. It has always been one of the most powerful and prestigious bodies in the Vatican, with the Bishop of Rome himself often presiding over its deliberations. Its very *raison d'être* makes it inevitably cautious, conservative, and defensive. Pope Paul VI, on the other hand, set up the 'Secretariat for the Unity of Christians' in order positively to foster ecumenical initiatives which had previously been frowned upon, if not forbidden. Once you have to start thinking about the way your theology relates to other churches besides your own, you find yourself challenged to question much that had seemed impeccably orthodox hitherto. The more you discover truth and spiritual reality in others, the more you need to take account of that discovery in what was once a far more domestic concern. An Italian journalist, who spent a year in the Vatican immediately after the second Vatican Council in order to assess the changes taking place, wrote of the Secretariat for Christian Unity:

'Often described as the visible negation of the Holy Office (which stands on the other side of St. Peter's Square), it is an overstatement to say that Bea's secretariat is spearheading an emasculation of the Holy Office. But the fact that ecumenism has gone so far as to produce the *schema* on religious liberty signifies that this secretariat represents an antithesis to the Holy Office.'¹

This tension creates an attitude of mind that is equally concerned with legitimate diversity as with essential unanimity. This is evident in *Lumen Gentium* itself, where the existence of certain churches, 'notably the ancient patriarchal churches', is ascribed to 'Divine Providence', though they 'enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage'. The section concludes:

'This variety of local churches with one common aspiration is particularly splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided church.'²

Here, then, is a situation where genuine ecumenical dialogue has become a reality for Catholics, without an over-riding assumption that an unconditional return to Rome is the only viable option.

Because of this radical alteration of the context for discussion between the churches and its novelty for so many Catholics, Anglicans must be patient while the Roman Catholic church goes through a sea-change. We must be sympathetic to the traumatic disturbance and insecurity this can produce in loyal church members. Many are feeling that all their anchors have been weighed without any assurance of their future destination. Anglicans will not make ecumenical progress without a sensitivity to what is happening. The Catholic church is looking for a method of reform which will remain faithful to her fundamental principles, and that all takes time.³ There is a delicate balance in these matters

¹ Alberto Cavallari *The Changing Vatican* (Faber, 1968) p.164.

² *Lumen Gentium* 23.

³ Alberto Cavallari, *op. cit.*: 'It becomes increasingly clear that such a church requires, above all, time, if it is going to modify its traditional systems without paralyzing itself completely' (p.181).

between the urgent call for action and the necessary care to avoid taking precipitate steps that will only be regretted later.

It should be obvious that any attempt to bring together two churches that are so comprehensive within themselves poses particular problems when it comes to the question of doctrinal safeguards. Neither communion can point to a very happy or successful record in this respect. However carefully doctrinal formularies are expressed, they prove open to varied interpretation. Although the authority of scripture is fundamental, even here there are very differing modes of interpretation, as we can see in the Protestant world alone. This has been the case since the early days of the church. What this all adds up to is the need for realism in any formula of concord between the churches. There must be agreement on the essentials of the faith, the primary matters in the 'hierarchy of truth'¹, but it will prove a fruitless exercise to try to be too precise over every detail. As Hans Kung puts it:

'... in working to come together again in theology we must not demand an exaggerated degree of agreement. Otherwise we should, in our ecumenical discussions, be requiring some totally impossible kind of agreement which would make reunion impossible.'²

I sometimes wonder if the demands made by some are not subconsciously directed to that very end—to make reunion impossible. Our goal must be to link *churches* together, not just elements within each of them. Cherishing the truth in love (Eph. 4, 15) is no simple matter.

There are those who seriously call in question the whole of this present ecumenical exercise. If churches manage to function effectively on their own, why bother with the unification process? Is not centralization, in church or state, the source of dull uniformity? Do Anglicans wish to be entangled at all with the bureaucracy of the Curia? Are not the theological rifts, stemming from the Reformation, so substantial as to make any *rapprochement* with Rome an unacceptable compromise? And what would such a move do to our relations with the Free Churches, especially with the Anglican rejection of the Covenant proposals? Is it not a 'spiritual ecumenism' that we should be seeking? Professor James Atkinson has pointedly expressed it in this way:

'We are not thinking in terms of the goal of one massive and mighty Church organized under a single authoritarian commissariat, the coming great church, as it gets called. We would not consider that even desirable were it achieved, rather a disaster. We must move away from all external and visible schemes which express themselves in organizations and administrative entities.'³

All such questioning is to be taken very seriously. True uniting is not simply a matter of organization, but neither should it be supposed that organizations are necessarily unspiritual. The church needs structures or it will collapse: the essential thing is that they should be adaptable

¹ *De Ecumenismo*, 11.

² Hans Kung, *op. cit.*, pp.173-174.

³ J. Atkinson *Rome and Reformation Today: how Luther speaks to the new situation* (Latimer House, 1982) p.30.

and subservient to its spiritual goals. The New Testament makes this need very clear, whether it is speaking of the appointment of elders in the church, convening a council to deal with practical issues that contained profound doctrinal implications, or collecting funds for the Christian poor in Judea.¹ Unity in faith and spirit is fundamental, but it must find some visible expression.² The problem is how this is best achieved, with the fullest encouragement of their variety which is essential to the body of Christ. In a church that is worldwide the problem is magnified.

What are the implications for us of Christ's 'high priestly' prayer:

'I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.' (John 17.20-23).

There has been much debate about the meaning and implications of this passage. It is generally agreed that the unity spoken about here is not institutional, though it may have a bearing upon the way institutions operate.³ Considerable caution must be exercised in trying to relate this passage to twentieth-century ecumenical problems. However, there are certain principles to be deduced that are explicit and non-controversial. First, the people for whose unity Jesus prayed were 'those who believe in me through their word.' The church is made up of those who respond in faith to the apostolic message by commitment to Jesus. Without submission to the word of God, recorded in the apostolic writings of the New Testament, there can be no church. Secondly, unity is a gift of God: it cannot be manufactured by man. That is why Jesus prayed 'that they may all be one'.⁴ Thirdly, true unity involves both a vertical and a horizontal dimension: 'as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us.' It is a striking parallelism, reminiscent of 1 John. Raymond Brown concludes, 'Some type of vital, organic unity seems to be demanded by the fact that the relationship of Father and Son is held up as the model of unity.'⁵ Since God has created us incarnate, it is hard to imagine how such

¹ e.g. Titus 1.5, Acts 15, 1 Cor. 16.1-4.

² That Anglican evangelicals accepted this principle was evident from their reaction to the Anglican-Methodist scheme. In opposition to it, the symposium *All in Each Plan*, ed. J. I. Packer (Marcham Manor Press, 1965) advocated an alternative along the lines of the Church of South India scheme: 'Nowhere in the New Testament do we find competing churches in the same locality' (p.87). Subsequently a team of evangelical and anglo-catholic writers presented a pattern that was mutually acceptable to them in *Growing into Union* (SPCK, 1970): its sub-title was *Proposals for forming a united church in England*.

³ e.g. C. K. Barrett *The Gospel according to St. John* (2nd ed. SPCK, 1978): 'It is clear that John has little interest in the church as an institution, and, unlike Ignatius, he does not appeal for unity in institutional terms.'

⁴ Cf. Raymond E. Brown *The Gospel according to John* (Chapman, 1971): 'Any approach that places the essence of unity in the solidarity of human endeavour is not really faithful to John's insistence that unity has its origins in divine action' (p.776). The whole passage is well surveyed on pp.774-779.

⁵ *op. cit.* p.776.

a depth of unity could be achieved without it. This is underlined, fourthly, by the impact on the world that this unity will effect—'that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.' Disunity hardly seems to commend divine love. But when Jesus Christ is seen as a living reality in a loving fellowship, especially when it is inclusive of all who profess to be Christian, the world is presented with a challenge. The truth about Jesus then becomes inescapable. It is doubtful if the prayer of Jesus implies all-round conversion. Rather it suggests that the church will become, like Jesus, a light that compels a responsible choice—acceptance or rejection. Indeed, it is not surprising that the modern ecumenical movement originated in overseas missions. When churches compete or overlap the world is puzzled, if not scandalized.¹

But there is one other conclusion to be drawn from this passage. Unity is not the same as uniformity. The Father and Son are distinct persons in the Trinity with differing roles in the divine dispensation; yet this implies no contradiction of their oneness. I am convinced that one of the greatest anxieties that impedes ecumenical advance is the fear of finding that one has put on a strait-jacket. It is particularly the fear of minorities that their distinctiveness will be stifled. It need not and must not be so.

