

THE CHURCH AS COMMUNIONI. 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 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 way in which communion is grounded in Scripture, and then of 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.

II. COMMUNION UNFOLDED IN SCRIPTURE

7. The drama of humanity, as expounded in Scripture, is of the formation, breakdown and renewal of relationships. Thus in Genesis Adam and Eve are presented as being created to find fulfilment in communion with each other and with God. Their disobedience undermines both their relationship with God and their relationship with each other: they hide from God; Adam blames Eve; they are excluded from the garden; their relationship with the rest of creation is distorted: the unfolding narrative in Genesis indicates that this is the way of all humanity.

8. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments bear witness that, in faithfulness to his eternal purpose, God continues to will the salvation of humankind and the restoration of creation. The divine purpose is re-affirmed in covenants with his people. Through Abraham God gives the promise of blessing to all the nations (Gen. 12:1-3). Through Moses God establishes a people as his own possession, a community in a covenant relationship with him (Exodus 19:5ff.). The prophets consistently denounce the community's faithlessness as threatening this relationship. Nevertheless, God's fidelity remains constant and he promises through the prophets that his purpose will be accomplished. Although division and exile follow upon the failures of the chosen people, reconciliation of the scattered people of God will spring from a radical transformation within a new covenant (Jer. 31:31). God will raise up a servant to fulfil his purpose of communion and peace for all the nations (Isaiah 49:6; cf. also Micah 4:1-4; Zechariah 2:10-13).

9. In the fullness of time, God sends his Son, born of a woman, to redeem his people and bring them into a new relationship as his adopted children (cf. Gal. 4:4). When Jesus begins his ministry he calls together a band of disciples with whom he shares his mission. (John 20:21). In the light of Easter they are to be witnesses to his life and teaching, death and resurrection. In the power of the Spirit given at Pentecost they proclaim that God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ. By a baptism of repentance and faith believers are brought into communion with God and one another (Acts. 2, esp. vv. 38, 42). The baptism bestowed in this New Covenant does more than restore that which was lost: by the Spirit believers enter Christ's own communion with the Father (cf. Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). It is this gift of communion which constitutes the people of the New Covenant, which is the Church, "a people still linked by spiritual ties to the stock of Abraham" (cf. Vatican II, Nostra Aetate, 4).

10. Through the victory of the Cross all estrangement occasioned by differences of culture, race, class, privilege and sex is overcome. In Christ all have equal standing before God (Galatians 3:27-29; Colossians 3:11). Moreover, because Christ is the one in whom and through whom all things are created and reconciled, the proper relationship between humanity and the rest of creation is restored and renewed in him (Colossians 1:15-20). This gift of communion is embodied in the people of the New Covenant.

11. However, from New Testament times to the present era the life of communion has been constantly weakened by human sin. The failure of Christians to respond to the evangelical demands of love and justice, truth and holiness impairs the life of communion. Divisions among Christians obscure the Church's witness.

12. Despite these failures and divisions the Scriptures speak of an authentic participation in the Kingdom here and now (Mark 1:15; Luke 11:20), to be perfectly realized only in the fulness of the Kingdom of God. Its culmination is described as a feast, 'the wedding supper of the Lamb', a vivid image of communion deeply rooted in human experience (Luke 22:30; Rev. 19:9; cf. Is. 25:6). This feast is spoken of by Jesus in the parables and foreshadowed in the feeding of the multitudes. The celebration of the Eucharist prefigures and provides a true foretaste of this messianic banquet. In the world to come, such signs will cease since the sacramental order will no longer be needed, for God will be immediately present to his people. They will see him face to face and join in endless praise (Revelation 22: 3-4). This will be the perfection of communion. Thus the communion of human beings with God, with one another, and with the whole creation is essentially eschatological in character.

