

**Anglican-Lutheran Society
Annual General Meeting, 25th February 2017**

**Dispersing the Clouds of Unknowing:
Ecumenical Agreements between Anglican-Lutherans and Roman Catholics**

A Reflection by Dame Mary Tanner

I love the title chosen for today: 'Dispersing the Clouds of Unknowing'. But what a task you have given me - to talk about 'Porvoo and Other Agreements : Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed and Roman Catholic' - all in half an hour! The 'agreements' are, of course different in kind: some are agreed statements from international dialogue commissions officially appointed by World Communions, some are agreements made at global level by World Communions, others are regional agreements signed by authorities taking the participating churches into closer fellowship on the way to visible unity. They each add to a single story of reconciliation.

I want to tell the story of sun shining through by recalling how the dispersal began and the dramatic change brought about by Vatican II. This helps me to understand the sun shining through in our European scene: Meissen, Rueilly, Porvoo.¹ Then I'll look at the global Anglican-Roman Catholic and Lutheran Roman Catholic stories of clouds dispersing. I hope I won't bore you. For me it's an exciting story of God's grace and a changing of the Christian landscape.

**I. The clouds begin to disperse: 1910 -1948 and the dramatic turn of events with
Vatican II**

First, let's remember quickly the beginning of dispersing the clouds, the great Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910, called to think about how to move from competition to co-operation in the mission- field. At Edinburgh an Anglican bishop from the US told the Conference that if Christians

¹ *The Meissen Agreement Texts: The Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England, Occasional Paper 2.1992; Called to Witness and Service, The Reuilly Common Statement, Conversations between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches, Church House Publishing, 1999; Together in Mission and Ministry, The Porvoo Common Statement, Conversations between the British and Irish Anglican Churches And the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches, Church House Publishing, 1993. All these texts are available on the web site of the Church of England, Council for Christian Unity.*

were to go out in mission together and stay together then they needed to face together those issues which had been the cause of division and still kept them apart. He called for another world conference on issues of faith and order that were causes of division and which still kept churches apart.

Because of the First World War it took until 1927 for the first World Conference on Faith and Order to take place in Lausanne. Anglicans and Lutherans were there with the largest delegations (on a rough count, 48 Anglicans from 13 Anglican churches among them Bishop Brent and William Temple and about 45 Lutherans from 14 Lutheran Churches , among them Archbishop Soderblom and Gustav Aulen. Orthodox, Reformed, Methodists, Baptists, Society of Friends, Waldensians and uniting churches. But the gaping hole was the Roman Catholic Church. Catholics were forbidden to attend. An important agenda was set for future conversations: the nature of the Church; the Church's common confession; the ministry; the sacraments, all central to the discussions since.

20 years later with the inauguration of the WCC in 1948, still no Catholics but Lutherans, Reformed, Anglicans who had been major players in the three founding movements (Mission, Life and Work and Faith and Order) were there. We were coming out of our isolations, getting to know one another, taking part in doctrinal conversations and learning to act together in a world now recovering from two great wars, (youth camps exchanges, sharing in mission,...): the clouds of unknowing were dispersing, false stereotypes being broken down, we were discovering new friends and discovering our common faith. From then on friendship was the soil in which ecumenical advance flourished. And what was happening at the global level was mirrored in many places locally and regionally as councils of churches were set up. So, 1910 -1948 were crucial years in the story of the dispersing of clouds.

Vatican II had a huge effect in dispersing the clouds as the Roman Catholic Church acknowledged that the Church *subsists* in the Catholic Church and not that it is the Church. It committed itself to

the search for full visible unity, clear that the search for agreement in faith 'sufficient and required' for unity must be a major concern.²

Roman Catholic theologians joined the WCC's Faith and Order Commission (Joseph Ratzinger among them) and international bilateral dialogues began between world communions. A veritable international dance of dialogues all together in the multilateral and in pairs in the bilateral conversations, overcoming years of living under clouds of unknowing, really getting to know one another and beginning to see how much was held in common.

Things began to move fast. In 1965 an International Lutheran- Roman Catholic dialogue began. In March 1966 Michael Ramsey visited Pope Paul VI. They issued a *Common Declaration* in which they recognised all that Anglicans and Roman Catholics shared in common. They spoke of 'a new stage of development of fraternal relations' and a sincere intention to remove the causes of conflict and re-establish unity. They announced their plan to inaugurate a 'significant dialogue which may lead to that unity in truth for which Christ prays'. But they didn't only look for a doctrinal dialogue but one which would face practical difficulties.

