

The Apostolic Constitution ‘Anglicanorum coetibus’ of Pope Benedict XVI from an Anglican Perspective

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Abstract:

Having illustrated the various responses among Anglicans to Benedict XVI's offer to allow Anglicans who enter into full communion with Rome to retain aspects of their Anglican heritage, the article analyses and evaluates the detail of what is actually proposed. The article argues that for all its generosity and creativity in seeking a pastoral accommodation for ex-Anglicans, *Anglicanorum Coetibus* does not measure up to the aspirations of Anglican ecumenism. In particular it is not the unity without absorption hoped for by Paul VI and Cardinal Willebrands. Nonetheless the offer is a significant step that, seen rightly, augurs well for future ecumenical relations.

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As soon as people got wind of the forthcoming Apostolic Constitution there was a flurry of excitement. The Pope, it seemed, had launched an attack upon the Anglican Communion, precisely at its moment of weakness. Just as Anglicans were struggling in the face of hard issues arising out of clashes concerning the development of doctrine, especially with regard to homosexuality and the ordination of women as bishops, it seemed that Rome was attempting to woo traditionalists away. The language got quite colourful. Ruth Gledhill, *The Times*' correspondent for religion, wrote on 21 October 2009: 'Rome has parked its tanks on the Archbishop of Canterbury's lawn...'.¹

It was just as one would expect, given the press that the Pope usually has. And in any case a good story always involves conflict. Put the two together and, with differences according to the information available or the creative perception of the writer, one has a tale of the Pope's latest act of aggression.

It would be unfair, however, to say that the negative reaction was only dreamt up by an unsympathetic media. Many Anglicans felt just as the journalists did. Instinctively, it seemed, they felt that Rome was up to something unpleasant. Behind this there is a long history of hurts and rebuffs that Anglicans have felt from the Holy See, which in its broad sweep in recent times began with Leo XIII's declaration of Anglican orders as 'utterly null and completely void' in *Apostolicae Curae* in 1896, was underlined in the tepid if not cold response to ARCIC's groundbreaking agreements, and culminated to some extent in the unfortunate phraseology of *Dominus Iesus* (declared by the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith when the then Cardinal Ratzinger was its head) which made it plain that Anglicans did not belong to a Church 'in the proper sense'.¹

At the same time, however, there were a significant number of others who were delighted. When the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* was finally published on 4 November 2009 John Broadhurst, the Bishop of Fulham and chairman of Forward in Faith (a coalition of those opposed to the ordination of women), a few days later wrote: 'I had thought the original notice from Rome was extremely generous. Today all the accompanying papers have been published and they are extremely impressive.' (*Letter on the Vatican Initiative*, 9 November²). Here he shows both his initial appreciation of the proposed Roman project and

¹ *Dominus Iesus*, 17

² http://www.bishopoffulham.co.uk/Webpage/vatican_initiative.htm, accessed 25 February 2010

then his deep pleasure in what has eventually been put forward. The Holy See, it seems, is offering just what a number of Anglicans say they have wanted.

At the same time, in contrast to any of the extremes, a measured reaction, reflected subsequently in various statements made by Anglican bishops, came from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. When the Apostolic Constitution was announced he (significantly) made a joint statement together with Vincent Nichols, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, and this was sent with an accompanying letter to the bishops of the Church of England and the members of the Primates Meeting of the Anglican Communion. In the letter he shows that not everything had been entirely smooth since he apologizes for not alerting them sooner, explaining that he could not do so as he was ‘informed of the planned announcement at a very late stage’ (in the press conference on 20 October he said it was only ‘a couple of weeks ago’ that he heard of the proposed Apostolic Constitution). But he goes on to say:

It remains to be seen what use will be made of this provision, since it is now up to those who have made requests to the Holy See to respond to the Apostolic Constitution; but, in the light of recent discussions with senior officials in the Vatican, I can say that this new possibility is in no sense at all intended to undermine existing relations between our two communions or to be an act of proselytism or aggression.³

Indeed, the joint statement together with the Archbishop of Westminster was at pains to underline the idea that between the communions of Canterbury and Rome it remains ‘business as usual’. Its last two paragraphs are dedicated to showing how:

With God's grace and prayer we are determined that our on-going mutual commitment and consultation on these [the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) and the International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM)] and other matters should continue to be strengthened.⁴

And it was emphasized that the Apostolic Constitution was essentially pastoral in nature, being

³ *The Archbishop of Canterbury to the Bishops of the Church of England, and the members of the Primates Meeting of the Anglican Communion*, 20 October 2009.

