

The Society for Ecumenical Studies

Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations: A Kick Start?

Dr Mary Tanner, European President, the World Council of Churches

Mgr Andrew Faley, Assistant General Secretary, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales

Report by Mark Woodruff

Annual Study, 30 May 2007

The Story from Vatican II to 2000

From Vatican II to the historic joint meeting of Anglican primates and their Catholic counterparts, the presidents of related Bishops' Conferences at Mississauga in Canada in 2000, Dr Mary Tanner recounted a story marked by four vital points to bear in mind behind the present structure for Anglican-Roman Catholic mutual engagement and collaboration, the International Anglican and Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission, IARCCUM.

First, from the outset (and this was laid out in the 1968 Malta Report of the preparatory commission that led to the setting up of ARCIC I), the vision for Anglican-Roman Catholic unity has never simply been to conduct a purely theological conversation to overcome the two churches' differences. Alongside the doctrinal dialogue both sides stressed the importance of close relationships, contacts and collaboration. Thus theological convergence was to be matched by convergence in life and praxis, and the shared vision and mission of the Church in the world would intensify the sense of identity in belief and proclamation. The interplay of closer co-operation and deeper understanding would naturally develop into a series of steps into unity on the way to full organic communion, a phased rapprochement. But the

fact that this was never fully put into effect caused the theological dialogue to outstrip the practical steps and lay behind the failure of ARCIC I to provide a widely recognisable sufficient basis for the steps needed at the time towards reconciliation.

Secondly, it tends to be missed how startling and swift the achievements of ARCIC were from its establishment to the 1980s. In 1982 it was quite clear that the steps towards convergence were very much on track:

- a) agreement (on the Eucharist and the ministry) was not just recognised as high, but the faith of Roman Catholics and of Anglicans was seen as consonant in substance; to most this indicated more or less complete convergence
- b) since belief was consonant, people expected to witness and take the next concrete steps to realise the unity visibly.

There was huge enthusiasm among the laity on both sides for practical outcomes, especially in mutual sharing of the Eucharist and mutual recognition, in the new contexts, of each others' ordained ministry.

Third, the failure to maintain the link between the doctrinal convergence and the convergence of life and praxis meant that both twin tracks lost their common direction. This was especially apparent by the time of the 1988 Lambeth Conference which, at the same time as endorsing ARCIC I and the work so far of ARCIC II, permitted separate provinces to proceed with the ordination of women to the episcopate in the Anglican Communion. And the problems were not just on the Anglican side. Years passed without an official Roman Catholic response to ARCIC. This was telling for the Anglicans who had warmly endorsed ARCIC I's progress in 1978 but whose enthusiasm had not been matched with a similar warmth from the Vatican side. The Observations from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith seemed to look for reasons to be negative and to be unaware of the agreed methodology on which the ARCIC process had always been intended to proceed. But perhaps it is also fair to say that, in the enthusiasm to make progress in the theological dialogue, and arguably without its being directly grounded in ecumenical living and praxis, ARCIC had a tendency to inexact formulations, however profound the underlying exploration, and this had long frustrated the official and academic Roman mind, who had a less immediate sense of the urgency evinced by the active ecumenists. By the time of an official response to ARCIC from the Vatican, involving the exchange of views with Bishops' Conferences around the world and the Elucidations and following the CDF Observations, it was both clear that the Catholic

authorities mindset had moved from thinking in terms of substantial consonance to those of detailed definition and that Anglicans' initial enthusiasm and hope had waned, partly due to other pressing concerns within their own communion, not the least of which was the threat to internal unity posed by the pressure to allow the ordination of women to the episcopate. The 1988 resolution on this coloured the warm but cautious official Catholic response to ARCIC when it eventually came in 1991 and the failure to agree that there was, after all, substantial agreement felt like a rebuff to Anglicans who had declared consonance in substance. Thus the prospect of visible unity with the Catholic Church was seen to be unrealistic and its bearing on Anglican life - and faith and order questions – was diminished.