Two years later a Preparatory Commission produced *The Malta Report*. It's this report which gives me a clue to the story of the dispersal of clouds of unknowing. The report summed up the substantial core of faith that Anglicans and Catholics shared. It's hard for us to realise just how startling this was. It also acknowledged honestly the divergences since the sixteenth century and the need now to distinguish between 'the merely apparent and the real'. The doctrinal work done: a **second stage** would begin with an official and explicit mutual affirmation and recognition from 'the highest authorities of each Communion'. Note the language '**mutual recognition**', '**highest authorities**'. Think for a moment, the recognition was to be grounded on the theological consensus and convergence reached in the international dialogue. The recognition was not of words on a page

² *The Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* and *The Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio* both 1964.

but of the faith of the Church recognised in one another's faithful lives - a reception of each other, not of documents. The documents were instruments to promote recognition and reception. Such mutual recognition would lead to a binding commitment to act together, in all sorts of ways everywhere in the world: annual joint meetings of hierarchies, shared theological education, shared prayer.....the list is impressive. This officially entered into second stage would lead to **a third, final stage** in the quest for 'full organic unity'.³

The Report suggested how progress should be made by taking steps and entering new stages of relationship. I wonder if by now some bells are beginning to ring for you?

It was only in 2000 when I went back to re-read *The Malta Report* that it dawned on me. Here was a clear plan for dispersing the clouds over Anglicans and Roman Catholics that somehow got forgotten in the following years, but was incarnated in the European agreements of Meissen, Rueilly and Porvoo, between Lutherans, Anglicans and Reformed. Each Agreement banked theological agreements which were the basis for a formal Declaration of mutual acknowledgements, and commitments to share in closer life of mission and service on the way to full visible unity, a Declaration signed by the European authorities of the participating churches and offered up in prayer.

II. Anglican-Lutheran-Reformed European Regional Agreements

Bishop Jurgen spoke movingly this morning about the work of the Meissen Commission. The dynamic behind *The Meissen Common Statement* was simple. First we set out the goal of visible unity we believed we are called to live together - not simply the goal for Anglicans and Lutherans; then we banked the doctrinal agreements using the results of the multilateral dance of Faith and Order, not least of all *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) and we harvested the fruits of Anglican-Lutheran and Anglican – Reformed international bilateral dialogues to express our agreement in

³ *The Malta Report, in Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue* ed Alan Clark and Colin Davey, OUP, 1974.

faith.⁴ Having banked all of this we made, and our leaders signed formal Declarations of what we could recognise in the faithful lives of one another and binding commitments of what we were now compelled to do together. It was not a matter of take it or leave it. We were compelled to act together in service and mission. One very important commitment was to set up structures of oversight to keep us accountable to the Declaration we had signed to intensify our relationship and our shared mission in Europe and globally – the Meissen Commission. Bishop Jurgen has spoken about how we are doing just that in the Meissen partnership. The sun is shining.⁵

Meissen remains a significant **regional** Agreement taking Lutherans, Reformed, united churches and Anglicans to a new stage of reconciled fellowship – a fellowship of faith, service and mission, on the way to visible unity, as is Rueilly. It also provided a model for other relationships in the future.

With Meissen signed and beginning to flourish Archbishop Robert Runcie was convinced that it was time to think about the relationship between the Anglican Churches of Britain and Ireland and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches. He recognised there was a ‘commonality’ about our churches, we faced similar challenges in mission in Northern Europe; it was a special time for Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, in the aftermath of the fall of communism; we were all episcopal churches; we had theological conversations between the Church of England and the Church of Sweden going back to 1929 and piecemeal agreements on Eucharistic hospitality; and now, in addition to the results of international conversations banked in Meissen, we had the international Anglican-Lutheran, *Niagara Report (1988,)* on *episcopate*.⁶ The conversations began in 1989 and with the last dot in place the Commission gave thanks in Porvoo Cathedral in 1992. The Porvoo Declaration was signed in 1996.⁷

⁴ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order paper 111, WCC, 1982.

