



A CONTRIBUTION TO THE READING OF THE ARCIC II STATEMENT ON "SALVATION AND THE CHURCH" BY DONATO VALENTINI, SDB

As in the past, when publishing a report resulting from an international dialogue, we present with it an article commenting on the document. The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity has commissioned P. Donato Valentini, SDB, a professor at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome, to write the following article. It expresses his personal opinion on the report.

There is no "today of salvation" without some structure. There are various ecumenical structures. They can be thought of at various levels. One of the loci of such structures is that of dialogues. The dialogue which concerns us here is official, doctrinal and international. It involves the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. It has produced a document entitled "Salvation and the Church". I shall discuss this document in three sections:

- I. Introduction
- II. Content
- III. Evaluation

I. INTRODUCTION

1. *ARCIC II. Preparation of the document*

This document has been prepared by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II). The history of the Commission is probably known. ARCIC II succeeded ARCIC I, which had compiled the "Final Report" (1981) at present being examined by the two ecclesial Communion with a view to an official evaluation which –something without precedent– will commit the two Churches. This was announced by John Paul II and by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, in the Common Declaration made in Canterbury Cathedral (29th May 1982) during the Pope's official visit to Great Britain. The new Commission, more numerous than the previous one (24 members drawn from 12 nations in 5 continents) and more international (so as to bring together and express better the various problems and situations), decided to devote itself above all to the first of the tasks assigned it in the Common Declaration, that relating to the remaining doctrinal difficulties between the two Communion (cf. Common Declaration n. 3). Among various possible subjects they eventually chose to work on "Salvation and the Church" – this at their first meeting in Venice, August 30th - Sept 6th 1983.

Keeping in mind other dialogues going on among the Churches, ARCIC II gave its attention, at its second and third meetings (Durham, England 22-31 August 1984, and Graymoor N.Y. 26 August – 4th September 1985) to a document prepared by a sub-commission.

During this work, salvation, justification and sanctification emerged more and more as themes central to Christianity, interdependent, charged with controversial overtones, and characterising the two communion at the level of tradition and theology. ARCIC II focussed on fundamental principles, adding secondary themes which helped to provide a more complete view of the main subject matter. It reviewed positions held at the beginning of the Reformation as well as subsequent controversies. It examined the wording of the Confessions of faith, attempts at reconciliation and other doctrinal and homiletic sources of particular importance. It gave attention not only to the sessions of the Council of Trent but also to Vatican II: to contexts and general orientations as well as particular passages. To all this the text before us bears witness, though at times only indirectly.

2. *The scope of the document*

The exact scope of ARCIC II's first statement is given in the title. Certainly it cannot emerge from the few historical hints I have given. Perhaps not even a reading of the document, unless very attentive, can easily and safely reach the real nucleus which inspires the text and provides its centre of gravity. Thus, for example, no. 32 indicates the two parts into which the statement is divided: doctrine on salvation and the role of the Church in it. We may ask which of these parts, not per se but given the scope of the document, is the driving force? Which did the members of ARCIC have at heart?

Even if obviously and per se salvation is the more important reality, the horizon of faith, the prior theological theme,

in the present text the prevalent concern seems to be to emphasise the Church more than that reality and that horizon. If the theological reflection behind the document is soteriological in inspiration, its texture and its parts seem to aim rather at outlining the mystery and role of the Church in God's plan of salvation. This divine plan is put forward as something within the space of which (faith, justification, good works) the Church can, so to speak, manoeuvre. The inner movement, the real dynamic of the document is ecclesial (I do not say "ecclesiocentric").

3. *The object of the document*

One means of understanding a text is to understand the aim of its authors. What did the 24 members of ARCIC II propose to achieve in producing and offering to the Anglican and Roman Catholic Communion the statement "Salvation and the Church"? More precisely, what is the immediate object of the Commission and what its more remote object?

The immediate object is to find the "balance and coherence" of the constituent elements of the Christian doctrine of salvation and to express it. To find and express it as Anglicans and Catholics together (cf. n. 32). Here is an affirmation to be explained with the historical and theological vicissitudes accompanying the origins and development of different interpretations of "fiducial" faith, of the relation between justification and salvation and of the vocation, mission and role of the Church in the economy of salvation. It is an affirmation founded on the belief that there have been in the past terminology and conceptual instruments which have hindered convergent readings let alone agreements. It goes obviously with the new climate of ecumenical dialogue existing today.

ARCIC II's more remote object is to offer an instrumental contribution to reconciliation between Anglicans and Catholics, that is, to "witness together to God's salvation in the midst of the anxieties, struggles and hopes of our world" (n. 32).

A document on the Church in the divine plan of salvation could not fail to include with this its best "memory": of the origins of present-day ecumenism, the evangelising mission (Edinburgh 1910) and a recall to an important text of Vatican II, the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. For ARCIC II also, true ecumenism is pastoral, the Church's pastoral dimension passes essentially through ecumenism.

II. CONTENT

An *Introduction*, four short chapters articulating the subject of the document and a *Conclusion* make up the ARCIC II text. I shall present the content in this order.

1. *Introduction*

This fixes the context or horizon of faith in which the whole discourse of the document is to be set (cf. n. 1). It offers some notes on the theological history of the problem (n. 2). It emphasises the area of agreement (cf. n. 3) and describes the four principal difficulties (cf. nn. 4-7). Past negative attitudes are recalled (cf. n. 8) and a new theological outlook is noted (cf. n. 8).

The document opens firmly, not unlike chapter 1 of *Lumen Gentium*, stressing the trinitarian dimension of salvation and of the Church, the mystery of *koinonia*, in Christ, with God and therefore between men (cf. the Final Report, n. 5). The first paragraph gives a kind of terminological grammar of the principal categories which provide the structure of the whole text: from salvation to reconciliation, from liberation to adoption (makes us sons and daughters of God), from grace the uncreated gift to faith, from the doxological dimension to the eschatological, from baptism to the community of believers: above all, the fundamental principle and criterion of salvation, through the grace of God in Christ.

The historical clue is in the next paragraph which recalls the theological disputes between Anglicans and Catholics, focussing them on justification. The Anglican position, the document stresses, was that of the moderate Lutheranism of the Confessions of Augsburg and Württemberg. The Council of Trent's decree on justification (Session VI, Jan. 13, 1557: DS 1540-1583) was not directed against Anglicans. Only afterwards was it so interpreted, bringing in other problems like predestination, original sin, good works and sanctification.