But it is important to recall for the record that the 1988 Lambeth bishops did not actually declare that it was right for women to be admitted to the episcopate. What they resolved was that, since provinces were determined to go their own ways on the issue, they would agree to remain in a communion as high as possible during an 'open period of reception'. Certainly this was seen as consent by some; but to others it was an attempt – and remains so – at ecumenism within the Anglican communion: an avoidance of schism in favour of maintain the greatest possible level of koinonia that unites all Christians through baptism (not to mention everything else) in any case. It is easy with hindsight to ask whether it was a fudge. Perhaps it was, but it was also a genuine attempt at integrity and unity. Of course, it harmed the cause of Anglican-Roman Catholic unity too; but that already appeared to be on hold from the Catholic side. So both within the Anglican communion and in its previously hopeful ecumenical journey with Roman Catholicism, there was a sense of going nowhere. So it was that the question of convergence in life and praxis was left to one side.

Fourth, since that point when the theological dialogue stalled, ARCIC has seen twenty more years of exploration. This has all been to the good, but it has still been missing that vital ingredient of praxis, which was the problem in the first place.

Mississauga 2000

But at the beginning of the Third Millennium Archbishop George Carey and Cardinal Edward Cassidy revived the twin track approach. In 2000 thirteen pairs of bishops – Anglican primates and Roman Catholic presidents of bishops' conferences – met at Mississauga. Archbishop Kasper, who would later succeed Cassidy as President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Archbishop of Levada of San

Francisco, who later succeeded Pope Benedict (then cardinal Ratzinger) as Prefect of the CDF, were both present.

The decisive dimension to the encounter was that this was not a meeting of theologians for discussion, but a meeting of pastoral bishops. They learned how similar their liturgies actually were, so the sense of Eucharistic division was greatly modified. But the Catholic and Anglican bishops also presented to their colleagues in common, reflecting on their shared home territory, then speaking to the context and content of their ecumenical experience. It was only at this point – in the light of conditions on the ground, so to speak – that they then turned to the ARCIC documents. This was significant, as the Catholic bishops were responding openly and in a common forum to ARCIC II prior to a response from the Vatican, a change to the way the Vatican had managed the response to ARCIC I which had been widely seen as counter-productive. So the process was not only feeling practical and constructive, it was clearly attempting to re-unite the doctrinal dialogue alongside its old twin track of shared life and common mission.

There was only one paper. *The goal of Anglican and Roman Catholic unity* was presented by the meeting's theological consultant, Fr Jean-Marie Tillard OP, the famous French Canadian Dominican scholar, who had been an expert at Vatican II. This discussed 'evangelical koinonia', approaching Anglican-Roman Catholic relations by deliberately beginning with the experience of living together in the life of the Gospel, then using that as the context for discussing the theology. Out of this the goal for the relationship could have shared definition, meaning that the intervening future steps could realistically be charted. This was very much a re-capturing, a re-receiving, of the vision of the 1968 Malta Report.

IARCCUM

But whereas in 1968 there was an expectation, never quite fully realised, that local Catholic conferences of bishops and bishops of Anglican provinces would encounter each other regularly and in a spirit of growing unity, what had been needed to sustain these local engagements was a structure at the universal level. So the Mississauga meeting in 2000 called for a new commission of bishops from local churches, but also engaging the Vatican and the Anglican Communion structures, to recover the original vision of ecumenical praxis as integral to the dialogue towards reconciliation in visible unity. The baton was passed thus from the theologians to those responsible for mission and unity in action, to realise a programme of action into a new, revived,

stage of the original plan for phased rapprochement. But in the meantime the world was a very different place and the sense of being the Church in the world experienced in the Anglican provinces as well as in the Roman Catholic Church around the globe meant that this was not simply a retracing of steps to set off again on the old path we had been on. We had to start from where we were, not where we had been once before, or even wished we were. So there had to be a plan for practicalities that took serious account of conditions and challenges in every part of the world: there would be no use in undertaking this exercise if it could not be collaborated upon and enacted everywhere. So began the International Anglican and Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission.

