

CENTRO PRO UNIONE

N. 65 - Spring 2004
ISSN: 1122-0384



semi-annual Bulletin

In this issue:

<i>Letter from the Director</i>	p. 2
Christian Unity and Christian Diversity, Lessons from Liturgical Renewal The Case of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Thomas F. Best	p. 3
Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations A New Step to be Taken, A New Stage to be Reached Mary Tanner	p. 14
The Petrine Ministry: Vatican I in the Light of Vatican II Herman J. Pottmeyer	p. 20
Week of Prayer 2004 Homily John Flack	p. 25

Centro Pro Unione - Via S. Maria dell'Anima, 30 - 00186 Rome, Italy
A Center conducted by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement

Director's Desk

Normally we would be including in this *Bulletin* the up-date of the Bibliography of the International Interchurch Theological Dialogues but due to the happy event of the birth of our librarian's son, we have had to postpone this up-date until the Fall issue of 2004. You may, however, always find the up to date (in real time) bibliography on our web site at all times.

Instead, in this issue we are pleased to offer you the texts of some interesting conferences held at the **Centro Pro Unione** during the past year. First is the text of Dr. Tom Best that was given in our series: "Liturgical Renewal as a Way to Christian Unity". Many of you know that Tom is a member of the Christian Church known as the Disciples of Christ and a long time staff person of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. We are particularly happy to offer this text because Dr. Best has been one of the prime movers for including many liturgical or worship texts as part of the work of Faith and Order.

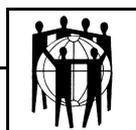
The second text published is that of Dr. Mary Tanner, former co-moderator of the Faith and Order Commission and member of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM). This conference was the sixth annual conference in honor of Fr. Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White. Mary's talk entitled: "Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations. A New Step to be Taken, A New Stage to be Reached" was very timely in light of the developments in the Anglican Communion. It is an honest and courageous appraisal of our relationships at this time as well as containing a realistic note of hope for the future. In order to shed even more light on the situation, especially in the United States, we have invited Prof. William Franklin, a scholar and historian, to address "The Current Situation in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. What are the Implications for the Ecumenical Future?"

The last two items in this Spring issue come from this year's celebration of the Week of Prayer. We do not usually include homilies but Bishop John Flack's homily impressed so many people that we decided to include it along with the text of the conference which was given by Prof. Hermann Pottmeyer, Member of the International Theological Commission. When we approached Dr. Pottmeyer to speak we asked him to do something on methodology and the hermeneutics of the dogmatic texts of the two Vatican Councils. He did this by offering a case study on the Petrine Ministry and how to read Vatican I in the light of Vatican II. We hope our readers will be stimulated and challenged by his approach to the question of the relationship between the two councils as well as the correct way of reading them.

During the Winter months and early Spring, diverse groups visited the **Centro** including students from the Lutheran College of St. Olaf (USA) for whom we did a three week course; the students and professors of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey; members of the Lutheran-Catholic International Dialogue as well as the drafting committee of the Methodist-Catholic International Dialogue; and a group of Anglican Archdeacons. Our pilot project "Ecumenismo in Erba" ("Budding Ecumenism") has gotten off the ground and we have received classes of young children (ages 5-11) for this initiative of Dr. Teresa Francesca Rossi, research assistant at the **Centro**.

This periodical is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Drive, 16th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606 (<http://www.atla.com>).

James F. Puglisi, sa
Director





CC

Centro Conferences

Christian Unity and Christian Diversity, Lessons from Liturgical Renewal The Case of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Thomas F. Best

Pastor of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Staff member for Faith and Order in the World Council of Churches, Geneva.

(Conference held at the **Centro Pro Unione**, Thursday, 7 November 2002)

I wish to thank the Centro Pro Unione for the great privilege of speaking to you on the topic of “Christian Unity and Christian Diversity, Lessons from Liturgical Renewal: The Case of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).” Having begun with thanks I now move, as do many liturgies, to confession: I am not going to deliver precisely what I have promised, rather something more limited in scope — but thereby sharper in focus — than my original title would indicate. So I ask you to add to my title the words “within a populist sacramental church.” The church in question is my own church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the memorable description of our church as “populist sacramental” comes from the seminal liturgist we have produced, Keith Watkins.¹ I invite you to see what follows as a case study on how that particular church has come, through the liturgical renewal movement, to a new and more profound understanding of its own identity and mission.²

1. The Origin and Distinctive Quality of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): From the Early Nineteenth Century on

To understand this story it is essential to know something of the distinctive history and beliefs of our church, but also its character and ethos. It began in the first two or three decades of the nineteenth century (1820-1830) on the “frontier” in the United States, the frontier then being western Virginia and Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Ohio, from the coalescing of impulses for the “restoration” of the “clear picture,” as was thought, of the church as found in the New Testament. Principal founders of the movement were father and son Thomas and Alexander Campbell,

Presbyterians from Scotland but who had also lived in Ireland, and another Presbyterian, Barton W. Stone. The movement was a remarkable combination of Enlightenment rationalism and evangelistic zeal; it was said that Alexander Campbell would arrive on horseback at frontier camp meetings and revivals with saddle-bags full of books holding, on one side of the horse, Greek texts and the bible in various translations — including one which he issued himself,³ mind you — and, on the other side, the writings of Isaac Newton and John Locke.

These founders were driven by the desire to lead the divided churches (Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, others) towards a unity rooted in the weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Four things in particular characterized this early unity movement: observance of the Lord’s Supper (or communion or Eucharist) on each Lord’s Day (or Sunday); baptism by submersion, or full immersion, of not only professing, but penitent adult believers; a decidedly congregational polity, with elders providing leadership; and a hunger for the unity of Christians. I have been told, upon describing this constellation of core beliefs, that we are a “cafeteria church,” formed by taking the eucharistic frequency of the Anglicans, the baptismal practice of the Baptists, and the polity of the Congregationalists; but we would say that the reality is just the reverse: we have taken each and every one of these practices, as well as the imperative for unity, from a single source, the New Testament; while other churches have devolved from this coherent pattern, specializing in one aspect of the New Testament picture — sometimes to the extent, as with the Baptists, that the church has taken its very name from that one aspect of Christian faith and practice.

The early Disciples were also shaped and characterized by two negative factors. The first was a positive dislike, born of personal experience, of the divisions and rivalries among Christians: one of the Disciples’ foundational myths tells how one of the Campbells,

¹ “Breaking the Bread of Life: The Eucharistic Piety of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),” *Mid-Stream* 36, 3/4 (1997) 293-307 (reference, p. 296, citing *Celebrate with Thanksgiving: Patterns of Prayer at the Communion Table* [St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001], esp. 11ff.).

² The following discussion draws upon my recent articles on Disciples worship published in P. BRADSHAW, ed., *The New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (London: SCM Press, 2002) 44-45, 76-77, 110-112, 181-182, 349-350, 483-484.

³ G. CAMPBELL, J. MacKNIGHT, and P. DODDRIGE, *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ: Common Styled the New Testament. Translated from the original Greek, with Prefaces, Various Emendations, and an Appendix by Alexander Campbell* (Bethany, Virginia, compiled by Alexander Campbell, 1833).

still in the Old Country, had been excluded from the Lord's Supper in a Presbyterian Church not because he was not a Presbyterian — he was — but because he was the wrong *kind* of Presbyterian. The will to unity in this early period had a radical, almost visceral side to it and the cause of unity was something, ecclesially speaking at least, to die for: in the "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery," one of the more remarkable documents of church history, an ecclesial body publicly declared the following: "We will that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large." It was not for nothing that the early leaders called Christian unity the Disciples' "polar star," for us the fixed point around which all else revolves.⁴

A second negative factor in these formational days was a healthy suspicion of creeds, not so much in themselves as positive statements of faith, but in their negative use. As Campbell said — and remember he was thinking of divisions among Protestant bodies at least as much as between Protestants and Roman Catholics — wherever he saw divided churches, he saw their respective creeds justifying, and maintaining, them in their division. But the situation was nuanced: the Apostles Creed was considered "catholic" (of value for *all* the churches) "because it is a recital of the facts of the gospel."⁵ And I myself grew up in a Disciples church which recited the Apostles Creed every week.

But let us now look in more detail at the worship practice of the churches in the early Disciples movement. Since no definitive, detailed rite is described — much less prescribed — in the New Testament it was incumbent upon congregations and particularly their elders, in the maturity of their faith and exercising reason, to order the community's worship (which, remember, each Sunday included the Lord's Supper). Typically the service included prayers, hymns, scripture readings, the celebration of the Supper itself, preaching (if, and only if, a person of suitable gifts were available!), and a concluding collection. Leadership was provided, at each point in the service, by those best suited according to the gifts they had received from the Lord.

A clear and colorful sense of these early days comes from Alexander Campbell's account, taken from his "memorandum-book," of Lord's Day worship in one church which he had visited:

"Not having any person whom they regarded as filling Paul's outlines of a bishop [meaning a local overseer or pastor], they had appointed two senior members, of a very grave deportment, to preside in their meetings. These persons were not competent to labor in the word and teaching; but they were qualified to rule well, and to preside with Christian dignity. One of them presided at each

meeting."⁶

At a certain point in the service:

"He [the presiding officer] then called upon a brother, who was a very distinct and emphatic reader, to read a section of the evangelical history. He arose and read, in a very audible voice, the history of the crucifixion of the Messiah."⁷

Later on Campbell records, with satisfaction, that following one of the prayers "the whole congregation, brethren and sisters, pronounced aloud the final *Amen*."⁸

Note in particular the early eucharistic practice of the Disciples of Christ, this being the most distinctive aspect, the heart of our identity as a church, and, as we shall see later on, perhaps the area of our greatest interaction — and learning — from the liturgical movement. As Campbell's account continues, then, we have his description of the Lord's Supper as conducted in a Disciples congregation in a frontier town, perhaps in western Virginia and perhaps about 1830:

"The president [usually a lay elder, duly appointed by the congregation] arose and said that our Lord had a table for his friends, and that he invited his disciples to sup with him." [Following a brief meditation, focusing on Christ's giving of himself for the world's salvation:] "He [the president] took a small loaf from the table, and in one or two periods gave thanks for it. After thanksgiving he raised it in his hand, and significantly brake it, and handed it to the disciples on each side of him, who passed the broken loaf from one to another, until they all partook of it. There was no stiffness, no formality, no pageantry; all was easy, familiar, solemn, cheerful. He then took the cup in a similar manner, and returned thanks for it, and handed it to the disciple sitting next to him, who passed it round; each one waiting upon his brother, until all were served. The thanksgiving before the breaking of the loaf, and the distributing of the cup, were as brief and pertinent to the occasion, as the thanks usually presented at a common table for the ordinary blessings of God's bounty."⁹

Significantly, the Supper was followed by prayers of supplication on behalf of the afflicted, the poor and the destitute, and in behalf of the conversion of the world.¹⁰

As the account of the service continues no sermon is mentioned, and indeed the practice was to dispense with the sermon

⁴ The image continues to fascinate Disciples. See for example P.A. CROW, Jr., "Three Dichotomies and a Polar Star," *Mid-Stream* 21, 1 (1982) 21-30.

⁵ W.J. RICHARDSON, "Alexander Campbell as an Advocate of Christian Union," in *Lectures in Honor of the Alexander Campbell Bicentennial, 1788-1988* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1988) 104.

⁶ A. CAMPBELL, *The Christian System*, 2nd edition (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1839) 290.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 291-292.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 292.

when no one considered suitable to preach was at hand; but Scripture readings and some sort of reaction to them was always included, and after the collection a number of persons rose to read biblical passages and to propose, and inquire on, matters “tending to the edification of the body.” Following several spiritual songs, “on the motion of a brother who signified that the hour of adjournment had arrived,” the president pronounced the apostolic benediction.¹¹ Characteristically, Campbell offers this whole account not as a fixed prescription for Disciples worship, but as an example which included the essential elements, conducted in a way which he found to be commendable in practice, of the Lord’s Day service, that is, the Lord’s Supper service.

If gathering at the Lord’s Table was “the one essential act of Sunday worship,” repeated again and again, then it was balanced by baptism as a decisive single moment in the believer’s lifelong journey in faith. Disciples baptismal theology and practice was, I think, less distinctive than their understanding and conduct of the eucharist, and here we need only to outline it briefly. Their baptismal position was, of course, explained with the usual vigor and clarity of thought. Again the determining factor was what was understood to be New Testament practice; and so baptism for Disciples was characterized by the profession of faith offered by a penitent believer, the use of the trinitarian formula, and full immersion in water. In excluding “indiscriminate” (including but not limited to infant) baptism the Disciples founders also sought to distinguish the church from the surrounding culture and from the state, and to expunge the memory of baptismal practice in the established churches of the Old World. This was one area where the early Disciples leadership had significant differences of opinion amongst themselves, notably over whether immersion was the only valid “mode” of baptism. Barton Stone did not insist absolutely on it, but Alexander Campbell did and, partly to make the point, in his own translation of the New Testament famously rendered every occurrence of *baptizein* as “immerse.”

