

## PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTION OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

### PRE-HISTORY OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL

#### **Ecumenical Beginnings**

Amid the many anniversaries that are eagerly anticipated by ecumenists in the coming years (Calvin and Luther being among them), one particularly bears with it the weight of ecumenical endeavour – 2010 marks the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, generally considered the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. There were 1,200 participants at that historic gathering, all of them Protestant – no Catholics or Orthodox were invited or present, and none, I'm sure, would have considered attending. The focus of the assembly was specifically Mission, and the spirit of the Conference was summed up by the strapline of the Protestant Christian Missionary community at the time: "The Evangelization of the World in This Generation".

There were other noteworthy ecumenical stirrings in the non-catholic world that followed, some of them from perhaps unexpected quarters. In 1919 the Ecumenical Patriarch wrote an encyclical 'To the churches of Christ everywhere,' committing himself to dialogue with Protestant communions. The encyclical contains the remarkable phrase "...rapprochement between the various Christian Churches and fellowship between them is not excluded by the doctrinal differences which exist between them..."

The real impetus, however, was coming from the Protestant world. Significant meetings of the Life & Work movement took place in 1925 in Stockholm, and of the Faith & Order movement in 1927 in Lausanne. These were the two main streams that were to flow into the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in London in 1948.

#### **RC Response**

The official Roman Catholic response to this growing movement could be described as somewhere on the chilly side of icy. In the 1917 Code of Canon Law (c 1325), the otherwise eirenic Pope Benedict XV had enshrined the prohibition on Catholics from participating in meetings with other Christians. Since the Roman Catholic Church constituted the one true Church of Christ, there could be no question of participating in the World Council of Churches, whose very name suggested a false equivalence of protestant communions with the Catholic Church. The only way forward, it was clear, was a unidirectional return to Rome; the fullest modern expression of this conviction came in Pius XI's 1928 Encyclical *Mortalium Animos*, which contemptuously described all ecumenical enthusiasm as 'indifferentism' and notoriously described ecumenists as 'pan-christians', indiscriminately associating with 'infidels and apostate Christians'. It concludes:

*'There is only one way in which the unity of Christians may be fostered, and that is by promoting the return to the one true church of Christ of those who are separated from it; for from that one true Church they have in the past unhappily fallen away.'*

It was, ecumenically speaking, a depressing story. Thankfully, however, it was not the *whole* story. Even at this time there were within the Catholic Church some remarkable initiatives and stirrings. In 1908, Paul Wattson, convert founder of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, established an octave of Prayer for Christian Unity, albeit in terms of a theology of return. However, his initiative was in 1935 broadened by Abbe Paul Coutourier into a more nuanced 'Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity' which was to be 'as Christ wishes and by the means which he desires.'

Perhaps the most remarkable project of this period took place from 1921 to 1927. With the tacit approval both of the Vatican and the Archbishop of Canterbury - on condition that they remained strictly secret - talks were held between Catholics and Anglicans, headed by Cardinal Mercier of Belgium and Lord Halifax; the so-called 'Malines Conversations'. The discussions examined the possibility of corporate re-union between Catholics and Anglicans, and proposed a model of 'reconciled diversity' which anticipated the language of Vatican II. They were far ahead of their time, indeed, far too far, and it didn't take much of a change of climate and personnel both in Rome and in England for the talks to be cancelled and consigned to history.

Individuals – notable among whom was Yves Congar – nevertheless kept the ecumenical agenda alive at some risk to their reputations. There were other signs of an ecumenical thaw amid the icy ecclesiastical landscape. In 1949 the Holy Office responded to the first session of the World Council of Churches in the letter "*Ecclesia Sancta*", cautiously acknowledging that the ecumenical movement 'derives from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,' and in 1952 the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Relations (a forerunner of the PCPCU) was founded by Jan Willebrands.

### **PCPCU: VATICAN II ORIGINS**

The origins and subsequent endeavours of the PCPCU are inextricably linked to the Second Vatican Council. It was the fervent and radical desire of Pope John XXIII that there should be ecumenical representation at the Council – which was to heap innovation upon innovation - and so in 1960 he established a 'Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity', with the specific aim of inviting and co-ordinating ecumenical delegations to the Council. Cardinal Augustin Bea of Germany was the first President, and he was charged to issue invitations to other churches and communions to send observers to the Council.

Cardinal Bea was originally a professor here at the Gregorian University, and rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute. He was also confessor to Pope Pius XII, and as such, he had had an immense influence on the publication of the ground-breaking 1943 encyclical on biblical studies, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. His stature, and determination, were evident even in the preparatory sessions of the Vatican Council, where he rejected the proposition that the Council Fathers take an oath composed of the Nicene Creed and the Anti-Modernist Oath.

Nevertheless, Cardinal Bea and his fledgling Secretariat for Unity faced a considerable task. Much as Pope John XXIII wanted to widen the ecumenical aspect of Vatican II, there was a widespread ignorance of the ecumenical movement among the voting members of the Council. It was assumed by the Fathers of the Council that the role of the Secretariat would be little more than that of a travel agent, that is, limited to taking care of the Orthodox and Protestant visitors.

The new President of the Secretariat, however, was distinctly determined otherwise. Cardinal Bea's biblical scholarship gave him a good knowledge of Protestant exegesis and exegetes, and his secretary Mgr Johannes Willebrands had extensive ecumenical experience in the Netherlands and in Europe more generally.

The members of the Secretariat, chiefly bishops and a few priests, were selected from areas where Catholics were neighbours to Orthodox, Anglicans, or Protestants. The Consultors – theological advisors to the Secretariat - were chosen from organisations, theological faculties and religious already involved in ecumenical relations.

Accordingly, Cardinal Bea brought to bear his considerable expertise and determination in ensuring that far from being little more than a guest manager, the new Secretariat would have teeth, confident in its pursuit of theological openness and dialogue.

The Secretariat for Christian Unity did not have to wait long to use those teeth. Early in the Council proceedings the Theological Commission produced a draft schema *De ecclesia*, which included a chapter *De Oecumenismo* simply renewing the invitations of Leo XIII and Pius XI to other Christians to come back to the fold under the authority of the Vicar of Christ. However, at the same time, the Commission for the Oriental Church was preparing a draft on the unity of the Church – *De Ecclesiae Unitate* - which offered a different understanding of ecumenism - presenting the unity of Christians not indeed as direct submission to Rome, but through restoration of communion with the bishop of Rome. This implied that the apostolic authority of all the ancient sees derived from Rome; a point of view that did not sit well with the ancient sees in question. The draft decrees were giving contradictory signals on ecumenism – on the one hand simply repeating the narrow requirement that other Christian denominations return to Rome, the other expressing an admittedly wider view of unity in terms of communion. Given this lack of clarity on the orientation of ecumenism, and a general dissatisfaction with the Theological Commission's proposed text on the Church, Pope John charged the Secretariat for Christian Unity to compose the decree that was to become *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which was adopted on November 21 1964, by 2137 votes to 11.

Under the steady hand of Cardinal Bea, the Secretariat – raised in 1962 by Pope John to the level of other commissions - prepared and presented to the Council the key documents on ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*), on non-Christian religions (*Nostra aetate*), on religious liberty (*Dignitatis humanae*) and, together with the doctrinal commission, the dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*). Originally Cardinal Ottaviani, the heavily conservative head of the Holy Office, had presented his own draft on the sources of Divine Revelation; Cardinal Bea claimed that it "would close the door to intellectual Europe and the outstretched hands of friendship in the old and new world."

In 1963, as the Vatican Council was proceeding, Pope Paul organised the Commission for Christian Unity into two sections, one dealing with the Orthodox and Ancient Oriental Churches, and the other with Western Ecclesial Communities.

Following the conclusion of the Vatican Council in 1966, the Pope confirmed the Secretariat as a permanent body, with Cardinal Bea continuing as its President until his death in 1968. His place was taken by his deputy, now Cardinal Johannes Willebrands. Of unparalleled experience and energy, Cardinal Willebrands was central to the ecumenical movement in the latter half of the twentieth century; after his retirement became President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council.