The twin tracks diverge again

The 2003 election and 2004 ordination to the episcopate in the Episcopal Church of the United States of America of Gene Robinson, a married and divorced man now living openly in a long-term homosexual relationship, and the decision by the Canadian diocese of New Westminster to provide for the blessing of same-sex unions, sharply halted IARCCUM and ARCIC meeting back to back as planned. ARCIC carried on with its theological work (this had been the old problem), but the meeting of the bishops charged with making a practical difference was stopped following a loss of confidence in the concept and process at the Holy See. And it is important to recognise that this loss of confidence at the time, after a recent period of clearly renewed warmth, was not so much because Gene Robinson's consecration centred on his sexuality as to negate what Anglicans had been saying to their Roman Catholic ecumenical partners about the nature and exercise of authority and the discernment of teaching and development.

Archbishop Rowan Williams, conscious too of the strains on Anglican unity in something of a re-run of the crisis (then over women and the episcopate) the 1988 Lambeth Conference had attempted to address, approached Cardinal Kasper, by then President of the PCPCU, for help in due course to rekindle IARCCUM but more immediately to shed some outside light on an Anglican problem. Both had first met, incidentally, at the 2003 conference at St Albans Abbey arranged by this Society, *'That they all may be one' – But how?* Both a conversation and a mutual regard and friendship was thus already in place. Both Williams and Kasper agreed that no one church could approach, let alone settle, such challenges on its own and that any action had to be thought through theologically, and together. So a panel of eight Catholic theologians met and reported to the Eames Commission (properly the

Lambeth Commission on Communion) as it was consulting in preparation for the 2004 Windsor Report. Thus Catholic theological thinking, in the context of a matter of vital practical and pastoral concern, on the nature of authority and *koinonia* that made sense for Anglicans was enabled to affect the Anglican Communion's identification of the nature of its own intrinsic unity and structure of governance.

IARCCUM – *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*

Thus considerable mutual trust and understanding, after a 'steep learning curve', was restored and IARCCUM was allowed to finish its work leading to the foundational report on ecumenical living and praxis, *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, published in early 2007.

Mgr Don Bolen, secretary to PCPCU, has described *Growing Together in Unity and Mission* as 'a complete landscape' for ecumenical relations between Catholics and Anglicans. It asks what it means to be a faithful ecumenical partner. It challenges the 'disconnect' between saying one thing with one breath of doctrinal dialogue and then living in a different way with another. So *Growing Together in Unity and Mission* is an Agreed Statement, a common understanding, rather than just a joint study document (which would have been too non-committal) or a formal Declaration (which would require a convergence that neither side has yet arrived at). Thus it can be a call for forthcoming action on the basis of an honest assessment of what has been achieved in the theological engagement so far. Furthermore it is directed not to interested parties in general, or to the respective universal-level authority structures. It is a document produced by bishops for bishops; thus it is essentially pastoral and concerns the day to day and lived out ecumenical discipleship of bishops, together with their clergy and lay people. And beyond the achievements, it sets out in clear boxes the remaining problems on the road to visible unity.

The strength of the statement is that its lessons have been hard learned and so it is not merely an affirmation of commitment to unity – it moves both churches firmly into action and co-operation. It identifies four areas for this to be realised practically:

- the sharing of faith through worship together
- joint study
- co-operation in pastoral ministry
- shared witness in and before the world

It repudiates any sense of rivalry, whether that is in doctrinal matters, or mission, or life as the Body of Christ. It is characterised by a sense of 'non-competitive ecumenism' that is intended, far from taking the edge off mission and development through caution against offence or stepping out of line with each other, to stimulate both invaluable distinctiveness and an essentially united proclamation and service in the world.

Will this approach work? It can happen only if the bishops take it seriously all round the world, Catholics and Anglicans together, and resolve to run with it. Without them acting and being together, the clergy and laity will not be enthused. We have already seen how the will of the lay people for practical realisation of unity and 'concrete steps' to make it visible in a phased rapprochement were crushed at an earlier stage of high hopes because of the hesitancy of Church leaders and the lack of the twin track of praxis. *Growing Together in Unity and Mission* will require us all, bishops, clergy and laity, to be enthused ecumenists.

