Anglican-Catholic Dialogue: Its Problems and Hopes

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INTRODUCTION. Agreed Statements and the position of the Roman Congregation for the Faith.

In a series of sessions between January 1970 and September 1981 the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission drew up statemen s on the Eucharist, Ministry & Ordination, and Authority in the Church. The aim of the Commission was to prepare a way for the restoration of intercommunion between the two Churches. There was no intention of solving **all** controversial issues, but it was hoped under these headings to get to grips with the major causes of division. Even here no claim was made to have achieved complete agreement in every detail [1] but conviction was expressed that the statements provided a fundamental common approach to these questions which might be termed 'substantial agreement', since fundamental principles were developed in them, whereby any remaining particular disagreements in these areas might be resolved[2]. The document accordingly concludes with the confident assertion that now - in 1981 - it is more than evident that 'under the Holy Spirit, our Churches have grown closer together in faith and charity. There are high expectations that significant initiatives will be boldly undertaken to deepen our reconciliation and lead us forward in the quest for full communion'[3].

At the same time the Commission was fully aware that the ultimate decision as to the ecclesiastical relevance of its findings did not rest with itself. All along it had intended, according to the ecclesiastical mandate which had called it into being, to submit its statements to the 'respective authorities'. Since its purpose was not merely academic but focused on ecclesiastical reality, the statements had to go through an official ecclesiastical process of examination and judgement[4]. This took place when the sessions came to an end in September 1981. It was also clear that, since ecclesiastical authority is structured differently in each case, examination and decision making would also have to be conducted on quite different lines by the respective authorities. Perhaps one should remark at this point that any presentation of the theme 'Authority in the Church' which was really intended to lead to unity, would have to take into account in a much more concrete way the actual form of authority in order to do justice to the question. For if there was surprise afterwards at the fact that the Roman Catholic Church can give an authoritative answer more immediately than Anglican structures allow for, this is surely an indication that too little attention had been paid to the actual functioning of authority. It was probably not made clear enough that the Pope - especially since Vatican II - has a special authentic teaching function for the whole Church: it is not indeed infallible but does make authoritative decisions[5]. On the other hand the text left one completely in the dark as to the concrete structure of authority in the Anglican community. Those well acquainted with Anglicanism know that the Lambeth Conference, originally instituted in 1867, was not due to meet for several years, according to its regular timing, and that no authoritative pronouncement could be made before that date. But ought not the text to have mentioned this structure in order to give a true explanation of the problem of authority without stopping short of the concrete reality? Would not the right and indeed necessary thing have been to explain what sort of teaching authority and jurisdiction belongs or does not belong to this assembly of bishops? Should one not also have gone into the question of the relation between political and ecclesiastical authority in the Church which first touches the nerve-point of the question of the Catholicity of the Church or the relation between local and universal Church? In 1640 Parliament decided as follows: 'Convocation has no power to enact canons or constitutions concerning matters of doctrine or discipline, or in any other way to bind clergy or religious without the consent of Parliament'. That may be obsolete, but it came to mind again in 1927 when on two occasions a version of the Book of Common Prayer was rejected by Parliament[5a]. However that may be, these concrete questions should have been clarified and answered, if a viable agreement about 'Authority in the Church' was the aim in view. For it is of the essence of authority to be concrete, consequently one can only do justice to the theme by naming the actual authorities and clarifying their relative position on both sides instead of just theorizing about authority.

But to go back to our starting point: this parenthesis was only inserted because, after there had been theoretical substantial agreement about authority in the Church, the actual intervention of authority resulted in misunderstanding and bad feeling. What had happened? According to the express intention of ARCIC, the Congregation for the Faith, commissioned by the Pope as central or[illegible]an of ecclesiastical authority, had set to work examining the texts as soon as they were completed, and then on 29th March 1982 promulgated a detailed statement of their opinion. This was first despatched to the Bishops' Conference as a 'Contribution to the current dialogue', and then on 6th May 1982 published in the Osservatore Romano[6]. Pursuing the matter further, one can say that this was an example of the functioning of precisely that structure of authority sketched out by Vatican II. One can clearly recognise three characteristic elements of that structure - the office of Peter's successor, the worldwide college of bishops, and relation in dialogue to other Christian churches and denominations. In this case we see ecumenical dialogue raised from the sphere of particular groups - which are not yet authoritative,

however important and well authorised they may be - and transferred to the level of matters concerning the whole Church in a universal and obligatory way. Then the See of Peter speaks through one of its central organs, not indeed in a definitive manner, yet with an authority which carries more weight in the Church than a merely academic publication about the question would. Based on the teaching of the Church, the document provides guidelines for further development of the dialogue. And finally the whole college of bishops, as successors of the apostles, are drawn into the dialogue in their capacity of responsibility for the whole Church.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM OF THE DIALOGUE: The Authority of Tradition, and the Central Organs of Unity.