⁵ I wish there was time to quote from John Arnold’s speech to General Synod presenting Meissen in 1988. ‘the origins of this exercise lie in reconciliation: and that reconciliation is the big theological concept within which the little ones find their perspective.’

⁶ *The Niagara Report, Report of the Anglican-Lutheran Consultation on Episcopate*, ACC, 1987.

⁷ *Together in Mission and Ministry, The Porvoo Common Statement with Essays on Church and Ministry in Northern Europe*, Church House Publishing, London, 1993.,

As David Tustin has written ‘without Meissen we could not have taken the further step to Porvoo’ , its theological content and what he calls its format! The format that I have been arguing goes back, even beyond Meissen, to Malta.⁸

The Porvoo Common Statement opens with a huge vision: God’s kingdom, God’s world; and God’s Church - a foretaste, sign, and instrument of the kingdom. The conversations were driven by the conviction that visible unity is utterly required for credible and effective mission in a Europe looking for its own identity. (What might we say today in the light of Brexit?) Within that huge canvas, we set out a portrait of the Church we believed God calls us to be together: a Church living in, revealing and offering the communion of God’s own Trinitarian life to the world: a communion where unity was not uniformity but expressed in rich diversity. Unity and diversity held together by a common faith; sacraments of baptism and Eucharist; a single ministry in the apostolic succession with structures/ bonds of grace serving the mission and ministry of the communion. The portrait wasn’t just of what the Porvoo churches were to become together but what we believed was God’s intention for the Universal Church. The Porvoo Communion was never seen as being a Northern European end in itself any more than Meissen was.

Like Meissen, Porvoo set out our agreement in faith, harvesting the fruits of BEM, the Anglican-Lutheran International, the recently published Niagara Report on *episcopate*, and interestingly also using ARCIC and the Lutheran - Catholic dialogue agreed statements. The great breakthrough and it really was a breakthrough - which made closer communion/closer visible unity possible - was on apostolicity and succession and episcopal succession. We saw the sign of apostolic succession carried within the continuity of the life and mission of the whole church and agreed that faithfulness is carried by more than one means of continuity – a rope of strands of succession. Succession in episcopal ministry was not a guarantee of fidelity, history proves that. It was a sign of the guarantee of God’s fidelity to the Church but not a guarantee of our fidelity but a sign of our intention to be

⁸ Tustin, David, What Made Porvoo Possible? In *Towards Closer Unity: Communion of the Porvoo Churches 20 Years*, Beate Fragerli, Leslie Nathaniel, Tomi Karttunen eds, 2016.

faithful. But episcopal succession was not an optional extra. But the hard issue still faced us – how, with integrity, could we all move to a single, interchangeable ministry? Wouldn't it mean some denying their belief in the necessity for episcopal succession and others denying their fidelity because of a break in succession? We came to agree that churches which have maintained the sign are free to recognise the apostolic continuity of the others, even when one strand in the rope had been temporarily broken, but who had been faithful to the apostolic teaching and mission. And those who have not at times used the sign of episcopal succession were free to embrace it. It was a great breakthrough! John will remember and describe it to you later!

Having banked the theological agreements, we were clear - 'the time was ripe to make a solemn Common Declaration to be signed by the European authorities of our churches within a Eucharist service - a Declaration with six mutual acknowledgements of what we recognised of Church in each other and ten commitments. Let me comment on one of the commitments. In the portrait of the Church we had spoken of bonds of communion 'strong enough to enable us to bear effective witness in the world, to guard and interpret the apostolic faith, to teach authoritatively together and share goods with those in need'(para 20). We agreed that a ministry of pastoral oversight exercised in 'personal, collegial and communal ways' (BEM) is necessary for visible unity to witness to and safeguard the unity and apostolicity of the Church (paras 44 and 45). So it was important to agree to establish embryonic structures of collegiality and communality to nurture and maintain what came to be called, 4 years later, the Porvoo Communion. What emerged were: the Church leaders' consultations, the Porvoo Primates' Meeting, and the Porvoo Contact Group. These are embryonic structures for oversight of the new communion of churches, we might even call them ecclesial structures, for mutual accountability, for shared decision making, for teaching with together with conviction, helping us speak together to the challenges in northern Europe: migration, relations with other faith communities, wealth and poverty, human trafficking, Europe and its global responsibility and for consulting together on doctrinal issues like the consecration of women, or ethical issues in human sexuality or gay marriage.