In 1989 Willebrand's successor Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy of Australia took over no longer a Secretariat, but an upgraded Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (or, as it is rather more neatly known, the PCPCU), as detailed in the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* of 28 June 1988. Following Cardinal Cassidy, in 2001 Cardinal Walter Kasper became President, a post from which he is expected to retire this current year.

The Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* neatly sets for the scope and operations of the new Pontifical Council. The relevant chapter is not long, and worth quoting in full:

*It is the function of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity to engage in ecumenical work through timely initiatives and activities, labouring to restore unity among Christians. It sees that the decrees of the Second Vatican Council pertaining to ecumenism are put into practice. It*

*deals with the correct interpretation of the principles of ecumenism and enjoins that they be carried out.*

*It fosters, brings together, and coordinates national and international Catholic organizations promoting Christian unity, and supervises their undertakings.*

*After prior consultation with the Supreme Pontiff, the Council maintains relations with Christians of Churches and ecclesial communities that do not yet have full communion with the Catholic Church, and especially organizes dialogue and meetings to promote unity with them, with the help of theological experts of sound doctrine. As often as may seem opportune, the Council deposes Catholic observers to Christian meetings, and it invites observers from other Churches and ecclesial communities to Catholic meetings.*

*Since the Council often deals with matters which by their very nature touch on questions of faith, it must proceed in close connection with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, especially if declarations and public documents have to be issued. In dealing with important matters concerning the separated Oriental Churches, the Council must first hear the Congregation for the Oriental Churches*

*Within the Council there exists a Commission to study and deal with matters concerning the Jews from a religious perspective, the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews; the president of the Council presides over the Commission. . (135 – 138)*

The programme therein set out comprises two basic elements:

1. To carry forward the work of Vatican II
2. To facilitate meetings and dialogues between the Catholic church and its ecumenical partners

In carrying out these two functions, the PCPCU is to liaise with the relevant Congregations in relation to documents and statements.

### **PCPCU:STRUCTURE**

The Pontifical Council itself, at its highest level, comprises Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, and a body of theological consultors – experts drawn from various theological faculties and institutions. These meet formally in a Plenary session of the Pontifical Council every two years, although obviously other contacts would occur in between those biennial sessions.

The permanent structure of the Pontifical Council follows that of other dicasteries: it is under the direction of the Cardinal President – at present Cardinal Walter Kasper - who is assisted by a Secretary and an under-Secretary. Following the categories of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which speaks of ‘two principle types of division which affect the seamless robe of Christ’ (UR13), the Council has two sections, an Eastern and a Western, the former dealing with the Orthodox Churches of Byzantine tradition (Greek, Russian, Serbian Orthodox etc); Oriental Orthodox Churches (Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian and Malankara) and the Assyrian Church of the East, and the latter with ecclesial Communities of the West and the World Council of Churches. Assistants, or Officials, work in both the Oriental and Occidental sections – that is, priests (like myself) who act as secretaries for each of the ecumenical dialogues. The work of an Official such as myself would fall under three headings:

### **1. Formal Dialogues**

The choosing of participants and locations for the main dialogue meetings, at which the Pontifical Council Official would act as secretary, sending out papers, taking minutes, and otherwise assisting the process of the dialogue. The PCPCU does not engage in national or local dialogues – it has neither the time or the resources - but the Officials need to be aware of, and catalogue, their progress.

### **2. Informal Relations**

This encompasses relations with representatives of our dialogue partners based in Rome (Anglican Centre, Methodist Church, Lutheran Church, Valdensian Church etc.), and maintaining links with overseas bodies, such as Lambeth Palace, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the World Methodist Council or the Lutheran World Federation. Officials would also participate in *informal* talks or meetings, and might attend as observers at meetings of dialogue partners – for example, the Lambeth Conference or the Methodist World Council. There are official visits to arrange, important visitors to greet, groups of pilgrims or students to talk with. In general, Officials would keep themselves informed of developments in their particular dialogue field, and update the PCPCU as necessary.

### **3. Nuncios**

Officials also act as a channel between Papal Nuncios and the PCPCU in relevant topics, receiving and answering mail, and preparing reports on the ecumenical situation when a new Nuncio takes up post.

In order to publicise its work as widely as possible, the PCPCU publishes a journal with the stimulating title of ‘Information Service’ four times a year, in English and French.

### **Relations with the Jews**

Closely linked with – but distinct from – the Pontifical Council is the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, established in 1974. The Cardinal President of the PCPCU also presides over this Commission, and the Secretary of the PCPCU is similarly its Vice-President.

## **WORK OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL**

### **1. ECUMENICAL DIRECTORY**

We’ve noted that in its on-going work the Pontifical Council is oriented towards Vatican II, and its first role is to promote, within the Catholic Church, an authentic Spirit according to the conciliar decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*. To this end, the PCPCU published a series of directories in the post-conciliar years:

- 1967 ‘A directory for the Application of the Second Vatican Council’s Decisions on Ecumenism.’ This dealt with several practical concerns, including the creation of diocesan and regional commissions, necessary for working out the Council’s ideas. It also affirmed the validity of baptism administered by the ministers of other churches and ecclesial communities, and promoted sharing among churches where possible.
- 1970 ‘Ecumenism in Higher Education’ laid more groundwork, presenting general principles that undergird ecumenism, and from that drawing out particular norms for ecumenical formation and collaboration, especially in regard to schools and institutions.

These documents served the Church well, but soon started to look a little dated, as other developments began to affect the ecumenical scene - most notably the revision of the Code of Canon Law in 1983, and publication of the Code of Oriental Canon Law in 1990. In 1992, the

Catechism of the Catholic Church included the ecumenical dimension as part of the basic teaching for all the faithful of the Church. As the ecumenical life of the Church had intensified since the Council, and Catholics were becoming more accustomed to interaction with non-Catholics, it also became clear - for example - that the existing directories had not adequately treated topics such as marriages between Catholics and other Christians. A more coherent integration of all these topics was needed, and so in 1985, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Pope John Paul called for the updating of the directory.

The Secretariat took on the long and meticulous process of development and consultation. The document passed through several committees, and received reactions from Episcopal conferences around the world. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith refined it further, and Pope John Paul approved the final document which was published on 25 March 1993 as the 'Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism' under the auspices of the renamed Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The finished document is in five sections. It opens with a chapter on the search for Christian Unity – this is new theological material rooted in the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism and Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Then it treats the organisation of the Catholic Church in its service to Christian Unity, calling for internal commissions and international cooperation. The third section concerns ecumenical formation in the Catholic Church, an attempt to widen participation in the ecumenical movement. The fourth section gathers the practical matters of communion of life and spiritual activity among the baptised. The final section calls for collaboration, dialogue and common witness to ecumenism.

The directory does, as we say in England, what it says on the tin – it gives directions on ecumenical questions that arise for Catholics in religious and social settings, in families, friendships and communities.

The fourth section, the longest, usually gets the most attention, as it looks at liturgy and prayer among Christian churches and communions, dealing with FAQs such as, 'May a Catholic serve as a godparent at a non-catholic baptism?' May a catholic be a best man at a non-Catholic wedding? May someone from an eastern Orthodox Church receive communion at a Catholic Mass? May a Catholic receive communion at a non-Catholic church? The section contains principles for prayer in common, sharing in non-sacramental liturgical worship, and sharing in the sacramental life of the Church, especially in the Eucharist, but also penance and anointing.

