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INTRODUCTION

1. In the midst of all its struggles on earth, humanity longs for true justice and peace. God alone, who is the source of all that is good, can fully satisfy these needs. By the grace and salvation given in Jesus Christ, God offers to the world the fulfilment of these hopes. Humanity needs God. Those who do not yet know the living God stand in need of reconciliation with their fellow men and women. Those who have heard and received the Gospel are called to grow day by day in their renewed relationship with God through Christ. God's gift of communion with himself is nothing less than a sharing in the divine life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Accordingly, to speak of communion is to address the world at the heart of its greatest need. Communion therefore provides the context within which we propose to discuss more fully our common understanding of God's purpose for his Church and for humanity.

2. We are conscious that the prevailing mood of contemporary society is indifferent to, uncomprehending of, and even hostile towards the claim that the Church can serve the real needs of human beings and their world. The religions of the world are often accused of exacerbating conflict through their divisions and intolerance. Christians are criticised for their inability to be reconciled amongst themselves. This estrangement challenges us to uphold and affirm the intention for which God calls us together: to bring to men and women the Good News of God's love and purpose for humanity revealed in Jesus Christ. This is the Gospel with which we are entrusted.

3. In proclaiming this Gospel the vocation of the Church is to bear the marks of the crucified one, rejected and pushed to the margin, serving by giving a greater proof of love. However, we who as God's Church are charged with the privilege and responsibility of bringing the Gospel to our world must ourselves stand penitent and humbled before the truth of the Gospel. We must proclaim the reconciliation and communion with God that is the final destiny of the whole creation; but our common life in this mystery should also provide for the world a foretaste of the final kingdom inaugurated by Christ.
4. To understand the Church in terms of communion presents a challenge to all Christians. The scandal of our divisions makes the Gospel we proclaim harder to hear, and obscures the message of God's gift of communion. Yet humbly and thankfully we affirm that the Church on earth has been chosen by God and empowered by the Spirit as his instrument of reconciliation in Christ. At the present time Christians of many traditions are coming to see the central place of communion in their understanding of the vocation to which the Lord has called his people.
5. Together with other Christians, Anglicans and Roman Catholics are committed to the search for that unity in truth for which Christ prayed. Within this context, the purpose of ARCIC is to examine and try to resolve those doctrinal differences which hinder communion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The Final Report of ARCIC-I and the publication of ARCIC-II's statement on Salvation and the Church have contributed to progress in mutual understanding and in growing awareness of the need for full ecclesial communion. We believe it is time now to reflect more explicitly upon the nature of communion and its constitutive elements, so that we may recognise the degree of communion that exists both within and between our two Churches.

Moreover we believe that within the perspective of communion the outstanding difficulties between us will be most clearly understood and most likely to be resolved. Furthermore we hope that our reflections on communion will help to meet requests to clarify the Commission's understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church.

6. After a brief survey of the biblical idea of communion and the relation of this concept to an understanding of the Church, we explore the way the Church is at the same time sign and instrument of the merciful grace of God. Then we examine the way in which the Church of today remains in communion with the Church of the apostles. Next we see how the one and indivisible Church exists in local churches rooted in the variety of cultures, geographical situations and historical conditions. We then consider some of the elements required for the full and visible unity of the Church. Finally we examine the existing communion between our two Churches and outline some of the remaining issues which continue to divide us.

COMMUNION AND APOSTOLIC TRADITION IN THE CHURCH

28. The Church of God is built on the confession and practice of the faith, whose object is all that God has accomplished supremely in his Son. Its context is the divine truth as it has been revealed in Christ, to which the apostolic community bore witness by its life and teaching. Everything that the Church does or decides must be measured against this apostolic witness. This God-given deposit of faith is indissolubly linked with the gift of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Church to preserve and keep alive the memory of the teaching, work and exaltation of Christ. The apostolic community received a mandate to transmit their witness for posterity.

29. In recognizing the canon of Scripture as the normative record of the revelation of God, the Church formally sealed its acceptance of this transmitted memory of the apostolic community as authoritative. This memory, realised and ~~fully~~^{frankly} expressed in every age and culture, constitutes the apostolic tradition of the Church. Through the Holy Spirit this tradition as a living reality is perpetually celebrated and proclaimed by word and sacrament. For this reason, in the eucharistic memorial of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, the Scriptures have always been read. This apostolic tradition is therefore fundamental to the Church's communion which spans time and space, linking the present to past and future generations of Christians.

