

AN INTERCHURCH GROUP
ON FAITH AND POLITICS



Towards Peace and Stability?

A Critical Assessment
of the
Anglo-Irish Agreement

70p

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by
An Interchurch Group on
Faith and Politics

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An Interchurch Group on Faith and Politics has published the following pamphlets: **Breaking Down the Enmity** (1985), **Understanding the Signs of the Times** (1986), **Choose Life** (1987), and **Towards an Island That Works** (1987). Copies of these may be obtained from the above addresses.

TOWARDS PEACE AND STABILITY? A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The Interchurch Group on Faith and Politics has produced three previous documents: *Breaking Down the Enmity* (1985) is a reflection on the link between faith and politics in Ireland, and particularly in Northern Ireland. Religion and politics have become so tangled up in Northern Ireland that politics has taken on some of the dimensions of a religious crusade; political positions have been absolutised and exclusive commitments have been demanded of people. Political loyalties and exclusive traditions have been put above the God who will have no other god before Him. Idolatry has led to violence. Christian faith has been compromised; two communities have called upon their religious traditions to sanctify political and cultural traditions, to a greater or lesser extent. In the process we have forgotten that the Gospel is a call to all men and women to enter into a relationship with Christ, and with Him, to be with their neighbour, whoever or whatever he or she may be. Christian faith challenges all exclusive claims of tribe, tradition and political commitment. The Gospel invites us into the space created by Christ, and to find there those who were previously our enemies. It therefore breaks down the enmity between us - enmity caused by different traditions, and national, political and religious loyalties. The Gospel opens up for us a view of wholeness, justice and living in right relations which sees the whole world as potential brothers and sisters. True politics may therefore be seen in the light of this vision as being the nourishing of humanness in corporate life, of finding ways of human beings living with each other. This is the challenge to politics in Northern Ireland; the challenge to Christians is to nourish such a politics. In the final part of *Breaking Down the Enmity* we tried to give some consideration to what such a politics would look like in Ireland. In particular we saw it as important that the British and Irish Governments should work together on the problem.

The signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in November 1985 might be seen as an attempt to create a new politics in Northern Ireland. It gave the relation of faith to politics a sharp and particular focus. How were Christians of different traditions to respond to the Agreement and its implications? What were the questions being raised by the Agreement?

Understanding the Signs of the Times (published March 1986) was our response. We saw the Agreement as offering an opportunity for all the parties in the conflict to face reality, to change course and to create new relationships; or else to be sucked into further destructive conflict. We said that things could never be the same again in Northern Ireland whether the Agreement worked or not. We took no position on the merits of the Agreement but said that those who rejected it had the responsibility to offer an alternative which would be acceptable to both communities.

In *Towards an Island That Works* (published November 1987) we examined the way people in the South relate faith to politics and how this affects the Northern conflict. We outlined some of the changes going on in Southern society over recent decades, particularly in relation to the North. We tried to envisage

what a more Christian politics might mean in the Republic and how the Churches could be better signs of the Covenant Community and of the Kingdom.

In the present document we are seeking to discern from the perspective of Christian faith what has happened after nearly three years of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and to see what important issues are arising for all the parties.

In the first section we simply detail what the Agreement (including the Preamble) contains.

In the second section we try to see where all the different groups are at this juncture and what in our view are the questions arising for them.

In the third section we look at some wider issues in Northern Ireland society: the present form of the British presence, dependence, and the creation of an underclass with which any political arrangement will have to come to terms.

The fourth section considers the role of the Churches and the challenges facing them.

An important dimension of the Agreement was security policy and in the fifth section we look at different security strategies, the practical and moral issues involved and how the fundamentals of the Agreement might relate to policing.

In the sixth section we pick up again*one of the basic themes of *Breaking Down the Enmity* - the enmity at the heart of the relationship of Protestant and Catholic - and look at the possibilities of reconciliation.

In the seventh section we state what in our opinion are the realities and criteria which should govern approaches to the Northern Ireland problem and we assess their congruence with the Agreement (and, in particular, with the Preamble).

In the conclusion we give our evaluation of the Agreement and how, in the perspective of faith, we might seek ways forward.

SECTION 1: THE AGREEMENT

In this section we set down the Preamble and summarise the Agreement itself. We make only one comment at this stage: it may be that the importance of the Preamble has been overlooked in the controversy about the contents of the Agreement, for the Preamble expresses the two Governments' agreed understanding of how to approach the Northern Ireland problem and their acceptance of the uniqueness of the relationship between the two islands.

The Preamble

The first clause claims a wish on the part of both Governments 'to develop further the unique relationship between their peoples and the close co-operation between their countries as friendly neighbours and as partners in the European community.'

The second clause reads: 'recognising the major interest of both their countries and above all, of the people of Northern Ireland in diminishing the divisions there and achieving peace and stability.'

The third clause reads: 'recognising the need for continuing efforts to reconcile and acknowledge the rights of the two traditions that exist in Ireland, represented on the one hand by those who wish for no change in the present status of Northern Ireland and on the other hand by those who aspire to a sovereign united Ireland achieved by peaceful means and through agreement.'

The fourth clause reads: 'reaffirming their total rejection of any attempt to promote political objectives by violence or the threat of violence and their determination to work together to ensure that those who adopt violence do not succeed.'

The fifth clause reads: 'recognising that a condition of genuine reconciliation and dialogue between Unionists and Nationalists is mutual recognition and acceptance of each others' rights.'

The sixth clause reads: 'recognising and respecting the identities of the two communities in Northern Ireland and the right of each to pursue its aspirations by peaceful and constitutional means.'

The last clause of the preamble reads: 'reaffirming their commitment to a society in Northern Ireland in which all may live in peace, free from discrimination and intolerance and with the opportunity for both communities to participate fully in the structure and processes of government.'

The Agreement Itself

Article 1: Status of Northern Ireland

This article in three sub-sections affirms that any change in the status of Northern Ireland can only come about with the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland, recognises that the present wish of the majority is for no change and finally declares that the two Governments will introduce legislation to facilitate the establishment of a united Ireland, if a majority should formally request it.

Article 2: The Intergovernmental Conference

This article is in two sub-sections.

Sub-section (a) deals with the establishment of the Conference.

The Conference is not a completely new policy entity or concept; it is the recognition as a formal entity of a process that has been going on informally as a result of a major decision taken during 1981 by both sovereign Governments. That decision was to establish an Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council. The concern of the Conference is with Northern Ireland and with relations between the two parts of Ireland with particular reference to (i) political matters; (ii) security and related matters; (iii) legal matters, including the administration of justice; (iv) the promotion of cross-border co-operation.