The recent publication *Towards Closer Unity: Communion of the Porvoo Churches 20 Years On* tells the story of twenty years of deepening the relationship, dispersing the clouds of unknowing.⁹

The theological agreement in *The Porvoo Common Statement*, a European advance to full visible unity, has and is making a difference in our lives. But there are more clouds to disperse if the Church is called to be fully local and global – the all in each place linked to the all in every place. And that conveniently takes us from the regional agreements to the global.

III The Anglican – Roman Catholic story of clouds dispersing

After the *Malta Report* the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission began to work and swiftly produced Agreed Statements (that is statements agreed by the members of the Commission) on the Eucharist, Ministry and Ordination and Authority. They were bound together in what was perhaps unwisely called *The Final Report*, (1982).¹⁰ Each time a statement was published comment was invited from dioceses and local study groups, theological colleges.... It wasn't only the theologians around the table that were seeing sunlight break through the clouds.

ARCIC's *Final Report* was sent to 'the highest level of authority in each Communion' with two questions. Is the *Final Report* consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans, the faith of Roman Catholics? And, if they are consonant then what are the next concrete steps we can take on the basis of the agreements? The questions held faith and life together in line with the Malta vision. However, the phraseology of the first question sent the two Communion's back to comparing the statements with their own internal faith statements. Some Anglicans compared the new documents with the 39 Articles! What was really needed was a question that asked both Communion's to

⁹ *Towards Closer Unity: Communion of the Porvoo Churches 20 Years On*, ed. Beata Fagerrli, Leslie Nathaniel, Tomi Karttunen The preface concludes that : we can say that in many ways we have concretely experienced growth in unity and friendship. On the other hand we have also experienced the challenges in living in communion. The mutual bonds in our common Christian faith, ministry and friendship within our communion have proved to be strong enough to deal with difficult questions, which have proven to be even church dividing at times, not only between the churches , but also in the churches. Together we can encounter the joint challenges more informed by our tradition and by our varying contexts.

consider whether these new statements were ‘consonant with the faith of the Church through the ages’. What a risky process asking the questions to– ‘the highest level of authority’ in the two Communion! This was a new journey, never undertaken before! Anglicans might not even know who their ‘highest authority’ was! The documents were not only inviting reflection on authority but on our own Anglican structures of discernment and decision making.

Sadly, that’s where the clouds began to thicken again. The Anglican responses from all the provinces were carefully collated and came to the 1988 Lambeth Conference. The Conference spent its energy on answering the doctrinal question where it did recognise ‘substantial agreement’.¹¹ We could speculate on why this was: as yet there was no response from Rome; and the matter of the consecration of women bishops in the Anglican Communion was also on the agenda of the Lambeth Conference too which meant uneasiness in Rome. Rome began to raise the question of the Communion with whom they were in dialogue. When Rome’s response came it was not entirely enthusiastic. The vision of Malta was forgotten or lost, and I think with it much enthusiasm among the laity. All the doctrinal agreement had led to little in changed relationships in life sanctioned by authority, no Eucharistic hospitality extended. Inter church- families were among the most disappointed.

ARCIC II was set up and produced more agreed statements: *Salvation and the Church* on justification, 1987; *The Church as Communion*, 1991; *Morals, Communion and the Church*, 1994; and probably the most important: *The Gift of Authority*, 1999; with its hard hitting questions to both communions and a common question on universal primacy and *Mary, Grace and Truth in Christ*, 2005.¹² It is striking that this time there was no binding of the statements together, no questions on faith or practical action put to the highest level of authority in the two Communion, only a half-hearted and hardly co-ordinated response in some churches. *Looking for a Church Fully Reconciled* publication does give account of some responses to these documents and considers the reception

¹¹ *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, Report of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, Church House Publishing 1998.

¹² All of these Agreed Statements can now be found in, *Looking for a Church Fully Reconciled*, 2017.

process, but it is nothing like the volume of response to *The Final Report*. It was as if confidence was lost, the clouds were thickening again. But there was as Cardinal Cormac said ‘money in the bank’. And in many places the laity were simply getting on with things!