⁴ *Ibid.*

a response by Pope Benedict XVI to a number of requests over the past few years to the Holy See from groups of Anglicans who wish to enter into full visible communion with the Roman Catholic Church, and are willing to declare that they share a common Catholic faith and accept the Petrine ministry as willed by Christ for his Church.⁵

The question then is what difference, if any, does the Apostolic Constitution make to relations between Rome and Canterbury? Are those who, in their various ways, are upset correct despite assurances to the contrary? Is this really an opportunity for some members of the Anglican Communion to see the fulfilment of their dreams? What effect will it have on the attempt to go on with the normal round of interactions between Roman Catholics and Anglicans? To explore these, and related questions, I would like to turn first to some of the key issues, from an Anglican point of view, lying in the background.

Ecumenical expectation: united but not absorbed

When in his Address of 28 April 1977, Paul VI said that relations between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion were such that ‘these words of hope, “The Anglican Communion united not absorbed,”⁶ were are no longer a mere dream, he was using a term, coined by the Roman Catholic monk Lambert Beauduin that characterized, and indeed still characterizes, Anglican endeavours in the ecumenical field. It can be seen for example in the dealing of the Church of England with the Methodists in the national covenant set up in November 2003, where the expectation and the attempt has been to come closer together in stages, changing where necessary and possible in conscience, to achieve ‘a visible unity that affirms the distinctive contributions of our two traditions rather than absorbing them into one.’⁷

This is precisely what seemed to have been the direction of what was suggested by Paul VI. In fact this vision was drawn out more clearly by Cardinal Jan Willebrands who in a celebrated address given at Great St Mary’s in Cambridge, on 18 January 1970, suggested what the reconciled Church of the future could look like. He drew on an essay by Dom Emmanuel Lanne which demonstrated that the Church Catholic is not only a communion of Churches, which should be clear from any consideration either of Roman Catholic ecclesiology or of the range of Churches currently in full communion with the See of Rome. It is also a communion of communions, each with its specific characteristics. These are *typoi* within the universal Church.

⁵ Joint Statement by the Archbishop of Westminster and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Tuesday 20 October 2009.

⁶ *Osservatore Romano*, 5 May 1977, 1.

⁷ Rt Revd Christopher Cocksworth and Professor Peter Howdle, co-chairs of the Joint Implementation Committee under the Anglican Methodist Covenant, *The Church Times*, 19 February 2010, 10.

When there is a long coherent tradition, commanding men's love and loyalty, creating and sustaining a harmonious and organic whole of complementary elements, each of which supports and strengthens the others, you have the reality of a *typos*.

Such complementary elements are many. A characteristic theological method and approach ... A spiritual and devotional tradition ... A characteristic canonical discipline, the fruit also of experience and psychology.... Through the combination of all these, a *typos* can be specified.⁸

It should, I think, be obvious that Anglicanism with its characteristic theological approach and methods that exist in dialectic complementarity, its range of different spiritualities cohering in one whole, its various liturgies that come from the single root of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, its common history and the continuing interaction of its members, its particular pastoral spirit and experience in dealing with many differing peoples throughout the world, its specific form of dispersed authority,⁹ its model of episcopal governance that gives a real place to the whole Church, including the laity, in its synodical decision-making, is an example of just such an ecclesial *typos*.

None of this was taken to mean that there was no work to be done. As Paul VI made clear, the issue of the apostolic succession of Anglican orders still needed to be faced, and this had to be seen against the background of ecclesiology and the understanding of sacramental theology. It is this awareness that, in time, gave such a feeling of excitement to the ARCIC deliberations which found a substantial agreement on many topics that had previously been thought to be matters of division. 'If both Communion were so clearly at one in their faith concerning the Eucharist and the Ministry, the context of this discussion [the question of Anglican orders] would indeed be changed' as Cardinal Willebrands himself put it in 1985.¹⁰

In the 1970s, however, the vision was clear. Indeed, later in the same year Cardinal Willebrands made his statement about the various *typoi* in the universal Church, what he said

⁸ Secretariat for Christian Unity, *Information Bulletin* (11, III, 1970), 14.

