

Society for Ecumenical Studies

Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ
The Agreed Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International
Commission

An Exploration of the Role of Mary in Ecumenical Growth

Bishop Malcolm McMahon OP, Canon Nicholas Sagovsky and Mgr Andrew Faley at the Nottingham Diocesan Ecumenical Commission, July 2005

Report by David Jones

reproduced by kind permission of the author and the Catholic Diocese of Nottingham

"The Scriptures lead us together to praise and bless Mary as the handmaid of the Lord, who was providentially prepared by divine grace to be the mother of our Redeemer. Her unqualified assent to the fulfilment of God's saving plan can be seen as the supreme instance of a believer's "Amen" in response to the "Yes" of God." (MGHC 51)

Introduction

Over seventy Christians from the Catholic Diocese of Nottingham, and beyond, responded to an invitation from the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission to a Joint Ecumenical Weekend at Swanwick in early July. This was the ninth in a series of annual conferences and the second to be open to people of all Christian denominations. This second "open" conference was devoted to the role of Mary in our ecumenical development by exploration of the document, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (MGHC), which was agreed in Seattle in 2004 by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).

When considering Mary in the Tradition of the Church, ARCIC often found it helpful to turn to Orthodox ideas, as the Churches of the East had remained largely free of scholastic dispute in this field. This Orthodox influence was echoed throughout the weekend by the use of icons in the periods devoted to Liturgy (organized and led by Father Ken O'Riordan and Miss Paula Bailey). An icon is

not a work of art, but a work of adoration. It is not painted; it is prayed. Thus, in introducing the conference, Father Kevin Clark, Chairman of the Diocese of Nottingham Ecumenical Commission, led it in praying the *Magnificat*.

The principal participants were Father Andrew Faley, Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs and Interfaith Relations of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, acting as facilitator, and the speakers, Bishop Malcolm McMahon OP of Nottingham and Dr Nicholas Sagovsky, Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey, both members of ARCIC.

SESSION 1 - SETTING THE SCENE

Catholic Dogmas on Mary - Bishop Malcolm McMahon

We are making the road of ecumenism as we walk on it. The new ARCIC document on Mary is a paving-stone on that road. The journey is exciting, and it takes courage. In places the road is smooth, but in places the going is tricky, and we may stumble at such points.

Mary, being in the Church, makes a difference for Catholics in the expression of their faith. Recalling boyhood, Bishop McMahon said that he had been taught the *Hail Mary* before learning the *Our Father*, and how much importance had been attached to May processions in honour of Our Lady. And so Mary is very much a part of life as a Catholic, with many hymns and prayers in which she is named and celebrated. As one grows up, Mary remains part of one's life as a Catholic, for example, through the praying of the Rosary.

But as an adult, one needs to make some kind of shift in one's thinking about Mary. Together with the devotion to Mary goes the doctrine, in the Scriptures and the Tradition. Understanding the devotion, liturgy and the doctrine, Catholics and Anglicans can learn more regarding each other's standpoint on Our Lady, and can come to see that their ideas about her need not be communion-dividing. Mary always points to her Son, and this unifying emphasis was a key element in ARCIC's deliberations.

So an adult view of Mary sees her as the first of the disciples, the first of the believers, comparable to Abraham in the Old Testament, who was given to

understand that his descendants would be blessed. Her *Magnificat*, which echoes that understanding of God's blessing renewed in her, is the prayer of a young person from a poor community, overwhelmed by God. The prayer demonstrates two key characteristics of poor communities, as groups where people always have a great dependence on each other, coupled with openness to God's grace.

And that openness to grace and availability to others in the life of Mary is not something that is confined to this young phase in her role in God's mystery of our salvation. One of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (1964), stresses that when Mary was assumed into Heaven, her salvific role was not set aside. Paragraph 69 of LG states:

"All Christ's faithful must issue urgent pleas to the Mother of God and Mother of men. She once assisted with her prayers at the beginnings of the Church. Now that she is placed high in heaven above all the blessed and the angels, they must plead with her to make intercession before her Son in the communion of all the saints."

