

The Reception of ARCIC I and II in Europe and Discerning the Strategy and Agenda for ARCIC III

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Abstract

This essay derives from an address to the inaugural meeting of the third major phase of work of the Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) at the Monastery of Bose, Italy in May 2011. ARCIC is the official organ for formal bilateral dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. The methods devised by successive generations of ARCIC theologians have been highly influential in shaping the work of other bilateral ecumenical dialogues. The first half of the essay reviews and comments on the reception to-date within Europe of the first and second major phases of ARCIC's work: ARCIC I (1971-1982) and ARCIC II (1987-2005). The second half then turns to identify the appropriate strategy for this crucial new phase of work, ARCIC III (2011-present). Throughout the essay clear recognition is given to the fact that ARCIC III is operating in a very different ecumenical context and in relation to a different set of challenges to those which prevailed when the classical ARCIC strategy was devised and as such requires a fresh strategic approach. The approach to contemporary ecumenical engagement and learning known as Receptive Ecumenism is presented here as providing this needed fresh strategy.

Key words: Anglican – ARCIC – ecumenism – method - reception - Receptive Ecumenism
- Roman Catholic - strategy

Introduction

Following the historic meeting between the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey, and Pope Paul VI in March 1966 in the heady days after the Second Vatican Council, it was announced that a formal bilateral dialogue process would be established between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church: the Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). The 1967 Preparatory Committee identified the primary objective as being ‘to further reconciliation between Anglicans and Roman Catholics as also to promote the wider unity of all Christians in their common Lord’.¹ In pursuit of this aim there have been three major phases in ARCIC’s history: ARCIC I (1970-1981), ARCIC II (1983-2005), and ARCIC III (2011-present).² This essay derives from an address to the inaugural meeting of the third such major phase of ARCIC’s work at the Monastery of Bose, Italy in May 2011.³ Whilst some of the specific asides and informalities appropriate to a spoken address have been removed, the basic format and substance of the address as delivered have been largely preserved rather than any sustained attempt having been made to extend the basic argument into a full and exhaustive treatment of the topic.⁴

1 *The Malta Report* (2), available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19680102_malta-report_en.html.

2 Most of the official documents and declarations are available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index_anglican-comm.htm.

3 I am grateful to my former Research Assistant, Mr Vasile A. Condrea, for helping to make this paper ready for publication in this form. With that, prior to delivery in May 2011, I appreciate advice and assistance variously received through conversations and exchanges with: the Right Rev. Donald Bolen, David Carter, Christiane Davisters, the Rev. Prof. Dr. Adelbert Denaux, Prof. Dr. Peter DeMey, the Right Rev. Christopher Hill, Mgr Mark Langham, the Most Rev. Kevin McDonald, His Eminence Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, the Rev. Canon Dr Alvyn Pettersen, Dame Dr Mary Tanner, the Rev. Neil Vigers, and Rev. Mark Woodruff. Most recently I appreciate the insightful comments of the two anonymous reviewers prior to publication.

4 For more extended treatments of the constructive proposal at issue here, see Paul D. Murray, ‘Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving Gifts for Our Needs’, *Louvain Studies*, 33 (2008), pp. 30-45; also Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, (Oxford: Oxford

The purpose of the presentation is twofold. Firstly, drawing upon the considerable number of essays and other extant materials on the subject, this address summarises and reflects on some of the key material pertaining to the European reception of the first two phases of ARCIC.⁵ Gaining perspective in this way on some of the successes and limitations of ARCIC I and ARCIC II leads naturally to reflecting on the very different ecumenical context and challenges facing ARCIC III. Consequently, having reflected in the first half of the address on the reception to-date of previous phases of ARCIC activity, culminating in recognition of the game-changing nature of more recent ecumenical challenges and the need this poses for a methodological gear-change,⁶ the second half complements this by reflecting on the appropriate strategy and agenda for ARCIC III. In doing so the address draws heavily on the work in Receptive Ecumenism that has been underway for a number of years now and advocates this as particularly fitting, and even urgent, for the methodology of

University Press, 2008), particularly Murray, ‘Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning: Establishing the Agenda’, pp. 5-25. More recently, see Murray, ‘ARCIC III: Recognising the Need for an Ecumenical Gear-Change’, *One in Christ*, 45 (2011), pp. 200-211; also Murray, ‘Introducing Receptive Ecumenism’, *The Ecumenist: A Journal of Theology, Culture, and Society* 51 (2014), pp. 1-8; and Murray, ‘Ecumenical Methodology’, in Paul McPartlan and Geoffrey Wainwright (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Ecumenism*, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), *forthcoming*. See also Paul D. Murray and Andrea L. Murray, ‘The Roots, Range, and Reach of Receptive Ecumenism’ in Clive Barrett (ed.), *Unity in Process: Reflections on Ecumenism* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 2012), pp. 79-94; and <https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/projects/receptivecumenism/>.

5 Of particular significance here are: Denaux, ‘The Anglican–Roman Catholic Dialogue and Its Reception’, unpublished paper; also Tanner, ‘From Vatican II to Mississauga – Lessons in Receptive Ecumenical Learning from the Anglican–Roman Catholic Bilateral’, in Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-70; also Bolen, ‘Receptive Ecumenism and Recent Initiatives in the Catholic Church’s Dialogues with the Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council’, in *ibid.*, pp. 271-84. The material of this first half of the essay all now needs to be read in the context of the comprehensive study edited and in large part written by Charles Sherlock, with the lead assistance of Nicholas Sagovsky and Adelbert Denaux, together with some members of ARCIC III, *Looking Forward to a Church Fully Reconciled: The Anglican Roman Catholic Commission 1983-2005* (ARCIC II), *forthcoming*.