⁹ 'Authority, as inherited by the Anglican Communion from the undivided Church of the early centuries of the Christian era, is single in that it is derived from a single Divine source, and reflects within itself the richness and historicity of the divine Revelation.... It is distributed among Scripture, Tradition, Creeds, the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, the witness of saints, and the *consensus fidelium*, which is the continuing experience of the Holy Spirit through His faithful people in the Church. It is thus a dispersed rather than a centralized authority having many elements which combine, interact with, and check each other; these elements together contributing by a process of mutual support, mutual checking, and redressing of errors or exaggerations to the many-sided fullness of the authority which Christ has committed to His Church. Where this authority is to be found mediated not in one mode but in several we recognize in this multiplicity God's loving provision against the temptations to tyranny and the dangers of unchecked power.' *The Lambeth Conference* (London 1948). Report IV, 'The Anglican Communion', 84.

¹⁰ Cardinal Willebrands' letter to the Co-Presidents of ARCIC II, July 1985.

appeared to be supported, with reference in particular to the Anglican Communion, by a homily given by Paul VI on the occasion of the canonization of the forty martyrs of England and Wales – an otherwise somewhat anti-ecumenical event since these were the Roman Catholic victims of the Reformation (Anglicans, mind you, boast around 200 martyrs!). Paul VI said:

There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and the worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church, when the Roman Catholic Church – this ‘humble Servant of the servants of God’ – is able to embrace her ever beloved Sister in the one authentic Communion of the family of Christ, a communion of origin and of faith, a communion of priesthood and of rule, a communion of the saints in the freedom of love of the Spirit of Jesus. Perhaps we shall have to go on waiting in prayer in order to deserve that blessed day. But already we are strengthened in this hope by the heavenly friendship of the forty martyrs of England and Wales who are canonized today.¹¹

Paul VI was certainly heard by many to be calling the Anglican Church already a ‘sister Church’, although, to be fair, he was actually only saying that at the point of union the Anglican Communion would be a ‘sister Church’. This was not just the language of diplomacy but of theological precision, presenting a model for the reconciliation of the Churches. The warmth of Paul VI towards Anglicanism was evident, but his image of what future union would look like was even more significant. It was absolutely clear: unity but not absorption. It remains fundamental to Anglican ecumenical expectations.

Imaginative and generous

It should be clear that *Anglicanorum coetibus* is a response to pastoral need. It grew out of the dialogue with different groups of Anglicans who were unhappy with the direction they felt their Church was taking. As a matter of historical fact it seems to be the case that the request in 2007 by the Traditional Anglican Church, a breakaway communion of ex-Anglicans spread across the world founded in 1991, to come into full communion with Rome was broached after other, first contacts had been made. Already in 1975 the Anglican diocese of Amritsa entered en bloc into full communion with Rome and in 1980 Pope John Paul II issued a Pastoral Provision that allowed a small number of Anglican parishes¹² in the USA to set up the Anglican Use Society, which is in full communion with the See of Rome and uses

¹¹ 25 October 1979, quoted in Robert Hale, *Canterbury and Rome. Sister Churches* (New York, 1982), 16.

¹² At the time of writing they number nine.

an adapted form of the *Book of Common Prayer* for its worship. These regional initiatives formed the background for a universal provision that can, it seems to me, be called imaginative and generous. But, as I shall eventually show, they do not amount to the ecumenical aspiration of a reconciliation that is ‘united but not absorbed’.

To begin with, however, it is perhaps useful to look at the many good things, from an Anglican perspective, to be found in the Apostolic Constitution.