Let us conclude this initial exposition by looking more closely at the *sacramental* dimension of this frontier unity movement. Early Disciples found the term “sacrament” uncongenial mainly, I think, for historic reasons and preferred to speak of “ordinances,” that is, practices “ordained” (or commanded) by Christ as a means of making God’s saving action present and visible in the world. They understood the Lord’s Supper and baptism to be the chief ordinances; each uses material substances (bread, the fruit of the vine, water); and each is a visible sign and seal of God’s grace. Each ordinance, moreover, has its own particular grace, or special role in the plan of salvation: for baptism, it is the remission of sin unto newness of life in Christ; for the Supper, nourishing the faith and unity of believers. I have spoken elsewhere about the “starkly realistic nature”¹² of early Disciples’ sacramental thought and life, which was indeed rationalist (though never reductionist). Thus for Alexander Campbell “the Holy Spirit works upon *the understand-*

ing and affections of saints and sinners...”¹³ so that Christians “must perceive, realize, appropriate, and feel the *blood* of Christ *applied* to our reason, our conscience, our will, and to our affections.”¹⁴

The Table is Christ’s; he is our host, and the whole church is invited to his Table; he is present; he enters into head and heart alike in a way that is tangible and has visible effects in our lives. If that’s not “presence,” and if it isn’t “real,” then I don’t know what is.

2. Developments within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): Through the mid-twentieth Century

Thus by about 1840 or so the main outlines of this “populist sacramental” church were established, its most distinctive feature being the observance each Lord’s Day of the Lord’s Supper, presided over by elders, who used extemporaneous prayers at the Table.¹⁵ But my topic is finally the encounter of the Disciples with the movement for liturgical renewal, and the early nineteenth-century Disciples of Christ church I have just described to you is not, of course, the same as that which encountered the liturgical movement in the mid-twentieth century. To understand *that* church, and thus the significance of that encounter, we must see how the Disciples developed over the hundred years or so from about 1840 to 1940 or 1950.

In some areas of the church’s faith and life there was growth and development; in other areas there was growth. The “Restorationist” movement stemming from the Campbells, Barton Stone, Walter Scott and others had brought together diverse persons and viewpoints; as these leaders died, and the movement moved into its second and third generations, a fault-line became apparent between more “progressive” and more “conservative” wings.

One fundamental problem was the interpretation of Scripture, particularly on the question of how to order the life of the church on matters not resolved by the first generation of leaders, and about which the New Testament was inconveniently silent. This came to a head on the question of how far musical instruments could be used in worship, since such use was not recorded in the New Testament. A second problem was the relation of local congregations to church structures beyond the local level, with some refusing to join cooperative institutions – even for reasons of mission – which were seen as threatening local autonomy. A third problem was the relation of the church to the state, with some pastors or congregations refusing to take actions which might be interpreted as seeking “recognition” by the state. By the early twentieth century the most conservative forces had left, coalescing to form separate churches carrying a different (and from a Disciples of Christ perspective more limited) form of the Campbell-Stone “Restoration” vision. Meanwhile the Disciples of Christ, through a series of specific decisions (all tending in a

¹³ *Millennial Harbinger* (May, 1855) 258, emphasis mine.

¹⁴ *Millennial Harbinger*, Extra, No. 8 (October, 1935) 508; cf. *Millennial Harbinger* (December, 1855) 662.

¹⁵ “Breaking the Bread of Life...,” *op. cit.*, 293-307.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² T. F. BEST, “Disciples Identity and the Ecumenical Future,” *Disciples Theological Digest* 8, 1 (1993) 5-20.

“progressive” direction) about the issues named above, had defined itself as a recognizably “mainline” denomination.

But the pattern was different in different areas of the church’s life, and we need to consider a number of factors in more detail beginning, inevitably, with the Lord’s Supper. The conviction remained that, since the Table was Christ’s, the church had no authority to exclude anyone from the Table who had been claimed by Christ, that is, who had been baptized. The practice of elders offering prayers — usually one elder praying over the bread and one over the wine — continued. I say “wine” but in fact (reflecting the founders’ aversion to alcohol, based on their experience on the frontier) the use of unfermented grape juice continued as the norm.

What did change — and for the worse — was the relation of the Table to the Word, that is, of the Supper to the sermon. Originally the sermon was dispensed with if no suitable elder or traveling evangelist was on hand; in any case the sermon was placed at the conclusion of the service, partly because there it could be more easily dispensed with if necessary. But with the gradual development of an ordained, professional paid clergy the sermon became the prerogative of the local pastor, and a fixed and necessary part of the Lord’s Day service. It remained at the conclusion of the service, but increasingly for a different reason: as a divine rhetoric, an evangelistic message reinforcing or calling out belief, the sermon increasingly replaced the Supper as the climax of the service.

Furthermore, the ordained minister came to have a prominent role in the service of the Table itself. It became the norm for elders and deacons to be joined at the Table by the ordained minister, who would recite the words of institution from the gospels or 1 Corinthians 11, and perhaps give a brief meditation, before the Elders’ prayers for the loaf and the cup. The deacons would then distribute the elements to the congregation, which remained seated and passed the elements to one another. At best this sharing of leadership by laity and ordained clergy modeled the ministry of the whole people of God; and some Elders’ prayers reflected, in simple and beautiful language, a lifetime of growth into Christ. But often enough the elders’ prayers showed neither theological understanding nor spiritual depth, thus only reinforcing the dominance of the sermon which followed. Meanwhile the liberal theology of the first half of the twentieth century, and a general resistance to representational thought, diminished the sense of the sacred in worship and encouraged a commemorative understanding of the supper, as an event which evoked the lively memory, but not the actual presence (however understood), of Christ.

In the case of baptism there is a two-fold story to be told. We noted earlier that Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell differed on the necessity for immersion, and in this case it was the stricter position of Campbell which prevailed generally in the church, at least until about 1900. This meant that persons joining a Disciples congregation who had been baptized, but in other ways, were normally expected to “complete their obedience to Christ” by undergoing full immersion. I hesitate to call this “re-baptism,” since the language of “completing” obedience implied at least the partial efficacy of the baptism which had already been received

elsewhere. It was striking that the logic of Disciples’ eucharistic theology led to the practice of an open Table, so that many congregations which required full immersion baptism for membership would nevertheless receive at the Lord’s Table persons who had been baptized in other ways.

While full immersion remained, and indeed remains, the practice in Disciples churches for persons first entering the body of Christ, the attitude to a “re”- or “completing” baptism began to change from about 1900, with some congregations beginning to accept earlier the baptism of persons transferring membership from “non-immersion” churches. I am not sure of the reasons for this, but I like to regard it as representing a rebirth or reawakening of the early Disciples’ ecumenical conviction and zeal, which had faded somewhat as the Disciples consolidated their position as a denomination in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps this renewed sense of their vocation to unity came from the increasing ecumenical experience of Disciples, as they engaged with others in associations for practical Christian work (such as the Sunday School Movement around the turn of the century). Perhaps it came from the awareness of figures such as Peter Ainslie, who became a well-known proponent of the nascent Faith and Order movement world-wide. Perhaps it reflected the emergence of the Disciples as one of the principal actors in the formation of councils of churches at all levels from local to national. It would be a mistake to say that the “mind” of the church had fully changed on this issue by 1950, but there was certainly a growing reluctance to call into question baptisms duly performed in other churches.

Other points in our profile can be noted more briefly. As mentioned before, this period saw the emergence of a professional, salaried clergy understood as the, or a, leader of the local congregation. But that was precisely the question: was it “the,” or was it “a,” leader? The role of the elder was so deeply ingrained in Disciples’ ethos that there was no question of the professional ministry supplanting it. Yet the functions of the elder — who was ordained locally to oversee the life of a local congregation, including administering the Lord’s Supper and baptism and, if suited for it, to preach as well — were precisely those for which the professional clergy was being trained. It should be stressed that the pattern described earlier, with both elders and the minister active at the Lord’s Table — was understood as an enrichment of the church’s life, drawing on the gifts of both lay and clerical leadership. But the fundamental questions remained: what is the relation of pastor and elders, and what is the role of lay leadership in an age of increasing specialization and professionalization, in the church as everywhere else?

A special word is in order about our use of liturgical books and resources. We produced our first authorized liturgical book — for voluntary use — in 1953. That is, through the whole period which we are presently considering there was no official, standard worship text. This followed from the fact that local congregations had, from our earliest days, been entrusted with the responsible ordering of their own worship, and from a reluctance to introduce anything other than the New Testament as authoritative in matters of faith and practice — including worship practice.

Yet there was, in fact, a discernible, distinctive “Disciples” worship practice, based primarily on two factors. The first factor was, inevitably, the widely-followed pattern of the Lord’s Supper observance (with minister and elders, as described above). The second was the hymnals published by Disciples which – through widespread use rather than official prescription – gave a considerable measure of common worship experience throughout the whole church. The tradition began with Alexander Campbell’s own widely-used hymnal,¹⁶ perhaps most prominent later on was *Hymns of the United Church* (1924, co-edited by C. C. Morrison and Herbert L. Willett),¹⁷ whose title reflects the growing appeal of things ecumenical for many Disciples of that day. In this – and not only in this – the hymnals were prophetic forces in the life of the church: the next widely-used hymnal, *Christian Worship, A Hymnal* (1941),¹⁸ was published by the Disciples denominational press together with the American Baptist Convention.

A final point should be noted; it is implicit in my description of the Lord’s Day service as normative for Disciples, but may have escaped your notice. Simply put: Disciples, as they had developed through the mid-twentieth century and in contrast to the Reformed aspects of their heritage, had little idea of a service of the word in the classical Reformed sense, that is, a Sunday service including entrance, scripture reading, proclamation of the gospel and response, statement of faith and prayers of intercession, but stopping short of the sharing of Christ’s body and blood at the Lord’s Table.

There were, of course, frequent and fervent small-scale occasions for prayer and meditation upon scripture, such as personal devotions or the prayers held by staff in church offices. These were understood to be sufficient unto themselves. But there were also occasions on which a more elaborate, but non-eucharistic service was called for, especially in inter-church and special ministry contexts, for example installation services for officers of councils of churches, services in institutional settings such as church camps or hospitals, or services in observance of special occasions in the life of the local community. Such services would normally include the reading of scripture and some form of response to it, but other elements, and their overall order, followed no fixed or classical pattern. And I think it is fair to say that most Disciples, attending a non-eucharistic service beyond the level of personal devotions, or of any complexity, would have felt that “something was missing” when the service did not include the Lord’s Supper.

This was, then, in broad outline, the personality of the Disci-

¹⁶ In one form in use as early as 1834: see *Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, Original and Selected* (Bethany, Virginia: printed by A. Campbell, 1834), and *Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, Original and Selected: Adapted to the Christian Religion* (Carthage, Ohio: printed by W. Scott, 1835); later versions include *The Christian Hymn Book: A Compilation of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, Original and Selected*, by A. Campbell and Others (Cincinnati: H. Bosworth, 1968 [1865]).

¹⁷ Chicago: Christian Century Press, 1924.

¹⁸ Christian Board of Publication, St. Louis: Bethany Press.

ples of Christ in the United States around the middle of the twentieth century: centered on the scriptures as the basis of faith and the life of the church; populist, that is, solidly middle-class and with a preference for direct, simple symbols; sacramental, with the center of the church’s life found, in each Lord’s Day worship, at the Lord’s Table service led by elders and (often) the minister — but less sacramental, perhaps, than earlier in our history as the sermon tended to overshadow the Supper; firmly committed to the baptism of professing believers by submersion, but increasingly ready to respect the practice of other churches; recovering its original ecumenical vocation; searching for the right relationship between professional pastoral leadership and the witness of elders; evincing a fervent piety, especially in personal prayer and congregational hymn singing; with a firm sense of order in worship, maintained not through prescribed worship texts but through widely-used hymnals and other worship resources. Worship had settled into nurturing, comfortable patterns and, I suppose, seemed likely to continue that way.

3. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Liturgical Renewal – Developments since 1950

Fifty years later, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we find ourselves as Disciples in the midst of a transformation in our self-understanding as a church. My own understanding is that this has been caused by, and expressed through, our engagement in two of the central movements of the Holy Spirit within the whole church in our times. Through interaction with these movements we have clarified our own identity as a church, come to a new appreciation of our strengths, and have learned to see where, perhaps, our own history has left us lacking in some things we need to be church fully and faithfully today.

The first of these movements is the ecumenical movement. We came early to it – or, indeed, were born of it — as mentioned above; but particularly over the past fifty years ecumenical engagement has become a central part of the life of our church. Here I will simply mention a few examples of this: There is our engagement, from almost its beginning, in the Consultation on Church Union (now Churches Uniting in Christ) in the United States (indeed, two of the General Secretaries of the Consultation have come from our church). There is our seconding, since the 1970s, of an executive staff position in the Faith and Order secretariat of the World Council of Churches. There is our serious engagement with the Faith and Order convergence text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.¹⁹ There is our close partnership with the United Church of Christ in the U.S., to the extent that these two major denominations share one and the same, common board for overseas mission. There is our international bilateral dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, which has been of deep importance

¹⁹ For an early example in the liturgical context, see Keith Watkins, “The Lima Liturgy: When Theology becomes Liturgy,” *Mid-Stream* 23, 3 (1984) 285-289.

to our own self-understanding.²⁰ And there is the striking fact that we have encouraged Disciples-related churches around the world not to continue relating primarily to us as their missioning, or “parent,” church but rather to enter church unions, so that Disciples in the Republic of Congo, Thailand, Japan, Jamaica, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere would now be found not as a separate church body but as part of a united church.

Perhaps it was this ecumenical contact with the larger church which made us more aware of the need for responsible ecclesial structures beyond the congregational level. In any case one of the most profound developments in our life was a process of “Restructure” in the 1960s which established much clearer patterns of oversight at regional, and national, levels. A robust sense of local responsibility and initiative remains, but we are much more aware now that local congregations belong to the whole of our church – and to the whole of the whole church. Certainly the encounter with ecumenical theology has had serious consequences for our understanding of both the Lord’s Supper and baptism, as we will see in a moment.