But this point has raised problems for those outside the Catholic Church. It has not been properly understood, or what Catholics believe in saying it has not been understood.

There is, however, much common ground between Christians concerning Mary. All acknowledge her as Mother of God, Theotókos, or God-bearer. We, too, as Christians, are called to bear Christ in our lives.

Christians also agree in believing that Mary is "ever-virgin". Agreement on the perpetual virginity of Mary was reached at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, although problems arose much more recently over references in Scripture to Jesus' "brothers and sisters". In the contexts in which this phrase occurs it could mean "cousins", and Jesus himself is quoted as saying that all those who hear the word of God and keep it are his "brothers and sisters" (cf. Matthew 12:48-50, Mark 3:31-34, Luke 8:19-21, 11:27-28).

A deeper and longer-term disagreement over different Christians' approach to Mary concerns the Communion of Saints - what relationship do we have with

them, and with each other, all under God? Can we ask the saints to pray for us? Do they still have an active role in the life of the Church?

But Catholic members of ARCIC were surprised by the continuity and depth of Marian devotion which they found in Anglicanism. The paragraph from *Lumen Gentium* quoted above begins with an expression of "great joy and consolation" in observing "that among separated brethren ... there are those who give due honour to the Lord and Saviour's mother...", noting that this was so "especially among Eastern Christians." But it is true among Anglicans too.

But Paragraph 2 of MGHC, having referred to "a significant degree of agreement" regarding belief about Mary reached in earlier ARCIC discussions, and reflected in each Church's doctrine, liturgy and devotion, pointed to two areas of remaining differences: the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

With regard to the Immaculate Conception, in 1854 Pope Pius IX, in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, declared that

"from the first moment of her conception, the Blessed Virgin Mary was, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of mankind, kept free of all stain of original sin ..."

Now while apparitions are fairly well known about in our own day, during the nineteenth century, no fewer than sixty had been recorded in France alone, only a few of which had been approved. In 1858, Mary appeared in repeated visions at Lourdes to an illiterate peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, identifying herself as "the Immaculate Conception", a term which would certainly have been beyond the knowledge of the fourteen-year old girl she was addressing.

Centuries earlier, Duns Scotus (c.1262- 1308) had questioned how anyone tainted with original sin could possibly become the Mother of God; and this questioning had raised many problems throughout the Catholic Church's thinking and praying for centuries subsequently. Pius IX's declaration was meant to draw all this to a conclusion and settle it after many years of deliberation.

So Catholics believe that it is because of the Immaculate Conception that Mary was a suitable person to bear Christ, through whom we are redeemed. And at the moment of our Baptism, we too have the same advantages as Mary had through the Immaculate Conception. Both she and we receive the fruits of the redemption that Christ has made in us. And Mary went on to live a life preserved from sin because she was open to God's grace from the beginning.

As to the Assumption of Our Lady - the belief that "the Immaculate Mother of God, Mary, ever virgin, having run the course of her earthly life, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven" – the dogma was defined (in those words) by Pope Pius XII's Apostolic Constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950), again after a centuries-long period of faith, worship and discernment, as of faith for Catholics.

The idea of the Assumption occurred because it was believed that as Mary's body had been one with that of Christ, then it was not fitting that her body should decay. The doctrine dates from very early in the Christian era, and was put forward formally in 1950 in the wake of two world wars - a reaction to the suffering and hope of that period, and an affirmation that bodies matter, as well as souls.

Anglicans too, in the hope of finding Christian unity with Catholics, wish at this point to take a fresh look at the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and of the Assumption, and the aim of the ARCIC document is to enable that, so that we can draw closer concerning Mary, and in drawing closer to her, come even closer to her Son.

