

A tale of two dialogues.

In July, two international bilateral ecumenical dialogues between two very different sets of partners produced reports. One, *Walking Together on the Way: Learning to be the Church-Local, Regional, Universal* was the latest report of a long series, dating back almost continuously to 1967, the other, *Faith Working through Love* was the first report of a dialogue, which began only five years ago. The first report was specifically designed to apply the principles of receptive ecumenism and mutual learning to very specific problems within each of the two communions involved, the solution of which might be helped by learning from the practice of the other. The newer dialogue, whilst certainly acknowledging the value of receptive ecumenism and growth in mutual understanding and reception, was primarily concerned with making the partners more aware of each other and the possibilities for common fellowship and mission.

The two dialogues concerned are those between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church and between the World Methodist Council and the Baptist World Alliance. The first has the long term aim of full unity in faith and sacramental life an aim that, in its first years, was believed by some to be achievable within the foreseeable future. However, by the 1980's, it was coming up against seemingly insurmountable problems, such as the admission, by an increasing number of Anglican provinces, of women to holy orders, a step which, from 1976, successive pontiffs felt the Roman Catholic Church was not authorised to take. Further problems were to occur in the new millennium when differences over the attitude to homosexuality and same-sex marriage began to create deep fissures *within* Anglicanism. From 2005 to 2011, there was a hiatus in the dialogue process.

Fortunately, however, the common sense of ecumenical vocation in both communions was so strong that the decision was taken to resume the dialogue, in the hope that both churches might find ways of learning from each other's strategy for keeping the communion together and coping with new issues that threatened to be divisive. Could a balance be found between Roman Catholic practice, that could seem too centralisingly authoritarian, and Anglican practice which seemed to value provincial autonomy to the point where it threatened internal communion and led to degrees of impaired communion between certain provinces and also *within* them? In particular, could the practice of receptive ecumenism offer real hope for advance? The principle was strongly endorsed by Abp. Welby who stressed that ARCIC must ask 'not what we might give the other but what we lack that God might give us through the other'¹. To this the Commission members add their own comment 'walking together means that, as travelling companions, we tend each others' wounds and that we love one another in our woundedness'².

¹ *Walking Together on the Way* (hereafter cited as WTW), para 18.

² *Ibid*, para 21.

The second dialogue arose out of the desire within two other communions for greater practical co-operation and mutual understanding. In it, there was no problem analogous to the Roman Catholic-Anglican one of relating a church which claims to be the uniquely full embodiment of the Church of Christ to another communion that regards itself as a true part of the one holy catholic church along with a variety of other Christian communions. Both Methodists and Baptists claim to be part of the rich diversity of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. They have no difficulty over accepting each other's ministries. They both hold the essentials of the apostolic faith³. There are tensions over differing practices with regard to baptism and some differing nuances over the ways in which justification and the authority of Scripture are understood but nothing that prevents common mission. In some cases, such as in Italy, Sweden and North India this happens on a very close basis. In all three countries a third or more partners is involved, in India also the common acceptance of a church order with a ministry including the historic episcopate⁴.

Each dialogue reveals a common feature with lessons applicable to others. In the ARCIC case, it is the consistent application of the principles of receptive ecumenism to the practical problems of balancing central authority and more local acceptable autonomy. In the case of the Baptist-Methodist dialogue it is the development of a particularly useful *Study Guide* to accompany the main theological text, thus making reception at the grassroots level of local congregations and individual church members easier. Reception at this level has always been, and remains, the Achilles heel of the Ecumenical Movement. It must be tackled if the aim, alike of the fathers of Vatican II and ecumenists from all denominations, of making concern and action for unity a matter for all the faithful is ever to be achieved.

The Study Guide, devised by two members of the joint commission for the dialogue, explains the issues discussed in the various sections of the report in simpler language, unpacking such complex issues as the work on alternative patterns of Christian initiation and nurture in easier terms. It contains suggestions for discussion in local fellowship groups, appropriate scriptural readings, accounts of Baptist-Methodist co-operation past and present in mission and in service of the marginalised and lists of significant Baptist and Methodist teaching documents. To some extent, its method was foreshadowed in the work and suggestions for local reception in the recent Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue report, *From Glory to Glory, the Call to Holiness* (2016) but this particular Study Guide is more fully developed and illustrated.

Each report is now considered in detail.

Walking Together on the Way.

The ARCIC report *Walking Together on the Way* deals with the first part of a designed two part process, the second part of which will be devoted to looking at how the two churches

³ *Faith Working through Love*, (hereafter cited as *Faith* paras 6,20.

⁴ *ibid*, paras 87-9.

can make common decisions on key ethical issues that are currently the subject of controversy within their communions and, indeed, others. It is stressed that, until the Reformation, the communions concerned were at one and still retain similar episcopal and diocesan structures at local level; they both understand the term local church as meaning the diocese presided over by its bishop not, as in some other traditions, the local congregation⁵. The report examines the development of co-operation between local churches from New Testament times, tracing the development of regional and wider consultation through regional and universal councils, some of the former, such as the Councils of Elvira and Toledo, having significant consequences for the wider fellowship⁶.

Some account is then given of post-Reformation developments in the divided churches with particular attention to the differences at regional and universal levels. Anglicanism (a term not, of course, then used) remained effectively confined to the British Isles till almost the end of the eighteenth century. Roman Catholicism began overseas missionary expansion beyond Europe from the sixteenth century, though, for both communions and others, the great era of such expansion was the nineteenth century. In the Roman Catholic communion, the circumstances alike of the sixteenth century reaction against Protestantism and the nineteenth century reaction to both secular challenges and overseas mission brought about an increase of central papal power, with little attention being given to any need for decision making at regional level, the current development of national bishops' conferences having only come about through Vatican II and the direction of Pope Paul VI.

Where Anglicanism was concerned, missionary activity and the settlement of large numbers of Anglicans in America and the colonies of British settlement necessitated the appointment of bishops and the formation bit by bit of provinces. The fact that the Church of England was the established church in England, but could not be so in America and elsewhere, meant the development of overseas provinces, which had to develop their own systems of regional church consultation and government. These generally created synods that contained lay representatives alongside the clergy, usually empowered to make significant changes in liturgy and ecumenical relations whilst always safeguarding the authority of the bishops who, as in the Church of England today, have to agree, independently of the clergy and lay representatives, to any changes in liturgy, doctrinal expression or ecumenical accords.