6 See Murray, ‘ARCIC III: Recognising the Need for an Ecumenical Gear-Change’.

ARCIC III.⁷ This presentation of the address does not seek to provide exhaustive systematic articulation and analysis of Receptive Ecumenism and all of its implications – such can be found elsewhere – but rather records and documents the basic case for Receptive Ecumenism as presented to the May 2011 Bose meeting and so makes it fully available for further critical scrutiny and development. On the basis of this presentation Receptive Ecumenism was subsequently embraced as constituting a key methodological resource for ARCIC III.⁸

The basic fact of ARCIC III operating in a fundamentally different ecumenical context to that which characterised earlier phases of ARCIC activity, particularly so ARCIC I, was clear in the minds of all members of the Commission as we gathered in Bose in May 2011. Not only were we aware that the ARCIC process had been stalled for a number of years on account of significant new and still unresolved issues between the communions, in the run-in to departure for Bose we had each had the question starkly posed to us on a number of occasions, ‘What exactly is the point?’. As one Durham colleague had expressed it, ‘Surely anything that an ARCIC-style process can achieve has already been achieved?’ The point was pressed home: ‘Anyway, quite apart from the fact that both the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and some of the more evangelical elements within Anglicanism have each shown themselves to be less than enthusiastic about those supposed achievements, issues around women’s ordination and human sexuality surely now make it impossible to continue pursuing the originating ARCIC concern of seeking to overcome causes of division in the service of achieving full structural and sacramental unity in the foreseeable future.’ The ARCIC documents may well be, as Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor described them, ‘Money in the bank’, but the interest accruing to them appears to

7 See the works cited in n. 4 here. For an excellent essay analysing Receptive Ecumenism, see Paul Avis, ‘Are We Receiving “Receptive Ecumenism”?’ *Ecclesiology*, 8.2 (2012), pp. 223-34.

8 See the official communique arising from the first meeting of ARCIC III in May 2011, held at the Monastery of Bose in Italy, available at: http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/catholic/arcic/docs/pdf/ARCIC_III_Bose_2011.pdf.

have dropped significantly in recent years and the cost of the remaining work has seemingly been placed beyond the reach of current ecclesial economies.⁹

This is a crunch issue that cannot be ducked. The very considerable financial, temporal, and intellectual resource that a process such as ARCIC III requires simply cannot be justified and would be best directed in other ways unless it is possible to provide a clear answer to these concerns. Establishing and resourcing ARCIC III for the mere sake of appearance, symbolism, and good relations, important though all that be, would be utterly insufficient and disordered. Matters of symbolism and good relation can be met more effectively in alternative ways, as demonstrated most dramatically by the attention given to the September 2010 visit to Lambeth Palace of Pope Benedict XVI and the English, Welsh, and Scottish Catholic bishops, followed later that day by the remarkable service at Westminster Abbey jointly presided over by Pope Benedict and Archbishop Williams. For the enterprise of ARCIC III to be justified, the members of the Commission need to be clear as to what ARCIC III's own real, substantive work is – every bit as real and substantive as the work of ARCIC I and II, albeit likely very different – and what shifts of strategy might be required in support of this work.

1. *The European Reception of ARCIC I and II*

There is now a considerable body of literature dealing with theological reception in general and ecumenical reception in particular.¹⁰ Whilst ultimately rooted in the living transmission

9 See HE Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, 'ARCIC: Dead in the Water or Money in the Bank', presented as the Seventh Richard Stewart Memorial Lecture at Worth Abbey, 29th October 2009, available at:

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=15071>.

10 Of the extensive body of literature on theological reception, of particular note are: Yves Congar, 'Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality', John Griffiths (trans.), in Giuseppe Alberigo and Anton Weiler (eds.), *Church History: Election–Consensus–Reception, Concilium*, 77 (1972), pp. 43-68; Thomas P. Rausch, 'Reception Past and Present', *Theological Studies*, 47 (1986), pp. 497-508; also Riccardo Larini, 'Texts and Contexts–Hermeneutical Reflections on Receptive Ecumenism', in Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning, op. cit.*, pp. 89-101. On ecumenical reception in particular, see William G. Rusch, *Reception: An Ecumenical Opportunity*, (Philadelphia,

of the Tradition of which St Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 11:23 (cf. 1 Cor. 11:2), it is accepted that the more formal concept of theological reception has its origins in the synodal procedures of the ante-Nicene church; and it relates to the generalisable process whereby one or more (local) churches actively embrace into their understanding and practice of the faith an initiative – either conceptual or practical – that originates in another local church.¹¹

Leaving aside the debasement of this at various subsequent points in the tradition into the mere passive acceptance at lower levels of church life of matters already firmly decided upon at higher levels, we might view this notion of reception – and specifically ecumenical reception – as applying in three ways to the ARCIC process and related documents. First is the question of what examples can be identified of ecumenical reception occurring within the ARCIC process itself for and by the various members, with subsequent evidence in the resulting texts. Let us call this ‘initiating reception’. Second is the question as to the degree of similar ecumenical reception that can be traced as having been stimulated ‘on-the-ground’ in the lives of the respective churches as a result of the ARCIC documents. Let us call this ‘local reception’. Third is the question as to the degree of authoritatively declared reception that the ARCIC documents met with from appropriate church bodies. This we can call ‘formal reception’.

