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The Anglican and Roman Catholic ecclesial traditions: the heritage of *Unitatis Redintegratio*

Charles Sherlock

*Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR), the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, was both the outcome and instrument of ecumenical engagement between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, and continues to have a formative influence on their dialogue. In the lead-up to the Council, personal contacts between Church of England leaders and the nascent Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity played a significant part in a change of atmosphere towards other Christian traditions at the Vatican. UR notes the ‘special place’ which the Anglican Communion holds in the communion of churches: the 1966 meeting in Rome between Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI would lead to *The Malta Report* (1968) and the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). The ‘Principles of Dialogue’ set out in UR – avoiding polemical language; integrating spiritual and academic learning; expounding positions clearly, and committed openness – are affirmed in the light of the experience of ARCIC. The Agreed Statements of ARCIC I and II, focused around the motif of *koinonia*, are assessed in view of the topics for dialogue listed in UR: Christology; Ecclesiology (including the Blessed Virgin Mary); Sacred Scripture; Life in Christ in communion; Teaching on sacraments and ministry; and Christian personal, family, liturgical and social life. The significance of eschatology in relation to unity in Christ is highlighted, both with reference to Anglican difficulties about gender relations and authority, and to the three-fold use of ‘complete’ in UR. What might it mean for ecumenical dialogue, and ecclesial relationships, to work from the future backwards rather than just from the past forwards – i.e. in terms of faith rather than sight?

**Keywords:** Anglican Communion; ARCIC I & II; ecclesiology; ecumenical dialogue; *koinonia*; *The Malta Report*; Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU); T(t)radition(s); *Unitatis Redintegratio*

On 21 November 1964 – a half-century ago this year – the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, was published (on the same day as *Lumen Gentium* and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*). It was issued less than 15 years after the proclamation in 1950 of *Munificentissimus Deus*, affirming the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary as an infallible papal definition – probably the greatest doctrinal barrier to Roman Catholic and Anglican reconciliation.¹ It is difficult to recall the extent to which the Roman Catholic Church then thought it ‘had everything to give and nothing to receive’ from other Christian traditions, since ‘The deposition of divine truth and the

¹Chadwick, ‘The Church of England and the Church of Rome, from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day’, outlines a full picture of the relationship.
means of sanctification repose, in their entirety, in her alone’. The differences in tone, subject matter and intended recipients of the two Decrees could hardly be greater.

This article argues that, without question, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR) laid the foundation for the opening up, indeed transformation, of relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion – the only Christian tradition the Decree names (§13). UR informed the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), the official dialogue which ensued between them and has continued to shape its successive mandates, methods and manner of operation: that is the argument and conclusion of this article. Yet the Decree had its roots, not only in internal Roman Catholic reflection, but in Rome’s relationships with other Christian traditions, especially Anglican ones. Further, it is inseparably linked to the Decree on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG): as they were revised in successive sessions of the Council, the importance of ecumenical relations was drawn out, as will be seen below. In its origins and development, UR was thus an outcome of ecumenical engagement, of which it would then become an instrument.

1. Anglican stimuli to Roman Catholic ecumenical developments

In March 1966, just 17 months after UR’s publication, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, would make his historic visit to Rome to visit Pope Paul VI. The groundwork for the meeting began some years earlier, encouraged by Pope John XXIII’s convoking of a General Council in January 1959, and his establishing of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) in October 1960. Early in the next year, Canon Bernard Pawley arrived in Rome as the personal representative of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Vatican. He already knew personally Giovanni Montini, elected as Paul VI in May 1963, became close to the SPCU’s originators, Cardinal Bea and (then Monsignor) Willebrands, and would be involved in events which played a significant part in the shaping of UR.

Dr Geoffrey Fisher, concluding his ministry as Archbishop of Canterbury, visited Rome on 1–2 December 1960. ‘His first wish was to visit the Pope’, concluded Fr Bernard Leeming SJ, whom Cardinal Bea had asked to inquire into Fisher’s background. In his

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2 Bishop John Moorman, citing a Roman Catholic theologian on the eve of the Council: *Vatican Observed*, 3. Moorman was an official Anglican Observer to the Council, present for each of its four Sessions. His book was concluded before ARCIC commenced, and was thus written without awareness of where the Council would lead. He notes that Pope John XXIII’s 1959 calling of the Council, *Ad Petri Cathedram*, despite its ecumenical awareness, presumes that this involves ‘the hope of return’ of ‘separated brethren’. On the significant shift which would take place over the next half-dozen years, of which UR is the focal point, see Moorman, *Vatican Observed*, 182–94. See further, Pawley, *Looking at the Vatican Council*. Pawley’s 167 reports to the Archbishop of Canterbury have recently been gathered in Chandler and Hansen, eds, *Observing Vatican II*, reviewed in Hill, ‘An Anglican Observing Vatican II’, (*IJSCC* vol. 14, no. 4, 2014: 419–427), but not available to the author at the time of preparation of this article.

3 Vereb, in ‘Because he was a German!’, recounts the origins of the SPCU: for its early work, including Fisher’s visit, see 239–52. Vereb cites evidence that it was originally to be a Pontifical Commission, but was ‘demoted’ to be a Secretariat. It became a permanent body from 1966, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) in March 1989.

4 Bliss, *Anglicans in Rome*, chap. 2, sets out the wider context of Pawley’s ministry in Rome, Fisher’s visit, and the deepening role of non-Roman Catholic observers at the Second Vatican Council.

5 Vereb, ‘Because he was a German!’, 242. Fisher’s journey also encompassed Istanbul and Geneva.
own words, Fisher admitted that he ‘grew up with an inbred opposition to anything that came from Rome’, though he was a keen supporter of practical Christian reunion. But Bishop Mervyn Stockwood, at the end of an audience with John XXIII in April 1959, was taken aside by the Pope and asked to convey to Fisher the message, ‘Two souls can meet in prayer though distance divide’. The Archbishop responded by asking to visit the Pope.

