

Meeting of Catholic Bishops Conference Committee for Christian Unity with Diocesan Ecumenical Representatives

June 17th-18th 2011

Focolare Centre, Welwyn Garden City

The meeting opened with Msgr Andrew Faley acting as chairman in the absence of Bishop Michael Evans who is still gravely ill.

Representatives were given a summary of Archbishop Bernard Longley's report on the Dept. of Dialogue & Unity's work to the Low Week meeting of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales. It was pointed out that Judaism is accorded a special place, separate from other religions, in dialogue with the Catholic Church by having a dedicated Catholic –Jewish Relations Committee with Archbishop Kevin McDonald as the Catholic Co-Chairman. Dialogue with non-believers is also being sought although this is more problematical in identifying individuals who are both representative and willing to enter into dialogue with the Church. At a universal level this dialogue is under the auspices of the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Culture.

English ARC

This commission had met on 1st/2nd March 2011 at Launde Abbey, an Anglican retreat centre in Leicestershire, and included a pastoral visit to St. Phillip's in Leicester which has a thriving inter-faith centre. The Ordinariate had been discussed. The body is now reviewing its purpose, membership and outreach under the co-chairmanship of Archbishop Bernard Longley and the Anglican Bishop of Truro. David Jackson presented the CBCEW's document *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger* on inter-religious dialogue.

It was reported that the CoE's Committee for Christian Unity is having a difficult time to justify its purpose and determine future direction. Paul Avis is retiring as general secretary. Colin Podmore from the CoE has been appointed secretary and is regarded as a pragmatist.

British Methodist-Roman Catholic Committee

This body had met on May 3rd/4th 2011 without either of the co-chairs. It continued to pursue the dialogue on sacramentality.

URC/RC Dialogue

Anne Doyle, a Catholic member of this dialogue, presented a brief report. This dialogue is coming to the end of its 5-year period and Anne explained the difficulty in generating a report of this first phase. The disparate nature of the two traditions in which the Catholic tradition has a clear and extensive body of doctrinal teaching expressed through a clear teaching authority while the URC has very little in the way of ecclesial statements to draw upon was something which was quite marked in the dialogue process. Other emerging themes were the doctrine of the human person and culture. Matters of contention were sacraments in general, baptism and ordination in particular, clergy/laity divide and the eucharist.

Catholic-Oriental Orthodox Forum

The forum had met in May 2011 and members were keen to develop a pragmatic relationship. It was agreed to publish a digest of agreed Christological statements and make them more widely known. Bishop Angelos of the Coptic Church in Britain and Archbishop Kevin McDonald are the co-chairs.

ARCIC III

The first meeting of the new phase of ARCIC in May 2011 went well. A communiqué was issued:

The Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission has completed the first meeting of its new phase (ARCIC III) at the Monastery of Bose in northern Italy (May 17-27, 2011). The Commission, chaired by the Most Reverend David Moxon (Anglican Archbishop of the New Zealand Dioceses) and the Most Reverend Bernard Longley (Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham) comprises eighteen theologians from a wide range of backgrounds across the world¹. In response to the Programme set forth by Pope Benedict and Archbishop Rowan Williams in their 2006 Common Declaration, discussions have focussed on the interrelated issues: *the Church as Communion, local and universal*, and *how in communion the local and universal Church come to discern right ethical teaching*. The Programme also required the Commission to re-examine how the “commitment to the common goal of the restoration of complete communion in faith and sacramental life”² is to be understood and pursued today, and to present the work of ARCIC II in its entirety with appropriate commentaries to assist its reception.

In addressing these issues, the Commission has devoted time to introducing its new members to the history and achievements of ARCIC, and has benefited from the shared experience of those who were members of previous phases. Members have worked both in plenary sessions and in small groups, developing plans to address the tasks that derive from its mandate.

Over the coming years, the Commission will examine how the abiding goal of the dialogues is currently perceived and understood, and how that goal will inform the entire dialogue process.

In considering the method that ARCIC III will use, the Commission was particularly helped by the approach of ‘receptive ecumenism’³, which seeks to make ecumenical progress by learning from our

¹ For a list of members, see appendix.

² 1996 Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey.

³ cf *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a way for Contemporary Ecumenism.*, ed. Paul D. Murray., OUP 2008

partner, rather than simply asking our partner to learn from us. Receptive ecumenism is more about self-examination and inner conversion than convincing the other; Anglicans and Roman Catholics can help each other grow in faith, life and witness to Christ if they are open to being transformed by God's grace mediated through each other. ARCIC is committed to modelling the receptive ecumenism it advocates. It intends to find ways to consult with the members of its churches at many levels as its work matures.