13. In the New Testament the general idea of communion is conveyed in many ways. A variety of words, expressions and images point to its reality. More than any other concept, communion illuminates the reality to which this variety of images and language refer: the people of God (1 Peter 2: 9-10); flock (John 10:14; Acts 20: 28-29; 1 Peter 5:3, 4); body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27); vine (John 15:5); temple (1 Corinthians 3: 16-17); bride (Revelation 21:2). All of these imply relationships with the Father or with God; some of them, such as flock and body, also imply a relationship between the members of the community.

14. In the New Testament the Greek word koinonia (often translated 'communion' or 'fellowship') is the one which most aptly describes these relationships. Although the word, together with its cognates, is not always used in the New Testament with precisely the same connotation, it usually signifies relationship based on participation (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:16). It has come to be recognized as the most appropriate term to describe our relationship with God and with one another through Christ in the Spirit. This usage is most explicit in the Johannine writings: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3; cf. 1 John 1:7).

15. Communion is the all-embracing reality of a shared life in Christ (1 Cor. 10: 16-21; cf. John 17) of which no one model or image is an exhaustive description. Communion is the participation in the life of God through the Holy Spirit which makes Christians one with Christ and one with each other. Because it comprises those who enjoy this communion with God and with one another, the Church itself is rightly described as 'communion'.

16. Every account of the Church as communion necessarily implies a fundamental relationship to Christ. He is the leader of God's people, the shepherd of the flock, the head of the body, the cornerstone of the temple, the heavenly bridegroom, the vine. Similarly it is characteristic of the apostle Paul to speak of the relationship of believers to their Lord as being 'in Christ' (Romans 8:1; Col. 1:28; 2 Cor. 5:17). He also speaks of Christ as being in the believer (Rom. 8:10; Gal. 2:28; Col. 1:27). Through this relation to Christ the Church exists as a fruit of saving grace and also as an instrument of God for the realization of this purpose.

17. In accordance with New Testament usage, communion also denotes participation in the Lord's Supper, the focus of the Church's life in communion (1 Cor. 10: 16-17). This New Testament use of the word, however, transcends and points beyond the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist; it expresses the unity that stems from the relationship that Christians enjoy in Christ with God and with one another, which will reach its fulfilment when God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). It is the will of God for the whole of his creation, that all things should be brought to ultimate unity in Christ (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1: 19-20); the Church is sign, instrument and foretaste of that communion and oneness of God's Kingdom. Consequently, communion means more than an institutional or juridical relationship between Christian communities, though this is certainly entailed. It is the word which most aptly expresses the fundamental nature of the Church.

III. COMMUNION, SACRAMENTALITY AND THE CHURCH

18. God's purpose is to bring all humanity into communion with himself within a transformed creation (cf. Rom. 8: 19-22). To accomplish this the eternal Word became incarnate. The life and ministry

of Jesus Christ definitively manifested the restored humanity that God intends. By what he was, by what he taught, and by what he accomplished through the Cross and resurrection, he became both sign and instrument of the realization of God's purpose for the whole of creation. The risen Christ as the new Adam, the source of life in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45), is the beginning and guarantor of this transformation. Through this transformation the bitterest alienations of humanity are superseded by a profound communion, not only between human beings but supremely between them and God. These two dimensions of communion are inseparable. This is the mystery of Christ (Romans 16: 25-26; Gal. 3: 2-11). In the design of God the harmony and love that he desires between individuals and communities, races and cultures, must be rooted in this communion with God and sustained and fostered by it.

19. Human relationships in their frailty are always under threat.

God in his mercy continues through the work of the Holy Spirit to make available the means of grace whereby communion can be restored, maintained and nourished. In Christ the new Adam, the responsibility and dignity of human kind, made in the image of God, have been restored and are constantly being renewed by the Spirit. That part of humanity which through faith acknowledges and accepts the gift of God's grace is joined with Christ in the manifestation and extension of this communion. The Church is this community of faith, incorporated into Christ through baptism, that has become his Body, "the fulness of him who fills the whole creation" (Eph. 1:23). It is empowered by his Spirit to make present for all time the incomparable riches of God's grace. The Church can therefore be described as "sacrament", the sign of our communion with God and with one another, and the instrument by which he accomplishes this communion.