The second of the movements which is transforming our church is, of course, the movement for liturgical renewal. We should note at the beginning that our encounter with this movement was a very particular one, and perhaps quite different from that of other churches. To understand this we need to recall the intention of the liturgical reform movement, as stated well by Ellsworth Chandlee:

“[The liturgical movement] seeks a recovery of those norms of liturgical worship of the Bible and the early church which lie behind Reformation divisions and medieval distortions, and which are fundamental to Christian liturgy in every time and place. It aims, however, not at an attempt to resuscitate the liturgy of the early Church in the twentieth century, but at the restatement of the fundamentals in forms and expressions which can enable the liturgy to be the living prayer and work of the church today.”²¹

Thus the liturgical movement presented Disciples with an understanding of the sources of Christian worship which was broader than that of our own tradition and ethos. In particular it called us to an encounter with the worship not just of the earliest Christian communities as described in the New Testament, but required us to engage seriously with the worship traditions of the early Christian centuries, and indeed beyond. Thus it called us to an engagement with liturgical scholarship in the strict sense of the

²⁰ For the first series of discussions (1977-1982) see *Apostolicity and Catholicity* (Indianapolis: Council on Christian Unity, 1982); for the second (1983-1992), “The Church as Communion in Christ,” *Mid-Stream* 33, 2 (1994) 219-239; for the third (1993-2002), “Receiving and Handing on the Faith: The Mission and Responsibility of the Church (1993-2002),” *Mid-Stream* 41, 4 (2002) 51-79; the reports from the first and second series are also printed in *Mid-Stream* 41, 4 (2002) 80-95, and 96-114 respectively.

²¹ J.C. DAVIS, ed., *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, 2nd ed., (London: SCM Press, 1986) 314.

development of liturgies historically – but also with research on the psychological, sociological and cultural factors at play in the experience of worship.

Let me give sketch the course of our encounter with the liturgical movement, indicating the main personalities involved and some results as reflected in worship materials produced in, and for, our church. Three persons have been central to the process. G Edwin Osborn produced the church’s first “semi-official” worship book in 1953 (mentioned above). Osborn was a student of the psychology of worship, and favored “relevant worship” focused on themes of direct concern to the community, but stressed the importance of a sound biblical and ecumenical basis for worship. William Robinson was in the forefront of our recovery of the centrality of the Lord’s Supper, to which we come in a moment. Both Osborn and Robinson died in the 1960s, and since then it has been Keith Watkins who has led both in recovering our own distinctive worship heritage, and in our engagement with the liturgical movement.

Watkins’ approach was through a series of liturgical studies aimed at renewing Disciples worship practice. The book *Thankful Praise: A Resource for Christian Worship* (1987)²² sought “to strengthen Christian public worship and especially the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.” Its goals can serve as a summary of Disciples’ aspirations for their worship today: to connect our worship with the great tradition of Christian worship through the ages; to reflect liturgically the results of ecumenical convergence; to be faithful to the crucial features of traditional Disciples’ worship; to be sensitive to social injustice, especially in its anti-Jewish and sexist expressions; to enhance the beauty and diversity of worship through vivid, biblical and felicitous language; and by encouraging a healthy variety within our worship life.²³ In 1991, Watkins followed this book by *Baptism and Belonging: A Resource for Christian Worship*,²⁴ which sought a parallel renewal in Disciples’ understanding and practice of baptism.

This liturgical process has proceeded alongside a theological one, namely a study on our church’s ecclesiological self-understanding begun by its Commission on Theology in 1978. Three of the texts from this study touch directly on worship: that on ministry (1985), on baptism (1987), and on the Lord’s Supper (1993). The overall report, issued in 1997, affirms that in worship the church makes “defining signs of its true identity” as it listens to scripture, proclaims the word, confesses sin and receives God’s forgiving grace, celebrates the sacramental acts of baptism and holy communion, and communicates in prayer with God.²⁵ This is unfamiliar language for some Disciples, who still expect divine worship to be described more subjectively and in terms of pious

²² St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication.

²³ Cf. T.F. BEST, “Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Worship,” in P. BRADSHAW, ed., *The New SCM Dictionary...*, *op. cit.*, 181.

²⁴ St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication.

²⁵ P.A. CROW, Jr. and J.O. DUKE, eds., *The Church for Disciples of Christ: Seeking to be Truly Church Today* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1998) 56.

emotions warmly felt. Yet it *is* where Disciples find themselves today in their worship. Further, we realize that the theology study could not have come to its conclusions without the study on worship which ran parallel to, and in interaction with, it. One of the true gifts of the Spirit to our church in this process was that we not only have visionary liturgists, but also theologians, such as Paul Crow and James O. Duke, who understand that theologians need to listen to liturgists. Many of you will understand how precious that is.

Now let me illustrate our encounter with the liturgical renewal movement, and the ecumenical movement, by looking in more detail at a number of specific issues.

A. *The Lord's Supper*

We have experienced, I think, a dramatic renewal of Disciples' eucharistic practice and theology in the past 30 years. Today we would understand the eucharist as

a public act in which the church, having heard the proclamation of the word, partakes of Christ's body and blood, thereby remembering God's reconciling initiative in Jesus Christ, celebrating the gift of the Spirit upon the Church, and anticipating the coming reign of God. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, an expression of Christ's body and blood in the visible signs of bread and wine. The host is the Lord, and the whole church is invited to his Table. The Supper has immediate social consequences; sharing at Christ's table compels the church to work in order that all may have "bread and enough" to eat. The Lord's Supper is central to the faith and piety of Disciples, who refer to themselves as "people of the chalice."²⁶

The service suggested in *Thankful Praise* includes the classic dimensions of gathering, proclamation of the word, response to the word, coming together around the Lord's Table, and sending forth. The Lord's Table service includes an invitation extended "upon Christ's behalf for all baptized believers," an offering, the classic Disciples feature of elders' prayers over the loaf and cup, responsive prayers, the institution narrative from scripture, the breaking of bread, the Lord's prayer, an expression of peace, the sharing of the elements (normally by passing the loaf and cup through the congregation, which remains seated), and a final prayer.

We noted above the Disciples' drift, through the first half of the twentieth century, towards a restricted "memorial" view of the supper in which Christ was more a memory than an actual presence at the Table. Thus one of the central challenges posed to us by the liturgical and ecumenical movements was the recovery of the biblical notion of *anamnesis*, of an *active remembering* which brings into the present the power and effective action of a past event. But as we tackled this question, we remembered that we had resources from our own tradition: thus our great early evangelist and theologian, Walter Scott, had spoken of baptism

²⁶ T.F. BEST, "Eucharist. Christian Church," in P. BRADSHAW, ed., *The New SCM Dictionary...*, *op. cit.*, 181.

and the Lord's Supper as "the crucifixion, or death, burial and resurrection of Christ, repeating themselves in the life and profession of the disciples"²⁷ – and, he might have said, of those who down the ages have followed. The liturgical and ecumenical movements, then, helped us to recover something which had been central to our own identity as a church, but which we had lost through a forgetting of our past, and an accommodation to the surrounding culture. We have recovered the true meaning of the words traditionally carved across the front of the Lord's Table in most Disciples' churches: "*do this in remembrance of me.*"

Another challenge posed to us was the recovery in the liturgical movement of the *social sense* and significance of worship, a recovery of the awareness that the liturgy led to, demanded, and was the source of, the "liturgy after the liturgy," namely our Christian service in the world. Recall from the ecumenical movement the famous statement in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*:

The eucharist embraces all aspects of life...The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life...All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ...²⁸

Some claimed that, if we took this liturgical and ecumenical insight too seriously, it would introduce "the world" into worship, threatening to divide congregations on social issues. But then we recalled words of Alexander Campbell himself, who had written the following:

The Lord says to each disciple, when he receives the symbols into his hand... "For *you* my body was wounded; for *you* my life was taken."²⁹

and then continued:

Each disciple in handing the symbols to his fellow-disciples, says in effect, 'You, my brother, once an alien, are now a citizen of heaven: once a stranger, are now brought home to the family of God. You have owned my Lord as your Lord, my people as your people. Under Jesus the Messiah we are one. Mutually embraced in the Everlasting arms, I embrace you in mind: thy sorrows shall be my sorrows, and thy joys my joys.' Joint debtors to the favor of God and the love of Jesus, we shall jointly suffer with him, that we may jointly reign with him. Let us, then, renew our

²⁷ W. SCOTT, *The Messiahship; or Great Demonstration* (Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1859), 284.

²⁸ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, "Eucharist," paragraph 20, Faith and Order Paper, 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

²⁹ A. CAMPBELL, *The Christian System...*, *op. cit.*, 273.

strength, remember our King and hold fast our boasted hope unshaken to the end.³⁰

Thus for Campbell, in contrast to the “rugged individualism” of his culture, the Supper was both profoundly personal *and* profoundly social. The Supper,

In relating us each to God, links us to our brothers and sisters in Christ; through the Supper we are made one family and given that eschatological hope which sustains us in suffering, and which enables us mutually to sustain one another. The *koinonia* which we share and express at the Lord’s Table compels — and empowers — our *diakonia* in all of life.³¹

Such texts have brought a new awareness within our church of the social dimension of the Lord’s Supper, and encouraged us to see our witness in the world as coherent with, and faithful to, the central role of the Supper in our worship and our self-understanding. Thus again, challenged through the liturgical movement, we re-discovered in our own heritage an aspect which had fallen fallow: the integration of the whole of life, both personal and social, in and through the meal offered by Christ at his Table.

But we did not draw *all* the elements of our eucharistic renewal from our own tradition. Perhaps the most striking development has been in our understanding of the proper *structure* of the Lord’s Day service. We noted above that by 1950 the norm was that the service concluded with a powerful sermon as its high point. But through the liturgical movement we gradually learned another pattern, and today it is the norm in our churches that the Supper comes at its conclusion and as its climax, with the Sermon seen increasingly as a preparation for the Supper.

Through this shifting of the Supper within the structure of the Lord’s Day service we restored the coherence between our liturgical expression of the meal, and the role which it plays in our life and thought. And in so doing we have *aligned our liturgy with the great tradition of eucharistic worship through the ages*. Some of our members, to be sure, would be very surprised to hear our change in practice described in these terms; but that is indeed what we have done. Along with this structural change, we find an increasing desire to symbolize the unity of the church in our liturgical practice: if the communion is given in small, individual cups (as is still usual), then the congregation will hold these and then partake all together. On special, more intimate occasions a common cup may be used. In all these areas the liturgical renewal movement has been our main inspiration and challenge.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ I have treated this text also in T.F. BEST, “Koinonia and Diakonia: The Ecumenical Implications of Two Biblical Perspectives on the Church,” in D. FIENSY and W.D. HOWDEN, *Faith in Practice: Studies in the Book of Acts* (Atlanta: European Evangelistic Society, 1995) 365-366.

Our understanding and practice of the Lord’s Supper is still developing and, I hope, deepening.³² Some important issues remain to be resolved. While at the Table the combination of ordained and lay leadership is the norm, in some congregations the line between lay *presence* and lay *presidency* is blurred.³³ In many congregations the prayers offered by elders at the table are an area where growth is needed, in both liturgical sensitivity and theological content. There is a cultural pressure for children to be admitted to the table before baptism, and a corresponding pressure for baptism to be performed at younger ages. We want to explore the meaning of Christ’s presence at the meal more fully, and are suggesting, with our Catholic colleagues, that the next, fourth Round of the Disciples/Roman Catholic dialogue should focus on “the presence of Christ in the church, with special reference to the eucharist,”³⁴ this being “important, given the emphasis that both Disciples and Roman Catholics put on the weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper and its link with the visible unity of Christians.”³⁵

B. Baptism

The past fifty years have seen significant developments in our appreciation of *baptism* as well. Our current understanding can be stated in this way, parallel to our grasp of the Lord’s Supper:

baptism is a public act of the church in which a believer, responding by personal profession of faith to God’s saving initiative in Jesus Christ, is immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and thereby incorporated into the church and set on a path of lifelong growth into Christ. Baptism is a sacrament, an expression of God’s grace in the visible sign of water. It has immediate social consequences, for the life entered into is one of love of neighbor and sacrificial service in the world.³⁶

³² See further “A Word to the Church on the Lord’s Supper (1991), A Report of the Committee on Theology,” in P.A. CROW, Jr. and J.O. DUKE, eds., *The Church for Disciples of Christ...*, op. cit., 139-152; and “A Word to the Church on Ministry (1985), in *The Church for Disciples of Christ...*, op. cit., 109-120; and J.O. DUKE and R. HARRISON, Jr., *The Lord’s Supper* (St. Louis: published for the Council on Christian Unity by Christian Board of Publication, 1993).

³³ On the historical background, and present extent and significance, of lay presidency in some Disciples congregations see K. WATKINS, “Worship as Understood and Practiced by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),” in T.F. BEST and D. HELLER, eds., *Worship Today: A Survey of Understanding and Practice Among the Churches* [provisional title] (Geneva: WCC Publications) forthcoming.

³⁴ “Receiving and Handing on the Faith: The Mission and Responsibility of the Church (1993-2002),” para. 6.2.

³⁵ “The Church as Communion in Christ,” para. 53a, quoted in “Receiving and Handing on the Faith: The Mission and Responsibility of the Church (1993-2002),” para. 6.2.

³⁶ T.F. BEST, “Baptism. Christian Church,” in P. BRADSHAW, ed., *The New SCM Dictionary...*, op. cit., 44.