The resulting situation included agreements and disagreements. It was agreed that the saving act of God is owed solely to his mercy in Christ, and that it evokes an authentic human response, faith, effective not only in the individual but also in the corporate life of the Church. "Difficulties arose in explaining how divine grace related to human response, and these difficulties were compounded by a framework of discussion that concentrated too narrowly upon the individual" (cf. n. 3)

These difficulties could be reduced to four.

The *first* concerned *justifying faith* insofar as this includes confidence (in final salvation). Catholics feared that the Protestant emphasis on assurance produced in the justified a subjective state of certainty which did not give due weight to the holiness of works, and would even do away with the need for hope. Protestants suspected that Catholics had not real trust in the mercy of God and in the end trusted in "works", so opening the way to scrupulosity and legalism (cf. n. 4).

The second difficulty was about justification as "*imputation*". By this Protestants understood the act with which God

“declared the unrighteous to be accepted by him on account of the obedience of Christ and the merits of his passion” (n. 5). Catholics took this to be “a merely nominal righteousness extrinsic to the believer”. The statement itself observes that in reality Anglicans of the 16th and 17th centuries did not deny grace as effectively given (*imparted*).

The *third* difficulty regarded the weight of *good works* in the work of salvation. Reformation theologians maintained that in the final analysis Catholics made justification depend on good works and religious practices, on ceremonies, thus compromising the sovereign power and freedom of God. Catholics thought that Protestants attributed no value in the sight of God to good works, thus denying human responsibility and freedom and the promise of divine reward even to good works. The statement here points out that the expression “by faith alone” meant to Anglican theologians “only for the merits of Christ” and merely stressed the inadequacy of good works (not their irrelevance to salvation (cf. n. 6)).

The *fourth* difficulty concerned the *role of the Church* in the process of salvation. Protestants considered that Catholics put the Church above Scripture and so ruled out that Christ was “the sole mediator between God and man” (1 Tim 2, 5). Catholics believed that Protestants at least undervalued the ministry and sacraments of the Church and its authority, if only relative, in the matter of the Word of God (n. 7).

The Commission recognises that the breaking-off of ecclesial communion encouraged caricatures and extremist positions (cf. n. 8). It concludes nevertheless that the foregoing four areas of theological difficulty, after the work done by itself, “need not be matters of dispute between us” (n. 8).

2. *Salvation and Faith*

With this heading there begins the expounding of the agreement arrived at.

Salvation—it is stated—is Christ and hence the trinitarian mystery verified in him. He is the outcome of God’s love. It is grace that actuates salvation in the Church, grace is at the origin of every saving human action. Salvation is also truly a human response: it is made personal through faith (n. 9).

Faith is confidence in the Gospel of the promise, of the mercy of God. It comes from our whole being. It includes assent to the truth of the Gospel and involves repentance and obedience. Living faith is inseparable from love. It does not exclude responsibility and “fear and trembling” (*Phil 2, 12-13*) (cf. n. 10).

Christian assurance is not then presumptuous. It is founded on God’s unfailing faithfulness and not on our powers. Because of sin, we cannot presume on our perseverance. An authentic faith, therefore, is inseparable from hope (n. 11).

3. *Salvation and Justification*

According to baptismal faith, Christian salvation concerns three levels: that of Christ, that of the Church and in her each person, and that of the fulfilment of the Kingdom. To describe salvation the New Testament uses a great variety of language, of terms and concepts: from salvation to reconciliation, from expiation/propitiation to redemption/liberation, from adoption to regeneration, from sanctification to justification, but “there is no controlling term or concept; they complement each other” (cf. n. 13). Even the two terms “justification” and “sanctification”, which largely governed past disputes between Catholics and Reformers, are neither wholly distinct nor unrelated. The Reformers tended to prefer the New Testament usage, and thus to interpret “justification” (*dikaìoun*) in the sense of “pronounce righteous”. Catholic theologians tended to follow the usage of patristic and medieval Latin writers and so to interpret “justification” (*dikaìoun*) as “make righteous” thus including in “justification” elements which the Reformers placed rather in “sanctification”. From this it came about that “Protestants took Catholics to be emphasising sanctification in such a way ‘that the absolute gratuitousness of salvation was threatened’, while “Catholics feared that Protestants were so stressing the justifying action of God that sanctification and human responsibility were gravely depreciated” (cf. n. 14).

In fact, the statement emphasises, justification and sanctification are aspects of the same divine act (*1 Cor 6, 11*, is cited). “This does not mean that justification is a reward for faith or works”: only that it is “linked with (God’s) sanctifying recreation of us in grace”.

It is a question of course, of a “transformation” destined to continue throughout our life’s pilgrimage – and of an effective transformation. “By pronouncing us righteous, God also makes us righteous. He imparts a righteousness which is his and becomes ours” (n. 15).

The idea of pilgrimage here introduces the topic of Christian eschatology. The declaration that we are acceptable to God and the gift of continual renewal through the Holy Spirit who dwells in the believers are a “pledge and first instalment” of the final kingdom of God, and so “the ground of the believer’s hope”. This is reflected in the life of the Church, in which baptism, incorporating into Christ, is unrepeatable while the eucharist, the food of the believer, is repeated (cf. n. 16).

In this way the sanctification of the believer is steadily perfected: God actualises in him His righteousness and holiness. This involves growing into conformity with Christ the perfect image of God, by means of a style of love, and the capacity to produce works “which are the fruit of the Holy Spirit”. There is not only a declaration of justice: in Christ we are just (cf. n. 17).

At this point it is possible to understand the exact significance of “reconciliation”. In the language of the bible the declaration of God’s mercy to the sinner is expressed, in this word, in legal terms, as a verdict of acquittal. There is this juridical aspect. Yet the verdict is the verdict of a Father and Saviour and not just of a judge, and it is a verdict – the statement underlines – which establishes new relations, by means of a remission of sin and the rebirth of a new life.

Hence reconciliation/absolution, the juridical aspect is a real and essential aspect of justification, but it is not the only aspect, nor is it that “in the light of which all other biblical ideas and images of salvation must be interpreted” (cf. n. 18).