The conclusion that, I believe, must be drawn from all this is that to be complacent about things as they are and to make no effort to resolve the problems that divide Christians is an attitude in conflict with the mind of Christ. The pursuit of Christian unity is a matter of Christian obedience. That is why it is of such paramount importance, despite all our other pre-occupations and all the difficulties involved. Moreover, it should be the concern of *all* Christian people, rather than being confined to an 'élite' group of ecumenical specialists. The prayer of Jesus was 'that they *all* may be one'—so everyone is involved whether they all like it or not. Obviously intricate theological debate is *not* for everyone, but the quest for unity is far more extensive than that. Experience shows that so many of the barriers between us are often more psychological than theological, even if we have found theological reasons to support our own positions. Cultural and social factors play their part as well, nor should we ever under-estimate the effect of our past history. When two churches have functioned in such persistent isolation from each other for over four hundred years, it is not surprising to find deeply embedded on either side distinctive traditional ways of thinking that will not take kindly or easily to any modification. It is often our devotional habits, which are so part and parcel of our spiritual life, that are most impervious to change. Liturgists are only too familiar with this fact. Change constitutes a threat which sets in motion all kinds of defence mechanisms to preserve the *status quo*. But Christian faith must include a willingness for change, not simply for its own sake, but where a better way can be found and one that is more applicable today. Obedience means a joint search for the truth in love, with a willingness to be led wherever the Spirit chooses. There must be a mutual resolve and mutual trust—'We cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.' (2 Cor. 13-8). We need not fear the search itself: the uncertainties relate to the integrity and perspicacity of the participants.

¹ Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975): 'The power of evangelization will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the gospel are divided among themselves' (para. 77).

2. THE FINAL REPORT

When the *Final Report* of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission was officially disclosed at a press conference at Lambeth Palace on 29 March 1982, there was an immediate flurry of excitement. In fact the direction of the Commission's thinking should have been quite apparent from the Venice Statement on Authority in 1976. The interest lay in the extent to which the Commission reckoned to have succeeded in overcoming certain specific obstacles in the realm of Authority that had been left over by the Venice Statement. While indicating considerable progress on such delicate matters as the Petrine texts and claiming that the papacy was of 'divine right' and possessed a universal immediate jurisdiction, the Final Report clearly showed that the Commission had not reached a workable agreement on papal infallibility. It was thus made perfectly clear that, even within its own specific brief, the Commission had not accomplished all that was needed. Nevertheless the conclusion included the following conviction:

The convergence reflected in our *Final Report* would appear to call for the establishing of a new relationship between our churches as a next stage in the journey towards Christian unity.¹

Before making further comment on that claim, it is necessary to make some more general remarks. I have continually discovered how much people misconstrue the process by which such Statements are produced and their precise implications. There are features that need to be clarified.

1. Subject matter

The subjects examined by the Commission—Eucharist, Ministry, and Authority—were not the Commission's own free choice. These were the themes proposed by the Preparatory Commission in their final report in 1968.² It was their belief that these were the most pressing issues to be considered by their successors. That opinion was criticized from early on in ARCIC's career. In particular there have been several forceful requests, especially from evangelicals, that the doctrine of salvation with particular reference to justification by faith should be discussed. It seems strange that the Preparatory Commission did not include this, since it was at the very heart of the Reformation debate. Comments in official gatherings by both Anglicans and Roman Catholics have suggested that our churches now have no disagreement in this field. If that is true, it is most encouraging news, but evangelicals in particular want assurance that that is the case.

Although many contemporary Catholic theologians have written on the subject, the only author well known in non-Catholic circles is Hans Kung.³ But what about the official stance of the Catholic church, since Kung has frequently clashed with the authorities? The subject appears to be consistently by-passed in recent official declarations. How does the Catholic church regard today the canons of the Council of Trent concerning justification? While these stress the prevenient grace of God, canons

¹ *The Final Report*, p.99.

² The full text of the *Malta Report* can be found in *The Final Report*, pp.108-116. See also the Introduction para. 4, p.5.

³ *Justification: the doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic reflection* (Burns and Oates, 1964).

9, 12, and 24 seem to confuse justification and sanctification, implying that faith alone is inadequate and that works contribute to our justification.¹ It is a fair criticism that Protestant theology has tended to polarize justification and sanctification in a way that the New Testament documents do not warrant, but this has sprung from a right concern to establish clearly the bases of our salvation as 'By grace alone, through faith alone'. Trent seems to be at best ambivalent.

On some occasions I conveyed this evangelical concern to the other members of the Commission. I think it is true to say that the Commission as a whole came to recognize that this subject of 'salvation' would have to be tackled at some stage. Our problem was that we already had a very heavy assignment given to us which, as events proved, we were only able to complete with rather a rush at the end. Salvation and justification would have to become a necessary part of the agenda of a future commission.

2. Brevity

The Commission deliberately aimed at brevity. There were several reasons for this. First, there was the practical consideration that material that can be confined to one hundred pages of a small paper-back is more likely to attain a wide readership than a more substantial volume. Secondly, lengthier writing runs the danger of being rather diffuse. Quantity does not necessarily clarify complicated matters, since it may well raise as many extra difficulties as those it has sought to resolve. There is an increased likelihood, as in some other ecumenical statements, of obscuring the wood by the trees. Brevity should help to focus upon the most important issues. Thirdly, it is a stricter discipline for the participants, since brevity compels logical argument and clarity of expression, which can easily be forfeited in a more lengthy treatise. It is the kernel of the truth and not an elaboration of detail that is most needed in this instance.

There have been complaints that some passages are not adequately clear and would have been better for some expansion. The Commission tried to meet this desire in the *Elucidations*, which were an answer to criticisms received concerning the first three Statements. This critical rejoinder from the public was requested, welcomed, and carefully examined. The *Elucidations*, however, were written in a similar style to that of the original Statements with brevity in mind. Further criticism suggests that there are those who still feel that a much fuller 'elucidation' is needed.

It should be noted at this point that we were aware of the danger in trying to define doctrine more closely than the evidence permits. Theologians have sometimes caused unnecessary confusion and division by endeavouring to be too precise. There is a delicate balance needed here between meticulous scholarship and reverent agnosticism. For instance, at the eucharist we believe there is a relationship between the bread and wine on the table and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross two thousand years ago. We can define this connection both negatively and positively up to a point, but at heart it remains a mystery. Is not the same true of so many fundamental truths of the faith?

¹ Denzinger 1559, 1562, 1574.

A consequence of this is sometimes to give an impression of deliberate ambiguity. That was never the intention of the Commission, except in areas where the conclusions to be drawn from the evidence seemed to us to be inescapably ambiguous (think of the frequency of this phenomenon in Johannine theology). However careful one may be, language is always liable to be interpreted in different ways. It is an inescapable hazard.

There is one more point here that is related to the brevity of the Report. It is the vital need to read the document as a whole, since it is all inter-related. The main body of the argument is in the Eucharist, Ministry, and two Authority, Statements. The Elucidations seek to clarify these in the light of criticism. The introductory matter indicates something of our methodology. Brevity makes it easier to compare one portion with another—and it is essential to do so. The reason for this is the fact that, on many subjects, it is almost impossible to make any statement without needing at once to add some qualification to it. An obvious case in point is the conflict between the ideal and the actual. Describe the church in terms of the ideal and you will be accused of triumphalism. Depict it warts and all and you are open to the charge of lack of faith. It was a tension we never managed fully to overcome in our documents and it has caused a lot of misunderstanding. The only antidote we can recommend is to study the Report as a whole, when we trust the intended balance will become apparent.