20. The Church as Sign

The Church as communion of believers with God and with each other is a sign of the new humanity that God is creating and a pledge of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. Its vocation is to embody and reveal the redemptive power of the Gospel, signifying the offer of forgiveness received through faith and the gift of sharing the new life in Christ. Those who are baptized devote themselves to "the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship (koinonia), to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42), and also to the proclamation of the Gospel (cf. Acts 8:4). They become one heart and soul. They serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13). Their sharing of material resources is a true dimension of their communion within the life of Christ (Romans 15: 26-27). Because Christ overcame all the barriers of division created by human sin, the Christian community has entered into the struggle to end those divisions (cf. Ephesians 2: 14-18, 5: 1,2).

21. The Church is thus far more than a voluntary coming together of justified individuals, for in it Christ is ever present and acting through the Spirit. It is the community where the redemptive work of Jesus Christ has both been recognised and appropriated, and is being made known to the world. The Church is the sign of what God has done in Christ, is continuing to do for those who serve him, and wills to do for all humanity. It is the sign of God's abiding presence, the pledge of his eternal faithfulness to his promises, till God be all in all.:

22. The Church as Instrument

In St. Matthew's Gospel the risen Christ gives his followers the promise of his continual presence and the command to make disciples of

all nations (28: 19-20). With the ascension of Christ, the Church has been entrusted with the stewardship of the means of grace and the message of salvation: to continue the saving mission of Christ through the power of his presence, assured by the Spirit. Through the Church's ministry of the Word, God proclaims the good news of salvation once for all achieved by Christ and of the call to communion with Christ. In the Church's celebration of the sacraments God the Father bestows the riches of shared life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. When God's promise of salvation and sanctification is thus offered, in his faithfulness, he brings it to fulfilment. Moreover, in the commitment of the members of the Church to the world's needs, Christ is present, continuing and extending his ministry to the end of time. Thus, as the instrument of God's purpose, 'the Church is called to be a living expression of the Gospel, evangelized and evangelized and evangelizing, reconciled and reconciling, gathered together and gathering others. In its ministry to the world the Church seeks to share with all people the grace by which its own life is created and sustained' (Salvation and the Church, 28).

23. Through the reception of God's grace the Church is empowered to become this active instrument of that grace. Therefore the affirmation that the Church is instrument of salvation does not mean that it is in any way independent of Christ or that it can add anything to the grace of God.

24. In Christ Jesus the service of God always involves readiness for suffering. In all the suffering of the members of the Church for God's glory, Christ himself, the Saviour of the world, is present. What Paul says of himself is true for all: "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body which is the Church" (Col. 1:24). Thus the sufferings

and anguish of the Church are not only an instrument of sanctification for its own members they are also instruments of God for the evangelisation of the world. To be the Church is to share sacrificially in partnership (koinonia) in the Gospel (Phil. 1:5).

25. Thus the Church, through its communion with God and its common life in the Spirit, is both sign and instrument, that is, the visible manifestation of the mysterious gift of the Kingdom as well as the means utilised by God for the fulfilment of his Kingdom. By its common life the Church is the sign of this Kingdom. By the preaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments, the pastoral ministry of reconciliation and healing and by the work of evangelisation, as well as their witness to justice and peace, the whole People of God is the instrument for the spread of the Kingdom. Consequently when we speak of the Church as 'sacrament' we mean that its very existence is both sign of the mystery of Christ and instrument of his Spirit.

26. The mandate of Christ given to the Church to bring salvation to all the nations of the earth constitutes its unique mission. By God's gift of the same Spirit who was at work in the earthly ministry of Jesus the Church shares in attaining the goal of Christ's mission.