From 1867, the Lambeth Conferences met every ten years. These are global meetings of Anglican bishops, intended to foster mutual support and debate on matters confronting all the Anglican provinces. The Archbishop of Canterbury convenes the conferences and plays a leading role in them but is not regarded as having any power over the provinces other than his own. He is certainly not an 'Anglican Pope'. A key distinction between the current Roman Catholic and Anglican systems of universal fellowship is that progress towards the restoration of full unity in faith and sacramental life can only be made at the universal level

⁵ *Walking*, p iii.

⁶ Para 11.

in the Roman Catholic Church whereas different Anglican provinces and national churches can make varying agreements, which are not necessarily shared by others. Thus, the Anglican churches of the British Isles are in the Porvoo Communion with Scandinavian and Baltic Lutheran churches⁷. The churches of England and Ireland have covenant relationships with British and Irish Methodists, a recent Irish agreement also allowing for interchangeability of presbyteral ministry, something not yet agreed in England⁸. These agreements lack transitivity, that is to say they do not apply to all Anglican, Lutheran and Methodist churches across the globe, an act that, as things presently are, would require agreement in all the synods and conferences responsible for particular regions.

One can argue that the differences between the two communions are inherent in their different ways of understanding their relationship to the universal Church of Christ, as indeed, it is spelt out very early in the Report when it draws attention to the fact that Roman Catholics, while not denying that important elements of the Church exist in other Christian bodies, believe that the Church nevertheless *subsists* in the Roman Catholic Church as possessing all the elements of faith and order necessary even though obviously not developed to their fullest eschatological potential. Anglicans, while claiming to be a part of the one holy catholic Church, see themselves as a part of the whole alongside all other Christian communities in imperfect communion.⁹

To solve the dilemma of these contrasting claims will, as the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales realised at the time of the *Called To Be One Process* in the 1990's, will involve neither a capitulation of one side to the other, rather, a going forward together into a new and fuller future¹⁰. It will involve important acts of recognition as to the extent of permissible variety of expression of the essentials of the Christian faith as well as acts enabling the reconciliation of ordained ministries which were not previously mutually recognised.

Walking strains every theological muscle in seeking to propose useful avenues of advance. Pope Francis and Abp. Justin say that they are undeterred by the many problems¹¹. Paul Lakeland, in *The Tablet*, regards it as propitious that this work is happening under the present pontificate.

⁷ With the exception of the Church of Latvia.

⁸ My article in *One in Christ* (2014, no2, pp. 194-214) deals with the developing relationships between Anglicans and Methodists as they stood then.

⁹ WTW, p. 3.

¹⁰ Cited in *One in Christ* (1999), p. 230, 'a common quest for a new and deeper realisation of the unity that the Lord wills and gives to his Church'.

¹¹ WTW, p.4.

‘My immediate reaction was: Pope Francis is all over this statement’. The way that the document embraces “explicit ecclesiastical self-critique”, synodality, the role of the laity, subsidiarity...all is pure Francis’¹².

One key problem is the vagueness that has previously attached to thinking about levels of church between the purely local and the universal. All Christian traditions acknowledge the two terms albeit that some, particularly in the independent tradition, define local church very differently from the diocese around the bishop model, common to both Anglicans and Roman Catholics. However, as already pointed out, church exists in a very real sense at national/regional levels, necessarily where the mission based exigencies of sharing are involved in addressing national issues of inculturation, church-state relationships and social justice. Regional synods have made important decisions, such as the synod of the pre-Reformation Church of England which decided, in 1281, with later ecumenical implications of which it was obviously then unaware, on the rule relating to confirmation and reception of holy communion¹³. Overseas expansion caused the development of Anglican provinces without full consideration at the time of the possible consequences for Anglican unity and cohesion. Roman Catholics intensified centralisation in the interests of unity, in their case without full consideration at the time of consequences for local decision making.

In seeking to contribute to the debate on the relationship between local and universal Church, the ARCIC Commission stresses that both Anglicans and Catholics affirm the full ecclesial reality of the local church as they both understand it, diocese with bishop. However, they also recognise, to use the words of *The Church, Towards a Common Vision*, that the local church, ‘though wholly Church is not the whole of the Church’ Universal¹⁴. It must relate to the rest of the whole communion, but how? The two poles of church are in a certain tension. Too strong a local autonomy strains the bonds of unity and may fail to protect the local church from identifying too closely and insufficiently critically with the local contextual secular culture. Too great a degree of centralisation can inhibit necessary adaptation for local mission¹⁵.

A strong stress is then laid on the way in which their common baptism and participation in the tria munera of Christ, priestly, prophetic and royal, involves each of the baptised as Christ’s instruments in the salvation of others. ‘The loving adoption that is received in baptism urges the faithful to have care for the eternal and present welfare of everyone that they encounter...the service claimed by Christ carries with it the sense of common identity, calling and mutual responsibility’¹⁶. A strong emphasis is also placed on the operation of the

¹² *The Tablet*, 14.7.2018.

¹³ Classically defined as ‘none may come to the holy communion except such as be confirmed or desirous of being confirmed’

¹⁴ *Towards a Common Vision of the Church*. Statement of the Faith and Order division of the World Council of Churches (2012), para 31.

¹⁵ *WTW*, paras 48,49.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, paras 52,53.

sensus fidelium which, as is stressed in recent Roman Catholic teaching, also exists and is operative in other Christian communities¹⁷. Theological reflection on the Church and other issues is not simply a matter for the hierarchy and theologians, it involves input from ‘men, women and children who know God from within and sense what conforms to God’s design for human beatitude’¹⁸.

We have here what Methodists and many other Protestants would call ‘the ministry of the whole people of God’ in which both ordained ministers and layfolk share responsibility together for the total mission to which God calls us in Christ and the mutual counsel and reflection which is involved in developing it. This strong stress will resonate with them, with Anglicans who generally have lay participation in all levels of regional provincial synods and will please those Catholics who wish to see a stronger lay voice in the affairs of the Church, feeling that the basis for this already exists in the teaching of Vatican II. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* calls for layfolk of spirit to give a Christian witness in action across a whole range of occupations¹⁹.