30. The living memory of the mystery of Christ is present and active within the Church as a whole. It is at work in the constant confession and celebration of the apostolic faith. It is also operative in the insights and perspectives of faithful members of the Church. As the social setting of the christian community changes, so the questions and challenges it has to face both from within and from without are never entirely the same. Even within the scriptures new images and nuances are used to express the faith as it is handed on to subsequent generations in changing cultural contexts. For the Church to remain faithfully rooted and grounded in the truth and to confess it with relevance, it must develop new expressions of the faith. Nevertheless these need to remain in conformity with the tradition received from the apostles. Within this living process individuals as well as the community as a whole play their part, for the Holy Spirit is at work in each member of the Church (cp. Romans 8:9). It is into the life and faith of the whole Church, the temple of the Holy Spirit (cp. 1 Cor. 3:16), that insights have to be integrated after being measured against the apostolic tradition.

31. Diversity of cultures may often elicit a diversity in the expression of the one gospel. Even within the same community differences of perception and practice arise. These call for a right discernment. The faith once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3) has to remain the same.

Tensions inevitably appear. Some are creative of healthy development. Some may cause a loss of continuity with apostolic tradition, disruption within the community, estrangement from other parts of the Church. Some, of them may lead to such conflict that ecclesial communion is severed. Whenever differences become embodied in separated ecclesial communities, so that Christians are no longer able to receive and pass on the truth within the one community of faith, communion is impoverished and the living memory of the Church becomes obscured. As Christians grow apart, complementary aspects of the one truth are perceived as mutually incompatible. Nevertheless the Church is sustained by Christ's promise of its perseverance in the truth (cf. Matt. 16:18), even though its unity and peace are constantly under threat. The Holy Spirit maintains the living memory of Christ among his people, by providing for them all that they require in order to remain in the apostolic tradition.

32. The responsibility of the Church's ministry is to keep the christian community within the bounds of the apostolic faith, preaching, explaining and applying its truth. Since the living memory of the Church is fostered by the Holy Spirit within the whole community, the individual Christian conscience is also being moulded by the same Spirit. The task of the minister, acting in the name of Christ, is to foster this action of the Spirit. In receiving the perceptions and desires of the community, the ministers seek to discern what is an authentic dimension of the will of God to be lived out in the Church. This task involves both heeding and sifting in order to assist the people of God in understanding, articulating and applying their faith. Sometimes they have to give an authoritative expression to the insights and wishes of the faithful. The responsibility for the maintenance of the apostolic faith is not exclusively that of the ordained ministry, even if it is their primary role. Every Christian has a share in this responsibility. The community must respond to the teaching of the ordained ministry and by active reflection through the discernment given by the Spirit assimilate its content into its life.

The succession of the episcopal ministry is intended to assure the community that its faith is indeed the faith that the Church through the ages has received in this dynamic way and has continued to transmit. Moreover, through the communion of the episcopal ministers the whole Church is made aware of the perceptions and situations of the local churches, while the local churches are helped to maintain their place within the communion of all the churches.

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VI COMMUNION - CATHOLICITY AND UNITY

32. The unity of the Church is grounded in God's gift of himself. Because there is only one Lord, there can only be one faith and one baptism. This unity will necessarily be realised in the rich diversity of the human race that God has created and now redeems. To speak of communion is to speak of a unity which requires and presupposes differences, reflecting the prodigious generosity of God the Creator, which finds its fullest expression in the mystery of salvation. Diversity is a characteristic of the human race. When the abundant variety of God's gifts is gladly accepted the fractures of hostility and suspicion which make differences threatening are mended. They are overcome in the love of the Three-in-One, who is in himself both unity and diversity. Correspondingly diversity must be a characteristic of the Church. The Church has always professed that it is "catholic". Called to carry the Gospel to the world's end, to every nation, culture, class and community, the Church must gladly embrace different forms and expressions as the indispensable medium of its ministry, so that, as at Pentecost, all may hear in their own tongues the tale of God's mighty works, and at the end every tribe and people and tongue may confess the salvation that belongs to him.

33. This diversity is apparent in the life both of individuals and communities. Communities vary in their ways of understanding and response as a result of cultural and geographical factors. Individuals, too, differ from one another in their temperamental and vocational endowments. St. Paul has the individual especially in mind when he writes (1 Cor. 12) of the Church as a body with a variety of members; but Christian communities, too, complement one another with their varied gifts and resources, spiritual and material. This has been evident, among other ways, in the variety of liturgies and forms of spirituality; of disciplines and ways of exercising authority, of theological approaches and forms of doctrinal expression which has always characterised the Church.