With hard work by Pawley, Bea and his staff, who faced considerable opposition from leaders in the Roman Curia, Fisher’s visit to John XXIII was arranged, but under restrictive conditions. As the difficulties faced by SPCU in its early years show, opposition to ecumenical exploration, especially in the West, was entrenched in Rome. The language of ‘separated brethren’ was more positive than that of ‘invincible ignorance’, but it was new, and understood as applying to individuals. So the restrictions placed on Fisher’s visit were not surprising. One was that he was forbidden to visit Cardinal Bea, even though he and the SPCU ‘had been given the responsibility of arranging the details of the visit’. But John XXIII, in his meeting with the Archbishop, countermanded this, and Fisher saw the Cardinal that afternoon.

The Archbishop recalled his meeting with the Pope fondly: “We talked like two good Christian gentlemen about anything that came into our minds”. When the Pope mentioned the separated Eastern and Western Churches, the Archbishop explained that Anglicans fell into neither of these categories. Fisher’s memoirs continue:

Pope read, in English, a passage which included a reference to ‘the time when our Separated Brethren should return to the Mother Church’. I at once said, ‘Your Holiness, not return’. He looked puzzled and said, ‘not return? Why not?’. I said, ‘None of us can go backwards. We are now running on parallel courses; we are looking forward until, in God’s good time, our two courses approximate and meet’. He said, after a moment’s pause, ‘You are right’. Coming just six months into the life of the SPCU, the visit stretched its meagre resources, but its effect was considerable. Canon William Purdy, who accompanied Fisher, wrote that ‘Fisher’s visit to Rome was an epoch-making event, which faced the SPCU at a moment when it was undergoing its baptism’. Bea himself noted that the initiative ‘was wholly from the Anglican side’, stimulating SPCU to develop a method of ‘invitation’ and ‘response’, rather than one of diplomacy. ‘It was Dr. Fisher who sensed the change in atmosphere [in Rome]; pointed it out; realised the obligations entailed and took the necessary steps to bring the public to a greater awareness of the new atmosphere.’ Yet ‘Fisher in turn attributed the change in atmosphere to [Pope] John. He was responding to John’s persistent expression of a desire to improve the relations of the Roman Church with the other Churches’. Already the path of dialogue was being trod.

2. *Unitatis Redintegratio*: from ‘return’ to ‘the reconciling of all Christians’

As the Second Vatican Council opened, ecumenical endeavour was seen – as John XXIII’s *Ad Petri Cathedram*, and his remarks to Archbishop Fisher show – as ‘separated

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6Bliss, Anglicans in Rome, 46.
7These are listed in Vereb, ‘Because he was a German!’; 243, citing Purdy, whose account in *The Search for Unity*, 29, is based on Fisher’s memoirs.
8Vereb, ‘Because he was a German!’; 249.
9Bliss, Anglicans in Rome, 47.
10Purdy, *The Search for Unity*, 30–1, cited in Vereb, ‘Because he was a German!’; 243.
11Purdy, *The Search for Unity*, 37, cited in Vereb, ‘Because he was a German!’; 244.
12Vereb, ‘Because he was a German!’; 247.
13Ibid., 249. The citations from Cardinal Bea are based on English translations of reports in *L’Osservatora Romano* of his speeches and interviews.
brethren’ returning to the ‘Mother Church’. Further, non-Roman Western Christians were seen as individuals returning: there was little sense of these baptised persons as belonging to communities who believed themselves to be churches. By the time UR was approved in 1964, a quite different understanding prevailed, encompassing the recognition that ecumenical work embraced churches and ‘ecclesial communities’.

When individuals wish for full Catholic communion, their preparation and reconciliation is an undertaking which of its nature is distinct from ecumenical action. But there is no opposition between the two, since both proceed from the marvellous ways of God (UR §4).

This ‘maturing of the Catholic mind’ (as Pawley described it) in such a short time-frame can be seen in the changing wording of Rome’s official prayer for unity. As Bliss summarised, this was, in 1962, ‘for the return of the Orthodox, the Anglicans and the Protestants to the Catholic Church; a year later it was prayer for their reconciliation to the Holy See. But in 1964 it was prayer for the Orthodox, the Anglicans and the Protestants’.

The ecumenical task had come to be understood as one in which all Christian traditions work towards a future Church whose precise form is yet to be seen, albeit with all acknowledging the distinctive ministry of the Bishop of Rome (cf. UR§2).

This shift of ecumenical perspective is most clearly seen in the changes made to the 1962 draft of ‘The Unity of the Church: that all may be one’. This ‘made no reference to the churches of the West, simply proposing uniatism as a model of reunion for the East’. It was voted down decisively, and the task of drafting given to the SPCU. The contrast could hardly be greater with Unitatis Redintegratio, the 1964 Decree, which describes the ‘holy objective’ of ecumenical work to be ‘the reconciling of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ’ (UR §24). The omission of ‘Catholic’ at this point is highly significant, though earlier it is stated that, consistent with Lumen Gentium, ‘We believe that this unity subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time’ (UR §4 – emphasis added).

‘Separated Churches and Ecclesial Communions in the West’ is the interesting title of section II of Chapter III, ‘Churches and Ecclesial Communities Separated from the Roman Apostolic See’ (UR §19–23). This title is ‘interesting’ because though the term ‘Churches’ is used in the header, and three more times in §19, no example of such a ‘Church’ is given. The discussion of what is held in common, and where there are differences, does not distinguish between these categories. Earlier, in the opening paragraph of Chapter III, it is stated that, as a result of ‘The Reformation’, ‘many Communions, national or confessional, were separated from the Roman See. Among those in which Catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place’ (UR §13). The term ‘Communion’ could be seen as denying Anglicans the standing of ‘Church’, but this is how the Anglican tradition describes itself at global level, using ‘Church’ to denote self-governing ‘Provinces’.

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14Moorman, Vatican Observed, 90–103 outlines the 1963 debate on UR, focusing on how the mood and mind of the Council shifted.
15Bliss, Anglicans in Rome, 76, based on Pawley’s May 1964 Report to Lambeth.
16Bliss, Anglicans in Rome, 67–8, who notes that two other ‘unity’ drafts failed. See also Moorman, Vatican Observed, 56–60, 90–4.
17Section I of the Chapter gives ‘Special Consideration’ to Eastern Churches, who despite their not being in communion with Rome, and so lacking the gift of unity, are named as ‘sister Churches’ (UR §14).
18Who suggested this phrase, and why it was inserted, does not appear to be known: Moorman, Vatican Observed, 98–100 notes a number of speeches related to this matter.
Whatever the intention of the Vatican fathers, the recognition in UR of the distinctive standing of the Anglican tradition is significant – indeed, it is the only place in the Decree where a particular non-Roman Catholic body is named.

