



CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO THE FINAL REPORT OF ARCIC I

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GENERAL EVALUATION

The Catholic Church gives a warm welcome to the Final Report of ARCIC I and expresses its gratitude to the members of the International Commission responsible for drawing up this document. The Report is a result of an in-depth study of certain questions of faith by partners in dialogue and witnesses to the achievement of points of convergence and even of agreement which many would not have thought possible before the Commission began its work. As such, it constitutes a significant milestone not only in relations between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion but in the ecumenical movement as a whole.

The Catholic Church judges, however, that it is not yet possible to state that substantial agreement has been reached on all the questions studied by the Commission. There still remain between Anglicans and Catholics important differences regarding essential matters of Catholic doctrine.

The following Explanatory Note is intended to give a detailed summary of the areas where differences or ambiguities remain which seriously hinder the restoration of full communion in faith and in the sacramental life. This Note is the fruit of a close collaboration between the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which is directly responsible for the dialogue – a dialogue which, as is well known, continues within the framework of ARCIC II.

It is the Catholic Church's hope that its definitive response to the results achieved by ARCIC I will serve as an impetus to further study, in the same fraternal spirit that has characterized this dialogue in the past, of the points of divergence remaining, as well as of those other questions which must be taken into account if the unity willed by Christ for His disciples is to be restored.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Before setting forth for further study those areas of the Final Report which do not satisfy fully certain elements of Catholic doctrine and which thereby prevent our speaking of the attainment of substantial agreement, it seems only right and just to mention some other areas in which notable progress has been achieved by those responsible for the redaction of the Report. The members of the Commission have obviously given a great deal of time, prayer, and reflection to the themes which they were asked to study together and they are owed an expression of gratitude and appreciation for the manner in which they carried out their mandate.

It is in respect of *Eucharistic Doctrine* that the members of the Commission were able to achieve the most notable progress toward a consensus. Together they affirm "that the eucharist is a sacrifice in the sacramental sense, provided that it is made clear that this is not a repetition of the historical sacrifice" [(EE 5)]¹; and areas of agreement are also evident in respect of the real presence of Christ: "Before the eucharistic prayer to the question 'what is it?', the believer answers 'it is bread'. After the eucharistic prayer to the same question he answers: 'it is truly the body of Christ, the bread of life'" (EE 6). The Catholic Church rejoices that such common affirmations have become possible. Still, as will be indicated further on, it looks for certain clarifications which will assure that these affirmations are understood in a way that conforms to Catholic doctrine.

With regard to *Ministry and Ordination*, the distinction between the priesthood common to all the baptized and the ordained priesthood is explicitly acknowledged: "These are two distinct realities which relate each in its own way to the high priesthood of Christ" (MOE 2). The ordained ministry "is not an extension of the common Christian priesthood but belongs to another realm of the gifts of the Spirit" (MO 13). Ordination is described as a "sacramental act" (MO 15) and the ordained ministry as being an essential element of the Church: "The New Testament shows that the ministerial office played an essential part in the life of the Church in the first century and we believe that a ministry of this kind is part of God's design for his people" (MOE 4). Moreover, "it is only the ordained minister who presides at the eucharist" (MOE 12). These are all matters of significant consensus and of particular importance for the future development of Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue.

On both the Eucharist and the Ordained Ministry, the *sacramental* understanding of the Church is affirmed, to the

exclusion of any purely 'congregational' presentation of Christianity. The members of the Commission are seen as speaking together out of a continuum of faith and practice which has its roots in the New Testament and has developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout Christian history.

When it comes to the question of *Authority in the Church*, it must be noted that the Final Report makes no claim to substantial agreement. The most that has been achieved is a certain convergence, which is but a first step along the path that seeks consensus as a prelude to unity. Yet even in this respect, there are certain signs of convergence that do indeed open the way to further progress in the future. As the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith pointed out in its *Observations* of 1982 on the Final Report: "It is necessary to underline the importance of the fact that Anglicans recognize that a 'primacy of the Bishop of Rome is not contrary to the New Testament, and is a part of God's purpose regarding the Church's unity and catholicity'" (cfr. *A II*; 7). If this is taken with the statement made by His Grace Archbishop Runcie during his visit to Pope John Paul II in 1989 and with reference to infallibility in *A II*, n. 29, then one can rejoice in the fact that centuries of antagonism have given way, to reasoned dialogue and theological reflection undertaken together.