Later in the Report, a detailed analysis of Anglican and Roman Catholic church structures and synods is given. It is clear that in Anglican diocesan and regional synods there are usually houses of bishop(s), clergy and laity, all three having a share in the common responsibility for the mission. Collegial responsibility is stressed in the Roman Catholic Church at the episcopal level. All the bishops watch together over the welfare of the Universal Church in the same way as ministers in the Methodist tradition watch over the Connexion and each other in Conference in faith and love²⁰. That such a principle should come to cover all Christians lay and ordained would seem to accord with a fundamental Christian instinct of koinonia and mutual collegial responsibility and accords with the suggestion in *Walking that Roman Catholics* take steps to involve layfolk and ordinary clergy more at diocesan and national levels.

Reverting to the section on the need for effective instruments of communion, the Commission stress that they need to serve the needs of true catholicity in unity and legitimate diversity. ‘To belong to the Church is to belong to a particular local community that is not turned in on itself but reaches beyond itself to become a community in full communion with other communities. Each Christian belongs to a local church and thus shares in the life of every other local church with which that church is in communion’²¹. At every level, local regional, universal, the Church needs the instruments to serve such communion.

¹⁷ I have explored this in my article in *Ecumenical Trends* (Feb. 2015), pp 6-13, where I examine the document produced by the International Theological Commission in 2014. Para 56 insists that Roman Catholics can learn from the *sensus fidei* at work in other Christian communities.

¹⁸ *WTW*, para 54.

¹⁹ *Evangelii Gaudium*, para 273.

²⁰ Wesley’s question about episcopate in his time was ‘who watches over them in faith and love?’

²¹ *WTW*, para 56.

One of the key general overall differences between Anglican and Roman Catholic polity is that the former generally provides constitutionally for the representation of clergy and layfolk in diocesan and provincial synods whereas the Roman Catholic system leaves the decision as to whether involve clergy at diocesan level to the bishop concerned and as to whether to involve laity in a parish council to the parish priest concerned. It is up to the Pope as to when to call a General Council or a particular synod of bishops. Appointment of bishops is nearly always a papal prerogative, though usually involving the use of the national papal nuncio concerned and his consultation with the existing local hierarchy. Anglican bishops are generally appointed through a system in which the clergy and layfolk of diocese have a say²². Whether the Roman Catholic system should change to something more like the Anglican system, with involvement of people from below is a moot point.

It is, however, accepted that the Anglican system of diocesan and provincial/national synods is not without its snags. The synodical system within dioceses and provinces can fall victim to a rather confrontational style of debate which does not always augur well for soberly divining the working and leading of the Spirit on complex issues. It can also eclipse the need to concentrate on catechesis and renewal. It is recommended that Anglicans might learn from a more reflective culture, as found in some Roman Catholic synods, in which the stress is on seeking to come prayerfully to a common mind²³. At the same time, the Commission make it abundantly clear that they feel that the current Roman Catholic models of governance 'seem not to give adequate recognition to the anointing of all the baptised and their share in the Good Shepherd's pastoral ministry...The lay faithful, for their part, not only receive teaching, but also offer their own expertise and faith to the Church'²⁴.

Para 96 further reinforces the case for the need for Roman Catholic forums for lay discussion, debate and disagreement . It further argues that, valuable and right as it is, 'the instinct for unity can, however, result in the suppression of difference, the inhibiting of candid conversation, and the avoidance of contentious issues in open forums.' The Commission conclude the paragraph by stating that the consultative processes involved in the Synods on marriage in 2014-6 seem to point in the right direction.

Para 97 relates to the challenges of church growth and shortage of clergy, particularly in the Roman Catholic tradition. It draws particular attention to some Anglican developments, in team ministry, use of non-stipendiary clergy and alternative models of formation which might be adoptable in the Roman Catholic Church. The value of women clergy in contemporary Anglicanism is stressed though not, for obvious reasons, commended as such to Roman Catholics, though it could have been noted that Pope Francis has already agreed

²² In England bishops are technically appointed by the Crown, but, today, local opinion is carefully consulted within the total process.

²³ *WTW*, para 94

²⁴ As is stressed in *Gaudium et Spes*, para 44 'the task of the entire people of God', see also para 37.

to a commission on the possibility of women deacons; elsewhere the report asks if women might preach and possibly enter the ancient minor order of lector²⁵.

In the subsequent section, devoted to receptive learning at local levels, it is argued that Anglicans are particularly faced with the need for unity both within the local and provincial churches and the wider communion. Reference is not made to the behaviour of some Anglican parishes in England who refuse to make appropriate diocesan subscriptions when they disagree with key diocesan decisions nor to the question of alternative episcopal oversight for parishes that will not accept women clergy, but Anglicans are reminded that ‘a catholic instinct for unity and participation in a greater whole is a deeply embedded value’ and that they must in potentially schismatic situations ‘ask what ecclesial learning can be explored in relation to Roman Catholic universal identity.’²⁶

At the universal level, both Roman Catholic and Anglican instruments of unity are considered. The current functions of the Pope are clearly set out. Both churches are reminded that the exercise of his authority was discussed by ARCIC II in *The Gift of Authority* and that many Anglicans already ‘recognise the gift that a Petrine ministry, exercised in fidelity to Scripture and Tradition and in service to the Church Universal can be’²⁷. The concurrent collegiality of bishops and the nature of their teaching is also addressed with the comment that when John Paul II invoked it in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*²⁸, he was unable to adduce any act making explicit the consent of the bishops to this supposedly binding teaching. Clearly the size of the current Catholic episcopate (about 5000) would make this far more difficult than when Pius IX invoked such episcopal unanimity in support of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception²⁹. The question of the Curia, ideally the servant of the whole episcopate as well as the Pope, is addressed and the point made that if consultation and exchange are inadequate and regional and local authority not respected, then the exercise of this ministry can appear over-centralising rather than genuinely universal and decision making ‘too remote from pastoral reality in the individual local churches’³⁰.

It is recorded that Pope Francis has himself noted ‘a tendency of bishops to defer too readily to Rome rather than to exercise their own authority’³¹. One may also add in this context that, in his encyclicals, Francis often cites the teaching of particular national bishops’ conferences, a sign that he values their teaching and encourages them to come forward with material that may be of great help to others³².

²⁵ WTW, para 102..

²⁶ *ibid*, para 101.

²⁷ *Ibid*, para 133

²⁸ *Ibid*, para 137.