As regards ‘initiating reception’, I would identify such examples as: 1) the way in which the category of *anamnesis* enabled a stronger Anglican recognition/reception of Catholic understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass (ARCIC, *Eucharistic Doctrine*, 1971); 2) the way in which clarification of the different operative grammars of justification at the time of the Reformation and subsequently has enabled both communions to understand in a coherent fashion that God’s transforming, saving action in Christ and the Spirit, which is received and continually re-received entirely as gracious gift whilst we are still sinners, is really effective in drawing us into the holiness of God (ARCIC, *Salvation and the Church*, 1987); 3) the way in which Catholic understanding of the catholicity of the church, the relationship between the college of bishops and the papacy, and the role of the laity in

Penn.: Fortress Press, 1988); and *id.*, *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity*, (Grand Rapids, Mich. and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2007).

11 See ‘By “reception”, I understand ... the process by means of which a church (body) truly takes over as its own a resolution that it did not originate in regard to itself, and acknowledges the measure it promulgates as a rule applicable to its own life.’ Congar, ‘Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality’, p. 45.

decision-making, have each been challenged to consider what might be appropriately received, or at least learned, from relevant Anglican understanding and practice (ARCIC, *The Gift of Authority*, 1999); 4) correlatively, and not uncontentiously, the way in which Anglican participants in the context of the universality of the church found themselves considering the papacy in fresh light and even contemplating a role for the Bishop of Rome prior to full structural and sacramental unity (ARCIC, *The Gift of Authority*, 1999); 5) perhaps most contentiously, the way in which Anglican understanding of the Roman Marian dogmas was cast in new light (ARCIC, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, 2005).

As regards ‘local reception’ – or at least consideration – of the fruits of the ARCIC dialogues, probably the most obvious and direct expression of this, particularly during the work of ARCIC I, was the widespread occurrence of ecumenical study groups of laity and clergy meeting to study the documents together, frequently with the aid of published study guides. The widespread nature of such groups during the first phase of ARCIC’s work was both an indication of the energy and high hopes that were unleashed following the formal entry of the Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement at Vatican II and a key means by which such hopes were further intensified, leading in many quarters to a strong expectation for the restoration of full communion in the imminent future. In turn, the fact that such expectations were disappointed is generally cited as a key factor in the subsequent cooling of local ecumenical energy – at least in its structural form – and its diversion, or development, on behalf of many local ecumenical enthusiasts into a concern for more directly practical cooperation in prayer, spirituality, and mission. Study guides have continued to be produced, most recently in relation to *Mary: Hope and Grace in Christ* (2005), and also in relation to *The Gift of Authority* (1999) and *The Church as Communion* (1991). But the last ARCIC document and associated study guide to receive widespread attention at the level of local study groups and the like was *Salvation and the Church* in 1987. Subsequent documents may have been the subject of diocesan-wide lectures and study days but there was typically little by way of parochial study groups. The general assumption was that there was insufficient interest and sense of relevance at that level to warrant such initiatives.

Another particularly obvious indication of ‘local reception’ or lack thereof can be found in newspaper and other media reports, both ecclesial and secular. For example, in relation to *The Gift of Authority* in 1999, the Anglican Communion Office performed an invaluable service in collating a comprehensive compendium of such media reports. Here the reported attitudes range, as one might expect, from strong appreciation, through more

cautious and questioning appreciation, to outright hostility from some within the evangelical wing of European Anglicanism. In the latter case what was already regarded as a default Catholic-bias within the entire ARCIC process was viewed as coming to its nadir in the positive attention accorded to the papacy in *The Gift of Authority*. Akin to this but at a more scholarly level is the plethora of essays and publications produced in response to the various ARCIC documents. Whilst expressed in considerably more sophisticated terms, an analogous range of opinion may be found.

In turn related to the scholarly reception of ARCIC documents is the use made of them in seminary and university teaching. Whilst this most obviously happens in courses devoted to the theology and practice of ecumenism,¹² it is not uncommon, perhaps now even normal, for courses on ecclesiology routinely to draw upon the ARCIC documents, as also other key ecumenical texts; as, similarly, courses on soteriology frequently engage the matter of justification through the lens of ecumenical dialogue.

Perhaps the most formal expression of ‘local reception’ – albeit lacking authoritative status – are the various national Anglican-Roman Catholic (ARC) commissions and consultations that meet on a regular basis to pursue analogous matters to those of ARCIC, to consider the ARCIC documents and to seek to promote local practical initiatives. Significant here are ARC USA, English ARC, French ARC, and Belgian ARC, with occasional joint meetings having taken place between the latter.¹³ Also notable here, although significantly

12 For example, unique amongst the English Roman Catholic seminaries, for over 15 years Ushaw College, Durham shared a common undergraduate framework with Cranmer Hall (Church of England) and the Wesley Study Centre (Methodist), at the heart of which was a year-long double module on ‘Church and Ministry in an Ecumenical Context’ that was co-taught and co-studied by staff and students of the three institutions. For its own part, for more than 20 years Oscott College (traditionally the Roman Catholic seminary for the Archdiocese of Birmingham but now with a considerably broader geographic reach) ran a highly successful intensive week-long residential course on the Eucharist in conjunction with the ecumenical seminary, the Queen’s Foundation.