The theological dialogue continues with the work of ARCIC III set up in 2001 and has yet to publish its first agreed statement on the church local/global – how the Church discerns right ethical teaching - a much needed document, certainly for Anglicans. It will be interesting to see how it builds on the earlier ARCIC statements on Authority and not least of all the text *The Gift of Authority*.

But a remarkable turn of events dragged the two Communion back to the vision of Malta. In 2000, with the Pope’s blessing, Cardinal Cassidy and Archbishop George Carey called 11 pairs of bishops from around the world to Mississauga in Canada to review where Anglicans and Roman Catholics were and where we might be going. One text they brought with them in their bags was *The Malta Report!* Those of us who planned the meeting put experience, not doctrine, first. The bishops invited two women to orchestrate the meeting! We got the bishops in pairs to reflect on their local experience of working together and then listen to the experience of other bishops in other regions in the hope that ‘good practice’ would emerge. It was fascinating to watch. Some bishops hardly knew each other others clearly worked closely together at local level. One pair were so close that one would start a sentence and the other finish it. After reflecting on experience, the bishops turned to consider the theological agreed statements of ARCIC. We hoped that the bishops would call for the Declaration that Malta had hoped for back in 1968: a Declaration, signed by the authorities of both churches, that would bank the theological agreements and provide a programme for living them out in shared life, ministry and mission around the world, a step to visible unity. But there was hesitation about calling for a Declaration sanctioned at the highest level of authority. Instead the bishops recommended a high level bishops’ commission to take things forward – The International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM). The baton was passing from theologians to bishops!

IARCCUM produced *Together in Mission and Ministry* which did precisely what Malta had looked for.

¹³It summed up the theological convergences and set out a programme of action on the basis of that.

Not exactly a Declaration like the Meissen or Porvoo Declarations at 'the highest authority', but the same dynamic. I wonder if our two Communion would say yes if formally asked, to the summary of agreement in faith. The question has not been put! However, an episcopal document which surely ought to command some authority in episcopally ordered churches!

In November last year in Rome Francis and Justin took things a bit further commissioning 19 pairs of bishops from around the world to go out to work and witness together and take their communities with them in what ¹⁴ - what Justin called 'an ecumenism of action'. Not quite the official Declaration of another step and a new stage of relationship that Malta looked for sanctioned at the highest level of authority but the Malta dynamic not quite lost.

I wonder if you can see how this story of doctrinal agreement being banked in closer relations moving in steps and stages to visible unity outlined in the *Malta Report* rings bells with our European Agreements?

IV. The Lutheran - Roman Catholic story of clouds dispersing

Even before ARCIC began its work after Vatican II the International Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue had begun work and produced over the next years, in four phases of dialogue, an extraordinary wealth of doctrinal texts. *The Gospel and the Church* in 1974¹⁵; *The Eucharist (1978)*;¹⁶

¹³ *Growing Together in Mission and Unity: Building on 40 Years of Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue*, SPCK, 2007.

¹⁴ No time to tell you a remarkable story of stop go calling off the bishops meetings, halting ARCIC because of the bewilderment over unilateral actions taken by the Anglican Communion over the ordination of women bishops and more seriously for Rome the consecration of a man living in a gay relationship. It's a moving story hardly ever remembered.58

¹⁵ See Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, eds., *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level* (New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press and Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984) 168-89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 190-214. With agreement on presence and sacrifice.

Ways to Community (1980)¹⁷; *Ministry in the Church* (1981)¹⁸; *Facing Unity* (1984)¹⁹ In 1983, marking the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth, *Martin Luther – Witness to Jesus Christ*,²⁰ offered a portrait of Luther largely indebted to Roman Catholic scholarship; in 1994, the important Statement - *The Church and justification* exploring the ecclesiological implications of the doctrine of justification.²¹ So, thousands of pages of Agreed Statements, serious scholarship, from the international dialogue. The dialogue finished its fourth phase with an Agreed Statement on apostolicity.²² At the same time as the international dialogue a regional bilateral in the USA added important statements, including one on the Petrine ministry. All of this erudite theology by theologians getting to know one another, building understanding, lifting some of those dark clouds of unknowing. The theologians were enjoying themselves!

What struck me back in the 80's was that there was no official response process for these agreed statements as there had been planned for ARCIC I, no looking for response 'at the highest level of authority'. This is not to say that close relations between the two traditions did not develop, the clouds of unknowing were not dispersing. They were especially in Germany and the USA with the regional Concordat.

