

Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity
Archdiocese of Southwark

February 2010
No. 86



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IN CHRIST

**Together in Christ, Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity,
Archdiocese Southwark, Vol 28, No 86, February 2010**

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to this rather historical issue of TIC. Starting with an Interfaith message by Rabbi Cliff Cohen, Chair of the Thanet Interfaith Council who asks if the harmony between faiths from the past might encourage and strengthen our efforts for co-operation today.

Parishioner John Elliffe provides details of how ecumenical St Patrick's Church in Plumstead has been after a Century of worshipful use. John is a parish unity contact for the SE area.

Thelma Lewis from the SW area provides an article on stewardship from a conference in 2003. It gives insight into our own unity with Jesus Christ and how our mission and discipleship will flow from Him.

Fr Kevin Robinson summarises the rights and wrongs of the Biblical interpretations which led to the English Reformation taking hold and Dr Desmond Miller shows how Henry VIII might have become such a tyrannical King.

John Calvin might not be the destroyer of the Church he is thought to be, but a catalyst for change that became a radical reform suggests the Revd Dr Donald Norwood.

If any of these articles encourage you to put pen to paper I will be happy to provide a slot for any Church unity projects or experiences you have to offer to a wider audience.

Michael

Thanet Interfaith Council

When I opened the inaugural meeting of the *Thanet Interfaith Council*, I described our task that evening as ‘the most important thing in the world’. I still believe that, for both negative and positive reasons.

The negative reasons are staring us in the face from every news source. There have always been those who use religious vocabulary to state their politics but today this happens in nations capable of destroying the entire planet. So in one place it is taught that there are no innocent people in other cultures, only unbelievers, while in another, an act of terrorism leads to the categorisation of a whole region as an ‘axis of evil’. My naive Jewish optimism tells me that this cannot be the way forward. My pragmatic rationalism tells me that unless we of differing cultures find ways of getting on with each other, and soon, then it is difficult to see a positive future for the world.

The positive reasons are partly historical. Most world faiths can point to a time when their followers lived in relative harmony with those whose beliefs were different. This is certainly true of Jews and Christians, also of Jews and Moslems. So there is nothing inevitable about conflict. But beyond this, it also seems to be true that when this harmony has occurred, both faiths have been enriched by the experience. Some of the greatest works of Jewish literature came out of what Jews refer to as the ‘Golden Age of Spain’, three hundred years of productive Jewish-Moslem harmony.

This works for individuals as well. My work in the award-winning multi-faith chaplaincy in Canterbury prison has led me to explore religious pluralism in very practical terms. Truly there are many paths to God, but we have to credit God with some intelligence. I do not think that if I attend a Carol Service, God

will mistake me for a Christian, even if I join in the singing. When my friends and colleagues from other faiths attended a service at my Synagogue, I do not think that God mistook them for Jews. On the contrary, my options for Jewish religious expression widen every time I see what others do, and my faith becomes both more complex and more rewarding.

Margaret Mead once wrote: ‘Do not think that a small group of dedicated people cannot change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.’ This is what drives me to contribute to the Thanet Interfaith Council. It is intensely rewarding both for individuals and their faith communities, and it will bring about change in a world which needs it so desperately. Our website is www.faith-in-thanet.org and it will tell you what we are doing. Come and help us to do God’s work.

Rabbi Cliff Cohen,
Ramsgate Synagogue

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St Patrick's Church, Plumstead

St Paul's into St Patrick's Centenary Celebrations

The Parish Church of St Patrick's in Plumstead in South East London recently celebrated its Centenary and one of the highlights of the Centenary celebrations was an Ecumenical Service of Thanksgiving. Our Parish Priest, Father Michael Branch, welcomed our guests, the Mayor of Greenwich, Councillor McCarthy, and a number of people from our local *Churches Together Group*. St Patrick's has two distinct claims to history. It is built on the original ground of the Arsenal Football Club. It made legal history in 1968 when an Act of Parliament was passed enabling the Roman Catholic Diocese of Southwark to buy the Anglican Church of St Paul which had closed two years previously.

The church was built in 1901 and dedicated to St Paul. In order to accommodate the growing number of worshippers the church was extended and completed in 1909 and it served the local Anglican community until it closed in 1966. The congregation had dwindled and it became necessary to close the church as part of the pastoral reorganisation of the Anglican churches in Plumstead.