²⁹ Moreover, Pius said that he had consulted the bishops specifically as to the faith of their local churches, an appeal to the *sensus fidelium* as well as to their own teaching.

³⁰ *Walking* para 143.

³¹ *Ibid*, para 143

³² *Evangelii Gaudium* was particularly striking in this respect.

The position of the Archbishop of Canterbury within the Anglican Communion is very different. He convokes the Lambeth Conferences and is widely revered as the senior bishop in the Communion and *primus inter pares*, though he has no direct authority outside of his own province. He has, particularly since the mid-twentieth century, exercised a pastoral role in visiting as widely as possible across the Communion. However, such counsel as he may give is persuasive rather than absolute. Recent years have seen the setting up of the Anglican Communion Office, which encourages interchange between provinces and sponsors dialogue with other communions but has no authority as such over the provinces. There have also been some meetings between Anglican Primates to explore ways of coping with current difficulties. The Commission argue that clearer definitions of the roles, competencies and relationships of these various global Anglican organs could give the Communion more cohesion³³.

The Commission argues that, despite Anglican hesitation over modifying provincial autonomy, 'there is a desire for worldwide identity and commitment that requires deeper expression.'³⁴ The Commission acknowledge what they call the *affective* role of Anglican provincial synods in promoting internal fellowship, but feel they could be more *effective*³⁵ in promoting internal unity. The Commission suggest various ways in which identity could be strengthened, such as commitment to the use of at least one common modern eucharistic prayer, an approved common catechism and a formal reception of 'The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion'. Finally, they suggest that through enlargement of the course for new bishops held annually at Canterbury the Communion could be strengthened. Pilgrimage to Canterbury and dialogue of bishops with the Archbishop, perhaps in small groups, could also give the Communion more cohesion.

For Roman Catholics, it is suggested that the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in summarising discussions at meetings with a view to articulating consensus might provide a model for a more transparent reporting of processes of discernment on contentious matters within their own communion. Pope Francis has recently encouraged bishops to speak more boldly³⁶.

In paragraph 149, the Commission remind the two communions of the value of the principle of re-reception, as mooted in *The Gift of Authority*. They argue it is necessary to be attentive to what other Christian communities have to say, 'recognising the presence of the Spirit in other Christians, their churches, and their communities'. This valuably reminds us that no two Christian communions are ever isolated from the others. They always need to remember that, in dialogue, they can say things that will be of great help to other communions and dialogue partnerships; similarly, they can always find things from other dialogues that may be of help in their own situation and relationship.

³³ WTW, para 148.

³⁴ *ibid*, para 145.

³⁵ *ibid*, paras 80, 123.

³⁶ *ibid*, para 143.

In their Conclusion, the Commission quote from John Paul II's ecumenical encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* where he states that 'Christian Unity is possible, provided that we are humbly conscious of having sinned against unity and are convinced of our need for conversion.' Dialogue always needs to be a dialogue of consciences³⁷. Archbishop Welby warns that dialogue is not always necessarily fruitful. 'Dialogue can be an opiate, or it can be a stimulant, confronting us with the need for repentance and change'³⁸. The Commission follow this up with a relevant statement from their own immediate context.

'For Anglicans and Catholics their respective confessional identities-cherishing the role of the local and regional church (Anglican) and placing high priority on the need for ecclesial unity and coherence (Roman Catholic) are valued as gifts of grace and providence. Nevertheless these identities themselves are not unaffected by sin, as can be seen when the desire for autonomy becomes one of outright independence and when the concern for ecclesial unity and coherence becomes excessively centralised power. Hence there is need for repentance and reform of our instruments of communion in this respect.'³⁹

The Commission identify, as the two key points they wish to make, that the Roman Catholic Church can learn 'from the culture of open and frank debate that exists at all levels in the Anglican Communion, evidenced by the indaba process, for example' and that receptive learning for Anglicans begins with 'an appreciation of the depth of commitment to the unity of the universal church', lived out in the Roman Catholic communion. They commend their work to the study of *IARCCUM*, the joint organisation for unity and mission set up in 2001⁴⁰.

Conclusion to this section.

ARCIC III has taken on a task subtly different from that of most dialogues including its immediate predecessors, ARCIC I and II. Most dialogues have been concerned with doctrine and spirituality; this one has concentrated on practical issues of church governance and the relationships involved in all their messiness. It calls the two communions to work towards a reconciled and balanced approach, which works for an orderly system of relationships in which there is free and frank exchange at every level from the most local to the universal, giving everyone, ordinary clergy and layfolk as well as church leaders, the chance to have their say. Such an approach would let them progress in communion, recognising three major sources of input, that of Pope and bishops, that of theologians and that of the ordinary faithful expressing the faith that is with them through the anointing of the Spirit. This may sound over-idealised to some but is surely possible if we believe in Christ's promise that the Spirit will lead the Church into all truth (John 16:13).

³⁷ *Ut Unum Sint*, para 34.

³⁸ WTW, para 155.

³⁹ WTW, para 155.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, paras 157-9. *The International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Co-operation in Unity and Mission*, which encourages co-operation in many mutually allowable ways between the two communions.

A similar dialogue needs to take place between all dialogue partnerships where the goal is full communion in faith, mission and sacramental life. It will certainly be needed at some point in MRCIC; elements of such a parallel dialogue may occur in the present quinquennium which, as I understand it, is devoted to the theme of reconciliation⁴¹. In many respects both Methodists and Lutherans, to take only two examples, have similar problems of cohesion to those that beset the Anglican Communion. World Methodism grew from its roots in the two original connexions, in Britain and USA, partly by Methodists settling overseas and partly by overseas missions. The result is many autonomous connexions, loosely linked in an affective body, to use the phrase adopted in ARCIC III, the *World Methodist Council*, but one that has no direct authority as such over them. The Council drew up a *Statement of Wesleyan Essentials* in 1996 and it sponsors bilateral international dialogues. Some, like Robert Gribben, an Australian Methodist and now minister in the *Uniting Church* in Australia, have queried whether it should have more power to create greater cohesion⁴². Certainly, Methodist churches across the world can differ not only in ethos but judgements on ecumenical issues as will be abundantly clear to any reader of *Churches Respond to BEM*⁴³.

Lutherans also display wide variation and some of the same difficult ethical issues also cause controversy amongst them. The Lutheran World Federation has published an excellent recent statement of their ecumenical principles but they also need to think about issues of cohesion, helped where possible by ecumenical partners⁴⁴.

