

# Celebrating Catholic Ecumenism

Marking the 50th anniversary of  
*Unitatis Redintegratio*

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Vespers sermon and seminar  
Leeds Cathedral, 11 November 2014



The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales –  
Department for Dialogue and Unity

West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council



Leading figures from Catholic, Anglican and Free Church traditions came together in Leeds on 11th November 2014 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Decree on Ecumenism that was promulgated by the Second Vatican Council in November 1964.

Four hundred people attended a service of Ecumenical Vespers led by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Liverpool, including His Eminence Vincent Nicholls, Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. They heard a sermon by the Most Revd. Sir David Moxon, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the Holy See. **(PAGE 3)**

The service was preceded by a seminar, organised by the Revd Dr Clive Barrett for West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council (WYEC), and chaired by the Rt Revd Tony Robinson, Bishop of Pontefract. Speakers included:

- the Revd. Dr. David Cornick, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, who put *Unitatis Redintegratio* into its historical context. **(PAGE 9)**
- Professor Paul D. Murray, Professor of Systematic Theology and Dean & Director of the Centre for Catholic Studies, Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University, who spoke of Receptive Ecumenism, the “ecumenism of wounded hands”. **(PAGE 15)**
- the Revd. Dr. Cally Hammond, Dean of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, who stressed the need to trust God's providence in the ecumenical journey. **(PAGE 22)**
- the Revd. Kenneth G. Howcroft, President of the Methodist Conference 2014-2015 and former Methodist Representative to the Holy See, who challenged the audience to read *Unitatis Redintegratio* through a mirror, as it were, replacing “Roman Catholic Church” with the name of their own denomination. **(PAGE 28)**



**Sermon by David Moxon, given at Leeds Cathedral to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

Your Eminence, Your grace, brothers and Sisters in Christ, I am from New Zealand, and this is the first time that I have been to Leeds and therefore the first time to be present in this beautiful Cathedral. Gathered here tonight, at an ecumenical vespers hosted by Anglican and Catholics my mind goes back to one of the first occasions where I attended such a liturgy. It was our inaugural ecumenical Ash Wednesday service in Hamilton, later to become a regular feature of New Zealand church life. We were very pleased to advertise this ground breaking ecumenical event through the press, but you can imagine our surprise when we saw it advertised in the sporting column. . . apparently the cub reporter thought that “The imposition of ashes” was something to do with cricket!

However we have come a long way since then, and there have now been over seventeen such liturgies each year in all the cathedrals and major Anglican and Catholic churches of those islands.

Another ecumenical story from my part of the world which continues to stir me in a very different way, comes from the islands of Papua New Guinea. As the Japanese invasion of Papua began, the Catholic and Anglican missionaries, clergy and religious present throughout the country were encouraged to leave and repatriate. Many of them were involved in hospitals, schools, religious houses parishes and other mission stations. Most of them decided to stay. How could they leave their patients and students, their parishioners and friends and colleagues to such an unknown future? They chose to share the fate with the people of the land no matter what the future brought. Well, most of them were martyred not long afterwards, often by being beheaded, sometimes together, and sometimes they were buried in common graves. It is often said that as they faced death together they were not thinking that they were dying for a different cause, or belonging to a different faith. They were dying for the Kingdom of God, and in the faith of Christ crucified and risen. One Faith , one Lord, one Baptism.

This is what pope Francis in our time, over 50 years later, describes as an Ecumenism of blood. He said to the Armenian patriarch “In our time the blood of innumerable Christians has become a seed of unity”.

How is the Pope able to say this? How is it possible to speak of this kind of spiritual intimacy between us as communions who are not yet fully reconciled, where there are still divisions? The Pope is able to speak this way because of the great decree on ecumenism from the Second Vatican Council that we commemorate tonight, *Unitatis Redintegratio*. The council had said then:

“It is right and salutary to recognise the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood”.

The Council made it clear that all Christians baptised in the name of the trinity shared the same generic faith, and were members of the one church of Christ. The Council declared

“It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the church as a whole, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful”.

And, in another place,

“Whenever the Sacrament of baptism is duly administered as Our Lord instituted it, and is received with the right dispositions, a person is truly incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ, and reborn to a sharing of the divine life”.

Perhaps this is why in 1966, Pope Paul the Sixth, the Pope who saw the Council through After Pope John the Twenty Third inaugurated it, was able to say to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, at St Paul’s Outside the Walls basilica when he welcomed him to Rome for the first time:

“You come to this house where you are not a stranger and that you have the right to think of as also your own. It is joy for us to open the doors and with the doors our hearts. Certainly St Gregory the Great and St Augustine look down on us from heaven and give us their benediction”.

And so the martyrs of Papua New Guinea died in the same way, for the same faith, and in the same Spirit. Which is why out of all the countries of the world, it is in Papua New Guinea that there have been the most passionate and comprehensive moves to express the unity we share in the baptism of the triune God. There are covenants between dioceses, there are shared missions, there are exchanges of gifts and resources, unparalleled in the rest of the world. In Papua the pressure is greatest for more progress towards the oneness that Christ prayed for more than anywhere else. They died for the same faith together and they call for the opportunity to live for the same faith together.

Against the backdrop however there is an even deeper impulse towards the oneness that we are called to, and that is expressed in tonight's reading from the Epistle to the Colossians [Colossians 1.15-21]. Christ is described there as reconciling all things to himself, making peace by the shedding of his blood on the cross. This is a remarkable thing to say, to say that everywhere, in every time and place there is a sacred energy which seeks reconciliation and unity in the diversity of the world. It goes on through us, in spite of us, around us and in all things. This means that even if we feel we are in an ecumenical winter, if we ever feel that there is nevertheless this sacred energy which keeps flowing and coursing through the world. This energy comes from the cosmic Christ; Christ crucified, risen, ascended and glorified who in God is over all and above all in and in all and through all; the image of the invisible God. Whenever we ourselves feel inert or stuck ecumenically, there is this deep source of inspiration and power which is available to us no matter how impossible things are, no matter how large the obstacles in front of us. All we have to do is remember this reconciling grace and immerse ourselves in it as baptised people, people of Easter faith; people of the reconciling God.

God in Christ is both "logos" and "Wisdom" in Colossians. As logos, Christ is the first principle, the Word, by whom and in whom and for whom all things were made. As Wisdom, Christ is the deep truth about things, the creative energy that makes everything. In fact both Logos and Word are two different words from two different cultures speaking of the same spiritual reality. This is what reconciles the world to God, and courses through us as we look at each other as brothers and sisters tonight. We are therefore greater than the sum of our parts, we are

gathered up into a flow of grace that is so much more powerful than us. No one of us has got it all together, but together each one of us can have it all.