*[Just to give you a flavour of this section of the directory, I am going to look at two of the topics that it deals with in especial detail.*

*The sacrament of Baptism prompts several concerns, including conditions for its validity and the role of godparents. Regarding validity, the document makes an assumption in favour of the validity of baptisms in which the minister uses the proper matter and form, and has the same intention as the Church.*

*This affirmation conceals a change in baptismal practice since the Second Vatican Council. Formerly, the baptism of other Christians was generally considered doubtful; if a non-catholic Christian converted, conditional baptism was usually administered. In fact, so common was this assumption that the formula for conditional baptism appeared in the Roman Ritual alongside the regular formula.*

*But now the baptisms of other Christians in the main churches and ecclesial communities is presumed to be valid. If any of them desire the full communion of the Catholic Church, they celebrate the Rite of Reception. The priest who receives them also Confirms them. If a conditional baptism is to be performed, it is to happen in private (93 – 95, 99 – 100)*

*The second issue, that of godparenting across denominational lines, has vexed many a Catholic. The directory explains that baptisms happen within a single ecclesial context. Only a person within that Church or ecclesial community may function as a godparent, but other baptised Christians may serve as witnesses together with the godparent. Catholic parents are advised to seek a Catholic godparent, even if they intend to include a non-catholic witness. The text also says that Catholics may serve as witnesses for baptisms in other Christian communities if the host church provides a godparent (98).*

*In sharing spiritual activities and resources, the directory encourages Catholics to make full use of what they share in common with others. Many non-sacramental occasions may draw churches together for prayer; the funeral of a non-catholic may even be held in a catholic church (102 – 121). Catholics may share buildings and religious objects with non-catholics, as long as each community's faith is respected. The question of sharing other sacraments is, of course, much more nuanced, and depends largely on whether the non-catholic individual comes from the churches of the west or east. Here, the Eucharist and Marriage pose difficult problems, and the Directory here is both rich and challenging.]*

In many ways, this was working out the detail of the broad brush strokes of Unitatis Redintegratio, trying to enfold the new vision of ecumenism, while remaining true to the Church's teaching and doctrine, and avoiding a false or unfaithful union. The Directory is a major tool in the first object of the Pontifical Council, that is, the promotion of a genuine ecumenical spirit, and is still the manual which governs – or should govern – all the statements and declarations of the Church, from whatever dicastery, that touch upon ecumenical matters.

## **2. INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUES**

If the first role of the Pontifical Council could be said to look at the Catholic Church's internal and local life as it is expressed ecumenically, in its other role it looks externally and internationally, for the second task of the PCPCU is, of course, to engage in dialogue and collaboration with other Churches and World Communions and, since 1968, the World Council of Churches.

Reprising its role at Vatican II, the Pontifical Council names Catholic delegates to the various bilateral (that is, two-party) dialogues and other ecumenical gatherings, and also invites observers (or 'fraternal delegates') to major events of the Catholic Church. An example of this latter was the recent Synod of Bishops on the Word of God, to which the Pontifical Council invited twelve fraternal delegates, among them Anglican Bishop Tom Wright of Durham.

In this capacity, the Pontifical Council is at present engaged in 15 international bi-lateral theological dialogues, with churches and ecclesial communions that include:

- The Orthodox Church
- The Oriental Orthodox Churches
- The Anglican Communion
- The Lutheran World Federation
- The World Alliance of Reformed Churches
- The World Methodist Council
- The Baptist World Alliance

- The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- The Mennonites
- Some Pentecostal groups.

I know you will be addressing several of these dialogues later in the course, but if time permits at the end I shall say a little more about them from the Pontifical Council's point of view, for they are the 'staple diet' of the PCPCU

### **THE FUTURE WORK OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL**

It is quite possible – and indeed realistic - to assert that the PCPCU will have work for many a year to come; for its task will only be accomplished when the visible unity of Christ's Church is accomplished. That is indeed our goal. We may be preoccupied with the interim steps that will take us there, and certain events or crises may make that destination seem further off so that sometime we may seem to be but whistling in the wind, but the PCPCU remains true to that hope and expectation that the day will come when, in the words of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 'all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed upon his Church from the beginning.' (UR4)

Therefore the Council strongly resists the notion that we have done enough, or have done all that we can do. We are wary of terms such as 'reconciled diversity', if by that is meant a certain contentment with staying where we are and resting with our divisions. A French Protestant minister was recently reported as saying to a Catholic associate; 'four hundred years ago we were killing each other, one hundred years ago we wouldn't speak to each other. Shouldn't we just be content now to live together as we are?' The Pontifical Council would certainly not be content with such a situation, which falls far short of the unity for which Christ prayed. Our attitude – and the attitude of the whole Church - was given voice by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, 'it is now necessary to advance to the visible unity which is required and is sufficient and which is manifested in a real and concrete way.' (UUS 78)

### **DIALOGUE ACHIEVEMENTS**

If we take stock, which we are much given to doing just now, there is much to rejoice over in the recent history of ecumenical dialogue. When we are grinding through knotty theological problems, or are faced with difficult developments in our partners' communions, it is rather easy to forget just how much has been achieved. Indeed, we are no longer killing each other, but are engaged in dialogues of mutual respect and relations of warmth and mutual appreciation. That itself is a remarkable accomplishment. Many of the classic disputes have been shown to be classic 'misunderstandings', or misrepresentations of each other's position. We have learned to recognize the gifts of others, and have moved beyond the old polemics.

The dialogue with the Orthodox Churches feels particularly successful at the moment, especially given the long and painful history of division between us. The achievements of hard, patient, years of dialogue seem to be bearing fruit; the Ecumenical Patriarch is extremely open to the West and a familiar guest in Rome, and the new Patriarch of Moscow seems to be well disposed towards the Catholic Church, and has already met the Holy Father several times. There is a sense of real excitement and possibilities here.

With the Western, or Reformation, dialogues, although the history of division is less ancient, remarkable achievements can be signalled and deserve to be better known. As we have grown in confidence and friendship, we feel happier at moving away from specific historical formulae, and realise that it sometimes is possible to say the same thing in different ways that suddenly light up

our partners' eyes. Yet we must also be honest, and admit that, overall, things are not going well with these dialogues at the moment.

Cardinal Kasper has recently reflected on where we are on our ecumenical journey, and notes five key points where significant agreement has been reached with our major dialogue partners in the West, most notably Lutherans, Anglicans, Reformed and Methodist:

### **1. Shared Apostolic Faith**

It may now seem an obvious 'given', but agreement on basics could not always be taken for granted. There were mutual suspicions about faithful adherence to fundamental truths such as the Bible as the Word of God, or the decrees of the first ecumenical councils. It has been important to discuss and confirm together the basic tenets of our shared Christian faith; the Trinity, the divine-human nature of Jesus Christ, the one and universal mediator between God and man. Confessing the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church – all these deepen the common foundation of our real but still incomplete communion.

### **2. A renewed understand of the Relationship between Scripture and Tradition**

If ever there was a topic of crude caricature in religious polemics, it was the relationship between Scripture and Tradition; the general idea was that Protestants believe the bible literally, while Catholics make up the bits that are missing in Scripture from Tradition. Today, it is no longer possible to pit Scripture and Tradition against each other in this way, as was common in the polemical heat of the Reformation. As our partners acknowledge, *Sola scriptura* is not *nuda scriptura*. Scripture itself is the product of Tradition, and the later Tradition is the history of interpretation of the Word of God. The dialogues have asserted the value of the intervening centuries since the composition of the sacred texts, and understand that we cannot simply ignore what happened afterwards in the mistaken belief that we can simply return to the pure scriptures. We have also learned to distinguish the one Tradition from the many traditions, and the primacy of Scripture within this complex process of interpretation. Overall, recognizing the scripture as the inspired Word of God, we have all grown in a shared biblical spirituality.

### **3. The Doctrine of Justification**

The greatest tangible achievements of the post conciliar years in dialogue with the Protestant communities has been the promulgation in 1999 by Catholics and Lutherans – and official reception by their relevant authorities - of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. This makes it the only ecumenical agreement which has received official recognition by both bodies. With the Joint Declaration, we have come to see that the classic Reformation hot potatoes - *sola gratia* and *sola fide* – do not in fact contradict the Catholic affirmation that by grace we are made capable of bearing good fruits through works of justice, mercy and active love. Through justification, God's saving grace calls, frees and equips us for holiness and personal sanctification. Thus, a common witness can now be given to the hope that is within us.

### **4. Deepened understanding of the nature of the Church**

The old and stark Reformation opposition of a visible, institutional Church to an invisible, spiritual one is, according to Cardinal Kasper, no longer tenable. This is a typical area where a new way of examining an old issue has brought out a measure of movement in a previously grid-locked street. In this case, Catholics and Protestants have looked together at the Church through the prism of its Trinitarian roots and its nature as communion, and here we have been able to find a new context to understand the Church and its ministries – and while we certainly cannot speak of agreement in these areas, there has been a remarkable convergence.