Sub-section (b) accepts that the Irish government will put forward views and proposals relating to Northern Ireland; it states that determined efforts shall be made to resolve any differences; it recognises that decisions reached as a result of Conference discussions may involve action in Great Britain or the Republic as well as in Northern Ireland; it declares that each government will retain responsibility 'for the decisions and administration of government within its own jurisdiction.'

Article 3: The Intergovernmental Conference

Article Three sets out the membership of and administration arrangements for the Conference. It may meet at Ministerial or official level and the business of the Conference will 'receive attention at the highest level.' Regular and frequent meetings at Ministerial level are to be held. Officials may meet in subordinate groups. When the Conference meets at Ministerial level, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Permanent Irish Minister Representative shall be joint Chairmen. Other Ministerial meetings may be held within the framework of the Agreement. Ministers may be accompanied by their officials and professional advisers, for example by police chiefs when security matters are being discussed. The Article also provides for the establishment of a Secretariat to service the Conference.

Article 4: The Intergovernmental Conference

This article deals with three issues.

(a) The first sub-section states that the unusual arrangements set out in the preceding two articles have been designed to provide a framework in which the rights and identities of the two traditions may be accommodated and to assist in the promotion of reconciliation, respect for human rights, co-operation against terrorism and mutually beneficial co-operation.

(b) The second sub-section affirms the declared policy of the United Kingdom government is that 'responsibility in respect of certain matters within the powers of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland should be devolved within Northern Ireland on a mutually acceptable basis.' The Government of the Republic supports that policy.

(c) The third sub-section recognises the need for the co-operation of constitutional representatives, if devolution is to be achieved. The Conference will permit of the Irish Government putting forward suggestions 'in so far as they relate to the interests of the minority community.'

Article 5: Political Matters

This article is in three sub-sections.

(a) The first sub-section states that the Conference shall concern itself with measures to recognise and accommodate the rights and identities of the two traditions in Northern Ireland, to protect human rights and to prevent discrimination. Matters to be considered will include measures to foster the cultural heritage of both traditions, changes in electoral arrangements, the use of flags and emblems, the avoidance of discrimination and the advantages and disadvantages of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

(b) The second sub-section provides for the possible application in the Republic of any matters pursuant to this Article.

(c) Failing the achievement of devolution, the third sub-section enables the Irish Government to put forward views or proposals for major legislation and on major issues within the purview of Northern Ireland Departments.

Article 6: Political Matters

This article enables the Irish Government to put forward views on the role and composition of a number of statutory bodies appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or by Departments subject to his control.

Article 7: Security and Related Matters

This article deals with three issues, namely security policy, relations between the Security forces and finally prisons policy.

(1) Security policy: the Conference is to consider the security situation at its regular meetings. It will address policy issues, serious incidents and forthcoming events.

(2) Relationships between the Nationalist community and the security forces; this sub-section requires the Conference to consider various measures designed to make the security forces more efficient and acceptable to the minority and to increase the proportion of Nationalist members in the RUC.

(3) Prisons policy: this sub-section deals with policy issues relating to prisons.

Article 8: Legal Matters, including the Administration of Justice

This Article envisages the possibility of harmonising areas of the criminal law. The Conference will seek advice from experts as appropriate and *inter alia* will consider the possibility of mixed courts in both jurisdictions. The Conference is also to be concerned with policy aspects of extradition and extra-territorial jurisdiction as between North and South.

Article 9: Cross Border Co-operation on Security Matters

This Article has two sub-sections.

(a) The first sub-section authorises the Conference 'to set in hand a programme of work to be undertaken by the Chief Constable of the RUC and the Commissioner of the Garda Síochána in such areas as threat assessments, exchange of information, liaison structures, technical co-operation, training of personnel and operational resources.'

(b) The second sub-section makes it clear that while the Conference shall indicate and set in hand a programme of work to be undertaken by the respective police chiefs, it shall have no operational responsibility. Each Chief Officer shall retain full responsibility for operations in and by his force and each shall maintain his links with his appropriate political master.

Article 10: Cross Border Co-operation on Economic, Social and Cultural Matters

This Article is in three sub-sections.

(a) The first sub-section pledges both Governments to promote economic and social development in those areas in both parts of Ireland which have suffered because of unrest. The paragraph envisages the enlistment of international support.

(b) The second sub-section states that in the absence of acceptable devolution, the Conference shall be 'a framework for the promotion of co-operation between the two parts of Ireland in such economic, social and cultural matters as remain the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.'

(c) The third sub-section provides for machinery to be established in the event of acceptable devolution for ensuring practical co-operation in respect of cross-border aspects of these issues.

Article 11: Arrangements for Review

This Article provides for the review of the Agreement after three years, or earlier, if requested by either Government. The purpose of the review will be 'to see whether any changes in the scope and nature of its activities are desirable.'

Article 12: Inter-Parliamentary Relations

This Article notes that the establishment of an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary body is a matter for decision by their respective Parliaments. Should one be established the two Governments would support it.

Article 13: Final Clauses

This Article declares that the Agreement shall enter into force on the date on which the two Governments exchange notification of their acceptance of the Agreement.

SECTION II: HOW THE AGREEMENT HAS WORKED

No group's best hopes or worst fears have been realised, and the overall situation of stalemate between the parties remains. None of the parties can get their way completely or be eliminated. However, it is clear that the fact of the Agreement is of very considerable importance and there is no going back to the situation before its signing. Whatever happens in the future, for better or for worse, we have moved into a new situation.

The British Government

The British Government was able to successfully resist the opposition to the Agreement from the Unionist community and to make it work as a consultative arrangement, with improved co-operation on security. It has shown that the Unionist community does not have a total veto on political change. However, given the scale of Unionist opposition, the hopes of a devolved arrangement between the two communities appear unlikely to be fulfilled under an unchanged Agreement in the foreseeable future. This would suggest to us that no political arrangement will work unless it has the support of the two sovereign Governments and majorities in the two communities in Northern Ireland. 'The totality of relationships in these islands,' in the words of Mr Molyneux and Mr Haughey, must be taken into account.