4. *Salvation and Good Works*

Faith and works are inseparable in the believer: the statement we are examining says this forcefully at the beginning of its approach to this *voxata quaestio* from the past: faith flowers in works necessarily – “by its very nature is acted out”. These works are truly good, because they are done in dependence on the grace of Christ. There is no salvation therefore without making Christ and his works the central point of reference. We need to be precise when speaking of good works: we are not saved *because* of any good work, but we are created in Christ *for* good works (*Eph 2, 8ff*): and it is only by virtue of the freedom that God gives us that we can exercise our responsibility and cooperation. In other words, at the level of salvation there is no real self-sufficiency in man. Only to the extent that he participates, in Christ, in the image of God is he involved by God in what God does to bring about our salvation. It is with these qualifications that Augustine’s phrase “The God who made you without you, without you does not make you just” (*Sermons 169.13*) (cf. n. 19).

It follows also that only in Christ does there develop decisively a life totally free from “demonic forces”, whether for the individual or for society as such (cf. n. 20). For this reason it is possible in a certain sense to say that the baptised person in “*simul justus et peccator*”. The growth of believers in maturity and indeed the common life of the Church are impaired by repeated lapses into sin. Yet the believer can in Christ reappropriate his freedom from sin by repentance and faith. This insight has sometimes been expressed by the paradox just quoted (cf. n. 21). Christian liberation from sin passes in many respects through the Church, the People of God: the Church as communion of prayer of the living and the dead which accompanies the believer on his journey of faith: the Church as authority received from God to pronounce pardon in his name; the Church, finally, as calling for penance (cf. n. 22).

At this point the chapter we are summarising suitably raises the subject of merit. It starts from the fact that in Scripture the works of the just are praised and promised reward. It follows from this promise that, at Christ’s second coming, those who have done such works will receive a place in the Kingdom and will be found with those who see God.

But what really is this reward? In reality it is a gift totally dependent on grace: in Augustine’s words, “when God crowns our merits, he is really crowning his own gifts” (*Ep 194, 5, 19*).

Therefore it remains to the believer to put his trust in God and pray that he will complete what he has begun (cf. n. 23).

Briefly therefore it should be said of merit: God does not become a debtor even to the justified who do good works: even more is justification itself unmerited; further still, the very first movements with which God leads us to justification (repentance for example, desire for forgiveness, even faith itself, are acts with which God touches us in his Holy Spirit (cf. n. 24).

5. *The Church and Salvation*

This decisive part of the statement begins by saying that the doctrine of salvation is intimately associated with that of the Church, and this because the community of believers in the Lord Jesus is also the community of the reconciled. (The Final Report par. 6 is quoted). The Church is essentially christological (cf. n. 25).

Of its nature the Church is thus above all a sign of the Gospel. Its vocation is to embody and reveal the redemptive power contained within the Gospel. It is thus also a sign and foretaste of God’s Kingdom. This is achieved through the way of the Cross. Church life incarnates a theology of the Cross (n. 26).

To the Church is entrusted a service, more exactly a *ministry* (*stewardship*) of the Lord’s expiatory Pasch.

It fulfils this stewardship through the Word, the sacraments and pastoral life, “... in such a way that the gospel may be heard as good news in differing ages and cultures while at the same time seeking neither to alter its content nor minimise its demands” –all this in the conviction that only the Holy Spirit can give it the efficacy needed for its mission (cf. n. 27).

Finally, “the Church is also an instrument for the realisation of God’s eternal design, the salvation of humanity”. While indeed the Holy Spirit acts outside the community of Christians, nevertheless, through the action of the Holy Spirit, only in the Church does the Gospel of grace become a manifest reality. It is therefore the Church’s responsibility to make itself a living testimony to that Gospel and share it with all people (cf. n. 28).

A conclusion may be drawn at this point: If the Church is sign and instrument at the service of God’s saving work, it is also a *sacrament* of it. A sacrament which by reason of the sins of its members, the shortcomings of its institutions and of the divisions between Churches has continual need of repentance and renewal; nevertheless a sacrament which God according to his promise will “use” to bring about the communion of humanity with Himself and with one another, by means of participation in this life of the Trinity (cf. n. 19).

Thus the Church is a foretaste of the Kingdom of God “in a world still awaiting its consummation” (cf. *Rm 8, 18-23*).

In a world therefore which calls for a Church committed to creating more and more real room for love, justice and liberty, leaving behind both forms of pietism and varieties of human discrimination. This commitment includes the overcoming of divisions between the Churches: Limits and imperfections will always be with the Church since, in respect to the fulfilment of the Kingdom, it is “the beginning and not yet the end, the first fruits and not yet the final

harvest" (n. 30).

All the same, the Church's mission is one of hope since God has never abandoned the world. Sharing in the mission of Christ, the Church will proclaim the dignity of the person and the value of natural and political communities. It will witness against the structures of sin in society and put forward the Gospel of repentance and forgiveness. It will be "an agent of justice and compassion". It "looks forward to the end when Christ delivers the Kingdom to God the Father" (1 Cor 4, 24) (cf. n. 21).

Conclusion

This paragraph presents ARCIC II's assessment of the topic and of the insights reached in the present document. They can be listed thus:

1. History and controversies have partially obscured the balance and coherence of the substance of the Christian doctrine of salvation.
2. The present statement has tried to rediscover and express that balance and coherence.
3. We are agreed that this is not an area where any remaining differences of theological interpretation or ecclesiological emphasis justify continued separation between the two Communions. ARCIC II maintains it has reached "agreement" on the essential aspects of salvation and on the Church's role within it.
4. It has also realised the central meaning and profound significance which the message of justification and sanctification continues to have for us today.
5. The work done is offered as a contribution to reconciliation between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

III. EVALUATION

The statement affirms that today there should no longer be dispute on the themes it deals with. This means that agreement is reached on essentials of doctrine and that remaining differences do not touch these essentials. We can still discuss it as part of the business of theology, but not remain separate Churches because of these discussions. What is to be said of this?