For both partners in ARCIC, some key purely theological issues will remain however much progress is made towards the balance recommended in *Walking Together on the Way*. There is the issue of Anglican 'comprehensiveness' and the need to face how far the current strong schools of Anglican churchmanship, evangelical, liberal and catholic could flourish within Anglican-Roman Catholic reconciliation. Can the common Nicene faith allow the setting of much wider parameters of the acceptable in such things as styles of worship and varying approaches to sacramental theology? There is much there still to debate; however, it is also true that much also will need to be done towards an effective reception of this valuable document.

Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the cohesion of the two communions immediately involved would benefit from the implementation of the suggestions made. They would live themselves internally in a more fully reconciled and, in a sense, *representative* diversity than

⁴¹ MRCIC, the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission. It reports every five years to the Vatican and the World Methodist Council,

⁴² In a paper presented at the Oxford Institute of Methodist studies in 2013. It is on the Oxford Institute website.

⁴³ Thurian, M. (ed) *Churches Respond to BEM*, (1986) vol 2, pp. 177-254.

⁴⁴ The statement is available on the LWF website. I have recently given an account and critique of it in *Ecumenical Trends* (Sept 2017), pp. 5-10.

is currently the case⁴⁵. There are, in particular, welcome signs that the thinking and acts of Pope Francis are in tune with the ARCIC suggestions. A recent apostolic constitution states that bishops must consult with the laity on 'questions to be dealt with in the synodal assembly'⁴⁶. One may add that more formal lay association with Roman Catholic processes at all levels will help relationships with all ecumenical partners, not simply Anglican and Protestants who have long insisted layfolk should be so involved, but also the Orthodox who have long insisted that it is the entire people of God who are the guardians of the faith⁴⁷.

Already, two mandated reactions to the Report have been published on the web, an Anglican one by Jamie Hawkey and a Roman Catholic one by Prof. O Rush⁴⁸. Hawkey echoes the hope I have already expressed that the document will have a use beyond the two communions immediately involved. He commends the courage of the Commission in calling for frank dialogue on difficult issues. He calls for more work on diversity within the apostolic and post-apostolic church, particularly from a Johannine perspective. He commends the call for instruments that are both affective and effective. He says that for Anglicans to accept the petrine ministry it must protect diversity as well as unity⁴⁹. Rush argues that *Walking The Way* is best interpreted in the light of Vatican II and the recent acts of Francis. He feels John Paul II's *Novo Millennio Ineunte* could also have been helpfully adduced for its sentiment that 'communion must be cultivated and extended day by day at every level'. Lastly, he lists seven key desirable outcomes, in terms of greater recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit working at all levels in the Church, greater recognition of diversity within a genuine catholicity, a move towards less centralisation in governance, , greater authority for regional synods, greater participation of lay people, , active promotion of genuine dialogue in the Church and greater appreciation of provisionality and the continuing guidance of the Spirit⁵⁰. One can certainly argue that these would be welcomed across the entire oikoumene

Faith Working through Love-The Baptist-Methodist Dialogue.

Where Baptists and Methodists are concerned, there are no barriers in terms of mutual recognition of ministries nor are there, in most cases, any in terms of mutual eucharistic hospitality and sharing⁵¹. Both churches regard the shape of the ministry of word and sacrament as variable and not as depending on an unbroken succession of ministers dating back to apostolic times⁵². That conviction has not, however, inhibited Baptists in North India

⁴⁵ I use the term in terms of inclusivity of lay folk and ordained ministers in acts of deliberation and governance.

⁴⁶ *Episcopalis Communio*, mentioned in *The Tablet*, 22.9.2018.

⁴⁷ As stressed by the Orthodox patriarchs in a response to Pius IX in 1848.

⁴⁸ Respectively Dean of Clare College, Cambridge and Professor in the Australian National University.

⁴⁹ Hawkey, pp. 5, 8, 11, 15, 16.

⁵⁰ Rush, p. 10, pp 13-19.

⁵¹ The occasional exceptions are mentioned immediately below.

⁵² For Baptists, stated in para 9. For Methodists we may note that some connexions have three orders of ministry E.g. The United Methodist Church (USA and global), others one or two.

and Methodists in both North and South India from entering into unions with Anglicans and accepting entry into the heritage of the episcopal succession⁵³.

There are thus no issues of mutual recognition as such⁵⁴. However, there are at stake different views on baptism as to whether it can be properly administered to infants who cannot be said to have come to conscious faith or whether it can only be administered to believers including, in some cases, younger children if they are felt to manifest sufficient faith⁵⁵. There are also differences of emphasis in church structure and ecclesiology, which could receive more attention than is the case in this report, and in the doctrine of justification/sanctification. It is to address these issues and to enable Baptists and Methodists to be both better informed about each other and more appreciative of each other's gifts that the dialogue was initiated. It is stressed in this dialogue that both churches seek to nurture 'bible Christians' and to spread the faith, both having a strong missionary tradition⁵⁶. Stress is placed on accounts of situations where members of the two churches have co-operated in mission and in service of the poor and oppressed and such co-operation is commended. At the end of each main section is appended a story relating to action by one or both of the communions on matters important to both. Both churches also draw on the rich tradition of English hymnody and at the end of each section a hymn, well known in both traditions, is used illustratively.

The Preface stresses that though both communions normally have no difficulty in recognising each other's members as true Christians and each other's churches as belonging to the 'the rich diversity of the one Church', there do remain problems over full recognition of each other's practices of baptism. These are explored further in the third section of the report.

The Introduction gives an account of the main stages of preparation of the Report and identifies four key aims, which are to encourage greater understanding and appreciation of each other, the mutual exchange of gifts for the enrichment and renewal of both communions, to encourage fuller fellowship and co-operation whilst, at the same time, overcoming any barriers. It recorded the way in which through the very process of the dialogue, the participants from both traditions had come to a deeper appreciation and understanding of each other.

The Report ends with eleven key recommendations, followed by a set of prayers to be used by Methodists and Baptists together. First, they thank God for each other's particular witness. Thus the Baptists say,

⁵³ Church of South India, formed 1947, Church of North India (1971)

⁵⁴ There are slight exceptions to this in the sense that some 'strict' Baptist churches only admit those baptised as believers to holy communion and thus would exclude Methodists and other members of paedobaptist churches unless they had subsequently received believers' baptism. Most Baptists, however, practice 'open' communion and would welcome believing members of any other church to the Table.