13 On the work of Belgian ARC, see David Carter, *One in Christ*, 32 (1996), pp. 173-8; also Adelbert Denaux, ‘Ecumenical Contacts between Belgium and England since the Malines Conversations’, in Denaux & J. A. Dick (eds.), *From Malines to ARCIC. The Malines Conversations Commemorated*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press-Peeters, 1997), p. 96; and Pierre Parré, *Rapprochements Anglicans-catholiques aux XIX^{me} et XX^{me} siècles*, (Mechelen: Service de Presse de l’Archevêché, 1996). I am grateful to David Carter for these last two references.

pre-dating the ARCIC process, are various examples of Belgian Catholic dioceses that are twinned with Church of England dioceses.¹⁴

In contrast, the least formal and somewhat intangible but nevertheless widespread form of ‘local reception’ relates to the fundamentally altered relations that now routinely exist on the ground between Anglican and Catholic laity, clergy, and entire parishes relative to as little as forty years ago. Indeed it is notable that this continues to be the case regardless of more recent developments in the Anglican Communion that have introduced new formal difficulties in Anglican – Roman Catholic relations. Whilst few to whom this pertains would know much, if anything, about ARCIC and related documents, this fundamental shift in ecclesial climate, habits, and relations probably owes more to ARCIC than to any other single initiative. If the documents are largely unread, the climate they have made possible has seeped into the subliminal subconscious of the churches, reinforced by powerful symbolic events such as the aforementioned September 2010 visit of Pope Benedict XVI and the English, Welsh, and Scottish Catholic bishops to Lambeth Palace.

As regards ‘official reception’, I here content myself with providing the briefest of summaries. From the outset it is important to note clearly that the structures and corresponding processes for formal reception are somewhat different across the two communions. Within the Church of England,¹⁵ during ARCIC I the Faith and Order Advisory Group (FOAG) prepared background papers on each document for the relevant General Synod debates, which in turn led to comments being taken into consideration in ARCIC’s own ‘Elucidations’ documents of 1979 and 1981 respectively. Following the publication of the ill-named *Final Report* in 1981, the Church of England embarked upon a thorough process of consultation. The matter was referred to each diocesan synod for discussion and subsequent referred to deanery synods for similar discussion. The fruits of these discussions, together with a report prepared by FOAG, were in turn taken to debate in General Synod, following which a further report was produced that formed the Church of England’s submission to the 1988 Lambeth Conference along with similar responses from all the Provinces of the Communion. Resolution 8 of that Conference judged that whilst the statements on Eucharist (1971) and Ministry (1973) together with their Elucidations (1979)

14 See Denaux, ‘Ecumenical Contacts between Belgium and England since the Malines Conversations’, pp. 103-107.

15 I am grateful to Mary Tanner for some of what follows.

could rightly, as the *Final Report* claimed, be viewed as being ‘consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans’, further work was necessary in relation to ‘Authority in the Church’ (1976 and 1981).¹⁶

Within the Roman Catholic Church,¹⁷ *The Final Report* was sent to all bishops’ conferences requesting considered evaluation. Almost simultaneously, although completely independently, and well prior to any serious evaluation taking place by bishops’ conferences, the CDF, alarmed by the claim in *The Final Report* to having achieved ‘substantial agreement’ and the concern that this be taken as implying ‘full and adequate’ agreement, issued a set of cautious *Observations* identifying areas where further work was needed.¹⁸ Although the formal *Response of the Holy See* was not issued by the CDF until 1991, it was not substantively different from the 1982 *Observations*.¹⁹

With regard to the subsequent story of the formal, or at least high-level if still non-authoritative, reception of ARCIC I and, in turn, ARCIC II, a few things are worthy of note. First, in as much as ARCIC II’s 1994 *Clarifications of Certain Aspects of the Agreed Statements on Eucharist and Ministry of the First Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission* were articulated in response to the concerns raised by the CDF in their 1982

16 See www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e_arcic_angresponse.html. For further on this and the correlative Roman Catholic response, see Adelbert Denaux, ‘The Anglican Catholic Dialogue and Its Reception’, pp. 7-10.

17 Further, in addition to Adelbert Denaux’s unpublished paper cited above, see Edward Yarnold, ‘Roman Catholic Responses to ARCIC I and II’, in *Reconciliation: Essays in Honour of Michael Hurley*, ed. Oliver Rafferty, (Dublin: Columba Press, 1993), pp. 32-52; also Archbishop Kevin McDonald, ‘The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: Ecumenical Dialogue’, in *The Legacy of John Paul II*, ed. Michael A. Hayes and Gerald O’Collins (London: Burns and Oates, 2008), pp. 110-28.

18 The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Observations on The Final Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*. For the subsequent respective Responses of the English and Welsh, and French Bishops’ Conferences, see Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I*, (London: Catholic Media Office, 1985); and La Conférence Épiscopale Française, *Évaluation du Rapport final de l’ARCIC*, in *La Documentation Catholique*, 67 (1985), pp. 867-876. I am grateful to Adelbert Denaux for the latter reference.

19 CDF, *Response of the Holy See to the Final Report of the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission, 1982 with a statement from the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales*, Do 609, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1991).