What follows is an attempted assessment by a Catholic theologian. However, the essential point of reference must be the Word of God present in the living tradition of the Church, our Mother. Truths of faith are given which must be the essential criteria of judgement: (for the Council of Trent cf. Session VI, Proemio *DS* 1520, the end of chapter XVI: *DS* 1550 and can. 33, *DS* 1583). The necessary distinction between the truths of faith and theology, the due freedom to translate into various cultures and languages the New Testament covenant, the experience and confessional formulae of the ecclesial community cannot make these criteria incidental. Today nevertheless we have become accustomed to reception of conciliar formulas within the same great Conciliar Tradition, and of a theologising which is genuinely open to new language and to new concepts and terms and aware of ecumenical dialogue. The Spirit speaks to the Church through everything that is authentic among its children.

For this reason it may be that, for example, a certain theological hermeneutic of some aspects of the VIth Session of Trent, while attentive to the tridentine doctrine of original sin (cf. Session V, 17th June 1546, *DS* 1510- 6) and while recognising that doctrinal and disciplinary decrees complement each other, should be now and then looked at afresh. The same applies to a certain theological tradition, rather repetitive and not always wholly enlightened.

Something similar may perhaps be said of certain aspects of confessional formulae and in general of documents of the Anglican communion. It may be that, on the one hand, not everything is today binding in faith and, on the other not everything in the scriptural witness is always clearly received.

What of all this in the present statement? Are the developments in method taken notice of? The Spirit speaks at all times to the ecclesial community to tell it how to carry out Christ's Pasch. A correct approach to history is a dimension also of faith. It is a fortiori a dimension of theology – the understanding of faith, in faith, for faith. New experiences, new Pentecosts can happen.

1. Method

The first point in my evaluation concerns method.

To achieve a valid and convincing presentation of its subject, ARCIC II has sought for and chosen a suitable method. We should try to grasp it.

First of all the Commission, as we have seen, decided to touch only the *essential points*. It held that at that level it could turn out that these were no longer reasons for disagreements; that past reasons for division could, through work of clarification, be left behind as no longer having sense; that a true agreement could be reached; that thus it would be possible to have confidence in the new course. It seems to me that the choice made by the Commission was reasonable enlightened and shrewd.

It might be that this choice, this strategy, is exposed to certain limitations, which should be noted in a critical assessment. That would not, in my view, weaken the method chosen.

Secondly, the work of the preceding commission ARCIC I, was done in a way which was mainly inductive. From practical difficulties – eucharist, ministry, authority – they worked back to general principles: other ecumenists have

noted this. Here the method is deductive: coming down from the general to the particular. The document starts from fundamental, doctrinal subject matter – radical and in a sense general. Witness for example the two categories found in the title of the statement: salvation and the Church. Insistence on the centrality of these, even today, for the Church's faith (n. 32) confirms what I am saying.

The method is that which at one time was preferred above all by Catholics. We should add to avoid misunderstandings, that the kind of deductive method which animates and sustains the document is not unqualified. The Anglo-Saxon mentality calls for sticking to the concrete, requires clarity, "facts", the elemental" we might say: not theoretical bombast. In this respect the text seems exemplary: the four theological difficulties (cf. nn. 4-7) become four little chapters of the text suggesting its logical arrangement.

Thirdly attention is obviously paid to the different theological traditions, *with respect and precision* (cf. n. 14: "tending") and with resolve to be responsible and objective. We remember that literature about problems of faith and theology has known, especially in the past, polemics and controversy, one sidedness and exclusiveness, has produced caricatures and extremism and progressively reinforced them (cf. n. 8); this has meant that the constituent elements of Christian doctrine of salvation have been partially obscured (*ibid.*).

Examples can be given. The Reformers, in interpreting grace and justification, tried to problems arising from anxieties ("*terrori*") about personal salvation; but the social aspects sin and redemption were not adequately emphasised. The biblical element of "imputation" of Christ's righteousness was accepted but so insisted on as to invite at times charges of extrinsicism, eschatologism, denying the efficacy of God's love.

On the other hand, they had strong reserves about the tendency of the Council of Trent and its subsequent theological tradition to give much space, in the act of justification, to the interior transformation of the justified person but little to the external, justifying act of God. This historical awareness is an important starting point for ARCIC II, an indispensable adjunct to clarifying and surmounting opposed positions.

Fourthly, the statement aims at a *critical distancing* of the past, avoiding controversy. Only thus, it is rightly thought, can reciprocal misunderstandings be overcome; only thus can it be shown that there is no reason to go on being divided, at least on the central points touched on in the text (nn. 8 and 32).

It may be useful in this regard to mark the insistence in the text on the past tense when negative, polemical passages are being dealt with. In particular it is worth noting that the Anglicans attribute the paternity of one-sided doctrine to Lutherans and Calvinists (cf. n. 2 referring back to the Continental Reformers). The Anglicans stress that they followed the "Moderates", that is the Lutheran formulae of Augusburg and Wurttemberg; that Trent's decree on justification was not directed against the Anglican formularies; that Anglican reactions to Trent varied considerably, some being sympathetic: only at the end did they become "protestant" (cf. *ibid.*).

Fifthly, the document explains why *it is possible today* to have a new attitude, a new method (n. 8).

A new context helps here, a new biblical knowledge, new historical and theological knowledge, new missionary experience – an important emphasis – and more important still the experience of ecumenical dialogue (M. Thurian would say of a "tradition of ecumenism").

We might try to explain some elements of this method of ecumenical dialogue:

- the statement pays attention throughout to the principle of "the hierarchy of truths of the faith" (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, p. 11 which speaks of "truths of Catholic doctrine"): if this, as it seems to me, does not mean diminishing or curtailing the deposit of Catholic faith, we have here an important instrument of method: it contributes to bringing out essential doctrines which are pointed to a possible "common household".

- In order to concentrate on the substance of faith, the need to distinguish theological language and interpretations from the *res* is noted (cf. nn. 13 sqq, 22, 24);

- there are some fine concise expressions used: "God's grace effects what he declares" (n. 15 *sub fine*); "while we are not saved *because* of good works, we are created in Christ *for* good works" (n. 19).

- Biblical language is much used, bringing out its multiplicity of expression, matching the many-sidedness of the salvation given us by Christ (cf. n. 13), and illustrating it (cf. n. 18).