⁵⁵ *Faith*, para 90.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, paras 24,27.

‘We thank you for the Methodists’.

The Methodists duly reciprocate with thanks for the Baptists.

Then they both confess their sins. Finally, they pray for Christians of the other major traditions, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. The prayers conclude,

‘Help us to love one another that the world may believe. In all things, may our faith be active in love’⁵⁷.

The Main Sections

The first main chapter deals, in turn, with the heritage of the two traditions. It stresses their common origins in puritan and pietistic emphases and activities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and their common ongoing commitment to evangelism and active discipleship, the ‘faith working through love’ of the title of the Report.

It is stressed that the Baptists of today around the world trace their origins to the early seventeenth century English dissenters who practiced believers’ baptism⁵⁸. Their distinctive features are then analysed in terms of the four creedal phrases, the unity being under the Lordship of Christ as defined in Eph 4:1-6, the holiness as ‘being animated by the Holy Spirit and joined in vital union with their holy Head, Jesus Christ’, the catholicity being inclusivity in terms of all nations and the apostolicity being defined in terms of ‘the normative authority of the apostolic witness, not that of an unbroken succession of ministers’⁵⁹.

Five key principles of Baptist churchmanship are the primacy of the local church (‘the gathered church’ is a term often used more widely within the independent tradition), baptismal immersion, congregational church government, separation of church and state (one may add that Baptists would have no desire for state patronage even if offered to them) and the priesthood of all believers, the term interestingly defined as ‘a form of corporate episcopate’ which is compatible with ‘an ordered ministry of leaders’. In all aspects of ministry the Church stands ‘under the word of God’⁶⁰.

Baptists have differed amongst themselves over the doctrine of predestination, over whether there should be open or closed communion, over the ordination of women and

⁵⁷ *Faith*, pp. 38-9.

⁵⁸ They are to be distinguished from the Continental Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, whose modern descendents are the Mennonites. It is important also to stress that the Baptist emphasis on believers’ baptism is shared by some other evangelical and Pentecostal traditions; it is not confined to those calling themselves Baptists.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, para 9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, para 10. One may add that, traditionally, authority is hands of the regular Church Meeting of all members. Most Baptist churches have deacons with some residual duties for any poorer members plus general administrative duties and a role in distributing the elements at holy communion. Some Baptist churches also have elders with pastoral and governing roles.

over charismatic gifts⁶¹. Usually, they have been happy to associate with other Baptist congregations, though they do not usually call these unions 'churches', reserving the term 'church' solely for the local congregation and the Church Universal⁶². The Baptist World Alliance encourages fellowship across the globe. It has issued some theological statements, such as the Seoul Covenant of 1990 with its statement, 'we aim to build communities that will be effective signs of God's Kingdom in the world'⁶³.

The account of the origins of Methodism naturally notes the key innovating role of the Wesley brothers in the Revival and their determination to develop a discipleship movement that combined 'vital piety' and social action; it very properly notes that, in more recent years, there has been an attempt to recover the rich sacramental practice and spirituality which also characterised the early revival. It notes that not simply were there varying Anglican and Puritan/pietist influences on the movement, but that there were also influences from the Roman Catholic tradition and that of the early Church as received by the Wesleys⁶⁴.

Whereas Baptists were primarily concerned to stress the authority of the Word of God, Methodists have also stressed that, in interpreting Scripture, use should be made of reason, Tradition and experience; one may add that the exact relationship of the four sources has been the subject of some controversy in recent times, though it is generally accepted that Scripture has the primacy⁶⁵.

The section ends with reviewing some commonalities between the two traditions. Both have seen the fulfilment of Christ's Great Commission in missionary endeavour (Matt 28:19-20) as basic from the beginning. Both have tended to fragment with internal schisms; 'we acknowledge that we have not always been faithful to Our Lord's call to unity'. Preaching, hymn singing and discipling have been common to both. Concern for education, health and social welfare have featured in both traditions alongside concern for the poor and neglected⁶⁶.

The second section looks at the three key questions of Church, Authority and Salvation. Unsurprisingly, in a summary of only seven pages, it is unable to resolve all the tensions between the respective Baptist and Methodist approaches to these issues though it makes a valiant, if at times slightly forced attempt to do so, particularly in the ecclesiological statement.

⁶¹ *Faith*, para 11. Echoed in the 1990's British Baptist Union statement of *Core Principles*.

⁶² These unions provide certain common services, such as theological seminaries and co-ordinated advice on social witness; they have, however, no authority to compel the member churches to use them.

⁶³ *Faith*, paras 12,13. Note the similarity to the Core Values document of the British Baptist Union in 1995.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, paras 14,15.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, para 16.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, paras 24-36. It is interesting to note the tribute paid to the influence of Charles Wesley's hymnody on Baptists as well as Methodists.

This section begins by affirming convictions which would be held throughout the contemporary oikoumene, viz that the Church is the gift of the triune God, grounded the communion of the Trinity. Both churches claim and cherish their place within the one holy catholic church.⁶⁷ Both believe, in common with other Protestants, that the one Church is visible wherever the word of God and the gospel sacraments are administered⁶⁸. Both stress the presence of Christ through the Spirit in each local congregation and the importance of the way in which the members 'watch over each other in faith and love.'⁶⁹

The key tension in ecclesiology is in polity, between Baptist congregational polity and Methodist Connexionalism. It is stressed that the former is modified in most cases by the associational principle which, I may add, has been stressed by British Baptists since the early days of persecution⁷⁰. However, there is an essential difference. Apart from small bodies of Independent Methodists, the vast majority of Methodists accept the ultimate authority of their respective conferences which deal with such vital matters as the discipline and stationing of ministers on the grounds that the overall needs of the mission under each Conference are one and that the Conference concerned must make decisions that reflect its understanding of the exigencies of the time and place. For Baptists, the calling of a minister in a responsibility for the local congregation which may indeed call anyone as minister. The national Baptist Union may maintain ministerial training colleges and indeed lists of recommended recognised pastors, but final decisions are for the local church, not, as for example in British Methodism, for the stationing committee of the Conference. There is here a clear ecclesiological difference. It is not one that prevents Methodist recognition of Baptist congregations as true local churches or of the authenticity of their preaching of the word and celebration of the sacraments. However, the difference is reflected in the sensus fidelium of Methodists, who are deeply aware of their belonging to the wider unity of the Connexion concerned, this being particularly the case with local preachers who always serve the wider fellowship of the circuit, defined in CPD as the 'primary unit in which local churches express their interconnexion in the Body of Christ'⁷¹.