The Unionist Community

The Agreement came as a profound symbolic shock to the Unionist community. The sense of being marginalised and excluded from the political process was very real and painful. There is a continuing unacceptance that Dublin's role in the internal affairs of the Province should be institutionalised as in the Agreement. However the majority of the Protestant community were unwilling to take opposition to the Agreement to active resistance. There is now in our view a reluctant acquiescence in the fact of the Agreement based partly on the reality that the world as Unionists know it has not actually come to an end, and that the protest was going nowhere and could go nowhere without substantially damaging the Unionist community itself. Among an increasing number in the various strands of Unionism there has been a growing recognition that saying no is not enough and there have been indications of a willingness to seek alternatives to traditional policies, e.g. the Commonsense Document of the Ulster Defence Association, the Task Force Report, editorials in the *Belfast News Letter* and Mr Molyneux's acceptance of the need for a discussion on 'the totality of relationships.'

However, the dominant impression for us is that, while there has been a clear 'No' to the Agreement there is as yet no clear consensus on what to say 'Yes' to or how to move forward. In this vacuum Equal Citizenship - seeking some form of integration with the rest of the UK - and some forms of independence may appear to offer attractive alternatives. The basic issue that has to be grasped, in our view, is the need to create a relationship with the Nationalist community that will recognise the legitimacy of the two traditions and lead to a significant sharing

of power and responsibility. In the words of Mr Ken Maginnis of the Official Unionist Party 'There must be some sort of responsibility sharing if we are going to make progress in the future.' It seems to us unlikely that the Agreement will be modified or supplanted unless the Unionist parties make an offer to the Nationalist community that is based on this approach. It also appears to us to be unrealistic to say that the Agreement must first go and then all things will be possible. The Agreement may also have had the effect of changing the relationship of Unionists with Britain in quite a significant way. The long term effects remain to be seen. There has been some talk, e.g. by Mr Raymond Ferguson of the Official Unionist Party, of conceiving a new relationship with Westminster.

The Nationalist Community

The SDLP has strengthened its position *vis-à-vis* Sinn Fein in the Nationalist community as a result of the Agreement and this was one of its primary purposes. At the symbolic level the fact of the Agreement is important in the Nationalist community because it recognises and legitimises the Irish dimension and by extension the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland. However, the 'real' changes and concrete results remain elusive, e.g. in the justice area. The *Fortnight* poll in March 1988 which found that 81 per cent of Catholics believe that the Nationalist community has not benefited from the Agreement reflects this. A devolved power-sharing arrangement as envisaged under the Agreement appears to be unlikely at the present time. However, this situation means that the SDLP does not need to face up to the hard choices which a power-sharing settlement might involve, e.g. some responsibility for security and policing and accepting the restraints and practicalities of government. Does the SDLP now want devolution or not?

Despite the weakening of its position it is clear that Sinn Fein will not disappear. A consistently powerful tradition cannot be eliminated, and may be capable of upsetting the strongest power-sharing machinery that can be devised. Nevertheless there appears to be some rethinking going on in the Republican movement, a recognition of the present stalemate and the unlikelihood of 'success' in any meaningful timescale. Gerry Adams said at the start of 1988 'There is no military solution, none whatsoever. Military solutions by either of the two main protagonists only mean more tragedies. There can only be a political solution.' And his assessment at the 1987 Ard Fheis after Sinn Fein got less than 2 per cent of the vote in the Dail election was that the party was irrelevant to the working class and that they would have to start again.

The latest Sinn Fein document *A Scenario For Peace* seems to us to show how difficult it is for the Republican movement to take the Protestant community and its fears and aspirations seriously, for to do so would represent a fundamental challenge to the framework of Republican belief. At the same time the continuation of the armed struggle must lead logically to bigger and more deadly bombs and weaponry, and to more tragic deaths. The logic is for escalation, but will this not lead to destruction for all? Is there not also an incompatibility between

pursuing working-class politics (representing people on social and economic issues) and pursuing nationalist aspirations by violent means?

The Republic

In the South there has been broad support for the Agreement, although Mr Haughey initially took a hostile attitude. However, on becoming Taoiseach in March 1987, he altered his position significantly and has worked the Agreement.

The Agreement was the first international recognition by the Republic that there could be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority. It represents the formalisation of an evolution in Southern attitudes, from a position of rejecting the rights of Unionists in Northern Ireland on the grounds that the majority was contrived and therefore invalid, to one where the will of the majority is to be respected. This is a major change, the significance of which should not be underestimated.

The Agreement represents an implicit acceptance by the Republic that the most important objective to be achieved in Northern Ireland is to assist Nationalists and Unionists to work together politically within Northern Ireland, even under British sovereignty. The aspiration for unity, while not abandoned, is very much given second place. Mr Haughey's initial rejection of the Agreement suggests to us that he recognised this clearly. His continuing lack of enthusiasm for devolution as envisaged under the Agreement may also suggest that, while prepared to work it, he has not yet accepted its presuppositions. This opens the way for ambiguity, confusion, and distrust.

It may be that the difficulties and differences of emphasis which emerged in the New Ireland Forum (e.g. between Fianna Fail with its determined espousal of the unitary State option and the other parties with their willingness to consider other options such as confederation and joint authority) have not yet been resolved - that in fact the Forum established no real national consensus on the North. Are there really two incompatible views on the North, one expressed by Articles Two and Three of the Constitution and the other by the Agreement? Has the signing of the Agreement accentuated the tension and has the coming of Fianna Fail into office again added to it?

All the parties in the Dail have voted endorsement of the Agreement. What does this mean in practice? What does it mean when, for example, the question of an internal settlement is raised? What precisely is the present Government's attitude to devolution? And what does Mr Haughey mean when he talks about the totality of relationships between these islands? (For that matter what does Mr Molyneaux mean by the phrase and is his meaning compatible with Mr Haughey's?)

Our comments suggest that the process of the South facing up to the realities of the North and clarifying its own position needs to continue, so that ambiguities are removed and a new consensus emerges.

The Agreement implies that both Governments act to provide a stable framework in which both Unionists and Nationalists can work together. They also

accept a responsibility to maintain that framework. Therefore, the Republic's Government accepts a responsibility to maintain the status of Northern Ireland as long as the majority wish it (Republicans have clearly seen this). At the same time the Agreement recognises the Republic's Government as the guarantor of the Northern minority. So, while the Agreement recognises this role of guarantor for the minority, it also repudiates total support for the minority. There may be potential for conflict between these two aspects of the Agreement. Similarly the sensitivity of the Republic to Northern Protestant fears and aspirations (which reconciliation on this island requires), may increase Northern Nationalist fears and concerns (e.g. if Articles Two and Three were to be reformulated).