Recent Anglican-Catholic relations in England

After Mary Tanner's address, discussion moved to the perspective of the England & Wales Catholic bishops' encounter with their counterparts, the bishops of the Church of England, which had taken place in the autumn before the publication of *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*.

Although it was an instance of local Anglican and Catholic church leaders meeting very much in the spirit of the IARCCUM and the forthcoming document, it was obviously charged with situations, comment, and events affecting both traditions at the global level. These not only included the ongoing problem for the Roman Catholic bishops of the Anglican episcopate being in full fellowship with a bishop living in a public union with another man and the provision for blessings of homosexual unions in a part of Canada, the moral discipleship dimension of *koinonia* impinging at the level of common discipleship through Christian unity in baptism. But for the Anglican bishops it also included the recent address to them (although invited by Archbishop Rowan Williams) by Cardinal Walter Kasper as President of the PCPCU, which had unequivocally communicated the consequences for foreseeable unity with Roman Catholics, if they took action to approve the ordination of women to the episcopate in the Church of England.

Nothing new had been said, but the apparent 'straight choice' between catholicity as the Roman Catholic Church sees it and the final embrace of what most Anglicans appeared to see as a legitimate development, within the essentially Catholic order that the Church of England had received and maintained, revived raw memories of the CDF's continued assertion that Christian traditions without the apostolic succession were 'not churches in the proper sense'. Public comment from some Church of England bishops on what Cardinal Kasper had said revealed a sense that, behind official Catholic ecumenical activity and warm mutual engagement, there remains still the 'ecumenism of the return'. And yet, whatever the setbacks along the way, it had been thought that both sides had been engaged on a process of genuine mutual growth together, and that 'Rome' had moved from its, so to speak, uncompleted and under-developed pre-Vatican II ecclesiology. As Jean-Marie Tillard had put it, there had been a move 'from conversion to Rome to conversion of Rome' in its sense of ecumenical orientation and vocation.

On one hand, Cardinal Kasper had aired what he had been asked to clarify lest there be any doubt, based on the personal friendship and mutual respect with Archbishop Rowan Williams – a genuine attempt to speak the truth in love.

On the other, it could be said that the Church of England bishops, through the Archbishop's initiative, had wished to exercise their autonomy and autocephaly at the same time as consulting the Petrine ministry of the Bishop of Rome, through his foremost ecumenical representative, on a matter touching on faith and order, and through the offer of a service available beyond the bounds of the juridical Roman Catholic Church to any and all Christians who called upon it, as envisaged by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *On Ecumenism, Ut Unum Sint*. So arguably there had been a desire to consult in an aspiration for full collegiality. But this was not a signal calling for jurisdiction, whether appellate or ordinary (whether, that is, for settling a disagreement between one patriarchate and another on a *primus inter pares* basis, or for the universal Church's principal figure to intervene at the local level on a *primus inter pares* basis).

Evidently the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church of England bishops did not expect the Vatican to endorse the ordination of women bishops. But, even though the late Cardinal Hume had said the ordination of women to the priesthood had made the reconciliation of the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion difficult, posing a 'grave obstacle' at a time other obstacles had been and were being successfully

removed, he had not said that the obstacle was insuperable. Now the strength and clarity of the opposition of the Catholic Church to this Anglican development, expressed with the authority of his office in the service of the Pope through the otherwise extremely positive Cardinal Kasper, had dismayed Church of England bishops anticipating a regretful but conciliatory response, understanding the Anglican position.