### **5. New approaches to Baptism and Eucharist**

Our agreement on common baptism is now taken for granted, and is the stuff of daily pastoral business, as we celebrate mixed marriages or support the RCIA. Before Vatican II, however, it was common for Catholic priests to re-baptise converts, even from the mainline churches; now there is a general recognition of a common baptism. To a lesser, but no less remarkable, extent, the study of the Eucharist - especially when approached through the liturgy - has found numerous convergences. In particular, the Anglican-Catholic statement on the Eucharist has received official recognition, if somewhat short of full reception.

These are significant developments, enough to excite any theologian, pastor and congregation. Many of those who come to the documents for the first time are astonished at the degree of agreement that has been achieved, and equally astonished that it is not better known and lived out. Perhaps the passage of time has dulled us to the splendour of what has been achieved. After forty years of dialogue, the PCPCU is keen to introduce these achievements to a new generation of theologians, and to foster the ecumenical awareness of those in formation

### **REMAINING DIFFERENCES AND OPEN QUESTIONS**

Granted all this, however, the PCPCU finds itself in a dilemma. As I have mentioned, the Eastern dialogues are in optimistic mood just now, and the positive atmosphere is one we formerly associated with the Western dialogues in the 1970s. In the West, however, there is evident something of a weariness with ecumenical dialogue. The progress towards unity must continue, but the pace has slowed, and seemingly insurmountable problems have presented themselves.

Some, indeed, have spoken of an 'ecumenical winter'. Forty years of dialogues have produced shelves full of agreed statements, and an impressive history of achievements. Yet, one cannot fail to read all this and ask, why are we not further forward? Why has the optimism of earlier years not translated into reality?

I think that the late Cardinal Avery Dulles hit the nail on the head when he said that in the early years of ecumenical dialogue, we found similarities in what we had thought was different, but now we are finding differences in what we thought was similar. A maturity of the dialogue process, and the reality of recent events in the communions of our partners has caused us all to examine the detail of our agreements, to 'drill down' on those agreed statements, and to acknowledge that the language of many of them concealed different interpretations or divergences in important details. The search for new formulae to express old positions can offer progress; but it can also paper over cracks. Agreed statements with Lutherans, for example, on the Eucharist are very positive in tone, but a little careful study shews that they do not address the issues of Real Presence, or Eucharistic reservation. Here, there is not yet agreement, a difficulty underlined when several of our dialogue partners have made ecumenical agreements with other ecclesial bodies that seem to take them further away from a catholic position. The Lutherans, for example, entered into an agreement with the Reformed Churches on Eucharistic sharing which causes us to question their real commitment to a Catholic understanding of the Eucharist.

A further point is that while we may indeed agree with a partner that our different explanation of a particular doctrine is complementary rather than exclusive, there will still be a disagreement upon the necessity of that doctrine. Methodists, for example, have shown themselves ready to accept the notion of episcopacy and indeed three-fold ministry, but if pressed, would not say they see these things as necessary, only permissible.

Cardinal Kasper has recently enumerated the remaining key issues – and they are key issues – that are holding back progress in dialogue with Western partners. They are:

1. The interpretation of basic Church confessions and statements. While the major protestant faiths profess the same Creed, it has become apparent that even at this basic level there are differences of interpretation - and even the rejection of some basic affirmations. Cardinal Kasper sees this especially in the Lutheran communion, where social, analytical and post-modern interpretations of basic texts offer a variety of interpretations – so that some theologians question or deny the bodily resurrection of Christ, or even his divine nature.
2. Despite considerable consensus on the relation between Scripture and Tradition, it is evident that there is not yet agreement on the relative role of both. *How far* are binding interpretations of Scripture contained in Scripture? *Who decides* about the binding interpretation of our common apostolic heritage? Cardinal Kasper notes as well the re-emergence of ‘historical critical’ methods of biblical scholarship, which tend to remove any divinely inspired aspect of scripture, and call into question many common inherited interpretations of it, so that even within a communion there can be several different interpretations of key texts.
3. While the agreement on the Doctrine of Justification is indeed a milestone, what it doesn’t say is as important as what it does say. The Joint Declaration, on close examination, is revealed as a consensus only on **basic** truths. At this distance from the event, with perhaps more sober reflection, we see that the Declaration conceals differences on the interpretation of the doctrine. At the root of these differences, believes Cardinal Kasper, is the question of theological anthropology. Our differing view of what man is before God is coming to the fore as the source not only of theological differences, but increasingly our ethical differences – such as human sexuality, marriage and family.
4. A key issue for Cardinal Kasper is a different understanding of the Church itself. While we are no longer so crude as to state that the Protestant position ignores *institutional* aspects, it is still true to say that it broadly views the Church more as ‘event’ - existing wherever the gospel is correctly preached and the sacraments administered. In contrast, the Catholic view is markedly sacramental, wherein the Church of Christ and her whole mystery subsists in a concrete and permanent institutional structure, in communion with the Bishop of Rome and the bishops in communion with him. This results in different opinions on what full church unity means, and indeed on the very goal of the ecumenical movement.
5. As a final point, Cardinal Kasper noted that although the dialogues record much agreement on sacraments, there are still important differences especially over the Eucharist; in particular, the themes of the real presence and the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist – that is, how and in what sense the Eucharist is the memorial representation of the one and unique sacrifice of Christ.

A complicating factor is a methodological problem that affects the dialogues. Catholic participants are aware of being able to call upon a mature and thorough Magisterium, that provides an authoritative and united Catholic position on theological issues. Our dialogue partners, however, both in East and West, have no such developed or consistent position. A vivid example of this was shown in the last meeting of the Catholic-Methodist dialogue, where the Eucharist was being discussed. The Catholic delegates were able to draw upon a vast body of authoritative material and developed theological reflexion on the Eucharist. The Methodists have no such material, and were in fact deducing the Methodist doctrine on the Eucharist from the hymns of Charles Wesley. This material is not only sparse; there is a real question as to whether all Methodists these days would understand those hymns as expressing their own standpoint. The other Western communions have, of course, the confessional statements of the Reformation – Calvin’s Institutes or the Augsburg Confession for example - but these frequently only deal with certain narrow issues and – moreover - are often re-interpreted today. It is extremely unlikely that an Anglican theologian today base his or her theological position on the 39 Articles.

## THE IMPACT OF EVENTS

In addition to the, as it were, **internal** questions raised by the dialogues, the PCPCU must take account of **external** events. This has had particular ramifications for the Anglican dialogue.

In 2003, Gene Robinson, a man in a same-sex relationship, was nominated as Anglican bishop of New Hampshire in the United States. At almost the same time, the Anglican diocese of New Anglicana di New Westminster in Canada approved a rite for the blessing of persons in homosexual relationships. The reactions throughout the worldwide Anglican communion were immediate. Several bishops threatened schism, parishes distanced themselves from the authority of their local bishops and in some cases placed themselves under bishops from other parts of the Anglican communion, and four dioceses of the Anglican church in America have withdrawn allegiance to the Presiding Bishop and are seeking to form a new, parallel, province. At the same time, the ordination of women priests, and now bishops, raises insurmountable barriers to reunion.

Where does this leave the dialogue process? The answer is, to be frank, in not a very good place. The internal debates and rifts in the Anglican communion demonstrate both a weakness of their own ecclesiology, and a move from positions previously agreed in our dialogues. They also leave the Pontifical Council with a considerable headache: What value can be placed on existing agreements, when it appears to us that recent developments contradict them? If substantial groups break away, in America or in Africa, what will our relations be with them? With whom do we dialogue, and to what end?

Similar issues, even if not so pressing, have arisen in the Lutheran and Reformed dialogues. As I've already mentioned, Lutheran agreed statements with Calvinists seem to contradict what had been agreed in their talks with the Catholic Church, while Methodists' introduction of non-Trinitarian baptismal formulae, and lay presidency at the Eucharist seem to undermine previous consensus. There is a sense that hard-won agreements are now being rendered worthless, that what appeared to be solid ground is in fact shifting sand.