It is clear that as this century has progressed there has been an increasing divergence of views between Northern and Southern Nationalists. There is considerable Southern ambivalence about the North and real interest in a United Ireland or even in Northern affairs is quite limited. There is also considerable ambivalence among Northern Nationalists about the South. Economic factors play a role in this, as does the experience of being part of a separate administration for nearly seventy years, but there is also an awareness of how little practical concern there has been for the Northern minority in the South since partition. Nevertheless the South will continue to be concerned and involved with the North because of the inevitable links between the two parts of the island. In the North the SDLP also feels the need of this external relationship to help provide a guarantee that the minority's position will be safeguarded.

The SDLP is not attracted by purely internal solutions. There are dangers, however, that the Northern minority may have too high expectations of what the Southern Government can do or is prepared to do in relation to the North.

Anglo-Irish Relations

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is a unique agreement in international relations. It recognises the close relationship and ties between the two countries and the need for co-operation on the Northern Ireland problem. At the same time in Anglo-Irish relations there seem to be permanent tensions and differences of perception and interest. These can be related on the British side to the difficulties that large countries have of taking small countries seriously, to the fact that Ireland is only one small item in a large British agenda and to a deep historical inability to comprehend Irish feelings, either Nationalist or Unionist; even beyond that, to a capacity to lose all sense when dealing with Ireland. On the Irish side, the British are still seen partly through the perspective of colonial history, and deep-rooted resentment and antipathy can easily come to the surface. The Irish too lose all sense. The entanglements of history, immediate political difficulties and different responsibilities have considerable capacities to create problems in Anglo-Irish relations. Therefore, while the Agreement offers a forum for talking and dealing with problems, it is unlikely that Anglo-Irish relations will run completely smoothly. Conflict over the Stalker Affair, the Birmingham Six verdict, problems over extradition and other grave issues have to be seen in this perspective.

It must also be said that a certain amount of conflict between countries is normal and inevitable, even countries tied together by the closest treaty obligations (the haggles between the countries in the EEC are a case in point). We must also see such ambitious undertakings as the Agreement in a long term perspective, a perspective of years not of months.

A Unique Relationship

Discussion has focused primarily on what the Agreement means for Northern Ireland. The Agreement, however, also recognises the 'unique relationship' between the two islands and this dimension has tended to be ignored. There are many shared interests and concerns that stem from the free movement between the two islands over the centuries, their shared social and cultural heritage and their high degree of economic interdependence. At the same time there has been an English-Irish antagonism which has lasted for over eight centuries. The Agreement recognises the close ties between the islands and may offer the possibility of easing the historic antagonism so that a healthier relationship may be established - a relationship based on mutual respect and co-operation rather than one determined by a colonial past.

The Agreement represents a break out from the straitjacket of the 'myth' of absolute and exclusive national sovereignties. It recognises much of the complexity of relationships within these islands. This could be built on in a number of fields, e.g. in the area of human rights. The Churches' Working Party on *Human Rights and Responsibilities in Britain and Ireland* has pointed the way towards looking at how human rights protection could be harmonised in both political jurisdictions.

The Agreement is enshrined in ambiguous language (for example, although the status of Northern Ireland is affirmed, nowhere in the Agreement is it said precisely what that status is; it is not clear what role the Agreement actually gives to Dublin in the affairs of Northern Ireland). Because of this there are many interpretative problems. Ambiguity in certain situations can be creative, giving freedom and allowing change; it can even be necessary. It may also lead to all sorts of disastrous confusions. The interpretative problems of the Agreement are accentuated by different perceptions of situations, by different responsibilities and by the need to sell it to different constituencies.

The British Government has quite naturally tried to sell the Agreement to the Northern majority on the basis that it would offer improved security, while the Irish Government and the SDLP, also quite naturally, have tried to sell it to the minority on the basis that it will gain reforms from the British in the operations of the security forces and the administration of justice. And in the Intergovernmental Talks the British side has concentrated on security and the Irish on the administration of justice, fair employment and jobs. There is some contradiction, and to say the least, difference of emphasis, here. When the apparent 'needs' of the target audiences are so different there are plenty of opportunities for confusion, disagreement and disillusionment.

This also raises the question: what did each Government expect from the Agreement? Did the British Government see the Agreement as providing a common front on security, enlisting some minority support in the North and helping to improve the country's international image (particularly in America) and nothing much beyond this? Obviously the Irish Government has a much wider agenda including political, economic, administrative and security matters. There is clearly a mis-match of expectations here.

Despite this it is unlikely that the two Governments will abandon the Agreement unless something better is created to fulfil the aspirations of the Preamble. More effort needs to go into creating a common understanding, an understanding which will outlast changes of Government and personnel on both sides, because it will require sustained and common effort by both Governments to bring stability to Northern Ireland. If both Governments are serious about the Agreement - if it represents an historic change in the relationship between Britain and Ireland - then they are engaged in a common and long-term enterprise and they will treat each other accordingly.

Neither British nor Irish Governments are seen as neutral in Northern Ireland: each is seen in different ways as, or expected to be, protectors or allies against the 'other' side. Historically Loyalists have expected Britain to protect their position. Similarly Northern Nationalists have expected Irish Governments to uphold their position and act as a 'voice' for their aspirations. Both communities have had their disappointments in their respective allies, but have not been able, or, in the main, wanted to do without them. Unless there is some agreement between the two Governments there is a danger that they will get sucked into simply supporting their 'own' side. In such a situation the more extreme and violent elements on both sides will make the running and governments will get more and more locked into the situation and it will get worse and worse. Therefore, common understanding, trust and co-operation between Irish and British Governments are important.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement repudiated the total support of each Government for 'their' side. The Irish Government accepted that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland and recognised that the present wish of the majority was for no change. The British Government accepted that if a majority wanted a United Ireland it would legislate for this, without abandoning that support. The Agreement represented an attempt to rebalance support for the two communities in Northern Ireland and to provide a stable framework in which the two communities are given equal status. The Agreement in its intent, whether both sides fully realise it or not, is highly ambitious and represents, if both Governments are serious, a fundamental change. Both Republicans and Loyalists clearly recognise this. It is not without its risks.

Working Together

Whether the particular framework of the Agreement is the best one is an open question but there is no doubt that without some framework for the two Governments to work together the situation is likely to get very much worse. All the hopes of those who support violence in Northern Ireland depend in the last analysis upon the collapse of any understanding between the British and Irish Governments. The strategy of those who espouse violent politics is directed to making this occur and forcing a unilateral response from either Government. Further, only by means of some framework in which the two Governments can work together will it be possible for Northern Nationalists to be able to accept the legitimate existence of the separate entity of Northern Ireland.