What does this mean in practice? When we come up against an obstacle that seems to divide us, so that we cannot seem to be reconciled, we turn to the grace and power we find in the reconciling Christ, to see what is possible there. For example, when Catholics and Anglicans believed that they could not find a way of understanding the deep meaning of the great thanksgiving in the Eucharist, on the Anglican Roman Catholic Commission, they were given the grace to find in Christ's own words a way over the stereotypes and obstacles. They looked to Christ's words at the last supper, "Do this for the *recalling* of me". The Greek word there, anamnesis, for recalling, helped them to see that what they both really believed could be expressed in a new way, transcending the old limited meaning of the words that they thought each other used before. They said that Christ is real presence at the Eucharist because he is called to be there, fully, and he comes in bread and wine through the celebration in an act of *communio*, of communion. Christ isn't simply remembered in a memorial kind of way, (the stereotype of Anglican belief) and the molecules don't change in the bread and wine, (the stereotype of Catholic belief) but the substance of what is being celebrated, bread wine, people, is full of Christ's real presence. We now agree over the meaning of the Great thanksgiving.

Take two contemporary examples where we appear to have some agreement and some disagreement; Mary and Authority in the church.

How many Catholics know that the Magnificat, Mary's song, is said or sung with great reverence at evensongs and evening prayer services all over the Anglican Communion, without fail and with considerable depth of appreciation? How many Anglicans know that Mary has never been "worshipped" by Catholics, but revered and venerated by them, something Anglicans would want to do for biblical reasons. This means we can be open to using the rosary together as a means of prayer for grace and hope in Christ, for example, since the rosary prayer traces the incarnation of God in Christ through Mary from Luke's gospel. In New Zealand we received a Mary banner tour from the Society of Mary, the Marists, to mark their anniversary in our part of the world, and they shared the banner in all the church named after Mary. There were twice as many Anglican churches as

Catholic, and we said at the time “We should talk about this”. Maybe Mary herself can help us in this way, as the first Christian, as the Mother of God, as the first member of the communion of saints. The reconciling grace of God moves us all the time, everywhere, reconciling all things through the cross, making peace.

Regarding work by ARCIC on “The Gift of Authority”, in the draft document that seeks to outline where we might begin to share the same understanding about leadership and cohesion locally and universally, both synodality and primacy are recommended. It is precisely these areas that both our communions are now looking into more fully because we have to. At the same time that the Anglican Communion is struggling to work out what primacy and international instruments of communion ought to look like, the Roman Catholic Church is working on what it means to have a synod. Maybe these two experiences can inform each other and move towards each other in some way in the years ahead. The reconciling grace of God moves us all the time, everywhere, reconciling all things through the cross, making peace.

But these initiatives and opportunities must not lead us to think that unity is something that we do not yet know. A distant goal we might one day attain. Pope Francis made it clear during the week of Christian unity in January this year, in his homily at St Paul’s Outside the Walls, that unity is a gift that has already been given. Thanks to *Unitatis Redintegratio*, we know that ontologically, generically, fundamentally we are one already in our baptism. This is the most basic fact about us, our Christian being and identity. So I don’t think of myself as out of communion with the Roman Catholic church, I see myself as in communion in this sense. Our calling and challenge is to increase and live out the degrees of communion that lie within us, as a sacred potential, so that one day its fullness will be possible and visible. This is a very different view than seeing each other as basically separated or divided.

In New Zealand, after many years of sharing the Ash Wednesday combined liturgy in Hamilton, the Society of St Vincent de Paul asked their Anglican neighbours for some help with volunteers for their Friday night food run, and the response was immediate. Because we knew each other in prayer and that degree of communion, we were able to come to each other’s assistance in the cause of the Kingdom. In fact I have often noticed that when Anglicans and Catholics are able

to achieve some shared mission or witness, as we do all over the world from time to time, that members of the general public, as well as a number of our church members are delighted and fascinated. They see that the reconciling energy of Christ is able to move us and transform us at these times. If we are able to witness to one faith, one Lord, one baptism, in these ways, many might begin to believe.

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**Paper read by David Cornick at Leeds Cathedral seminar on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014.**

Two ecumenical conversations were happening in England in 1964, largely independent of each other. The first was a largely Protestant conversation which gave birth to what became known as “the modern ecumenical movement”. It gained impetus from the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, continued after the first world war with discussions about how to create a kind of Christian version of the League of Nations, and resulted eventually in the formation of the World Council of Churches. That international conversation, guided by such eminent English churchmen as William Temple and J.H. Oldham, also had a national dimension as they sought for the unity of Christ’s church.

By 1964 that conversation had born considerable fruit - fractured bits of the Church in Scotland came back together in 1929, some very different members of the Methodist family united in 1932, the British Council of Churches had been formed in 1942, the Church of South India (designed largely in the Senior Common Rooms of the English universities) came into existence in 1947, the World Council of Churches first Assembly took place in 1948, and an Anglican-Methodist scheme was on the table which showed every sign of succeeding. Those who had been at the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1961 had caught the South India vision of the union of all in each place in the mission and service of Christ’s world. As British representatives like Oliver Tomkins, the Bishop of Bristol, looked around them they saw united churches happening or being planned around the world, and they returned home to encourage a similar process in England. That process came to a head in the Faith and Order Conference which met at Nottingham University in September 1964. It was profoundly exciting. Michael Ramsey preached at the opening service at Southwell Minster. Across the seas in Rome, Vatican II had survived the death of John XXIII, and a new world seemed possible. Paul VI had that January travelled to Jerusalem and met with Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople. No Pope had left Italy, except as a prisoner of a foreign power for more than 500 years, and not since the Council of Florence had a Pope and Patriarch met. Hopes were therefore high in September 1964. In his opening address Tomkins stressed the urgency of union “. . . because a divided church was disastrously the wrong-shaped tool for

doing the work that God wanted the church to do in the modern world”.<sup>1</sup> The Conference heeded his passion, asking the churches of England to covenant together for unity no later than Easter Day 1980, and authorising what it called “Areas of ecumenical experiment”, later to be known as “Local Ecumenical Projects”, in anticipation of that coming union.