Meanwhile the congregation of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church was expanding becoming too large for the existing church in Conway Road and negotiations began between Archbishop Cowderoy of Southwark and Dr Mervyn Stockwood, the Anglican Bishop of Southwark. However, because St Paul's was consecrated, the Church of England could not sell it as a standing church, but had to have a Bill passed through Parliament. This was the first sale of a standing Anglican Church to the Roman Catholic Church and the Bill would therefore establish a precedent.

We were very privileged to have Bishop Bernard Longley as one of our invited guests at our ecumenical centenary celebration and he preached the Homily. He said "This centenary is unusual and it is a remarkable ecumenical feature. As you know there are

in England many ancient churches whose congregations and clergy were for a long time in full communion with the Bishop of Rome before taking their place at the Reformation within the new ecclesial reality of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion. It is rare for an Anglican church to become the Parish Church of a Roman Catholic community, but it indicates a spirit of co-operation – and that co-operation has grown over the years into a real experience of communion and friendship.”

The debate on the Third Reading of the St James and St Paul, Plumstead Bill was characterised by the obvious goodwill of the House towards closer and friendlier relations between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. The spirit of generosity exemplified by the Lords Spiritual in their speeches including the well known Lord Soper was notable indeed. One of the most interesting speeches was by the then Bishop of Portsmouth when making his Maiden speech said “My Lords, I rise to support this Bill both in principle and in detail. I do so, on the ground of belief in the rightness of the Bill and also, if I may say so, on the grounds of sentiment, because my father was the Vicar of St Paul’s Plumstead and it was during his time there that the church was finally completed. I was born in the vicarage of St Paul’s Plumstead and I was christened in St Paul’s Plumstead. I do not pretend that those two latter events are any argument for retaining the building or for putting up a commemoration plaque, but from a sentimental point of view I cannot but feel delighted at the prospect that the building which has a very close association should not be sent to the breakers yard so to speak, but should be continued to be used by a Christian body. It has already been pointed out that in this case a precedent is being set. I am only too delighted from a personal point of view that that precedent should be focused in the church of St Paul’s Plumstead and I very warmly support the Bill.”

The Bill completed its passage through Parliament in 1968 and received Royal Assent. Alterations began and the new St Patrick’s Church was opened on 4th July 1969. His Grace Archbishop Cowderoy was the principle celebrant at a special

Mass and His Lordship Dr Mervyn Stockwood, Anglican Bishop of Southwark, also attended.

At our centenary ecumenical service we were privileged to have the active participation of members of the local Churches Together group both clergy and laity. The spirit of communion and friendship which Bishop Longley referred to typified the celebration and it was very moving to hear the heartfelt prayers of our friends from the other churches praying for unity between Christians. The music was carefully chosen for the occasion and the singing was greatly enhanced by the active participation of the united voices of the diverse congregation singing in perfect harmony. One of our special guests who graced us with her presence is our next door neighbour Florrie who is now in her nineties and who was a loyal worshipper at St Paul's church for many years and who has requested that her funeral service takes place at St Patrick's. We hope that will not be necessary for many years to come. The service was described as beautiful and fitting for such an historic church. We pray that the ecumenical spirit which is such an integral part of the history and life of this Parish will continue to grow and flourish in the years ahead.

John Elliffe
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We are indebted to

The Church of St Patrick Plumstead – A short history,
by Tom Coyle. The Burleigh Press, Bristol.

and:

The St James and St Paul's, Plumstead Bill
Third Reading, 22 May 1968, Hansard.

**Bishop Bernard Longley
at the ecumenical service**



Stewardship – A Way of Life

What is stewardship about?

It is a spiritual attitude about who we are and what we have. Stewardship begins with a relationship – we are loved by God and called into a relationship with Christ. Through this relationship we are in partnership with God.

Stewardship is tied to discipleship – we have been handed a mission; disciples experience conversion of their lives shaping both in changes of mind and in the changes of heart.

Disciples understand “Go you are sent” to use their gifts and talents to build up God’s kingdom everywhere.