It needs to be stressed in any future dialogue that the Connexional Principle does not imply rigidly unalterable rules, but that changes can be and frequently have been made within every Conference jurisdiction over the years. Certainly, the degree of consultation with local congregations and circuits has been improved enormously since the late nineteenth century in British Methodism⁷².

⁶⁷ Ibid, para 40

⁶⁸ Ibid, para 41.

⁶⁹ Ibid, para 43.

⁷⁰ Ibid, para 45. For a detailed account of early, late seventeenth century Baptist associationalism, see Fiddes P. *Tracks and Traces. Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (2003).

⁷¹ *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the (British) Methodist Church*, p. 463.

⁷² It should be noted that the Methodist sense of being 'one people the world over' is not fully reflected in a world conference even though the World Methodist Council acts as a valuable forum for exchange of views

It is agreed by the Commission that Methodists and Baptists share much in common mission and in sharing in the eucharist. It is not yet clear how far further rapprochement in ecclesiology might be achieved. I would suggest that looking at the history of the formation both of the Church of South India and of the United Reformed Church might help; in both cases churches with a heritage of independent polity came into wider unions involving a dilution but not complete elimination of congregational autonomy.

The sub-section on Scripture and Authority notes that Christ is both the source and model of all authority which must always be cruciform⁷³. It notes the common stress in both traditions on the priesthood of all believers and also a common suspicion of hierarchical authority; one may add that in the case of British Methodism this sprang to some extent from inappropriately heavy authority being exercised over local congregations and lay leaders by the travelling preachers in the early nineteenth century. It is stressed that pastoral care and discipling in both traditions are not the monopoly of ministers but are also exercised by layfolk.

The Scriptures are the final rule of faith and practice, but both traditions believe in *sola scriptura* in the sense of *suprema scriptura* not *nuda scriptura*, that is by scripture unexamined in terms of its context and wider meaning. Para 51 states 'we are grateful for those engaged in scholarly and devotional study of scripture, through which our faith has been strengthened'. The so called Wesleyan Quadrilateral is mentioned as an important aid to many Methodists in reading the Bible⁷⁴; it certainly can be shown to have been practiced by the Wesley despite his averring that he was a man of one book. Both traditions affirm the ancient ecumenical creeds as normative and as faithful to the apostolic tradition⁷⁵.

The last sub-section deals with justification and sanctification. Both traditions accept the Reformation tradition that 'in accordance with the Scriptures, we believe human beings are justified by God's grace in Christ received freely by faith alone'. The statement of the Joint Declaration on Justification of 1999 'expresses well our shared understanding'⁷⁶. Less agreement exists on the *exact* extent of sanctification achievable in this life⁷⁷. It is agreed that it is 'God's continuous work in the Christian life through the power of the Holy Spirit', but Methodists go on to speak of salvation as 'the renewal of the image of God' and to stress, in contrast to the Baptist stress on the *imputation* of righteousness, the *impartation*

and also sponsors dialogues with other communions. It has, however, no *direct* authority over the many conferences.

⁷³ Faith, para 48.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, para 52.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, para 53.

⁷⁶ *Joint Declaration on Justification* (1999), para 15.

⁷⁷ *Faith*, para 62 'Baptists see the fullness of salvation purely in eschatological terms, looking to resurrection and glorification rather than any state achievable in this life'.

of righteousness, the divine gift by which we grow in holiness, even, in rare cases, to the point of perfect holiness⁷⁸.

In this context, we should note that Wesley, and, indeed, later Methodists have been keen to stress that Christian holiness is not incompatible with ignorance and unavoidable error. It is not, as Wesley termed it, 'Adamic perfection', in other words the total perfection in knowledge and understanding that he and others in the western Augustinian tradition believed had been lost at the Fall. Much remains to be discussed on this subject, perhaps in a further dialogue. There is a sense in which, perhaps, pace the very proper Methodist stress on the search for the greatest possible holiness in this life, the Baptists are correct in insisting that salvation is not totally complete until the final restoration of all things in which Christ hands over the kingdom to the Father and God is finally all in all together with His redeemed and perfected creation (1 Cor 15:28). Only at that point will all the faithful be able to rejoice that the Father's great plan of salvation, reconciling all things in Christ, is complete (Eph 1:10).

The third section deals with the best known divergence between the two traditions, that over infant baptism which Methodists accept as a custom that developed early in the Church and which is justifiable in terms of their understanding of prevenient grace⁷⁹.

The Commission are anxious to refute myths that have grown up, in particular that Baptists only baptise adults and Methodists only infants. Baptists will baptise children whom they believe to have reached faith and Methodists will, of course, baptise adults that have not previously received baptism⁸⁰. Both churches agree that baptism is unrepeatable, Baptists arguing that when they baptise as believers those who have previously been christened as infants, it is because that previous 'baptism' was not fully authentically scriptural in their understanding⁸¹. Baptists and Methodists both agree that, despite this difference, they can acknowledge that in both communions 'true disciples are made'⁸².

Paras 90-92 indicate changing patterns in both communions. In Jamaica, some Methodists call for a child blessing, analogous, one might add, to Baptist dedication of infants and leave baptism to a time when a child can make a clear commitment. In some Baptist congregations in USA children as young as five can be baptised, 'a trend blurring the line between infants and believers'. By contrast, some of the Wesleyan-Holiness movement churches make provision both for infant baptism and for infant dedication.

Despite the basic difference over infant baptism, Baptists and Methodists are agreed on several important relevant matters. Two have already been indicated above. Another is the

⁷⁸ *ibid*, paras 63,64.

⁷⁹ And in terms of a lively confidence that God will do for their children what his grace has done for them. cf. C. Wesley, 'joyful that we ourselves are thine, thine let our children be'.

⁸⁰ *Faith*, para 67.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, para 70.