That was the first conversation. The second was happening in St Peter’s Basilica in Rome, and its implications for ecumenism were momentous. It is difficult, some fifty years on to appreciate its revolutionary character. The 1917 code of Canon Law forbade Catholics from sharing in meetings with other Christians, and Pius XI’s 1928 encyclical “On fostering religious union” (*Mortalium Animos*) stated that the only possible route to unity was

“. . . the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it; for from the one true Church they have in the past unhappily fallen away”.<sup>2</sup>

During the Blitz, Cardinal Hinsley was reproved by his fellow bishops for having the temerity to share a platform with Bishop George Bell and to lead the meeting in the Lord’s Prayer, and it was only in 1950 that a Catholic bishop referred, in the letters page of *The Times*, to the Archbishop of Canterbury as “a doubtfully baptised layman”.<sup>3</sup> The reason that the Nottingham conversation was essentially Protestant is that until the Council Catholicism and Protestantism were different worlds. England’s Catholic leadership on the eve of the Council was deeply cautious. Cardinal Godfrey had been part of the planning group, but he was old, very ill, and so in love with the traditional church that he stretched all his failing nerves to stem the liberal tide. Archbishop Heenan took over in 1963, and was at the Council, but his instinct too was conservative, and his ecumenism practical rather than theoretical – “I fear experts and those bearing gifts” – was his most

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<sup>1</sup> *The Times* 14<sup>th</sup> September 1964, accessed from the digital archive.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Murray “On celebrating Vatican II as Catholic and ecumenical” in Gavin da Costa and Emma Harris (eds.) *The Second Vatican Council: celebrating its achievements and the future* (London, Bloomsbury 2013) pp.85-104, at p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Hastings *A history of English Christianity 1920-1985* (London, Collins 1986) p. 395 (for Hinsley); Nicholas Lash *Theology for pilgrims* (London, DLT, 2008) p. 228 (for *The Times*).

notorious intervention. Christopher Butler lived in a different world. So, although ten places at Nottingham were offered to the Catholic church, only six of those places were filled.

But what happened in Rome was remarkable. It was game-changing. The ecumenical movement was recognised as a work of the Spirit, Catholics accepted part of the responsibility for the divisions of the sixteenth century, the church re-defined herself by arguing that the true church “subsisted in” rather than was defined by the Roman Catholic Church, which opened up possibilities of dialogue with other ecclesial communions which manifestly exhibited some of the signs of the true church. John Moorman, bishop of Ripon and the historian of the Franciscan movement was the chief Anglican observer at the Council. He realised the import of what was happening - “A new pattern has emerged as a result of the Council”, he noted, “and much of the thought and language which was valid five years ago is now obsolete”.<sup>4</sup>

He was also at Nottingham, against his better judgment, because he was no great lover of conferences like Nottingham, nor a friend of Free Church unity, nor later of the ministry of women, particularly if that threatened relationships with Rome. His anxiety was the inevitable Anglo-Catholic concern that Nottingham was focusing on “local unions rather than unity” - that is to say on England and its Free Churches rather than the universal catholic church.<sup>5</sup> Reflecting after the Council he wrote,

“The result of the Council has been to alter the whole ecumenical pattern and to carry the ecumenical discussion into a new field. . . Rome has, at last, begun to interest herself in the problem of unity, and things can never be the same again. . . The ecumenical problem of 1966 is quite different from what it was in 1961”.<sup>6</sup>

He was, of course, right. It is one of church history's sad ironies that the Nottingham Faith and Order Conference reached a climax of ecumenical decision

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Faggioli *op cit* loc 685.

<sup>5</sup> *The Guardian* Sept 16 1964.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Massimo Faggioli *Vatican II: the battle for meaning* (Mahwah NJ Paulist Press 2012) loc 702.

just a month before the Decree on Ecumenism was promulgated by Paul VI on November 21st 1964. What might have happened if Nottingham had been held in December is one of those tantalising “ifs” of history.

Since Nottingham, of course, those conversations have no longer kept on parallel tracks, but have come closer to each other. Easter 1980 came and went. The heady optimism of Nottingham 1964 crashed to the ground as the Anglican-Methodist scheme died at the first session of General Synod in 1972 (but, note, by a mere seven votes in the House of Clergy), and despite the formation of the URC later in the year it was clear that the Nottingham motorway was heading up a cul-de-sac, confirmed by the failure of the English covenant in 1982. Yet 1982 also saw John Paul II and Robert Runcie joined in prayer at Canterbury, and the papal visit played a role in deepening Catholicism’s commitment to English ecumenism, and a new form of ecumenical encounter, “Churches Together”, growing from the ashes of the old British Council of Churches. In other words, we have emerged from the Nottingham cul-de-sac into a richer encounter which simply couldn’t have happened before Vatican II. And if so nationally, then also internationally as Catholicism’s rich dialogue with both eastern and western partners has redrawn the theological landscape. Who would have thought in 1964 than by the end of the century Catholics and Lutherans would have issued a joint statement on the doctrine of justification, the very cause of the reformation that had created Protestantism in the first place.

But other forces were also at play in England. The first, and most obvious, is that successive waves of migration have changed the face of country and therefore of English Christianity. In 1951 4.3% of the population of England and Wales were born outside the UK. In 2011 that had risen to 13% (1.9 million to 7.5 million people).<sup>7</sup> The mosques, temples and gurdwaras of our burgeoning Muslim, Hindu and Sikh neighbours are on our High Streets, but so too are the world’s churches. World Christianity is now an English phenomenon. The 2005 church census revealed that one in six of English worshippers was either Asian or Black.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Immigration Patterns of non-UK born populations in England and Wales in 2011* (Office of National Statistics 2013); [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_346219.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_346219.pdf) (accessed 12th February 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Peter Brierley *Pulling out of the nose-dive: a contemporary picture of church going: what the 2005 religious census reveals* (London, 2006) p.90

Migration has dramatically altered the religious landscape. It has transformed the life of some historic congregations, particularly in London and large urban conurbations and brought a welter of new Pentecostal and independent denominations and groupings which behave very differently to historic English denominations. There are now, it is estimated, about a million black Christians and about 4,000 black-led congregations. Estimates of the number of black Pentecostal denominations varies, but it is at least 300, serving a community which is 2% of the British population and 6% of the worshipping population.<sup>9</sup> The dynamics are profoundly different to those of the historic denominations - missional, entrepreneurial and centripetal rather than centrifugal. Spinning off new churches and networks, often based around individuals, is understood as a method of growth.

Another force in play, more contentiously, is what is sometimes called “secularisation”. That is a slippery word, and a much debated word, but for all its problems, let it stand as a description of what has happened to the church since 1964. Measuring people’s religious commitment is a profoundly difficult exercise, and it can never be reduced to churchgoing, which is why secularisation is a bad explanatory word. What we can say with some certainty is that on the eve of the first world war about 25% of the population would have been in church on any given Sunday, but now that figure is about 6%. During what some historians are now calling “the long 1960s” (1958-75) England changed from being what Roy Jenkins once called “a Christian country” to “a civilised nation”. One historian suggests that during the 1960s we experienced the “final crisis of Christendom”. However long the roots of that crisis may have been, they bore devastating fruit in the sixties. Anglican confirmations fell by 36% between 1963-69, ordinations by 25%. Methodist membership fell by 24% between 1960-75. The biggest drop in Anglican Easter communicants in the century was between 1962-64.

That wasn’t something the church engineered. It was something that happened to the churches, and we can speculate endlessly about its causes. What we cannot ignore is that since then the churches have been trying to cope with its consequences, which is one reason why mission has been the dominant note of discourse for the past twenty years or so.