ARCIC III will present all the documents of ARCIC II, together with elucidations based upon responses already received, for reception by the relevant authorities of both communions, and for study at all levels of the churches' life.

ARCIC III has decided that it will address the two principal topics together in a single document. It has drawn up a plan for its work that views the Church above all in the light of its rootedness in Christ through the Paschal Mystery. This focus on Jesus Christ, human and divine, gives the Commission a creative way to view the relationship between the local and universal in communion. The Commission will seek to develop a theological understanding of the human person, human society, and the new life of grace in Christ. This will provide a basis from which to explore how right ethical teaching is determined at universal and local levels. ARCIC will base this study firmly in scripture, tradition and reason, and draw on the previous work of the Commission. It will analyze some particular questions to elucidate how our two Communion's approach moral decision making, and how areas of tension for Anglicans and Roman Catholics might be resolved by learning from the other. ARCIC III does this conscious of the fact that what unites us is greater than what divides us.

The work of the Commission members has been enriched by sharing in the liturgical and spiritual life of the sisters and brothers of the Monastery of Bose, whose ecumenical mission and constant prayer have provided a supportive context for ARCIC. They were encouraged by visits from the bishop of the local diocese and by the bishop responsible for ecumenism for the northern Italian dioceses. The Commission will now organize papers and continue its work along the lines it has proposed, in preparation for its next meeting in 2012.

The Holy See has downgraded this dialogue to the same level as the bilateral dialogues with other Reformation traditions. ARCIC has been one of the longest running bilateral dialogues and in the early days there were great hopes that significant fruit would be borne out of two traditions that were seemingly already quite close. It was observed that the IARCCUM Agreed Statement had virtually disappeared from the ecumenical agenda. This was considered a great loss as it contained practical suggestions.

Other Reports

A joint meeting of the CoE and Catholic Bishops had taken place on 4th April at Southwark Catholic Cathedral. This was the fourth such meeting. Subjects discussed were the Ordinariate (put on the agenda at the request of the CoE Bishops), Christians in the Holy Land, the Big Society, Chaplaincy and Inter-religious Dialogue. No further meetings of the joint episcopate have been scheduled.

Andrew Faley had attended the February 2011 meeting of the CoE General Synod as an official observer, he reported:

Christian Initiation/Baptism

In response to a motion from the Liverpool diocesan synod, the Synod passed the following resolution: "That this Synod request the House of Bishops to ask the Liturgical Commission to prepare material to supplement the Common Worship Initiation provision, including additional forms of the Decision, the Prayer over the Water and the Commission, expressed in accessible

language.' The resolution is expected to be considered by the House of Bishops at its next meeting, in May.

Anglican-Roman Catholic relations

The Bishop of Guildford, the Rt Revd Christopher Hill (Chair of the Council for Christian Unity, CCU), and Bishop George Stack, on behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, gave a presentation. This was followed by a debate on a motion from the CCU based on the report from the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC): *Mary - Grace and Hope in Christ*, published in 2005. Synod voted in favour of the motion which welcomed the dialogue between the two churches; noted the strengths and weaknesses of the ARCIC report and the areas for further work identified in the briefing paper from the Faith and Order Advisory Group; and encouraged study of the report.

A discussion on the impact of the erection of the Ordinariate at local level took place. The general view was that it had not been in existence long enough to ascertain any discernible effect on ecumenical relations. The opportunity was taken to express concern at the lack of ecumenical sensitivity by some of the Vatican's actions. One diocesan representative expressed regret at the Holy See's insistence that the Archbishop of Liverpool withdraw the invitation he had made to the Methodist Conference offering the Metropolitan Cathedral as a venue for ordinations to the Methodist ministry to take place during the annual meeting of the Conference. The Methodists were most understanding about the withdrawal and were subsequently accommodated in Chester Anglican Cathedral. The Vatican had acted on a delation it received from person(s) unknown. Bishop, now Archbishop, George Stack had been called to account by the Vatican following a critical unofficial web article relating to his address to the CoE General Synod on the ARCIC document on Mary.

Papal Visit Legacy

The first anniversary of the papal visit is to be commemorated ecumenically by a national Mass in Westminster Cathedral.