Perhaps the most impressive element is the solid desire to respect and maintain Anglican liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions. Not only is this specifically stated, but provisions are made do so. Thus the Ordinariate is granted the faculty, ‘without excluding liturgical celebrations according to the Roman Rite’,

to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and the other Sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours and other liturgical celebrations according to the liturgical books proper to the Anglican tradition, which have been approved by the Holy See (*Ang. coetibus*, III)

For a tradition like Anglicanism this is particularly significant since Anglican theology is principally worked out in worship. For Anglicans in particular the dictum holds true: *lex orandi, lex credendi*, as you pray, so you believe. Just what this provision might mean in practice can be seen in the USA’s Anglican Use *Book of Divine Worship*, helpfully subtitled ‘*Being Elements of the Book of Common Prayer Revised and Adapted According to the Roman Rite for Use by Roman Catholics Coming from the Anglican Tradition*’. It is indeed a mixture of elements derived ultimately from the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, some more modern Anglican rites (as used by the Episcopal Church in the USA) and Roman Catholic liturgy. The basic patterns that order the services, the ethos that for the most part pervades them (in that it strives to be completely biblical and does not lay great emphasis on the intercession of the saints – while giving some provision for the practice), a great deal of the language and many of the prayers are recognizably Anglican, but the Roman additions and corrections ensure that the document irrefutably affirms Catholic doctrine.

In addition to liturgical patrimony the spiritual and pastoral traditions of Anglicanism are to be maintained by the training of future clergy. There is a permanent requirement that ‘candidates for Holy Orders’, while training alongside other seminarians, should be supplied with ‘seminary programs or houses of formation which would relate to existing Catholic faculties of theology’ but that would have the specific purpose of ‘formation in Anglican patrimony’ (*Ang. coetibus*, VI, 5). In addition to this the possibility of ‘Institutes of Consecrated Life originating in the Anglican Communion’, upon written request (*Ang. coetibus*, IX), coming into the Ordinariates (see *Ang. coetibus*, VII) would encourage a continuing stream of spirituality formed by Anglicanism. Indeed, the whole legal framework

would encourage the continuance of some kind of Anglican ethos since it admits as members of an Ordinariate only those who have been Anglicans, or those who have come to faith via the Ordinariate, or (and this shows a real pastoral imagination) other Roman Catholics whose families have already become members.

Possibly, however, the most imaginative provision of something like their old home to Anglicans who become part of an Ordinariate can be seen in its institutional structure. There is a clear attempt to set up a kind of governance that comes as close as possible, within the current canons of the Latin Church, to Anglican synodical government. Throughout the world Anglican dioceses are governed by bishops in synod and each of the thirty-eight Churches of the Anglican Communion has its General Synod, and these synods at whatever level comprise bishops, clergy and laity. (The same is true of the Anglican Consultative Council which spans the worldwide Communion). This means that clergy and laity have deliberative voices in the Church's decision-making at all levels. Certainly the bishops are given a special place in matters of doctrine or worship, but no resolution can be reached without in effect hearing also the whole church. There is a theological perception here: namely, that the Holy Spirit is given both to persons specifically through the charisms they are granted (as to bishops) and that he is poured also upon the whole body of the faithful (as history has demonstrated even in the realm of doctrine).¹³ Paragraph X of *Anglicanorum coetibus* stipulates that the Ordinary in his governing of the Ordinariate *must* have a 'Governing Council, presided over by the Ordinary ... composed of at least six priests' and in the Complementary Norms it is spelt out that certain decisions can only be made with the agreement of the Council (for instance, admitting a candidate to Holy Orders, erecting or suppressing a personal parish, erecting or suppressing a house of formation, approving a programme of formation, see Article 12). This is not optional. Neither is it optional whether the Ordinary will hear the voice of the laity. Canon 511 of the Code Canon Law says that 'In each diocese, *in so far as pastoral circumstances suggest*, a pastoral council is to be established.'¹⁴ In the Apostolic Constitution, however, the need of a pastoral council 'to provide for the consultation of the faithful' (*Ang. coetibus* X, 4) is obligatory. Both clergy and laity have statutory roles.

A further element of generosity, which nonetheless has an air of provisionality, can be seen in the admittance of married clergy. Ex-Anglican ministers can be ordained as deacons or priests, though not bishops, even though they are married, assuming that they are

¹³ To illustrate this one only has to consider the Arian controversy of the fourth century where, in 358, the bishops at the troubled Councils of Seleucia and Ariminum accepted heretical propositions. It was, above all, the laity who maintained the faith.