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<sup>9</sup> Adedibu *op cit* p.50

What will shape the future? The continuing convergence of the two ecumenical conversations of the 1960s, the continuing process of engaging Pentecostal and charismatic churches in dialogue about our common mission, and the handling of diversity – ethnic, cultural, theological and spiritual. The conversation in 2014 is far richer, profounder and puzzling than it was at Nottingham and in St Peter’s fifty years ago.

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***Into the Fullness of Communion: Still Receiving Vatican II's Teaching on Church and Ecumenism.***

**A paper read by Paul D. Murray at Leeds Cathedral seminar on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014.**

***Introduction***

Many thanks Bishop Tony and through you, Clive Barrett and WYEC for the invitation to share in this event. It is a pleasure to be here and a particular delight to meet some old friends, not least Fr Paul Fisher and Rev Dr Roger Walton who, between them, were basically responsible for my life taking a formal ecumenical turn: the first by giving me the ecumenical brief when I arrived to teach at Ushaw in September 2000 – all agreed that a compulsory double Ecumenics module, jointly taught with Cranmer Hall and the Methodist Study Centre was a thoroughly good thing but no one wished to teach it. For his own part, Roger's patience with me as a fellow teacher gave me the context in which I could begin to engage some genuinely transformational ecumenical learning. It is a delight also to meet Bill Snelson, who has been one of my teachers at distance; and I similarly hope to meet Fr Billy Steele, whose notes, as a former member of Ushaw staff, I cribbed when learning how to teach ecumenism in the first place. It is very good to be here. A sub-title for what I am going to share with you might be: "Into the Fullness of Communion: Still Receiving Vatican II on Church and Ecumenism". I will start by testing the temperature and movement of the waters in which we find ourselves, then briefly note some of the key shifts in *Unitatis Redintegratio (UR)* before closing by reflecting on how we are now called to live these shifts with renewed focus.

***On celebrating well: remembrance and anticipation***

What does it mean for us to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Vatican II? For those who lived through it, it was the defining Catholic experience of their lives, whether through enthusiastic embrace or aggrieved reaction. For enthusiasts this act of remembering can have something of mourning and protest about it: mourning for a perceived eclipsing of the great work of the Spirit at Vatican II; protest that things should be otherwise. For others, making memory is an act of

reinterpretation, reclaiming the Council from distorting novelty. Here Pope Benedict's careful balancing of the language of reform and continuity in relation to the Council is significant and reminds us that the duality of continuity and change is properly of the essence of Christian tradition, which genuinely is the dynamism and fidelity of the Spirit in the church.

Well, if we can ask the general question as to what it means to celebrate Vatican II, all the more so can we ask this of *UR*: what does it mean at this moment in church history to be celebrating one of the defining impulses to the ecumenical story? Vatican II led to what many still fondly regard as the golden age of modern ecumenism, with the overly optimistic expectation that it really would be possible within a generation to overcome all the historic divisions between the traditions and bring about a structurally and sacramentally united church. The great bilateral dialogues were established to serve that goal and all the indications seemed positive. Take the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) for example: through a combination of clarifying misunderstandings, drawing on recent scholarship, and viewing differing theological frameworks as potentially complementary rather than opposed, one historic point of division after another seemed to render itself as no longer necessarily communion-dividing.

In contrast, ours are difficult times for formal, institutional ecumenism. Not only have some of the classical issues around authority and decision-making proven more intractable than imagined, new issues have arisen, at the formal level at least, concerning significantly different views in relation to such things as women's ordination and the pastoral care of people of homosexual orientation. Such real differences at the formal level do not lend themselves to being explained away, as the classical bilateral strategies would typically do, as legitimately diverse ways of articulating the same basic position. As a consequence, there is something of a widespread energy-drain around formal ecumenism and a sense of frustrated disappointment. The wave of ecumenical optimism flowing from Vatican II appears beached on the intransigence of the church, its energy spent.

What does it mean that the barque of the church is passing through such challenging waters? How is it that this "sacrament ... of intimate union with God

and of the unity of the whole human race” (*Lumen Gentium*, LG 1) is not of one mind, never mind one body? Well, in part at least, it simply means that we are living flesh and blood and that the church is a living, breathing, organic reality and not simply an ideal on a page! Disagreement, difficulty and tension are normal in the experience of the church, as also in society. Grace, the movement of the Spirit in the life of the church, is not about the eradication of difficulty and the achievement of an easy uniformity but about the church being held, even deepened, in communion in and through such differences and difficulties. Viewed in this way, the barque of the church is where it should be: in mid-stream; neither the starting point, nor the conclusion of its own story but in the midst of it: both remembering and anticipating the one who as Alpha and Omega, Emmanuel, God with us, is re-*member*-ing us and drawing us into the fullness of communion.

The fourth Gospel has a wonderful pair of narratives in chapters 6 and 21 which bring this home very clearly: the first about Jesus coming to the disciples on the lake in troubled conditions, the second about the disciples coming to shore to find the risen Jesus already there. Christ, the one in and through whom all was called into being, this Christ is the one who has already passed over through disappointment, even death, and who always already awaits us, calling us forth. Remembering well in relation to *UR* is about a calling forwards as well as recalling backwards. In this context the current papacy appears to many to have been given to the churches precisely so that we can reconnect in power, freedom, confidence and creative fidelity with the movement of the Council.

### ***On the Catholic ecumenical significance of Vatican II***

Whilst dichotomous contrasts between pre-conciliar and post-conciliar Catholicism can be unhelpfully overlaid, in the case of Catholic ecumenical teaching it is right to remind ourselves of the contrast. In the face of the rise of the modern ecumenical movement, the 1917 Code of Canon Law had forbidden Catholics from participating in meetings with other Christians (c.1325), let alone from sharing in their rituals (c.1258). The mind-set was that the one true Church of Christ is to be straightforwardly and exclusively identified with the Catholic Church and that any such association with other Christians would suggest a false equivalence. The only way forward was that of unidirectional return to Rome. The contrast both of tone and content could not be clearer when compared with *UR*.

Relinquishing the attitude of one-sided fault, Catholicism's complicity in the breaks of the sixteenth century is acknowledged (*UR 3*) and recognition given that

“very many of the significant elements and endowments which together . . . give life to the Church . . . can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church”(*UR 3*).

The implication is drawn:

“To the extent that these elements are found in other Christian communities, the one Church of Christ is effectively present in them” (*UR 3*).

Furthermore, these ecclesial elements are regarded as being of significance for the Catholic Church itself and not simply for the other traditions. Most pointedly so it is recognised that some of these ecclesial elements may have come to fuller flower in the other traditions than they have been able to do within Catholicism:

“Whatever is truly Christian . . . can always bring a deeper realization of the mystery of Christ and the Church” (*UR 4*).

Pope John Paul II later underlined this in his remarkable 1995 encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint (UUS)*, referring to other Christian communities as places

“where certain features of the Christian mystery have at times been more effectively emphasized” (*UUS 14*).