Other results of the visit include resources under the title *Some Definite Purpose*, social/pastoral outreach involving other religions, resourcing for the new translation of the missal, instigation of the Year of Catholic Education and *New Wind in Our Sails* as the theme for Home Mission Sunday.

A prayer is to be composed, involving CTE and Cytun, with encouragement given for it to be recited on a regular monthly basis.

Reflections On the Current State of Ecumenism

The second half of the meeting was given over to a reflection in the form of a dialogue between Msgr Andrew Faley, who is stepping down as AGS of the CBCEW and ending his national ecumenical work, and Rev Dr David Cornick, General Secretary of CTE.

DC We have reached an interesting stage in the ecumenical journey as we are now at a time of change and transition. In Walter Kasper's *Harvesting the Fruits* he mentions the

end of the beginning. There is a new awareness of theological issues and the difficulty of the dividing issues. In this country there is now a rich diversity of cultures and a difference is apparent between Christians steeped in a western post-enlightenment culture and Christians from African or Asian background and culture. Divisions also occur across traditions around the issues of sexuality and gender equality. The start of ARCIC III is good news especially its adoption of receptive ecumenism as its methodology. Spiritual/receptive ecumenism allows each tradition to take responsibility. In England the Anglican/Methodist Covenant is pushing at the boundaries in shared ministry and working. The Anglican/URC dialogue is also bearing fruit. People are more realistic about the possibilities of visible unity.

AF It may be recalled that the *Called to be One* process did not bear fruit. Archbishop Derek Worlock distinguished between need and structures, need should be identified before establishing structures. This distinction was illustrated in the review of CTBI five years or so ago and the restructured instrument that has emerged to serve the need. CTE consistently puts need before structure. We can be celebratory about how the Catholic Church has structured and committed itself to Christian unity. We need to be less provincial so that dialogue occurs across dioceses and into provinces along the lines of the Welsh model. We are tasked to pursue the faith and order agenda and continue dialogues at the local level with our partners.

DC There is a frustration at what level the bilateral statements have been agreed and to what extent they have reached the local level. In other words, there is a question of reception of agreed statements. There are now 34 denominations in membership with CTE and Christianity is becoming more diversified especially in the major cities. The picture has drastically transformed. There is a discernible trend across the traditions to the theological right (conservatism) and a definite decline in liberal Protestantism. Many of the traditions rooted in ethnic minorities were enthusiastic about the papal visit, they saw the papacy taking a clear definite line and they felt the Pope was also speaking for them as they lack visible and vocal leadership in the public forum. The challenge is how to share the ecumenical space in the light of these shifting trends. Despite the appearance of vibrant ethnic minority churches membership numbers overall are still declining. The unchurched, as opposed to the dechurched, are all the while increasing. All this in the context of no money and shrinking resources.

AF Catholic, Orthodox and Black Minority Churches are growing closer in terms of theology and/or ethical issues. There is a need to embrace a wider range of traditions than simply the broad Protestant tradition in the ecumenical space which is currently dominated by liberal Protestantism.

DC We need to hear more strongly the Catholic voice. At the Nottingham Faith & Order Conference in 1964, which encouraged local ecumenical experiments, there was a call to churches to unite by 1980. This was backed by the Anglican Bishop Tompkins who had been involved with the WCC. However, Bishop Moorman, an Anglican official observer at Vatican II with knowledge of the then draft of the Council's decree on ecumenism, urged the conference to wait. The Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism

was promulgated a few months after the Nottingham Conference. If the Conference had heeded Bishop Moorman the shape of ecumenism in this country would have been different. Protestants need to hear the Catholic voice with help from Catholics.

AF How do Catholics resource the ecumenical space and secure it? We need to guard against the lowest common theological denominator for mission and unity.

DC There is a shift from structural/ecclesial to relational boundaries, from an organisational basis to a spontaneous one. Christians and churches do things together naturally which is a mark of success and maturity. A lot goes on below the radar. Cumbria is about to become the first ecumenical county [where the churches, apart from the Catholic Church, are aligning their own organisational boundaries to coincide with one another]. The ecumenical instruments do not control ecumenism but are its heralds. Initiatives often come from agencies, secular and otherwise, rather than churches.

Any Other Business

This was Msgr Andrew Faley's last meeting and he was thanked for all the valuable input he had made over the last seven years.

The next CCU/DER's meeting is 13th/14th January 2012 at the Focolare Centre, Welwyn Garden City.