¹⁴ My emphasis. The canon goes on to say 'Its function, under the authority of the Bishop, is to study and weigh those matters which concern the pastoral works in the diocese, and to propose practical conclusions concerning them.' Trans. 1983 © The Canon Law Society Trust.

not ‘in irregular marriage situations’ (*Complementary Norms*, Article 6, 2). The air of provisionality is given by the Apostolic Constitution’s affirmation that ‘as a rule (*pro regula*) [the Ordinary] will admit only celibate men to the order of presbyter’ (*Ang. coetibus* V, 2), so the intention would appear to be to phase out married clergy from the Ordinariates. Nonetheless, the Apostolic Constitution immediately goes on to say that ‘on a case by case basis’ the Ordinary ‘may also petition the Roman Pontiff’ for a derogation from canon 277, 1¹⁵ requiring clerical celibacy, to admit married men to the order of presbyter on the basis of (unspecified) ‘objective criteria approved by the Holy See’. Hence, despite discouraging the idea, it will be possible to have married priests in the future. Bearing in mind the inevitable tensions this will cause with the rest of the Latin Church, this provision, made from pastoral concern, shows magnanimity in the face of the need of those who wish to keep some kind of Anglican identity while being in full communion with Rome.

No derogation, however, is possible for episcopal orders. A married ex-Anglican bishop can only be ordained priest. Here too, nonetheless, a creative generosity can be seen, since it is possible for a man in priest’s orders to be the Ordinary, having (like a Vicar General when there is a vacancy in a diocese) episcopal powers without the ability to ordain. Since it is also explicitly stated in the *Complementary Norms* that ‘a former Anglican Bishop who belongs to the Ordinariate and who has not been ordained as a bishop in the Catholic Church, may request permission from the Holy See to use the insignia of the episcopal office’ (Article 11, 4), it would be possible for a man in priest’s orders to look, act and be like a bishop within his specific area of competence in the Ordinariate without actually being a bishop. It is possible to imagine this applying to married ex-Anglican bishops who would be, in the first instance, the prime candidates to hold positions as Ordinaries. At the same time there can be observed in this seemingly trivial detail both an obvious desire not to humiliate anyone who previously had exercised a role as a bishop, and the wish to value the previous episcopal ministry of such former Anglican clergy. Indeed, any former Anglican bishop belonging to an Ordinariate, even though no longer recognized as a bishop and not even holding the position of Ordinary, can be invited to join the episcopal conference in any area. This too can only be on the grounds of accepting the positive value of the expertise gained in a man’s previous ministry as an Anglican bishop.

It is, I think, clear therefore that *Anglicanorum coetibus*, in a creative and pastoral manner, strives to do all it can to accommodate an Anglican identity within the setting of the Latin Church. This is significant for those who may wish to avail themselves of the Pope’s

¹⁵ Canon. 277, §1: ‘Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven, and are therefore bound to celibacy. Celibacy is a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can more easily remain close to Christ with an undivided heart, and can dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and their neighbour.’ *The Code of Canon Law*, The Canon Law Society Trust, op. cit.

offer. It is also, as I hope to demonstrate later, significant in a positive manner for relations between the Communions of Rome and Canterbury. But it is nevertheless a long way from the unity without absorption that would or should be the end of the ecumenical journey. Those who feel impelled in the words of the Anglican bishops of Ebbsfleet and Richborough to ‘begin to form a caravan, rather like the People of Israel crossing the desert in search of the Promised Land’¹⁶ as they seek full communion with Rome will in reality be giving up a fully Anglican identity.

Abridged Anglicanism

No doubt taking up the offer of the Apostolic Constitution would not be seen as a loss of their identity by those who make the journey. As a rule they see themselves as having remained faithful while the rest have changed and so, arguably, they maintain an identity the others have lost. Nonetheless it is undeniable that *Anglicanorum coetibus* demands the renunciation of several hitherto characteristic aspects of Anglicanism.