ARCIC - *Canon Nicholas Sagovsky*

Although a member of ARCIC since 1991, never before had Nicholas Sagovsky had the opportunity of following a document through in the way offered by this conference.

ARCIC has been in operation for nearly forty years, having been set up in 1966 on the initiative of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury. It has been a "serious dialogue founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions." (Paragraph 4 MGHC)

In ARCIC I, the first dialogues were on the Eucharist, on Ministry and on Authority; and real progress had been made. ARCIC's method of working became

well-established: it is to state first what Catholics and Anglicans can say together before considering points of disagreement as a basis for future work. Those involved had found a huge amount of shared tradition - stretching over a period of more than 1,500 years.

A style of working has been established, in which those participating meet in an atmosphere of prayer and friendship. All involved meet daily for prayer and the Eucharist. Eucharists are presided over in turn by Catholics and Anglicans, and, invariably, one finds that people will come forward for a blessing if they are not able to receive Communion.

ARCIC is not an authoritative body, which is in a position to direct or speak for the authorities of the Churches by which it has been established. But it can explore and offer its findings to those authorities. For their part, the authorities can evaluate the work of ARCIC and, where it is felt necessary, point to the need for further work.

ARCIC II studied the Church as the Body of Christ and the Church as Communion. It also worked on Justification by Faith, on Morals, and on a Common Vision of Christ.

There is a real link between ARCIC's work on Authority and the present statement on Mary, because in Mary we have the prime example of responding to God's "Yes" - his active will for her - with her "Amen". This is something faced by each Christian in saying "Amen" to Christ's "Yes" to him. So attempting to understand the respective traditions concerning Mary goes to the heart of the attempt to understand Christ's authority in the world and in the Church, and the heart of life in the Church.

It is possible that those involved in the work of ARCIC in its early days may have envisaged sharing full Communion by 2000. Now it is generally recognised that this coming together will "take as long as it takes". In the meantime ARCIC members are called to work urgently on answering Our Lord's prayer "that they may all be one".

So it is pleasing that this statement on Mary has been well received. In Sagovsky's early experience he found that, "Anglicans don't do Mary". This

situation was a hangover from the Reformation, when there had been a very strong reaction to Marian devotion, which had come to be seen as detracting from devotion to Christ. As a result of this reaction Mary had effectively been cut out from Anglican devotion as far as most were concerned.

Despite this, the belief in Mary as "ever-virgin" had not been abandoned, although her active role in God's scheme salvation was a problem for Anglicans to acknowledge; and there was a sense that Mary had to be down-graded. While all this was true of attitudes in the sixteenth century, the seventeenth century saw something of a re-exploration of the tradition in England, particularly among the poets, for example, Lancelot Andrewes and Jeremy Taylor.

Mary was, however, still "kept on the books". For example, five Marian feasts were included in the calendar of the Church of England from 1561, and later retained in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. These were her Conception, her Nativity, the Annunciation, the Visitation and her Purification/Presentation. All these were seen to be scriptural. The Assumption was not included as not only was it understood to lack direct scriptural warrant, but it was also seen as exalting Mary at the expense of Christ.

In addition, as is noted in MGHC paragraph 46, "in spite of the diminution of devotion to Mary ... reverence for her endured in the continued use of the *Magnificat* in Evening Prayer and the unchanged dedication of ancient churches and Lady Chapels."

So Mary certainly was not lost from Anglicanism. Nor could she be, because of her presence in Scripture; although for some Anglicans lack of devotion to Mary was a marker for them, while for others she remained highly important, as is evident in, for example, devotion to her at Walsingham. And for other Anglicans, belief in the Immaculate Conception and in the Assumption is not what is important. For them, of much more significance is Mary's presence at the foot of the Cross.

ARCIC began by setting itself to explore everything in Scripture relating to Mary, but doing this had brought in the much wider themes of God's activity and people's response to God. The words "Grace" and "Hope" in the title of the Agreed Statement embrace these very important themes, because God's grace is

being seen most signally at work in Mary, and hope for humanity is embodied in her too.