34. When these differences complement one another they demonstrate that as the result of our communion with God in Christ diversity need not lead to division. Division occurs only when diversities are taken to contradict or obscure the unity of the faith on which the Church is grounded, ^{or} ~~as~~ the integrity of the life which expresses it. This may be the case, or it may be a misunderstanding. The apostolic tradition is normative for the whole Church; and where there is rejection or distortion of its content, it is inevitable that this will lead to schism. And since the faith is professed by life and conduct as well, its denial in all forms of sin and injustice will also undermine communion. However, it is vital to distinguish what is essential for loyalty to the apostolic tradition from what is not. Unreasonable demand for conformity will mutilate true communion. Because catholicity requires an openness to the rich pluriformity of communion the Church refuses to be constrained within narrow sectarianism or exclusive elitism.

35. Thus the unity of the Church needs to be both nurtured and defended, and to this end God has equipped it with ministries of unity, exercised especially through the episcopate. In the first place their ministry is to hold diverse communities together in one communion, by mutual recognition, by interpretation and by reconciliation. When necessary, it also involves discerning where diversity has become departure from the apostolic norm, and expressing the Church's judgement on it. From its apostolic beginnings the Christian community has judged that those whose life constituted a radical rejection of the Gospel should be excluded from the Church's fellowship. However, concern for integrity must not become an intolerance which no longer accepts the frail and the sinful to whom God shows mercy. Those who have the ministry of oversight are responsible for guarding, co-ordinating and promoting the diverse gifts within each local community as well as the distinctive traditions of the communities themselves, while all the time safeguarding the fundamental unity of the People of God.

36. The catholicity of God's love demands that all the diverse gifts and graces given by God to his people should find room in his Church. The particular gifts that each member exercises are for building up the whole body of Christ. So every Christian is called both to contribute and to receive. And what is true of the individual is true of the local church. Communion with neighbouring churches and with the universal Church is essential to the integrity of its self-understanding. Life in self-sufficient isolation, which rejects the enrichment coming from other churches, is the denial of its very being. This is the sense in which we confess the Church to be both "one" and "catholic".

VI. Unity and Ecclesial Communion

37. The Communion which is the work of the Spirit must be embodied in a visible community. Shared discipleship needs to be manifested in a discernible manner. It is totally inadequate to speak only of an invisible unity as the fulfilment of Christ's will for his Church on earth. The Church as communion 'requires visible expression because it is intended to be the "sacrament" of God's saving work' (ARCIC I, Final Report, Intro. 7). The purpose of the visible ecclesial community is to promote and strengthen communion with God and to proclaim the apostolic witness that in the Son the Father has reconciled the world to himself, and has entrusted to the Church the ministry of reconciliation.

38. To the communion of the Church belong certain constitutive elements which are discernible already in the life of the Church of apostolic times. We read in Acts 'So those who received (Peter's) words were baptized ... And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers' (Acts 2:41-42; cf. 4:32-35). In this picture of the Jerusalem church we can see in nascent form certain elements of ecclesial communion which must be present in the Church in every age.

39. Full ecclesial communion is rooted in the confession of the one apostolic faith, revealed in the Scriptures, set forth in the Creeds, and attested by the ancient common traditions. It is founded upon one baptism with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit - a baptism which is a sign of the renunciation of evil, of the confession of faith, of the commitment to common discipleship, and of incorporation into the body of Christ which is the Church. Within the sacramental life of the Church, the common celebration of the Eucharist (especially on the Lord's day) is the pre-eminent expression and focus of the Church's communion; it is the perpetual memorial of Christ's redemption (offered in intercession for the entire Church by the whole Christ, head and members), whereby those who believe participate in the gift of the Lord's body and blood. The communion is built up and served at local, regional and universal levels by common organs of authority and a single ministry of oversight, grounded in the life of the community and exercised collegially and primatially, by means of which the Church at every level is able to guard and interpret the apostolic faith, to take decisions and to teach authoritatively.

39.A These elements find expression in shared commitment to the mission entrusted by Christ to his Church. They are integrally bound up with a life of shared concern for one another in mutual forbearance, submission, gentleness and love, in the placing of the interests of others above the interests of self, in making room for each other in the body of Christ; they compel us to participate in the search for peace and to side with the poor and powerless in their struggle for justice. Also constitutive of life in communion is acceptance of the same basic moral values, the sharing of the same vision of humanity created in the image of God and recreated

in Christ, and the common confession of the one hope in the final consummation of the Kingdom of God.

40. These inter-related elements are the means for constituting, maintaining and recognizing full ecclesial communion. While the Church as mystery already shares in the divine life of communion and love, in its human reality this communion is always marred by sin. As ^aconsequence divisions appear both within the life of particular Churches and between them. We are called to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3) and to strive for the restoration of communion where it is broken.