Our baptismal practice³⁷ is a process which continues several characteristically “Disciples” traditions: the personal profession of faith often comes in response to a “hymn of invitation” sung at the end of a Sunday Service; the candidate affirms Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and his or her own personal Lord and Savior; the period of instruction is meant to explore the depth of this profession, and to set it within the faith of the church as a whole; and to prepare the candidate to embark on a lifetime’s journey with and toward Christ. Baptism is normally performed within a Lord’s Day Service, and in a baptistery visible to the whole congregation.

A number of developments in our practise of baptism are due to the influence and challenge of the liturgical movement and the ecumenical movement. Increasingly Disciples agree that the rite itself should include the following elements: proclamation of scripture; repentance and renunciation of evil; profession of faith in Jesus Christ, invocation of the Holy Spirit; full immersion; administration “in the name of the Trinity,” normally following the formula in Matthew 28:19; and welcome into the life of the church. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* has been influential, especially in its insistence on the social as well as personal dimensions of baptism, and on the fact that baptism, as a sacrament of unity, is unrepeatable. Since 1950 more and more congregations have refused the practice of “re”-baptism, and the Disciples’ official response to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* may be taken as having consolidated the church’s official rejection of that practice. At the same time, we have stressed increasingly the fact that baptism is into the *whole* church, not just “our” particular part of it.

Open questions remain, perhaps more so than with the Lord’s Supper. For example: what is the proper age for baptism, and what is its relation to church membership? Should there be a blessing or dedication of children, anticipating their later personal commitment — or perhaps a dedication of parents, solemnizing their intention to raise the child in the faith? Questions — thoughtful and honest — have been raised about the masculine imagery of the traditional baptismal formula; but the traditional formula remains for us very much the norm, not least in view of our extensive ecumenical commitments. How can the service of baptism be enriched liturgically — perhaps by a blessing of the water, to emphasize God’s initiative in the event? How to renew the awareness of one’s own baptismal commitment — perhaps by incorporating a renewal of baptism vows into other worship events? How to convey the broader dimensions of the baptismal commitment? Here, strikingly, the church’s Theology Commission has proposed a new form of the profession of faith, stressing the ecclesial and social, as well as personal, dimensions of baptism: “Do you, with Christians of every time and place, believe that ‘Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God’ (Mt

³⁷ For a current example of Disciples baptismal practice and commentary thereon see K. WATKINS, “Christian Baptism: the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), in T.F. BEST, ed., *Becoming a Christian: Baptismal Practice and Understanding Among the Churches Today* [provisional title] (Geneva: WCC Publications) forthcoming.

16:16)?”³⁸

C. The “Service of the Word”

Let us look briefly at another area of growth which has come largely due to our encounter with the liturgical movement. This is the increased awareness of the service of the Word as a liturgical event with its own proper structure and process, normally including the elements of entrance, scripture reading, proclamation of the Gospel, response, prayer and intercession, the Lord’s Prayer, and dismissal/sending forth, with blessing. The discovery that this basic structure or pattern of worship — the notion of *ordo* which has been central to current Faith and Order work on worship,³⁹ and which Gordon Lathrop will take up elsewhere in this series — is one shared by Christians of many times and place, has done much to increase the vitality of our own non-eucharistic worship. Here, too, we have learned from the liturgical renewal movement that we stand within the long tradition of the church, even as we bear witness to our distinctive worship traditions.

D. Worship Materials

None of these developments would have had an impact liturgically without worship materials to bring them into the lives of local congregations. And thus we need to conclude this review of developments in the second half the twentieth century with a brief look at Disciples hymnals, worship books and other materials. Already the *Hymnbook for Christian Worship* published in 1970⁴⁰ (done jointly with the American Baptist Convention, as was *Christian Worship: A Hymnal* of 1941) included many modern hymns, including some from other continents and from the ecumenical movement, while discretely “‘retiring’ hymns considered overly sentimental or theologically simplistic.”⁴¹ The principal worship book at this point was still *Christian Worship*:

³⁸ See “A Word to the Church on Baptism (1987), A Report of the Committee on Theology,” in P.A. CROW, Jr. and J.O. DUKE, eds., *The Church for Disciples of Christ...*, *op. cit.*, 121-137, citation, p. 133. See also C.M. WILLIAMSON, *Baptism, Embodiment of the Gospel: Disciples Baptismal Theology, The Nature of the Church*, Study Series, 4 (St. Louis: published for the Council on Christian Unity by Christian Board of Publication, 1987).

³⁹ See T.F. BEST and D. HELLER, eds., *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship*, Faith and Order Paper, 171 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995); T.F. BEST and D. HELLER, eds., *Eucharistic Worship in Ecumenical Contexts: The Lima Liturgy – and Beyond* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988); T.F. BEST and D. HELLER, eds., *Becoming A Christian: The Ecumenical Implications of Our Common Baptism*, Faith and Order Paper, 184 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999); “One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition of Christian Initiation,” FO/2001:24, text under development, publication forthcoming; and the forthcoming publications given in notes 30 and 34, above.

⁴⁰ St. Louis: Bethany Press. See also A.N. WAKE, *Companion to Hymnbook for Christian Worship* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1970).

⁴¹ T.F. BEST, “Books, Liturgical. Christian Church,” in P. BRADSHAW, ed., *The New SCM Dictionary...*, *op. cit.*, 76.

A Service Book (1953),⁴² the work of G. Edwin Osborn. Its stress on “relevant” worship on specific themes is not perhaps in accord with much of the liturgical movement; yet it was advanced for Disciples in including a lectionary and it did encourage a more positive attitude towards practices in worship common to the whole of our church.

These materials are now superseded by fully modern resources, including both a strong hymnal and a service book produced in the 1990s. The *Chalice Hymnal* of 1995⁴³ combines classic hymns from the long Christian tradition with a generous collection of songs from churches around the world and from the ecumenical movement, as well as from African-American and Hispanic contexts. It is sensitive to issues of language. Reflecting Disciples piety and tradition, it “includes probably more communion hymns than any other currently available hymnal.”⁴⁴ A partial psalter, lectionary for years A, B, and C, quotations from a wide variety of sources, some ancient, and some service materials, are also included. Happily, it has been warmly received within the church. A companion to the hymnal for worship leaders was published in 1998.⁴⁵

The hymnal is beautifully complemented by *Chalice Worship* of 1997, the service book edited by Colbert Cartwright and Cricket Harrison.⁴⁶ With this the church has, finally, a rich collection of services and material which both honor its own tradition and that of the wider church; and is thoroughly modern in its engagement with the liturgical and ecumenical movements, as well as its attention to contemporary worship needs. Thus in addition to Lord’s Day services (one including a clear *epiklesis* in the eucharistic prayer) and baptismal rites, there are services for the installation of elders, an Easter Vigil service, material for use during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, three examples of worship in ecumenical contexts (including one for use of Martin Luther King, Jr. day), a prayer service for healing, and prayers for special and difficult pastoral situations (for example, for “one who has been molested,” or for those “in a coma or unable to communicate”) as well as, of course, the more familiar special occasions of weddings and funerals. The worship book has a “message,” namely that worship is important and worth doing well; and that is a message of hope for our church as a whole.

Finally, I want to mention the wealth of worship materials being produced by individuals within the church; these are un- or semi-official, but bear witness to important trends in our life as a church. Especially important is the first Disciples’ set of lectionary-based Communion and post-Communion prayers, *Fed by God’s Grace: Communion Prayers for Year A* (2001), *Year B*

⁴² St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication.

⁴³ St. Louis: Chalice Press.

⁴⁴ T.F. BEST, “Books, Liturgical...., *op. cit.*, 76.

⁴⁵ S.L. ADAMS, C.S. CARTWRIGHT, and D.B. MERRICK, eds., *Chalice Hymnal: A Worship Leader’s Companion* (St. Louis: Chalice Press).

⁴⁶ St. Louis: Chalice Press.

(1999) and for *Year C* (2000).⁴⁷ These are broadening the appreciation for the lectionary within the church, as well as improving the quality, both theological and liturgical, of the elders’ prayers offered during the service of the Supper.

A normative liturgy or body of hymns would be inimical to Disciples ecclesiology and ethos alike; yet all these materials are clear evidence of our new liturgical vitality, and our engagement with our tradition, the tradition of the whole church, and the modern world.

4. “Lessons from Liturgical Renewal”

And now let us return to our title as amended: “Christian Unity and Christian Diversity, Lessons from Liturgical Renewal in a Populist Sacramental Church: The Case of the Disciples of Christ.” For Disciples, the fundamental questions raised by the liturgical reform movement have been how to hold unity and diversity together within our own church; and how we, as a church, fit within the diversity of churches which make up the church as a whole.

From this perspective, I see three central lessons which we have learned in the course of our engagement with the movement for liturgical reform. The *first* is that the liturgical and ecumenical movements are part of one larger movement of the Holy Spirit, within the whole church, for renewal and towards unity. The two movements together have pressed us to a closer coherence between what and how we pray, and what we believe. The new material in our hymnal and worship book is the fruit of both movements, especially the liturgical — but that as informed by, and in some dialogue with, the ecumenical. If William Temple had spoken in 1980 rather than 1930, perhaps he would have spoken of “the ecumenical *and liturgical* movements” as “the great facts of our era.”

A *second* learning is that the liturgical renewal movement has been a force both for unity and for diversity. After our first century and more, from 1820 to about 1950, we Disciples found ourselves internally very united, reflecting cultural and social factors to be sure, but due principally to our common practice of the Lord’s Supper on each Lord’s Day, with the active participation of elders, as well as the pastor, at the Table. Looking outside ourselves, it was precisely this frequent eucharistic practice which distinguished us from our immediate ecclesiological neighbors, the churches stemming from the Calvinist Reformed tradition, as well as from the churches of the Baptist tradition, to whom we were linked by our baptismal understanding and practice. In this sense we were a sign of *diversity* in the broader Reformed tradition; but, looking more broadly still, we were a sign of *unity* to Anglicans and even Roman Catholics, as a church stemming from the Reformation which had preserved the weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper as the heart of the life of the church.

What the liturgical reform movement has done over the past fifty years is to make us much more *diverse* internally, by bringing new worship materials and by encouraging the development of specific, focused worship forms for particular occasions of non-eucharistic worship. But at the same time, it has strengthened our

⁴⁷ M.E. DIXON and S. DIXON (St. Louis: Chalice Press).

witness to *unity*, and our sense of being part of the whole church, by stressing the basic patterns or structures of worship shared by many churches. And liturgical reform has strengthened our unity as a church internally, by making it a unity which embraces greater diversity — first of all, of course, in our worship life but also throughout the life of the church as a whole. And this we have experienced as the action of the Holy Spirit.

This brings me to our *third*, and final, learning: liturgical renewal has taught us much about the meaning and process of renewal in the life of the church as a whole. My conviction is that most churches — and, in some sense, *the* church itself — have begun as movements for reform. And at any point in the life of a church—even when it has settled down into comfortable patterns of life and worship as had ours — the Holy Spirit may appeal to the church, calling it to new life.

To the extent to which a church carries the memory of its origin as a renewal movement, that church has within itself the seeds of reform and renewal. The Spirit calls that church to a re-discovery of its own roots—as we discovered, encouraged by the liturgical reform movement, in the writings and witness of our founders Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott the vision of the

Lord's Supper as a moment of Christ's actual *presence*, not just of his memory; and as we discovered that the Lord's Supper is profoundly *social* as well as personal. Here the Spirit has taken us more deeply *into* ourselves, enabling us to rediscover who we are.

But that is not the whole story: for the resources for renewal in a particular area of a church's life are not always available within that church itself. And then the Spirit calls that church to look beyond itself and its own resources, to look to other churches, to the whole church and its long tradition. And in doing that, encouraged by the liturgical renewal movement, our own church was inspired to re-order and renew our observance of the Lord's Supper, moving its position within the structure of the Lord's Day service so that the Supper was its culmination and climax, thus restoring the Supper to the center of our church's worship and life — where we had longed for it to be all along. here the Spirit has taken us *beyond* ourselves, enabling us to see who we are called to become.

In taking us more deeply into ourselves, and in called us beyond ourselves, the liturgical movement has been a blessing for our "populist sacramental" church, and for this we give thanks to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



CC

Centro Conferences

Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations A New Step to be Taken, A New Stage to be Reached

Mary Tanner

Member of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission of Unity and Mission

Sixth Annual Conference in Honor of Father Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White

(Conference held at the **Centro Pro Unione**, Thursday, 11 December, 2003)

It is a great privilege to be invited to give this lecture in honour of the Co-Founders of the Society of the Atonement, Paul Wattson and Lurana White. The fact that they combined in their lives and spiritual journeys Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions makes me feel close to them. From birth I was brought up inhabiting the same two worlds. I recognize and salute in Paul Wattson and Lurana White the passion for unity and reconciliation that impelled their vocations. I value the contact that I have had over many years with the Society of the Atonement in Graymoor, England, and here at the Centro Pro Unione. The work of this Centro is a gift of God to the ecumenical movement.

When Father James Puglisi invited me to speak, over a year ago now, I offered him three possible titles for today's talk. I was delighted then, that of the three, he chose 'Anglican-Roman Catholic relations: a new step to be taken, a new stage to be reached'. It seemed to me that at the beginning of a new millennium there were signs that the ecumenical movement had moved out of winter, there were signs of spring blossoming in the signing of the Joint Declaration between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, in the strengthening relationship of communion between the Anglican Churches of Britain and Ireland and Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches, in the new Covenant between the Church of England and the Methodist Church, as well as promise now of progress ahead in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. Each of these moves for me were important witnesses to a continuing commitment, within a fragile ecumenical movement, to the full visible unity of the Church and each in its own way an authentic response to Christ's prayer that we might all be one, and a sign amidst the brokenness of this world that, by God's grace, it is possible to reconcile the bitterest of memories, to overcome deep divisions, and enter a better way of living and loving in the communion of God's own life.