MGHC paragraph 10 refers to accounts in the Scriptures of "the calling by God of particular persons so that within the people of God certain special tasks may be performed" and to "profound reflections on what it is to be known and called by God from the very beginning of one's existence".

In the same paragraph, Paul is quoted as speaking of those who are "called according to God's purpose," affirming that those whom God "foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son ... And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified". (Romans 8:28-30)

This is a key passage in understanding the role of Mary, who is pre-eminent among those who are called. The Annunciation is her call, and what God does in Mary, he does because of Christ. Her justification and sanctification lead into glorification, as Paul told of us all. So the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are seen within a trajectory of grace. This way of understanding what the Catholic dogmas are driving at is very encouraging for Anglicans, especially those looking first to the words of Scripture rather than from within the perspectives of Tradition. In ARCIC's method of working there is no negotiation, no trade-offs, no dissenting judgements. Rather their way is to work until a point is reached that all can assent to. This statement on Mary is, therefore, unanimous.

The Anglican and Roman Catholic authorities will almost certainly be asking ARCIC to do some further work on some points in the document, as not all the difficulties and differences on Mary have been resolved. But it is up to the authorities to decide to what extent they have been resolved in the shared understanding presented in MGHC.

SESSION 2 - MARY ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ, Section A - *Nicholas Sagovsky*

A phrase or two in each paragraph of the document was highlighted, with the aim of discerning how each "brick" of the document contributed to the whole "building".

First, there are two important points made in the Preface to the Statement by the two Co-Chairmen of ARCIC. The first is that "in framing this Agreed Statement, we have drawn on the Scriptures and the common tradition which pre-dates the Reformation.." The second point is that, "as in previous ARCIC documents, we have attempted to use language that reflects what we hold in common, and transcends the controversies of the past."

In Paragraph 1 of the MGHC, the focus is turned "on the place of Mary in the life and doctrine of the Church" - a point which recalled the Liturgy of the previous evening when those participating had been invited to spend time before a number of icons of Mary.

Paragraph 2 points out how a great deal of agreement was reached in earlier work by ARCIC on Mary as "a model of holiness, obedience and faith for all Christians". In the light of so much agreement, one might well ask what need there is for further work on Mary, but the latter half of the same paragraph points to "remaining differences" between the two Communion over various matters, including the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, papal authority, and whether Anglicans would be required to "subscribe to such dogmatic statements", in the event of imminent union between the two churches.

One might express surprise that, having pointed to key areas of outstanding difference at the outset, MGHC does not address these differences immediately - they are not raised again until Paragraph 58. But ARCIC's method of working is first to establish what can be agreed upon, before delineating areas where there is lack of agreement.

In Paragraph 3, reference is made to an earlier ARCIC document, *The Gift of Authority* (1999), and to the important principle of "re-reception". The paragraph concludes by stating, "Progress in ecumenical dialogue and understanding suggests that we now have an opportunity to re-receive together the tradition of Mary's place in God's revelation."

This idea of “re-reception” originated with the Catholic theologian, Yves Congar. Reception is a term applied to what is taught and is received by the faithful who recognise it as basically what they believe, that is, they receive what has been handed on. Re-reception is a process in which fresh recourse to Scripture and Tradition yields new insights for the present day, while remaining faithful to what has been handed down (e.g., for Anglicans, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion must always be kept in mind as a frame of reference).

Paragraph 4 recalls that, since its beginnings, "ARCIC has sought to get behind opposed or entrenched positions to discover and develop our common inheritance of faith"; while in Paragraph 5 a clear link is seen between Mary and the life of the Church in the statement that, "Mary's *fiat* can be seen as the supreme instance of a believer's "Amen" in response to the "Yes" of God." The opening sentence of Paragraph 6 states a key idea in its recognition of Scripture as the norm and guide for ARCIC's work, and as the test for its teaching. It asserts, "it is impossible to be faithful to Scripture and not to take Mary seriously."