But, there was a very significant move in October 1999, in Augsburg, when representatives of the LWF and the Vatican signed *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* demonstrating that Lutherans and Catholics could express a common, though not total agreement on justification. They described their agreement as 'differentiated consensus' – agreement in essentials and legitimate diversity on other matters. The great advance meant that the mutual condemnations of the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 215-40. Describing the goal of the dialogue.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 248-75¹⁸.

¹⁹ See Jeffrey Gros, FSC; Harding Meyer; and William G. Rusch, eds., *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998* (Geneva: World Council of Churches and Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000) 443-84. outlined a possible process by which over a period of time there could be a formation of a joint L-C ministry.

²⁰ Jeffrey Gros, FSC; Harding Meyer; and William G. Rusch, eds., *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998, op. cit.*, 438-42.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 485-565

²² *The Apostolicity of the Church*, 2006.

sixteenth century no longer applied. It is sometimes hard for Anglicans to understand just how momentous this was. *The Joint Declaration*, with its concept of ‘differentiated consensus’, is the one step of official reception of the fruits of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue to date.²³ What is interesting to note is that although Methodists and Reformed officially supported the Declaration, it was only last year that the Anglican Consultative Council passed a resolution recognising the significance of the *Joint Declaration*. This was affirmed in the General Synod of the Church of England in February, 2017.

2015 marked for Lutherans and Roman Catholics the 50th year of theological dialogue just as 2016 did for Anglicans and Catholics. It also began for Lutherans an intense reflection on what might happen two years later in 2017, the 500th anniversary of Luther’s Ninety Five Thesis, a convenient event for marking the start of the Reformation. But how to mark the beginning of the Reformation, in the new context of all that had been achieved in understanding one another in the last 50 years. Was the notion of celebration appropriate? Would a joint celebration be appropriate? With the dispersal of the clouds of unknowing, how were Lutherans and Catholics, indeed all the churches springing from the Reformation, to remember? Not easy. Some Lutherans believed that the event should be only a “celebration” of the contributions of the Reformation to the Church and the world. Other Lutherans, and certainly most Catholics, had difficulty in combining the notion of “celebration” with an event, for whatever its positive features, caused division in the western church. The conclusion was that 2017 should be a commemoration not a celebration.

An official joint L – RC document, *From Conflict to Communion*, compiled for the commemoration, presents 2017 as an opportunity for deeper communion between Lutherans and Catholics and for the celebration of the common witness they share to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It does this by an integration of fundamental themes of Luther’s theology and the contemporary Catholic response to

²³ On the concept of “differentiated consensus”, see William G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007) 118-30.

this theology stressing that on these issues Lutherans and Catholics can now speak with one voice if not total agreement.

From Conflict to Communion sums up the consensus and convergence reached in dialogue and admits openly areas of unresolved difference, but it is not a vehicle by which the results of fifty years of dialogue on the international or national levels are *officially* and *juridically* received by the two churches at the highest level of authority. Nevertheless, it contributes to an atmosphere of trust between formerly estranged Catholics and Lutherans and can be thought of as an instrument to stimulate a wider reception of one another.²⁴ In terms of our subject it is a clear indication of clouds dispersed and sun shining.

From Conflict to Communion does have practical consequences encouraging Lutherans and Catholics to take certain concrete steps to increase as a greater expression of their unity. It urges them to:

- commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate what this means and strive towards the goal.
- rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this time.
- witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.

From Conflict to Communion shows the degree of agreement that exists between the two Communion and is clear that the time is right to take action together but it is not a way to receive the fruits of all the dialogue agreements by the authorities of the Church. One experienced ecumenical theologian has written that what is needed is a new type of document for churches to take official and juridical action, a document that would claim consensus and convergence on the

²⁴ For a discussion of "ecumenical reception," see William G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity*, *op. cit.* The only example of such Lutheran-Roman Catholic reception to date is the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. For an account of this process, see William G. Rusch, "The History and Methodology of the *Joint Declaration on Justification*: A Case Study in Ecumenical Reception," in Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, o.p., ed., *Agapè: Études en l'honneur de Mgr. Pierre Duprey, M. Afr.* (Chambésy-Genève: Centre Orthodoxe du Patriarcat Oecuménique, 2000) 169-84.