But I have to acknowledge as I begin this talk that the particular context in which I speak of promise for Anglican-Roman Catholic relations this evening has changed in the past weeks in ways that I could not have envisaged two months ago when I sat down to write. It would be wholly inappropriate to give the talk as I wrote it then. So, I propose to reflect first on the present troubled context in the Anglican Communion. Secondly, to review what

seemed a promising new development in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, and then, finally to offer some concluding reflections. I do this as much for myself as for you as I struggle to understand what is happening in the Anglican Communion and its implications for our ecumenical relations and as I try not to let my immediate reactions be determined by sensational headlines in the media.

I A troubled context

The controversial decision by the Diocese of New Westminster, Canada, to authorise a Public Rite of Blessing for those in committed same sex relationships, and by the 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the United States (ECUSA) to confirm the election of a priest in a committed same sex relationship to the office and work of a bishop and the subsequent ordination of Canon Gene Robinson as bishop, raise an acute moral problem, involving complex issues of anthropology, gender, theology of marriage, and friendship. But this is not in the first instance our problem this evening, though it is a pressing matter in many churches and many, though by no means all, cultures that requires ongoing study, pastoral care and discernment. The problem for us is, in the first instance, the problem of communion and authority, and how the Church discerns the mind of Christ on issues of faith, order, or moral life, that touch the truth of the Gospel and thus the unity of the Church. The fact of divided churches compounds complexity of the subject of authority in the communion of the Church.

The Anglican Communion, increasingly, during the last century has struggled to understand the exercise of authority in communion. Discussions have touched on the authority of Scripture and Tradition, who and where decisions should be taken, the role of the episcopate within the symphony of the whole people of God, what are the appropriate processes of discernment, decision making, teaching with authority and reception, and what is the appropriate relation between provincial structures and Communion-wide structures. Anglicans have developed, and are still developing, instruments of communion at the international level: the Lambeth Conference of bishops (established in 1867), the Anglican Consultative Council of bishops, clergy and lay

persons (established in 1968), and the Primates' Meeting (established in 1978). These, together with the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the focus of unity and communion at the international level, are the ways by which the provinces of the Communion express their unity and communion and live out their interdependence. 'They may not either individually or together take decisions on behalf of the whole Communion. They do provide the means of consultation, places in which to search for a common mind, and they provide the means for expressing the mind of the Communion'.¹ While the autonomy of provinces entails the legal, juridical right, of each province to govern its way of life, in practice autonomy has never been the sole criterion for understanding the relation of Anglican provinces to one another. As Anglicans have reflected on their own instruments of communion they have been aware that the exercise of authority in the Anglican Communion is affected by the division of the churches and the inability to discern together in the communion of all the churches. Between the 1988 and 1998 Lambeth Conferences, the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission explored the subject of *koinonia* and the structures and processes for maintaining communion. Its report to the 1998 Lambeth Conference, *The Virginia Report*, explored the web of structures, which hold together and guide a common life of belonging in the Anglican Communion. It raised many sharp questions about the exercise of authority in communion, including questions about the theological importance of a diocese which is reckoned to be the basic unit within Anglican unity; about the autonomy and interdependence of provinces; the authority of the Lambeth Conference and the binding character, or otherwise, of its resolutions; the inter-relation of the instruments of communion; and the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in relation to individual provinces. The report ended:

...by virtue of our baptism we are in a communion in the Holy Trinity and therefore with the universal Church. The long history of ecumenical involvement... has shown us that Anglican discernment and decision making must take account of the insights into truth and the Spirit-led wisdom of our ecumenical partners. Moreover, the decisions we take must be offered for the discernment of the universal Church.²

So, the Anglican Communion, like many other churches, is a Communion *in via*, struggling to understand how decisions are to be made, how communion is to be maintained when questions of truth and unity are posed and how to develop structures of belonging. In recent years issues in the area of order and moral life have only served to underline the urgency of the matter of the exercise of authority in communion.

¹ ANGLICAN CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL, *The Truth Shall Set You Free. the Report of the 1988 Lambeth Conference: The Reports, Resolutions & Pastoral Letters from the Bishops* (London: Church House, 1988) 111.

² *The Virginia Report* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1999) 51.

At the same time the discussions of authority in the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue have influenced, and continue to influence, the internal Anglican discussion. There has been a remarkable convergence reached, though not full agreement, in the area of authority in the Agreed Statements of ARCICI, as was noted in the official responses of both Communions.³ The more recent statement, *The Gift of Authority*, has made further progress. It has posed very sharp questions about the exercise of authority, both in the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. It is clear that, in different ways, neither Communion has it right. The questions ARCIC addresses to Anglicans in *The Gift of Authority* are in fact very similar to the questions Anglicans have already addressed to themselves in *The Virginia Report*.⁴ Anglicans are challenged to consider whether the Anglican Communion is open to the acceptance of instruments of oversight, which would allow decisions to be made that, in certain circumstances, would call for restraint or even bind the whole Communion. They are asked to consider to what extent unilateral action by provinces, or dioceses, in matters concerning the whole Church weaken communion, and how they may be open to participate in the *sensus fidelium* with all Christians. They are pressed about their willingness to tolerate anomalies even when these lead to impairment in communion. One might wish that these questions had been asked and answered many years ago and our lives ordered accordingly. But life is not so neat or comfortable.

In the situation of a Communion in change, struggling both internally and with ecumenical partners, to understand processes of discernment, decision-making and reception in the communion of local churches, a decision is taken by the Episcopal Church in the United States (ECUSA), for the sake of more credible witness in its own cultural context, concerning a matter on which all the bishops gathered at the 1998 Lambeth Conference had spoken, with all the moral authority that a Lambeth Conference has.⁵ It has no juridical authority. Resolution I.10 on human sexuality states clearly that the Conference 'cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions'.⁶ The action of ECUSA, not surprisingly,

³ C. HILL and E.J. YARNOLD, (eds.), *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity* (London: SPCK/CTS, 1994).

⁴ ARCIC, *The Gift of Authority: Authority III: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* (London/Toronto: CTS/Anglican Book Centre, 1999).

⁵ The 1920 Lambeth Conference had this to say: "The Lambeth Conference... does not claim to exercise any powers of control or command. It stands for the more spiritual and more Christian principle of loyalty to the fellowship. The Churches represented in it are indeed independent but independent with the Christian freedom which recognises the restraints of truth and life. They are not free to deny the truth. They are not free to ignore the fellowship... the conference is... a fellowship in the Spirit."

⁶ *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998: Transformation and Renewal, July 18-August 9, 1998, Lambeth Palace; Canterbury, England* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1999) 381.

precipitated a crisis in the Anglican Communion. Whatever one thinks about the issue itself, it is undeniable that in 1998 the bishops passed a clear Resolution on the subject of homosexuality. The immediate problem, therefore, both internally for Anglicans, and for our relations with the Roman Catholic Church is one of authority and communion. And Roman Catholics and other ecumenical partners will want to press on us the question— who now speaks for the Anglican Communion? In this ecumenical age there is no decision of one church that does not in some way touch ecumenical partners.

The reaction of the Archbishop of Canterbury, even before the consecration of Canon Gene Robinson, was to call a meeting of the Primates of the Communion 'to take counsel together, and to seek to discern, in an atmosphere of common prayer and worship, the will and guidance of the Holy Spirit for the common life of the 38 provinces which constitute our communion'. The report of that meeting acknowledged that the actions of New Westminster and New Hampshire threaten the unity of the Communion, affect relations with other parts of Christ's Church, as well as our relations with other faiths. The Primates re-affirmed the Resolution of the Lambeth Conference in 1998 on human sexuality as having moral force and therefore commanding respect of the Communion, and they commend an on-going study on questions of human sexuality, in which the experience of homosexuals must be listened to. The Primates regretted 'deeply' the action of New Westminster which appeared to them to short circuit the process that the Lambeth Conference had called for, and to be an action unilaterally altering the position of the Anglican Communion. 'Whilst we recognise' they say, 'the juridical autonomy of each province in our Communion, the mutual interdependence of the provinces means that none has authority unilaterally to substitute an alternative teaching as if it were the teaching of the entire Anglican Communion.' They went on to say that the actions of New Westminster and in the Episcopal Church USA 'do not express the mind of the Communion as a whole, and these decisions jeopardise our sacramental fellowship with each other' - strong, clear words. The Primates in a pastoral role call on the provinces concerned to make adequate provision for episcopal oversight for dissenting minorities in their area in consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Primates met and reported immediately prior to the consecration of Canon Gene Robinson. They were clear:

If his consecration proceeds, we recognise that we have reached a crucial and critical point in the life of the Anglican Communion and we have had to conclude that the future of the Communion itself will be put in jeopardy. In this case, the ministry of this one bishop will not be recognised by most of the Anglican world, and many provinces are likely to consider themselves to be out of Communion with the Episcopal Church (USA). This will tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level, and may lead to further division on this and further issues as provinces have to decide in consequence whether they can

remain in communion with provinces that choose not to break communion with the Episcopal Church.

The Primates, echoing a Resolution of the 1998 Lambeth Conference (Resolution IV, 13 b), called for the setting up of a Commission to consider the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in maintaining communion within and between provinces when grave difficulties arise and that the remit be extended to include urgent and deep theological and legal reflection on the way in which the dangers they had identified will have to be addressed. They called for no province to act precipitately and for all to engage in a lengthy process of reflection.

Reactions to the consecration of Canon Gene Robinson continue, within the diocese of New Hampshire itself, within the Episcopal Church, within the Anglican Communion, and relations with some of our ecumenical partners have suffered in consequence. The strain on the Communion is clear. It will take more time to understand just what are the implications of what has happened, what the appropriate response should be to these events, and how, and whether, we can live in 'restricted communion', 'impaired communion', and what this might require in terms of structures of extended episcopal oversight. A Commission has been set up under the chairmanship of the longest serving Primate, Robin Eames. It is not for me to predict the outcome of that Commission's work.

I felt it important to remind myself, and all of us, of the struggle in the Anglican Communion, painful as it is. The present crisis takes place in a Communion, which has long sought to understand authority and ecclesial communion, both in its internal reflections and in light of its on-going discussion of authority with the Roman Catholic Church. There have been, to borrow a title of a recent book, 'two trains running', not I believe, as the author argued on divergent lines but on remarkably converging lines. Developments have been made in the Anglican structures of discernment, decision making and reception over the last 100 years and are still developing. We have identified, both in our own discussions, and in conversation with the Roman Catholic Church, matters that urgently require study and action.

Whenever I reflect on the discussions on authority in communion what strikes me immediately is that our two Communion have much to learn from one another both in terms of their strengths to be shared but also their weaknesses to be avoided. *The Gift of Authority* is clear both about those strengths and those weaknesses. And it seems to me, to quote the title of another book, co-authored by a Roman Catholic Archbishop and an Anglican bishop, it would be "Better Together". It is a scandal that we are not in eucharistic communion. It is a scandal that in matters of faith, order and moral life, we do not discern or decide, or teach together.

But there is another side to the events of the last few months, which reveals the closeness of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. Even before the Primates met, when Archbishop Rowan visited the Holy Father, here in Rome, the Pope gave a stern warning about 'new and serious difficulties which extend to matters of faith and morals'. I took that warning as an indication

of the closeness of relationship. The Holy Father cares about the relationship of our two Communion and understands it as close enough for the truth, as he perceives it, to be spoken in love. Warmings there were, but there was also warmth captured in that picture of the Holy Father kissing Archbishop Rowan's ring, a ring given to another Archbishop, Archbishop Michael Ramsey by another Pope, Pope Paul VI, and treasured by Archbishops of Canterbury ever since.

The events of the last days seem to me to speak the same message, a message of warning and warmth. The decision, which came from a meeting here in Rome between Cardinal Kasper and Canon John Peterson, the General Secretary of the Anglican Communion, not to call off the meeting of ARCIC in February, was a welcome one. In no way did their response mean a 'collapse' in the ARCIC dialogue, as one newspaper suggested. Their other decision to suspend some, though not all, of the work of the International Anglican Commission for Unity and Mission, a Commission that accompanies the work of ARCIC, is both understandable and, at the same time, a reason for sadness. I shall return to this later. One hopeful sign, however, a sign of our closeness, seems to me to be the response that Cardinal Kasper has given to the request of the Archbishop of Canterbury that an Anglican-Roman Catholic ad hoc sub group of IARCCUM should reflect on the ecclesiological issues raised by recent developments within the Anglican Communion, particularly in the light of the Agreed Statements of ARCIC on Authority, and that this group should accompany the Anglican Communion during its own internal processes of discernment. It seems to me that the leader in *The Tablet* last week was absolutely right to suggest that 'The fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury has enlisted the Roman Catholic Church to help it determine its future shape is in itself a vindication of ARCIC' I would add that it is a witness to the closeness of our two Communion. We have travelled far together in the last 45 years not least of all in understanding communion and how it is to be maintained. We cannot say 'I have no need of you'. This is, in *The Tablet's* words, 'a moment rich in danger and opportunity in equal measure.'