Sad to say, this has frequently not been the case, even among those who had important criticisms to make and of whom one would have expected better. For instance, when the first Statement on Authority was debated in General Synod, after several weighty and learned contributions, Professor J. R. Porter felt obliged to say:

'When I heard some of their criticisms I began to wonder whether some of the people who spoke and I had been reading the same document, or, if I am to be uncharitable, whether they had really read it at all, because they said some extraordinary things.'

He went on to cite some of these, which clearly indicated a mishandling of the Statement. He concluded:

'There are many other points of the same kind that lead me to think that so far in this debate the document has been seriously misrepresented.'¹

Like any document, it needs to be read for what it *actually* says rather than with preconceived notions about its content.

Though there may be some loose expressions in the Report, let us be quite clear that a combination of eleven years' work and such disciplined brevity means that every phrase has to be hammered into shape, every word meticulously scrutinized. Occasional observers who have attended plenary sessions have expressed amazement at the trouble taken over each detail.

¹ *General Synod, February Group of Sessions, 1977: Report of Proceedings, Vol VIII, No. 1, pp.364, 365. Cf. Final Report, Preface: 'We are confident that the Report will be read as a whole, and that particular sentences or passages will not be taken out of context' (p.3).*

3. Language

The choice of language has also been deliberate. The Commission was aware of the difficulty of employing the polemical language of the past, as it has always led to an *impasse* in dialogue. Certain terms always raise hackles, be they Catholic or Protestant; they are not the most propitious means of making ecumenical headway. Our aim was to get behind such terminology in order to discover what was the real issue at stake, what it was that was being safeguarded by this traditional language. This was not to deny the gravity of the doctrinal divisions of the sixteenth century, but to seek the best means of discovering the truth in a meaningful way in the twentieth century.

'In producing these Statements, we have been concerned, not to evade the difficulties, but rather to avoid the controversial language in which they have often been discussed.'¹

This has obviously troubled some readers, who have looked in vain for the watch-cries that they felt would reassure them. It was, for example, a remarkable fact that the Commission completed its work on the Eucharist, to the satisfaction of Catholic as well as Anglican members, without any mention of 'transubstantiation'. There was an immediate feeling that the Commission's work would not be taken seriously without some mention of it: it would look as if the real difficulties had been swept under the carpet. When the Catholic members endeavoured to write a footnote to explain the meaning of transubstantiation in Catholic theology, they simply could not agree upon it. In the end it had to be an Anglican who wrote it. Subsequently it was this footnote that probably caused more adverse criticism of the Eucharist Statement than any other part, although it was only an appendage to explain a technical term in Catholic teaching. The members of the Commission believe they had achieved 'substantial agreement' without using the word at all.

It is also necessary to realize that the thinking of both churches has not stood still for four hundred years. Theological research and better mutual understanding has caused some shift in the ground of debate. Although the main areas of controversy are still the same as in Luther's day, their context has changed and they cannot be expressed adequately now in the same sixteenth-century terms.

4. Substantial Agreement

'Substantial agreement' is a phrase that has caused some confusion. This was first claimed for the Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine (para. 12). In the conclusion to the Canterbury Statement on Ministry and Ordination it is stated:

'What we have to say represents the consensus of the Commission on essential matters where it considers that doctrine admits no divergence.'²

¹ *The Final Report, Introduction para. 3, p.5. This was more fully elaborated in Authority in the Church I, para 25, p.66.*

² *The Final Report, p.38.*

At the end of *Authority in the Church I* the Commission wrote:

"What we have written here amounts to a consensus on authority in the church and, in particular, on the basic principles of primacy. This consensus is of fundamental importance. While it does not wholly resolve all the problems associated with papal primacy, it provides us with a solid basis for confronting them."¹

Nevertheless, it then moved on to outline particular claims of papal primacy and its exercise that were still unresolved—the Petrine texts, the language of 'divine right', infallibility, and universal jurisdiction. The Petrine texts no longer figure so prominently in Catholic apologetic and their interpretation is less controversial. *Authority in the Church II* examined this issue and also proposed a general outline of agreement on 'divine right' and jurisdiction. It will be apparent to the careful reader that the way forward in consensus advocated on the two other issues is tentative as well as hopeful. On the even thornier question of infallibility, along with a positive reappraisal of the way in which such language might be understood, there is a profession of unresolved disagreement:

"In spite of our agreement on the need of a universal primacy in a united church, Anglicans do not accept the guaranteed possession of such a gift of divine assistance in judgment necessarily attached to the office of the bishop of Rome by virtue of which his formal decisions can be known to be wholly assured before their reception by the faithful."²

The position is therefore not exactly the same with all the documents. On Eucharist and Ministry there is claimed to be agreement on the absolute essentials. On *Authority* there is claimed to be consensus on the general principles, including the complementarity of conciliar and primatial authority. However, this consensus and the convergence indicated in understanding primacy were not such as to constitute 'substantial agreement'. There remain tentative areas and explicitly unresolved problems.

Of course, 'agreement' refers only to the opinion of the Commission itself. The members of their respective Churches must decide for themselves whether they believe such consensus has been reached. It should be noted that there were no dissentients producing minority reports. To have avoided that, when the matters at stake have such a long and complex controversial history, was no mean feat in itself.

'Substantial' refers to 'essential matters when it considers that doctrine admits no divergence'. These documents are *not* comprehensive dogmatic studies. We have often been criticized for not spelling out certain aspects of a subject where they have not in fact been a matter of dispute between the churches. Sometimes these have been topics of debate *within* both churches, rather than a barrier *between* them as, (e.g. 'liberation theology'). Selection of the matters that constitute ecumenical hurdles may give an impression of imbalance in consequence. For instance, we have been charged with too great a concern for ecclesiastical matters, yet it is in this sphere that so many of our differences are to be found. It was not the Commission's brief or intention to write a full systematic theology.

¹ *The Final Report*, p.64.

² *The Final Report*, pp.96-97.

The principle of 'substantial' agreement applies to individual members of the Commission as well as to the Commission as a whole. If you have eighteen theologians, selected by the authorities of the Roman Catholic and Anglican communions to be reasonably representative across the board, it is totally unrealistic to imagine that they will ever agree over every detail and nuance. Of course there will be differences—and there certainly were. Everyone has his own axe to grind, his own particular angle on things. It is essential to try to discern what is crucial among the less important details. These are the 'substantial' issues in your own personal judgment. Here there can be no compromise—that was mutually understood by all the Commission members. Details, emphases, choice of words, all were debated at length: in the end there would always be minor parts of the texts that did not please everyone. A Commission has to reach consensus on essentials and allow for the impossibility of whole-hearted endorsement of every detail.

Let me illustrate this principle by three instances that concerned me personally. The first two occurred in our work on the document on the Eucharist. I quote from my Commentary on that Statement:

"There is a further commendable emphasis in the Statement, which is the more noteworthy for being a deliberate change from what was said in the Venice working paper *Church and Eucharist*. The Venice document stated: "Christ's whole life, culminating in his death on the cross, was the one true perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world". In contrast the Statement says, "Christ's death on the cross, the culmination of his whole life of obedience, was the one, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world"."¹

Although this shift on emphasis to the cross as the locus of atonement rather than the whole life of Christ was not crucial to the argument at that point in the Statement, I felt it was 'substantially important' and that ultimately it had a very real bearing upon eucharistic theology. The change was accepted.²

Secondly, there was the expression 'enter into the movement of his self-offering' (*Eucharistic Doctrine*, para. 8). Predictably, this has caused a good deal of adverse comment from evangelicals. If the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was a once-for-all event (Hebrews 10.10), we cannot in any way contribute to that offering, only respond to it. Grace bestows, faith receives. Yet it is possible to over-simplify all that is involved. In my commentary I quoted a passage from *Growing into Union* to show how some evangelicals and anglo-catholics had sought to explain this.³ For even our self-offering in response must be closely linked with divine grace. We can only offer ourselves as 'reappropriated by Christ'. The difficulty in the text with which we are concerned is that the whole section is seemingly governed by the

¹ J. W. Charley *The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreement on the Eucharist* (Grove Books, 1971) p.17.