After referring to the various approaches to the reading of the Scriptures, Paragraph 7 concludes with the observation that ARCIC's is "an ecclesial and ecumenical reading, seeking to consider each passage about Mary in the context of the New Testament as a whole, against the background of the Old and in the light of Tradition." In a word, Mary has been considered in the light of the whole of Scripture.

Finally in this session, note the heading above Paragraph 8, which reads, "The Witness of Scripture: A Trajectory of Grace and Hope". Both grace and hope are themes which recur throughout Scripture; and "trajectory" in this context has the meaning of something akin to a pattern, but also includes the idea of a forward movement.

SESSION 3 - MARY IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ, Section B - *Nicholas Sagovsky*

Tradition is not separate from Scripture, but is the way in which Scripture has been lived.

In Paragraph 31, "Christ and Mary in the Christian Tradition", note the mention of Christ ... Mary is not to be considered alone. Her unique position is thus in God's plan in bringing Christ into the world. And so, from the very beginnings of the Church, debate about the role of Mary has been very closely linked to debate concerning the nature of Christ.

Paragraphs 32-34 refer respectively to Jesus' birth from Mary, to her virginal conception of Jesus and to Mary as Theotókos (Godbearer). Each ends with the declaration, "This Anglicans and Roman Catholics together affirm".

The use of the plural - "Traditions" - in the heading to Paragraph 35 is a reference to the different traditions of the Churches of the East and of the West. Paragraph 35 thus speaks of how in the early undivided centuries there developed "a deep awareness of Mary's role in the redemption of humanityas Eve's counterpart and as a type of the Church."

The comparison with Eve is picked up in Paragraph 36, "virgin Eve's disobedience results in death; the virgin Mary's obedience opens the way to salvation. The New Eve shares in the New Adam's victory over sin and death."

Paragraph 37, on the question of Mary as "Ever-Virgin", explains that "virginity was understood not only as physical integrity, but as an interior disposition of openness, obedience and single-hearted fidelity to Christ, which models Christian discipleship, and issues in spiritual fruitfulness."

As Paragraph 38 explains, "Mary's virginity was closely related to her sanctity", and declares that "Fathers from East and Westsupport the view that Mary was filled with grace from her origin in anticipation of her unique vocation as Mother of the Lord ... (that she was) a new creation, blameless, spotless, 'holy in body and soul'..."

Paragraph 39 points out how, "following the Christological debates at the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), devotion to Mary flourished ... and a tradition of praying with, and praising Mary was gradually established."

Developing this theme, Paragraph 40 details how "churches began to be dedicated to Mary, and feasts in her honour began to be celebrated..." Referring

to her assumption, this paragraph states that this belief "was grounded in the promise of the resurrection of the dead and the recognition of Mary's dignity as Theotókos and 'Ever Virgin', coupled with the conviction that she who had borne Life should be associated with her Son's victory over death .."

As Paragraph 41 notes, in later centuries, "a growing emphasis on the humanity of Christ was matched by attention to the exemplary virtues of Mary ... meditation on the lives of both Christ and Mary became popular, and gave rise to ... devotional practices such as the rosary."

Paragraphs 42-44 trace the history of how "major shifts in emphasis in theological reflection about Mary", which led to believers moving from seeing Mary "as representing redeemed humanity" to a view of her "as dispensing Christ's graces to the faithful", led to a reaction at the Reformation "against devotional practices which approached Mary as a mediatrix alongside Christ, or, sometimes, even in his place".

The next four paragraphs (43-48) trace developments regarding Marian devotion since the Reformation in both the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions, while Paragraph 49 refers to "a new prominence in Anglican worship" given to Mary in the twentieth century. Paragraph 50 speaks of how, in *Lumen Gentium*, "the Roman Catholic Church has attempted to set devotion to Mary within the context of the teaching of Scripture and the ancient common tradition" which "constitutes a re-reception of teaching about Mary."