1. Preliminary note on the situation of the discussion

The above statements have already brought us right to the heart of the problem with which Anglican-Catholic dialogue is concerned. A first reading of the ARCIC documents might well convey the impression that nothing but Vatican I's teaching about papal primacy, and the more recent Marian dogmas stood in the way of complete agreement. The reaction of the media, which are always bound to be on the look-out for something striking and quickly grasped, intensified this impression which only too easily turned into the opinion that reconciliation was held up only by particular 19th century dogmas on the part of Rome. Were this the case, it would certainly be hard to understand why Rome laid so much stress on such recent, particular doctrinal developments, apparently even wishing to raise them to a touchstone of ecumenism. In point of fact, both the aforesaid dogmas are only the most tangible symptoms of the overall problem of authority in the Church. The way one views the structure of Christianity will necessarily affect in some measure, great or small, one's attitude to various particular matters contained within the whole. For this reason I do not wish here to go into the particular points which surfaced in the dialogue between Catholics and Anglicans, and which have already been dealt with in the ARCIC Report as well as in the comments of the Congregation for the Faith. I would prefer to approach one single point from various aspects - the point which has already emerged from a simple account of the course of events as the core of the problem, namely the question of authority. This is identical with the question of tradition and cannot be separated from that of the relation between the universal Church and a particular Church. Even this problem cannot receive comprehensive, systematic treatment here. Within the limits of this short essay it would seem more to the point to dispense with systematic procedure and simply juxtapose a series of observations which will nevertheless, each in its own way, reflect something of the whole.

But first it would seem fitting to comment briefly on the general nature both of the statement of the Congregation for the Faith and of the Agreed Statements of ARCIC which underlie it. Almost everywhere newspapers and reports tell how the communication from the Roman Congregation begins with a few short, meaningless and florid compliments, and that after that everything is merely negative and critical, so that by the end of it one is left with a discouraging impression. Such an assertion could only be the result of a very superficial reading of the text. In the relatively short first section, dealing with the subject as a whole, the positive side is stated first and then followed up by criticism. This pattern is retained throughout the sections dealing with particular subjects. Attention is first drawn to the important steps forward that have been made in dealing with the particular questions, and then guidelines are laid down to show the way ahead if a really viable basic 'substantial agreement' is to be reached. Actually it is impossible to read through the ARCIC statements without feeling a great sense of gratitude, for they show how far theological thought has matured in the last decade as regards shared insight. Recourse to Scripture and the Fathers has brought to light the common foundations of diverging confessional developments, and so opened up that perspective in which apparently irreconcilable elements can be fused together into the wholeness of the one truth. The desire for unity is plain: one might say that the hermeneutics of unity have made a new understanding of the sources possible, and conversely, recourse to the sources has evoked hermeneutics of unity. All this is indisputable and makes the ARCIC documents so outstanding that they could be, and had to be, transferred from the sphere of private preparatory work into the forum of the Church's public dialogue. But all this must serve too to justify the courage needed to face the questions squarely and fully both in statement and deliberation. Approbation and criticism are not mutually exclusive: each demands the other. It is only when both are joined together that we get an authentic vehicle for true dialogue. This will be taken for granted as I proceed now to deal with the most urgent questions.

2. The authority of Tradition

The complex of questions we are concerned with here cannot possibly be contained within the single concept 'primacy'. It includes, over and above, determining the co-ordination of Scripture - tradition - councils - episcopate - reception. The two last ideas refer to the respective roles of bishops and laity in the formation of Christian doctrine. It is a universal tenet amongst Christians that Scripture is the basic standard of Christian faith, the central authority through which Christ himself exercises his authority over the Church and within it. For this reason all teaching in the Church is ultimately exposition of Scripture, just as Scripture in its turn is exposition of

the living word of Jesus Christ: but the ultimate value of all is not what is written but the life which Our Lord transmitted to his Church, within which Scripture itself lives and is life. Vatican II formulated these mutual relations very beautifully: 'Through tradition the complete canon of sacred books is made known to the Church. Within her the Holy Scriptures are themselves understood at greater depth and ceaselessly put into action. So it is that God who spoke of old, never ceases to converse with the Bride of His beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit - through whom the living voice of the Gospel resounds in the Church and through her in the world beyond - leads the faithful into all truth and causes the word of Christ to dwell amongst them in full measure.' (c.f. Col. 3,16)[7]. There is a priority of Scriptures as witness and a priority of the Church as the vital environment for such witness, but both are linked together in constantly alternating relationships, so that neither can be imagined without the other. This relative priority of the Church to Scripture obviously presupposes also the existence of the Universal Church as a concrete and active reality, for only the whole Church can be the locus of Scripture in this sense. So the question of defining the relation between a particular Church and the Universal Church has obviously already claimed a place amongst the fundamental problems.