- Contrary to what used to be done, when single terms were put in opposition (cf. n. 13), the statement shows places where attention to both distinction and complementarity enables us to avoid radical antitheses. Thus it is, for example, with the nexus between justification and sanctification (cf. n. 19) the formula "*simul justus et peccator*" is explained with a kind of *sic et non* (cf. n. 21); the word "impute" is given precise meaning (cf. n. 15 *sub fine et 18*); an explanation is given of biblical "reconciliation" in the New Testament (cf. n. 18). The method of complementarity appears, generally also in not making antithetical use of justification and sanctification, faith and works. This perhaps rises to a principle in the finale, n. 32, when they speak of *balance and coherence*. One thinks of a similar style at work in *Lumen Gentium* par 6, which collects all the chief biblical images of the Church. Effectively there is a biblical analogy, it makes for better understanding of faith.

Sixthly, the statement is wide awake to the methodological value of *language*. I may develop here the hints already given on language and terminology. Take for example par. 14: it brings out two tendencies in interpreting the term "justify" (*dikaion*): the Reformation one, following the predominant use of the New Testament, where the verb usually means to "pronounce (declare) righteous", and the Catholic one, following the usage of patristic and medieval Latin writers, where it means "to make righteous". Another example: par no. 22 speaks of the prayers of the living and the dead. It seems that we should read "the communion of saints". The expression does not appear but the *res* is there. Is this just banal hair-splitting, or is it a positive advance in method? Certainly it is the latter.

The question of language is serious and enlightening. It is far from irrelevant to a re-reception of the conciliar document of the sixth session of Trent to note that in the 16th century the debate between Catholics and Reformed was conditioned by the interpretation of the language of the West and of Augustine; that in the course of history (as is made clear in *Justification by Faith, Common Statement*: in the collection "*Justification by Faith, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*" VII Edited by H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, Joseph A Burgess, Augsburg, Minneapolis 1985, pp. 49 ff, 94 ff) different approaches and explanations gave rise to different models (the forensic model of the Lutherans, the "transformist" model of the Catholics), that different languages in their turn gave shape to different ways of thinking on several themes (for example, justification, the sinfulness of the justified, merit); that Catholic theology, recognising the value of scholastic language but also its cultural limits, has departed somewhat from it and turned increasingly towards biblical categories which have a more personalist and historical emphasis.

Today there is much talk of a new way of doing theology: this is decidedly linked to linguistic changes. The statement has recognised this and acted on it. Two points of reference, biblical literature and contemporary cultures, have not rarely facilitated re-thinking and rereading the languages of the past and led to their *Aufhebung*.

Seventhly, the *form* of the statement shows concern for logical coherence and for synthetic quality. Chapter headings and paragraphs mark successive topics (note the connection between nn. 19, 20, 22, and 23). The florid and the precious are not indulged in, theological discourse is often condensed. Weighty content is presented in simple and transparent style: see for example n. 30 where you have in summary a group of reflections which co-ordinate – through the essential mediation of Word and Sacrament – justification by faith with Christian living in liberty and peace.

2. *Salvation and Faith*

Having spoken of method, I now try to assess the *content* of the statement. This first section on "Salvation and Faith" might seem the easiest. It is obviously centered on faith: even grace is seen as a "language" (cf n. 9): the kernel of truth is looked for under the terms; there is even talk of "appropriation" (cf. n. 9), of "absolute certitude", of "guarantee", of "assurance" (nn. 10-11). However the section of the text, like others, is really vigilant in responding to the problems raised by the Council of Trent and by authoritative Anglican sources.

Thus ARCIC II certainly incorporates in this section the fundamental affirmation of Trent (cf. chap. 1, *DS* 1521; chap. 2 *DS* 1522; can. 1 *DS* 1551, can 5, *DS* 1555) and of the Reformers, of God's initiative and the priority of grace. But what does it say about, e.g. *justificatio sola fide*?

We know that in this Luther goes beyond the Augustinian emphasis on grace; he centres his solution on faith and the expression quoted is for him *articulus stantis et cadentis Ecclesiae* and that even present day non-Catholic theologians find no incompatibility between the expression and the Council of Trent.

The expression is not found in so many words in the ARCIC II statement. Yet it is found equivalently and reconsidered according to the working principles of the members of the two Communions. In particular, as far as Catholic theology is concerned, it can be said that in the statement there is accepted the requirement (belonging it seems to me to the historic faith) of assent to God and to the truths of the Gospel and not merely to the truth of the promises of forgiveness (cf. n. 10). The statement speaks of a faith which is confidence (cf. *Ibid.*) and therefore trust. True, Trent links trust to hope and not to faith. All the same, Scripture does not rule out this last interpretation (cf. for example Rm 4, 3 and 16-22, *Gal* 2, 6).

"Faith" in the statement does not rule out as sins acts of repentance and obedience; it particularly requires them. They are not sins (cf. n. 10). We should remember here – to go further into the question – that even Catholic theologians who insist on the universality of grace at least as offered, maintain that every morally good act is a salutary act, and that every act not carried out with the grace received is a sin.

The "faith" of the text we are examining does not exclude a beginning of love (cf. n. 10). It is known that Luther put love among the "fruits" of justifying faith because of a mistaken interpretation, of *fides caritate formata*. In fact the act of faith implies the act of love. In face of the event of God's self-communication – which is at the same time revelation, promise and love – the human response, that is faith, precisely on the basis of the movement of trust implies love. The reality of justifying faith cannot be split up. This would be to give way, in rather nominalistic terms, to interpretations derived from some Scholastic writings.

Another point is that of *human cooperation* in the "event" of justification. Trust demands it (cf. example chapters V, VI, VII). ARCIC II does not make a meal of the matter, but affirms it clearly. It speaks in fact of "truly human personal response" (cf. n. 9). It insists that the human person appropriates the gift of grace (by faith, cf. *ibid.*) and welcomes the gift of the Gospel of the Lord's Pasch (cf. n. 10). He performs these acts. It does not follow from this that justification is partly the work of God and partly the work of man. Everything that is positive, grace, is from God: grace is required *ad esse*, not merely *ad melius esse*. Whatever is at least, a continual non-refusal of grace (there can be refusal) is the work of man.

Trent also says that acts carried out by the sinner *prepare* with the grace of God, for justification. Prepare, and dispose (cf. chaps VI and VII).

ARCIC II does not go into this? It does not seem to me that there are any clear openings for doing so.