The paragraph concludes by stating that "growing ecumenical exchange has contributed to the process of re-reception in both Communions."

Paragraph 51 summarizes the points of agreement on Mary reached by ARCIC, to which the Scriptures led the two communions. Together they recognize her "as the handmaid of the Lord" and as "a model of holiness, obedience and faith for all Christians" who "belongs in the prophetic tradition". They acknowledge that their two communions "are both heirs to a rich tradition which recognizes Mary as ever virgin, and sees her as the new Eve and as a type of the Church". They join in "praising and praying with Mary ... in observing her festivals" and are agreed "that Mary and the saints pray for the whole Church"> They see Mary "as inseparably linked with Christ and the Church".

SESSION 4 - MARY WITHIN THE PATTERN OF GRACE AND HOPE

Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ, Section C - *Nicholas Sagovsky*

Sections C and D are the "the engine-room" of the statement, an engine-room being a place full of banging and clanking!

Section C attempts to see how God has worked in Mary in a wider context. Through the Scriptures and in Christ we have been given an idea of how things will look from the end of Time, and, as Paragraph 52 says, "this perspective offers fresh light in which to consider the place of Mary."

Paragraph 53, referring to Paul speaking "as it were from the future retrospectively", quotes again the key passage found earlier in the document (at Paragraph 10 where the Apostle, speaking of those who are "called according to God's purpose", affirms that "those whom God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son ... And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified" (Romans 8:28-30).

The word "economy" used in the heading to Paragraph 54, (Mary in the Economy of Grace) is used in the sense which it has in Greek, that is, to do with the running of a household, so that the Church is seen as "a household of faith". As this paragraph points out, Gabriel addressed Mary as "already 'graced' ". Thus, "viewed eschatologically, Mary embodies the 'elect Israel' of whom Paul speaks - glorified, justified, called, predestined", so that "this is the pattern of grace and hope which we see at work in the life of Mary" who is "the one chosen, called and graced by God through the Holy Spirit for the task that lay ahead of her."

Paragraph 55, speaking of how "God was at work in Mary from her earliest beginnings", refers to "God's care for all human beings, even before their coming to birth" and to "the action of God's grace preceding the specific calling of particular persons, even from their conception," citing examples. With the Assumption in mind, Paragraph 56, while acknowledging that "there is no direct testimony in Scripture concerning the end of Mary's life," refers to other "faithful servants" of God, such as Elijah and Enoch, who were "taken up" so that they "should not see death". Paragraph 57, developing this theme, points to the fact that, "when Christians from East and West ... have pondered God's work in Mary,

they have discerned in faith that it is fitting that the Lord gathered her wholly to himself."

Paragraph 58 turns from "our common faith concerning ... Mary" to consider what one tradition finds difficult - the Assumption, noting that "Roman Catholic Christians... are bound to believe that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory". After carefully noting what the dogma does not claim, the document goes on to assert that, "given the understanding we have reached concerning the place of Mary in the economy of hope and grace, we can affirm together the teaching that God has taken the Blessed Virgin Mary in the fullness of her person into his glory as consonant with Scripture and that it can, indeed, only be understood in the light of Scripture."

In Paragraph 59, the question of the Immaculate Conception is considered, beginning with the observation that "Roman Catholic Christians ...are bound to believe that the most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, kept free of all stain of original sin ..." As the statement explains, it is not that Mary is seen as lacking sin, but, more positively, that she is "immune from all stain" as "the glorious grace of God filled her life from the beginning". Put another way, it is not a question of something, which she hadn't got, but rather one of something which she had never lost. So Paragraph 59, like the one before it, concludes that "in view of her vocation to be the mother of the Holy One, we can affirm together that Christ's redeeming work reached 'back' in Mary to the depths of her being, and to her earliest beginnings. This is not contrary to the teaching of Scripture and can only be understood in the light of Scripture."