The mutual dependence of a community living the Bible, and of the Bible in which the community finds the inward standard of its being, is first represented as a subtle spiritual reality, but it becomes a very practical issue with the question: How is Scripture recognised in the Church? Who decides whether what you say is in accord with Scripture or not? It is rather ambiguous when ARCIC says: 'Neither general councils nor universal primates are invariably preserved from error even in official declarations[8]. It is still more emphatic in another place: 'The Commission is very far from implying that general councils cannot err and is well aware that they sometimes have erred[9]. The Synods of Ariminum and of Seleucia are quoted as examples of this. Then it goes on to say: 'Article 21 (i.e. of the Anglican Articles of Religion) affirms that general councils have authority only when their judgements "may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture". The ARCIC text adds that according to the argument of the Statement also, 'only those judgements of general councils are guaranteed to exclude what is erroneous or are protected from error which have as their content fundamental matters of faith, which formulate central truths of salvation and which are faithful to Scripture and consistent with Tradition'[10]. Moreover there is need for reception; about this it says in what seems a rather dialectical way that 'reception does not create truth nor legitimitise the decision', the authority of a council is not derived entirely from reception on the part of the faithful; on the other hand it also teaches that a council is 'not so evidently self-sufficient that its definitions owe nothing to reception'[11]. Another passage is even more explicit: 'If the definition proposed for assent were not manifestly a legitimate interpretation of biblical faith and in line with orthodox tradition, Anglicans would think it a duty to reserve the reception of the definition for study and discussion'[12].

The phrase 'manifestly a legitimate interpretation of biblical faith' catches one's attention. The dogmas of the pre-Reformation Church are quite certainly not 'manifestly legitimate' in the sense in which 'manifest' is used in modern exegesis. If there were such a thing as the 'manifestly legitimate', obvious enough to stand in its own right out of range of reasonable discussion, there would be no need at all for councils and ecclesiastical teaching authority. On this point questions raised by the continental European Reformation are fully present amongst the Anglicans. It is true they are modified by the fact that the survival of the episcopate retains the fundamental structure of the pre-Reformation Church as the form of life within the ecclesiastical community to this day. This assures a fundamentally positive attitude to the doctrinal tenets of the pre-Reformation Church. Originally this was the intention also of the continental denominations but the pull away from tradition was much stronger in their communities, so that there was far less ability to hold fast. This modification of the principle of 'Scripture only' has, however, long been more on the level of fact than of principle; it is true that fact could facilitate the step down to the fundamental level. This should not be too difficult, considering the actual authority of tradition. In any case further dialogue must get to grips in real earnest with this fundamental issue.

3. The Universal Church and its central organs as the condition of tradition.

But to return once again to our starting point in the analysis of the text. Nothing 'manifest' can be derived from intellectual discussion or from the mere fact of general opinion in the Church. Ultimately we come up against an anthropological question here; beyond what is purely objective, nothing is 'manifest' to anyone save what he lives. For that reason interpretation is always a question of the whole complex of life[13]. To transfer authority in this way to what is 'manifest', as is done in the passage already quoted, means linking up faith with the authority of historians, i.e. exposing it to conflicting hypotheses. Quite the contrary - keeping in view the faith testified to in the New Testamen itself and the life of the early Church, we must hold fast to the conviction that there can be no second sifting through of what the Universal Church teaches as Universal Church. Who would presume to undertake such a task? One can read greater depth into a pronouncement of the Universal Church; one can improve on it linguistically; one can develop it further by focusing on the centre of the faith and on new perspectives opening up a way forward, but one cannot 'discuss' it in the ordinary sense of the word.

At this point it becomes clear what the episcopal office means and what exactly 'tradition' is in the Church. According to the catholic way of thinking, a bishop is someone who can express the voice of the Universal Church

in his teaching, or to put it another way: the episcopate is the supreme court in the Church as regards both teaching and decision, because it is the living voice of the Universal Church. An individual bishop has full authority as pastor of a particular Church because, and in so far as, he represents the Universal Church.

'Apostolic Succession' is the sacramental form of the unifying presence of tradition[14]. For this reason the Universal Church is not a mere external amplification, contributing nothing to the essential nature of Church in the local Churches, but it extends into that very nature itself. Here it is necessary to contradict the ARCIC Report where it says: 'The second Vatican Council allows it to be said that a Church out of communion with the Roman See may lack nothing from the viewpoint of the Roman Catholic Church except that it does not belong to the visible manifestation of full Christian communion[15]. With such an assertion wrongly claiming the support of Vatican II, Church Unity is debased to an unnecessary, if desirable, externality, and the character of the Universal Church is reduced to mere outward representation, of little significance in constituting what is ecclesial. This romantic idea of provincial Churches which is supposed to restore the structure of the early Church, is really contradicting the historical reality of the early Church as well as the concrete experiences of history, to which one must certainly not turn a blind eye in considerations of this sort. The early Church did indeed know nothing of Roman primacy in practice, in the sense of Roman Catholic theology of the second millennium, but it was well acquainted with living forms of unity in the Universal Church which were constitutive of the essence of provincial Churches. Understood in this sense, the priority of the Universal Church always preceded that of particular Churches.