However, as *Unitatis Redintegratio* itself admits, when it comes to divisions, 'people of both sides were to blame.' (UR 3) The whole purpose of dialogue, as experienced in the last fifty years, is to ensure that contrasting positions do not harden into separation because the partners involved do not listen to one another, or do not take the time to understand what is really being said, or what is the deeper context of a partner's position. A case in point might be documents such as *Dominus Iesus*, or the '*Clarifications on certain questions concerning the church*' which were received with dismay by our ecumenical partners. Such statements help clarify positions, but from our partners' viewpoint they also can sew seeds of doubt as to our ecumenical commitment, and give rise to statements from them that the Catholic Church is pulling back from its commitment to ecumenism. This is clearly not the case, and the Holy Father has signalled clearly the importance he attaches to ecumenism, but our dialogues must work hard to enable us to move on from such moments.

## THE HARVEST PROJECT

As a major contribution to the ecumenical scene at this time of what Cardinal Kasper calls 'sober reality' in the western dialogues, he has been leading the PCPCU in compiling the 'Harvest document.' This is the first time that the results of the four main western bi-lateral dialogue processes – Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist and Reformed - have been drawn together to enable an appreciation of common themes and issues. Cardinal Kasper envisages the Harvest document as serving three purposes:

- Firstly, it is an attempt to draw together ('harvest') the results of forty years of bilateral dialogues between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist and Reformed Churches, and show the rich results of that process.

- Secondly, it is an opportunity to assess the remaining unresolved issues, and those areas that require closer attention.
- Thirdly, it is an opportunity to present the results of forty years' of dialogue to a new generation that has grown up after Vatican II, and to give them a tool to discern how to take the dialogue process forward.

The document is in four chapters, dealing respectively with Fundamentals of our Common Faith; Salvation, Justification, Sanctification; The Church; The Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. Each of these chapters has its own introduction and conclusion. There is also an introductory chapter to the whole work, and a final chapter entitled 'Some Preliminary Conclusions'.

The Harvest Document has already aroused considerable interest among our dialogue partners. At this stage, it is envisaged as a study document. It may be that a popular version, or an 'ecumenical catechism' may arise out of it later. Nevertheless, the problem it address is one of stagnation, or at least of pause, in the ecumenical scene. Cardinal Kasper says, in the conclusion, that unanswered questions 'cast a shadow over the rich results of more than forty years of dialogue.' The document seeks to identify problems clearly, so that they can be addressed; this, believes the Pontifical Council, is the first step towards solving them.

### **A NEW ECUMENISM?**

Given this somewhat down-beat prognosis, is the ecumenical patient beyond resuscitation? The Pontifical Council certainly does not think so, and has committed itself to seek new and more effective ways of dialogue, and aid the reception of what has already been achieved.

Firstly, there must be a continual process of personal conversion, which *Unitatis Redintegratio* spoke of as the prerequisite for ecumenism. Recently, Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council, linked the notion of healing of past wrongs to the idea of personal conversion: *"In ecumenism, conversion has much to do with the purification of the memory; that is, of again seeing all these events of the past -- which have caused so much suffering and so many divisions -- in the light of Christ. Christ reconciles all in one."*

You have, I believe, already looked at the Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism, developed from 2003 by the Pontifical Council. This Handbook is an attempt to take forward the statement of *Unitatis Redintegratio* that a "change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be the soul of the ecumenical movement, and merits the name 'spiritual ecumenism'(UR 8). In the Handbook, the Pontifical Council seeks to take the ecumenical process beyond the locked rooms and rarified atmosphere of the dialogue commissions, and give a living heart to what can seem a dry, academic process. This, we believe, is the key to a new ecumenism. Ecumenism, as well as being an academic concern, should be a personal conviction, and bring with it a heartfelt commitment to change and repentance.

This conviction has recently received a fresh impetus from a new ecumenical method which seems to offer an invigorated ecumenical process. This is the notion of 'Receptive Ecumenism', which has attracted considerable interest, including that of the PCPCU.

Receptive Ecumenism employs a subtle change of emphasis, asking not what we have to tell our dialogue partners, but what we can appropriately learn from them. It is about listening, more than talking. It is about seeing unity not as some distant goal, which we have to construct ourselves, but rather as an entity existing already in the divine intent, which we can draw down and realise, if we

only have ears to hear. Receptive Ecumenism realises that as a pilgrim church, we can learn from each other on the path to the goal all share.

I was recently at a Receptive Ecumenism conference, and was astonished at the extent to which other Christians were willing to listen and consider the value of Catholic realities, not to become Roman Catholics, but to become better Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists - to help them, in fact, become what they are. To hear Baptists acknowledge the value of apostolic succession, to hear Reformed Christians speaking approvingly of the 'sensus fidelium', induced a feeling of elation rarely experienced in ecumenical circles these days.

Indeed, this is to carry forward the message of Pope John Paul in *Ut Unum Sint*: "Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an exchange of gifts." (28) This must begin in an interior disposition of readiness to move beyond historic antagonism or polemical stances, in taking seriously the historic statement of *Lumen Gentium* 8 that "...many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside [the Catholic Church's] visible confines. Since these are gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity."

For this exchange of gifts truly to be meaningful, for the change of heart to bear fruit, then the results of forty years of dialogue need to be received, not just by theologians, but by *bishops* and by the *laity*. The PCPCU is for this reason currently hesitant simply to plunge into new rounds of traditional ecumenical dialogue commissions. It is remarkable, and regrettable, how little the results of forty years of ecumenical dialogues have percolated down to the roots of the church, and how ignorant most of our faithful still are of what has been achieved.

Accordingly, while the PCPCU is committed to continuing theological dialogue, it is also considering seriously the way in which that dialogue should take place, and how its results can be received in our churches and ecclesial communities. We believe that we must engage in a new type of dialogue process, where alongside theological dialogue are placed spiritual and affective ecumenism. We are therefore asking ourselves and our partners whether the commissions of the future should be limited to theological experts, or should they also include those church leaders who can aid reception at the highest levels in their communities, and local experts who help bring the fruits of dialogue to parishes and other local institutions. Should the Pontifical Council engage in more local ecumenical activity, highlighting real achievements in parishes and communities and sharing best practice?

If reception of ecumenical agreements is indeed the key issue, then the Pontifical Council is right to pause, and to ask how this process may be aided, in the dialogues both of East and West. Perhaps rather than seeking to create yet more documents, we need to bring those we have into the life of the Church. As Pope John Paul said, the results of the dialogues 'cannot remain the statements of bilateral commissions, but must become a common heritage. For this to come about and for the bonds of communion to be thus strengthened, a serious examination needs to be made, which.. must involve the whole People of God.' (UUS 80)

## **APPENDIX: THE DIALOGUES IN DETAIL**

I'll say a little bit more about each of these dialogues, since in many ways they define the identity of the Pontifical Council.

### **ORIENTAL/EASTERN DIALOGUES**

There are two main dialogues here, with confusingly similar names, although they are quite distinct. One dialogue takes place with the Byzantine Orthodox tradition (familiar to us as Greek Orthodox,

Russian Orthodox, Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbian Orthodox and so on), and the other with the Oriental Orthodox Churches (these are the ancient Churches who share with us the first three ecumenical councils – Nicaea, Constantinople I and Ephesus - but who reject the third, that of Chalcedon, in 451).

A little more on both these dialogues.

#### **A) BYZANTINE ORTHODOX**

John XXIII is again a key figure here, for as Archbishop Roncalli, Apostolic Nuncio in Turkey from 1934 – 1944, he established good relations with the Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin, which were continued at the request of Benjamin's successor, the great Athenagoras, and taken up in earnest when Roncalli became Pope John XXIII.

The calling of the Second Vatican Council provoked some grave concern among the various Orthodox communities, not least because there had been an invitation to the Orthodox to attend Vatican I issued by Pope Pius IX, which strongly asserted Papal prerogatives. Despite intense diplomatic activity by Cardinal Bea and Mgr Willebrands, the Orthodox community was unexcited at the prospect of another aggressive bout of Papal lecturing. Patriarch Athenagoras did, however, send personal representatives to the Vatican Council, and Bea and Willebrands briefed him about the first session.

However, the Pan-Orthodox Conference of 1964 renewed commitment to ecumenical dialogue, and permitted *local* Orthodox churches to initiate such relationships. This allowed Athenagoras to upgrade the Patriarchal observers at the later sessions of the Vatican Council to become his official delegates. In 1964, Pope Paul and Patriarch Athenagoras had their famous meeting in Jerusalem, and in 1965 the mutual excommunications of 1054 of the two Churches were lifted.