3. The Anglican Communion – a ‘special place’

The title of Section II, and the particular reference to the Anglican Communion, would appear to leave open the possibility that Rome could regard Anglicans as not only a ‘Communio of ecclesial communities’ but a ‘Communio of churches’. Such a claim is supported by the famous reference by Paul VI in 1970, during the canonisation of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales. He spoke of the ‘legitimate prestige and worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church’, looking forward to the day ‘when the Roman Catholic Church . . . is able to embrace her ever-beloved sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ’.¹⁹

Fisher’s visit to Rome a decade earlier helped the development of SPCU in its first year, and so helped prepare the way for UR, which in turn laid the foundation for the historic March 1966 meeting of Archbishop Ramsey and Pope Paul VI. Their Common Declaration stated that they intended:

- to inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed. The dialogue should include not only theological matters such as Scripture, Tradition and Liturgy, but also matters of practical difficulty felt on either side.²⁰

Within weeks an Anglican–Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission was set up by the SPCU and the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations, in association with the Anglican Executive Officer.²¹ Its establishment arose from UR’s encouragement of ‘“dialogue” between competent experts from different Churches and Communities’ (UR §4). After just three meetings, in January 1968 the Commission was able to issue a far-reaching Report. It noted several possible convergences of lines of thought: first, between the traditional Anglican distinction of internal and external communion and the distinction drawn by the Vatican Council between full and partial communion; secondly, between the Anglican distinction of fundamentals from non-fundamentals and the distinction implied by the Vatican Council’s references to a

¹⁹Bishop Christopher Hill, writing in The Tablet of September 9, 2002, notes that, since Paul VI spoke of ‘ever-beloved’ sister, this sisterhood is longstanding rather than retrospective. ‘This sentence, in English, was added by Paul VI himself in his own hand late on the night before the ceremony’, Hill states. ‘It was included in L’Osservatore Romano and the official Acta Apostolicae Sedis (AAS 62.1970). Moreover, as it was delivered as the allocution at a canonisation, it has the presumption of teaching authority.’ Hill wrote in response to the ‘Note on the Expression “Sister Churches”’ issued by the CDF on June 30, 2000. This had the effect of restricting the term to particular churches in communion with Rome, excluding its use to refer to other bodies: further, the Note holds that ‘one cannot properly say that the Catholic Church is the sister of a particular Church’.


²¹The Anglican Consultative Council, administered by the Anglican Communion Office, began in 1971, as a result of the 1968 Lambeth Conference’s Resolution 69. Relationships with the SPCU (and other Churches) were until then handled by the Archbishop of Canterbury’s office. The 1968 Conference also affirmed its support for the new Anglican Centre in Rome, the proposed Permanent Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission (later ARCIC) and urged the completion of the work of the Joint Commission on Marriage. On the latter, see Sherlock, ‘Anglican–Roman Catholic Dialogue on Ethics and Moral Theology’.
UR is cited twice here, and its influence can be seen in many other places. The Report recommended ‘that the second stage in our growing together begin with an official and explicit affirmation of mutual recognition from the highest authorities of each Communion’ (§7), and that an ‘annual joint meeting’ of representatives take place where both traditions are present (§8). This would involve ‘constant consultation’ over pastoral and evangelistic problems, and ‘joint use of churches and other ecclesiastical buildings’. The sharing of ‘facilities for theological education’ should include cross-tradition teaching, ‘exchange of students’ and ‘collaboration in projects and institutions of theological scholarship’ (§9). ‘Joint or parallel statements by church leaders’ are looked for (§13), while the growing number of ‘mixed marriages’ sees the Commission hope that the ‘Joint Commission on Marriage will be promptly initiated and vigorously pursued’ (§15). These ‘applied’ recommendations have found mixed responses. An ‘official and explicit affirmation of mutual recognition’ has not eventuated, and that ARCIC Agreed Statements continue to make similar recommendations is an indication that the ecumenical vision expressed in UR is yet to be fulfilled.

The Malta Report is warmer than UR about matters of communio in sacris, however (see below), probably because only Anglican–Roman Catholic relationships are in view. It notes that ‘similar liturgical and spiritual traditions make extensive sharing possible and desirable’, though not eucharistic (§11). Yet ‘closeness in the field of sacramental belief’ could see ‘on occasion the exchange of preachers’ in the Eucharist (§12). Co-operation in liturgical reform looks toward a common calendar and lectionary, and ‘agreement on the vernacular forms of those prayers, hymns, and responses which our people share in common in their respective liturgies. We recommend that this be taken up without delay’ (§13). Some of this has taken place, notably as regards lectionaries, but the demise of the International Commission on Ecclesiastical Texts (ICET), and the lack of consultation around the new ‘translation’ of the Mass fall a long way short of the Report’s hopes.

The main recommendation of The Malta Report, the ecumenical first-fruit of UR, was that two ‘Permanent Commissions’ be established to explore theological divergences. One would consider inter-communion and ministry, the other authority (§21). ‘We also recommend joint study of moral theology to determine similarities and differences in our teaching and practice in this field’ (§22). In the event, a single Commission, ARCIC, was set up. In its first phase (1970–81) it would take up Malta’s agenda and reach partial agreements; in its second phase (1982–2005) these agreements – taking into account responses from both traditions – were completed, and moral theology was considered. In all this work, the ‘principles of dialogue’ set out in UR were fundamental – to the exploration this article now turns.

4. ‘Principles of dialogue’ in Unitatis Redintegratio: the experience of ARCIC

The Decree sets out four ‘principles’ and ‘practices’ for ecumenical dialogue, summarised in UR §4. Their ongoing influence can be seen in that they continue to shape the way in which ARCIC’s dialogue is conducted.