Despite these very consoling areas of agreement or convergence on questions that are of great importance for the faith of the Catholic Church, it seems clear that there are still other areas that are essential to Catholic doctrine on which complete agreement or even at times convergence has eluded the Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission.

In fact, the Report itself acknowledges that there are such matters and this is particularly true in respect of the Catholic dogma of Papal infallibility, to which reference has just been made. In the section *Authority in the Church II*, it is stated that "in spite of our agreement over the need for a universal primacy in a united Church, Anglicans do not accept the guaranteed possession of such a gift of divine assistance in judgement necessarily attached to the office of the Bishop of Rome by virtue of which his formal decisions can be known to be assured before their reception by the faithful" (n. 31).

The Final Report recalls the conditions set down for an infallible definition by the First Vatican Council, but goes on to give a different understanding of this question on the part of Catholics and Anglicans: "When it is plain that these conditions have been fulfilled, Roman Catholics conclude that the judgement is preserved from error and the proposition true. If the proposition proposed for assent were not manifestly a legitimate interpretation of biblical faith and in line with orthodox tradition, Anglicans would think it a duty to reserve the reception of the definition for study and discussion" (n. 29).

Similarly, the Commission has not been able to record any real consensus on the Marian dogmas. For while *A II* 30 indicates that "Catholics and Anglicans can agree in much that the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption are designed to affirm", under the same heading it is stated: "The dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption raise a special problem for those Anglicans who do not consider that the precise definitions given by these dogmas are sufficiently supported by Scripture. For many Anglicans the teaching authority of the Bishop of Rome, independent of a Council, is not recommended by the fact that through it these Marian doctrines were proclaimed as dogmas binding on all the faithful. Anglicans would also ask whether, in any future union between our two Churches, they would be required to subscribe to such dogmatic statements".

This statement and several others in the Final Report illustrate the need for much further study to be done in respect of the petrine ministry in the Church. The following quotations from the Final Report, while reflecting the more positive approach of Anglicans in recent times in this connection, also illustrate the reservations that still exist on the part of the Anglican community:

– "Much Anglican objection has been directed against the manner of the exercise and particular claims of the Roman primacy rather than against universal primacy as such" (*AE* 8);

– "Relations between our two communions in the past have not encouraged reflection by Anglicans on the positive significance of the Roman primacy in the life of the universal Church. Nonetheless, from time to time Anglican theologians have affirmed that, in changed circumstances, it might be possible for the Churches of the Anglican Communion to recognize the development of the Roman primacy as a gift of divine providence – in other words, as an effect of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Church" (*A II* 13);

– "In spite of our agreement over the need for a universal primate in a united Church, Anglicans do not accept the guaranteed possession of such a gift of divine assistance in judgements necessarily attached to the office of the Bishop of Rome by virtue of which his formal decisions can be known to be wholly assured before their reception by the faithful" (*A II* 31).

With regard to the magisterial authority of the Church, there is a very positive presentation in *Authority in the Church II*, 24-27. We read in fact that "at certain moments the Church can in matters of essential doctrine make a decisive judgement which becomes part of its permanent witness ... The purpose of this service cannot be to add to the content of revelation, but to recall and emphasize some important truth". A clear statement is made, moreover, in *Authority in*

the Church: Elucidation n. 3, to the effect that reception of a defined truth by the People of God “does not create truth nor legitimize the decision”. But as has been just noted with regard to the primacy, it would seem that elsewhere the Final Report sees the “assent of the faithful” as required for the recognition that a doctrinal decision of the Pope or of an Ecumenical Council is immune from error (*A II*, 27 and 31). For the Catholic Church, the certain knowledge of any defined truth is not guaranteed by the reception of the faithful that such is in conformity with Scripture and Tradition, but by the authoritative definition itself on the part of the authentic teachers.