I will just instance here three well known phenomena: letters of communion, which bound Churches together; the symbolism of collegiality at the consecration of a bishop. This ceremony was always linked up with living tradition by cross-questioning and acceptance of the Creed, while the imprint of the Universal Church was manifest in the fact that bishops of prominent sees were represented: mere neighbourly recognition would not suffice; it had to be made clear that the prominent sees were in communion with each other, as it fell to them to guarantee the character of the Universal Church in the case of this particular one. Finally one should include here what people today like to call the conciliarity of the Church, though they often have romantically simplified ideas about it. For it is a known fact that conciliarity has never functioned simply of its own accord by the pure and spontaneous harmony of plurality, as many present day statements would seem to suggest. Actually the authority of the emperor was necessary to summon a council. Take away the person of the emperor, and you can no longer discuss the conciliar reality of the medieval Church but a only a theological fiction. Closer consideration shows that the participation of Rome, the See centered on the place where SS. Peter & Paul died, was of great significance for the full validity of a council, even if this factor is less in evidence than the position of the emperor. All the same, Vincent Twomey has already shown in a very well documented piece of research, that already in the contest at Nicea two opposed options stand out clearly: the Eusebian and the Athanasian, i.e. the idea of an imperial universal Church as against a really theological conception in which it is not the emperor but Rome which plays the decisive role[16]. However that may be, the imperial Church has vanished, and with it the emperor too: Thank God, we may say. Meanwhile, if one wants to discuss the conciliarity of the Church in a way that is realistic and meaningful, the question inevitably arises: what office is important enough from a theological point of view to replace and sustain the function fulfilled by the emperor?[17]

At this point the question about the later development of history must inevitably be faced as a theological issue; a mere return to the medieval Church is no solution even from a theological point of view. Jean Meyendorff has recently tackled the whole subject with an uninhibited realism which might well serve as a model for research with an eye to the future. He shows how, once the central organs of unity, founded on a theological basis, were given up after the break up of the old imperial Church, this led in fact with compulsive inward logic to state churches springing up everywhere. These did not correspond at all to the medieval idea of local Church or parish, though an attempt was made to justify them theologically in that way. Instead they brought in their train a tendancy to particularize Christianity, contrary to the essential idea of 'Church' in the New Testament and pre-Reformation Church[18]. Once the Universal Church had disappeared from view as a concrete reality actually leaving its mark on the local Church, and a link had been forged with some political or ethnic reality as a framework for the latter, the whole pattern of ecclesiastical government changed - including the evaluation of episcopal office, and so involving alteration in the structure of the Church. It was not only an outward 'manifestation' which fell away but a power which had influenced from within. It is in this context that Meyendorff wonders whether it would no actually be better to devote more attention to the idea of development in the Church, and use that as an approach to the theological content of primacy. The latter is offset by the negative legalism which resulted from the tendency to particularise and was in evidence after the break up of the old empire wherever the link with the unifying function of the papacy had been severed[19].

Reflections like these must on no account lead to one sided assertion of the 'Roman' point of view. They do point towards the principle of a unifying office, but they also call for self criticism on the part of Roman-Catholic theology. Without a doubt there have been misguided developments in both theology and practice where the

primacy is concerned, and these must be brought to light with the same perspicacity and frankness that Meyendorff has shown with regard to misguided developments in a theology and practice geared simply to the local Church. By this means the theological core could really be brought to view and be seen as acceptable. The principle of the primatial office in the Universal Church, in my opinion, must not be weakened to the extent of being reduced to mere manifestation, while the reality of the Universal Church is theologically dissolved. On the other hand the outward ways of putting the office into practice are subject to alteration and must always be tested afresh by the principle. The consequences of this for the Catholic-Anglican dialogue became evident to us rather as a side-result of the introductory report on its last phases. In order to reach a viable unity, the form of authority in the Anglican Church must be spelt out with complete realism, and there must be no shirking the question of the relationship between episcopal and political authority, for that was after all the start of the separation. The fact that since then the Anglican community has spread all over the world, has anyway led automatically to modifications of the original pattern, so that history itself has helped to rectify history. Parallel to these considerations, most careful thought must be given to variations in practice, potentially contained in the principle of primacy.

4. Tradition and Belief

With all that has been said, it should have become clear that the question of the Universal Church and of the primacy as its real central organ is not simply a matter of an isolated Roman problem, of varying significance to different people. It is at heart a question of the most powerful and communal presence of the Word of God in the Church, and as we have said, this question includes that of the Universal Church and its authority as well as the official instruments of this authority. To put it in a different way: it is a question of what one actually means by 'Tradition'. In this connection I think a comment on terminology might bring us further. In quite a number of places in the ARCIC papers the two dialoguing parties - Anglican and Catholic - are referred to as 'our two traditions'[20]. 'Tradition' has become a key-word in recent ecumenism and is used in theological classification of the difference between various churches and denominations: they are referred to as 'our traditions'. This terminology expresses a quite definite idea about the degree of separation and the way to restore Church Unity. The different forms of the reality 'church' are according to this 'traditions' in which the heritage of the New Testament has found manifold realisation. This means that divisions are regarded theologically as of secondary importance, even when historically seen as venerable and noteworthy realisations of common Christianity. One might say that in the most recent publications about dialogue 'tradition' is the new name for 'confession', which certainly means that a fundamental change of model has taken place in the vision of Church and faith. Wherever 'tradition' is substituted for 'confession' the question of truth is resolved into reconciling concern for what history has brought about.