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22 Anglican–Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission, Malta Report, §6. Essays prepared for the Commission’s meetings, and an account of each, can be found in Clark and Davey, eds, Anglican–Roman Catholic Dialogue.
4.1. Avoiding polemical language

Every effort is to be made ‘to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult’ (UR §4). What came to be called ‘the ARCIC method’ of ‘getting behind’ language that divides can be seen as having its roots in this principle. It has not gone uncontested, as The Observations and Commentary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) on ARCIC’s Final Report and Salvation and the Church show. The CDF saw the language used by ARCIC as ‘difficult to interpret univocally’, and thus asked for ‘more rigorous doctrinal formulations, though not necessarily scholastic ones’.23

ARCIC early realised that much traditional language carries unavoidably polemical overtones, so sought fresh terms in which to express its agreements. Its linguistic method was commended by John-Paul II in 1980, at an audience for ARCIC I in Castel Gandolfo. He observed that the method of ARCIC is ‘to go behind the habit of thought and expression born and nourished in enmity and controversy, to clothe it in a language at once traditional and expressive of the insights of an age which no longer glories in strife’. This approach had its beginnings in Unitatis Redintegratio.

4.2. Integrating spiritual and academic learning

Dialogue, according to UR, is to entail ‘competent experts from different Churches and Communities’, meeting ‘in a religious spirit’ and (where this is allowed) sharing ‘prayer in common’ (UR §4). Again, this principle – reflecting John XXIII’s message to Archbishop Fisher – has been at the heart of ARCIC’s dialogue. On the one hand, each day’s work begins with a Eucharist (with homily) and concludes with Evening Prayer or Vespers. It is the frequent experience of participants that the scripture readings, homilies and prayers offered weave their way into the day’s discussion. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the Decree is sensitive about ‘worship in common (communicatio in sacris)’ not being indiscriminate (UR §8). ARCIC has taken this concern with utmost seriousness: each Eucharist follows either an Anglican or Roman Catholic rite, and those not communicating may come forward to receive a blessing (not all do so). This practice heightens the painful reality that – close as we may be – Anglicans and Roman Catholics are not in communion.

In 1994, in response to the Official Response of the Roman Catholic Church to ARCIC I’s Final Report, ARCIC II issued Clarifications on Eucharist and Ministry. Cardinal Cassidy, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) President, writing to ARCIC II’s Co-Chairs, indicated that in view of this Agreement, ‘no further study is needed at this time’ regarding the Eucharist.24 When asked about the phrase ‘at this time’, Cassidy stated that this did not refer to more doctrinal work being needed. The effect of this letter, along with the recognition by the 1988 Lambeth Conference’s Resolution 8 that ARCIC’s agreement on the Eucharist and ministry was ‘consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans’, meant that no official doctrinal difference over the Eucharist between

23 CDF, ‘Observations on ARCIC II’s Salvation and the Church’ and ‘Commentary on the Observations’.
24 ARCIC I, The Final Report, the CDF and Vatican Responses, Lambeth 1988 Resolution 8, Clarifications and Cardinal Cassidy’s Letter are included in Hill and Yarnold, Anglicans and Roman Catholics.
Anglicans and Roman Catholics remained. When the question was raised in ARCIC II as to whether this might permit inter-communion, it was agreed that even though the doctrinal barrier had come down, the discipline of each tradition would continue to be observed, lest misunderstandings arise. Difficult though this practice has often been and remains, for ARCIC members, it expresses tangibly the integration of spiritual and academic learning which UR commends.

4.3. **Expounding positions clearly**

The partners in dialogue, UR states, ‘explains the teaching of [their] Communion in greater depth and bring out clearly its distinctive features’ (UR §4). For their part, Roman Catholic participants ‘must get to know the outlook of our separated brethren’, so that ‘study is of necessity required’, which ‘must be pursued with a sense of realism and good will’ (UR §9). They must be able to explain ‘the Catholic faith ... profoundly and precisely, and in such terms as our separated brethren can also readily understand’ (UR §11).

The Decree thus requires Roman Catholic participants to attentive listening and careful speaking, so that the dialogue in which they are engaged involves genuine appreciation of both differences and agreements. It presumes that participants from the other tradition will act similarly, though it could not require this of them. It is significant that the wording used of Roman Catholic participants is in the imperative – ‘must’, ‘of necessity’ – whereas that used of others is in the indicative. In this way UR recognises that dialogue partners meet on equal terms, grounded in their common baptismal faith in the Holy Trinity, and on their common desire to come into the unity for which Christ prayed.

This recognition, that bilateral dialogue can only truly proceed when both partners accept one another as genuinely Christian, has been the typical experience of ARCIC participants. On occasion, especially at the beginning of work on a topic, a member may seem to operate out of a position that presumes their tradition is right and others wrong. When this happens, however, it offers opportunity for engagement in depth about ‘the gospel is at stake’ stances, or differences perceived to be irreconcilable. The insistence of UR on honest clarity about ecclesial positions and differences, putting aside earlier exclusivist attitudes towards others by the Roman Catholic tradition, is lived out in the experience of ARCIC participants.

4.4. **Committed openness**

‘All are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ’s will for the Church and accordingly to undertake with vigour the task of renewal and reform’ (UR §4). This is a remarkable appeal to self-examination on the part of all participants, not only those not in communion with Rome, who in earlier times were expected simply to ‘return to Mother’. Such reflection opens up each participant to the possibility of *metanoia*, conversion to a new understanding of Christ’s will for the Church. This cannot happen without ongoing commitment to Christ’s Church as each experiences it, while sustaining an openness to

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25UR §8 lists ‘two main principles governing the practice of such common worship: first, the bearing witness to the unity of the Church, and second, the sharing in the means of grace. Witness to the unity of the Church very generally forbids common worship to Christians, but the grace to be had from it sometimes commends this practice’. The latter can be allowed by ‘local episcopal authority’ unless ‘otherwise provided’ by ‘the Bishops’ Conference ... or by the Holy See’. This latter course, however, has not been taken by ARCIC I, II or III.
how the dialogue partner understands, sees and practises ‘church’. The experience of ARCIC participants is that such conversion is rarely, if ever, to existing Anglican or Roman Catholic positions. Rather, it is conversion to an understanding of Church that is seen now only by faith, the nature of whose unity, like the Church itself, is a mystery – a mystery being revealed in the koinonia of the dialogue itself. This ‘change of heart’ is described in the Decree as ‘spiritual ecumenism’, characterised not only by ‘public and private prayer for the unity of all Christians’, but by ‘holiness of life’ (UR §8). UR states that ‘it is allowable, indeed desirable that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren’ (referencing Matthew 18.20), while expressing cautions about communio in sacris, as noted above.