VIII COMMUNION BETWEEN ANGLICANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

41. Our common perception of the Church and its mission urges us forward together on the voyage towards full ecclesial communion, rather than continuing on our separate ways. Unity is so central to the purpose of God that we may never before him dare to allow the visible growth of the seeds of communion to wither and die. God wills the unity of all humanity. The realization of this goal is not so remote as to be entirely hidden, for already it is possible for us to taste firstfruits of the communion he intends. This foretaste of God's final destiny for his creation is both an incentive for our work and a guarantee that our labour is not in vain in the Lord (1Cor. 15:58).

42. It is important to recognize the large degree of doctrinal agreement that exists between our two communions and the progress in mutual understanding that has been achieved. In spite of past estrangements our long-standing common inheritance, now better understood, enables Anglicans and Roman Catholics to recognize in each other's churches a genuine affinity. Such progress must not be forfeited, even if the goal of visible unity now appears more distant than it once did.

43. We already share in the communion founded upon the once-for-all work of Christ and his continuing presence through the Holy Spirit. The common roots from which Anglicans and Roman Catholics have continued to draw life were acknowledged jointly in the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Donald Coggan in 1977. In it they noted some of the elements of full ecclesial communion already shared:

'A common faith in God our Father, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit; our common baptism into Christ;

our sharing of the Holy Scriptures, of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Chalcedonian definition, and the teaching of the Fathers; our common Christian inheritance for many centuries with its living traditions of liturgy, theology, spirituality and mission.'

The more we build upon this basis the more we discover the depth of this communion. Moreover, along with this recognition of all that we already share, there is a growing awareness of the richness which exists in both our Communions.

44. The Agreed Statements of ARCIC-I and ARCIC-II have contributed to this progress in our mutual understanding and relationships. Roman Catholics and Anglicans now frequently pray together on more than an occasional basis. Our patterns of liturgy have notably converged. The same eucharistic lectionary is used in many countries. We no longer disagree on the use of the vernacular language in public worship, nor do we any longer disagree that communion in both kinds is the appropriate mode of administration of the eucharist. Church buildings are shared. In some areas there is collaboration in christian education and in service to local communities; there is closer co-operation in ministerial formation and between parochial clergy; meetings of Roman Catholic and Anglican bishops are becoming customary, engendering mutual understanding and confidence. This often results in joint practical action and

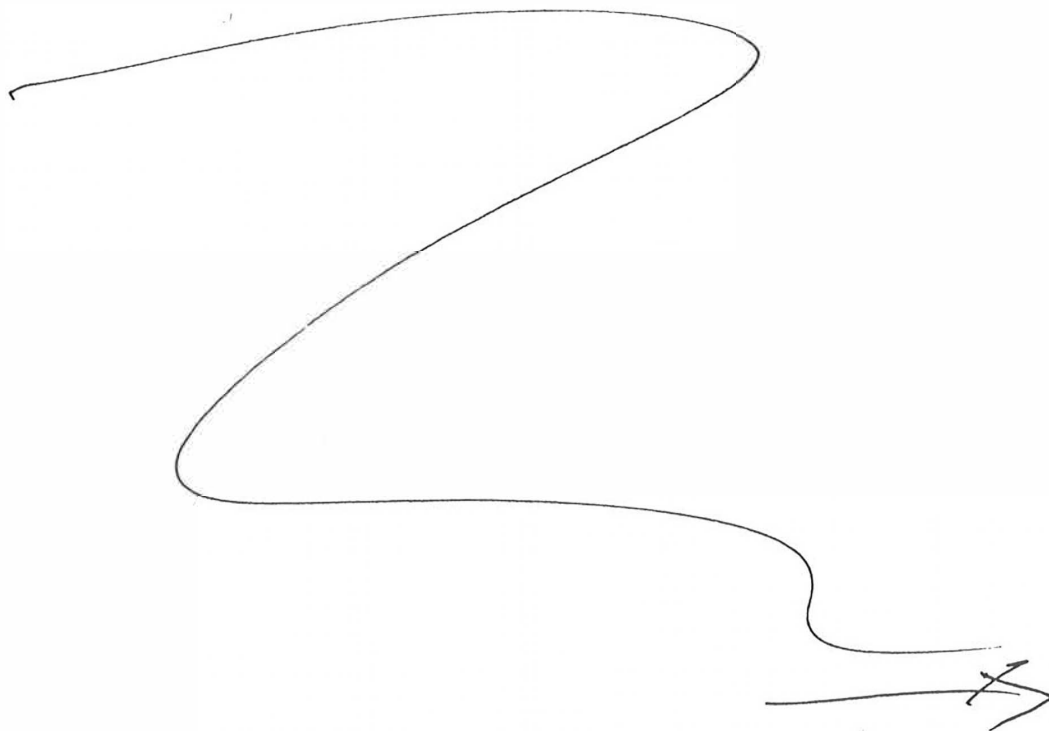
common statements on social and moral issues. This measure of communion that we experience, though ecclesially separated is, we believe, a fruit of the communion we share with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