27. To be in communion with Christ in his continuing ministry for the salvation of the world is to share his will that the Father be glorified. The will of Christ that his Church be one is not only for the credibility of the Church's witness and for the effectiveness of its mission, it is also for the glorification of the Father. God's reconciling work is made strikingly manifest when believers in all their diversity are united in the communion of the Church. This

Communion is a pledge here and now of the ultimate fulfilment of God's design for all humanity as proclaimed in the vision of the Book of Revelation of a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues ... crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev. 7, 9-10).

IV. COMMUNION, APOSTOLIC TRADITION AND 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, and supremely what he has accomplished in his Son. Its content 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 from the Lord to transmit its witness for posterity.

29. In recognizing the canon of Scripture as the normative record of the revelation of God, the Church sealed its acceptance of this transmitted memory of the apostolic community as authoritative. This memory, realised and freely 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. Faith seeks understanding and this search involves a profound probing of the very foundations of faith. Moreover, as the social setting of the Christian community changes, so the questions and challenges it has to face, both from within and from without the Church, are never entirely the same. Even within the scriptures new images and nuances are employed to express the faith as it is handed on throughout the generations and 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 faithful to 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. It is into the life and faith of the whole Church, the temple of the Holy Spirit, that insights have to be integrated after being measured against the apostolic tradition. (cf. 1 Cor. 3: 10-17).

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. Within the history of Christianity, some have led 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 those who have oversight in the Church 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 those who exercise oversight, acting in the name of Christ, is to foster this action of the Spirit. In receiving the perceptions and desires of the community, they 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 the role is primarily theirs. Every Christian has a share in this responsibility. The community responds to the teaching of the ordained ministry and, by active reflection through the discernment given by the Spirit, assimilates its content into its life.

33. The fullness of the ministry of oversight is entrusted to the episcopate. 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.

V. COMMUNION - CATHOLICITY AND UNITY

34. The unity of the Church is grounded in the trinitarian unity of God. Because there is only one Lord, there can only be one faith and one baptism. This unity will necessarily be realized 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 prodigal generosity of God the Creator, which finds its fullest expression in the mystery of salvation. Diversity is a characteristic of the human race. Where 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 through our participation in the sacrificial love of God the Holy Trinity, perfectly revealed in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. But whereas the Church seeks to overcome division and alienation, diversity must remain 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 differences of form and expression, so that, as at Pentecost, all may hear in their own tongues the tale of God's mighty works, and at the end, all tribes and people and tongues may confess the salvation which belongs to God (cf. Rev. 7: 9-10).

35. 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.

36. 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 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 serious 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 fidelity to the apostolic tradition from what is not. Unreasonable demand for conformity will weaken true communion. Because catholicity requires an openness to the manifold richness of communion the Church refuses to be constrained within narrow sectarianism or exclusive elitism.

37. Thus the unity of the Church needs to be both nurtured and defended, and to this end God has equipped it with an episcopal ministry of unity. In the first place this ministry involves holding 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 expression the Church's judgment 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. 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.

38. 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 other 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

39. 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 mission 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.

40. 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.

41. 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 locally, regionally and universally, through the ordained ministry and especially through the episcopate. This ministry of oversight is exercised in relation to all the members of the community. It is also exercised collegially, with other bishops and primatially so that at every level the Church is able to guard and interpret the apostolic faith, to take decisions and to teach authoritatively. It is in the context of the universal dimension of ministry serving communion that the office of the Bishop of Rome must find its place.

42. 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 require the Church 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.

43. These inter-related elements are the means for constituting, maintaining and recognizing full ecclesial communion. While the Church already shares in the divine life of communion and love, in its human reality this communion is always marred by sin. As a

consequence divisions appear both within the life of churches and between them. Christians 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.

44. From earliest times the Church has known the reality of breakdown of communion resulting in a situation in which some Christians no longer live its full reality. The ordained ministry has always had the responsibility of seeking to maintain communion.

45. Different means have been used to express, preserve and foster communion, especially when the Church has been faced with grave disagreement. Communication has been maintained by the exchange of episcopal letters. In the early Church, local churches recognized the necessity of maintaining communion with the principal Sees, especially with the Bishop of Rome. The practice of holding synods or councils (first local, later ecumenical) came from the need for mutual consultation and common decision-making.