There is no greater dignity or challenge than to know that we are trusted by God with all our weaknesses and strengths, our limitations and gifts, since Jesus Christ has entrusted his church to all of us, to live and preach his gospel of justice, peace and love. We are called to deepen our trust in his spirit and in each other.

Stewardship and Creation

God said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all living things that move on the earth.’ (Gen 1:28)

Stewardship helps us to see that God’s invitation to work with him came *before the fall*. Therefore we appreciate the gift of life, to safeguard life, to cultivate and care for the land, to teach children not to destroy plants and shrubs, not to deliberately kill birds, torment or maim dogs and cats.

God put beings on the earth to be its steward
to cultivate and care for it. (Gen 2:15)

We need to understand that work is a fundamental aspect of the human vocation it is necessary for human happiness and fulfilment. Just as human activity proceeds from man so it is ordered towards man, for when a man works he not only alters things and society but develops himself as well for he learns much, he cultivates his resources, goes outside himself and beyond himself.

Stewardship of God’s grace at work within us

A Christian steward serves God out of love and gratitude for these gifts knowing that it is not how much we have but what we do with what we have that is important. The gift of generosity allows for sharing the

gift that God has given us – acknowledging God as the giver of all good gifts without counting the cost. Therefore as disciples of Christ we should imitate his way of life by:

- Sharing without expecting something in return.
- Being gracious in our giving.
- Recognising God’s blessing in each passing day.
- Knowing the freedom that comes with real generosity.
- Accepting our talents whether many or few.
- Using our talents in the service of the kingdom.

Teach us Lord to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost. To fight and not to seek for rest, labour and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do your will through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen. St Francis of Assisi

Stewardship in action

Christian stewardship provides a spirituality that a lay person can take home from church, exercise at work, express through involvement in the church community and in the wider community.

- It is not job orientated or project minded.
- It is not about meeting the needs of the parish budget.
- It is living out our commitment to Christ.
- It is living out Christ’s instruction
“love one another as I have loved you.”
- It is about building happy healthy families.
- It is about renewing the church.
- It is taking a positive view of money –
of how we acquire it, use it and share it.
- It is being concerned about how we share our parish surplus.

Christian stewardship successfully bridges the material world around us and the world of the spirit within us.

Thelma Lewis

Adapted from the Antilles Episcopal Conference pastoral letter,
Stewardship and the revitalisation of Parish life in the Caribbean.
November 2003.

Reflections on the 500th Anniversary Of the Accession of King Henry VIII

This year, 2009 commemorates the five hundredth anniversary of the coronation of Henry VIII, (June 24th). In conjunction with this moment, the Vatican has exhibited the original document petitioning the Pope for Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. It is an extraordinary record from those times remaining in near perfect condition and still carrying the original wax seals of the state signatories weighing nearly 6 lbs. Henry's divorce was the event that triggered the separation of the Church of England from the Catholic Church throughout the world. What was it all about, and how is it relevant to Christian life today?

At the heart of English Christianity, is a fundamental and insoluble problem that remains unresolved. It still affects how we see each other as Christian brothers and sisters. The dilemma shapes the relationship between all the 'churches' to say nothing of those alternative and more recent Evangelical/Pentecostal bodies springing up throughout the world. Nowadays we live respectfully 'together in Christ', yet for three or four hundred years, Catholics, Baptists and other non-conformist or Puritan sects were only reluctantly accommodated within these islands. Being outside the established Church of England they were actually considered illegal. The unresolved question which goes straight to the heart of our faith is this:

*What has the greater authority, the Bible or the Church?
And who has the authority to determine authentic Christian
teaching?*

Is the church simply a random community of believers gathering for worship wherever the Bible is read, or is the Bible better seen as that sacred book received down the ages as one part of the treasury of the church? Wherever we stand within that inheritance, for those who have a deep commitment to Christianity, this is the

issue that still creates the watershed between Catholic and Protestant approaches to faith.

Before we rush for those well worn proof texts in the attempt to defend long cherished positions, let's go to the very issue that originally initiated the mayhem commonly called 'Reformation' in Britain. For example, how do you answer this question?

Is it right that a man should marry the wife of his own brother?