² An even less obviously relevant detail in the same part of the document could have been read to be implicitly universalist (a fairly wide-spread position among Catholics today): that also disappeared.

³ *op. cit.*, p.18.

opening words 'In the eucharistic prayer . . .' It looks, therefore, as if the self-offering is in some way implying a human addition to Christ's sacrifice that is being commemorated. That was not the intention of the drafters. The argument is helpfully elucidated in this way, by the addition of parentheses as follows:

'In the eucharistic prayer the church continues to make a perpetual memorial of Christ's death, and his members, united with God and one another, give thanks for all his mercies, entreat the benefits of his passion on behalf of the whole church, [in communion] participate in these benefits and [in response] enter into the movement of his self-offering.'

This is how it is explained in *Anglican Worship Today*, with the further comment, 'the progress of thought in the Statement is perfectly clear.'¹ No one would, strictly speaking, associate the *participation* in the benefits with the eucharistic prayer *before* the reception of the bread and wine. Logically the entering into 'the movement of his self-offering' must also be subsequent to reception. As the finality of the cross is emphasized just before², then it cannot be saying what some critics seem to fear.

If there is lingering suspicion of the text as it stands, consider what it might have been in the light of so many past Catholic statements. In trying to do justice to a very delicate subject, this is not being obscurantist. In fact it is a most encouraging forward step by Catholics for which evangelicals should be profoundly grateful.

The third instance that comes to mind occurred at the very end of our final meeting at Windsor. We were unfortunately by then working against the clock. The Conclusion states:

'We understand but do not share the fears of those who think that such Statements constitute a threat to all that is distinctive and true in their own traditions.'³

I had long been concerned that the Commission's selected areas of work did not reflect the primary concerns of so many evangelicals. The areas appeared to be largely absorbed with problems of church structures and related ecclesiastical issues. In fairness, I should add that it is not only evangelicals who would make a different choice of priorities. However I wanted to see something more directly reassuring to evangelicals in the Conclusion, a view shared by others also on the Commission. In talking about 'distinctive' traditions, it might appear (by reason of our general subject-matter) that we were thinking largely of the more anglo-catholic aspects of Anglicanism. Some reference to the 'positive insights of the Reformation' seemed to me to be the kind of acknowledgement of Anglican origins by Catholics that could redress the balance. I was asked to draft an appropriate section, which I did twice. It won more than 50% approval but not enough for the Commission to feel satisfied that it could

¹ Colin Buchanan, Trevor Lloyd, and Harold Miller (eds.) *Anglican Worship Today* (Collins, 1980) p.124.

² 'There can be no repetition of or addition to what was then accomplished once for all by Christ' (para. 5).

³ *The Final Report*, p.99.

be incorporated. Our regular pattern of working required more time to achieve a genuinely satisfactory text. I regret its omission—given an extra day, it could probably have been knocked into satisfactory shape for agreed inclusion. You don't win every time!

There is one other dimension to this concept of 'substantial agreement' that should not be overlooked. If we are talking about 'essential matters' where 'doctrine admits no divergence', then we are not solely concerned with bi-lateral conversations between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. This is what is essential to Christian faith, therefore for every Christian. That is why I could fully endorse the document on Ministry and Ordination. It agrees that the essential need is for a ministry of *episcopo* (oversight), not *episcopoi* (bishops). If it had said the latter, I could not have signed it, as it would have immediately unchurched a very substantial body of Christians. It leaves open the possibility that *episcopo* might take other forms than that of an 'historic episcopate'. So the Co-Chairmen's Preface reads:

'While respecting the different forms that ministry has taken in other traditions, we hope that the clarification of our understanding expressed in the statement will be of service to them also.'¹

Similarly, the wording concerning the *jure divino* claims for the Roman primacy is very careful not to speak about a *past fact*, which would imply disobedience on the part of all those not in communion with Rome, simply by reason of their continuing to be separate. Authority in the Church I describes the kind of primacy that could be acceptable to Anglicans (and possibly to other non-Catholic churches) as well as to Catholics, both in its doctrinal implications and its pastoral exercise. As one Catholic theologian remarked to me, that Statement was calling for a very radical change in the whole nature of the Roman primacy. It must be remembered that the first Authority Statement with regard to primacy precedes all that is said about 'divine right'. The context is the future, rather than an evaluation of the past. Thus we read,

'It is to a universal primate thus envisaged within the collegiality of the bishops and the *koinonia* of the whole Church that the qualification *jure divino* can be applied.'²

But can we say with confidence that that condition has yet been realized? Surely this is exactly where the post-Vatican II debate lies, that this collegial pattern, together with a real lay participation, has not yet come about? Even after Vatican II there is a continuing tendency to try to make of the Pope '*plus qu'un pape*'.³

I have always been concerned that progress in Anglican/Roman Catholic relations should proceed along with advance in Anglican relations with the Free Churches. That is why the set-back over the Covenant is so serious. Closing ranks on one front and widening rifts on another would be an unhappy state of affairs. Consensus must therefore focus on Christian

¹ *The Final Report*, p.29 [italics mine].

² *The Final Report*, p.86.

³ J. M. R. Tillard, *op. cit.* 'Et mettre la collégialité au service du pouvoir du Pape revient à faire de celui-ci . . . "plus qu'un pape"' (p.65).

essentials. It is vital to differentiate between these and the various forms of church government that have evolved in the different churches, each in its own way seeking to preserve a true catholicity and apostolicity in the church. In the New Testament, church government is always seen as a service to the church: it must then be marked by a high degree of flexibility, which is not a characteristic always very evident in episcopal churches. Inevitably in an Anglican/Roman Catholic joint statement much of our shared ecclesial tradition will be apparent, but, as we have seen, that is in large part only one possible way of structuring church life in order to serve the truth of the gospel. So it was possible to say,

'It is our hope to carry with us in the substance of our agreement not only Roman Catholics and Anglicans but all Christians, and that what we have done may contribute to the visible unity of all the people of God as well as to the reconciliation of our two churches.'¹

The first two Statements, on Eucharistic Doctrine and on Ministry and Ordination, elicited a warm response from many Free Churchmen. Not surprisingly the documents on Authority have been received by them far more coolly and critically.

5. The Authority of the Statements

Anxiety has been shown concerning the authority that this Final Report carries. At present it has only the authority of its signatories. However, ARCIC was appointed by the Pope and by the Archbishop of Canterbury to carry out its work, which gives some indication of its official standing. Authority in the Church I concludes:

'We submit our Statements to our respective authorities to consider whether or not they are judged to express on these central subjects a unity at the level of faith which not only justifies but requires action to bring about a closer sharing between our two communions in life, worship and mission.'²

The earlier Statements have been discussed and recommended for further study by the General Synod of the Church of England and by many other Provincial Synods in the Anglican Communion. It is less easy to assess what measure of official approval and authority the different Roman Catholic responses carry. It will be interesting to see what conclusions will be drawn and future steps advocated by the Roman Catholic Synod of bishops in 1983. In the Catholic understanding of collegiality that would seem now to be the vital court of appeal. The Anglican reactions may prove even more difficult to combine in an overall policy. Each Province will have to make its own separate assessment and recommendations. Neither the Lambeth Conference nor the Anglican Consultative Council has jurisdictional powers to impose its own mind upon others. If the judgments of the respective Provinces differ, as they well might, an appropriate *modus operandi* will have to be found. At all events, it is the churches themselves, and not commissions, that will do the decision-making.

6. Statements are not a scheme

Finally, it must be realized that this Report is a *study document*, not a *scheme for reunion*. From what has just been said about reception by

¹ *The Final Report*, p.99.