⁸² *ibid*, para 69.

importance of catechesis always being linked with baptism, as is suggested in the Great Commission (Matt 28: 19-20), or being given at an appropriate post-baptismal stage and the affirmation both of the importance of divine initiative and human response in the sacrament⁸³. The Commission affirm their gratitude for the statement on baptism in the Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry process (1982) that, 'while the possibility exists that infant baptism was also practiced in the apostolic age, baptism upon profession of faith is the most clearly attested practice in the New Testament documents'⁸⁴. They also note the promising work done, particularly by Baptists and Anglicans in Britain, on the possible recognition of alternative patterns of Christian initiation, one beginning with infant baptism, the other with infant dedication, but both involving teaching and growth in faith with confirmation or believers baptism (possibly accompanied by a 'laying on of hands' coming as the culmination of the process. Both communions accept that growth in discipleship continues throughout the faithfully lived Christian life⁸⁵.

Hope is expressed that each church might receive a key aspect of the other's witness, Baptists the Methodist stress on prevenient grace, Methodists the Baptist stress on the drama of Christian conversion⁸⁶.

It is in this context that one might have expected some attention to be given to baptism as sacramental entrance into the paschal mystery, from the human side a commitment to enter into the pattern of total dedication to the Father's will, from the divine side a joyful acceptance of one who desires to be one with the eternally Beloved Son in his obedience and one with Him in ultimate glory and eternal life. It is strange to see Romans 6 ignored in what is otherwise a well crafted section of this dialogue. The dialogue partners might have done well to look at the work of the Methodist- Roman Catholic dialogue on baptism in this particular respect⁸⁷.

Finally, we should note the reference to those situations where there has been advance towards accepting forms of alternative initiation, particularly in North India and in Sweden⁸⁸. We note the existence of LEPs in Britain, where there are often similar local arrangements, and the agreement of the Baptist Union there that its ministers may baptise infants if they can do so in good conscience. Baptist churches in Britain vary as to whether they will accept into membership people who were baptised as infants and now wish to join a Baptist church⁸⁹.

⁸³ *ibid*, para 77.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, para 67.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, paras 73-77. For the work done by Anglicans and Baptists, see *Pushing at the Boundaries of Unity. Conversations between Anglicans and Baptists*, (1992-2005).

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, para 75.

⁸⁷ *Encountering Christ the Saviour-Church and Sacraments* (2011), pp 9-15.

⁸⁸ *Faith*, paras 87-88.

⁸⁹ *ibid*, paras 87-89.

The fourth section deals with worship, witness and mission. It contains some beautiful reflections, particularly on the eucharist. It is agreed that worship is the central act of the Church, inspiring and empowering witness, mission and service⁹⁰. Stress is placed on the role of hymnody in both traditions, alike in worship and in catechesis⁹¹. Preaching and the celebration of the sacraments are central. It is stressed that both liturgical and extempore prayer have a part in Methodist and Baptist worship, though, surely, liturgical worship is more prominent in Methodism, which has always cherished both traditions within worship, even if revivalistic forms of worship became much commoner in the nineteenth century and, in some cases, charismatic worship in the late twentieth⁹².

A sub-section deals with the question of sacraments and ordinances, also a subject of the recent WCC Faith and Order document, *The Church Towards a Common Vision*. It seeks to reconcile a traditional Baptist stress on the Lord's Supper as simply requiring obedience with the more sacramental Methodist stress on meeting with the Risen Lord. It argues that 'the Supper is both instrumental(used by God to establish a new reality) and expressive manifesting an already existing reality)... The Supper express and realises the communion of the people of God with Christ and each other'⁹³. Here we see both reconciliation of the standpoints of the two partners and learning from others as manifested in the following paragraph with the statement that more regular practice may be appropriate today.

Mission is defined holistically in terms of evangelism, nurture of Christians in faithful discipleship, responding in service to human need, care for God's creation and working for justice and peace⁹⁴. Mention is made of the way in which missions of both churches have contributed powerfully to education and other forms of empowerment⁹⁵. Two paragraphs refer respectively to the deaconess movement in both churches and other forms of witness and service by laywomen⁹⁶. The section concludes with an account of shared Baptist-Methodist ministry amongst the homeless at Ashland in Ohio.

The Report concludes with eleven recommendations to both communions⁹⁷. Three show the interconnected relevance of all ecumenical work. The very first recommends that the two communions should always follow the Lund principle, that they should never do separately those things that they can, in good conscience, do together. The Commission state how useful it found the Joint Declaration on Justification in its work and recommends that the Baptist World Alliance responds to the text. They also advocate mutual reception of each other's gifts. On the tricky issue of baptism, they make four recommendations; first, that they stress how baptism unites, despite differences in practice. All Methodists and

⁹⁰ Ibid, para 93.

⁹¹ Ibid, para 95.

⁹² Ibid, para 96.

⁹³ Ibid, para 98.

⁹⁴ Ibid, para 102.

⁹⁵ Ibid, para 105.

⁹⁶ Ibid, paras 106-7.

⁹⁷ *Faith*, pp. 35-7.

Baptists should rejoice in their baptism regularly. They commend the work done ecumenically in BEM and the Anglican-Baptist conversations on it. They recommend careful consideration of the proposed two patterns of Christian initiation and careful consideration of modern scholarly work on baptism and 'the way in which it challenges stereotypes and easy assumptions. Finally, they state that though it was impossible to get full agreement on everything in the dialogue, it was good to recognise that there are no insurmountable barriers to unity in mission and witness.

Conclusion.

It is devoutly to be hoped that this report and its user friendly study guide will be well used in both communions, particularly in those places where Baptist and Methodist congregations witness and serve within the same community, as is frequently the case in many parts of both the USA and Britain. It is to be hoped that the study of the main report will feature in the ministerial training agenda in both communions and also in lay training schemes since local lay leaders can and do play key roles in local ecumenical co-operation, my friend John Pope, of Carshalton Beeches Free Church (Baptist), being such an example in South London.

The first section of the Report on the heritage of the two churches provides enough information to stimulate interest amongst Methodists and Baptists in each others' Christian discipleship. The Report and the Study Guide both indicate ample resources for further study. In several places, the Report stresses ways in which both have benefited from the witness of the wider oikoumene. In an age of receptive ecumenism, it behoves both to learn not simply from each other but also from the other communions, with some of which, notably the Roman Catholic Church, both are already in dialogue.

The two good, if rather different, dialogues surveyed in this article hold out much promise for the whole of the dialogue relationships, so warmly commended by John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint*.

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