Think about it and then consider what the Bible says:

*If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity;
he has uncovered his brother's nakedness;
they shall be childless. [Lev 20:21]*

So that seems clear enough! Now Henry VIII *had* actually married his brother's wife. Henry's elder brother Arthur should have become King of England. From the age of two, Arthur had been promised in marriage to the infant Spanish Princess, Catharine of Aragon. Catherine did not arrive in England for another thirteen years. In 1501 the couple were officially married in (the old) St Paul's Cathedral both aged fifteen! This was all normal and legal in those times. Even today, certain cultures would advocate early marriage to stabilise family life and prevent from fornication. That is a very different discussion but no less pertinent now in a modern multi-cultural society that increasingly embraces conflicting moral codes.

Tragically in less than five months after their marriage Arthur and Catherine fell victim to a serious contagion – the so called 'sweating sickness'. Arthur died, but Catherine survived and was left a sad teenage widow in a foreign land. Henry was only ten years old at that time, but eight years later in 1509 following the death of his father (Henry VII), he married Catherine and the two were crowned King and Queen of England.

Because this was a delicate matter, apparently abrogating the teaching of the Bible, they had sought permission from Pope Julius II. Catherine was six years older than Henry, but it is worth remembering she was married to Henry longer than all the other wives put together. She conceived six children; three were still born and two others, a girl and a boy, only lived for a few weeks. Only one

daughter, the Princess Mary, survived. By the late 1520's, as she approached her forties, it was clear that poor Catherine would not conceive and safely deliver a male heir to the throne. Fearing for the succession, Henry came over all scrupulous about Biblical teaching, after all Leviticus said that "*If a man takes his brother's wife. . . they shall be childless*"

What right had Pope Julius to give permission for such an apparently irregular marriage? How would you judge the matter today? Well consider this, the Bible also says:

When brothers reside together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her, taking her in marriage, and performing the duty of a husband's brother to her. [Deut 25:5]

In fact Deuteronomy goes on to prescribe severe curses and penalties on the man who refuses to undertake such a responsibility. These issues are taken up in the New Testament: John the Baptist lost his head because he had the boldness to condemn King Herod to his face for taking his brother's wife;

Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. [Mark 6:17]

The difference here of course was that this had been *within the lifetime* of his brother. Elsewhere in the New Testament the idea of taking care of a *deceased* brother's wife was considered normal:

Then come unto him the Sadducees, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. [Mark 12:19]

By 1526 Henry's fancy had settled on a young lady in waiting called Anne Boleyn. The long process commenced in an attempt to annul Henry's first marriage. The Pope would not concede and over a period of six years Henry tried in vain to officially put an end to his marriage. We will not rehearse here all the political intrigue contributing to the failure to secure a 'divorce'. In the end Henry

resorted to the opinions of the English universities that he could manipulate, and set them against the opinion of the Pope whom he could not. All this is to cut a very long story very short. If we stick to Biblical teaching where do you draw the line? How do you read and apply the Bible to such moral dilemmas today, and are you competent to decide such matters on your own?

If the story of Catherine's marriage was tragic, Anne's was catastrophic (to say nothing of his subsequent victims). Anne's marriage lasted a little over two years (*Queen of 1000 Days*) although history has vindicated her as the mother of England's greatest Queen – Elizabeth I. Like Catherine, Anne suffered at least three miscarriages including a male child. By the time she was married, after a delay of six years, she was in her late thirties. The writing was on the wall, like Catherine, she was unlikely to safely deliver a male heir, but unlike Catherine she would have no access to any kind of dignified divorce or separation. Henry accused her of incestuous crimes equivalent to treason and had her executed in 1536. It was ungracious of the Pope to speak of Anne as a harlot and her child a bastard, but by any reckoning Anne died as the innocent victim of a despot. Catherine had died of natural causes some four months before Anne's execution. It is said that on the day of her death the taper lights that stood around Catherine's tomb (still seen in Peterborough Cathedral today) mysteriously self ignited. By this time Henry had appointed himself as *Supreme Head of the Church* in England. Thomas More and John Fisher were executed and the monasteries were being ransacked. The authority of the Pope was denounced and the so called *New Christian Learning* based exclusively on 'biblical teaching' was being digested in alternative ecclesiastical circles.