One thing that would not surprise anyone is that the orders of former Anglican clergy are not recognized, hence any reordination in an Ordinariate is absolute and not conditional. No amount of appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit in a man’s previous ministry can deny this fact, and so a denial of the Anglican belief in the validity of its Church’s orders is implicit, even though there will be ways of reconciling the consciences of former Anglican clergy to this. Such a relatively minor point (minor in that no one would expect Rome to reinterpret *Apostolicae Curae* at this juncture and minor in comparison with other points) underlines, nonetheless, an important truth about the Apostolic Constitution: *it is an accommodation within Rome’s current terms of reference and breaks no new ground ecclesiologically.*

More indicative of a diminished Anglican identity is the loss of communion with other streams of spirituality, life and theology within the Anglican Communion, and in particular evangelicals and liberals. To explain just why this is so vital we need to look at how Anglicanism sees itself. The mother Church of the Anglican Communion in the Revised Catechism of 1962 says of itself that ‘The Church of England is the ancient Church of this land, catholic and reformed.’ (Article 19) This has four dimensions that are each essential to Anglican identity. The first is that it is ‘ancient’, namely that it is in continuity with the early Church, and so its roots go further back than the sixteenth-century Reformation. It is the inheritor of more than just the mission of Augustine who, sent by Gregory the Bishop of Rome, landed in England in 597. Its heritage comes also from the Christians who already existed in Britain, including the Celtic missions active at the time in the north of the island.

¹⁶ Letter on 20 October 2009 from Andrew Burnham, Bishop of Ebbsfleet, and Keith Newton, Bishop of Richborough.

This means that the Church of England feels itself to be truly the Church founded by Christ. The second point that it says is ‘of this land’, which means both that it has a mission to the whole community in the country where it is (and so is not, as it were, a simply chaplaincy to the Christians who live there) and that it is inculturated, or contextualized, within its local culture. This is replicated in all the Anglican Churches around the world, each with their inculturated mission to the peoples they serve. This is the origin of the liberal wing of the Church, which gives such value to the contemporary culture and to the use of reason in discerning what may come from God in new avenues of human learning. The next point is that it is ‘catholic’. This means that it contains all the objective riches essential to the catholic tradition, sacramental, episcopal, ministerial and ecclesiological. This has given rise to the catholic or High Church wing. And finally ‘reformed’ which means that all of this has been purified by having a scriptural basis according to the insights of the Protestant Reformation. This is the origin of the evangelical or Low Church wing. Including all these elements, sometimes in tension and sometimes in harmony with one another, is essential to the Anglican experience of being Church, an experience that transcends and is more fundamental than the specific expressions of Church, whether evangelical, catholic, liberal or, indeed, charismatic or anything else. This is the comprehensiveness that is at the core of what it means to be an Anglican. To lose any of these dimensions is to lose something of the core of Anglican identity. The price of joining an Ordinariate is to lose the other wings.

I have no doubt that a solid rejoinder to this point could be made, to the effect that catholic identity in an Ordinariate can still be enhanced by love of the Word of God and by keeping abreast of new developments in human knowledge and understanding. This will almost certainly be part of the project as it attempts to maintain Anglican patrimony. But the fact is that an Ordinariate is not part of a communion in which these various elements are exemplified and lived by actual people, where the dialogue, therefore, is rooted in a real conversation in which the other with differing views is fully accepted as belonging to the same Body. By some this may be considered no great loss. However it is assessed, though, it is a loss of the real comprehensiveness at the heart of Anglican identity.

The ‘abridged’ Anglicanism this leads to is exemplified in the disciplinary measures to do with the marriage of clergy. Following biblical precedent Anglicans value their liberty to marry or not.¹⁷ This is not to dispute the value of celibacy, which likewise has biblical precedent.¹⁸ The Apostolic Constitution, for all its openness to the possibility of married priests and deacons, fundamentally asserts the current practice of the Latin Church (not even that of the Greek Catholic Churches in communion with the See of Rome).

¹⁷ See 1 Cor 7 and 1 Cor 9:5.

¹⁸ For instance: ‘So then, he who marries his fiancée does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better’ (1 Cor 7:38).