In Chapter II, ‘The Practice of Ecumenism’, this call for renewal is explored at both structural and individual levels: ‘There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart’ (UR §7, citing Ephesians 3.1–2), a call ‘directed especially to those raised to sacred Orders’. Such ‘spiritual ecumenism’ has become an increasingly significant aspect of ARCIC’s work. As well as daily worship, opportunity is taken to experience something of the life of the Church in the various parts of the world where it meets. Meetings alternate between Anglican and Roman Catholic contexts – a monastery (Bose, Benedictines in Rio), theological school (Virginia Theological Seminary, Palazolla English College), ecumenical centre (Veluka in Durban, Seafarers’ Mission in Hong Kong) or educational institution (Church of Ireland Teachers’ College Dublin, St George’s Windsor). Reflection on a meeting’s context not uncommonly shapes the Commission’s work – and not always positively. A visit may be made to significant people or ecumenical projects – a USA Lutheran–Anglican–Roman Catholic congregation, Cardinal Mercier’s tomb in Mechelen, co-operative ministry in a Rio favela, a papal audience, an HIV centre in South Africa. These not only expose ARCIC members to varied aspects of God’s mission, but in their individual and interactive responses ‘spiritual ecumenism’ is fostered, perspectives shifted and new insights emerge.

The more open understanding of ‘church’ involved here is far from that held by Rome in earlier generations. It is founded on the recognition that ‘all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ’s body, and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church’ (UR §3). This is a long way from the language of ‘invincible ignorance’, and stretches the newer expression, ‘separated brethren’. Grounding ecumenical dialogue in Baptism – a consistent theme of Cardinal Bea – thus enables UR to usher a call for ecclesial openness, in terms close to the ecclesia semper reformanda of the Reformed tradition: ‘Christ summons the Church to continual reformation as she sojourns here on earth’ (UR §6, my emphasis, since this is not preceded by ‘Catholic’ here). Committed openness thus not only applies to Christians but to churches. As noted below, there remain tensions in UR over assumptions that the earth-sojourning ‘Church militant’ is co-extensive with Rome, and ‘complete’, yet in its call for ecclesial conversion wider possibilities open up.

In sum, the four principles for dialogue articulated in UR have found significant ongoing expression in the work of ARCIC – care with language, the integration of academic and spiritual learning, honest clarity in articulating viewpoints, gathered together in what UR describes as the practice of ‘spiritual ecumenism’, with its more open approach to ‘church’.

5. The Agreed Statements of ARCIC in the light of Unitatis Redintegratio

In reflecting on the challenges of the ecumenical journey, UR lists a number of particular topics which need to be faced. These are based on the presumption that non-Roman
Christians or churches are not strangers, but ‘sons of God in Christ’ and so ‘brothers’, sharing the grace of Baptism. Early on in UR it is recognised that:

very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, and visible elements too. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to Christ, belong by right to the one Church of Christ. The brethren divided from us also use many liturgical actions of the Christian religion … [that] must be regarded as capable of giving access to the community of salvation. (UR §3, emphasis added)

The omission of ‘Catholic’ before ‘the one Church of Christ’ here is again significant: UR does not resile from the Roman Catholic understanding of ‘church’, but is generous in seeing ‘elements and endowments’ beyond its boundaries. The sketch of challenges in Chapter III Section II (UR §20–23), and ways in which ARCIC has taken them up, is best read in view of this orientation towards hospitality. The topics listed in UR are:

- Christology: the Word of God made flesh, the work of redemption, and thus
- Ecclesiology: the mystery and ministry of the Church, Christ’s body, and the role of Mary in the plan of salvation (UR §20)
- Sacred Scripture, its relation to the Church, and their respective authority (UR §21)
- How Baptism is to be directed towards ‘fullness of life in Christ … a complete confession of faith, complete incorporation in the system of salvation such as Christ willed it to be, and finally complete ingrafting in eucharistic communion’, linked to
- ‘Teaching concerning the Lord’s Supper, the other sacraments, worship, the ministry of the Church’, including the sacrament of Orders (UR §22)

ARCIC’s successive mandates have been set by successive Common Declarations of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope (1966, 1977, 1982, 1989, 1996, 2007). Their precise terms are formulated on the Roman Catholic side by the SPCU/PCPCU, and on the Anglican side by the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Ecumenical Officer and the Anglican Communion Office. Each Agreed Statement sets out the mandate addressed, which is understood to be limited to the matters listed: the Commission does not seek to write a thesis or textbook on every aspect of a topic!

The nine Agreed Statements, two Elucidations and one Clarification issued by ARCIC I and II do not correspond neatly to those listed in UR §20–23. But taken as a whole, ARCIC’s work would seem to cover them all.

5.1. Christology

UR claims that among ‘Christians who make open confession of Jesus Christ as God and Lord … to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit … there exist considerable divergences from the doctrine of the Catholic Church concerning Christ Himself’ (UR §20). To Anglicans this would come as a surprise, given their acceptance of the Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon, and their continued use of the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds in liturgy. This is why no ARCIC Statement deals
directly with Christology – it is taken to be agreed between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.\textsuperscript{26}

That said, it is noteworthy that \textit{Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ} warmly affirms that the Blessed Virgin Mary rightly bears the title \textit{Theotókos}, ‘God-bearer’.\textsuperscript{27} In the sub-section ‘Christ and Mary in the Ancient Common Traditions’, the part played by Mary in ‘the defence of Christ’s true humanity’ (\textit{Mary} §32), ‘true divinity’ (\textit{Mary} §33) and the orthodox doctrine of the unity of Christ’s person (\textit{Mary} §34), is outlined. Each of these paragraphs concludes, ‘This Anglicans and Roman Catholics together affirm’. Though the subject-matter is Mary rather than Christology, this agreement presumes and articulates the acceptance in both traditions of shared faith in Christ – truly human (\textit{homoousios} with Mary), truly divine (\textit{homoousios} with the Father), recognised as one person in two natures, in whose life, atoning passion, resurrection and exaltation God’s saving work is seen and achieved.