These lines of teaching combine in an emphasis on Catholicism's own need to learn, to be renewed, purified and even reformed: *UR 6* speaks of ecumenism as a “renewal” (*renovatio*) and a “continual reformation” (*perennis reformation*). This is no longer ecumenism conceived simply as a call to one-sided return but of growth on both sides and mutual journeying to a new relationship. Again in *UR 4* we find,

“Their [Catholics’] primary duty is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be done or renewed in the Catholic household itself”.

This Vatican II call to put one’s own house in order resonates strongly with one of the central themes of this current papacy. So what does it mean in this ecumenical winter of discontent for us to seek to live into Vatican II’s ecumenical vision?

### ***Living into Vatican II’s Catholic ecumenical vision***

As already noted, in contrast to the heady years following Vatican II, ours are difficult times for formal, institutional ecumenism: the kind that still aims at working towards full reconciled communion. Many have grown impatient and downsized the ecumenical goal to seeking simply to get along and do as many good things together as possible: Life and Works instead of Faith and Order, if you like, rather than as necessary complement. The problem, however, is that whilst they are as crucial as oxygen, no matter how much getting along with each other and doing good things together we have, they alone are never going to solve the ecumenical agenda, which in Catholic understanding is to do with the broken sign-value we give of our communion in diversity in the Trinitarian life of God. For this, the aspiration of formal institutional ecumenism remains basic. But it is this very aspiration which is now so difficult to pursue in any meaningful way – at least as we have thus far done, in terms of seeking to teach our ecumenical others a more accurate understanding of what we are really like. We have done that but the differences still remain.

In this apparent cul-de-sac we need to remind ourselves of some basics. First is that the Spirit of Jesus Christ does not drive us into blind corners in order to prod us with a stick: if the call to full structural and sacramental communion really is a Gospel imperative, a constant, then so also will the Lord’s resourcing of the churches to live this imperative be constant. The context and the challenges it entails might be different; previous strategies and resources might no longer be adequate, at least at this juncture; but fresh strategies and resources there most surely will be. Our task is to seek to discern them and to live them with courage, creativity, and fidelity.

Second is that unlike optimism, authentic Christian hope is not a form of reality denial. Hope takes reality in all its starkness radically seriously, even into and through disappointment and death, and knows that our role is not to be the architects and sole producers of a future that is not yet but to be its servants; our role is to anticipate this “now-but-not-yet” future, of which we can get glimpse and foretaste, and to ask ourselves what it means to live it now; what it means for us to be conformed to that which we glimpse and taste so that we can grow more fully into it; what it means for us to “lean-into” the presence of the Spirit who is this sure foretaste and down-payment so that we can be held, set on our feet, impelled to action, called to conversion, and made living witnesses to this future in the here and now in ways that will both take us towards it and inspire others also so to travel.

A few minutes ago I suggested that *UR*'s central contribution was to present Catholic ecumenical learning (as distinct from teaching!) as a means whereby Catholicism could itself hear the call to continuing conversion and renewal and so grow more fully into what Catholicism most deeply already is. We are given a remarkable witness to this reversal in the sections of Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, wherein he actually extends an invitation to theologians and leaders of other Christian traditions to help re-imagine the way in which the papacy operates so that it might once again become the focus for Christian unity rather than the continuing cause of division it currently is (*UUS* 95-6). Here we have clear, prophetic expression of the kind of imaginative commitment to the continuing conversion of one's own tradition that is required if the Christian churches are really to progress beyond friendship to the full catholicity of the one Church of Christ; a prophetic expression, moreover, in relation to which Pope Francis can be viewed as now seeking to deliver in practice.

More generally, in recent years this basic ecumenical approach of focussing on one's own tradition's need for conversion has been formally developed and explicitly offered as a fresh strategy and way for contemporary ecumenism, referred to as Receptive Ecumenism; one that seeks to hold to and serve the traditional concern to work for the structural and sacramental unity of the churches, whilst also taking the changed challenges of our situation absolutely seriously. At the heart of Receptive Ecumenism is the basic conviction that further

substantial progress is indeed possible but only if a fundamental, counter-instinctual move is made away from traditions wishing that others could be more like themselves to instead each asking what they can and must learn, with dynamic integrity, from their respective others. In this perspective, each tradition is called to take responsibility for its own required learning rather than to wait on others to do likewise. The principle is that for all the many gifts in our respective traditions, we each variously fall short of the glory of God; that we each have difficulties, wounds even, that require healing.

Much ecumenical engagement can be a matter of getting the “best china” out: of wanting others to see us in our best possible light; one in which we do not even generally regard ourselves if we are honest. In contrast, Receptive Ecumenism is an ecumenism of the wounded hands: of being prepared to show our wounds to each other, knowing that we cannot save ourselves and asking the other to minister to us in our need. It forsakes the aspiration for a programmed step-by-step journey to a foreseeable destination and embraces instead a programme of conversion that will take each of us to a fresh place wherein new things become possible; but new places that involve each of us becoming more fully rather than less what we most deeply already are.

This humble yet hopeful spirit of Receptive Ecumenism resonates strongly with Pope Francis’s recent exhortation during this year’s Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity:

“It is good to . . . find in other Christians something of which we are in need, something that we can receive as a gift from our brothers and our sisters. . . This requires . . . much prayer, humility, reflection and constant conversion. Let us go forward on this path, praying for the unity of Christians, so that this scandal may cease and be no longer with us”.

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**Paper read by Cally Hammond at Leeds Cathedral seminar on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014.**

*Unitatis Redintegratio* is the same age as I am - 50. I've been committed to ecumenism since my student days, and encourage ecumenical thinking among the students I work with. As well as being Dean of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, I am a member of the Church of England's Faith and Order Commission (FAOC), an advisory and drafting body for General Synod and the bishops. I am also a member of the Meissen Commission which forges closer links between the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) and the Church of England. In November 2013 I attended the World Council of Churches (WCC) as a delegate of the Church of England, which gave me a unique experience of global Christianity as a force for change and good.

My personal academic interests feed in to these commitments: early church literature and history including Irenaeus of Lyons (*Against knowledge falsely so-called* aka *Against Heresies*) and Augustine of Hippo. It is hard not to care about ecumenism when you study the origins of Christian self-definition. In addition to this, I have a long-standing interest in Catholic spirituality, and especially the rosary.

***Theory and Practice in Church Self-Understanding***

(I) Theory

The gospel criterion for defining Christian identity as a group is unity. But because Christian identity encompasses competing ideologies (called, by the disputants "heresy" and "orthodoxy") I would like to suggest that we need to make a crucial distinction: between unity and uniformity. [Acts 4.33]

How did Christianity first define itself? Irenaeus first sets out the *regula veritatis* ("rule of truth", sometimes *regula fidei*, "rule of faith"): the scripture-fulfilled, apostolic-continuity-authenticated, open-to-all (i.e. not secret/gnostic), incarnation-affirming content of Christianity. By refuting false-knowledge (*gnosis*) he articulates for the first time what the Church is by defining what she isn't.