Dealing with the authority of the Ecumenical Councils (*AE* 3), ARCIC I describes the scope of doctrinal definitions by the Councils as being concerned with “fundamental doctrines” or “central truths of salvation”. The Catholic Church believes that the Councils or the Pope, even acting alone, are able to teach, if necessary in a definitive way, within the range of all truth revealed by God.

A further point of difficulty emerges in the position taken regarding the relationship of the ecclesial character of a Christian community and its incorporation into Catholic communion through union with the See of Rome. With references to *Lumen gentium* 8 and *Unitatis redintegratio* 13, which are not fully accurate, the Report states: “The Second Vatican Council allows it to be said that a church out of communion with the Roman See may lack nothing from the viewpoint of the Roman Catholic Church except that it does not belong to the visible manifestation of full Christian communion which is maintained in the Roman Catholic Church” (*A II* 12). It is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that a church outside of communion with the Roman Pontiff lacks more than just the visible manifestation of unity with the Church of Christ which subsists in the Roman Catholic Church.

The manner in which ARCIC I writes in respect of the role of Peter among the twelve – ‘special position’ (*A II* 3), ‘a position of special importance’ (*A II* 5) – does not express the fullness of the Catholic faith in this regard. The dogmatic definition of the First Vatican Council declares that the primacy of the Bishop of Rome belongs to the divine structure of the Church; the Bishop of Rome inherits the primacy from Peter who received it “immediately and directly” from Christ (DS 3055; cfr. *Lumen gentium* 22). From a Catholic viewpoint, it is not possible then to accept the interpretation given in *Authority in the Church II* concerning the *Jus divinum* of the First Vatican Council, namely that it “need not to be taken to imply the universal primacy as a permanent institution was directly founded by Jesus during his life on earth” (n. 11). The Catholic Church sees rather in the primacy of the successors of Peter something positively intended by God and deriving from the will and institution of Jesus Christ.

As is obvious, despite considerable convergence in this regard, full agreement on the nature and the significance of the Roman primacy has not been reached. As Pope John Paul II pointed out during his visit to the World Council of Churches on June 12, 1984, the petrine ministry must be discussed “in all frankness and friendship”, because of the importance of this from the Catholic point of view and the difficulty that it poses for other Christians.

It is clear, as already affirmed, that on the questions of *Eucharist* and the *Ordained Ministry*, greater progress has been made. There are, however, certain statements and formulations in respect of these doctrines that would need greater clarification from the Catholic point of view.

With regard to the *Eucharist*, the faith of the Catholic Church would be even more clearly reflected in the Final Report if the following points were to be explicitly affirmed:

– that in the Eucharist, the Church, doing what Christ commanded His Apostles to do at the Last Supper, makes present the sacrifice of Calvary. This would complete, without contradicting it, the statement made in the Final Report, affirming that the Eucharist does not repeat the sacrifice of Christ, nor add to it (*E* 5; *EE* 5);

– that the sacrifice of Christ is made present with all its effects, thus affirming the propitiatory nature of the eucharistic sacrifice, which can be applied also to the deceased. For Catholics “the whole Church” must include the dead. The prayer for the dead is to be found in all the Canons of the Mass, and the propitiatory character of the Mass as the sacrifice of Christ that may be offered for the living and the dead, including a particular dead person, is part of the Catholic faith.

The affirmations that the Eucharist is “the Lord’s real gift of himself to his Church” (*E* 8) and that the bread and wine “become” the body and blood of Christ (*EE* 6) can certainly be interpreted in conformity with Catholic faith. They are insufficient, however, to remove all ambiguity regarding the mode of the real presence which is due to a substantial change in the elements. The Catholic Church holds that Christ in the Eucharist makes himself present sacramentally and substantially when under the species of bread and wine these earthly realities are changed into the reality of his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.

On the question of the reservation of the Eucharist, the statement that there are those who “find any kind of adoration of Christ in the reserved sacrament unacceptable” (*EE* 9), creates concern from the Roman Catholic point of view. This section of *Eucharistic Doctrine: Elucidations*, seeks to allay any such doubts, but one remains with the conviction that this is an area in which real consensus between Anglicans and Roman Catholics is lacking.

