

SEMINAR ON ECCLESIOLOGY

Roman institutions figured prominently in the two sessions of the Ecclesiology Seminar. The June 12 session took as its starting point a presentation by Margaret O'Gara (University of St. Michael's College, Toronto) on the Vatican response to the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission's *Final Report* of 1982. The June 13 session discussed the proposal by Peter Chirico (Seattle University) for distinguishing between Petrine primacy and the "accrued authority" of the papacy.

RESPONSE TO ARCIC I

Some fifty seminar participants heard Margaret O'Gara's critical appraisal of the Vatican response last December to *The Final Report* of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).¹ Some ten years in the making, the Vatican response² is a joint publication of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which continues to sponsor the ARCIC dialogues. The two curial offices, which were asked to state whether the agreements reached in *The Final Report* were consonant with the faith of the Church, gave a mixed reply. Although "notable progress" has been achieved, nevertheless "differences or ambiguities remain which seriously hinder the restoration of full communion."

Margaret O'Gara began her analysis of the Vatican response by identifying doctrinal areas in which the Vatican's request for clarifications is "puzzling." For example, the Vatican states that ARCIC's treatment of the Eucharist is insufficient "to remove all ambiguity regarding the mode of the real presence which is due to a substantial change in the elements." To this, O'Gara replied by citing ARCIC texts which affirm that, in the Eucharist, bread and wine become Christ's body and blood. The clarifications requested can be found, she said, "but to do so will take us more deeply into theological opinions than perhaps an ecumenical agreement need travel."

After examining other "puzzling" clarifications requested in the Vatican response, O'Gara turned to what she called "missed opportunities." The first of these is the opportunity to note greater convergence between Anglicans and Roman Catholics in *The Final Report*. The Vatican response states that the

¹*The Final Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications; Washington DC: USCC, 1982).

²"Vatican Responds to ARCIC I Final Report," *Origins* 21/28 (19 December 1991) 441, 443-47.

Report "would seem" to require the assent of the faithful "for the recognition that a doctrinal decision . . . is immune from error." This is a position, O'Gara replied, which "confuses reception as a means of recognition with reception as a guarantee, a confusion not shared by ARCIC."

Another missed opportunity for understanding, from O'Gara's viewpoint, is the Vatican's call for affirmations which ARCIC has already made. For example, the Vatican response states that *The Final Report* ignores the link between Scripture and tradition in its examination of the Petrine texts. According to the Vatican response, this happens when the *Report* claims that the Bible's Petrine texts do not offer sufficient basis for establishing papal primacy. The Vatican believes that those texts *do* offer a sufficient basis when rightly interpreted.

But O'Gara argued that this misunderstands the ARCIC document. The document, to be sure, claims that the Petrine texts are insufficient. But it allows the possibility of affirming papal primacy as part of "God's design for the universal koinonia." To O'Gara, this affirmation should have been noted in the Vatican response.

After O'Gara's presentation, R. William Franklin (General Theological Seminary), a representative of the Episcopal Church in Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogues, gave a more appreciative assessment of the Vatican response. He said that it establishes clear agreements on Eucharist and the priesthood, agreements which may soften the force of earlier condemnations of Anglicanism by the Vatican. Moreover, the tone of the 1991 response marks a positive advance beyond earlier reactions by the curia to *The Final Report*.

The Vatican's response departs, Franklin said, from the condemnation in Leo XIII's bull *Apostolicae Curae*. He added that the response "puts to rest any claim that the 1896 condemnation of Anglican orders is infallible." The rationale for the condemnation, he said, is what Pope Leo called defects of form and intention in Anglican ordination. The 1991 Vatican response, however, notes that consensus has been reached about many aspects of ministry and ordination. Franklin argued that, in place of condemnation, a basis for future dialogue has been laid.

Franklin also compared the 1991 response to the 1982 letter by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to the Catholic Cochairman of ARCIC. The 1982 letter, he said, measured ARCIC by the yardstick of the Council of Trent, and in particular expressed dissatisfaction with ARCIC's treatment of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. In contrast, the 1991 response—which makes special reference to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist—states that "It is in respect of eucharistic doctrine that the members of the [ARCIC] commission were able to achieve the most notable progress toward a consensus." Franklin concluded that the clarifications requested by the Vatican response would be relatively easy to provide. He called for the establishment between Anglicans and Roman Catholics of "covenants" which in certain circumstances would allow participation by the churches in each other's ordinations and the sharing of the eucharistic meal.