Perhaps the likelihood of a reaction of disappointment; and exasperation in Rome had been under-estimated, if at all recognised. Thus in the talk of hopes for reconciliation as 'impossible' and intercommunion as 'unreachable', some detected an authoritarian and forbidding 'no' to Anglicans, rather than the message that it felt in Rome that Anglicans were saying 'no' to Catholics. The history of Catholic 'noes' to Anglicans cannot have helped, nor the inordinate delay to the Vatican response to ARCIC I, which was a significant factor to the divergence of the twin tracks in the first place. But if Cardinal Kasper is one who hopes for time, playing the long game, in other words reassuringly creating new space and opportunity for dialogue and fresh encounter, what this development in the life of the Church of England did (even if it was inevitable, and irrespective of rights and wrongs, advisability or otherwise) was to shorten the time and space available to him. Hence the end to previous suppositions to dialogue, and the distant retreat of a now more unreachable intercommunion.

Yet why so definite a clarification from Cardinal Kasper? Were not women already serving as bishops in other parts of the Anglican Communion? In my view, it can be overlooked that, while the Anglican Communion is worldwide, it is England that remains 'privileged ecumenical territory', with not only historic origins and core identity, being the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, but also a huge proportion of the number of Anglicans counted worldwide. So in a way that is not so true of other parts of the Communion, from the viewpoint of other churches, what happens in England is more than significant: it becomes normative. Hence the vigorous caution against the step, as it would make it impossible for the Roman Catholic Church to contemplate how re-integration could even be feasible.

In some Anglicans, the nerve that was struck by Cardinal Kasper's remarks was of a necessarily separate 'reformed Catholicism', freed from papal control to enable the purification of the Church in the English setting, it did not appeal to their Catholic, ecumenising instinct either. In others, it sharpened the sense of legitimacy to an

ongoing Reformed and reforming stance. But the question posed was what sort of ecumenism can be contemplated with the Roman Catholic Church, if the Church of England were to move towards the ordination of women to the episcopate and if neither, in respect of its own integrity, could alter its position. The new situation concerns whether we figure out how to move towards each other at the table of the Lord, or (if that has been taken off the agenda) how we can co-exist best.

IARCCUM in practice in England

In Mgr Andrew Faley's response to Mary Tanner, he recalled the way in which the autumn 2006 meeting at Hinsley Hall, Leeds, between the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales and Anglican Bishops had been founded upon the deep friendship between Archbishop Williams and Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor. It had been arranged prior to the visit of Cardinal Kasper in June 2006, but there were now questions of what to do next in the new situation, how to restore the twin tracks of dialogue and praxis, how to work beyond the Vatican's 'unreachable' and English Anglicanism's necessary development'. This was an echo of when Archbishop Williams, on the basis of a friendly engagement, had approached Cardinal Kasper to rekindle the IARCCUM process which then led to *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*.

There was a joint statement of mutual commitment and encouragement towards unity and collaboration signed by Rowan Williams and Pope Benedict XVI, but it did not go into older or more recent difficulties.

The meeting itself was, understandably in the circumstances, a privileged discussion between senior colleagues and counterparts, sharing views and concerns in confidence, both as they were worked out across the board and in the local or regional setting. It could not have happened but for a desire for good personal relations at the heart of good ecumenism – not just good relations, but active collaboration. Both sides were united, whatever the recent developments and the respective sensitivities, in agreement that ecumenism could not be allowed to become a specialism for some – it had to be an aspect of the Church's whole life and for that there would need to be a new ecumenical map.

In outline, reflections focussed on greater pastoral collaboration; witness before the public world in the face of secularism and other faiths; differing ecclesiological issues; and the opportunity for sharing episcopal concerns, problems and mutual support.

For while IARCCUM's *Growing Together in Unity and Mission* deserves wide study and action, its aspirations will only come to reality universally if they are grounded in the experience and praxis of local parishes and congregations, and of co-operating Catholic and Anglican dioceses serving people regionally.

In this spirit, the bishops had resolved to meet again and to encourage the closer collaboration of their respective diocesan ecumenical officers and departments.