Church, Eucharist and ministry and which commits the two Communion to work at remaining issues of difference.²⁵ In other words he looks for a banking of the agreements at an authoritative level.

What is a wonderful sign of how far the clouds have dispersed was that on October 31 Francis and Bishop Younan, the President of the LWF, went to Lund to commemorate the Anniversary and in their joint statement pledged their two Communion to pursue their dialogue so as to remove the remaining obstacles that prevent them from reaching 'full unity' and stressed a commitment to common witness on behalf of the poor, the needy, and victims of injustice. And they ended their statement that Catholics and Lutherans are now a step nearer to the unity for which Christ prayed. .

Conclusion

Let me conclude. Following these different stories at regional and global level what is clear is that there have been different sorts of agreements: Declarations and statements of Popes and Archbishops; Agreed theological reports from officially appointed commissions; *The Joint Declaration on Justification*; the summary by Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in IARCCUM and there have been regional agreements like our European agreements, Meissen, Reuilly and Porvoo, made at the highest level of authority. There has been theological advance in understanding the Gospel and the Church and action together in service and mission. All of this shows the miracle of how far we have come together. The clouds of unknowing are being dispersed, the sun is shining through. But, perhaps what speaks more than all of this are prophetic gestures, grace filled moments:

Seeing Francis and Justin together in Rome with Justin taking off his episcopal cross and handing it to Francis who immediately kissed it and put it around his own neck and seeing photos of Francis in

²⁵ William Rusch in *Ecumenical Trends...* He regrets that it doesn't pay more attention to the papacy, or ethical issues as potentially church dividing. ²⁵ he regrets too that it relates to *Lutheran and Roman Catholic* but does not address other Reformation churches or their relation to the Roman Catholic Church. That may be so but many events planned for this year are thoroughly ecumenical. The press statement from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York speak of the blessings of the Reformation: the clear proclamation of God's grace, the availability of the Bible in the vernacular and the calling of lay people to service. We are remembering the Reformation together and the events in Wittenberg on 31 October 1517.

Lund celebrating the beginning of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation with that remarkable picture of him embracing the Archbishop of Uppsala, a woman bishop, are precious moments that say more than words can about mutual acknowledgement. They show the clouds of unknowing have lifted we are friends in Christ. Reconciliation is happening. The question for now for us all is - where next, for God's sake and the world's sake?

Mary Tanner 25.02.2017

Anglican-Lutheran Society AGM

A short Post Script that I might have added had the time not been so short!

Many years ago I found myself at a consultation run by Lutherans and Roman Catholics and having to speak about the future with Cardinal Ratzinger. My suggestion was that it was time for a trilateral A-L-RC discussion. Making me think, as you have done today, convinces me that there would be so much to be gained from a trilateral. I've even got an agenda for it.

- What do we all mean by the unity to which God calls us to live visibly: a sign to the world of its own possibility, a unity that empower us for mission?
- What place would diversity take in such a picture? Are we talking about recognisable denominations forever or are we open to something beyond our present identities and a rich diversity born out of the gospel made truly relevant in the languages, symbols and imagery of localities? How does this relate to 'reconciled diversity'?
- What gossamer structures of grace would hold us in belonging to each other, would hold the local in communion with the global and the Church through the ages and what attitudes would help us to listen to one another when confronting new challenges and issues that threaten our unity?

- What place a universal primacy? Another faithful ecumenist – now nearly 90 - wrote a PS at the end of his Christmas letter to me. ‘It seems to me that a pattern has developed over 50 years for a way of seeing the See of Canterbury and Anglicans with the Universal Church through Peter’s successor. The Bishop of Rome already has hundreds of ecclesial bodies related to him (rites, religious orders) and a few more should not be a problem! The recent meeting at Lund of the Bishop of Rome and the Archbishop of Uppsala and other LWF leaders suggests something similar. What do you think Mary?’
- And as we do our doctrinal work let’s get on with the business of living and witnessing together, serving the poor and binding up the wounds of a broken and confused and confusing world – God’s world. The vision we have set impels us to work together impels us to an active ecumenism. Faith and life belong together as they did in 1910 and have struggled to hold together for over 100 years.