After the presentation and response, a dialogue ensued which was chaired by Jeffrey Gros (USCC Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs).

Some seminar members, such as Harry McSorley (University of St. Michael's College) stated that the Vatican response is unworthy of the Church, and Brian Johnston (Holy Redeemer College) counted in it seventeen false statements. Others, such as George Tavard (Brighton, Massachusetts), were more optimistic about the fate of ARCIC, noting that the Vatican response is not so important as the dialogue itself.

PAPAL PRIMACY AND "ACCRUED" AUTHORITY

On June 13, nearly fifty seminar participants discussed the distinction, proposed by Peter Chirico, between the authority which belongs to the pope by virtue of his primacy and the authority which has accrued to him over the centuries on grounds other than that of primacy. Chirico began with a nine-point summary of primatial authority, the first point of which is that the powers of the primacy are "solely" for the achievement of Christian unity, as expressed in *Pastor Aeternus* (1870). In his ninth point, Chirico noted another limit to papal authority, a limit expressed at Vatican I by the Deputation of the Faith, namely, the limit marked by natural and divine law. Apart from these very general limits, he said, Vatican I seems to have accorded the pope almost unlimited jurisdictional authority.

Chirico then defined two additional limits to papal authority which he believes Vatican I itself imposed. The first is a limit to the "area" or scope of papal activity. Chirico reached this conclusion by an analysis of the Vatican I teaching that papal authority is "ordinary," i.e., not delegated. Ordinary authority is exercised in the discharge of the regular duties of office. Chirico argued that, since the papal office was established to preserve "unity of faith and communion" (*Pastor Aeternus*), primatial authority is given only for promoting that unity. "The pope, as universal primate, has no authority," Chirico said, "to do anything that does not pertain to this role of fostering unity amidst legitimate diversity."

In addition to this limit on the *area* in which the pope exercises his ordinary authority, Chirico proposed a second limit, a limit to the *efficacy* of papal authority. Such authority, *Pastor Aeternus* teaches, is jurisdictional. It gives the pope the right to rule and command obedience. But the efficacy of jurisdiction, Chirico argued, is not the efficacy of truth. Although no Catholic would contest the pope's legal right to govern the Church, few would maintain that the pope's governance of the Church (as distinct from infallible teaching) is immune to error. The efficacy of jurisdiction is a limit to papal authority, Chirico said, because "the Roman Pontiff is rightfully subject to respectful *moral* challenges . . . when he appears to go beyond his area of jurisdiction or when he appears to make harmful decisions within that area."

In his formal response to Chirico, Joseph Komonchak (Catholic University of America) allowed the possibility of the first proposed limit to papal authority and granted the existence of the second limit. Although he criticized the development of Chirico's argument, he endorsed the goal of stating the limits of papal

primacy.

On Chirico's proposal that Vatican I intended to limit the *area* of papal authority to the sphere of promoting unity, Komonchak passed no judgment. He did say, however, that Chirico's list of what falls outside the area envisioned by Vatican II—a list which includes imposing the theology of the Roman school, promoting a "Roman" style of episcopal leadership, and mandating celibacy for priests—is a list requiring further development. Why these fall outside the area of papal authority could be articulated, said Komonchak, and the lack of such an articulation is "a major failing."

To the second proposal by Chirico, that Vatican I wanted to emphasize primatial authority in the area of jurisdiction (and thus to distinguish between the efficacy of jurisdiction and the efficacy of truth), Komonchak agreed with Chirico's distinction but maintained that it is a theological commonplace. Vatican I implicitly granted that the charism of infallibility does not govern the papacy's exercise of disciplinary authority, said Komonchak. Chirico's claim that the primacy of jurisdiction implies a limited efficacy, Komonchak concluded, needs to be expanded.

Following the response, Susan Wood (St. John's University, Colledgeville) chaired a dialogue among the seminar participants. Several affirmed Komonchak's insight that an understanding of the universal Church as a homogeneous institution ruled by the episcopal college is giving way to a view of the Church as a communion of local churches.

Mark F. Fischer announced his resignation as seminar convenor and introduced Susan Wood as convenor in 1993.

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