² *The Final Report*, p.67.

church authorities, it is obvious that there will lie ahead a long drawn-out process, and rightly so. It is far too serious a matter for hasty, precipitate action. At the same time, procrastination is a well-known method of killing enthusiasm for proposals about anything. But the Final Report itself has no advice whatever to offer about what future steps should be taken, beyond a general assumption that it will be necessary to aim at 'unity by stages'. What those stages might be—such as inter-communion—is not discussed. That may be part of the brief given to the next Commission, but it is premature anyway until there is agreement officially given that enough common ground exists to warrant some positive step forward. The Commission believes that there *is*, but so far that is only their opinion, it must be weighed by the authorities in each church. It was also the firmly-held conviction of the Commission that there comes a stage when further progress is impossible without the willingness to take a deliberate step forward together in mutual trust.

'We suggest that some difficulties will not be wholly resolved until a practical initiative has been taken and our two churches have lived together more visibly in the one *koinonia*.'¹

The work of ARCIC has been a ground-clearing exercise. It has been like the search for a safe route through minefields that have in the past taken a heavy toll of life. Its work is commended for study. We are thankful that earlier Statements have already been translated into several languages and become study material all over the world. Come-back was invited and the Commission sought to deal with it in *Elucidations*. It is unfortunate that the termination of ARCIC has prevented any immediate opportunity for a similar response to criticism after the publication of the fresh material in the *Final Report*, especially as the Commission's material has become increasingly delicate and complex as it has moved into the heart of this area of Authority. The Commission were privileged to spend eleven years together, with much support and assistance from other sources, hammering out a clearer grasp of what they believed and how best to express it. The intimacy, understanding, and trust, of a group working for such a long period together was a significant contributory factor in anything that has been achieved. We could hardly expect others, often coming raw to the condensed material of the Statements, to be able easily or quickly to comprehend the methodology employed and the arguments expressed. Study takes time. It was our hope that the brevity of the documents would encourage a much wider readership than that of the professional theologians. In such intricate matters technicality is unavoidable, so that it is unlikely that those without some measure of theological background would be able to make much of the material without more professional guidance. However, it has in many instances been effectively studied in parish groups by laymen who would not claim any great expertise.

The Final Report has claimed to have discovered such a measure of convergence that it is time to establish 'a new relationship between our churches as a next stage in the journey toward Christian unity.'² It has covered a broad field—Eucharist, Ministry, Authority. Reactions from both sides indicate that there is still a lot of discussion and debate needed. The

¹ *The Final Report*, p.98.

² *The Final Report*, p.99.

assurance of the Commission is not shared by many Catholics as well as Anglicans. In trying to build bridges there is always the danger of finding oneself stranded in the middle, out of touch at both ends. As a vicar recently put it to me, 'There seem to be Roman Catholics, Anglicans—and ARCIC'! I know what he meant. What matters is the truth of the gospel. If the *Final Report* is mistaken, it must be corrected. It can certainly be improved. On its own admission it is incomplete when it deals with Authority. It makes no claims for itself to be infallible or perfect. The question that must be faced squarely and honestly is, how much agreement is necessary before at least *some* step closer can be taken by the churches? There is a need to remove suspicion and distrust, as well as to clarify doctrinal difficulties.

Manifestly the most sensitive area in ARCIC's work is that of universal primacy. Having argued for the complementary need for conciliarity and primacy as the best means under God of preserving the church from error and of being open to the Holy Spirit's guidance, the Commission suggested that the see of Rome would be the right choice for the exercise of any mutually accepted primacy of the future:

'It seems appropriate that in any future union a universal primacy such as has been described should be held by that see.'¹

Notice that it is only a primacy 'such as' has been described' that would be mutually acceptable. It is *not* a recommendation to acknowledge the Roman primacy just as it is at present. There is a strong feeling among many Anglicans, and not a few Catholics too, that practice thus far does not well correspond with theory. Somehow, certain guarantees would be desirable. If, for instance, jurisdiction may be defined as 'the authority or power (*potestas*) necessary for the exercise of an office'² and 'primacy is not an autocratic power over the church'³, what assurance can be given that central authority will not intervene unjustifiably in local diocesan affairs? Experience leaves real doubts about the implementation of the theory.

Others have questioned the need for a universal primacy at all. It involves a considerable distorting of the sources to suggest that the authority bestowed on Peter according to the New Testament envisaged a *universal* primacy as an immediate *sine qua non* for the church, let alone the transmission of such authority to successors.⁴ Oscar Cullman aptly summarized the evidence:

'Thus we here must pay attention to two things; on the one hand, to the non-transferable character of the leadership of the Primitive Church by Peter [the office of apostle]; on the other hand, to the fact that there must also be leadership later in the Church, so that Peter is in a certain respect the archetype and example for all future church leadership. . . . Only the original Church was led by this apostle, and he led it in only its earliest period.'⁵

¹ *The Final Report*, p.64 Cf. p.85.

² *The Final Report*, p.88.

³ *The Final Report*, p. 90.

⁴ See the careful wording of *The Final Report*, para. 7, p.84.

⁵ O. Cullman *Peter—Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* (S.C.M., 1962), pp.228, 229.

The survey of New Testament material concerning Peter in Authority in the Church II (paras. 2-9) makes considerable qualifications to the way the Petrine function of the Bishop of Rome has actually been exercised. The claim that the Bishop of Rome is the 'successor' of Peter is unfortunately worded. It builds on the Petrine texts far more than is warranted. Again, it may be historically true that the pre-eminence of the see of Rome was in part ascribed to the belief that Peter and Paul taught and were martyred there; but that does not permit the drawing of *theological* conclusions about the ecclesial status of the Roman see. Would it not be equally, or far more, significant that Christ died and rose in Jerusalem? That kind of argument will not do. It will be seen that the *Final Report* cites these traditional Catholic arguments without passing any verdict upon them—they are simply described as part of the early church's thinking.¹

Nevertheless, the idea of primacy is not an unfamiliar one to Anglicans, even though the primacy of the Archbishop of Canterbury is very different in character from that of the Bishop of Rome. It is interesting to recall how this 'primatial' role in the Anglican Communion evolved. The distress caused by the heresy trial and excommunication of Bishop Colenso of Natal over a century ago, followed by his legal exoneration after appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, prompted appeals for help to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Consequently Archbishop Longley summoned the first Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 1867, which has continued as a decennial event:

'We shall meet together for brotherly council and encouragement. . . . I should refuse to convene any assembly which pretended to enact any Canons or affected to make any decisions binding on the Church.'²

A matter such as this needed help from the Anglican Communion as a whole, so it was to the Archbishop of Canterbury that approaches were made. He acted then as the convenor of this episcopal conference and has continued in that role ever since. The significant distinction of the Lambeth Conference from the Catholic Synod of Bishops is that from the start the Anglican gatherings have disclaimed any jurisdictional powers. They are meetings for 'brotherly counsel and encouragement'. The degree of independence enjoyed by Anglican provinces is a cherished part of Anglican tradition that few would wish to lose. Yet the importance of the Lambeth Conference for the worldwide Anglican Communion should not be under-estimated. The scale of the Anglican church requires this kind of structure and, in the process, a Primate to be convenor. The Archbishop of Canterbury is, in a measure, the focus of unity for Anglicans and their official spokesman.

It is in the light of this experience, elucidated in para. 8 of the Elucidation on Authority in the Church, that the need for a universal primate in a reunited church must be considered. With the Petrine example in mind

¹ Authority in the Church II, para. 6.

² Quoted in Stephen Neill *Anglicanism*, (Mowbray edition, 1977), pp.360-361. The Colenso affair is fully described in Peter Hinchliff *John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal* (Nelson, 1964).

and the collegial setting of primacy that the Commission has emphasized, the pattern is that of a *primus inter pares*, a first among equals, not the top of a pyramid. There is thus no rigid formula for the way that this primacy is to be exercised. If, as the Commission maintains, there is a need for the *episcopus* of a universal primate, that does not imply an inflexible institution. The Authority Elucidation says:

'But the way *episcopus* is realized concretely in ecclesial life (the balance fluctuating between conciliarity and primacy) will depend upon contingent historical factors and upon development under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.'¹

It is a service of the visible unity of the church. Unfortunately the hierarchical image of primacy dies hard among Catholics. There is an Ultramontane under-current that is continually breaking surface. It is a regrettable side-effect of Pope John Paul II's dynamic personality and world tours that they are liable, unconsciously, to promote the exaltation of the Bishop of Rome into 'plus qu'un pape'. People respond to charismatic personalities in every walk of life. The Pope's visit to Britain proved how much people warm to that kind of leadership. They want someone who mingles with ordinary people, rather than living in the remote recesses of the Vatican. Yet he must be seen as *servus servorum Dei*. The problem lies in the nature of the authority that people ascribe to him.