With historical hindsight we can see that the Church as a body has persisted through time because she is able *to transmit her self-identifying features from one generation to the next*. Her leadership system is crucial to this. The early Church builds herself on a continuity of ministry (through laying-on of hands); and continuity of thought and action which heaps a huge negative load on anything perceived as discontinuity with the past.

Our theology of the Church, though, still has to encompass development, revelation and providence in a positive way, rather than repeating a static, dogmatic *fait accompli* which denies the truth of development in the Church over the centuries. There can be no place in a truly apostolic Christian community for speaking/thinking as if past history were “wrong” (e.g. some feminist theology which says 2000 years should have been “different”).

If we keep hold of the distinction between unity (possible) and uniformity (impossible), the fracture in the one-ness/unity of the Church is not irreparable, because God can do all things, even raise up children of Abraham from stones. And it remains mendable while all concerned continue to interact in a spirit of hope, in this case both within the Church of England and with the wider catholic Church of Christ.

If, however, there comes a point when the fracture is widely accepted as actual real “heresy”, because it takes the Church’s leaders into *fundamentally misrepresenting God to God’s people* (see Ignatius: the most heinous error we could possibly fall into) then the ecumenical movement is sunk.

## (II) Practice

In September last year, I conducted an ordination retreat for the Church of Ireland, an Anglican church. For the retreat we stayed in the Benedictine monastery in Rosstrevor; a truly inspiring place. And we were all offered Eucharistic hospitality, and accepted with gratitude and joy for the privilege of sharing at the Lord’s table, as we shared our common meals in the rest of the day.

In 2008 Caius College had a visit from a girls’ Roman Catholic cathedral choir in Rottenburg, Germany. They came to sing evensong and learn about English

church music. On the Thursday, when we have our College eucharist, I was celebrating as usual, and I saw the girls in the pews in a dilemma about what to do; the priest who was their chaplain told them to come up and receive communion from me, which they did; and so did their chaplain himself. That was a moment of grace as far as I was concerned. They had honoured us as their fellow-Christians by that simple act of *koinonia*.

Later that year, Caius Choir returned the courtesy by visiting Rottenburg to sing a Roman Catholic choral evensong broadcast. I was a bit lost as to the protocol in a church not my own; but the bishop sent a server to call me into the priests' vestry, where we robed, and in the procession as we passed the blessed sacrament I saw the bishop whispering to the acolytes not to genuflect; the only possible reason for which, that I can see, is that he did not want to make it difficult for me, thinking that perhaps the gesture of reverence was unfamiliar.

These small gestures of hospitality are happening every day somewhere round the world; I know that in the diocese of Niassa, in Mozambique, for example, when a priest comes to the church in any village, people don't ask if he's an Anglican priest or a Roman Catholic priest; because a priest is a priest. God can raise up children of Abraham from stones; surely he can make a priest a priest by his own sovereign fiat?

All my life as a Christian I have been going deeper and deeper into the spiritual resources of the small-c catholic tradition. We are very aware of the divisions; we often forget what unites us. What seems to me to be the most fundamental of all our ecumenical acts is that we sing each other's hymns; the old words at least are nobody's property, they are the churches' free resource, and we all draw on them gladly. Somehow they feel non-partisan.

It is not so with the rosary: probably because of the stumbling-block that is Our Lady. Many Protestants are repelled by what they see as virtual Mariolatry, Mary-worship; they aren't interested in fancy finicking distinctions between *doulia* and *hyperdoulia* (veneration, for other saints, and deep veneration, for Mary alone) and *latreia* (worship), which is proper to God alone. They look at the actions and behaviour more than the words, and they see Mary Mary Mary, more prominent than Jesus sometimes (not to mention the other two persons of the Trinity).

It usually takes people a while to feel comfortable with the mental discipline required with the rosary, of saying one thing with your lip, and meditating on quite another in your soul. That makes it sound like spiritual hypocrisy; but it's not so different from the mental discipline required in ecumenical matters - to behave as if you are comfortable with what's actually making you uncomfortable is one way to learn to become comfortable with it. This is not hypocrisy, it's good manners! And good manners are the first step in any ecumenical endeavour; because they aren't about etiquette, but about putting the other person first.

I started praying the rosary at the age of 20: because I knew that I was not praying "right". I now know that I had been stuck in the same Slough of Despond as many others, looking at the public worship of the Church and trying to use that public type of prayer for private devotion. It didn't work.

The rosary did work, for me. I have been praying it ever since; it has been the source of some of my deepest insights into our common faith in Jesus Christ. I have taught it as a personal devotion to many people both Roman Catholic and Church of England, Methodist, free church; and sold it to "Protestants" as a way to pray the life of Jesus. (Cf the Methodist spiritual writer J. Neville Ward).

I don't teach it as a corporate prayer but as a prayer for individual use. I tend to avoid the more schmaltzy stuff about Mary. For Anglicans I pare it back to "why does Mary become so important in the Christian tradition so quickly?"—answer: because she stands for us; the first of redeemed humankind, the one who had living physical contact, even unity, with Jesus from the first moment of his conception, the icon of obedience to God will.

All this has been rediscovered and re-emphasized by Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Marialis Cultus* for the right ordering and development of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary on the feast of Candlemas 1974. In a different but related way, Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* encouraged Christians to rediscover the riches of the rosary as a spiritual devotion, and introduced the new luminous mysteries to given even greater depth to the rosary as a way of praying the life of Jesus-in-relation-to-us-as-all-humankind. (Cf *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, 2004)

## ***Progress?***

*Lumen Gentium* 8 (the sole Church of Christ “subsistit in” the Roman Catholic Church, not “est”) was a huge step forward. There have been Roman Catholic agreements with Anglicans on baptism, eucharist and ministry (BEM), and with Lutherans on justification; and other encouraging steps forward. But the ordination of women, and increasing readiness at least to acknowledge openly gay relationships, have made further negotiation between churches more difficult. That is a weeping sore, apparently incompatible gospel imperatives clashing with one another; we can only hope and pray that one day it will be healed.

I know from my work on FAOC and from my time in parish ministry, and as Dean of Caius College in Cambridge, that most people come to faith and remain in faith with no clear sense of doctrine, no interest in grasping the mysteries of Trinitarian theology; no real interest in ecclesiology, either. They stumble into one church or another, and either do or don’t find a home. They come looking for a place, a Christian community, which feels authentic, rooted, which transmits a sense of integrity.

It is the religious professionals who care most about doctrine and boundaries; because we are carefully trained to, lest the Church fall into error. In this country, my own Church is still to some extent the default setting; if one is a Baptist or Roman Catholic, for example, one tends to have a much stronger sense of identity as defined in opposition to that Church of England status quo. And that rings alarm bells, for me anyway.