It is in the context of 'a moment rich in danger and opportunity in equal measure' that I re-call the new initiative begun at the beginning of the new millennium in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, and is still there even if its coming to fruition may take longer than some of us had hoped. The new initiative for a new millennium stems directly from a unique meeting of 26 Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops from around the world in Mississauga, Canada, in May 2000. The meeting was called together by Cardinal Cassidy and Archbishop George Carey, with the blessing of the Holy Father.

II A Possible next step to be taken, a next step to be reached

In order to understand the Mississauga meeting we need to go back to those heady days after Vatican II. In 1966 Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey issued their Common

Declaration in which they spoke of a new atmosphere of Christian fellowship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Anglican Communion – 'a **new stage** in the development of fraternal relations, based on Christian charity, and of sincere efforts to remove causes of conflict and to re-establish unity'. They announced plans to inaugurate a serious dialogue, not only on theological matters, but also one that faced honestly matters of practical difficulty'.

Two years later a preparatory group produced the *Malta Report* charting a way forward for Anglican-Roman Catholic relations in the future. The *Malta Report* laid out a plan for what we might call, 'phased *rapprochement*'. Anglicans and Roman Catholics would move together by taking steps, entering new stages of committed relationship on the basis of explicit agreement in faith. A first stage had already been recognised by the Pope and the Archbishop in their Common Declaration. A second stage of closer relationship lay in the future. It would begin with an affirmation and explicit recognition and acknowledgement of one another, supporting binding commitments to intensify relationships and to act together. This second, officially recognised stage, would lead to a third and final stage in the quest for 'full organic unity of our two Communion'. What strikes me looking back at the *Malta Report* is its firm commitment to organic unity as the goal, the intention to move to that goal by taking steps into clearly marked, and officially sanctioned, new stages of relatedness, as well as the expressed intention to keep theological and practical progress together. But what happened after Malta?

The theological dialogue of ARCIC I made extraordinary progress in three areas – eucharist, ministry, and authority. *The Final Report* (an unfortunate title) was published in 1982 and sent to the two Communion with two questions: first, whether the agreed statements were 'consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans/Romans Catholics', and, secondly, what were the next 'concrete steps' that ought to be taken on the basis of these agreements. These two questions were faithful to the Malta vision keeping together the theological and the practical. But there was an almost total failure in both Communion to see the point of the two questions being harnessed together. Almost all attention was given to answering the first theological question and very little response to the second. Of course it's much less threatening to answer a disembodied theological question than to face up to the renewal in life and the changes in relationships that those agreements demand. There was, it seems to me, a lack of imagination and a loss of the original Malta vision.

What in fact happened was the inauguration of ARCIC II and another twenty years of intense theological conversation in which, undoubtedly, important documents were produced on justification, ecclesiology, morals, authority and we now look forward to an agreed statement on Mary in 2004 which will conclude work on the agenda identified in Malta, 35 years ago. Some hoped that the completion of this phase of theological conversation would lead to a return to an emphasis on the sort of changed relations that would be appropriate as a result of the all the theological conversation and obvious convergence in many

areas.

This was something of the context in which Archbishop George and Cardinal Cassidy called for an extra-ordinary meeting not of bishops. The responsibility was to pass now from the theologians to those who have a special ministry for the unity of the Church. The bishops came, two by two, from 13 regions of the world. There were only a few non-episcopal figures present. Jean-Marie Tillard, two women facilitators and 4 members of staff. Cardinal Kasper, who was to succeed Cardinal Cassidy as the head of the Pontifical Council, was also there.

The bishops were to review where we are now and where we might go next in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, in the light of the imperative for reconciliation and mission in a divided world. The meeting was held in an atmosphere of prayer: a day's retreat that ended in renewal of baptismal vows and daily eucharists, presided over by an Anglican one morning and a Roman Catholic the next – a learning experience in itself for some, as they discovered in a very direct way how close our two liturgical traditions are. There was an immediate sense of commonality, of belonging to one another in the communion of the eucharist, in spite of the shared pain of not being able to receive together.

The dynamic of the meeting was very simple indeed. This was not a paper driven meeting but an experience driven meeting. It began with the bishops in pairs walking in the garden reflecting on their own experience of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations on the ground. One of the few papers the bishops had in advance was a collation of answers given by the different regions to questions about the degree of co-operation in their part of the world. It was fascinating to watch how some pairs of bishops knew one another well while others had hardly met and had very few stories of co-operation to tell. The bishops listened to a number of paired stories of co-operation: in Northern Ireland, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Nigeria. What was soon clear was how much was happening in some regions and practically nothing in others. Quite quickly from the review of lived relations many of the theological issues were on the table; eucharistic sharing, the recognition of ministries, authority in moral decision-making. There was also an overwhelming sense of the need to be together in mission and action especially in those parts of the world where Christian witness is hard in the midst of other faith communities, there were stories of good practice and stories of what to avoid.

It was in the light of the actual experience of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations that the bishops turned next to review the theological work of ARCIC and the responses of the two Communion to ARCIC I. Then came the one substantial theological paper of the whole meeting given by Jean-Marie Tillard on the theme: 'Our goal: full and visible communion' It was a moving paper in which Father Jean captured the vision that motivates the work of ARCIC, made all the more moving as Jean was in the last months of his struggle with cancer. He had mustered all the strength he could to give, it seemed, a farewell message to the bishops. He insisted that it was now possible, on the basis of the agreements of ARCIC, to realise a new stage 'an evangelical stage of *Koinonia* in which the gifts preserved and

developed by each tradition would be at the service of both the Anglican and Catholic Churches, with official approbation'. 'I firmly believe' he said 'that without being totally healed, the schism dividing our two communions may and must be shrunk, diminished. By this affirmation I mean that some official bridges may and must be constructed over our disastrous division.... We cannot wait until the obstacle created by the ordination of women is removed.' 'An official step forward is now possible' he insisted 'But if we really want it, do we really want also to pay the price?' and he ended 'Words are not sufficient: we need decisions'.

The bishops left Mississauga with a statement, 'Communion in Mission', and an action plan for the future. They acknowledge the 'degree of communion' that already exists, which is no longer to be viewed in minimal terms... We have moved much closer to the goal of full visible communion than we had at first dared to think'. They mention honestly the unresolved differences and challenges – among them, the way authority is exercised, the nature and role of a universal primate, Anglican Orders, the ordination of women, moral and ethical questions. They suggest:

now is the appropriate time for the authorities of our two Communion to recognise and endorse this new stage through the signing of a Joint Declaration of Agreement. This Agreement would set out: our shared goal of visible unity; and acknowledgement of the consensus in faith we have reached, and a fresh commitment to share together in common life and witness. Our two Communion should be invited to celebrate this Agreement around the world. (para.10)

The bishops called for a group to be set up to oversee the preparation of a Joint Declaration. They were clear that a Declaration would mark a new stage on the way to full and visible unity.

The Mississauga meeting was important for many reasons. It saw the responsibility for Anglican-Roman Catholic relations pass from theologians to bishops. It returned to the intention of Malta to take a new step and move into an officially recognised new stage of relationship, a stage of evangelical *koinonia*, as Tillard called it. It held together theological agreement and praxis, and it called for something to be done now. It enthused at least a few bishops, some of whom went home and began putting into practice in their own episcopal areas some of what they had learned at Mississauga. And a new international Commission for Unity and Mission IARCCUM was set up whose primary task is to prepare the Declaration called for by Mississauga: a Declaration that would be the way into a new intensified relationship of Anglicans and Roman Catholics in every part of the world.

The Commission of bishops was set up and is well on with the preparation of a Joint Declaration, which banks what it can of the theological work of ARCIC, and, on the basis of that, the two Communion will be invited to make certain acknowledgements about each other's ecclesial life as well as affirm binding commitments to live an intensified shared life at local and wider

than local levels. One further effect of a Joint Declaration might be that both Communion would agree not to make decisions in the areas of faith, order or moral life, without official consultation and a clear understanding of what it would mean for the other to do so. As a lay woman I also want to stress how vital it is for the laity that all the theological talk is seen to have 'cash value', that it does find expression in officially sanctioned and encouraged ways of living together. In the early 1980's it was very easy to enthuse parishes and dioceses with the work of ARCIC. There was a genuine excitement that things were about to change. But with practical results so long in coming, either the laity take the law into their own hands, or they give up on the ecumenical movement. It is very much harder to get an enthusiastic response now.

III Concluding reflections

The theological conversation of ARCIC will continue with its work on Mary, and plans will be made for where the conversation should go next. The work of the Sub Commissions of IARCCUM will proceed, even if the hopes for a Declaration that would lead to a new step being taken a new stage of evangelical *koinonia* being reached, will be put on hold – put on ice like good champagne, ready to be drunk when the time is judged to be right. In the ecumenical pilgrimage there are set backs but what has been gained remains there to be picked up, harvested, when the time is right.

What is important now is that Anglicans and Roman Catholics keep talking. We need one another even more than ever. We need to explore together the ecclesiological implications of what has happened and we need to explore them in the light of the work of ARCIC on authority in communion and the responses of our two Communion to that work. I hope that when the new stage of evangelical *koinonia* does come about we shall have reached a deeper understanding through our standing together now of how a united Church might be a genuine communion of discernment in which those with a ministry of memory, the bishops, in, with

and among the whole people of God, like a symphony, become a genuine communion of discernment, exploring controversial issues, with a clearer understanding of the value of legitimate diversity, on the one hand and requiring restraint and deferring to one another in love means on the other, as we come to a common mind, the mind of Christ for the Church, in areas of faith, order and moral life. This will mean understanding better than either of our Communion does now the relation between the local and the universal Church.

The Primates ended their statement: 'It is clear that recent controversies have opened debates within the life of our Communion which will not be resolved until there has been a lengthy process of prayer, reflection and substantial work in and alongside the Eames commission. We pray that God will equip our Communion to be equal to the task and challenges that lie before it.' The willingness of Roman Catholics to accompany that process through the ad hoc group is at least a comfort to an Anglican who longs to live 'beyond Anglicanism' in that visible communion to which ARCIC has always been committed and towards which it seemed, when I accepted the invitation to speak tonight, we might soon take a significant step and enter a new stage of relationship, reviving the way that Malta envisioned in the heady days after Vatican II.

This wasn't the talk that I had planned to give but it seemed to me to be dishonest not to face the reality of the situation, a situation that is indeed 'rich in danger and opportunity in equal measure.' I take heart from Cardinal Kasper's words to the Bishops gathered at Mississauga:

In our ecumenical efforts we should keep in mind that one day we will rub our eyes and be surprised by the new things that God has done in his Church. It is true that in the course of history we have done much against love and unity, but God – this is our hope – will make things good again.



The Petrine Ministry Vatican I in the Light of Vatican II

Hermann J. Pottmeyer
Member of the International Theological Commission

(Conference held at the **Centro Pro Unione**, Thursday, 22 January 2004)

1. *The critical questioning of the long prevailing interpretation of Vatican I*

If one compares theology with a landscape, the theological tradition surrounding the Petrine ministry resembles a frontier zone between long-hostile countries. At every step one encounters traces and residues of military conflicts: old trenches and bunkers and – as a particularly dangerous legacy – land mines. It is generally considered that the most dangerous mine lurking here is the dogma of the First Vatican Council concerning the primacy of the successor of Peter. It is no wonder therefore that ecumenical dialogue between the long-hostile churches has until now given this danger zone a wide berth. But if any further convergence is to be achieved, it is imperative that this mine, which has until now seemed an insuperable obstacle, be defused. As with every mine, its de-activation demands a method of approach combining expertise and precision.

Controversy surrounds the dogma not only in an ecumenical context. Even within the Catholic Church there is debate, not regarding the primacy of the bishop of Rome itself, but certainly regarding the formulation and interpretation of the dogma which was so decisively shaped by the religious and political situation in Europe in the 18/19th centuries, and regarding the form taken by the exercise of the primacy as a consequence of the dogma. To continue the analogy between this dogma and an explosive mine, the explosive effect which this subject has had and continues to have is demonstrated not least by the history of the First and Second Vatican Councils. At Vatican I, the formulation led to the brink of a breach, and subsequently to the secession of the Old Catholics. At Vatican II, the failure of the Constitution on the Church was only avoided by the concession made to the minority by Paul VI with an binding text interpretation, the so-called *Nota praevia*. The minority at Vatican I feared the betrayal of the ancient tradition of the Church, the minority at Vatican II feared a betrayal of the dogma of Vatican I.

Therefore, when the Roman Catholic Church today engages in a process of rapprochement on the primacy of the successor of Peter, it should in my view at the same time or – even better – beforehand, clarify those critical questions which have been posed within the Catholic Church itself regarding the longstanding customary interpretation of this dogma, and the exercise of primacy validated by that interpretation. For if we Catholics are

convinced that the Petrine ministry is a gift and an aid which Christ handed down to the community of all Christians, we are called upon to first of all clear away everything which obscures this divine gift and gives rise to misunderstandings.

The critical questioning of the dogma of 1870 within the Catholic Church was already initiated by the minority Fathers at Vatican I, who insisted that the Council did not declare the Pope absolute monarch of the church. That questioning intensified during Vatican II, and has intensified to an increasing degree since that last Council. Today, a *re-lecture* or re-reception of this dogma is demanded within the Catholic Church – *re-lecture* within the framework of the *communio* ecclesiology which Vatican II wished to re-establish.