On the other hand, it seems as well to remember that Catholic theology regrets that Trent did not clearly rule out the possibility of *de congruo* merit in justification and hence a certain ambiguous interpretation of *facientibus quod est in se, Deus non denegat gratiam*. With Catholic theologians like Rahner and Lonergan it may be held instead that God gives his (actual) grace which disposes man to act in a salutary way (operating grace *in homine sine homine*) and gives grace

which is the beginning of the salutary act (cf. cooperating grace) which man accomplishes (we are reminded of prevenient, concomitant and following grace).

ARCIC II also speaks, finally, of sureness of God's faithfulness to his promises. It says that justifying faith comes with it a certain *security* (cf. n. 10), though explicitly rules out all presumption (n. 11). We are very far from the condemnation of the state of absolute and "enthusiastic" certainty found at Trent (chap. IX, *DS*, 1533-4 and corresponding canons).

Present Catholic theology also presumes to speak of a scheme of "phenomenology of grace" of a certain "psychology" of grace. In all this question, attention to the "fruits of the Spirit" may be helpful. Neither that Catholic position which was rooted in a simply ontological, physical view of grace, nor that emphatic Reformed view which ignored man's moral limitations was valid. Here is the context for ARCIC II's balanced statement in perseverance.

3. *Salvation and Justification*

This section gives much space to hermeneutics, particularly as mediated through language. It provides in fact a review of the varieties of language (cf. nn. 12 and 15), as if to say that the mystery of Salvation is rich and many-sided and that analogy and complementarity should be preferred to one-sidedness. Variety of language is accepted by ARCIC II (cf. n. 15). This is connected with the differing interpretations of the term "justification" by Reformers and Catholics (cf. n. 14), explained by different theological reflection on the two sides. If the statement does not reject scholastic language, it is shaped rather by attention to the interior the personal. This is a decisive though not the only reason why the goal of consensus is claimed by ARCIC II.

More particularly, coming to the kernel of the section, it accepts that no biblical term, and consequently no concept or category can be held as controlling and decisive (cf. n. 13). Two terms however play the lion's part: "*justification and sanctification*".

These are focal points for the "associated terms". With justification are linked imputation and non-imputation, reconciliation and remission, liberation, (cf. n. 12) and "juridical". To sanctification are referred rather regeneration and renewal, new life and rebirth (cf. n. 18), the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the justified (cf. n. 16) adoption, transformation and increase of grace (cf. n. 12) and conformity to Christ and incorporation" in him (cf. n. 16).

Is it possible to grasp a relationship between these two groups of terms? I think we both can and should. Justification and sanctification the organising terms of the two groups are to be regarded, says ARCIC II, as "two aspects of the same divine, saving act" (cf. n. 15).

This assertion can be harmonised with the Council of Trent. Though stressing, in reaction to the opposed position, the aspect of sanctification, the Council does not deny, what is positive and not exclusive in the other position (cf. e.g. Capt. VII where both aspects are present).

We accept therefore the view of justification/sanctification offered by the statement. It can be described thus: God pardons the sinner by imputing to him the justice of Christ and not imputing to him his sins. In this way God remits and frees from sin and, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes the sinner rise to a really new life. This new life increases, flourishes in good works which are the fruit of the Holy Spirit and moves towards its fulfilment in the final Kingdom.

Some observations are needed to show how this scheme (which I hope I have grasped objectively) surmounts, though in a new language, the disputes of the past.

First, touching *Anglican concerns*, the act of imputation is an essential element of justification; it underlines God's initiative; it is logically prior to sanctification; it stresses that the righteousness in us comes from God (and is from this point of view "foreign") and carries with it also a juridical aspect (remember the biblical term "reconciliation").

Second, touching *Catholic concerns*, justification and sanctification make up one sole reality (this is not opposed to what I have just said); sins are really pardoned and cancelled within a scheme of salvation, passage from one state to another (cf. n. 13) man becomes truly righteous (cf. nn. 15, 16, 17); is given a new life (cf. n. 18); the indwelling Holy Spirit sets up new relations with God and so disposes the subject to divine communion (here we make a choice in present day theology); the sanctifying re-creation" of which the text speaks (n. 15) can, properly understood, answer to Trent's expression "inherent" (cf. *DS* 1529, 1530, 1549 and 1561) contributing to broadening a dynamic interpretation of sanctifying grace, present also in the Trent document, by means of accenting the permanent nexus between God who justifies and sanctification and establishing the possibility of good works in accordance with the requirement of total renewal and with an eschatological tension.

What has the ARCIC statement to say, in this context, about the *forensic model* and the *transformative model*? Some fragments of these are present without making up the full pattern: terms like "pronounces, imputes (cf. n. 16), "declares" (cf. n. 18) on the one hand, and "transform" (n. 15) on the other are there.

The statement nevertheless gives no privileged position to either model. This was discounted from the outset. The whole aim was to coordinate the demands of both models by finding a point of agreement. On the other hand, bearing in mind their presuppositions and historical explanations, it is easy to see that they are not at all binding. Both can still take their place in the history of theology, provided that they are stripped of whatever has made them irreconcilable and polarizing: i.e. that they are not any longer a motive for division between the Churches.

A point which undoubtedly helps to surmount opposition between the two models as a basis or expression of division between the Churches is the correct interpretation of the role of faith in justification/sanctification. It is no accident that ARCIC II speaks of this in n. 15.

Rm 3:22, 24 is examined. Faith is required, obviously: Trent and the Reformers were both convinced of that. Division comes only when it is asked what is the role of faith in justification?

Is it to dispose the subject to being justified? Is it an instrumental cause or a partial formal cause? Is it at least a necessary condition of justification/sanctification? Trent, avoiding the disputes between Thomists and Scotists, says that it is “the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification (chapt VIII, DS 1532).

Faith is then present in the preparation and disposing, in the conferring of justification and in the increase of grace. It tells of permanence; nothing more precise. Such a position however seems to me open and sufficient. The present statement says that justification is not the prize of faith (cf. n. 16).

That is to say, faith is not rewarded with justification. Theologians today say that it is not even a true and proper condition. Faith, they stress, is already in fact an effect and gift of grace. It too is to be construed according to the proclamatory and performative value of God’s declaration: that is, of that Word of God which pardons and sanctifies, which does and achieves that it says. This is impressive. To some extent it is also persuasive.