One more thought comes to mind which will take us back to the theological question from which we started. If two such different subjects as the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church are grouped together under the common term 'our two traditions', the profound difference in estimation of the phenomenon 'tradition' - such a hall-mark of the identity of each - is obliterated. But unfortunately one searches in vain through the ARCIC texts for an analysis of what 'tradition' means to each. Roughly speaking one might summarise it like this: in the Catholic Church the principle of 'tradition' refers, not only and not even in the first place, to the permanency of ancient doctrines or texts which have been handed down, but to a certain way of co-ordinating the living word of the Church and the decisive written word of Scripture. Here 'tradition' means above all, that the Church, living in the form of the apostolic succession with the Petrine office at its centre, is the place in which the Bible is lived and interpreted in a way that binds. this interpretation forms a historical continuity, setting fixed standards but never itself reaching a final point at which it belongs only to the past. 'Revelation' is closed but interpretation which binds is not[21]. There can be no appeal against the ultimate binding force of interpretation. So tradition is essentially marked by the 'living voice' - i.e. by the obligatory nature of the teaching of the Universal Church.

If, on the other hand, one consults the Articles of Religion or the "Lambeth Quadrilateral' of 1886, the difference strikes one immediately. The similarity of Art.19 on the Church with Art.8 of the Augsburg Confession hits one in the eye in the same way as the similarity of Art.20 on Authority in the Church with the corresponding Art.15 of the Confessio Augustana. Now both the Confessio Augustana and the Articles of Religion assume that Creed and dogmas are taken over from the pre-Reformation Church. One cannot strictly speaking apply *sola scriptura* here in the face of a fundamental recognition of tradition. But for all that, the tendency is to regard tradition as a recognised heritage of texts from the past. At the same time the right of the living voice of the Church is minimised in theology by the demand for testing against Scripture, while in practice it is reduced to the sphere of mere discipline, which is thereby cut off from its true foundations. This restriction is to a certain extent projected into the past in the Articles of Religion, in so far as it is expressly stated that just as the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch erred, so also the Church of Rome has erred in matters of faith, and general councils too. (Art. 19 & 21).

5. Tradition can never be closed.

At this point another omission in the ARCIC documents should be noted: it has to do with the concrete realities of each Church. It is true that ARCIC defends itself against accusation that it has contradicted Art.21 of the Articles of Religion[22]. But it does not explain anywhere what force these Articles and the Book of Common Prayer actually have. In this case too, as in the question of authority, one can only grasp the concrete situation by investigating these matters, for obviously we are touching here on what an Anglican would regard as 'tradition'. In the discussion about the texts it was evident that both the Articles of Religion and the Book of Common Prayer have great influence as standards. It seems to me all the more strange that from the reverse point of view the Catholic ecumenical paper 'Irénikon' felt obliged to criticise the Congregation for the Faith severely in an editorial because in its analysis of the Agreed Statements it had brought in definitions promulgated in the Catholic Church since the separation. 'Irénikon speaks (in a quite unirenic way) of the 'painful' impression that the Congregation has made. With finger raised in reproach it continues: 'If this attitude has already had consequences in dialogue with the Anglicans, one can imagine how it would block the way towards restoring canonical and sacramental communion with the Orthodox Church.'[23]

A kind of ecumenical dogma seems to be developing here which needs some attention. Quite likely it began with this train of thought: for intercommunion with the Orthodox, the Catholic Church need not necessarily insist on acceptance of the dogmas of the second millenium. It was presumed that the Eastern Churches have remained in the traditional form of the first millenium, which in itself is legitimate and, if rightly understood, contains no contradiction to further developments. The latter after all only unfolded what was already there in principle in the time of the undivided Church. I myself have already taken part in attempts to work things out like this[24], but meanwhile they have grown out of hand to the point at which councils and dogmatic decisions of the second millenium are supposed not to be regarded as ecumenical but as particular developments in the Latin Church, constituting its private property in the sense of 'our two traditions'. But this distorts the first attempt to think things out into a completely new thesis with far-reaching consequences. For this way of looking at it actually implies denial of the existence of the Universal Church in the second millenium, while tradition as a living, truth-giving power is frozen at the end of the first. This strikes at the very heart of the idea of Church and tradition, because ultimately such an age test dissolves the full authority of the Church, which is then left without a voice at the present day. Moreover one might well ask in reply to such an assertion, with what right consciences, in such a particular Church as the Latin Church would then be, could be bound by such pronouncements. What once appeared as truth would have to be reduced to mere custom. The great age-long claim to truth would be disqualified as an abuse.

All this means that a far-reaching thesis, the principles and consequences of which have not been thought out, has been raised to the level of a self-evident axiom. To belittle it is to incur ungracious censure. But this very self-evidence which convinced 'Irénikon' that it was its duty to pass censure from its lofty look-out on the Congregation for the Faith, demands decisive response. To my mind the central truth of what they are trying to get at is this: unity is a fundamental, hermeneutic principle of all theology, and we must learn to read the documents which have been handed down to us, according to the hermeneutics of unity, which show up much that is new and open doors where only bolts were visible before. Such hermeneutics of unity will entail reading the statements of both parties in the context of the whole tradition and with a deeper understanding of Scripture. This will include investigating how far decisions since the separation have been stamped with a certain particularisation both as to language and thought - something that might well be transcended without doing violence to the content of the statements. For heremeneutics are not a skillful device for escaping from burdensome authorities by a change of verbal function, (though this abuse has often ocurred), but rather apprehending the word with an understanding which at the same time discovers in it new possibilities.