SECTION III: SOME WIDER ISSUES IN NORTHERN IRISH SOCIETY

1. The British Presence

The present form of British involvement shields us from the consequences of our intransigence, i.e. widespread violence. It enables a large number of people (particularly middle class people) to live relatively comfortable lives and to opt out of their responsibilities; it even subsidises them in this. The price is largely paid by members of the security forces and by those living in ghetto areas. The present form of British presence allows many people to evade the reality of the present position and its long term consequences.

2. Dependence

Part of British involvement in Northern Ireland is the reality of dependence. Northern Ireland is subsidised to the tune of something like £1,700 million per year. It is a dependent society, and this reality applies to both Unionist and Nationalist communities. This has implications for our traditional political ideologies and aspirations, and for the image of ourselves as a people, which we are deeply reluctant to face. The fact of economic dependence was a significant factor in the restraint of the Unionist community in its opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It has made Nationalists deeply ambivalent about a United Ireland. The Republic's present economic difficulties encourage this. And yet the other side of dependence is resentment. Many Unionists deeply resent Britain and this has significantly increased since the signing of the Agreement. With some there is not only resentment, but a sense of betrayal. Increasingly, in both communities, our hearts and our heads run in different directions, which is a difficult posture to retain with dignity.

3. The Creation of an Underclass

In significant areas of Belfast and Londonderry/Derry (and other places such as Strabane and Newry) the majority of people are unemployed and likely to remain so. It is now a misnomer to talk of a working class in these areas; instead there is a permanent underclass who are effectively excluded from the rest of society. They are largely the poor, the less well educated, those living in bad housing. This has been the reality in many Catholic areas for some time; it is also the reality in some Protestant areas. The situation that people in these areas find themselves in is no fault of theirs; it is largely the consequence of our present way of running the economy. Some people are paying the price for other people's affluence. This is not only a Northern Irish development; similar things are happening in parts of the South and in parts of Britain.

The areas in which this is happening in Northern Ireland are also the areas where paramilitaries have their tightest grip, where racketeering is endemic and policing most difficult. In Nationalist areas it is where Sinn Fein often gets a strong vote. In similar Protestant areas extreme Loyalist candidates also get a strong vote.

What will political solutions mean in areas like these? Why is the gap between rich and poor widening in British and Irish societies? The ideology that legitimates and even promotes these divisions is flourishing. Is an ideology acceptable which bears with such exclusive force on those with the least possibilities of responding to it?

SECTION IV: THE CHURCHES

The Churches play a significant stabilising role in Northern Irish society. They are one of the reasons why our society has not gone over the edge. It is clear, for instance, that the Protestant Churches have played an important restraining role in the Unionist community during the protests against the Agreement.

The Churches have been chaplains to 'their' communities - comforters, reflecters of feelings, understanders, restrainers. They have often helped to moderate the crisis, but at the same time have largely been unable to provide the spiritual resources, vision and hope which would enable people find new paths and new ways forward.

The various Christian traditions (including their theologies) have developed in opposition to each other. Their differences have been emphasised rather than the things they hold in common. Churches have become badges of identity. Our Churches have shared in and contributed to the communal antagonisms. They have sometimes fueled the rivalry by sanctifying one cause over and against another. They have even gained strength from the divisions. Have we come to need these antagonisms?

Relativising Our Loyalties

Religious communities are also national communities in Ireland. This has meant that it is very difficult to make distinctions between transcendent commitments and communal and political commitments. It is, therefore, not surprising that large parts of our Churches are so captive to the political ideologies of Unionism and Nationalism that they are unable to make a clear distinction between commitment to their faith and commitment to a particular political point of view. The fact that religious communities are also national communities in Ireland has also meant that our worship has reflected 'our' community's concerns. Who we pray for - who is inside and outside our concern - and how we pray shows how we really understand ourselves and how we stand in relation to the inclusiveness of the Kingdom and to the God who has no favourites (Acts 10: 34). These national identities cannot be, indeed ought not to be, abandoned by the Churches as wrong; to do so might well leave the respective communities 'prayerless.' Instead we must give them their place, to be valued but not to be idolised, a starting point but not an end point. The Kingdom is for all who wish to be there. Therefore the Kingdom really does relativise our loyalties.

Theologies of Conflict

It is, therefore, not surprising that we Christians by and large do not see a connection between commitment to Christ and the necessity for peacemaking. Indeed in the theologies of conflict, of election and of the Chosen People, which dominate in the Ulster Protestant tradition (and which have been imported in distorted ways into our politics with lethal effect), peacemaking and reconciliation between people are not seen as virtues but as signs of weakness and muddle-mindedness, at best, and betrayal of truth, at worse. Peace comes only after

victory in the minds of many people. Between the 'just' and the 'unjust,' light and darkness, there can only be separation in this view. The definition of enemies, the sense of being surrounded by enemies, is part of the way Ulster Protestantism knows and understands itself.

In the different religious/national traditions there have developed different visions of righteousness, radically different versions of justice. In a significant part of the Ulster Protestant tradition justice tends to emphasise honest dealing, getting one's deserts, acting rightly, fair procedures and the punishment of the guilty. Communal justice is not so central.

In the Irish Catholic tradition there has developed a victim theology where the community sees itself as the victim and identifies with the victims. Justice for the innocent victim and making sure that the oppressor gets his deserts are quite central. Peace comes after justice and justice is the right framework. Reconciliation in this perspective is seen merely as giving the other a place in *our* framework, not together trying to create something new.

This radical difference in perspective between the two communities is one of the reasons why they have extreme difficulties in understanding each other on law and order and administration of justice issues. It is, therefore, important that we talk together about our perceptions of injustice in the situation and see if we can reach some understanding, if not agreement.

Protestant and Catholic theological understandings and traditions have influenced our different cultures and therefore our politics in all sorts of different ways. It is one of the causes of our two communities failing to understand each other and their consequent inability to find agreement. The 'framework' approach of many Nationalist politicians and the step by step testing of propositions approach of many Unionists is one example of a theological difference of approach brought into politics. We need a much greater understanding of this whole area and it is only by honestly talking to each other that we can get it.

There is an urgent need to recover the view that working for peace (for shalom - the Biblical vision of new relationships which includes justice and righteousness) far from being a contradiction of faith in Jesus, is an essential expression of the Gospel, and that authentic Christian living requires attempting to bring the peace of God's Kingdom into this violent world. The current 'Not Strangers But Pilgrims' interchurch process which involves Protestant and Catholic Churches in Britain and Ireland and which hopes to create a new ecumenical instrument in 1990 may have the potential of offering a Christian contribution to overcoming the history of antagonism between these islands.