What remains to be plumbed further in ARCIC II’s statement seems to me to concern other points. I wonder for instance if what is said about the Eucharist is altogether sufficient; its value, which is also sacrificial, is perhaps a little diminished (cf. n. 16); I wonder again if the aspect of divinisation of the justified subject, brought out by the Greek fathers, is kept in mind enough; and finally, whether the virtues of faith, hope and charity, even apart from the scholastic scheme of supernatural anthropology, are given their due in the statement. A few clarifications might help here.

4. Good Works

At the beginning of this part (n. 19) the presence of those theological virtues just mentioned seem to be *implicitly affirmed*. Precisely in this context things are said which do away with some past positions.

First, the statement rules out the idea that the commandments cannot be observed and that mankind has not the freedom to cooperate with grace. This is a notable problem. Let me explain. We are not talking of freedom of choice between two alternatives (what there is in the statement about that ought to be taken for granted). We are talking of liberty in Christ: the freedom to do his will (cf. n. 20). This entails that there is not in the righteous (I am not dealing here with the situation of the sinner) an irresistible concupiscence. There is no “*peccatum regnans*” (if the phrase be pardoned): only “*peccatum regnatum*”.

Secondly, leaving aside creeping or open Pelagianism, works are said to be *good* because, in the righteous, they are accomplished in God: God involves in good works the new humanity of the justified, who participate through the transforming power of Christ, in His humanity (cf. n. 19).

Good works spring from faith necessarily, “by its very nature”; nothing then about *sola fide* (the Reformers in the past were sometimes wrongly interpreted on this precise point). There is no question of our good works meriting justification; but we are justified to do good works (cf. n. 19).

Thirdly, the problem of *merit* arises here. Trent rules out the possibility of meriting Justification and final perseverance (DS 1525, 1572) but says we can merit increase of grace and, speaking summarily, eternal glory (DS 1582). ARCIC II maintains that neither the very first preparatory acts of justification, nor justification itself, nor eternal life are merited (cf. n. 24). There is then substantial agreement between Trent and ARCIC II about merit in relation to preparatory acts and to justification itself.

But what must be said of the relation between the merit of the good works of the justified and eternal glory? Remember that Trent underlines two points: on the one hand we must not count, in the strong sense, on heaping up good works; on the other hand, we must hold that God is faithful to his promises. Unfortunately Catholics have not rarely paid little attention to the first point, and so the Reformers have found it easy to think that they over-valued the merit of good works.

It should be recognised that, to compound misunderstanding and dispute, there was the “range of meanings” of the term “*promereor*”, “*mereor*”, “*Merita*”, “*meritoria*” used by the Council of Trent (cf. chap XVI, DS 1545 and corresponding canons) However, a correct interpretation of Trent forbids that, except when Christ is referred to these terms should signify any true right that the justified have from God.

ARCIC II justly points out that there can be no exact proportion between man’s actions and divine recompense. The commission pays attention to the “labour of love” (cf. *Hebr* 6:10, in ARCIC II, note to § 24); there is some correspondence between the biblical texts cited by Trent, DS 1545, particularly *1 Cor* 15:58 and those in ARCIC II n. 24) which good works present before God.

Summarizing, we can say, on the basis of the divine promise (central to all this matter) of a reward and of a grace which makes good works a gift (God wants our merits to become his gifts; this goes back ultimately to Augustine: see DS 1548); we trust and pray God to accept and reward our good works. We hold in fact that He in fidelity to his promises will not give us reward independently of them. We do not glory in “our” works: indeed they are not accepted and meritorious in themselves but through the dignity of the person, liberated and sustained by grace, who does them; the righteousness which constitutes that dignity is “ours” not in the sense that it comes from us, but because it is in us.

The logic of *increase of grace* of which Trent speaks (cf. chap X, DS 1535 and canon 1582) in the end belongs to the same scheme; on the basis of continual sharing in Christ’s life – remember the images of head and members, vine and branches, DS 1546– we are given, through good works, a continued increase in grace.

ARCIC II seems to me to follow *implicitly* the same line. Among its governing ideas are these of incorporation in the

ecclesial community (cf. n. 13), incorporation in Christ (cf. n. 16), growth in the likeness of Christ (n. 17), growth in the freedom of Christ (n. 20), growth in Christian maturity (cf. n. 21), pilgrimage of faith (cf. n. 22), the Church as foretaste of the Kingdom (cf. n. 30).

Another problem is the expression "*simul justus et peccator*", which ARCIC II calls "paradoxical" (n. 21). The problem arises only from the phrase taken "*sensu composito*". It is one thing to say that in the Church, the people of God, there are some justified who have sin, another to say that the righteous person who has no sin is at once intrinsically just and a sinner. What Trent rejects, though it does not cite the formula, is this latter interpretation; we are not according to the Council justified merely in *hope*, nominalistically, we do not have merely the external favour of God (cf. DS 1528, 1529, 1561).

What does ARCIC II say? First of all, – the fact that the phrase is called "paradoxical" means that it is not to be taken literally, *sensu composito*. For ARCIC II also God really remits sins, truly makes people just, does not regard the concupiscence that still remains in man as real sin. This is the essential, decisive thing.

We can however try to understand rather more positively what there is behind the ambiguity of the formula. We recall that Vatican II also affirmed that the Church is at once holy and in continual need of reformation (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 8). Catholic theology gives many reasons to show that not everything in the life of the Church or of the justified is all holy (cf. "subjective" holiness). Think of the sin that can be and is committed, of the concupiscence that comes from and leads to sin. There are many examples. The phrase, therefore, explained in this way can be accepted. In effect we are now only "re-born to the hope of glory and not yet to glory itself" (DS 1541).

What is to be said of sin *in the real and full sense*? This is my last remark on the present section of the statement.

On the one hand it should be said that ARCIC II's answer contains very valid points. It says that the baptised, through God's grace, can regain Christian freedom by repentance and faith (cf. n. 21); that the Church has authority to pronounce forgiveness in the name of God and to ask for practical satisfaction and amends (cf. n. 22). This does not imply that God has not already pardoned everything: such an implication is excluded by the very emphasis on "faith alone," "grace alone," "through Christ's mediation alone". The Church's intervention is made solely to offer the sinner help towards a deeper and fuller realisation of God's mercy. There are theologians who put timely stress on the various stages through which God's saving pardon passes in the practical life of a person: there are the "*reliquiae peccatorum*" (habits of sin, tendencies toward evil etc.).