Comment from members of the Society

Women's Ordained Ministry

The experience of women in priesthood in the Church of England is not an obstacle to unity that can simply be removed. It is not only a fact that has to be faced, it is authentic – Marianne Atkinson

Mary Tanner: The sharp question in Anglican-Catholic relations used to whether Catholics recognised Anglican orders. The truth is that the ordination of women has altered this entirely. Whether you are a Catholic opposed or an Anglican in favour, however much you want unity with the other, the development poses a grave new obstacle to reconciliation. The strength of the IARCCUM approach is that, with this understood, it offers as much recognition to bishops and priests, women and men, in practical terms, as far as possible.

Yet the ordination of women is not an obstacle to unity from the point of view of Anglicans who support it. We feel that it is not women bishops who are the obstacle, but the idea that they are an obstacle that is the true obstacle. Yes, it is a new step, but it is a legitimate development within the common tradition and is something from which we all need to learn and which the Anglican Church can help to teach – Martin Conway

Organic or visible unity?

What does the term 'full organic unity' mean to and does it mean the same today as at the start of the ecumenical movement? – Hilary Martin

Mary Tanner: This is the ecumenical question: the term is not clear, not used by all in the same way, and thus much misunderstood. The desire for 'organic unity' is not

just about achieving the same structure (which of course is needed), but the vision of unity, re-stated from time to time, as it shapes up in our experience and aspirations through the process of mutually receiving gifts from each other. Perhaps the better portraiture is of 'visible unity' (which of course can be no less organic than visible), which locates unity in what we are seeing and can imagine, rather than starting from getting the underlying structure straight before we even start on what we are seeing taking shape. This is closer to the thinking to which the Commission on Faith and Order and the World Council of Churches work. It is also easier to envisage 'visible unity' as a manifestation we can all approach of the unity of the Trinity that we are living in our church life, with our common faith, our baptism, the ministry and the Eucharist, and our common ways of discerning and teaching the truth. Obviously, structures are indispensable, and our life together in the Body of Christ as the Church will always thus be organic. But the diversity of the unity which we can imagine, we cannot yet imagine how to achieve. There is a huge diversity within the Roman Catholic, and this includes a diversity of structure; but perhaps that experience shows – in visible unity – how at a world level great diversity is capable of a personal focus for unity (the Bishop of Rome) – 'organic unity'.

Andrew Faley: Concentrating on the structural aspect of what 'organic' means, is like viewing bones as relics when they are actually skeletons for supporting life. Anglicans and Catholics exhibit that they share the same faith and witness to the same truth; *Growing Together in Unity and Mission* describes this dynamism in the past and present, pointing to ever closer and clearer life together in the future.

Unity in experience and practice, not institution

The meeting between only bishops signals an inwardlookingness on the two churches' parts. Yet Christ is the Saviour of the world, not just of his Church and vital encounters for the rapprochement of two divided traditions should not be exclusively conducted by bishops. Catholicity, after all, means 'bigger than we are', going beyond; and it is the lay element in the Church that decides and delivers on this. We need to get beyond the mythology of apostolicity if it leads to an unacceptable episcopocentricity - Martin Conway

Our practice is actually better than our theory, which tends to load us time and again back into our past. We need therefore to recognise the theory that is actually behind our positive practice, so it is the better practice we have learned that becomes the structure for our visible unity – Donald Norwood

Mary Tanner: This is precisely what the dialogue is trying for and the work of IARCCUM has been specifically about getting theory to listen to practice.

There is a widespread recognition among Anglican, Catholics and other Christians at the grass roots of a mutual experience of being united. It is at this point that we urgently sense the instinct to share the Eucharist together. And this is as true of Church leaders as of lay people – Kate Davson

Garret Fitzgerald, the learned former Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, wittily asked once, 'That's all very well in practice, but how does it work in theory?' Organic unity is not just organisational unity, and we know this well. We have more of it than we realise. And unity for Christians is about more than its bone structure, as Andrew Faley said: it is a Body and that includes parts and passions. You have only to think of what we have all gone through to search for unity, and our (at times) intense experience of pains and joys. So it is that, in the Body of Christ, talk of unity that is inorganic is inconceivable. Our task is to make the reality of this Body visible – John Bradley

The Society records its warm thanks to Mary Tanner and Andrew Faley for this thought provoking and ecumenically motivating study.