Observations and 1991 *Response*, these *Clarifications* can properly be viewed as being part of the on-going process of the reception of the ARCIC I documents – as can the ARCIC II documents more generally. Indeed, Cardinal Cassidy, the then President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), could say of the *Clarifications* that they had ‘thrown new light on the questions concerning Eucharist and ministry in the *Final Report* of ARCIC I’ and that in these specific regards ‘no further study would seem to be required at this stage’.²⁰

With regard to the specific reception of ARCIC II documents, there is considerably less to be said given that neither communion has, as yet, set-up a formal process of scrutiny. That said, the practice within the Church of England of conducting consultation through the Faith and Order Advisory Group (now Faith and Order Commission: FOAC) and producing related briefing papers for discussion at General Synod has continued.²¹ With this, responses have been sought – with a mixed level of success – from the various Anglican Provinces on the work of ARCIC II.²²

Also worthy of note and operating at a near-similar level of formality are the various commissioned commentaries on the dialogue documents that can be found in the *Information Service* of the PCPCU and which prior to publication are first checked and approved by the CDF. Perhaps the clearest example of *de facto* formal Roman Catholic reception-by-use of an ARCIC document is the way in which the substantive claims of ARCIC II’s *Salvation and the Church* (1987) were subsumed into the 1999 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, together with the associated joint statement agreed with the CDF

20 Cited in Archbishop Kevin McDonald, ‘The Legacy of Pope John Paul II: Ecumenical Dialogue’.

21 See the Council for Christian Unity, ‘Briefing Paper by the Faith and Order Advisory Group (FOAG) on the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) Report *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, GS 1818. With thanks to Neil Vigers. A similar range of attitudes is indicated as was earlier noted as featuring in popular media reports of *The Gift of Authority*, from enthusiasm to hostility and positions between.

22 See ‘Provincial Responses to the Work of the Second Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission: An Interim Report’, 25 JUN/Sat/14.30/2. With thanks to Neil Vigers.

that was signed by Cardinal Edward Cassidy of the PCPCU on behalf of the Catholic Church.²³

Analogously, although clearly operating at a different level, the extent to which ARCIC documents are drawn upon as authoritative sources in the 1998 joint teaching document of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, *One Bread One Body*, is significant as, too, is the use made of these documents in the 2001 response of the House of Bishops of the Church of England, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity*.²⁴ Similarly notable is the way in which the Church of England has variously drawn upon the ARCIC documents in other bilateral processes in which it has been engaged: for example, the *Meissen Agreement* with the Evangelical Church of Germany quotes *The Church as Communion*; the *Porvoo Agreement* between the Anglican Churches of Britain and Ireland and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches use quotes from the documents of both ARCIC I and ARCIC II.²⁵ This practice was in turn continued, although with somewhat mixed outcomes, in the way in which the Anglican Covenant deployed a series of ARCIC citations in relation to proposed intra-Anglican developments.

Finally, a key formal strategy for the widespread – 'local' – reception of the ARCIC documents has been the establishment of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) flowing out of the year 2000 Mississauga

23 See Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI and London: Eerdmans and CTS, 2000/2001), available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. For the *Official Common Statement* and the associated *Annex to the Official Common Statement*, see respectively: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-official-statement_en.html; and http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-annex_en.html.

24 The Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, *One Bread One Body: A Teaching Document on the Eucharist in the Life of the Church, and the Establishment of General Norms in Sacramental Sharing*, (London/Dublin: CTS/Veritas, 1998); The House of Bishops of the Church of England, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity: An Occasional Paper of the House of Bishops of the Church of England*, GS Misc 632, (London: Church House Publishing, 2001).

25 With thanks to Mary Tanner for this suggestion.

conference of Roman Catholic and Anglican bishops jointly convened by Archbishop George Carey and Cardinal Edward Cassidy. The core dual purpose of IARCCUM is: to harvest and seek to promote understanding of the achievements of ARCIC; and to propose realisable practical initiatives in support of these achievements.²⁶

For all of this, it remains the case that in neither communion has there yet been the effective will to endorse the ARCIC documents and their undoubted achievements formally and without qualification. On the one hand, even if there were the prerequisite cohesive will within Anglicanism to endorse the documents authoritatively on behalf of the entire Communion, it is not clear currently that there is any appropriate and effective means of so doing. On the other hand, whilst the Roman Catholic Church does indeed have such a means in the CDF and the papacy, those organs have thus far shown themselves unwilling to give such positive endorsement.

Were this to be the total extent of the not inconsiderable challenges that ARCIC III confronts, it might be assumed – incorrectly I would suggest – that the essential, continuing task for ARCIC III is two-fold: firstly, to keep returning with ever more refined focus and sophistication of argument to the task of showing that any outstanding objections to the previous work of ARCIC can be more than satisfactorily met; secondly, to apply renewed energy to the task of promoting effective local reception of the various ARCIC developments and proposals. Whilst, however, each of these tasks continues to be essential, neither of them, whether singly or jointly, is sufficient to respond to the newer challenges presented by substantive differences over women’s ordination and the appropriate pastoral care and potential ordination of people of same-sex orientation who are in committed and sexually active relationships. Here we have two ecumenical “game-changers”.

Regardless of what one personally thinks on these matters, and regardless even of the fact that there are Roman Catholic theologians who are exploring how Roman Catholic understanding may, with integrity, develop in these regards, it is clear that formal Catholic understanding is not going to be able to embrace such proposed developments in the foreseeable future. As such, we can confidently say that these are going to remain

26 See the International Anglican – Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission, *Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 Years of Anglican – Roman Catholic Dialogue* (London: SPCK, 2007), available at https://iarccum.org/archive/IARCCUM_2000-2010/2007_iarccum_growing_together_en.pdf.

ecumenical obstacles for the medium-long term in such a fashion as makes any hopes for the restoration of full structural and sacramental unity in the short-medium term utterly unrealistic. Indeed, in relation to women's ordination §57 of ARCIC II's *Church as Communion* accepts as much.