We are living in times when individualism and sectarianism are on the increase; despite the fact that the memory of the Great War’s centenary is upon us this very day (11th November 2014). The Scottish referendum on independence; fighting over UKIP and secession from Europe: these and similar movements show what danger we are in of throwing away all the slow gains of the League of Nations, the UN, the EU, and other organisations which exist to make bonds stronger than the individualistic interests which pull humankind apart.

Alongside these international organisations there is the WCC, which I attended in Busan, S. Korea last November; it is a parallel example to the UN, as a Christian organisation dedicated to the search for Christian unity. It is a voluntary fellowship (association) of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.

In 2012-2013 the WCC issued a document 20 years in the formation: *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. Produced by theologians from the widest range of Christian traditions and cultures, including representation from the Roman Catholic Church, it does what it says on the cover - tries to find ways of understanding ourselves as , if not a uniformity, still somehow a unity, even if only a unity in the process of being forged over centuries.

With today's events here in Leeds, we are playing our own small part in a project which is bigger than any of us, and any of our churches: talking and listening; and - most crucial of all in any such negotiations, getting into the habit of giving each other the benefit of the doubt. When we disagree, when our practices unintentionally offend each other, when we feel undervalued, disrespected, that is when we are pushed towards divisive and sectarian attitudes.

If we accept the need to listen, take the pain, and be ready to face change with courage and honesty, somehow all shall eventually be well. How that happens, I don't know, but it is true. I don't feel divided from my fellow Christians in the Roman Catholic Church, Methodist Church, Orthodox Churches, Baptists, Maronites, German Evangelical and Lutheran churches, whatever, by anything except (a big "except") the institutions and their regulations. The Church, whichever denomination, is the Body of Christ, not the buildings, not the regulations, but the people. Christian unity is in our hands, in our grasp - a real *unitatis redintegratio*. Ultimately it is our conduct, our behaviour, our courtesy and our readiness to honour our fellow-Christians that will enable us ultimately to stand without fear before the judgment seat of Christ.

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## ***“Unitatis Redintegratio” 50 Years On: A Methodist Perspective***

**Paper read by Kenneth G Howcroft at Leeds Cathedral seminar on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014.**

It is a great honour to be invited to make this presentation. For three years I served as the ecumenical officer of the Methodist Church in Great Britain; and for the last five years I was the Co-Convenor of the Joint Implementation Commission for the Covenant between that Church and the Church of England. I have also recently had the enormous privilege of serving for three years in Rome, where, in addition to caring for the English language congregation in Rome on behalf of the Methodist Church in Italy, part of my brief was to develop an ecumenical resource on behalf of the world-wide family of Methodist Churches. It is therefore good to see my friend and colleague, Archbishop David Moxon, here today.

In my time in Rome I began to experience that renewal of the wholeness of the unity of Christ’s Church (with which the Ecumenical Decree is concerned) in and through my relationships with others, and theirs with me. I say “began to experience” advisedly. It is, of course, a process of – dare I say it? – redemption and perfection as we and our churches are gradually transformed by the Spirit into the body of Christ. And, as St Paul repeatedly testified, becoming the body of Christ involves being baptised into his death: becoming incorporate in his sufferings, facing the problems and taking the knocks, paying the cost of self-giving love. So it was with enormous pain that I did not hide in the congregation and refuse to go forward at a Mass; nor did I go forward and ask to receive the holy elements; but went to ask for a blessing. And it was an experience of grace to receive a blessing, and then occasionally to be asked by the priest to pray over him in return. Grace, pain and joy. The deeper the pain, the greater the joy. And vice versa. The overflowing of grace.

In my time in Rome, we witnessed the change from Pope Benedict to Pope Francis. It would be too facile to characterise that as a shift from a *Lumen Gentium* approach to a *Unitatis Redintegratio* approach. As Cardinal Kasper wrote on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the two hang together. If *Lumen Gentium* is doctrinal, it points to the pastoral. If *Unitatis Redintegratio* is pastoral,

it points back to the doctrinal. Both are deeply theological and inter-connected in a tradition that is a living reality. To quote Cardinal Kasper:

“Understanding the tradition as a living reality implies that not only in *Unitatis Redintegratio* but also in many other texts of the Second Vatican Council (together with *Lumen Gentium*), old and new are often found side by side”.<sup>10</sup>

With the arrival of Pope Francis, we do seem to be seeing the Spirit blowing over the embers of the living tradition. It is as if all our doctrinal assertions are becoming once more not Law as in the Christian characterisation of the Hebrew Scriptures, but Torah as in the Jewish characterisation of them. Torah is the story of God’s gracious love, constantly creating, redeeming, recreating and perfecting. It is the story that is constantly re-contextualised and re-embodied in each age through the patriarchs, the prophets, the writings and the traditions of the Church. It is ultimately the Word made flesh.

One of the things that Pope Francis keeps saying in a variety of ecumenical contexts is that Christians must walk together and work together, and therefore talk together and pray together. That seems to be true to the spirit of *Unitatis Redintegratio*. In that sense, as I look to the future, I want to praise and use, not bury the decree.

There have, though, been times when I have thought the opposite. It is easy to bridle at the view that seems to underlie *Unitatis Redintegratio* that, with the apparent exception of the Eastern Churches, the other traditions have all come about through schism from mother Church, in a way that leaves them at best deficient as embodiments of the body of Christ, whilst mother Church is, of course, in no way deficient at all; and which therefore means that the renewal of the wholeness of the unity of Christ’s body and Church must require the return and re-absorption of those separated brothers and sisters into the mother Church in a way that changes them in essence, but not it.

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<sup>10</sup> Walter Kasper *That they all may be one* Burns & Oates 2004 p. 12

We all know, of course, that when the Church came into being, it was wonderfully united, harmonious, peaceable, and without divisive contention. You only need to read the pages of the New Testament to see that! With his tongue similarly in his cheek, the doyen of Methodist ecumenical theologians, the Revd Professor Geoffrey Wainwright, gives a rapid sketch of the ecclesiastical history that followed.

“In the fifth century, the non-Chalcedonians split from the hitherto undivided Church. Then the Byzantine East broke away in 1054. The unreformed Roman Catholics were left behind in the sixteenth century, while the continental Protestants had the misfortune of being foreigners. In the eighteenth century, even the Church of England refused Wesley’s mission, so that finally only Methodists remained in the body of Christ. . .”<sup>11</sup>

What that does is make me realise that we of other traditions have inherited the mirror image of the mind-set for which we criticise Roman Catholics. You can see that clearly if you simply take the text of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, and switch over the references. In the following extracts from paragraph 4 of Chapter 1 of the decree, I shall do it in relation to my own tradition, but it could be done in relation to any.