Following the Council, a growth in the confidence made possible the establishment of a commission in 1976 to prepare for an official dialogue. In 1978 it submitted a document to the authorities of both churches which proposed a methodology where dialogue concentrated first on the many areas that the two churches have in common, establishing a firm theological foundation with a new theological language, that would then be the basis for fruitful discussion on the divisive issues of the past – including, of course, the role of the Bishop of Rome.

On the Feast of St Andrew in 1979 Patriarch Dimitrios I and Pope John Paul jointly declared in Istanbul the opening of official dialogue between the Churches, with, as its aim, “an advance towards the reestablishment of full communion between the Catholic and Orthodox Sister Churches.” One of the Catholic delegates was, to note in passing, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

#### **THE INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE**

The first session took place on the islands of Patmos and Rhodes in 1980. Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, President of the Vatican's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, and Archbishop Stylianos of Australia (for the Ecumenical Patriarchate) were chosen as co-presidents.

Over the next eight years, the commission met five more times, and much progress was made. As the preparatory commission had suggested, common areas such as Eucharist and Apostolic Succession were treated, with a large measure of agreement.

However, the mood changed in 1989, with the fall of the iron curtain, and the re-emergence of Eastern Catholic Churches that had been suppressed by the communists. This fed into longstanding Orthodox grievances going back to the creation of some Eastern Catholic Churches centuries earlier – the so called ‘Uniate’ Churches.

Despite a common statement following the 1993 meeting at the Balamand Orthodox School of Theology in Lebanon, which while recognising the problem of uniate churches, nevertheless affirmed their right to exist, this issue rapidly took over the agenda. By 1999, a dialogue meeting at Emmitsburg, Maryland, under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, reached an impasse on the subject. At that meeting, in fact, many Orthodox churches not only objected to uniate churches, but denied absolutely their right to exist. So unfortunately, what had happened was precisely what the preparatory committee had warned against – divisive issues had risen to the top of the agenda before common elements had been agreed.

Thankfully things were soon to change for the better. Cardinal Walter Kasper, by now head of the PCPCU, hosted an important Catholic-Orthodox symposium in 2003 on the role of the Pope. At that symposium, Metropolitan John of Pergamon from the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate made careful arguments in favour of a "universal primacy" and said the Orthodox churches could accept a universal primacy as long as it did not undermine the ecclesiological integrity of any local church.

Then at Ravenna in 2007, Catholic and Orthodox members of the commission turned their attention to the somewhat indigestible theme of "the ecclesiological and canonical consequences of the sacramental nature of the Church - conciliarity and synodality in the Church," and approved a joint document.

There were still unexpected setbacks; the Russian Orthodox delegation withdrew from the Ravenna meeting because of the presence of the Church of Estonia. However, the meeting was overall a considerable success. The resulting joint document speaks of "the tension between authority and conciliarity -- or synodality -- at the local (that is, diocesan), regional and universal levels." Now this little phrase is important because, as Cardinal Kasper said, it conceals the fact that "for the first time the Orthodox Churches have said yes, this universal level of the Church exists and also at the universal level there is conciliarity, synodality and authority; this means that there is also a primate; according to the practice of the ancient Church, the first bishop is the Bishop of Rome."

The Dialogue is set to meet later this year to study the theme of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome in the first millennium, and this will need to be followed by consideration of the second millennium and the councils that were held after the division between the Churches to see what consensus can be reached. Much painstaking work remains, and there is much suspicion and memory of historical animosities that needs to be overcome – but in general, the mood of this dialogue is upbeat.

## **B) ORIENTAL ORTHODOX**

Unofficial contacts had taken place between the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox churches since 1971, and there had been several regional encounters, but the official International Dialogue did not take place until 2004, under the co-presidency of Cardinal Kasper and Metropolitan Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Twenty eight clergy and lay theologians of the Armenian, Coptic, Syrian, Indian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches - the representatives of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church were absent - and the Catholic Church evaluated the work of the official and unofficial bi-lateral dialogues between the Catholic Church and the Family of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the common declarations signed by the Heads of their respective Churches.

Following the by now well-established pattern of ecumenical dialogue, the commission first established the many basic points of agreement; they have the same faith in the Triune God and in the Saviour Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and they share as common Fathers and Teachers of the Church.

It then moved on to wider issues of ecclesiology and communion, in particular exposing the Oriental Orthodox churches to some of the contemporary nuances in Catholic theology – for example, looking at the notion of ‘degrees of communion’, or at the idea of salvation outside the formal Church, both of which are unfamiliar to Oriental Orthodox ears.

This issue of salvation outside the Church is a live and complex one for the Oriental Orthodox Churches, most of which are based in Muslim countries where they face serious issues around mixed marriages and proselytism. Inevitably, then, the 2008 dialogue focussed on the Mission of the Church, while the 2009 session is expected to look back to common roots in the Fathers and the first Councils.

## WESTERN DIALOGUES

### A. ANGLICAN

The recent history of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, and the involvement of the PCPCU in that history, revolves in the main around the official international dialogues, known as the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, thankfully shortened to ‘ARCIC’.

Despite the unequivocal rejection of the validity of Anglican Orders in the Papal Bull *Apostolicae Curae* of 1896, there had been some early attempts at rapprochement between the Catholic Church and Anglican Communion. I have already mentioned the Malines Conversations in the 1920s; in 1960 Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher visited Pope John – albeit in a private capacity. In 1966, Archbishop Ramsey paid the first official visit of an Archbishop of Canterbury to Rome since the Reformation. On this occasion, Pope Paul VI famously gave him his own episcopal ring from Milan, and they issued a *Common Declaration* ‘to inaugurate a serious dialogue...which, founded on the Gospels and the ancient common tradition, may lead to the unity for which Christ prayed.’

As a result the Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) was established in 1970, with its first phase lasting ten years. During this time, agreed statements were issued on the key issues of **Eucharist**, **Ordination** and **Authority**. Documents were, in fact, coming out thick and fast, and it looked as though the goal of visible union was firmly within grasp. ARCIC I issued an enthusiastic *Final Report* in 1981, shortly before Pope John Paul’s visit to Great Britain. The progress all these statements represented was sufficiently encouraging to persuade the Pope and the Archbishop to issue a further joint declaration, from Canterbury, establishing a second round of ARCIC dialogues.

This moment was perhaps the high point of the ARCIC process, for at this point, progress seemed to falter. ARCIC II painted with a broader palette, looking at more abstract themes as though less sure of basic terrain. Agreed statements were produced on *Salvation and the Church* and *The Church as Communion*, but it was apparent that progress in the 1980s was not as fast as that a decade earlier.

The 1988 Lambeth Conference responded to the *Final Report* of ARCIC I, largely positively, but the official response of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1991 was lukewarm, and asked for clarifications. ARCIC issued these clarifications on the Eucharist and Ministry in 1993, after which the CDF stated that ‘no further study seemed to be required at this stage’ – an acceptance, if not a ringing endorsement.

Nevertheless, there was enough enthusiasm to keep hopes high. In 1995 Cardinal Cassidy, president of the PCPCU, wrote to the co-chairmen of ARCIC II that a declaration of real agreement by both traditions concerning Eucharist and Ministry ‘could lead to a new evaluation’ of Pope Leo XIII’s 1896 assessment of Anglican Orders. The next year, the *Common Declaration* by Pope John

Paul II and Archbishop George Carey ‘affirmed the signs of progress’ and encouraged ARCIC to ‘continue and deepen our theological dialogues’.

A parallel dialogue process was established after a meeting of Catholic and Anglican hierarchy in Canada in 2000. The International Anglican - Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission – known by the unlovely moniker IARCCUM – was asked to discern the progress made in the implementation of the ARCIC agreements, and develop strategies for closer co-operation between the two traditions. Its key document ‘*Growing Together in Unity and Mission*’, reviewing 40 years of dialogues and offering practical suggestions for ecumenical co-operation, was published in 2006.

However, as you certainly will be aware, events in the Anglican communion were to overtake the dialogues. Although ARCIC II had just completed the major document on Marian theology in 2005, Pope John Paul II suspended ARCIC following the consecration of Gene Robinson, a gay man in a non-celibate relationship, as a bishop in the Episcopal Church in the United States. Moreover, the ordination of women, although a reality in the Anglican communion since the 1970s, has come into sharper focus, and has taken the soul out of moves to draw closer. What seemed once a tangible reality is now reduced to theoretical speculation.