We are, then, in a fundamentally changed context to that to which ARCIC I and, to a lesser extent, ARCIC II responded and therefore, I suggest, we need a correlatively changed understanding of the appropriate strategy for ARCIC III. It is into this context that Receptive Ecumenism seeks to speak and, indeed, in explicit relation to this context and its challenges that Receptive Ecumenism was devised as showing an appropriate way forwards.²⁷

Prior to turning to engage the distinctive thinking of Receptive Ecumenism, we need recognise that there is both continuity and change at work here. Charles Sherlock helpfully identifies how as early as 1994 with the document *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*, ARCIC II was already beginning to recognise the limits of seeking, as much ARCIC work had previously done, to 'get behind' historic divisions by showing them to be premised either upon mistaken understandings or upon failure to appreciate that a theological truth can legitimately be expressed in variant ways.²⁸ By contrast ARCIC II members were coming to see that some areas of continuing substantive disagreement cannot readily be overcome by seeking to 'get behind' them to a level of supposedly underlying agreement. As they did so they came to see the need for an historical view of tradition to be complemented by a forwards-oriented eschatological view. Sherlock identifies this "'future into the present'" orientation' as having come to fullest development in *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2005).

As is detailed in the next section of this essay, Receptive Ecumenism seeks to take similarly seriously that we are responsible not only for the tradition's past but for its present

27 For a more detailed discussion of the specific challenges facing ARCIC III and the way in which the proposed strategy of Receptive Ecumenism both builds upon key aspects of the various strategies progressively developed by ARCIC I and ARCIC II and, in turn, represents a fresh development of these strategies, see Murray, 'ARCIC III: Recognising the Need for an Ecumenical Gear-Change', particularly pp. 202 & 205-7.

28 See Charles Sherlock, 'The Journey – An Anglican Perspective', in *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ: the Text with Commentaries and Study Guide*, ed. Donald Bolen and Gregory Cameron (London & New York: Continuum, 2006), pp. 204-31.

and future also. The integrity of Christian tradition is not a static, fixed integrity simply awaiting retrieval but a dynamic integrity awaiting discernment. Receptive Ecumenism seeks to serve this discerning and this future-oriented understanding of Christian tradition by asking not simply how the other is to be properly understood but what can be properly learned from the other in a manner that can help one's own tradition. This is both to continue the lines of travel of the ARCIC story and to turn a corner in how it is taken forwards with fresh resolve.

2. Discerning the Strategy for ARCIC III – Receptive Ecumenism in Focus

As the foregoing suggests, Receptive Ecumenism is the name that has come to be given to an approach to contemporary ecumenical engagement that has been gestating within the ecumenical movement over a long period and which has had explicit, structured focus placed on it by a series of projects operating out of the Centre for Catholic Studies within Durham University's Department of Theology and Religion. The central aim of Receptive Ecumenism is to take seriously *both* the reality and the specific challenges of the contemporary ecumenical moment as here described (wherein we face issues of substantive difference that do not lend themselves to easy resolution) *and* the abiding and absolutely non-negotiable need for the Christian churches precisely in this situation to continue to walk the way of conversion towards more visible structural and sacramental unity. The aim is to seek after an appropriate ecumenical ethic and strategy for living between the times: for living now orientated upon the promise of and calling to being made one in the Trinitarian life of God; for learning how to 'lean-in' to the Spirit who is the foretaste and agent of the Kingdom, who will shape and conform us so that we can bear imaginative, attractive, transforming witness to the Kingdom in the here and now.

In service of this aim, Receptive Ecumenism represents a remarkably simple but far-reaching strategy which essentially seeks to draw out a value that has been at work, to some extent at least, in all good ecumenical encounter and to place it centre-stage as the appropriate organising principle for contemporary ecumenism. The basic principle is that considerable further ecumenical progress is indeed possible, but only if each of the traditions, both singly and jointly, makes a clear, programmatic shift from prioritising the question, 'What do our various others first need to learn from us?', to asking instead, 'What do *we* need to learn and what can *we* learn – or receive – with integrity from *our* others?'. It

represents, then, a John F. Kennedy-style reversal: ‘Ask not what your ecumenical others need to learn, or receive, from your tradition. . . . Ask rather what your own tradition needs to learn and can learn with integrity from your ecumenical others.’

The natural tendency is to put it the other way around: to assume that it is the ‘others’ who need to do the learning and ‘we’ the teaching. One might be forgiven for thinking that it is particularly clear that the Catholic Church plays that game on occasion but if we are honest we all come to the ecumenical table assuming that life would just be that bit easier if the ‘others’, whoever the ‘others’ might be, were a little more like ‘us’ and assuming that ‘we’ basically have it right. In many respects this is all perfectly natural. It represents a due recognition and conviction of our own tradition’s particular giftedness. After all, if we did not each greatly value where we are then we would no longer stay in our respective places. But if this recognition, good and proper in itself, is not to become sterile then it needs complementing with an equal recognition of our need to become more fully, more richly what we are and a sense of our inability to do this of our own resources.