Similarly, in respect of the *Ordained Ministry*, the Final Report would be helped if the following were made clearer:

– that only a validly ordained priest can be the minister who, in the person of Christ, brings into being the sacrament of the Eucharist. He not only recites the narrative of the institution of the Last Supper, pronouncing the

words of consecration and imploring the Father to send the Holy Spirit to effect through them the transformation of the gifts, but in so doing offers sacramentally the redemptive sacrifice of Christ;

– that it was Christ himself who instituted the sacrament of Orders as the rite which confers the priesthood of the New Covenant. This would complete the significant statement made in *Ministry and Ordination* 13, that in the Eucharist the ordained minister “is seen to stand in sacramental relation to what Christ himself did in offering his own sacrifice”. This clarification would seem all the more important in view of the fact that the ARCIC document does not refer to the *character* of priestly ordination which implies a configuration to the priesthood of Christ. The character of priestly ordination is central to the Catholic understanding of the distinction between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the baptized. It is moreover important for the recognition of Holy Orders as a sacrament instituted by Christ, and not therefore a simple ecclesiastical institution.

The Commission itself has, in *Ministry and Ordination; Elucidation 5*, referred to the developments within the Anglican Communion after the setting up of ARCIC I, in connection with the ordination of women. The Final Report states that the members of the Commission believe “that the principles upon which its doctrinal agreement rests are not affected by such ordinations; for it was concerned with the origin and nature of the ordained ministry and not with the question who can or who cannot be ordained”. The view of the Catholic Church in this matter has been expressed in an exchange of correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury, in which it is made clear that the question of the subject of ordination is linked with the nature of the sacrament of Holy Orders. Differences in this connection must therefore affect the agreement reached on *Ministry and Ordination*.

The question of Apostolic Succession is not dealt with directly in the Final Report of ARCIC I, but it is referred to in *Ministry and Ordination* 16, and in *Ministry and Ordination; Elucidation 4*. The essential features of “what is meant in our two traditions by ordination in the apostolic succession” are set down in *MO* 16 and the statement is made that “because they (the ordaining bishops) are entrusted with the oversight of other churches, this participation in his ordination signifies that this new bishop and his church are within the communion of churches. Moreover, because they are representatives of their churches in fidelity to the teaching and mission of the apostles and are members of the episcopal college, their participation also ensures the historical continuity of this church with the apostolic church and its bishop with the original apostolic ministry”. These statements stand in need of further clarification from the Catholic perspective. The Catholic Church recognizes in the apostolic succession both an unbroken line of episcopal ordination from Christ through the apostles down through the centuries to the bishops of today and an uninterrupted continuity in Christian doctrine from Christ to those today who teach in union with the College of Bishops and its head, the Successor of Peter. As *Lumen gentium* 20 affirms, the unbroken lines of episcopal succession and apostolic teaching stand in causal relationship to each other: “Among those various ministries which, as tradition witnesses, were exercised in the Church from the earliest times, the chief place belongs to the office of those who, appointed to the episcopate in a sequence running back to the beginning, are the ones who pass on the apostolic seed. Thus, as Saint Irenaeus testifies, through those who were appointed bishops by the apostles, and through their successors down to our own time, the apostolic tradition is manifested and preserved throughout the world.” This question, then, lies at the very heart of the ecumenical discussion and touches vitally all the themes dealt with by ARCIC I: the reality of the Eucharist, the sacramentality of the ministerial priesthood, the nature of the Roman primacy.

A final word seems necessary in relation to the attitude of the Final Report to the interpretation of Scripture in so far as the role of Tradition is concerned. It is true that this subject was not treated specifically by the Commission, yet there are statements made which cannot be allowed to pass without comment in this reply. As is well known, the Catholic doctrine affirms that the historicalcritical method is not sufficient for the interpretation of Scripture. Such interpretation cannot be separated from the living Tradition of the Church which receives the message of Scripture. The Final Report seems to ignore this when dealing with the interpretation of the petrine texts of the New Testament, for it states that they “do not offer sufficient basis” on which to establish the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. In the same way, the Final Report introduces with reference to the infallible judgements of the Bishop of Rome the need for such decisions to be “manifestly a legitimate interpretation of biblical faith and in line with orthodox tradition” (*A II* 29). Certainly, there is need, then, for further study concerning Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium and their interrelationship since, according to Catholic teaching, Christ has given to his Church full authority to continue, with the uninterrupted and efficacious assistance of the Holy Spirit, “to preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it and make it more widely known” (*Dei Verbum* 9-10).