45. After the publication of ARCIC-I's Final Report and ARCIC-II's Statement Salvation and the Church, there were requests for clarification and further exposition of the ecclesiological basis of our work. The importance of this subject is underlined by the growing awareness that all ecumenical endeavour depends upon the understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. It is clear for us, as we conclude this document, that despite the continuing obstacles, our two communions share a fundamental agreement, as we have set it out above, in what Christ wishes his Church to be. This should enable us to examine our present difficulties with hope because of our common certainty regarding the goal.

46. These reflections have been developed by the Commission against the background both of the ecclesiological perspectives of the Second Vatican Council and the developing understanding of the theology of communion in the Anglican Communion. This paper intends to be faithful to the doctrinal formulation to which both Anglicans and Catholics are committed. Its method has been to go behind these formulations in a way that is faithful to their meaning but to express that meaning in the form of perspectives that can claim the support of both sides. Not all that either side would want to say about the nature of the Church is stated here however. In particular the question of the petrine ministry awaits further attention in the context of the Commission's study of authority.

47. Grave obstacles both from the past and of recent origin must not lead us into thinking that there is no further room for advance. On the contrary, there are numerous areas wide open for growth in mutual understanding and sharing. Our agreement about the will of Christ for his Church impels us to seek the resolution of those doctrinal issues that keep us apart and make visible unity impossible. Without their resolution we cannot, as Churches, join together in the communion of the Lord's table, which is the sign of our communion in the one Church.

48. Our approach to the unresolved matters we must now face together is shaped by the agreed understanding of communion we have elaborated. Hence the crucial importance of this document for the continuation of our task. Moreover our agreement on communion will enable us to see how communion is relevant to a number of these outstanding issues.



a) To the long-standing problems of the reconciliation of ministries, with which ARCIC has been involved since its inception, are now added the implications for full ecclesial communion occasioned by the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate in some provinces of the Anglican Communion. These Anglican provinces consider their action to be a legitimate development of Tradition in the light of the fullness of communion of all humankind the Church is intended to signify. The Lambeth Conference of 1988, while registering different convictions about the ordination of women acknowledged the autonomy of Anglican Provinces in making decisions on this matter.

The Roman Catholic Church is firmly opposed to this development, viewing it as a break with Tradition of a kind such as no-one has competence to authorize. Given that the reconciliation of ministries is essential to full ecclesial communion, the ordination of women in the Anglican Communion seems to preclude the realization of this goal. From the Roman Catholic point of view, the situation is summed up in the recent comments of Pope John Paul II on ARCIC-I's study of the reconciliation of ministries:

'The ordination of women to the priesthood in some provinces of the Anglican Communion, together with the recognition of the right of individual provinces to proceed with the ordination of women to the episcopacy, appears to preempt this study and effectively block the path to the mutual recognition of ministries.'¹

¹Letter from Pope John Paul II to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 8th December 1988.

(b) Another area which the Commission is currently engaged in studying is that of moral issues. This study will explore the moral dimension of life in communion and seek to explain and assess the significance of agreement and differences on particular moral questions.

(c) Outstanding issues also include non-theological factors and, in particular, what has been called the difference in "ethos" between Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. The four hundred years of separate development has entailed a degree of cultural separation which has caused differences in our actual experience of what is involved in being in the Church.

(d) It is evident ^{that} all of the above issues are inextricably bound up with the question of authority, especially the reconciliation of ministries and the ordination of women, and moral questions. We continue to believe that an agreed understanding of the Church as communion is the correct context to continue the study of authority in the Church begun by ARCIC-I. This work will take into account the response of the Lambeth Conference of 1988 and the eventual response of the Roman Catholic Church in the search for the next steps we might take to deepen the existing communion between our two Churches. Paradoxically, the closer we draw together the more painful our outstanding differences become.

49. Acute as some of these obstacles may seem, our two Churches, together with all Christians, are under a divine obligation to continue to pursue the goal of full communion of faith and sacramental life. The continuing separation of our Churches impedes their mission. Christians not only have a responsibility for their own communities but for the accomplishment of the Church's God-given role in the fulfilment of his purpose in the world. Under God the communion of the Church does not exist merely for itself but in order that all creation may be led to give him the praise that is his due.