On the other hand the Catholic is bound to find the statement blurring the doctrine of the sacrament of penance and of the fruitfulness of the eucharist for the problem concerned. (I do not enter on the question of indulgences and purgatory).

One last observation: ecclesiology perhaps finds more space in this chapter. This prepares us for the following section on "The Church and Salvation".

Good works are very well seen not only from an individual standpoint but also as an expression of the life of the community (cf. n. 20). There is allusion to the mutual intercession of prayers for the living and the dead (cf. n. 22). There is mention, as we have seen, of authority to remit sins (cf. *ibid.*). Here too perhaps, the problem of merit seems to be given a new dimension by ARCIC II, more balanced in its emphasis than that of the past.

5. *Salvation and the Church*

The last section is really important, even decisive. The style is concise, concentrating on the essential. Substantially it deals with the deep issues deriving from or strictly connected with the soteriological doctrine of the three preceding sections.

Six important concepts articulate the whole, constituting the ecclesiological thinking of the ARCIC II statement: sign (cf. n. 26) service/ministry (n. 27) instrument (n. 28) sacrament (n. 31). Within this logical framework other themes and secondary matters are developed.

In my view the chapter has positive aspects but also invites some questions. I shall touch upon both, beginning with the latter.

It might be asked whether the two essential terminals of the ecclesiological theme, Pentecost and the heavenly fatherland should not have been given more attention in the text. I think they deserved it, as the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the life of the Church, giving it motive, force and internal structure and shape and involving personal and impersonal realities. Could not a paragraph have been profitably (not merely strategically) devoted to reflection on the prophetic witness of the saints and martyrs with their various charisms?

Ecclesiological reflection would have been enriched too, e.g. in its essential elements of communion, Body of Christ, People of God, by rather more development on the Church *as ministry*, considering the various ordained and non-ordained ministries in relation to the threefold function of prophet, priest and king. There are brief allusions in n. 30.

Ecumenical reflection, as linked to commitment to evangelisation, might have been expected to be fuller in such a document than what is briefly said in n. 29. Does not the section as a whole suggest more concern with liberation (the negative aspect) than with divinisation (the positive aspect)?

Finally expressions like the Church being "used" in the achievement of God's purpose (cf. n. 29) seem theologically unclear: could not words be found less suggestive of passivity? "Shortcomings" in the Church (how substantial?) might be more clearly circumscribed, and the phrase "Church as an agent of justice and compassion" (n. 31) might be further clarified; greater precision here might be to the advantage of the document's purpose.

The positive aspects of the section are indeed many. The text is a rich one. Here are some particular features worth stressing.

One of the current themes in ecclesiology is that of models. It seems that the model most favoured in this statement, or at least that to which the few elements found in the text can be best referred, is the *model of communion* (cf. nn. 1, 25, 29). "Mystery" emerges as giving body and bearings to this communion. With it should be coordinated the concepts of People of God (cf. n. 22) and "the one holy body of Christ" (n. 29). If my reading is objective (and I do not want to force the text) the statement is quite consistent with the main orientation of the two communions: the citing of n. 8 of "*The Final Report*" of ARCIC I (cf. n. 25) is significant here.

The present section also stresses the Trinitarian dimension. In particular Christ (cf. e.g. n. 25) and the Holy Spirit (cf. n. 28) are decisively present in the ecclesiological profile of salvation. The passage in the statement on the "Theology of the Cross" is remarkable and deserves to be brought into relation with the Gospel/Kingdom motive (cf. n. 25) and that of the Church as sign and foretaste of the Kingdom (cf. 11. 26).

Of the Holy Spirit, the text declares that He "gives and nurtures the new life of the Kingdom" (n. 28). A reflection on vocation and charisms might find here a good starting point. So might one on the Church as sacrament of the Spirit. With its Christological and pneumatological elements there might have been dovetailed some theological probing, in terms of the sacramentality of the Church.

Regarding the Holy Spirit, see n. 28, which says that in the Church through Him "the Gospel becomes a manifest reality". Also n. 26, which speaks of the Church as sign.

Another positive element in the statement is that on the Church and mission. This fits well with that on the Church as mystery (cf. n. 28). It forms one of the two poles of the Church's ministry: the other is more properly relative to Christ (cf. n. 28). It has a link with the short passage on the theology about non-Christian religions, which is outlined with openness and balance (cf. n. 28).

The missionary dimension of the Church can also explain a certain insistence in the statement both on the Church's continual need for repentance and renewal (cf. 22 and 29) and on the imperative mood (the Church must adopt a style of poverty and humility) rather than the indicative (the Church is already, in its members holy): this is how to arrive at a Church which is truly an epiphany of holiness. Certainly we may read in this context what is found in n. 28 on the Church which is evangelising, reconciling, uniting if it shows itself truly welcoming evangelisation, reconciliation, the drive towards unity and communion.

My last favourable comment concerns the *eschatological dimension* of the Church. Given that salvation has this dimension the Church too has it. What emerges in the section we are looking at is, in my view, an incipient eschatology, a salvation "already" and "not yet" (cf. the finale of n. 30). Of many possible observations I offer two: on the ethical emphasis and on the incarnational.

The first calls on us to avoid both an insignificant private pietism and the reduction of the Christian message to a political and social affair. The second, most clearly evident in n. 31, seems to me really rich and efficacious, and to be read in close relation to the Church's eschatological dimension. It displays a Church which is truly *sacramentum mundi* (cf. n. 32) and with the world in pilgrimage towards the accomplishment of God's Kingdom.

With this brief assessment of the last part of the statement I end my task. Reaching the end, I feel I can say that with this text another great step has been taken towards the union of the two Churches.

Further deepening of the doctrine, is, as I have suggested, certainly possible. Some further clarifications would improve the statement and make it even more reliable and transparent.

I am persuaded none the less that, from the Roman Catholic point of view, an "agreement" has been reached on the chief essential aspects of the subject. What has been achieved in the statement leaves no further ground for division on this topic between the Anglican communion (so far as it expresses itself in this document) and the Roman Catholic Church.

If this is an objective judgement, let us thank the Holy Spirit and ARCIC II for the gift they have given to the Church.

DONATO VALENTINI