It is little known that before his marriage to Anne, Henry had had sexual relations with Anne's sister Mary Boleyn. She possibly even conceived and passed off to another man his illegitimate son. The recent film *The Other Boleyn Girl* may, for the sake of romantic licence, have taken liberties with historical detail, but the essential part was fact. Shame that Archbishop Cranmer and his cohorts didn't advise the king a little more accurately about biblical

teaching – not that he would have needed it because Henry was quite an accomplished theologian in his own right.

Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time . . . it is wickedness. [Lev 18:18]

By any biblical reckoning there should never have been any other marriage within the lifetime of Catherine, least of all to Anne, but perhaps that line would be a little too Catholic! Still it's all 500 years in the past now. But how should we read the Bible today, and who will you rely on to apply it's teaching to your moral dilemmas in 2009?

Lord, source of eternal life and truth,
Give to your shepherd Pope Benedict,
A spirit of courage and right judgement,
A spirit of knowledge and love.
By governing with fidelity
those entrusted to his care.
As successor to the Apostle Peter
and Vicar of Christ,
May he build your church
into a sacrament of unity,
love and peace for all the world.
We ask this through
Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Fr Kevin Robinson

On 11 October 1521 Pope Leo X conferred the title *Fidei Defensor* 'Defender of the Faith' on King Henry VIII in acknowledgement of his book *Assertio septem sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum*. This work is now available in modern English: Henry VIII, *Defence of the Seven Sacraments, New Millennium Edition*, Editor Raymond de Sousa, Saint Gabriel Communications International, 2007. [No ISBN] See www.SaintGabrielInternational.com.

Henry VIII and his lack of a son and heir

Fr Kevin's interesting article on King Henry's marital problems led me to reflect on the medical aspects. On the death of Arthur the 17 year old Henry married his brother's wife Catherine of Aragon six years his senior. During their 24 years of marriage Catherine had six pregnancies, but only one survived – Mary Tudor. It was said that Catherine suffered from a *mysterious female ailment* possibly an infection. It was her failure to produce a son and heir that led to the 'annulment' and Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn.

Before Henry became impotent at about the time of his marriage to Anne of Cleves, he had two well attested affairs – one with Bessie Blount with whom he fathered an illegitimate son Henry FitzRoy – the other with Mary Boleyn, older sister of Anne. There may have been three other affairs, but no other children. The marriage with Anne Boleyn was fruitful with the birth of Elizabeth, later Queen. Henry's third marriage to Jane Seymour resulted in the birth of a son, the future Edward VI. Henry acknowledged his illegitimate son and sought to establish him as his legitimate heir. Henry FitzRoy had married, but died childless shortly after.

Some historians believe Henry suffered from the venereal disease syphilis of which there was an epidemic in Europe at that time. It would account for Catherine's stillborn children and Henry's mental decline. But Henry proved his fertility and his surviving children had no signs of congenital syphilis casting doubt on this hypothesis .

Aged 35 Henry suffered a leg injury while jousting after which he had chronic leg ulceration and became grossly obese due to lack of exercise and too much food. An alternative hypothesis is that Henry developed diabetes and hardening of the arteries affecting his legs and brain with multiple minor strokes to account for his dementia.

Catherine of Aragon was the legitimate Queen of England and a very fine woman. She was devoutly religious and spent her last days in solitude, in prayer and fasting, and wore a hair shirt. Before her death in 1547 she wrote to Henry pardoning him and asking that he

protect their daughter Mary. A black growth was found on her heart which could have been a cancer possibly a melanoma. She is buried in Peterborough Cathedral where she is honoured to this day.

Desmond Miller

CALVINUS CATHOLICUS REVISITED

To mark the 500th birthday of John Calvin, the Society of Ecumenical Studies held a meeting at St Mary's, Cadogan St, London on 10 July 2009 where papers were presented by the Revd Dr Donald W. Norwood and Dr Richard Price. The following is an abridged version of Dr Norwood's presentation.

Introduction: Theological context

Calvin, in contrast to Wesley and Luther, should not be credited for founding any particular Church. Reformed Churches world wide may acknowledge their debt to Calvin, but need not regard him as their founder. Calvin was not a Presbyterian. Though he advocated elders or presbyters he also supported episcopacy.