Why did the discussion of the dogma of 1870 arise within the Catholic Church immediately before, during and after Vatican II? The reason was the rediscovery of the sacramental *communio* character of the church, and the *communio* structure and praxis of the as yet undivided church of the first millennium. The understanding of the primacy which had prevailed in the Catholic Church since Vatican I and was grounded in that Council, could only with difficulty be reconciled with *communio* ecclesiology. This problem also set in motion an intensified study of the history of papal primacy. That led in turn to the discovery that the still undivided church certainly was already aware of the primatial position of the bishop of Rome, but that his primacy had been understood and exercised in differing ways in different epochs, and that the interpretation and the exercise of the primacy at any particular time had been influenced by both the prevailing concept of the church and the contemporary political context.

It was not surprising that the problem experienced by the Fathers of Vatican II in reconciling *communio* ecclesiology with the current interpretation of the dogma of 1870 awakened a special interest in the history of Vatican I as well. The study of this history led to a twofold discovery. First came the discovery of the degree to which the dogma of primacy and its formulation had been influenced by the historical situation in Western and Central Europe at that time. The dominant interpretation of the dogma up until Vatican II had not taken this historical factor into account. That interpretation saw the dogma as the result of a logical development of the Biblical data and as the perfected formulation of papal primacy. All previous versions were therefore seen as

merely preliminary stages in the developmental process of the primacy, and deficient forms of its exercise. From this perspective, the dogma of Vatican I was indeed irreconcilable with *communio* ecclesiology. It was this interpretation of the dogma which led to the opposition by the minority at Vatican II against the doctrine of the collegial structure of the supreme authority in the church.

At this point a second discovery advanced the discussion. It was established that alongside the longstanding prevailing interpretation there had been and still was another understanding of the dogma. It is its understanding by the minority of Vatican I, which – and this can be proven historically – was recognized as legitimate, even if it was virtually ignored following Vatican I. In this understanding, the dogma of 1870 is open to a *communio* ecclesiology. It therefore appears possible to integrate this dogma into a *communio* ecclesiology.

Both discoveries are the result of a series of studies of the history of Vatican I. I will mention here only the most comprehensive and detailed study, namely the three-volume work by Klaus Schatz “Vaticanum I”, which appeared 1992-1994. Why was it so difficult to disprove the opinion that Vatican I had defined the primacy as an absolute monarchy of the Pope supporting this way a centralistic administration in the Catholic Church? Catholic apologetics, indeed, had over a long period presented and interpreted the dogma of 1870 in a way which seemed to confirm this opinion. It is this longstanding prevailing apologetic-maximalist interpretation which to this day determines the image of the dogma both within the Catholic Church and without. An added difficulty arises because the one-sided formulation of the dogma does not make sufficiently clear that this maximalist interpretation does not fully convey the intended meaning of the Council. That meaning can only be inferred from the Council files and from several official documents which followed Vatican I in order to protect the dogma from misunderstanding. In the following I will give only some indications, which demonstrate that the dogma of 1870 did remain open to a *communio* ecclesiology.

2. *The struggle of the minority Fathers of Vatican I for faithfulness to tradition*

To be clear at the outset: at the Council there was no dispute about two points, *firstly*, that Christ Himself had appointed Peter as the first among the apostles and as visible head of the Church here on earth, and *secondly* that the bishop of Rome is the successor of Peter, and as such holds the primacy over the whole church. On those points there was undivided consensus. There were however critical questions by numerous Council Fathers regarding the extent and form of exercise of the primacy. How was the relationship of the primacy to the authority of the college of bishops and to the individual bishops to be defined more precisely? These questions were prompted by the fears of the minority that at the Council the pope was to be declared universal bishop and absolute monarch and sovereign of the church, so that the other bishops would be reduced to representatives of the pope.

There were good reasons for these fears, for precisely this concept of the primacy had found broad acceptance in the

Catholic Church during the 19th century. It did not originate in Rome, but from the so-called Ultramontane movement. Catholic laypeople and clergy in Europe were striving for a strengthening of the papacy because they saw it as the only hope of protecting the church against encroachments by the evolving nation states insisting on their absolute sovereignty towards church and pope. In reaction to that claim of the modern state, for the Ultramontane movement only the sovereign jurisdiction of the pope in the entire church could guarantee the autonomy and independence of the church from the state. The ideology which supported the dominance of the state over the church was so-called Gallicanism. Gallicanism was therefore the real opponent which the dogma of Vatican I was intended to combat and eliminate.

But it was not only state dirigisme which the Ultramontane movement rebelled against. The intellectual developments in Europe caused no less consternation: rationalism, materialism, atheism and liberalism called the foundations of the Christian faith into question. In response to this threat too, the Ultramontanes placed their hopes in strengthening the authority of the pope as the representative of the authority of God and His revelation. Therefore the dogmatization of papal infallibility became the second central objective of the Ultramontane movement. Rome did not take the lead in this movement until the time of Gregory XVI and Pius IX.

Thus it was not a lust for power on the part of the popes which led to the two dogmas of the primacy and the infallibility of the pope, but the very real threat to the church, its unity and its autonomy vis-à-vis the state, and the fact that the faith was in danger. However, the desire to counter an extreme danger with an extreme reaction gave rise to a new danger. To declare the pope absolute and sovereign monarch of the church would have meant a break with the divine constitution and the tradition of the church.

That is the background to the fears held by those Council Fathers, who formed the minority and rejected the extreme conceptions of the primacy and infallibility of the pope. There was every indication that the Council should and would define these conceptions. The first draft of the text which was presented to the Council Fathers for discussion did indeed take the extreme conception of the primacy as monarchical sovereignty as its starting point. It is due to the minority that this was prevented.

Of particular significance for the understanding of the dogma is the reply of the speaker of the responsible commission to the criticisms of the Council Fathers. He declared:

1. The church is indeed not an absolute monarchy under the pope. The primacy has to observe the divine constitution of the church, including the authority of the college of bishops and the individual bishops, and it must take as its guiding principle the welfare of the church which it is to serve. All of that is assumed to be taken for granted and is not a subject for debate. The sole issue here is the question whether there is any human authority beside or above the pope which can limit his authority. That is precisely what is to be excluded.
2. It is true that the full and supreme jurisdictional power of the

church exists in a twofold manner. On the one hand it pertains to the college of bishops with its head, the bishop of Rome, and also to the bishop of Rome as the visible head of the Church, independently of his acting together with the other bishops. For Christ's commission was given both to all the apostles together with Peter, and to Peter alone. This two-fold structure becomes problematic only when the two forms, which are bound together by the same apostolic commission and the same sacrament, are considered as separate powers competing with one another, as they are regarded by conciliarism and Gallicanism.

These frequently overlooked statements by the speaker of the responsible commission are nothing less than an official commentary on the dogma and a guide to its understanding. They allow the intended meaning of the Council to become clear. They allow us to recognize what the Council did not intend and what it did intend. The Council did not want to deny the limits to the primacy set by God. It did not wish to limit the divinely guaranteed rights of the episcopate, and therefore did not intend to define the primacy as an absolute monarchical sovereignty. But on the other hand, it certainly wanted to establish that no human authority, whether it be a Council or the state, could set limits to his commission.

How was this intention expressed in the definitive text of the Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus* which the Council accepted? To be clear at the outset: what the Council did not wish to deny and presupposed to be true, was written into the prologue to the constitution and the chapters of exposition, but not into the canon of the definition itself, as the minority wished. Only what it wished to teach as a dogma was expressed in the canon, in order to condemn Gallicanism. In detail it can be summed up as follows:

1. The prologue begins with the will of Christ that the church should be one, and with the mission of all the apostles to serve the unity of the church as pastors and teachers (DS 3050).
2. This is followed by the mission of Peter and his successors as the abiding principle and visible foundation of church unity, to serve directly the unity of the episcopate, and indirectly – together with the bishops and priests – “the unity of faith and *communio*” (DS 3051). Thus the immediate purpose of the primacy is the unity of the episcopate, and together with the bishops the pope serves the unity of the church, which is designated as a *communio* in faith.
3. It is repeatedly stated that the Council wishes to define the primacy and infallibility of the pope with respect for the universal tradition of the Church, including the tradition of the still undivided church of the first millennium. (DS 3052, 3059, 3065). The Council thereby implicitly acknowledges the plurality of shapes in which the primacy has been and can be manifested and realized.
4. A separate paragraph in the third chapter emphasizes that the primacy does not threaten the ordinary and immediate jurisdiction of the bishops – the most important point raised by the

minority in its criticism. The fact that this paragraph was inserted into the third chapter, which deals with the nature of the primacy, represents the most important achievement of the minority. The paragraph reads as follows:

“This power of the Supreme Pontiff is far from standing in the way of the power of ordinary and immediate jurisdiction, by which the bishops, who under appointment of the Holy Spirit, succeeded in the place of the apostles, feed and rule individually, as true shepherds, the particular flock assigned to them. Rather this latter power is asserted, confirmed and vindicated by this same supreme and universal shepherd; as in the words of St. Gregory the Great: ‘My honour is the honour of the whole Church. My honour is the firm strength of my brethren. I am truly honoured, when due honour is paid to each and every one.’” (DS 3061 ND 827)

For the rest, this chapter clearly states the true objective of the dogmatization of the primacy: It is intended as a condemnation of Gallicanism, because the latter legitimizes the view that the state is permitted to impede the free communication between the pope and the bishops, and to annul papal decrees within its territory (DS 3062). The assertion made by Gallicanism of the possibility of appealing against papal judgements to an Ecumenical Council meant in practice that state jurisdiction took the place of papal jurisdiction, which was rendered ineffective by this reservation. Because the inappellability of the primacy was therefore the real bulwark against encroachments by the state – that is also made clear by Chapter 3 – the dogma takes aim at precisely this point, inappellability, but not at the relationship between papacy and episcopate.

This is expressed in the corresponding canon, which reads:

“And so, if anyone says that the Roman Pontiff has only the office of inspection and direction, but not the full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole Church, not only in matters that pertain to faith and morals, but also in matters that pertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the whole world, or if anyone says that he has only a more important part and not the complete fullness of this supreme power, or if anyone says that this power is not ordinary and immediate either over each and every Church or over each and every shepherd and faithful, *anathema sit.*” (DS 3064 ND 830)

3. *Results of recent discussion and research*

It is time to take stock. In judging the dogma of the primacy of the successor of Peter one arrives at a negative and a positive conclusion. The deliberate one-sidedness of the concluding definition is to be assessed as negative. Exclusive prominence is given to the primacy, its universality and its unlimited freedom from any human authority. Neither its intended purpose nor other criteria for an appropriate exercise which respects the jurisdiction of the bishops, are mentioned here. This one-sidedness of the

definition itself subsequently enabled the maximalist interpretation of the primacy as absolute sovereignty to substantiate its claim on the basis of this dogma.

As we have seen, it is only the Council files – in particular the commentary by the speaker of the responsible commission – which allow us to infer that the definition’s silence regarding the collegial co-responsibility of the bishops for the government of the whole Church in no way means a rejection of that responsibility. On the contrary, the doctrine of the simultaneous full and supreme authority of the college of bishops is presupposed as a self-evident component of the tradition. This doctrine was not disputed by anybody. What was disputed on the part of the Gallicans, and what therefore had to be defined, was the simultaneous full and supreme authority of the pope, which empowered him to act independently of the collaboration of the episcopate. For this reason, any proposals by the minority which wished to have the appropriateness of the collaboration of the episcopate also mentioned in the canon were rejected. Such a reference was not rejected because of any intention to deny that appropriateness, but because it was feared that such a reference could be understood in the sense of Gallicanism.

There is yet another reason for this silence which was not intended to be a rejection. The doctrine of the episcopal office and the college of bishops was to be dealt with in a second constitution on the church. This second constitution did not come to pass, because the Council was suspended ahead of time because of the Franco-Prussian War. But we know the draft for this constitution. In it, the full and supreme authority of the college of bishops is designated as “*fidei dogma certissimum*”. When the responsible commission rejected the corresponding proposals of the minority, it had in mind that the collegial co-responsibility of the episcopate was to receive due recognition of its rights in the projected second constitution.

Even more important for the understanding of the dogma are of course the preceding chapters and the prologue. These texts contain sufficiently clear signals that the dogma did not intend to detract from either the tradition of the Church or the rights of the bishops and the college of bishops. The citation from Gregory the Great referred to was a sentence with which that pope had refused the proposed title of “*universalis papa*”.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the one-sided formulation of the dogma itself and the maximalist interpretation, based on this one-sidedness, by those for whom the strengthening of papal authority could never go far enough, gave rise to the impression among the general public that the Council had in fact declared the pope to be the absolute and sovereign monarch of the church. That is precisely what the German Imperial Chancellor Bismarck maintained in his circular of 1872 to the European governments. He warned them that the bishops in their countries had by this dogma been made mere tools of the pope. That prompted the German bishops to issue a collective declaration in 1875 in which they rejected this accusation. They declare expressly that this dogma has not made the pope an absolute sovereign of the church, nor the bishops papal officials without any personal responsibility.

This document is also important for the understanding and interpretation of the dogma, since Pius IX twice gave it official approval, in an apostolic brief of 1875 (DS 3117) and in a consistorial address of the same year (DS 3112). The collective declaration of the German episcopate states:

“It is a complete misunderstanding of the Vatican decrees to believe that because of them ‘the episcopal jurisdiction has been absorbed into the papal’, that the pope has ‘in principle taken the place of each individual bishop’, the bishops are now ‘no more than tools of the pope, his officials, without responsibility of their own’.” (DS 3115 ND 841).

On the positive side, we can therefore draw a threefold conclusion.