Life in self-sufficient isolation is for the local church the denial of its very being. Whether in times of dispute or not, this is the reason why bishops of other local churches participate in episcopal ordinations. Even when ecclesial communion has been broken, the desire for such communion has never been wholly lost. Communion of the local church with neighbouring churches and with the universal Church is an essential part of the integrity of the Church's self-understanding.

46. The Church confesses itself to be 'apostolic' because it is founded upon the faith of the apostles and because it proclaims that faith in apostolic mission. The office of bishop, whether

exercised in the diocese, in council or primatially, has a particular responsibility to maintain and express the communion and unity of the churches. As indicated earlier, this task is fulfilled by keeping the community faithful to the apostolic teaching. In the early Church this apostolic continuity was not only expressed by the careful transmission of the Holy Scripture but also by keeping lists of episcopal succession. Such lists witnessed to the apostolic succession in faith of particular local churches, and already in the late second century Irenaeus made clear that amongst such lists that of the bishops of Rome had special significance. Fundamental to the Church's self-understanding is this sense of communion through time. This is also expressed through faith in the "communion of Saints", whereby the Church declares its conviction that the eucharistic community on earth is itself a participation in a larger communion which includes the martyrs and confessors and all who have fallen asleep in Christ throughout the ages.

VII. COMMUNION BETWEEN ANGLICANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

47. 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 good 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.

48. 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.

49. We already share in the communion founded upon the once-for-all work of Christ and his continuing presence through the Holy Spirit. This was acknowledged jointly in the Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert Runcie of October 1989. In it they noted some of the elements of full ecclesial communion already shared:

We also urge our clergy and faithful not to neglect or undervalue that certain yet imperfect communion we already share. This communion already shared is grounded in faith in God our Father, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in 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. This communion should be cherished and guarded as we seek to grow into the fuller communion Christ wills. Even in the years of our separation we have been able to recognize gifts of the Spirit in each other. The ecumenical journey is not only about the removal of obstacles but also about the sharing of gifts.

50. One of the most important ways in which there has already been a sharing of gifts is in spirituality and worship. 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 either on the availability of the bible for study by the laity or 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. In some circumstances, buildings are shared.

51. 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 and religious communities; 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.

52. 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 wills his Church to be. This should enable us to examine our present difficulties with hope because of our common certainty regarding the goal.

53. These reflections have been developed by the Commission against the background both of the ecclesiological perspectives of the Second Vatican Council and the developing Anglican understanding of the theology of communion. This Statement intends to be faithful to the doctrinal formulations to which Anglicans and Catholics are each 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.

54. 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.

55. 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 now gives us the context that will enable us to see how communion is relevant to a number of these outstanding issues.

(a) To the long-standing problem of the reconciliation of ministries particularly as focused in Apostolicae Curae (1896), with which ARCIC has been involved since its inception, are now added the present and future implications for full ecclesial communion of 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. It also stressed the importance of "maintaining the highest possible degree of communion with the Provinces which differ" (Lambeth Conference, 1988; 1,1).

The Roman Catholic Church views this development as a break with Tradition that it does not believe itself competent to authorise. (cf. Inter Insigniores 1). 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 point of view of the Roman Catholic Church, the situation is summed up in the recent comments of Pope John Paul II on ARCIC'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. (Letter 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) It is evident that all of the above issues are inextricably bound up with the question of authority. In particular, they entail further study both of the nature of the authority of the Bishop of Rome and the character of provincial autonomy in the Anglican Communion. We also 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.

(d) 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 separate cultural evolution which has caused differences in our experience of what is involved in being the Church.

55. Serious 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 an internal responsibility for their own communities but also 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. Paradoxically, the closer we draw together, the more acute our differences become. The manner in which we handle painful conflict and debate will itself testify to the character of the fuller communion for which we strive.