All of this calls for a re-conceiving of the ecumenical terrain: rather than approaching it as an intractably problem-strewn field, Receptive Ecumenism views the interim ecumenical space in which we currently find ourselves as a field of open possibilities; a privileged space for journeying towards our calling and destiny by the only means possible – through maturation and continuing conversion on all sides; a privileged space for learning from each how to be more fully, more freely what we already are. To alter the image, ecumenism too easily tends towards a matter of ‘getting the best china tea-service out’; of wanting others to see us and to understand us in the best possible light – in a light, if we are going to be honest, in which we do not even generally see ourselves. In contrast, Receptive Ecumenism starts from the somewhat different assumption that for all our respective gifts, each of us, each of our communities and traditions, is wounded and in need of healing and continuing conversion. Receptive Ecumenism, we might say, represents the ecumenism of the ‘wounded hands’ rather than the ‘best china’. It is about being prepared to show these wounds to each other, knowing that we cannot save ourselves, asking our ecumenical others to minister to us in our need from their gifts.

As exemplars of this I think of Rowan Williams’s generous and unusual invitation to ecumenical partners during his years as Archbishop of Canterbury to speak into Anglican difficulties. This was, perhaps, most notably the case when Cardinal Kasper was invited on various occasions to offer comment on these matters from the perspective of the PCPCU specifically and the Holy See more generally. Similarly, although in cooler emotional and

political waters, there is John Paul II's remarkable invitation in his 1995 encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, to theologians and church leaders in other traditions to help re-imagine the understanding and performance of papacy so that it might once again become the focus for unity rather than the continuing cause of division that it currently is.²⁹

As all of this suggests, in some ways Receptive Ecumenism builds upon the more familiar notion of Spiritual Ecumenism by explicitly reinforcing the communal, structural, and institutional levels at which Spiritual Ecumenism, as originally conceived by Paul Couturier, authentically applies.³⁰ Too often the practice of Spiritual Ecumenism tends to be limited to asking after the ways in which spirituality and personal theological understanding, and collective spiritual and liturgical practices, might be enriched across the traditions. Receptive Ecumenism seeks to complement this important work and to recover the more radical and wide-ranging originating intent behind Spiritual Ecumenism by typically focusing on such things as respective systems of decision-making and asking how difficulties in one's own practice and understanding can be helped by learning from best practice and understanding in other traditions. To the degree that Receptive Ecumenism takes this path it is intentionally organisational and ecclesiological in focus.³¹

Further, it is to be noted that these are questions that can be asked by all church-going people, at all levels, and in relation to all dimensions of church life. They can be asked, for example, at the level of the structures and processes of decision-making within particular congregations, as also equally at regional, national and international levels. For example, the third major expression of the Durham Receptive Ecumenism projects has taken

29 Pope John Paul II (25 May 1995), '*Ut Unum Sint*. On Commitment to Ecumenism' (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1995), §§95-6, available at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.htm.

30 See Mark Woodruff (ed.), *The Unity of Christians: The Vision of Paul Couturier*, being a special edition of *The Messenger of the Catholic League*, 280 (October 2003 – February 2004); also Cardinal Walter Kasper, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2006). The latter handbook tends to focus more on the personal and spiritual aspects of Spiritual Ecumenism rather than on the collective and genuinely ecclesial dimensions that Couturier also saw as being in view.

31 It is, of course, entirely possible to pursue a receptive ecumenical mode of working in relation to other core doctrinal areas than the directly ecclesiological. E.g. for application to the doctrine of justification, see Murray, 'St. Paul and Ecumenism: Justification and All That', *New Blackfriars* (March 2010), pp. 142-70.

the form of a multi-year project involving all of the major Christian denominational groupings in the North East of England collaborating in asking this question of themselves in relation to matters of governance and finance, leadership and ministry, and learning and formation and at all three equivalent levels of diocese, deanery, and parish. The conviction is that wherever there is in practice a felt itch, it can be scratched through appropriate receptive learning, whether at the level of international structures or parochial practice.

As such, Receptive Ecumenism might be viewed as advocating a process of collective, ecclesial examination of conscience before the face of the other which complements and extends the practices of individual examination of conscience in which we are rather better versed. And as with all examination of conscience, for all the challenge associated with it, the conviction is that it will lead not to our diminution but our greater flourishing. In Receptive Ecumenism we come before each other in a spirit of expectant and penitent joy: recognising that we are on holy ground in each other's company; recognising that we are called to be fed there by the real ecclesial presence of Christ in the other so that the particular ecclesial presence of Christ in our own tradition may be expanded and enriched; recognising, most fundamentally, that we come to each other in our need; recognising that, for all the undoubted gifts in our respective ecclesial traditions, we all fall short of the glory of God; recognising that each of our traditions has areas of difficulty representing ways in which we are each respectively called to grow.

As all of this suggests, Receptive Ecumenism is a strange kind of ecumenism for it seeks to further unity not by directly seeking to overcome areas of disagreement *between* traditions, vital though that be, but rather by addressing difficulties *within* traditions and the possibilities that are open for respective enrichment and deepening through learning *across* traditions. The dual conviction is that without this mode of self-critical receptivity, no real further ecumenical progress will be possible, whereas with such a disposition considerable things are already possible which, if realised, will in turn open up further as yet unforeseeable possibilities. That is, this way of growth and continual communal conversion is here viewed as *the* way, indeed the only way, of the deeper enfolding of each in the other and of all together in the Trinitarian communion of God.