5.2. Ecclesiology

ARCIC I, in focusing initially on Eucharist and ministry, found itself drawn into reflecting on the nature of the Church. Employing the method of ‘getting behind’ polemics, and reading the Gospels and common traditions together, the Commission came to a fresh appreciation of the significance of \textit{koinonia} as at the heart of ecclesiology. The \textit{Introduction to The Final Report}, penned at the end of ARCIC I’s decade of work, states that ‘Fundamental to all our Statements is the concept of \textit{koinonia} (communion). In the early Christian tradition, reflection on the experience of \textit{koinonia} opened the way to the understanding of the mystery of the Church’.\textsuperscript{28} ARCIC II developed this explicitly in \textit{Church as Communion}, in which the Commission reached significant agreement on the Church as ‘sign, instrument and foretaste of communion’ with the Triune God: its nature is thus ‘sacramental’ (\textit{mysterion}).\textsuperscript{29}

The ‘role of Mary in the plan of salvation’ is listed with ecclesiology in UR §20 since this topic – as is well known – is included in \textit{Lumen Gentium} Chapter VIII, rather than being treated separately. Locating this as part of ecclesiology is most helpful for Anglicans, not least since the two instances of the Bishop of Rome exercising the charism of infallible teaching concern the Blessed Virgin Mary. This ecclesial context was a key factor in enabling ARCIC II, in \textit{Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ}, to reach agreement on the meaning of this teaching about her beginning (\textit{Mary} §59), end (\textit{Mary} §58 – the inverted order is significant) and ‘distinctive ministry’ (\textit{Mary} §71–74). This agreement places ‘the questions about authority which arise from the two definitions of 1854 and 1950 in a new ecumenical context’ (\textit{Mary} §61–63).

5.3. Scripture and Church

Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics receive the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the divinely inspired ‘word of God written’. In the past, however, the ways in which they were employed in the life of churches differed considerably: Anglican congregations encountered the scriptures in every service as the essential ‘matter’ of

\textsuperscript{26}Cf. \textit{Anglican–Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission, Malta Report}, §3.
\textsuperscript{27}ARCIC II, \textit{Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ}, §31–34. This agreement was earlier recognised in \textit{The Final Report, Authority in the Church II}, §30.
liturgy, while many Roman Catholics had little direct exposure to them. Anglicans were delighted by the Council’s enthusiasm for the scriptures to be made available to and used by all the faithful, and were quick to take up the ‘Three-Year Lectionary’. But the significant differences over the weight given by Rome to ‘tradition’ alongside Scripture, to the interpretive role of the Church’s *magisterium*, and to the place of the laity in decision-making (a long-term Anglican concern), were not so readily resolved.

Anglican scholars welcomed the more dynamic understanding of ‘Sacred Tradition’ in the Council’s Divine Constitution on Revelation, *Dei Verbum*. But many Anglicans questioned the extent to which Rome accepts the authority of the scriptures, and takes seriously the insights of the faithful who are not ordained. For its part, the Roman Catholic Church questioned whether the Reformation motif *sola scriptura* isolates the Bible from the life of the Church, and fails to coordinate it with magisterial teaching, as expressed in tradition.  

These issues thread through the work of ARCIC I, as can be seen its two Agreements and an Elucidation on Authority (1976, 1981), which the Commission acknowledged were ‘partial’ agreements. The 1988 Lambeth Conference thus asked ARCIC II to explore the matter further, as did the 1991 *Official Response of the Holy See to The Final Report*.

The Gift of Authority: Authority III is the outcome of ARCIC’s renewed work in this area. Grounded in the motif of God’s ‘Yes’ in Christ, and our Spirit-empowered ‘Amen’, this Agreement works from ‘the bottom up’ to view authority as God’s ‘authoring’ of life and new life in Christ. From this divine initiative and graced human response, inseparably joined in Christ, the living Word, comes *both* the people of God *and* the written scriptures. God’s ‘revelation has been entrusted to a community’, in which ‘the faith of the community precedes the faith of the individual’, whose ‘Amen’ is bound up with that of the people of God. Thus, as *Gift* concludes, ‘Word of God and Church of God cannot be put asunder’.

Taking up the dynamic approach to tradition in *Dei Verbum* (1965), *Gift* states that Tradition is a dynamic process, communicating to each generation what was delivered once for all to the apostolic community. Tradition is far more than the transmission of true propositions concerning salvation. A minimalist understanding of Tradition that would limit it to a storehouse of doctrine and ecclesial decisions is insufficient.

ARCIC II also took up the helpful use of English capitals and plurals made at the 1963 Montreal Faith & Order Conference. This sees ‘Tradition’ as ‘the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church’ – the ‘apostolic Tradition’ of Christ crucified and raised (cf. 1 Corinthians 15.1–3). Used without a capital, ‘tradition’ refers to ‘the traditionary processes’, the ways by which the once-for-all apostolic Tradition has continued to be passed on across history, while the plural ‘traditions’ refers to the particular forms this takes. This approach situates the scriptures as the central ‘thread’ and norm in the ongoing life of the Church:

30 Though affirmed by some Anglicans, the phrase *sola scriptura* is not found in Anglican formularies. Further, it is in the ablative, not nominative case (cf. *sola fide*): the phrase means ‘by scripture alone’, not ‘scripture only’, a (mis)understanding rejected by Anglican theologians in debate with Puritan divines, notably Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book II.
32 Ibid., §14.
33 Ibid., §14, fn. 1.
34 The footnote lists ‘liturgy, theology, canonical and ecclesial life in the various cultures and faith communities’ as typical ‘peculiar features’ of traditions.
Within Tradition the Scriptures occupy a unique and normative place and belong to what has been given once for all. As the written witness to God’s ‘Yes’ they require the Church constantly to measure its teaching, preaching and action against them.\textsuperscript{35}