For the PCPCU, this is a difficult time. ARCIC and IARCCUM are on hold, and although there have been exploratory meetings about ARCIC III, the feeling in the Council is that the situation in the Anglican Communion is too fluid and uncertain to recommence formal international dialogue at the moment. Recent developments seem to undermine the agreements we had reached on communion, authority and ministry – which must throw the whole process of dialogue into question. If communions do not feel themselves bound by previous statements, is there a value in resuming dialogue meetings in the same form?

This is a painful question, particularly in the light of what has been achieved, and the eagerness of Anglicans to re-engage in dialogue. The dialogues *will* resume, that is certain, but it is not clear what shape they will take. In the meantime, personal contact is essential, and the PCPCU maintains warm relations with the Anglican Centre in Rome and with Lambeth Palace. A sizeable Catholic contingent, including officials of the PCPCU, attended last summer’s Lambeth Conference, when Cardinal Kasper spoke frankly to the Conference about the negative effect on ecumenical relations of the recent developments in the worldwide Anglican Communion. Informal talks with representatives of the communion are held every November at the offices of the PCPCU, ranging over the whole scope of catholic-anglican relations, and it has been agreed to hold further preparatory talks to examine questions that must be answered before ARCIC can resume.

## **B. LUTHERAN**

As with the Anglican dialogue, dialogue with the Lutherans followed swiftly from the new openness of the Catholic Church after Vatican II. Commencing in 1967, under the auspices of the World Lutheran Federation and the Pontifical Council, there have been ten rounds of talks on specific questions dividing the two communions, such as Eucharist, Ministry, the Petrine Office.

It is to this dialogue that the most significant ecumenical advance of the post-Vatican II years belongs, and the only truly official reception of an ecumenical document by the Catholic Church, namely, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) on October 31, 1999.

The issue of Justification had been, of course, the touchstone of the Reformation, and was seen as the most significant issue dividing Catholics and Protestants.

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) firmly distances itself from the past condemnations issued by both churches, and instead considers the notion of salvation itself. In other words, it does theology, not history. Its conclusion: we are indeed saved by God's grace through faith alone rather than by our own efforts, but at the same time, cannot dismiss the spiritual significance of our "good works."

A final JDDJ draft was submitted to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and LWF member churches in January 1997. Official responses were provided from both in June 1998. Certain aspects then had to be examined before the announcement was made, in June 1999, that agreement had been reached.

The JDDJ was signed on Reformation Day, 31 October 1999 in Augsburg, where the confession of the same name was presented in 1530 by the Lutheran reformers. Eight signatories represented the LWF, while the PCPCU President Cardinal Cassidy and Secretary Bishop Kasper signed on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church. Cardinal Cassidy later said that it was the crowning moment of his career.

But after the celebrations, the hangover. Following general euphoria, an expectation that Lutheran/Catholic relations would swiftly move towards intercommunion was to be disappointed. The PCPCU pointed out that although the agreement touched basic truths, other related issues were still disputed – notably how a Christian can be *simul justus et peccator* (both justified, but at the same time sinful); the point being that in Lutheran theology justification is declared, while in Catholic theology it is communicated. Another blow to ecumenical agreement came with the readiness of the Lutheran communion to sign accords with other Christian groups – such as Calvinists - which seemed to put into doubt its commitment to earlier agreements with Catholics.

Other major obstacles have bubbled to the surface, such as the question of the nature of the Church itself, and the reading of scripture. Again, the euphoria of earlier dialogues has somewhat evaporated, with the realisation that the devil really is in the detail, and that seeming accords can mask vital differences.

### **C. REFORMED**

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches is an umbrella group that includes Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed and United communions who follow the Reformation teachings of Calvin, Knox or Zwingli. However, some members, such as the Waldensians and Hussites, have an older history stretching back to the middle ages. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches have completed three phases of International dialogue, all of which published reports. Members of the PCPCU have also attended the annual Prague Conferences of Reformation churches.

A particular feature of this dialogue has been the concern to heal and reconcile historical memories. There is a great deal of pain and historical baggage that needs to be acknowledged on both sides. The desire to heal these wounds is reflected in the dialogue documents, and in specific statements and gestures of Pope John Paul II and member churches of WARC. The dialogue admits that "over the centuries our forbears had often misunderstood each others' motives and language" and seeks "a reconciliation of memories" in which we begin to share "one sense of the past rather than two".

An important convergence was found in the second phase of international dialogue with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches on the reformed vision of the Church as *Creatura Verbi* with the Catholic understanding of the Church as *Sacrament*. Traditionally, this was one of the main issues between us, with Reformers saying that the Church was only present in and for the preaching of

Scripture, and Catholics asserting its permanent sacramental relationship to Christ. However, the dialogues have shown that where 'the Word' is understood broadly as the 'Word of God', rather than narrowly as 'the scriptures', then there can be an openness on the part of the Reformed tradition to a sacramental definition of the Church.

In general, though, the same pattern emerges in this dialogue of an initial enthusiasm and optimism giving way to a more sober judgement, as the products of the dialogues do not seem to have had much effect on the reality of church unity. Here, one of the problems is the diversity of the groups contained in the WARC, and the diversity and complexity of their positions. While the reformation families share much of the Christian heritage in common, in many ways they are also separated from each other and diverge between themselves on many questions. In the course of the annual Prague conferences serious differences among these traditions have been noted - for example, in regard to the understanding of the Church and the state, and in regard to sacraments. While for all of them Scripture is a fundamental aspect for Christian life, even here differences are apparent with regard to the primacy of Scripture for discerning God's will. The level of agreement among themselves is not always high, so that the bi-lateral dialogue has often felt more like a multi-lateral.

#### **D. METHODIST**

Methodism emerges as a reform movement within Anglicanism in the eighteenth century. So, a major advantage in the relationship with Methodism is that we do not share a Reformation history, and the painful historical conflicts that burden dialogue with other partners. Indeed, Methodism shares with Catholicism a commitment to personal holiness, and a certain theology of participation in salvation, which provide a good starting point for conversations. However, the emphasis on personal holiness, which is at the root of the Methodist reform of Anglicanism, also leads them to play down any consistent or well-articulated ecclesiology.

This has given a particular flavour to the Methodist-Catholic theological dialogue, which began in 1967; a focus on foundational ecclesiological issues. The last three reports of the International Methodist-Catholic Dialogue Commission have treated in sequence the Apostolic Tradition, divine revelation and the teaching authority of the Church. In May 2006, the International Methodist-Catholic Dialogue Commission completed a major report, *The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church*, and submitted the text to Methodist and Catholic authorities. The Commission is presently studying the relationship between Catholic and Methodist definitions of what essentially constitutes the Church, and is preparing a report to be presented in three years' time.

The Methodist-Catholic Dialogue works in five-year cycles, with each round of dialogue culminating in a report which is submitted to the Methodist family of churches (in the context of a World Methodist Conference) and to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

It can be said at once that the Methodist-Catholic dialogue has bucked the trend of the other western dialogues, and is proceeding in positive fashion. Perhaps expectations are lower, and the topics are treated in a more general fashion, but the atmosphere of the dialogues is upbeat.

A key moment took place in 2006, when the Member Churches of the World Methodist Council (WMC) voted to approve and sign a "Methodist Statement of Association" with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). In his address at the signing ceremony, Cardinal Kasper reflected on the larger context of Methodist-Catholic relations, noting that "we have come increasingly to articulate those elements of faith which we hold in common. Without compromising the beliefs of our faith communities, we have come to recognize many authentic

elements of the Church in each other, and have gained a clearer grasp of remaining differences which we can continue to address in future conversations".

Other events involving the PCPCU have marked the warm relations between the Catholic Church and Methodist communion. In 2003 Cardinal Kasper preached at the Methodist Church in Rome on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the birth of John Wesley. In 2007 an even greater involvement marked the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Charles Wesley, when a major ecumenical service was held at St Paul's outside the Walls.

### **E. BAPTIST**

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) embraces about 40 million baptized members. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Baptist World Alliance have had cordial relations for a long time, with one phase of formal international dialogue from 1984 to 1988, which published a report in 1990 entitled "Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World".