Ecumenical dialogue does not mean opting out of living, Christian reality, but advancing by means of the hermeneutics of unity. To opt out and cut oneself off means artificial withdrawal into a past beyond recall; it means restricting tradition to the past. But that is to transfer ecumenism into an artificial world while one goes on practising particularisation by fencing off one's own thing. Since this preserve is regarded as immune from dialogue but is still clung to, it is lowered from the realm of truth into the sphere of mere custom. Finally the question arises as to whether it is a matter of truth at all, or just of comparing different customs and finding a way of reconciling them. In any case, the remark that the introduction of dogmatic decisions passed since the separation should not be regarded as the high point of the dialogue, denotes a flight into the artificial which should be firmly resisted.

6. Tradition and Eucharist

Now to get back to the ARCIC document after this detour. Everything said so far has revolved round the question of authority and tradition. I have tried to show that here and nowhere else really lies the fundamental

problem. To solve it would be decisive for the question of unity. It would not be hard to show that this question affects also the particular areas in which full agreement has not yet been reached, and which were noted in the communication from the Congregation for the Faith: Eucharist with emphasis on sacrifice, transubstantiation and, according to circumstances, adoration of the consecrated species; sacramental nature and content of the priesthood (with the question in the background of the institution of the sacraments and of their actual number); theological substantiation and concrete ecclesiastical content of the Petrine office. It is not possible to deal with all these things here. But let me just add one remark about the question of the Eucharist. The great reformed denominations and the Anglican community accepted the ancient creeds as part of their own belief, and so the trinitarian and christological faith defined in the councils of the early Church has been kept out of the debate. Side by side with Scripture and combined with it, this is the actual nucleus of the unity which binds us together and gives us hope of complete reconciliation.

For this reason we must for the sake of unity strenuously resist any attempt to break up this central ecclesial deposit or to discard as outmoded the practice based on it of reading Scripture together. A mere fundamentalist approach to the Bible, adopted these days by quite a number of people, would not bring us together but would soon break up the Bible itself. Without this centre the Bible would cease to be one book and would lose its authority.

So, although unity remained in the Creeds, the break in the form of eucharistic liturgy had its full effect. But in point of fact, in spite of all textual and ritual differences, the consistent unity of structure and understanding of the eucharistic liturgy in the pre-Reformation Church (together with the baptismal liturgy) was the vital habitat in which the Christian dogma of that Church was rooted. The authority of tradition in the case of eucharistic model carries no less weight than in the case of councils and their creeds, even though it is differently expressed - through constant living enactment instead of by conciliar decree. It is really only possible to make an artificial separation between the two: in both cases it is the one basic form of the pre-Reformation Church expressing itself. Unfortunately this connection was no longer easily recognisable in the late medieval Church and its celebration of Mass. But all the same one can imagine what it would mean for ecumenism if the inseparability of this union were again both manifest and recognised. If we had today to 'prove' the Trinitarian dogma and Christological faith from Scripture in the same controversial way as the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, our endeavour to reach common conclusions would certainly be no less arduous. On the other hand, if the basic form of the liturgy of the early Church were accepted as a lasting heritage, ranking with conciliar creeds, this would provide unifying hermeneutics which would render many points of contention superfluous. The Church's liturgy being the original interpretation of the biblical heritage has no need to justify itself before historical reconstructions: it is rather itself the standard, sprung from what is living, which directs research back to the initial stages.[25]

I do not think that this sort of consideration is merely an intellectual game. Fundamentally it again points to the question of mere history and the significance of its content (Geschichte), of growth and life, i.e. the problem of authority and tradition which has occupied our minds throughout these ruminations. It is essential to have the most accurate knowledge possible of what the Bible says from an historical point of view. Progressive deepening of such knowledge can always serve to purify and enrich tradition. But what is merely historical remains ambiguous. It belongs to the realm of hypothesis, whose certainty is intellectual, not certainty by which to live.[26] To live by faith and die for faith is possible, only because the power of the living community, which it created and still creates, opens up the significance of history and renders it unequivocal, in a way that no amount of mere reasoning could do. The two levels we are referring to can be well illustrated by a formula in the ARCIC documents. As the authors unfold their theological vision, they repeatedly use the phrase 'we believe'[27]. If I understand them aright, what it actually means is 'it is our opinion': it is expressing the opinions of theologians. But it is only when 'we believe' is transformed from 'this is our opinion' to 'this is our faith' by what has been thought out theologically that it is caught up into the full life stream of the Church; only in this way can unity be achieved. The task that lies before us is to find a way to effect this transition. The document from the Congregation of the Faith was intended as a contribution towards this.