*Gift* goes on to develop the concepts of ‘reception’ – the regular, usual process of believers encountering Christ through the scriptures – and ‘re-reception’.\textsuperscript{36} The latter involves ‘fresh recourse to Tradition’, needed when human sin has obscured or forgotten an aspect of the gospel, or when a new situation calls for ‘rediscovery of elements that were neglected and a fresh remembrance of the promises of God’ or even a ‘sifting of what has been received because some formulations of the Tradition are seen to be inadequate or even misleading in a new context’. In both reception and re-reception, insights are sought from ‘biblical scholars and theologians and the wisdom of holy persons’, and the *sensus fidei* which every Christian bears. This is ‘an active capacity for spiritual discernment, an intuition formed by worshipping and living in communion as a faithful member of the Church’. In this way ‘there is an exchange, a mutual give-and-take, in which bishops, clergy and lay people receive from as well as give to others within the whole body’.\textsuperscript{37}

Based on this understanding of Scripture and T/tradition(s), the place of all the faithful in receiving them, and the need from time to time for re-reception, *Gift*, in its Section III, explores the exercise of authority. Agreement is reached, with sharp questions posed to both traditions about how authority is in practice exercised in their ecclesial living. The most radical conclusion reached, however, is agreement on the need for a re-reception of the ‘primacy of the Bishop of Rome’, albeit in different ways given the diverse experience of this ministry by those in communion with Rome and others.\textsuperscript{38} And this is seen as more than just an agreement – it is a ‘gift to be shared’.

Looking back over this work of ARCIC I and II, the issues raised in UR about authority can be seen to have been not only addressed, but pushed forward in ways which the Council fathers, and its Anglican observers, could scarcely have imagined. But it is true to say that without UR no start would have been made on this ecumenical exploration.

5.4. ‘Complete’ Christian life

Baptism in the triune Name is accepted in UR as ‘valid’ for all Christian believers, whether in communion with Rome or not. But it needs to be directed towards ‘a complete confession of faith, complete incorporation … and finally complete ingrafting in eucharistic communion’. The three-fold mention of ‘complete’ here could be criticised for failing to recognise that the Christian life is never ‘complete’, but always *in via*. In context, however, UR reflects a proper insistence that baptism is far more than an individual experience, or an act of personal commitment. This recognition is the starting-place for ARCIC II’s reflection in *Gift*. Read alongside UR, it can be seen that baptism is a *passive* reality, in which a candidate is ‘acted on’ rather than ‘acting’. A believer, rather than ‘baptising’, is ‘baptised’ by and into a community of Christian faith, the outward and visible sign, instrument and foretaste of *koinonia* in the very life of Father, Son and Spirit.

In this way, albeit starting from different places, the concern of UR that individual believers are built up into Christ’s body is met in *Gift*’s focus on the intertwining of

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\textsuperscript{35}ARCIC II, *The Gift of Authority*, §19.

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., §24–25.

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., §28.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., §60–62.
personal and communal life in Christ. It is important to acknowledge that what ‘complete ingrafting in eucharistic communion’ entails is not spelled out in either – a significant ecumenical openness, though both presume that this is the goal of dialogue and its fruits.

5.5. Eucharist and Ministry

In the third paragraph of UR §22, following on from the triple ‘completes’, it is stated that what is lacking in ‘the ecclesial Communities separated from us’ is ‘the fullness of unity with us flowing from Baptism ... especially because of the absence of the sacrament of Orders’. Eucharist and ministry are seen as inseparably conjoined in relation to unity. The Malta Report acknowledged that ‘the mutual recognition of ministry ... presents a particular difficulty in regard to Anglican Orders according to the traditional judgement of the Roman Church’ (no doubt referring to Apostolicae Curae of 1896).39

ARCIC I took ‘Eucharist’ as its first topic, however, issuing an Agreed Statement in just two years, followed by ‘Ministry’, two years later. Setting both topics within the theology of the Church, as UR does, played a key part in opening up the concept of Church as koinonia. The Elucidations in The Final Report on both areas showed that, particularly in relation to ministry, further dialogue was needed. The ordination of Anglican women as priests and later bishops, and the Official Response to The Final Report by Rome, were further indicators of this need. The 1981 Elucidation of the Agreed Statement on Ministry held that the ordination of women did not undermine its theology, while ARCIC II responded further in Clarifications (1994, as noted earlier). These significant achievements of the dialogue form a welcome outcome of the hopes expressed in UR.

5.6. Christian moral life

UR welcomes the significant evidence in ‘the daily life in Christ of these brethren’ of the being nourished by many means of grace – private and corporate prayer, biblical meditation, family life, communities of praise. The Decree goes on to affirm the fruit of their Christian faith in lives of thanksgiving; ‘a strong sense of justice and a true charity towards their neighbour, active in many organisations relieving distress; teaching the young, and promoting social progress and peace. These are generous acknowledgements. Even where ‘the moral teaching of the Gospel’ is understood ‘differently from Catholics’, and where they ‘do not accept the same solutions to the more difficult problems of modern society’, these ‘separated brethren’ are recognised as sharing the same ‘desire to stand by the words of Christ as the source of Christian virtue’.

Yet it is in differences over moral teaching that the divergence between Anglicans and Roman Catholics is most pressing. There are no significant divergences on social ethics or many areas of personal moral life: the documented disagreements centre on sexual ethics. The Joint Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its Application to Mixed Marriages (its self-chosen title) was set up in 1967, arising from the 1966 Common Declaration.40 The Malta Report expressed the hope its work ‘will be promptly initiated

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and vigorously pursued’, with recommendations that will ‘alleviate difficulties’, lead to ‘changes in Church regulations’ and safeguard against ‘the dangers which threaten to undermine family life in our time’.41 It thus recommended ‘joint study of moral theology to determine similarities and differences in our teaching and practice in this field’.42 This echoes the suggestion made in UR that ‘an ecumenical dialogue might start with discussion of the application of the Gospel to moral conduct’ (UR §23).

It was not until 25 years later that ARCIC II would take up the challenge. In 1994 it issued the first Agreed Statement on morals and ethics to emerge from an ecumenical dialogue – *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*.43 In this the Commission was able to articulate a ‘Shared Vision’ about moral formation and living, explicate the ‘Common Heritage’ that Anglicans and Roman Catholics share, and – were other areas resolved – narrow the formal differences around human sexuality to the point where these would not justify remaining out of communion. *Life in Christ* is noteworthy for recognising that much of the divergence arises from the two traditions making separate approaches to emerging issues. This is one outcome of living in isolation from one another – which ought not to be.