¹ *The Final Report*, p.76.

3. REACTIONS TO THE FINAL REPORT

As was to be expected, the Final Report was greeted with a flurry of excitement in the media. However, it is not the kind of document that is most usefully debated in that context. It needs fuller, more protracted, study. The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had been studying the Report for some weeks prior to its publication and so was able soon afterwards to produce its own *Observations*¹ upon it. Cardinal Ratzinger's committee analyzed each document, together with an overall evaluation. As we have already noted, the nature of this particular Congregation in the Curia inevitably encourages a conservative outlook. My immediate reaction on reading an advance copy of *Observations* was that, if this represented official Roman Catholicism, then our Commission had wasted eleven years. Its attitude is so utterly inflexible, with nothing of the true spirit of Vatican II. It displays a rigid conciliar fundamentalism in complete contrast to the kind of 'elasticity' we examined earlier. The authors have utterly failed, if they ever tried, to understand the mind and purpose of ARCIC. I have no doubt that *Observations* will infuriate many Catholic theologians as much as it will Anglicans. Bishop Alan Clark had the unenviable task (he had been one of ARCIC's co-chairmen) of writing a Foreword on behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. He wrote that they 'welcome this positive contribution to the continuing study of the fundamental questions of faith discussed by ARCIC.' But the only *positive* thing about it is that it highlights yet again the extent of the rift between conservatives and progressives in the Roman Catholic Church. Let us hope that it will also lead to such a *positive* reaction in Catholic circles as to rule out of court a manner of thinking that makes ecumenism a dead-letter from the start.

Most of *Observations* is taken up with 'Doctrinal difficulties noted by the S.C.D.F.' On the eucharist the Congregation affirms categorically that the Church 'offers sacramentally in him and with him his sacrifice. The propitiatory value that Catholic dogma attributes to the Eucharist, which is not mentioned by ARCIC, is precisely that of this sacramental offering'. We are back to square one in the Reformation debate. A particular interpretation of transubstantiation is put forward as *the way the Church understands it*, when in fact Catholic theologians are deeply divided on the subject: yet this interpretation is the one they believe ARCIC should have included. It is not to the Scriptures that the writers look but what they claim as 'the authentic interpretation of the Scriptures which it pertains to the Church to make'¹ Consequently, they insist, regardless of New Testament exegesis, that 'the sacrament of Holy Orders was initiated by Christ' notwithstanding 'the possible difficulties of an historical proof', and that 'Christ himself provided for the universal primacy'. In the latter case, therefore, unity with the Roman see 'pertains to the intimate structure of faith, permeating all its elements'—i.e. non-Catholics are deficient, to say the least, in every part of their Christian life because of their separation from Rome. Finally, there is presented an 'all-or-nothing' attitude to ecumenism. They conclude that the *Final Report* fails.

'[It] does not contribute a substantial and explicit agreement on some essential elements of Catholic faith:

¹ *Observations on the Final Report* (C.T.S.).

- (a) because the Report explicitly recognizes that one or another Catholic dogma is not accepted by our Anglican brethren (for example, Eucharistic adoration, infallibility, the Marian dogmas);
- (b) because one or another Catholic doctrine is only accepted in part by our Anglican brethren (for example, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome).'

The nature and tone of *Observations* provokes two theological questions. First, how does this tally with the concept of 'the hierarchy of truths'?¹ Are all official dogmatic statements equally binding upon the faithful? Are they all so high in the 'hierarchy' of truths that they admit of no diversity of opinion? And would that also be true for other churches who wished to enter into communion with the Roman see? Would it be incumbent upon Anglicans, in such a case, to accept without question the Marian dogmas as an integral part of the revealed faith? If that is what the S.C.D.F. means, then we have reverted to a pre-Vatican II situation, in that case ecumenism is certainly not a dialogue: it is a process of persuading non-Catholics to accept Catholic teaching in its entirety without concession or modification. Secondly, this calls for another frank look at that much-discussed passage in the Vatican II document on the Church, where the relationship between Rome and other churches is described:

'The Church, constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in union with that successor, although many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside of her visible structure.'²

Experience in ecumenism has increasingly made Catholics aware of the reality of the faith of other Christians. The charismatic movement has played a very significant part here. In many cases Catholics have also become deeply indebted to non-Catholics for new insights into the truths of the gospel.³ Yet the Church is claimed to 'subsist' in the Catholic church: everything can be found there, despite blemishes, though it is possible also to learn from non-Catholics. I am convinced that there is a real tension here in the minds of many Catholics. They have a loyalty to their own Church, yet experience teaches them that simply to say you learn things from non-Catholics does not adequately do justice to the facts of their experience. How exclusive is the Catholic Church? Do separated brethren, in Catholic eyes, simply lack the benefits to be derived from union with the see of Rome (as Cardinal Bea explained it), or does their continued separation constitute a sin on their part that vitiates every aspect of their life (as the S.C.D.F. implies)? Elasticity in Catholic teaching is a great asset, but on such a matter Anglicans want them to come clean.

Despite the stance taken by *Observations*, the authors can still describe the *Final Report* as 'a notable ecumenical endeavour and a useful basis for further steps on the road to reconciliation.'¹ They recommend that 'the dialogue be continued.'

¹ *De Ecumenismo* 11.

² *Lumen Gentium* 8.

³ e.g. Vincent J. Donovan *Christianity Rediscovered* (S.C.M., 1982), where an R.C. missionary to the Masai shows how his whole strategy was transformed largely through his discovery of the writings of the Anglican missionary, Roland Allen.

On the Anglican side there has been published a careful critique entitled *Evangelical Anglicans and the ARCIC Final Report*.² This has been produced in the names of Timothy Dudley-Smith, Bishop of Thetford, and John Stott, Director of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, the two being together co-chairmen of the Church of England Evangelical Council. The assessment made largely represents the mind of the C.E.E.C. An historical introduction recalls the various requests to ARCIC already made by evangelicals. It then adds:

'It is now possible to evaluate the Commission's 12 years of solid work. We urge all Anglicans to give thorough consideration to the Report as a whole. It repays careful study. There is much in it to applaud.'³

The authors then turn to the publication of *Observations*, which they describe as 'an extremely reactionary document,' breathing 'an entirely different spirit from that of ARCIC'. After a scathing denunciation they very rightly stress the urgency for the Vatican to clarify the status of it. 'If it is in any sense the Vatican's official response to ARCIC, then not only is further discussion pre-empted, but the work of the new Commission is condemned to fruitlessness and failure before it begins.'⁴

The bulk of the C.E.E.C. statement is understandably devoted to a thorough critique of the Final Report, concluding with recommendations for the new Commission that is to be set up. It has been significant that, from the moment that ARCIC began to publish any of its material, the most thorough theological critique of its work from the Anglican side has consistently come from evangelicals. This document is no exception in its fairness and incisiveness.

As an evangelical who served on ARCIC, I feel myself a little torn between deference to the *Final Report* of which I was a signatory and endorsement of the concerns of C.E.E.C. This is not the place to try to answer their criticisms where there is a credible defence, but some comments arise.

There are two matters on which the C.E.E.C. document and *Observations* are in agreement. Both want the text revised to eliminate ambiguities, with C.E.E.C. explicitly requesting that the material in *Elucidations* should be incorporated in the text of the main Statements on Eucharist, Ministry and Ordination, and Authority in the Church. The Commission itself weighed up this possibility early in its career. Its own conviction was that the criticisms asked for and received did not alter the basic conclusions that it had reached. Clearly clarification was needed on a number of issues, but this did not modify the course of the argument. The Commission had said at the end of the Eucharist Statement,

'... we are convinced that if there are any remaining points of disagreement they can be resolved on the principles here established.'⁵

¹ *Observations*, para. x.