Following this, as regards how Receptive Ecumenism relates to the achievements of the bilateral processes such as ARCIC, the first thing to reiterate is that Receptive Ecumenism is intentionally in service of the traditional concern to strive towards full structural and sacramental unity and to seek to overcome all that stands in the way of such unity. Receptive Ecumenism cannot be reconciled long-term to anything less than full unity

and, hence, would be wrongly understood as simply settling for dealing with more peripheral matters now that that central task has become so difficult. On the contrary, Receptive Ecumenism seeks to bring to the forefront the only attitude that can enable long-term progress towards unity: that of focussed self-critical receptivity. This is a strategy of engagement and advancement, not one of retreat and defeat.

Beyond this, not only does Receptive Ecumenism bring to the forefront a value and disposition more generally implicit within bilateral processes such as ARCIC, it explicitly draws upon the many achievements of the bilateral processes by utilising, as a second step, the work there conducted in the process of analysing how creative progress might actually be made in relation to the various desired aspects of receptive ecumenical learning. For example, in the context of assessing whether Roman Catholicism could, with integrity, fruitfully and practically receive from Anglicanism in relation to modes of decision-making, *The Gift of Authority* and other ARCIC documents and the literature-base pertaining to them become an invaluable resource. In other words, the work of the bilaterals is an invaluable component in the receptive ecumenical process in any given context.

In turn, with regard to how Receptive Ecumenism might, for its part, take the ARCIC agenda and strategy forwards in distinctive ways, perhaps most notable here is the way in which Receptive Ecumenism foregoes the strategy of seeking directly after agreement between traditions, for the time being at least, and seeks instead for more piecemeal – unilateral even – self-critical learning within and across traditions.³² This move is partly strategic, reflecting the recognition that on many fronts agreement is simply not possible *pro tempore*. Beyond such strategic pragmatism, however, it reflects the conviction that simply coming to agreement on new formulae of faith does not, in itself, go far enough and may even become a substitute for the deeper levels of expansively self-critical learning

32 Here Receptive Ecumenism can be viewed as both directly building upon and further developing the approach that was taken in the two closing sections of ARCIC II's *The Gift of Authority*, which turn to ask after the outstanding issues for Anglicans and Roman Catholics respectively with the theology and practice of the other tradition in relation to matters of authority. Whilst these sections do not yet explicitly ask the characteristically receptive ecumenical question as to what might be learned from the other in a way that could helpfully address difficulties within one's own tradition – instead they remain at the level of identifying what continues to appear difficult for one's own tradition in the other tradition – they do, nevertheless, allow for each tradition to be explicitly subjected to the criticisms and questions of the other tradition.

that must also take place for real progress to occur. In contrast, the strategy at issue in Receptive Ecumenism of a somewhat *ad hoc* yet systematically tested receptive learning process has, it is assumed, the potential to take each tradition with integrity to a different place than at present; one resulting from the creative expansion of current logic rather than its mere clarification, extrapolation and repetition.

To bring all of this down to focus in relation to the two substantive issues on which ARCIC III has been charged to work – as to the appropriate relationship between the local and the universal church and as to the character of sound moral discernment – the clear implication of adopting a receptive ecumenical mode of working is that we should not, in the first instance, approach these issues as matters on which our immediate aim is to seek common mind and practice. A common mind is precisely what we cannot achieve directly in these instances. Nor should we approach them simply as matters concerning which the key thing is for us to be able to get the other to understand what we find difficult about them in the hope that we might get them to become more like us and so resolve our difference. Rather, we should approach them as matters concerning which we recognise there to be real tensions already within our own respective traditions;³³ tensions that we cannot resolve from our own resources and for which we need the help of our others: indeed, tensions which, quite likely, we cannot even properly appreciate and articulate without such help from our others.

This is ecumenism conceived not, primarily, as a task of convincing the other but as a task of conversion; a task of asking how in the face of the other we are being called to conversion out of ways that are frustrating our flourishing and into a greater abundance of life, a deeper quality of catholicity. In this context, whilst it might not be appropriate for us to start out with a presenting concern to teach the other, it is absolutely right and proper that we start out by subjecting ourselves to listening to what the other finds difficult and thwarted in us so that that might speak into and open out our own resident, if perhaps sometimes suppressed and contained, concerns. The conviction is that we will meet each other not because we have set out after a particular, foreseeable commonly agreed and envisaged destination but because we are each walking, albeit very differently, the way of

33 For an important document in this regard, see The Anglican – Roman Catholic Theological Consultation in the U.S.A., ‘Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment: Seeking a Unified Moral Witness, (2014), available at: <https://iarccum.org/archive/ARC-USA/arcusa-2014-statement.pdf>.

conversion – indeed ministering to each other in our respective walking of the way of conversion – and will therefore find ourselves coming together in the total truth of Christ into which we are each being differently formed.

Conclusion

All of Christian existence is lived *in via*, on the way: in between the times of sure initiation and promissory beginnings on the one hand and of accomplished fulfilment on the other hand. Modern ecumenical existence is lived between the times in a more concentrated sense: between the times of enthusiastic hope-filled beginnings and early achievements on the one hand and of fully achieved structural and sacramental communion in the communion of the Holy Trinity on the other hand. From its establishment and throughout its remarkable achievements ARCIC has been something of a benchmark for formal ecumenical progress and potential. The methods pioneered by ARCIC have exerted great influence on other bilateral dialogue processes. As ARCIC now lives through its own sense of shifting between the times – of confronting the limits of modes of operation that had previously been so fruitful – it is vital that the members of ARCIC III continue to engage this challenge head-on with a view to asking afresh and seeking to model anew what it means to live between these times; what the appropriate ethic is for leaning into and living out of and towards the future to which the churches believe and trust themselves to be called.