Similarly the attempt to provide something like a form of governance that is familiar to Anglicans falls short of the ecclesiology evident in the Anglican Communion's practice. Here the laity have a real voice, and not simply a consultative role. It is true from the Parish Councils made up of laypeople, where certain key decisions cannot be taken without their permission, through diocesan synods, to the General Synods of the various Churches of the Communion. This is a fundamental point and not one that could be compromised in any reconciliation between the Churches. It has to do with more than how to conduct Church business, and is also more than a formalized way for encouraging the reception of ecclesial acts by the *sensus fidelium*. It is a theological issue as to how God operates to reveal his will to his people. Anglicanism, while asserting the gift of episcopacy (and the charismatic giftedness of bishops), also affirms the authority of the whole people of God.

This indicates, finally, just how *Anglicanorum coetibus* produces its abridged Anglicanism. The otherwise admirable attempt to maintain as much as possible of Anglican liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions means, on the one hand, selecting those elements of these three interlocking aspects of the tradition that are considered acceptable from a Roman Catholic perspective and, on the other, setting aside the theological and ecclesiological context in which these elements have their full meaning. This is not to argue that Anglicanism has an officially sanctioned theological rationale for its existence, though the tradition after the break with Rome does contain such works (one thinks, for instance, of Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* of 1549 or John Jewel's *Apology of the Church of England* of 1592). But it is to say that for all its multifaceted and sometimes conflictual nature there are doctrinal presuppositions, albeit often implicit, undergirding the existence of Anglicanism as a way of being the Church of Christ, and that these are expressed in its ecclesiastical structures. Again, I am not seeking to exaggerate this, since there are, particularly in the Church of England, many mediaeval 'hangovers' of a secondary nature.¹⁹ Nonetheless, one key theological presupposition that has institutional shape can be seen in the value of the whole people of God and the place of the laity in decision-making. Likewise the freedom given to interpreting the Gospel, while sometimes construed as latitude verging on lack of conviction, both shows a sense that core, scriptural truth, is always beyond the full grasp of the human intellect and, still more, a sense that it can be understood with integrity in a variety of ways within the experience of the one Body of Christ. To lose any such element is

¹⁹ Some are useful, like the existence of churchwardens who have legal responsibilities, particularly with regard to the fabric of the church building, and are elected by the whole parish (which in this case, potentially at least, includes anyone of any conviction resident in the parish), some are more dubious, like the existence of Patrons of the Living, that is, persons or institutions who 'own' the living or patronage of a parish, and who nowadays exercise this generally by having the right to present potential parish priests to the bishop, with the agreement of the Parochial Church Council, for appointment. Neither of these is part of the *esse* of the Church; it is to be hoped that both can be lived out in such a way as to be part of its *bene esse*.

to lose, to use the term employed by Cardinal Willebrands, the particular *typos*, the particular way of being church, that is Anglican.

In fact, *Anglicanorum coetibus* shows itself aware of this. In its ecclesiological preamble, quoting *Lumen Gentium* 8, it says that ‘many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside her [the Catholic Church’s] visible confines. [And that] Since these are gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity.’²⁰ What it means in context by Catholic unity is becoming part of the Latin Church in full communion with Rome, where the Catholic Church ‘subsists’. It is seeking therefore to regain these elements and reintegrate them within itself. It does not seek to maintain their existence within the fullness of their integrity as a distinct *typos*. It is thus, in reality, a unity by partial absorption.

Ecumenical implications

This means that the surprise voiced in several quarters that negotiating *Anglicanorum coetibus* was not assigned to the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity but was instead in the hands of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is perhaps misplaced. The Apostolic Constitution is not about ecumenism, and it is just as well that it is not. If it were, it would be unacceptable, since its form of reconciliation would not recognize the ecclesial integrity of its partner institution. As Fr Gianfranco Ghirlanda says in an official Vatican commentary on the Apostolic Constitution the possibility of erecting Personal Ordinariates for former Anglicans ‘does not create a new structure within the current canonical norms’, but seeks not only to maintain ‘the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church’ but also, and crucially, ‘to fully integrate into the life of the Catholic Church groups of faithful, or individuals, coming from Anglicanism’.²¹

Therefore when the Archbishop of Canterbury said in his address at the Willebrands Symposium in Rome (19 November 2009) that ‘it is an imaginative *pastoral* response to the needs of some; but it does not break any fresh *ecclesiological* ground’²² he was not only very succinctly summing up the nature of *Anglicanorum coetibus*, he was also indicating why it cannot be any kind of blueprint for Christian unity. In this sense it is not about ecumenism.