Overcoming Antagonism

The healing effects of ecumenism (and such activities as peace education, cross community contact, etc.) are a very thin skin on this history of antagonism. It is little wonder that there is great difficulty in making ecumenical progress. Yet we need to face the pain, the hurt and the antagonism, and to move beyond politeness and formal symbolism (important as they are) to telling and listening

to each other's stories honestly. To overcome our antagonisms, repentance and forgiveness are central. Instead of a relationship of opposition to each other can we move to a relationship of being together in difference where the other is not a threat but a gift? How can the Catholic tradition be a gift to the Protestant tradition and vice versa?

As part of the overcoming of the history of antagonism can the Protestant Churches look honestly at the anti-Catholic element in Protestantism? It is welcome that the new Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Dr Godfrey Brown, in his opening address to the 1988 General Assembly, called for a change of image on the part of the Presbyterian Church so that the name 'Protestant' might no longer be synonymous with 'anti-Catholic' and he recognised the need to find ways of relating to the Catholic Church and its people with 'openness and honesty, with grace and indeed love.' The decision at the same Assembly which left members of the Church free to decide for themselves whether the Pope is the 'anti-Christ' or not is of considerable symbolic importance for the whole Protestant community, and not only in its religious expression. This part of the Westminster Confession - however understandable in relation to the polemics between Protestant and Catholic in the seventeenth century - has, in the changed circumstances of the late twentieth century, become in Northern Ireland a focus of sectarian feeling. The debate about the Pope as anti-Christ is really about the nature and identity of Protestantism. Is it to have a positive identity focused on Jesus Christ or a negative identity focused on anti-Catholicism? This debate, although it takes a particular form in a discussion about the Confession in the Presbyterian Church, is a debate for all the Protestant Churches.

Can the Catholic Church look seriously at the deep seated Protestant fear of Catholic ecclesiastical power? Is the Orange Order, for instance, in part a reaction to a certain sort of Catholicism? This fear should not be dismissed even if it is thought to be groundless or grossly exaggerated. A Palestinian leader from Gaza said 'You know what? I really think that you Israelis have a problem and therefore we Palestinians have a problem because we don't understand that you really, sincerely, are afraid. We thought until now that it was propaganda, that it was a kind of excuse. So we have to deal with it, we have to understand it.' Can Irish Catholics appropriate this to the situation in Ireland?

The task of reconciliation among the different Christian traditions is central, for how can the Gospel be commended to people when its agents (or its proxy agents) are pounding each other in ruthless politics and power games or are as divided as the rest of society to which they come with a message (or is it only a rumour?) that reconciliation is possible in Jesus Christ?

SECTION V:

POLICING AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE ⁽²⁾

Security was an important element in the Agreement. In this section we look at the different alternative security strategies and their practical and, in particular, their moral implications. Arguments about policing and security policy are in the end arguments about the proper morality of society. We also look at what the fundamentals of the Agreement could imply about policing Northern Irish society.

To police a divided society where there is no political consent and where there is a major terrorist campaign going on is a very difficult task. In relationships between the two communities in Northern Ireland it is often the different perceptions and interpretations of events in security operations and the administration of justice that create most strain and antagonism. One community's demand for security of life and limb comes into conflict with the other community's lack of confidence in the impartiality of the security forces and their full accountability to the rule of law. Yet everyone needs security of life and limb and an impartial police force that is fully accountable. Both the IRA and its Loyalist counterpart are rooted in their respective communities. Both are concrete expressions of the shared aspirations and concerns of these communities: on the Nationalist side aspirations for the unification of Ireland and fears of continued oppression and deprivation; on the Loyalist side fears of absorption into a Catholic dominated Ireland and aspirations for the continued existence of some form of link between Northern Ireland and Britain. The rootedness of terrorism in the two communities has important implications for security policy. It means that the elimination of IRA activity and loyalist reaction to it is not just a matter of 'taking out' terrorists, either by killing them or putting them behind bars. It may be possible for terrorist activity to be contained by that means. But it cannot be eliminated as long as conditions for continued recruitment or regeneration remain. A number of different security strategies have been advocated by different groups in response to the conflict.

The War Strategy

It is often argued that if only the security forces could be freed from the restraints under which they are currently operating in Northern Ireland and permitted to wage all-out war on the IRA the current emergency could be brought to a rapid and satisfactory conclusion. Some support for this view may be taken from the fact that the IRA clearly perceives itself to be fighting a war against the British Army. It is a guerrilla war with some limitation of legitimate targets. It is a war, nonetheless, in which soldiers, policemen, prison officers and civilians are shot without warning, and in which bombs and incendiaries are used against all kinds of property, both governmental and private.

It is not always made clear what the adoption of a war model by the security forces would entail. At the simplest level it would almost certainly involve a general policy of shooting suspected terrorists on sight, and the indefinite detention of all captured suspects as prisoners of war. Experience in the Irish Republic in the 1920s and in Malaya in the 1950s suggests that it might also involve reprisals

against communities from which gunmen or bombers emerged or in which they were sheltered. There is also the possibility of hot pursuit raids into the Republic or even the destruction of suspected terrorist training camps or hideouts.

It is extremely doubtful whether the adoption of policies of this kind would be successful in eliminating the IRA. They would be equally likely to cause an escalation in the fighting. And the cost in civilian casualties would certainly be very high. The political consequences for the British Government in the eyes of the rest of the world would be very grave. How could such a policy ever be morally acceptable?

The Detention Strategy

A policy of arresting and detaining suspected terrorists without trial may be pursued without resorting to a full-scale war model. This strategy was used between 1971 and 1975, and is still authorised under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act. There are strong arguments against any return to detention without trial even on a limited basis.

The strongest argument is the evidence of what happened between 1971 and 1975. The implementation of the policy of putting suspected terrorists behind bars during that period involved the regular and systematic 'screening' of the population in all areas in which there was thought to be a substantial IRA presence. The process of arresting and questioning large numbers of people, sometimes on a street by street basis, inevitably increased the antagonism between the security forces and innocent members of the Nationalist community in which the policy was applied. There is little doubt that it contributed substantially to the flow of recruits into the IRA, and that if a similar policy was introduced again there would be a similar result, even if the scale of detention was much more limited.