Conclusion. Prospect for the future

This brings me to my conclusion. Perhaps what I have said sounds in places rather depressing. It may have given the impression that there far more problems than signs of hope. but here too it is true that the problems belong to the realm of thought, the hopeful signs to the realm of life. The Pope's visit was a clear indication of this: because it was a lived event, it was also a gesture of hope. Of course thought and life belong together; to separate them would destroy both. The hopes of all in our days have come from those who have lived the faith and suffered for it. Hope has directed thought along new ways and made unifying hermeneutics possible. In this sense Catholic theology can and must agree to the idea of reception. Unity can grow only if particular communities live out their faith with unity as their goal. There must always be interplay between thought and life, ministry and community. Although at times things have been held up, there is much that is hopeful, precisely with regard to the

fundamental problem of the authority of living tradition and its central organs in the Universal Church, and also in what concerns the intimate mutual relationship between the Universal Church and each particular church. The fact that most of the communities which were once national or state churches have transcended the frontiers of countries and continents, means that there is a new openness to the meaning of 'catholicity' in the original sense of the word. In the same way actual experience of lived ecclesial community has moderated exaggerated fundamentalist notions with regard to Scripture and facilitated new understanding of the meaning of tradition and of doctrinal authority on a sacramental basis. In both cases contact with the Orthodox Church has proved stimulating. The Eastern Church has enabled reformed communities to experience a form of Catholicity free from the burden of Western history; and on the other hand, thanks to their common structure, it has enabled the Catholic Church of the West to detect a number of its own exaggerations and prejudices and helped it to differentiate better between what is essential to its character and what is merely accidental. Much is on the move, and the ARCIC papers are part of an endeavour to sieze the opportunity of the moment, follow the way opened up for us and carry possibility through to actuality. No one can predict when convergence will end in unity, just as no one could have forseen the ways which have brought us so far. History shows us that a superficial unity which jumps the gun without inward preparation through actual living, could only prove harmful. Greater unity is really to be found in the fact that the separated communities are passionately seeking the truth together with the firm intention of imposing nothing which does not come from the Lord on the other party, and of losing nothing entrusted to us by Him. In this way our lives advance towards each other because they are directed towards Christ. Perhaps institutional separation has some share in the significance of salvation history which St Paul attributes to the division between Israel and the Gentiles - namely that they should make 'each other envious', vying with each other in coming closer to the Lord (Rom.11, 11).

As regards practical measures for the future progres of affairs between Anglicans and the Catholic Church, the Pope and Archbishop Runcie in their joint declaration at Canterbury on 29th May 1982 announced the next step to be taken: "We are agreed that it is now time to set up a new international Commission. Its task will be to continue the work already begun: to examine, *especially in the light of our respective judgements on the final report*, the oustanding doctrinal differences which still separate us, with a view towards their final resolution; to study all that hinders the mutual recognition of the ministries of our Communions; and to recommend what practical steps will be necessary when, on the basis of our unity in faith, we are able to proceed to the restoration of full communion."[28]

That is a modest statement as well as a hopeful one. The task it sets before us cannot be accomplished by a commission alone; it needs the prayerful support of the whole Church, which in the last resort is always the inspiration of any hope of unity.

NOTES

1 *Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission, The Final Report:* Windsor, September 1981. The admitted limitation of the document with regard to achieved consensus is clearly expressed especially in *Authority in the Church II* (1981), section *Jurisdiction*, 16-33. Also in other places, e.g. Elucidation to *Eucharistic Doctrine* (1979), 8, 9, certain limitations are mentioned.

2. cf *Eucharistic Doctrine* (1971), 12: "We believe we have reached substantial agreement on the doctrine of the eucharist.....if there are any remaining points of disagreement they can be resolved on the principles here established....."

3. Conclusion, 1981

4. e.g. *Authority in the Church I*, 26 (conclusion).

5. cf *Lumen Gentium* II, 12; III, 22; especially in this context III, 25.

5a. Th. Schnitker, *The American Book of Common Prayer* (ThRev 78, 1982, 265-272) points out that as a result of "Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure 1974", the Church of England itself, without ratification from Parliament, can make decisions about its liturgical books. "With Schedule 2 of this document the Act of Uniformity 1662, like almost all liturgical enactments of state controlled churches, has become it valid (a.a.O., Note 3, col. 266f).

6. The essential content of the text was pre-announced in a letter, published on 31:3:1982 in the *Osservatore Romano*, from the Prefect of the Congregation for the Faith, to the Catholic Chairman of ARCIC, Bishop Clark.

7. *Dei Verbum* II, 8

8. *Authority in the Church* II, 27 (1981)

9. *Authority in the Church* I, Elucidation 3 (1981)

10. ibid. "which have as their content, fundamental matters of faith".