Conclusion: The above observations are not intended in any way to diminish appreciation for the important work done by ARCIC I, but rather to illustrate areas within the matters dealt with by the Final Report about which further clarification or study is required before it can be said that the statements made in the Final Report correspond fully to Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist and on Ordained Ministry.

The quite remarkable progress that has been made in respect of Authority in the Church indicates just how essential this question is for the future of the Roman Catholic-Anglican dialogue. The value of any consensus reached in regard to other matters will to a large extent depend on the authority of the body which eventually endorses them.

The objection may be made that this reply does not sufficiently follow the ecumenical method, by which agreement

is sought step by step, rather than in full agreement at the first attempt. It must, however, be remembered that the Roman Catholic Church was asked to give a clear answer to the question: are the agreements contained in this Report consonant with the faith of the Catholic Church? What was asked for was not a simple evaluation of an ecumenical study, but an official response as to the identity of the various statements with the faith of the Church.

It is sincerely hoped that this reply will contribute to the continued dialogue between Anglicans and Catholics in the spirit of the Common Declaration made between Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert Runcie during the visit of the latter to Rome in 1989. There it is stated: "We here solemnly recommit ourselves and those we represent to the restoration of visible unity and full ecclesial communion in the confidence that to seek anything else would be to betray Our Lord's intention for the unity of his people".

[*L'Osservatore Romano* 50 (1220) 16 December 1991, 21f and *Information Service* 82 (1993/I) 47-51]

ANNEX

CARDINAL CASSIDY'S LETTER TO THE CO-CHAIRMEN OF ARCIC-II

As you are well aware, in 1982 the members of ARCIC I presented to the authorities that had given them their mandate a Final Report on the three doctrinal questions that had been the subject of their discussions, namely the Eucharist, the Ordained Ministry and Authority in the Church.

The Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion were asked to examine this Report and to reply officially to the conclusions reached by the ARCIC, giving in particular a judgement on how precisely those conclusions reflected the faith respectively of the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion.

The Lambeth Conference of 1988 considered the Final Report and came to the conclusion that the Report's statements on Eucharistic Doctrine, Ministry and Ordination and their Elucidations were "consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans". The Conference also found the statement on Authority in the Church to be a "firm basis for the direction and agenda of the continuing dialogue on this question".

Over the past years there has been wide consultation within the Catholic Church on this document and on the official response to be given in respect of its conclusions. The preparation of this response was finally entrusted by Pope John Paul II to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which had issued the first official Catholic reaction to the Report in 1982, and the Congregation has had a determining role in drawing up the formal reply which I am now forwarding to you. You will note that the main points of the Observations of 1982 are incorporated in this text. At the same time, I wish to state that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has carried out the task entrusted to it in consultation with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which for its part has contributed notably to the final text, which has now been approved by His Holiness Pope John Paul II. This collaboration is to be seen against the background of the Decree *Pastor Bonus* which states that, since the questions dealt with by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity by their very nature often touch on matters of faith, the Council has to proceed in strict relationship with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, especially when it comes to drafting documents or statements for publication (*Pastor Bonus*, Art. 137, § 1).

I wish to take this opportunity of paying tribute to the hard work and dedication of the members of ARCIC I. The long period of time necessary for this response on the part of the Catholic Church witnesses to the serious manner in which this task was undertaken and indicates just how arduous is the quest for unity in faith. Those not involved in ecumenical dialogue often underestimate the complexity and the difficulty of such work.

With the expression of my esteem and very best wishes, I remain,

Fraternally yours in Christ,
EDWARD IDRIS Cardinal CASSIDY
President

ENDNOTES

1. Here is the list of abbreviations used in the text: *E*: Eucharistic Doctrine. *EE* Eucharistic Doctrine, Elucidations. *A* Authority in the Church I. *A II* Authority in the Church II. *AE* Authority in the Church, Elucidations, *MO* Ministry and Ordination. *MOE* Ministry and Ordination, Elucidation.