The Criminal Prosecution Strategy

Under a pure criminal prosecution model all suspects, whether they were charged with terrorist or ordinary crimes, would be dealt with in ordinary criminal courts and would have a right to jury trial in serious cases. In practice the system of criminal prosecution has been substantially modified in Northern Ireland since 1973 by changes in the common law rules on arrest for questioning, by the admissibility of confessions and by the suspension of jury trial. But the criminal prosecution model which has been maintained since 1975 remains essentially different from the war or detention models in that a suspect may be kept in custody only if he is charged with a specific criminal offence and the prosecution is able to prove his guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

There are some important consequences of adopting a pure or modified criminal prosecution model. The most important is that some people who are 'known' by the security forces to have committed or organised acts of terrorism will not be put behind bars because there is insufficient evidence to bring them before a court or because a court will not convict them. Relying on criminal prosecution thus makes dealing with suspected terrorists rather like dealing with suspected burglars or pickpockets. No one assumes that all of these will be arrested and imprisoned, or that burglary or pick-pocketing will be completely stamped out.

The community accepts this as part of the price to be paid for its commitment to the principle that it is better to allow a guilty suspect to go free than to convict an innocent person.

One important advantage of relying on criminal prosecution in dealing with terrorism is that it helps to avoid the kind of communal distrust and antagonism which the military, security and detention policies caused in the period between 1971 and 1975, and conversely that it helps to increase confidence in the judicial system. In the short term the authorities hope that they will be able to bring sufficient numbers of suspected terrorists before the courts and to obtain a sufficient number of convictions to meet the demands from the bulk of the population for effective action in the face of terrorist attacks and at the same time to diminish recruitment by terrorist organisations in their own communities. The longer term objective is to maintain the confidence of the whole population in the organs of the State and to win general consent for the system of government. In a society like Northern Ireland where there are two communities with potentially divided allegiances and a tradition of support for paramilitary organisations, these considerations are of special importance.

All policies have their consequences and costs. The criminal prosecution strategy enforces restraint on the security forces. The problem of obtaining evidence can be very difficult, if not impossible. Emphasis is put on undercover work, the use of informers and sophisticated intelligence gathering. With the understandable pressure to get 'results', to lessen or eliminate terrorism, there are strong temptations for the security forces to seek ways round the restraint. The suspicions of confessions being forced out of people in Castlereagh in the late 1970s, the use of supergrasses in the mid-1980s, the events of 1982 investigated by John Stalker and Colin Sampson, all highlight the continuing dilemma of how to cope with sophisticated and deeply entrenched terrorism. Most of these attempts to get round the restraints have been morally dubious and have been deeply counter-productive in terms of community support for the police (particularly in the Nationalist community). Yet lack of community support drives the security forces into the use of expedients which are unacceptable. So the vicious circle is complete.

The criminal prosecution strategy criminalises people whose motivation is very different from 'ordinary' criminals, because they regard themselves as being at 'war'. Criminalisation of such people can only work successfully in societies where there is acceptance of the State by virtually everyone, a situation which does not exist in Northern Ireland at present. The criminal prosecution strategy, as applied to Northern Ireland, is a pretence at the moment. It pretends Northern Ireland is a 'normal' society like Britain with a temporary problem. The pretence cannot continue for ever. Unless Northern Ireland moves (however slowly) to being a normal society with community consent, with a normal criminal prosecution system, where social and political deviants are successfully criminalised, and where there is a general consent for policing, it is likely that Northern Ireland as presently constituted will break up.

The police find themselves in an impossible position: it is difficult to find enough

evidence to convict terrorists; there is no purely security solution to the Northern Ireland problem, yet order has to be maintained in the absence of a political agreement and to allow for an agreement to be reached. Members of the Unionist community largely police the Nationalist community. The police thus find themselves in a situation of supporting the position of one community against the aspirations of the other. The police save society from anarchy by being scapegoats. Their periodic sacrifices (over 250 killed since the beginning of the 'Troubles') preserve what peace there is.

Towards Impartial Policing

What do the fundamentals of the Anglo-Irish Agreement imply for policing? The Agreement, if the two Governments are fully serious, is about the British and Irish Governments working together to provide a stable framework for Northern Ireland and the two communities within it. It seems likely to us that without some framework of this kind it will not be possible for the majority of Nationalists over time to accept fully the legitimate existence of Northern Ireland, to accept responsibility for policing and for terrorists to be successfully criminalised (which the criminal prosecution model requires). Both Governments working together to provide a stable framework (an agreed authority) for Northern Ireland means both Governments working together to secure and protect it. They are accepting a common responsibility for security.

It also offers the possibility for the police (and other security forces) to be separated from the position of ultimately supporting the position of the Unionist community against the aspirations of the Nationalist community (the violent reaction of some elements of the Unionist community during the height of the protest against the Agreement shows that this was recognised) and to be able to provide a police service for both communities. Thus the Agreement has offered the possibility for the police to get out of their impossible position. If these opportunities and the responsibilities which go with them are not taken the danger for the police is that they may find themselves having the support of neither community - as appeared to be happening during the height of the protest against the Agreement. The Agreement has given possibilities as well as increased risks. In the area of policing, as in the political, there needs to be a sharing of power and responsibility. Both communities need to be represented in the control and membership of the security forces.

There has to be a moral distance between the methods of the terrorist and the methods of those who oppose them. In the words of the *Daily Telegraph* editorial of March 8, 1988 after the Gibraltar shootings 'it is an essential part of any effective anti-terrorist campaign to maintain the principles of civilised restraint which obtain in a democratic society . . . Failure to do so argues that terrorism is succeeding in one of its critical aims - the brutalisation of the society under attack.' War against terrorism can so easily corrupt us all and undermine the very basis on which any healthy society must be built. We become lost in a miasma of lies and deception. Limits and restraints must be observed, otherwise the State becomes, in the words of St Augustine, 'organised brigandage' and sections of the security forces become indistinguishable in the end from the terrorist (as happened in some South American countries in the mid-1970s).

SECTION VI: ENMITY AND RECONCILIATION

By and large, national communities that co-exist on the same soil develop in rivalry with and antagonism to each other. National conflicts do not normally end up with reconciliation of the antagonists. More commonly they are concluded only by final victories or forced separations.

The fundamental state of Protestant/Catholic relations in Northern Ireland has been one of enmity and hostility, whether latent or manifest. The prognosis for the conflict, if it follows the pattern of other similar conflicts, is that there will be forced separation because final victory of one community over the other is unlikely. We should, however, be fully aware of the likely consequences of failing to find reconciliation, such as repartition, considerable violence, and the spilling of the conflict over into the Republic and Great Britain. The potential for such an outcome should make us all cautious and should make us realise that the politics of reconciliation is the only realistic one, the only one that will give all of us in Northern Ireland a future.