- The maximalist interpretation of the dogma of 1870 and a centralist exercise of the primacy cannot be substantiated by Vatican I. That is confirmed by Vatican II, which in its Constitution on the Church repeatedly took up the commentary by the speakers of the responsible commission of Vatican I in order to give expression to the coexistence of primacy and collegiality, and to the appropriateness of the participation of the episcopate in the governing of the church.
- The dogma of 1870 is open for the possibility of different forms to exercise primacy because it refers also to the tradition and practice of the yet undivided church of the first millennium.
- The dogma of 1870 is open to a *communio* ecclesiology. In designating the primacy as a “truly episcopal” authority, it binds the pope into the sacramentally instituted *communio* of the college of bishops. As its head, the pope is to serve the unity of the episcopate and together with the episcopate the unity of the church. The question of how the relationship between primacy and collegiality was to be structured in concrete terms, the constitution “Pastor Aeternus” did not intend to answer. Vatican II therefore wished to confront this question, precisely because it had remained open at Vatican I. So the doctrine of collegiality became one of the main concerns of Vatican II.

4. Confirmation by recent documents of the magisterium

It is precisely this insight of the studies on the dogma of Vatican I which found expression in two recent documents of the Catholic magisterium, namely in the encyclical “*Ut unum sint*” of 1995 and in the document “*The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the Mystery of the Church*” which the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published in 1998. Both documents confirm our understanding of the dogma of Vatican I in the light of Vatican II in two ways: with regard to the distinction between the abiding commission of Peter and his successors and its changing modes of realization depending on the particular situation, and with regard to the openness of the dogma for a *communio* ecclesiology.

With regard to the distinction between the perpetual commis-

sion of Peter and its changing modes of exercise: In his encyclical, Pope John Paul II distinguishes between “what is essential to the mission” of the primacy and the various ways it is exercised, which are to correspond to the current needs of the church. He refers expressly to the way the primacy was exercised in the still undivided church, which he does not characterize as deficient or as merely a preliminary developmental phase, as it was said before the last Council (UUS 95).

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith takes up this distinction. It distinguishes between the “unchanging nature of the primacy of the successor of Peter” and its historical forms, the changing ways it is exercised. And it sets down criteria for the forms of exercise appropriate to the particular situation. As criteria it designates on the one hand the intended purpose of the primacy, that is the unity of the church, and on the other the *necessitas ecclesiae*, which can differ according to place and time (No. 12). In addition, the Congregation emphasizes that the bishop of Rome should in each instance clarify in fraternal dialogue with the other bishops the appropriate extent of the application of his powers (No.13).

With regard to the openness of the dogma for a *communio* ecclesiology:

- In his encyclical “Ut unum sint” Pope John Paul II says: “When the Catholic Church affirms that the office of the bishop of Rome corresponds with the will of Christ, she does not separate this office from the mission entrusted to the whole body of bishops, who are also “vicars and ambassadors of Christ”. The bishop of Rome is a member of the “college”, and they are his brothers in the ministry.” (UUS 95) This language does indeed differ considerably from the maximalist interpretation of the dogma, but not from the prologue of the Constitution “*Pastor Aeternus*” of Vatican I, nor from the commentary of the speaker of its commission.
- We saw that with deliberate one-sidedness the dogma of 1870 gave special prominence to the inappellability of papal judgements according to the principle: *Prima sedes a nemine iudicatur*. The maximalist interpretation of the dogma had deduced from that the absolute sovereignty of the pope. In contrast, the document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith state:
- “That does not however mean that the pope has absolute power. For it is a characteristic of the service of unity, and also a consequence of the communion of the college of bishops and the *sensus fidei* of the whole people of God, to listen to the voice of the particular churches. . . . The final and inalienable responsibility of the pope finds its best guarantee on the one hand in his integration into the tradition and into the fraternal communion, and on the other hand in trust in the support of the Holy Spirit who guides the Church.” (No. 10) This clarification is to be welcomed. It accords both with the commentary of the speaker of the Council commission of Vatican I and with the understanding of the minority of the Council.

Another confirmation of the requirement to integrate the dogma of the Petrine Ministry in a *communio* ecclesiology we find in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* published by Pope John Paul II at the end of the Great Jubilee 2000. In this Letter the Pope once more supports the central theme of the Great Jubilee celebration to promote the further realization of Vatican II. This Letter which develops an ecclesiology and spirituality of communion sounds like the will and testament of the Pope for the church in the new century.

He writes: “To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God’s plan and respond to the world’s deepest yearnings.” (NMI 43) After having underlined the required promotion of a spirituality of communion, he continues as far as our subject is concerned:

“The new century will have to see us more than ever intent on valuing and developing the forums and structures which, in accordance with the Second Vatican Council’s major directives, serve to ensure and safeguard communion. How can we forget in the first place those specific services to communion which are the Petrine Ministry and, closely related to it, episcopal collegiality? These are realities which have their foundation and substance in Christ’s own plan for the Church, but which need to be examined constantly in order to ensure that they follow their genuinely evangelical inspiration.” (NMI 44)

The minority Fathers of Vatican I would not have opposed. On the contrary, they would have felt understood.

In a word: the dogma of 1870 did not deserve the bad reputation which its maximalist interpretation in theory and practice has earned it. It is not the insuperable obstacle to the unity of Christians which it has long been considered to be. And one further point: in the “Hall of Fame” of the ecumenical movement, the minority of Vatican I deserves a place of honour, because it was able to win over the Council to keep this dogma open to a future *communio* primacy.

References used in the text

DS= *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum, Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, edited by H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, Freiburg: Herder, 1976.

ND= *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, edited by J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, New York: Alba House, 1995.

Hermann J. Pottmeyer, *Towards a Papacy in Communion: Perspectives from Vatican Councils I & II* (New York: Crossroad, 1998).



CC

Centro Conferences

Ecumenical Service Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Bishop John Flack, Director
Anglican Centre in Rome

(Homily given at the **Centro Pro Unione**, Thursday, 22 January 2004)

It is a privilege to be invited to preach here this evening. It is about 14 months since I first came here and met Fr Jim Puglisi and heard about the wonderful work done by the Centro Pro Unione. I have heard two very distinguished presentations in this room since I arrived in Rome last July, and now I am faced with the challenge of keeping up with such high standards. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity gives a preacher a particular opportunity to share experiences *and* insights and I shall try to do both this evening.

My experience of Anglican/Roman Catholic working relationships goes back to 1972. In that year I was just 30 years old. After 6 years as a curate I was appointed to my first parish. It was an overgrown mining village on the edge of Wakefield. "Village" was a bit of a misnomer as the population was around 14,000. There was what we would call today a UPA housing estate built on to the village – the kind of estate where people chopped up their fences and front doors for firewood if they weren't entitled to free coal in the winter. There were gangs and vandalism etc – you can imagine the general scene. After I had moved into the Vicarage which was on the estate, my first visitor was the local catholic priest, Fr Andrew Daly. He was older than me, and from County Cork, so in one sense we were worlds apart. But he said to me "Life here is very difficult and it's hard for the church. To survive we need each other. We need to be friends."

That first meeting was the start of a very important relationship in that parish. Fr Andrew and I met together regularly – we said an office together at least twice a week and shared intercessory prayer for the parish. We planned many joint events, without ever breaking the rules. I remember especially the Procession through the streets of the estate during Holy Week, going from his church to mine, with stations along the way. Fr Andrew always referred to it as "The Stations of the Cross" whilst I had regard for Anglican sensibilities by calling it "The **Way** of the Cross" – but it was one and the same event. It brought hundreds of people out into the streets. Many people who had never been in a church before came through the doors at the end of the Procession. In the summer we had hymn singing on the green in the middle of the estate, we mounted exhibitions in both churches explaining the bible and the sacraments. We found so much to do together which compromised neither of us. From Fr Andrew I learned how to minister to dying parishioners. In a mining village in the 1970's men commonly died in their mid-fifties from pneumoconi-

osis, the miner's lung disease. They died at home in their living rooms, with oxygen bottles, the family and the district nurse around them. I was privilege to sit and watch Fr Andrew deal so tenderly and gently with these situations, and finally I was able to do it myself when I was asked.

The basis of all this shared ministry was that we were friends – close friends – who could share innermost thoughts. We worked together in that way for 4 years. Then one day in 1976 Fr Andrew said to me "I'm moving to a parish in Sheffield – part of the new Diocese of Hallam" and within a week he was gone. And sometime during the next year – so I heard on the grapevine – he was dead, from cancer of the liver, at 50 years old. When I get to heaven, if I ever do, he will be one of the first people I shall seek out, just to tell him how much he did for me in those early years of my ministry, just by being my friend and treating me as a colleague. He taught me more of what it means to be a priest than I ever learned in seminary. Every year, in this Week of Prayer for Christian unity, I give thanks for Fr Andrew Daly. He didn't often talk about Christian unity, he just lived it. Working together in unity was not an idea but a simple action. I've never forgotten that lesson, across all the years since then.

I've spent a long time on that early experience of mine, but I hope you can see what I'm getting at. Working together across the boundaries of ecclesiastical division, without compromising your own convictions or the rules of your church, is perfectly possible if it based on a trusting friendship. In fact, most of our day-to-day time in the ministry is spent doing things which we could do with colleagues in other churches, without compromising ourselves at all. If we could get into the mind set of always doing together what we do not have to do separately, we should maximise our common resources and – more importantly – learn to have a deeper respect for one another. Back in the 1970's when I worked with Fr Andrew, we were in the springtime of ecumenism, following the Second Vatican Council. Today's ecumenical atmosphere is a little more sober. But these fluctuations count for nothing in the urban streets of industrial towns. And I don't think Fr Andrew became friends with me because of anything the Vatican said or did. He was just exercising his humanity and his common sense. That would certainly be my advice to all who minister in any way in our churches. Build upon friendships and your need to work with others. This is the surest guide to working ecumenism. Let the pendulum of formal inter-church relation-

ships swing backwards and forwards on its own. Most of the work we do together will be unaffected by what goes on in the higher councils of the churches. I often wish I could take high level unity commissions into the streets of that mining village and say “now see here, this is what it is all about”. Perhaps that’s my particular vocation whilst I’m in Rome!

I think of all this when I read these words from Ephesians 2

“So he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father”.

So much of the church’s ministry is about the imparting of God’s grace to others and to ourselves. It’s one reason why Christian ministry is never just offered to faithful Christians. God is not just the God of Christians, but of **all** peoples, of all faiths and none. We cannot put God in a box and keep him for ourselves. Many of you here will have experienced the presence of God at a Baptism, or a Wedding, or a Funeral, where the chief participants are not worshipping Christians but still God and his grace are palpably present. I learned this great truth as I watched Fr Andrew Daly minister to dying miners in darkest South Yorkshire. And as I shall say again before I’ve finished, God is far greater and far more generous than we ever acknowledge. That’s why, in our calling to minister to the whole of God’s world, we need to be together.

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens but citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone”

The ministry we offer is not something we made up ourselves, but something handed on to us down the ages, so that when we come to baptise, or to confirm, or to bury, we bring with us the faith once delivered to the saints, and a faith which is not simply local, but global. This I learned too from Fr Andrew, as we ministered to dying men in the shadow of the pithead gear. His ministry to those dying men brought them into the orbit of the universal church, and his prayers for them joined the great procession of prayer which goes up to God’s throne from every corner of the world and every part of the church. We are the priestly people of God, and as such we are the *channels* of God’s grace, not the possessors of it. It is not *our* grace, but God’s, and so often our divisions mar the progress of that grace, rather than enable it to flow.

Let me then sum up the points I would like you to take away with you this evening

First, the effectiveness of ecumenism depends not merely on the head, but on the heart. It only works well if, deep down, you are friends with sister and brother Christians in other churches. It will never be effective just as an idea. It must be in your heart. 30 years ago Andrew Daly and I desperately wanted to be together as Christians, we couldn’t of course share the sacrament, but we shared virtually everything else, not for strategic reasons, but because we wanted to, badly.

Second, our Christian witness to the world will always be impaired whilst we are separated. We need the support and encouragement we can offer one another if we journey together. A friend put it like this to me recently – she said “The more coals there are on a fire, the more it glows. If you take coals away the fire will grow dimmer”. Perhaps we’ve forgotten that beautiful analogy in these days of central heating! But it’s a fact that the fire of our Gospel is dimmer than it should be because we are lighting separate fires. Think upon that, I beg you.

Third, we are often afraid of Christian Unity because we might have to give up something we love dearly in our own tradition. Such fears affect all of us, whatever tradition we belong to. We need perhaps to remember that what we seek and pray for is not *uniformity* but *unity*. We seek to be together, even though we shan’t all be the same. And we *shouldn’t* all be the same, should we? For we worship a God who is more variegated, more diverse, more generous, more enveloping than we can ever imagine. As the separate colours of the rainbow fuse together to make one great shining light, so our differing visions of God are complementary, not divisive. We can’t *begin* to understand Almighty God unless we can accept our own diversity and difference. In the past, Christians have persecuted fellow Christians because they could not accept diversity and difference. We must not make the same mistake.

And lastly, we seek Christian Unity most of all because the Lord Jesus Christ whom we follow, wills it. He made this clear in a purple passage in St John 17 verse 23 “*may they be one, as I and my father are one*”. We remind ourselves of the Lord’s will for our unity every time we say the Nicene Creed “*I believe in ONE, holy, catholic and apostolic church*”. It is God’s church, not ours, and he made it to be one. Human beings have divided it. We have maintained its divisions. It is time to hear the call to restore the divine oneness of the Church.

At this act of worship, in this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, may we pledge ourselves to do just that. Amen.