Paragraphs 60 and 61 deal with the problem for Anglicans posed by the assertion by Roman Catholics that these two teachings, both of which it has been agreed "can be said to be consonant with the teaching of the Scriptures and the ancient common traditions" are described as "revealed by God". But Paragraph 61 points out that this implies "no suggestion of new revelation".

Paragraph 62 notes that neither of these definitions was made "in response to controversy, but gave voice to the consensus of faith among believers in

communion with the Bishop of Rome." It is because Anglicans were not part of the process that led to the making of these two definitions that they need to pose the questions asked in Paragraph 63 concerning them. Christians can be seen to believe the same things, even if the beliefs are expressed differently. So the key question arises - is that true of these two doctrines?

SESSION 5 - MARY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ, Section D - *Nicholas Sagovsky*

Canon Sagovsky devoted the session to dealing with questions arising in people's minds in response to the Agreed Statement and his presentation of it.

One speaker, referring to Paragraph 65, which mentions "different emphases (which) have marked the way (Anglicans and Roman Catholics) have experienced Mary's ministry", asked whether it was fair to state these differences by seeing the Anglican view of Mary as static, i.e., there being no development since her lifetime, and characterizing the Catholic view of her as dynamic, i.e., as Mary having a continuing role; and, further, whether these "different emphases" date from the Reformation, stemming from the reaction to what some regarded as excessive adoration of Mary.

In reply, the Canon Sagovsky drew attention to the reference later in the same paragraph to the fact that "the twentieth century witnessed a ...growth in convergence", many Anglicans being "drawn into a more active devotion to Mary", while "Roman Catholics discovered afresh the scriptural roots of such devotion." In a word, recent decades had seen some shift in the positions of both Communion.

Another speaker enquired as to the meaning of the phrase "in a new ecumenical context" in Paragraph 78, which lists "Advances in Agreement" and where one clause states "that this agreement (concerning the definitions of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception), when accepted by our two Communion, would place the questions about authority which arise from the two definitions of 1854 and 1950 in a new ecumenical context."

Canon Sagovsky identified how the problem many Anglicans have with these two definitions arose because of the perception within the Anglican Church that

the Bishop of Rome had acted alone in issuing them. Anyway, a common faith doesn't mean an identical faith. ARCIC's work does not aim at achieving uniformity, but rather seeks to limit diversity.

What will happen now to this Statement? It will be considered by the authorities within each of the two Communion which had asked ARCIC to undertake the study. It is probable that ARCIC would be asked by these authorities to do further work in it.

What impact is ARCIC's work likely to have on Christians of other Communion? The World Council of Churches has observers at ARCIC. Hence people from other denominations are kept in close touch with developments at ARCIC.

How much religious education would Mary have had as a Jewish woman? No one knows the answer to this question, but there is a tradition that she was brought up in the Temple.

In reply to a question about Mary as "a second Eve", Canon Sagovsky remarked that one can never have enough phrases to describe the qualities of Mary. In referring to Mary as ever-Virgin, he stressed the strong link in the early Church between virginity, as consecration to God, and holiness - see MGHC Paragraph 37.

At the end of this session, Father Ken O'Riordan of the Nottingham Ecumenical Commission, mindful of difficulties people may be finding with MGHC, Catholics concerning Anglican viewpoints, and Anglicans concerning Catholic dogmas, recalled the advice given by Pope Gregory to Saint Augustine as he prepared to embark on his mission to England - "Don't destroy what you find there, baptize it!"

SESSION 6 - MYSTAGOGICAL CATECHESIS

Father Andrew Faley

For centuries, it has been traditional for Christians to keep Sunday as a holy day, to use it for rest and prayer. Nowadays, however, that has changed in our culture,

and Sunday tends to be very busy, with many shops open for business. Even so, we are still obliged to keep Sunday for God.