While the PCPCU expressed the wish to proceed immediately to a second phase of formal dialogue, that was not then feasible for the Baptist World Alliance, because of hostility from Southern Baptists – the largest group within the BWA. Therefore, in recent years, to ensure continuing contacts between the BWA and the PCPCU in the absence of formal dialogue, a series of informal two-day consultations have been held each year. Although these talks are sponsored by the PCPCU and the BWA, these informal talks have emphasised a particular region; thus, in 2001 the Latin America region, in 2003 the European region, 2004 the North America region.

Papers have been produced on *koinonia*, on the *Petrine ministry*, and on *justification*, but the format of the talks means they are brief, and do not discuss issues in any great depth. However, more attention was given to a major issue between Baptists and Catholics, namely infant baptism. Baptists, as you will know, insist that a personal confession of faith is required before baptism (hence their name!) Thus, one of the issues which always comes up in these papers is the relationship between baptism and the Church.

Another hot potato is the theme of "Mary in the Life of the Church," where there was evident a new evangelical openness to Mary. Nevertheless, even with the renewed interest in Mary in Evangelical circles, this is still a neuralgic ecumenical issue. It still seems to many Baptists that Catholics give too much attention to Mary in a way that lessens the attention which must be given to Christ.

### **F. PENTECOSTALS/EVANGELICALS (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST/CHURCHES OF GOD/ASSEMBLIES OF GOD)/SALVATION ARMY/MORMONS**

The Pentecostal movement traces its origins to an event in the Church in Azusa Street in 1906, when the congregation experienced a 'personal Pentecost', or what was later called 'baptism' or 'anointing' in the Holy Spirit. Originally, deeply opposed to Catholicism – the movement did after all see itself as a reaction to 'dead orthodoxy' - Pentecostals readily identified Rome with the 'whore of Babylon'. While this attitude is still to be found in places, the situation really changed overall with the growth of the charismatic and Pentecostal experience within the Catholic community. Pentecostals were willing to see the Holy Spirit working in those believers who had received 'baptism in the spirit', independent of the denomination to which they belonged.

The Catholic-Pentecostal international dialogue began as long ago 1972 – a fact which often surprises both Catholics and Pentecostals - and for a good while was the only ecumenical dialogue in which Pentecostals were engaged . It has continued since then in a series of five yearly dialogues. It should be remembered that almost 40 years ago, Catholics knew little or nothing about

Pentecostal spirituality and missiology. Nor did the majority of Pentecostals know of the rich spirituality and missionary vitality of Catholics. Relations were clouded by mutual ignorance, caricature, and a general suspicion that the other side was only interested in gaining converts.

But matters moved forward. The appearance of Catholic Charismatic Renewal, together with the participation of a Pentecostal leader in the Second Vatican Council, made it possible to initiate a dialogue with several leaders and groups of the so-called 'classic Pentecostals'. This dialogue aimed at deepening their knowledge of each other and at overcoming reciprocal misunderstandings.

You'll notice I used the phrase 'classic Pentecostals'; this serves to distinguish older groups of Pentecostals from the many new Pentecostal and Evangelical groups that have sprung up in recent years. Dialogue with these newer groups is proving very difficult. They do not belong to any overarching organisation, there is no representative world structure, and they are often little more than 'house churches'. It is very difficult to know who to dialogue with, or to find any consistent or coherent position among them. In many cases, their aggressive attitude towards conversion and proselytism means that a disposition towards dialogue is not present in the first place. This would be most true in traditionally Catholic terrain, such as South America.

Pentecostalism – as the briefest glance at the schedules of Sky Television will reveal - is on the increase. In South America the growth in Pentecostal churches has been phenomenal. The urgent need to have and to inspire the vital experience of the Holy Spirit, and the certainty of salvation, explain part of its fascination and success. This has provoked a certain amount of soul-searching in the Catholic Church. In September 2005 a Study Seminar was organized jointly in São Paulo by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the bishops' conference of Brazil, at which Cardinal Walter Kasper said: "A critical examination of our pastoral conscience is urgently necessary. We must ask ourselves: why are Catholics leaving our Church and moving to these groups? What is lacking in our parishes? What can we learn from the pastoral closeness of Pentecostals? What must we avoid?"

With other groups, such as the Salvation Army and even the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons), dialogue is in its infancy and at its most basic level. Here, the differences in basic doctrine are so fundamental that dialogue is only analogously ecumenical, and almost fits into the category of interfaith dialogue

## **G. WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

As you may know, the Catholic Church is not a member of the World Council of Churches, because we are one universal Church, while the World Council are national churches or groups of regional churches. However, even if not members, we are, in Cardinal Kasper's words, 'good partners'. Hence, the Catholic Church sees the work of the World Council as an opportunity to bring many Christians together and to work with them. This, then, in contrast to the bilateral dialogues mentioned above, is a multi-lateral dialogue, where the self-awareness of different member churches and groups forms part of the work of discerning the aim of the ecumenical movement.

In 1961, the then Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity delegated five observers to the WCC's third assembly in New Delhi. There were two WCC observers at Vatican II, and even before the end of the Council in 1964, the Secretariat and the World Council began to consider future Catholic-World Council collaboration. In 1965, both bodies proposed, and accepted, a Joint Working Group, the original mandate of which is still in force:

- The JWG is a consultative forum that initiates, evaluates and sustains collaboration between the WCC and the RCC, and reports to the competent authorities: the WCC Assembly and

Central Committee, and the PCPCU. The parent bodies may empower the JWG to develop and administer its proposed programmes.

- The JWG does not limit its work to the administrative aspects of collaboration. It tries also to discern the will of God in the contemporary ecumenical situation, and to offer its own reflections in studies.

Since 1968 the Pontifical Council further deepened its relations with the World Council, and now sends representatives to all major WCC conferences, as well as to its Central Committee meetings and assemblies. The PCPCU also appoints twelve representatives to the World Council's Faith and Order Commission, and co-operates with the World Council to prepare resource materials for local congregations and parishes to use during the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Since 1998, there has also existed the Global Christian Forum; an attempt to widen the scope of the WCC to include many of the new and independent communities – particularly evangelical groups - that had not taken part in the World Council. In the words of one participant the Forum was an opportunity "for churches that have been marginalized to be given the possibility to speak."

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I wish to make two points about the dialogue work of the PCPCU. Firstly, that dialogue is a real learning process, a true 'exchange of gifts'. Dialogue partners have learned a great deal from the process of dialogue: perhaps the most notable example I have seen is in our relations with the Anglicans, where theological dialogue with Roman Catholics (and, indeed, with Orthodox) has had a major influence on the formation of an Anglican ecclesiology. Traditionally rather weak, Anglican ecclesiology is openly drawing upon the results of dialogues with us in creating a more robust statement of what the Anglican Communion is, *as a communion*. In the same way, Methodists are deepening their theology of the Eucharist, Baptists apostolic succession, and so forth.

So, even if the results are not always spectacular, there is progress and inner transformation. Here we recognise the truth of the statement that ecumenism is not the work of man, but rather the power of the Holy Spirit working within our communities to transform them.

Secondly, I would affirm to you the integrity of the dialogue process. Sometimes there is a general perception – and I have certainly had the opinion expressed to me – that ecumenists want to cut corners, ignore or water down difficult doctrines in their eagerness to produce agreements.

From my own experience, I completely refute this imputation. Ecumenical dialogues are robust, and proceed with integrity. The theologians who participate in them are indeed concerned to find ways forward, to find new ways of expressing old truths, but never to deny or downplay doctrine. I came away from the last Methodist-Catholic dialogue meeting knowing more Catholic theology, not less, and I was highly impressed with the rigour and faithfulness with which catholic positions were presented. I think it true to say that some of the best theology being done these days is in the ecumenical dialogues, where theologians themselves have a deeply-rooted, visceral sense that only dialogue that proceeds in faithfulness to our own traditions is real and enduring. It means that results are not quickly forthcoming, and that difficult issues are frankly presented, but this alone is true ecumenism; not trying to create something ourselves that does not already exist, but rather trying to make real that unity which already exists in the intention of God, and which is his gift alone.