Calvin was a Catholic. Like all the 16th century Reformers he was baptised and brought up and destined for office in what we now specify as the Roman Catholic Church. He died a Catholic in so far as he was never [officially] excommunicated, though some say he was denied a Catholic burial when he died in 1564. No one knows where he is buried. Calvin belongs to us all! I ask my Roman Catholic friends to treat him like Hans Kung, but more graciously!

Historical Context

For 200 years before Calvin, there had been demands for reform of the Church. The Fifth Lateran Council 1512–17 advocated various reforms but failed to carry them out. Both Luther and Calvin called for a genuinely free and ecumenical council. Twenty-five years later the Council of Trent 1545–63 was

convened to defend the Church against the perceived errors of the Reformers. The Council they longed for was not held until Vatican II in 1962. Trent denied the Reformers. Vatican II affirmed them. Well almost!

Reforming Bishop?

There was not much hope in 16th century Geneva of either the local bishop or the popes promoting reform. The city had substituted its own sovereignty for that of the bishop. But who was going to lead the Church? William Farel persuaded Calvin to stay and help the consolidation of the Genevan Reformation. This he did for the rest of his life, with the exception of a few years exile in Strasbourg 1538–1541, during which the Genevans rediscovered they could not manage without him.

Reforming Pope?

There is an ecumenical consensus that there were no good reforming Popes during Calvin's lifetime. The failings of the Bishop and of the Papacy give some credence to Calvin's argument with Cardinal Sadolet who was commissioned to urge the Genevans to return to the Catholic Church. Calvin's *Response* (1539) was that Rome should do likewise! Pope John Paul II concedes in *Ut Unum Sint* that for the current lack of unity, 'people of both sides were to blame', a point made thirty years earlier at Vatican II. Nonetheless says the Pope, the Church is preserved in the truth despite 'grave crises which have shaken her' and 'the infidelity of some of her ministers'. And praise the Lord that this is so. But then give some of the thanks to John Calvin for what I call his 'Catholic Reforms' that have benefited us all. I list four: Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry and Conciliarism.

Reform of Baptism

Calvin baptised but with two innovations: he expected parents and particularly fathers to be present at the baptism of their

children, and for baptism to take place during a normal service in church so that baptism be seen as the first step in a life of discipleship and Church membership.

The Roman Rite of Baptism authorized in 1969 after the Second Vatican Council clearly involves parents and godparents and expects them to bring up their child in the faith. The newly baptised is welcomed as a member of Christ's body – the Church. In England we now have a Common Certificate of Baptism that is endorsed by most Churches including the Roman Catholic Church.

Reforming the Eucharist

Although Calvin like other Reformers rejected the Mass, as it was then being celebrated; his intention was to promote Communion and institute a full Service of Word and Sacrament every Sunday. Even though he failed to convince the Swiss authorities and most Reformed Congregations ever since, if parishioners communicate once a month or even once a quarter this is still a twelve or four fold increase on Medieval practice.

The Mass had become a spectacle, albeit a sacrifice, not a communal meal. It looked to some like idolatry. If today John Calvin went to a Roman Catholic Mass he would notice and welcome the tremendous reform – the service is simpler and in the language of the people. The Eucharist is clearly related to the Last Supper and the feeding of the multitude in its four key actions of offering, giving thanks, breaking and sharing; scripture is properly honoured and expounded; the Cup has been restored to the laity. He might hesitate over the invocation of the saints and the reference to sacrifice.

Reform of the Ministry

Directly through the establishment of the Geneva Academy (1559) and indirectly by the challenge posed by Reformed

teachers and preachers, Calvin helped raise the standard of ministry in both Roman Catholic and Protestant congregations. Catholic priests needed to be better educated if they were to respond convincingly to the arguments, usually based on scripture, of Calvin and his heirs.

Calvin did not object to episcopacy nor did he insist on his own version of a fourfold ministry. A feature that other churches have appreciated is that of ‘Elders’ who assist pastors at the Communion Table and in government and pastoral care.

It is objected that Calvin was not ordained, but who could ordain him? Calvin was called by the local people and he fiercely defended his election on the basis of Scripture and Tradition.

Today some Roman Catholics make a case for the local election of bishops, but their cry is resisted in Rome. Popular election of Church leaders is a feature of Reformed Churches everywhere, but it can claim to be as much Catholic as Reformed.