In sum, though in a different order and manner to what UR proposed, ARCIC I and II have offered substantial responses on all the areas seen in UR to be necessary for coverage – Christology, ecclesiology (and Mary), revelation, Eucharist, ministry and moral life.

6. The ecumenical future: beyond *Unitatis Redintegratio*

6.1. Anglican difficulties

The work of ARCIC I and II, significant as it is, did not bring the need for dialogue to an end. The International Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), consisting of pairs of bishops charged to implement ARCIC’s work, synthesised ARCIC’s work in *Growing in Unity and Mission* (2006).44 But by then some of *Life in Christ*’s agreed conclusions had been overtaken by subsequent events, notably around differing responses to gay relationships, and the decision-making processes – and thus the exercise of authority – involved.45 These developments in the Anglican Communion led to the suspension of IARCCUM for several years; when it resumed, it was part of the setting up of a third phase of ARCIC. Given Rome’s focus on the universal in matters of authority, and Anglican concern for ‘provincial autonomy’, the mandate for ARCIC III is thus ‘Church as Communion, local and universal, and how in communion the Local and Universal Church comes to discern right ethical teaching’. The suggestion in UR §23 that dialogue might start with the Gospel and moral conduct has thus come full

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43 ARCIC II, *Life in Christ*. Its publication was delayed due to *Veritatis Splendor* being in preparation.

44 IARCCUM, *Growing in Unity and Mission*.

45 Resolution 10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference had both affirmed traditional teaching and also asked for processes of listening to committed Christians of same-sex orientation. In 2003, the consecration as bishop of a priest of The Episcopal Church of the USA (TEC), who was living in a same-sex relationship led to sharp intra-Anglican debate and the suspension of IARCCUM. The ‘Windsor Report’, of a Commission set up by the Archbishop of Canterbury, saw a ‘covenanting process’ commence, and the suspension of TEC from representative bodies of the Anglican Communion.
6.2. ‘Unity’ in Unitatis Redintegratio: sight or faith?

If Anglicans have run into difficulties, on the Roman Catholic side one aspect of UR remains problematic. This article began by noting that, prior to the Second Vatican Council, Rome understood itself to be the one true Church. UR, however, building on the *subsistit* (rather than *est*) approach of *Lumen Gentium*, in its opening paragraphs states that ‘almost everyone regards the body in which he has heard the Gospel as his Church and indeed God’s Church. All however, though in different ways, long for the one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal’ (UR §1). This sets ecclesiology in a quite different context, and opens the way for authentic ecumenical dialogue.

Yet there remains in UR – even in its title, *Redintegratio*, ‘renewal’ or ‘restoration’ – the belief that those in communion with Rome already possess all that Christ intends for the Church – including its unity. ‘Our separated brethren, whether considered as individuals or as Communities and Churches, *are not blessed with that unity* which Jesus Christ wished to bestow’ (UR §3, emphasis added) – a claim which seems to apply even to the Eastern Churches, though UR speaks of ‘restoration of unity’ with them elsewhere (cf. UR §16). Unity in UR is seen as something which the Church of Rome *already* possesses. The unity for which Christ prayed, however, will only be fulfilled when those who believe in the apostles’ testimony also believe, to the point where the whole cosmos is one with the unity of the Father and the Son (John 17.20–23).

In short, the unity of the Church – and holiness, apostolicity and catholicity – is an eschatological reality, indeed a ‘mystery’ (as UR affirms). Even in a healthy congregation, in which the Spirit brings the at-one-ing work of God in Christ into the present, unity in Christ still awaits its full expression. The oneness of God’s people in this age is a matter of faith and hope, not sight: though permeated by the love of God poured into our hearts, it is yet seen ‘through a glass darkly’. Conversely, visible disunity at any level not only mitigates this hope, but stains this love, renders Christ’s body and so has the character of sin.

Earlier it was noted that ‘complete’ is used three times in UR, in describing the ‘fullness of the life in Christ’ which baptism inaugurates (UR §22). If this ‘complete’ and ‘fullness’ is read eschatologically, as a statement of faith and hope, no issue arises. UR, however, while moving away from Rome’s earlier monistic view of ecclesial identity, and acknowledging that the Church ‘makes its pilgrim way in hope toward the goal of the fatherland above’ (UR §2), appears to understand both baptismal life and unity in Christ too much in terms of a ‘completeness’ and ‘fullness’ *already present* in the Roman Catholic Church. Anglicans insist that, while the dioceses in communion with Canterbury are fully part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, in visible terms they are but *partially* Church (a frequent emphasis of Archbishop Michael Ramsey). Ecumenical dialogue is thus understood as not only the task of bringing down the barriers which divide, but *churches* (as well as individuals) taking the opportunity to grow further into maturity in Christ. While in UR §8 the importance of ‘spiritual ecumenism’ is recognised, its eschatological nature appears but dimly. Here the way in which ARCIC II learnt to ‘do theology from the future backwards’ comes to the fore, the one way in which it moves on from the principles and practice of dialogue outlined in UR. Put another way, ecumenical work needs to recognise that every part of God’s people awaits the fulfilment of the ‘vision
glorious’, the day when the Church, the Bride of Christ, comes to the ‘consummation of peace for evermore’.46

7. **Conclusion: what if UR were followed?**

With the qualifications above in mind, a significant question remains. Major responses to what UR sets out were made in *The Malta Report*, and by ARCIC I and II. What would it mean, were the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions to take these seriously? What barriers might further be lowered? What differences might be set aside? What receptions – of structures as well as teaching – might emerge to support the whole people of God, participating in the mission of God the Holy Trinity, living out the hope of the new creation?

A key part of the response to these questions is the work of ARCIC III, for which the ‘principles’ and ‘practice’ of ecumenical dialogue set out in *Unitatis Redintegratio* remain foundational. So the story continues . . .

**Notes on contributor**

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46These words, from the hymn ‘The Church’s One Foundation’, took on new significance at the 2014 (fourth) meeting of ARCIC III, in Durban, South Africa. They had been penned there by Samuel John Stone, originally as one of a set on each article (in this case, the Church) of the Apostles’ Creed, in the wake of controversy around the ministry of Bishop Colenso. Local Anglicans drew the attention of the Commission to the ongoing significance of the hymn.