²⁰ *Anglicanorum coetibus*, penultimate paragraph of the preamble, 2.

²¹ An official commentary posted on the Vatican website 9 November 2009 <[http://seraphin.vatican.va/news_services/bulletin/news/24626.php?index=24626&lang=e#THE_SIGNIFICANCE_OF_THE_APOSTOLIC_CONSTITUTION_ANGLICANORUM_COETIBUS_\(FR_GIANFRANCO_GHIRLANDA,_S.J.,_RECTOR_OF_THE_PONTIFICAL_GREGORIAN_UNIVERSITY\)](http://seraphin.vatican.va/news_services/bulletin/news/24626.php?index=24626&lang=e#THE_SIGNIFICANCE_OF_THE_APOSTOLIC_CONSTITUTION_ANGLICANORUM_COETIBUS_(FR_GIANFRANCO_GHIRLANDA,_S.J.,_RECTOR_OF_THE_PONTIFICAL_GREGORIAN_UNIVERSITY))> accessed 3 March 2010. Published also in *Osservatore Romano* 10 November 2009. My emphasis.

²² Thursday 19 November 2009 <<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2616>> accessed 3 March 2010.

Nonetheless it would be somewhat unreasonable to think that the Apostolic Constitution has no ecumenical or ecclesiastical impact. It touches the inner life of both Communion. For the Roman Catholic Church it uses ‘the current canonical norms’ but produces something as yet unseen within its ecclesiastical structure. Personal Ordinariates are not like the various oriental Churches that are in full communion with Rome, since the hierarchical structures of Ordinariates are part of the Latin Church and they do not have their own codes of canon law. But modelled on provision for the armed forces, these non-territorial dioceses are novel jurisdictions within a specific Bishops’ Conference that give ecclesial reality to new groupings of people belonging to the Latin Church. For the Anglican Communion, on the other hand, it means the weakening of the ‘catholic’ element within its ranks. It may turn out to be that the Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop in the diocese of Melbourne, Peter J. Elliott, exaggerates when he ventures to suggest ‘that, at the end of the day, the only significant communities with an authentic Oxford Movement tradition left on earth will be found in the Personal Ordinariates within the Catholic Church.’²³ Nonetheless, any exodus of such groups of Anglicans will affect their Church of origin. They must follow their consciences, and it would be quite ‘unAnglican’ to suggest otherwise, but their choices have consequences.

Ecumenically, it may seem strange to say, however, the news is good, and I would go so far as to say very good indeed. *Anglicanorum coetibus* signals an extremely positive appreciation of Anglicanism. At the very least this Christian Communion must have something good to offer if the Roman Catholic Church officially wishes to incorporate its liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions into itself. This is perhaps one of the most important things to come out of the Apostolic Constitution and it is a departure from much of what, to the perception of many, is the negative attitude that seems, despite the efforts of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and the warmth of personal relations between members of the two Communion, to characterize the official Roman stance with regard to all things Anglican. It is no small point. Unity cannot be achieved without seeing the other as worthy of being united to, without, that is, seeing the good in the other. Ultimately this spiritual point is perhaps the key to understanding the significance of the Pope’s offer. It shows that the door is still open for a future reconciliation at an ecclesial level. With the grace of God, who is able to achieve things beyond our imagination and power, let’s hope that we can soon pass through that door to the unity among his followers that Jesus prayed for the night before he died.

²³ Bishop Peter J. Elliott address to Forward in Faith Australia, All Saints’, Kooyong, Melbourne, 13 February 2010, *What is this ‘Personal Ordinate’? Understanding Pope Benedict’s Offer to Traditional Anglicans* <<http://www.theanglocatholic.com/2010/02/what-is-this-personal-ordinate/>> accessed 3 March 2010.

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