² Grove Books, 1982.

³ *op. cit.* p.4.

⁴ *op. cit.* p.6.

⁵ *The Final Report*, p.16.

This was felt also to apply after both the Ministry and first Authority Statements were published. Comments received did not change that opinion. The Commission believed that too much detail incorporated in the main Statements would obscure the argument and not be as helpful a procedure as the production of separate *Elucidations*.

I would add that there is a limit to the process of reviewing and revising documents. These have already had a great deal of time spent on them. Our experience suggests that at a certain point in time revision ceases to be a constructive exercise but becomes niggling and stultifying. I sincerely hope that the new Commission will not be given such an assignment, especially as it will not even be their own material with which they have to start. I fear that it would give them a most frustrating and uncreative beginning. Untidy though it may seem, further *Elucidations*, I suggest would be a more profitable method of dealing with some of these specific difficulties. It seems to me that the C.E.E.C. comments on Eucharist and Ministry could well be handled in this way. Since Anglicans are far from full agreement among themselves on these matters, some latitude must be permissible. There is a danger in endeavouring to be a little more precise than the fact of comprehensiveness will allow. Their critique of Authority is much more substantial and concerns a subject on which ARCIC did not reach full consensus anyway.

The second point on which the C.E.E.C. document and *Observations* are in agreement is that ARCIC should have indicated their position with regard to the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal. Valuable as this could be, it poses difficulties if we are considering the Anglican Communion as a whole not just the Church of England. The diversity of liturgical forms throughout the Anglican provinces is very considerable. The Alternative Service Book has substantially affected our own English scene. As for the Thirty-Nine Articles there is still greater variety. Since the Lambeth Conference of 1888 new Provinces in the Anglican Communion have not necessarily been required to accept them in their entirety.

'There are Anglican provinces in which the Articles have been revised or replaced, others in which no mention is made to them, and many which do not automatically print the Articles with their Prayer Books.'

And in the Church of England itself the present Preface to the Declaration of Assent speaks of the Church of England in this way:

'Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.'

It continues:

'In the declaration you are about to make, will you affirm your loyalty to this inheritance of faith as your inspiration and guidance under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making him known to those in your care?'

The skilful wording here employed, after many years of debate on the subject, suggest the difficulty of knowing exactly how ARCIC could have expressed its relationship to the historic Anglican formularies. Such a

¹ *Subscription and Assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles* (Report of the Archbishop's Commission on Christian Doctrine), S.P.V.K. 1968, p.19.

² As set out in *ASB*, pp.387-388, for the Ordination or Consecration of a Bishop.

procedure could lead to deadlock by reverting again to the polemical terms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I fear it might also encourage the kind of reference to past statements that evangelicals especially find as frustrating in the methodology of Catholic documents like *Observations*. Of course there are particular matters, such as the authority of Scripture and the nature of the Sacraments, which are pungently set forth in the Thirty-Nine Articles. However, I believe there are more fruitful ways today of establishing these vital truths.

The fact that *Observations* appeared so hot on the heels of the *Final Report* has led C.E.E.C. to conclude that it is not possible to comment on the latter (their primary task) without taking note of the former. This is an understandable but regrettable decision in terms of making a fair analysis of ARCIC's work, since the *Final Report* is an agreed statement by Anglicans and Roman Catholics together, while *Observations* is the production of Catholics alone, and that of a very conservative group.

As for the agenda of ARCIC's successor, both *Observations* and C.E.E.C. wish to see clarification where misgivings persist and also want an extension to new themes. C.E.E.C. requests again that the doctrine of salvation, with special reference to justification, be included. They then list a number of doctrines and social and ethical issues that the new Commission might profitably examine. But the crucial issue is whether or not we can proceed to closer unity. What are the main obstructions? What should be the next steps? *These* are the urgent matters for the next Commission. It must not be given so extensive a brief that its work could only be superficial. There is a need for many other working parties and study groups to examine a wide range of issues where our traditions differ. Let the new Commission concentrate on the primary doctrinal issues.

What model of relationship between the two Communions should be our aim, if doctrinal accord on essentials were to be achieved? Quite apart from any preparatory stages, what should be our ultimate goal? C.E.E.C. favour an arrangement like the Bonn Agreement in July 1931 between the Anglicans and Old Catholics.¹ This involved the recognition of each other's catholicity and independence, admission to each other's sacraments, and agreement on essentials in matters of doctrine, sacramental devotion, and liturgical practice, without the requirement of complete unanimity on secondary matters. It is certainly a feasible possibility, but one has to ask how far the Bonn Agreement could be described as achieving 'organic' unity, if that is what is wanted? The two Churches continue their own separate ways without much mutual impact. One argument for its deeper ecumenical significance is the suggestion that, by introducing the right elements into the 'ordination line', it has now made possible for Catholics the acceptance of the validity of Anglican Orders. This line of thought was never one that appealed to Archbishop Lang at the time of the Bonn Agreement, nor is it likely to carry much weight with any but a very small minority of Anglicans, since the whole concept is so mechanical and artificial and begins with the assumption that Anglicanism was *not* 'Catholic' till recently! Yet the Catholic Bishop B. C. Butler recently aired the idea again as a possible way round the hurdle of *Apostolicae Curia*.

The preference indicated by C.E.E.C. is set over against the possibility of a 'Uniat' relationship, where a much fuller doctrinal accord would be

¹ See J. G. Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang* (Hodder, 1949), pp. 364-365.

required together with acceptance of full Papal authority. Nevertheless the Uniat churches retain their own liturgies, which are almost indistinguishable from those of the Orthodox Church. They are also permitted a married priesthood and are not required to use the *Filloque* clause in the creed. This was the idea mooted by Cardinal Mercier in 1925 during the Malines Conversations, in which he suggested that the Anglican Church should be 'united, not absorbed'.¹ The Cardinal was indebted to a paper that he had requested from a Roman canonist, Dom Lambert Beauduin of Amay. It was entitled 'L'Église Anglicani unie none absorbée'.² Dom Beauduin argued for the see of Canterbury to become a fifth Patriarchate, receiving the *pallium* from the see of Rome. The Anglican church should retain its own rites, canon laws, liturgy and discipline, including non-celibate clergy. He went on to suggest that the Roman Catholics sees in England (established in the nineteenth century) should be suppressed. For English Catholics in particular it was obviously a highly inflammable document. However, it made one serious omission, which Bishop Gore was quick to point out. The Anglican church was not confined to the Church of England—what of Anglican dioceses overseas?

There are obviously still many outstanding problems where full accord between the Roman Catholic and Anglican communions has not yet been reached. Perhaps it never will be. The diversity within both Churches does not help in ascertaining how much real accord exists. That is why the pattern of the Bonn Agreement appeals. However, the Uniat pattern is much more like 'organic' unity, but it necessitates an acceptance of Roman authority in doctrinal matters that are still unresolved. 'United, not absorbed' is a helpful formula, but Anglicans want to be clear that this unity would not commit them to things that are fundamentally unacceptable to them. Do evangelicals still stand by the principle of 'all in each place' as their target? If so, the Bonn pattern will not serve as more than a stepping-stone. What should rather be sought is a mutual absorption with mutual respect for history and tradition. The logic of Dom Beauduin's suggestion with regard to the suppression of Roman sees in Britain would lead to the possibility of the suppression of Anglican sees in some other parts of the world where Catholics were more prevalent. And how would Anglican Provinces overseas respond to that? I am reminded of the willingness of Count Zinzendorf for the Moravian churches to perform a kind of *hari-kari* if their separate identity were no longer needed. There are implications in ecumenism that are threatening and demand great sacrifice. Should we remain content with parallel structures, overlapping dioceses, and alternative churches in the same area, even in communion with one another?