As with the way we try to observe the modern Sunday as Christian, so 'mystagogy' refers to stepping deeper into the mystery of our faith - we are not surface people; we must go deeper and live at a deeper level. We belong to a salvation religion, and Nicholas Sagovsky has helped us to go deeper into the significance of Mary in our salvation.

Two incidents in the Gospels, presented in the Statement, reflect this. First, in the story of the finding of Jesus in the Temple, we are told of the return of the Holy Family to Nazareth: "Jesus went with them, returning to Nazareth, and he continued to be obedient to them. As for his mother, she pondered all these things in her heart." That is mystagogia, a going deeper into the mystery of faith and the hidden life of grace.

Secondly, in the story of the wedding at Cana, we learn of Mary's instruction to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." In giving this instruction, what she was doing was sharing her faith with others. Throughout Canon Sagovsky's sessions participants at the Conference had been able both to ponder the riches of what had been offered and to share faith with each other at a profound level.

One of the strengths of the ARCIC process is the language used in its documents - every word is carefully weighed and chosen. This language is devoted to seeking, affirming, finding and questioning. In the same way, the language of faith is used to express how we know and believe our faith, how we celebrate it in the sacraments, and how we live and pray it.

And so a question, typical of Mary's life, faces us too: "Where do we go from here?". Where do we go, with what we have heard, with what we have learned, with what we have found difficult, and with what we have found a source of joy. And where to go as individuals, in terms of the community, family and friends, in terms of relationship to the wider community and the world of work, the parish, our Anglican or Catholic neighbours, and other local Churches Together?

In response, conference participants considered that:

- It had been very helpful to have been led back to the Scriptures and to the Tradition in such depth – an ever deeper journey together into the Scriptures cited in MGHC would therefore be fruitful
- recognition accorded to the value of the witness of other traditions is itself valuable for closer future relations
- Greater awareness of the difficulties faced by those from other traditions with our own needs to be sustained by greater attentiveness and listening in the future
- The possibility that Anglicans and Catholics, coming from the religious cultures of their respective Churches, may each be reading a different document needs to be overcome through regular encounter and dialogue
- The conference's experience of a process of "re-knowing" Mary, discovering her to be not at all "meek and mild", but rather a very strong person, needs to inform Catholics' and Anglicans' devotion, liturgy, and proclamation of the Gospel of Christ
- A tendency for the Statement to remain with its immediate, educated audience should be countered – it needs to be made more accessible, and opened up more generally in the people's experience of devotion, catechesis, liturgy and preaching
- While for some, difficulties over ideas such as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption feel as though they have not been so resolved as ARCIC believes they are and can be, the key to Mary lies in her role at the Annunciation (her obedience as the human who returns to God and her agreement to be the mother of God incarnate), at Cana (her intercession on people's behalf, directing people to her Son) and at the foot of the Cross (united with Christ at his passion, thus becoming the mother of the disciples and the new adopted children she is given in the life of the Church he leaves after his resurrection and ascension: Mary is significantly among the apostles on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit descends to lead the Church into all truth)
- The way in which different Christians had been able to discuss their faith as it involves Mary, disagreeing but keen to learn, and without any hint of competitiveness is a good pattern for ecumenical relations and mutual learning for the future and in the parishes.

In closing, Bishop Malcolm McMahon commended people to pray the Statement, rather than simply read it. This was the spirit in which ARCIC members had approached the questions it raises and attempts to address. ARCIC's method had been to re-read the Scriptures and the Tradition together, not least in approaching the Scriptures as the Fathers did, with understanding and riches opened up through the use of allegory, as well as liturgical and critical tools. Thus MGHC is an Agreed Statement not just because it had been discussed deeply, its formulation had been prayed. The members of ARCIC hope that their understanding of Scripture and the Tradition in a like spirit can be re-received by those who read the document they produced for their Churches.