“For although the *Methodist* Church has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all means of grace, yet its members fail to live by them with all the fervor that they should, so that the radiance of the Church's image is less clear in the eyes of our separated brethren and of the world at large, and the growth of God's kingdom is delayed. All *Methodists* must therefore aim at Christian perfection and, each according to his station, play his part that the Church may daily be more purified and renewed. For the Church must bear in her own body the humility and dying of Jesus, against the day when Christ will present her to Himself in all her glory without spot or wrinkle. . . .

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<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, “Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation”, Chapter XI in *The Ecumenical Moment: Crisis and Opportunity for the Church*, Eerdmans 1983 p. 189

“On the other hand, *Methodists* must gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren. It is right and salutary to recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood. For God is always wonderful in His works and worthy of all praise”.

Where does the realisation that those of us of other traditions often display the same mind-set for which we criticise Roman Catholics take us? We all have to face the mystery of grace by which the love of God, the things of Christ’s Church and the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit seem to exist outside the current boundaries of our own Churches; and that our own Churches are therefore authentic embodiments of the apostolic faith, apostolic witness and apostolic mission (with their own signs of continuity in that apostolicity), yet still lacking the ultimate perfection that Christ wills and for which Christ prayed.

*Unitatis Redintegratio* points to that with the startling – to me, at least – claim that can also be found in paragraph 4 of Chapter 1.

“Nevertheless, the divisions among Christians prevent the Church from attaining the fullness of catholicity proper to her, in those of her sons (*sc. and daughters*) who, though attached to her by Baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her. Furthermore, the Church herself finds it more difficult to express in actual life her full catholicity in all her bearings”.

In other words – the Catholic Church is yet to be transformed into the fullness of catholicity!

The shift in the decree from saying that the universal Church of Christ is (“est”) a particular historical institution to saying that it subsists in (“subsistit in”) a particular institution at least hints at the idea that the body of Christ be found in more than one church. I covet for the rest of us the model of relationship that *Unitatis Redintegratio* sets out in paragraph 16 between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches.

“Already from the earliest times the Eastern Churches followed their own forms of ecclesiastical law and custom, which were sanctioned by the approval of the Fathers of the Church, of synods, and even of ecumenical councils. Far from being an obstacle to the Church's unity, a certain diversity of customs and observances only adds to her splendor, and is of great help in carrying out her mission, as has already been stated. To remove, then, all shadow of doubt, this holy Council solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, while remembering the necessary unity of the whole Church, have the power to govern themselves according to the disciplines proper to them, since these are better suited to the character of their faithful, and more for the good of their souls. The perfect observance of this traditional principle not always indeed carried out in practice, is one of the essential prerequisites for any restoration of unity”.

*Unitatis Redintegratio* also provides help on the interconnection and interdependence of worship and mission. I have long believed that we have not paid sufficient attention to that interconnection and interdependency. There is too often dissonance and disjunction. I suspect that it was a sense of that disjunction which in recent years has caused there to be an increasing emphasis on “Unity in Mission”. One of the fruits of the formal dialogues for me has been the recognition that apostolic faith is not just about the transmission of the content of what is to be believed, but the presentation and re-presentation through word, sacrament and holy lives of Christ as a living person to be believed in. And apostolic faith is also about a commitment to being sent to share in the mission of the kingdom. So it is not surprising that we have seen the development of, say, IARCCUM (the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission) alongside that of ARCIC (the Anglican—Roman Catholic International Commission).

But I believe that there is something more to be learned here. When I reflect on the experience in this country, something interesting emerges. Until the late 1980s, ecumenical work was done through Councils of Churches under the aegis of the British Council of Churches. The sense was that as with the ecumenical councils of the church in previous ages, these councils were bodies playing a part in the oversight of Christ’s church. They were in a sense embryonic or anticipatory

oversight and governance bodies for the united church that was emerging into existence. The model was of a visible unity that was organic, institutional and uniform rather than pluriform. It was very Protestant. It was therefore impossible for the Roman Catholic churches in Britain to be full members. Whatever the actual nuance of the phrase, that statement from the Second Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium* that the Church of Christ “subsistit in” the Roman Catholic Church prevented it.

At the same time, the statement in *Lumen Gentium* that there are elements of truth and sanctification in other Christian churches and communities raised the question of how the Roman Catholic Churches would relate to them. The breakthrough was the Swanwick Declaration in 1987. That led to the abandonment of the conciliar model and its replacement by a “Churches Together” model of working. In 1990 the British Council of Churches was disbanded and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (with sub-groups such as Churches Together in England) was created. These were definitely not oversight or governance bodies. They were conferring and co-ordinating bodies supporting the churches as they worked together.

The model was therefore one of “Unity in Mission”. Visible unity no longer meant – at least in the foreseeable future – organic, institutional uniformity, but churches that retained high degrees of autonomy yet worked with and alongside each other in mission. The language began to shift from talk of “visible unity” to talk of “communion”. The goal started to become “autonomy in communion”. But that phrase is not without its difficulties. It has been used to propose a model for the Anglican Communion that might see it through some troubled times. But as a lawyer once said in a meeting that I was at, “Of course, in theory there is no difference between theory and practice. . . .”(!)

This model has, though, released energy and enabled many good things to happen. But that very fact creates a potential tension with the models previously inherent in the formal dialogues. Ironically, that is particularly true for the Roman Catholic Church (which inspired much of move towards “Churches Together”!) because of the tension between the new model and the implications of the phrase “subsistit in”.

I would argue that it is only as *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Lumen Gentium* are held together that that tension can be experienced as something creative. Much of our previous ecumenical works has been concerned with orthodoxy (and I am always intrigued that *doxa* in Greek refers both to glory and therefore worship, and to the understanding of truth). But the unity in mission agenda and concerns about moral behaviour in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are raising the topic of orthopraxy, and we can see that ARCIC III might be moving towards dealing with that. There is also a move to discuss holiness and holy living which is characterising such formal conversations as those between Methodists and Roman Catholics. What that does is pay attention to what we might call ortho-pathy, the formation of individual and collective minds, hearts and spirits into the image of Christ. It is about tempers and dispositions. It is what lies at the heart of what some call “spiritual ecumenism”. It is about love.

John Wesley wrote a famous sermon under the title “Catholic Spirit”. Its teaching is simple. Doing it is difficult. It included the famous sentences

“Although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?”

When Pope Francis talks of walking and working together, I think that I can see a smile of the face of my revered predecessor.

Thanks be to God!



Responding to the seminar speakers, the Co-Chair of ARCIC and Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome, the Most Revd Sir David Moxon, suggested three images:

- First, God walks in long strides, perhaps a decade. We need to measure ecumenical progress in decades and then we will be better able to see clearly how much things have changed.
- Secondly, consider the image of a flotilla of yachts: no one Church has every gift, but together we can have them all.
- Thirdly, Christian unity is like an aeroplane. When it takes off there is a lot of noise and experience of power but when it is airborne, it is much quieter and it feels still and suspended, as if not much is happening. Yet it is moving fast and with power -- and there is no reverse gear!



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