The new Commission will need to look most carefully at the whole of this question, as well as at the manner of proceeding toward 'unity by stages'. It will mean breaking new ground. It will not always be tidy or theologically impeccable, since it is a matter of healing the results of sin and misunderstanding. But the future takes precedence. ARCIC concludes:

'We suggest that some difficulties will not be wholly resolved until a practical initiative has been taken and our two churches have lived together more visibly in the one *koinonia*.'³

¹ The Malines Conversations are well described in G. K. A. Bell, *Randall Davidson* (O.U.P., 1938), ch. LXXIX.

² See J. G. Lockhart, *Viscount Halifax*, Part 2 (Geoffrey Bles, 1936), pp.316-317.

³ *The Final Report*, p.98.

4. THE FUTURE

Looking back over two decades, one can only marvel at the amazing distance we have travelled ecumenically in so short a time after such a long period of mutual intransigence. That augurs well for the future. It encourages us to persevere, however difficult the road ahead and however painful the setbacks. The second National Evangelical Congress at Nottingham in April 1977 included in its 'Declarations of Intent' the following:

6 We reaffirm our commitment to the goal of visible unity in Christ's Church and declare our conviction that the starting-point of visible unity is a common confession of faith in Christ, leading on to the fellowship of congregations at the Lord's table.

7 Deeply regretting past attitudes of indifference and ill will towards Roman Catholics, we renew our commitment to seek with them the truth of God and the unity he wills, in obedience to our common Lord on the basis of Scripture.¹

Such intentions are as urgent now as then, yet I suspect there are two things that tend to dampen that kind of whole-hearted commitment. The first is a fear of the mammoth organization, the great church, be it centred on Rome or on Geneva. We have been re-discovering that 'small is beautiful.' The house-church movement has been a reaction against the centrally organized, rigidly structured, church. Christians have found more spiritual help and intimacy of fellowship in home-groups, sometimes splintering off from the main-line churches. But the two should not be in conflict. Church history repeatedly warns of the danger when groups of Christians separate themselves off from others. We need one another in the body of Christ. The wider organization can and should provide both encouragement and safeguards.

'Collegial and primate responsibility for preserving the distinctive life of the local churches involves a proper respect for their customs and traditions...'²

Visible unity need not stifle local initiative and an independence of the right sort. For the Church to be truly catholic and apostolic, the wider links and the local freedom are both indispensable.

The second hindrance to ecumenical commitment is often the pressure of already existing vital church life. People feel themselves too busy to take on board yet another form of involvement. Sometimes there is also an unspoken belief that such activity will be dull and fruitless anyway. Yet there is always the danger of the local church becoming introverted, with so full a programme that often the most pressing challenges to Christians are being neglected. Should not this concern for unity, related as it also is to evangelism, be a high priority? Insularity is unhealthy for a church, where it should be outward-looking in both evangelism and social involvement.³ In an area like Everton, which is now probably 75%

¹ *The Nottingham Statement* (Falcon, 1977), p.77.

² *The Final Report*, p.90.

³ For two outstanding recent Catholic documents on these subjects, see Paul VI's *Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)* and his 1967 Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*.

nominally Catholic, it is unrealistic to imagine that there can be a long-term strategy of evangelism unless it becomes a joint enterprise by the churches. A real visible unity is a testimony to the gospel of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

ARCIC's successor will need to explore further the nature and practice of authority in the church. It will have to decide what is the best way to handle the requests for further clarification of the *Final Report's* material on the Eucharist and on Ministry and Ordination. Clearly salvation, with special reference to justification, must be part of the agenda. It must begin to define more precisely, as far as is possible at this juncture, the goal toward which ecumenism should be aiming. 'Unity by stages' will need to be worked out. Beyond that, if such a brief were not more than enough, the major obstacles to progress must be carefully examined. The non-recognition of Anglican orders is one such obstruction, its reversal an essential prerequisite for intercommunion.¹ It is also clear that the Marian dogmas still constitute a major problem for many Anglicans, not least because of the manner of their pronouncement. Although the role of the Virgin Mary is relegated to the final chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, the devotions accorded to her as 'Queen of all' and a 'mother to us in the order of grace'² is far more than many Anglicans could accept. Even with all the safeguards then added, the doctrine has been, in the opinion of evangelicals, a constant source of detraction from the gospel of the glory of Christ. There is absolutely no comparable ascription to the Virgin Mary in the New Testament epistles such as we find at the end, for example, of Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. The early title *theotokos* was not given primarily for Mary's sake but as a means of resolving Christological dispute. Devotion to Mary, as depicted in *Lumen Gentium*, cannot claim continuity from the church's beginning in the same way that Trinitarianism can be traced from the New Testament up to its conciliar definition.³

There are many areas where the Anglican and Catholic traditions diverge or may be found to be in conflict. Some headway has been made by a separate Commission on the vexed question of mixed marriage. There are moral issues such as contraception and divorce that call for much more combined study. But the load must be spread. The number of dogmatic theologians who are also well read in moral theology is probably very small. The more that Catholics and Anglicans can meet and do their thinking together, the more hopeful future prospects become. But ARCIC's successor must not be deflected from the central divisive issues. This must not be dialogue for dialogue's sake, a way of postponing any significant action. It must maintain the positive intention of making progress.

¹ This is an important paper by Harry J. McSorley in *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV* (1970), entitled 'Trent and the question: Can Protestant ministers consecrate the Eucharist?' Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* (S.C.M., 1981) for the historical changes in the understanding of ministry and ordination in the Western Church.

² *Lumen Gentium* 59, 61.

³ In the 1854 pronouncement on Mary's immaculate conception, *Ineffabilis Deus*, it is stated that those who have denied it have suffered shipwreck concerning their faith and have lapsed from the unity of the Church (*Denzinger* 2804). The 1950 dogma, *Munificentissimus Deus*, states that Mary was conveyed in body and spirit to the glory of heaven '*ubi Regina refulgeret ad eiusdem sui filii dexteram, immortalis saecularum Regis*' (*Denzinger* 3902).

Ecumenism is not simply an occupation for specialists. It is a means to bring ordinary Christians together in faith, fellowship, witness, and service. There are many such local experiments taking place, with no common pattern between them. I want to end with an outline of the way relations between Catholics and Anglicans have been slowly developing in West Everton, where I have been ministering for the past eight years. It is the most unlikely scene for ecumenism, with a history of Catholic/Protestant hostility reminiscent of Belfast. Some ten or twelve years ago representatives of local residents' groups were brought together in the West Everton Community Centre on the initiative of the Anglican Church. It was an accepted principle from the start that the Council would not become a platform for either religion or politics—all would work together, regardless of labels, for the welfare of the community. West Everton Age Concern began a little later, again on the Anglican Church's initiative and again with the same agreement about religion and politics. These were the beginning of real Catholic/Protestant sharing in a neighbourhood where religious affiliation had long been a source of bitter division. Orange and Green were cooperating. There then began a bi-monthly meeting of the Anglican clergy with some Catholic priests (one Catholic church that overlapped our parish declined to take part). Over the years this group has discussed such matters as the needs of the community, baptismal policy, and schooling; we have also studied the epistle to the Romans together. Friendship and trust has produced absolute frankness with one another. More recently, on our Reader's initiative, a small group of Anglican and Catholic laity have been meeting in a home for Bible study and prayer. The organization for this has been shared with a prominent Catholic layman. Those invited had all been involved in community matters previously, so most were well-known to each other already. The question was originally put to them: As you are all committed to community work and also to your local churches, is there a common Christian inspiration that motivates you in your social involvement? The group has continued fruitfully, though spasmodically. On Good Friday last the same Anglican and Catholic lay leaders arranged and led, with other participants from both churches, our special service for that day in the parish church, which was warmly appreciated. It may not sound very much—in some districts it would not be—but in Everton this was a major step forward. The one thing that still seems to be anathema to many is joint worship in a local church.

The lesson I draw from this is the need to take definite steps to bring Anglicans and Catholics together. Every neighbourhood varies and the pace must vary accordingly. To try to proceed too quickly may only put the clock back. But the more that local churches will take such initiatives, the more the pain and folly of separation will be felt. We can all pray about it and nearly all of us can do something to contribute to that prayer being answered.