Councils, Collegiality, Consensus, Reception

My argument so far has been that Calvin’s reforms of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry are not dismissed in Rome as ‘Protestant innovations’ but have been accepted or ‘received’ by Vatican II, and in the case of Ministry, in part by the Council of Trent.

Could we not all agree that after Calvin and Trent, the Roman Catholic Church was served by better popes, bishops and priests, both educationally and morally, than it had been in his lifetime and the centuries before. But a whole range of related issues remain unresolved not only in Rome but also in Geneva, the home of the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and various ecumenical agencies. Ecumenical Councils, Papal Primacy and Collegiality remain unresolved issues, not just for Roman Catholics but for the whole *oikumene*. The good news for

Calvinus Catholicus is that these structural matters remain open questions. Calvin believed in collegiality and conciliarity but objected to any form of papal tyranny or arbitrary rule.

Calvin's Concern for Unity

Calvin took part in five or six Protestant–Catholic colloquies and longed for a truly Ecumenical Council. Calvin is critical of Church leaders who prefer their own private peace and who are indifferent to the safety and piety of the whole Church.

In a letter Calvin scolded Cranmer for being too half hearted in his reforms. Hence the emergence of more radical reform movements in England with Thomas Cartwright, John Owen and co, my ancestors in what Bernard Lord Manning called ‘Orthodox Dissent’.

Provisional Churches

Calvin, like Luther before him and Wesley after him, sought to reform the Church he knew, not create a new church. In the apt description by Basil Hall, he sought to restore an old painting which over the years had become disfigured by grime and varnish. If faithful to his legacy, Reformed Churches today see themselves as ‘provisional Churches’, a point readily conceded in the Anglican-Reformed International Dialogue (1984), and by the great Reformed theologian Karl Barth. But if really faithful to Calvin’s concerns, we should go on pushing for the reform of Rome. Half the world’s Christians are Roman Catholics. The other half might appear like branches splintered into a myriad of competing sects. Rome has a structure of unity that not even the Orthodox can match and which the World Council of Churches makes no claim to express. But if Rome holds together half the world’s Christians, she alienates the other half. Hence my argument that reform of Rome is essential for unity. Indeed, I am attracted by a quotation I can not locate: ‘the goal of the

Ecumenical Movement is reunion with Rome, but not with Rome as she now is’.

People of the calibre of Calvin are God’s gift to the whole Church. Had he lived 400 years later, he would have been a *peritus*, not just an observer at Vatican II. The whole Church needs him so please, if you will, accept him as a Catholic. Any lesser title is just an excuse for ignoring him on this, his five hundredth birthday. There is also a good case for saying with Barth that there is no past in the Church, Calvin is still with us:

As regards theology, we cannot be in the Church without taking as much responsibility for the theology of the past as for the theology of our present. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, Schleiermacher and all the rest are not dead but living. They still speak and demand a hearing as living voices, as surely as we know that they and we belong together in the Church.

Revd Dr Donald W Norwood
United Reformed
Ecumenical Research Oxford

Reproduced with the kind permission of Dr Norwood. JDM

A Prayer for Unity

Almighty and eternal God,
keep together those you have united.
We are all consecrated to you
by our common baptism;
make us one in the fullness faith,
and keep us one in the fellowship of love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Two hundred and fifty Ecumenical Visits

As the members of St George's Church were celebrating their Harvest Festival last Sunday week, I attended their Eucharistic Service. I had not warned Fr Malcolm as I did not want to impinge on his planning for the Harvest Luncheon which was to follow. It was a special day for me too as in 2001 I had begun my perpetual pilgrimage at that very church and eight years later to the day, Oct 4th, was making my 250th visit to a member church of Churches Together In Bromley (CTIB). So it had to be St George's! I enjoyed the service and at 12.30 went to the Hall for their Harvest Festival luncheon which Fr Malcolm thought was the best ever.

It was a magic day for me and for St George's. My two hundred and fifty visits to a CTIB church Sunday service had taken two hundred and fifty Sunday mornings since 2001, but had proved to be worth the effort. It has strengthened the links between my own church, St Edmund's and CTIB; we were one of the earliest members of CTIB.

I shall continue my Pilgrimage hoping to make five hundred visits, but that will take me till I am ninety, so please pray that I shall live long enough.

Terry Davis