11. ibid.
12. *Authority in the Church*, II, 29
13. cf especially the important essays from J. Pieper, *Buchstabierübungen* (München 1980) 11 - 30; E. Coreth, *Grundfragen der Hermeneutik* (Freiburg 1969); H. Anton, *Interpretation*, in: J. Ritter - K. Gründer, *Historiches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* IV (1976) 514 - 517.
14. J. Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre* (München 1982) 251 - 263; 300 - 314
15. *Authority in the Church* II, 12. The text of LG I, 8, quoted here in support, is far from expressing such a conviction. The text runs: "Haec est unica Christi Ecclesia, quam in Symbolo unam, sanctam catholicam et apostolicam confitemur . . . . . Haec Ecclesia, in hoc mundo ut societas constituta et ordinata, subsistit in Ecclesia catholica, a successore Petri et episcopis in eius communione gubernata, licet extra eius compaginem elementa plura sanctificationis et veritatis inveniuntur, quae ut dona Ecclesiae Christi propria, ad unitatem catholicam impellunt.' (This is the unique Church of Christ which in the Creed we avow as one, holy, catholic and apostolic . . . . . this Church, constituted and organised 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 or truth can be found outside of her visible structure. These elements, however, as gifts properly belong to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism towards Catholic unity.) Neither does *Unitatis Redintegratio* III, 13, quoted in the same context, say anything of the kind. It gives a typology of *divisions*, and ends the description of communities resulting from 16th century divisions with the sentence: 'Inter eas, in quibus traditiones et structurae catholicae ex parte subsistere pergunt, locum specialem tenet Communio anglicana'. (Among those in which some Catholic traditions and institutions continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place).
16. V. Twomey, *Apostolikos Thronos. The Primacy of Rome as reflected in the Church History of Eusebius and the historico-apologetic writings of St. Athanasius the great* (Münster 1982). This extremely thorough work (to my mind) marks a turning point in the approach to this subject in dogmatic history. Here perhaps for the first time it is again brought to light how profoundly imbued the pre-Reformation Church was with the Petrine idea and its connection with the See of Rome, and also how soon the conception of a state church began to break away from it. A recently published book by St. Horn, *Petrou Kathedra* (Paderborn 1982) throws similar light on the 5th century. Now that both these books have appeared, the commonplace judgments of the present day on the subject will have to be thoroughly re-examined and possibly revised. Cf also by St. Horn *La "Sedes Apostolica": Theological outlook of the East at the beginning of the sixth century*, in: *Istina* 1975, 435 - 456.
17. The same objection applies especially to the Catholic - Orthodox joint statement, *Le mystère de l'Eglise et de l'Eucharistie à la lumiere du mystère de la Sainte Trinité.*
18. J. Meyendorff, *Kirchlicher Regionalismus: Strukturen der Gemeinschaft oder Vorwand des Separatismus?* in: G. Alberigo - Y. Congar - H. J. Pottmeyer, *Kirche im Wandel. Eine kritische Zwischenbilanz nach dem Zweiten Vatikanum* (Dusseldorf 1982), 303 - 318; cf e.g. page 311: "one can see how modern nationalism has deformed legitimate ecclesiastical provincialism and turned it into a cloak for ethnic separatism."
19. ibid. 316 ff.
20. cf Elucidation (1979) to *Ministry and Ordination*, para 3: 'both traditions'; *Authority in the Church* I, 18: "both our traditions"; so also ibid. 19; ibid. 25: 'our two traditions'; and *Authority in the Church* II, 8; ibid. 15: 'both our traditions'.
21. cf my own contributions in: K. Rahner - J. Ratzinger, *Offenbarung und Uberlieferung* (Frieburg 1965).
22. Elucidation (1981) to *Authority in the Church*
23. Irénikon 55 (1982) 161 f. quotation 162.
24. cf *Theologische Prinzipienlehre* (München 1982) 109 - 211 (text from 1976).
25. cf J. Ratzinger, Das Fest des Glaubens (Einsieden 1981)
26. cf R. Spaemann, *Die christliche Religion und das Ende des modernen Bewusstseins*, in the international Catholic periodical *Communio* 8 (1979) 251 - 270, especially 264 - 268.
27. To give just some examples, though the meaning of the word is perhaps not exactly the same in each case: *Ministry and Ordination* (1973) 6: 'we believe'; *Elucidation* to it (1979) 6, para 2: "The Commission believes"; Co-Chairman's Preface to *Authority in the Church* (1976), para 4: "we believe"; *Authority in the Church* I, 25: "we believe". I find it difficult to answer the question as to the exact force of the claim made for the contects, especial'y because for the actual teaching of the Church a terminology is used that is very similar to those expressions of the Commission in the aforementioned texts, cf e.g. *Authority in the Church* II, 27: "The welfare of the koinonia does not require that all the statements of those who speak authoritatively on behalf of the Church should be considered permanent expressions of the truth. But situations may occur where serious divisions of opinion on crucial issues of pastoral urgency call for a more definitive judgement. Any such statement would be intended as an expression of the mind of the Church and faith of the Church . . ." This inevitably gives rise to the question as to how the mind of the Church

Church relate to each other, which means that the respective levels of faith and theology must be further clarified.

28. Acta Apostolicae Sedis 74 (1982), 8, page 925. The above mentioned Editorial of Irénikon (see note 23) when naming the first task significantly omits the phrase "especially in the light of our respective judgements on the Final Report"; it contradicted too obviously the polarity suggested by the said article between the text of the congregation of the Faith and the utterances of the Pope - not a very fair way of conveying information to the reader.