In a situation of enmity and antagonism those who can both threaten and control violence simultaneously become the most significant. The extremists and confrontationalists call the 'shots'. When people live in the shadow of violence, which they do in significant areas of Northern Ireland, it becomes difficult to repudiate 'our' confrontationalists when the same people may be 'our' defenders against whomever they have provoked. And this is true for the other side as well. What develops is a situation of mutual communal deterrence with each community an armed camp (as in the Lebanon). Further forced separation becomes a possibility. One important factor in preventing this from happening in Northern Ireland has been the presence of the security forces. There are enough elements of mutual communal deterrence around (and examples of their effects) to show us what might happen.

How do we get out of this and create some sort of peace? First we need to recognise that the enmity and the mutual threat relationship are facts. It is not enough to blame the extremists on either side. We are all caught together in a relationship of mutual threat. 'We' and 'they' are trapped together and we are a threat to each other. We have to get out of the self righteousness of blaming the other side.

In the Northern Ireland context we need to take the history of our antagonism seriously. This means that Protestants cannot be expected to accept a political arrangement where the State's legitimacy rests ultimately on a Nationalist majority and Catholics cannot be expected to accept an arrangement where its legitimacy rests ultimately on a Unionist majority. This is where each side has come to through their experience of the history of the antagonism. Any solution which attempts to ignore this reality will not work.

To remove the mutual threat relationship an agreed authority must be created in Northern Ireland by Britain and the Irish Republic working together. Unless the two Governments work together it will be very difficult to provide the necessary legitimacy and authority. The approach of the Anglo-Irish Agreement,

whatever the precise details, is not wrong. If some such framework cannot be developed, or if it collapses, the full separation of the two communities in Northern Ireland becomes increasingly likely.

Confidence Building

At the same time political frameworks and devices, while necessary to provide the essential stability for the situation, will not endure if hatred and antagonism persist in large sections of the Northern Ireland community. No solution can be imposed from outside. The enmity must be broken and a process created which leads to an increase of internal agreement.

To create some sort of peace requires that we understand the threat that we are to the other and our mutual vulnerability. Therefore to ask for trust from the other side without some concrete evidence of change on our part is unbelievable. If we want to get out of a conflict then we need to ask: what would the other side regard as evidence of good intentions? We have to accept that they have interests, identities and rights that must be taken into account too; that in fact we all require protection from each other; that we are not going to hand ourselves over into the clutches of the other side; that we fear revenge; that we will not become oppressed again.

Therefore, to get out of a position of enmity we have to acknowledge the fears that exist, both ours and theirs, and that we both require protection. If we want to have peace we have to help the other to be ready for peace, for readiness for peace is something which develops in new relationships. It is not something definable in the abstract or in isolation or something into which other people have to fit. We must take risks and small steps ourselves and not leave it all to the other side. Nor can politicians do this alone. It is the responsibility of everyone and it will require a profound change of heart and mind. Both communities taking small steps will build mutual confidence and perhaps then the situation will start to spiral upwards.

What might count as confidence building steps in the Northern Ireland situation? The following we believe would help:

Since both communities require protection from each other we should consider a Bill of Rights and other means of securing the rights, interests and identities of minorities and individuals. Some of the recommendations of the Churches' Working Party on *Human Rights and Responsibilities in Britain and Ireland*, and of *Ireland: A Positive Proposal*, by Kevin Boyle and Tom Hadden, may be valuable in this regard.⁽³⁾

A reformulation of Articles II and III of the Republic's Constitution would help reduce Protestant fears, as would the development of greater pluralism in Southern society.

It would help if the Catholic Church took more seriously the deep-seated distrust among Protestants of Catholic ecclesiastical power. Changes along the lines suggested in *Towards an Island that Works*, pages 20-22, such as offering communion to interchurch couples when requested, or not putting obstacles in the

way of those who wish to give experiments in integrated education a fair trial, or altering some of the rules for mixed marriages would be helpful.

There is a need for the Protestant Churches to examine honestly their anti-Catholic bias and to show some understanding of the sense of grievance and injustice of many Catholics. Support for the security forces should be balanced by concern for those occasions when there are abuses by them.

The Gospel makes it a priority to seek reconciliation with our enemies and reach out to people who are not like us. What does this say about our various activities and practices in all our Churches and how we approach and maintain particular doctrines and views of truth?

There is also a need for:

- measures that allow Nationalists to express their Irish identity in ways that do not conflict with the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom;
- greater support for the security forces and encouragement to participate in them by significant bodies in the Catholic community;
- effective Fair Employment legislation and greater opportunities for employment particularly in ghetto areas;
- improvements in the administration of justice;
- more effective security.

If there is not enough support, consensus, or trust for full power-sharing, could we begin with devolved executive government with some sort of weighted majority system which would allow representatives of all parties to be involved in the process of government without requiring full consensus as assumed in a complete power-sharing model? This could be combined with a system of scrutinising committees with Chairmen and members drawn from all parties. What is important is that a process starts which is capable of evolution as confidence and trust develops.

As a training for devolved Government and for its own intrinsic good, it would help if methods of consensus working could be developed in local Councils, where there is relatively little power at stake.

Of course, the greatest confidence building measure would be an end to violence. The effects of violence over the last twenty years - the bitterness, pain, hatred and destruction - cannot be overestimated. Violence not only destroys the body, it destroys the soul as well. It will empty Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland of all positive values and we will become only violent people, mirror images of each other, fighting over nothing.

What we are seeking is not an end to the conflict at once, for that is unlikely, but an evolution of the conflict, so that it is expressed in less destructive forms.

SECTION VII: APPROACHES TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROBLEM

In our view the following realities and criteria should govern approaches to the Northern Ireland problem:

- Northern Ireland is a divided society and there are two major traditions;
- therefore Northern Ireland cannot be governed in the same way as more homogeneous societies, like Britain and the Republic of Ireland;
- neither community can be coerced or dominated and therefore each community should be given parity of esteem and treatment;
- Northern Ireland is linked with the rest of Ireland and Great Britain (by history, relationships, culture and aspirations);
- there are three sets of relationships that need to be taken into consideration
 - (a) between Nationalists and Unionists within Northern Ireland;
 - (b) between Northern Ireland and the London Government; and
 - (c) between political representatives in London, Belfast and Dublin - the totality of relationships within these islands;
- any political settlement requires the consent of majorities in both communities in Northern Ireland and the agreement of the British and Irish Governments;
- within Northern Ireland there has to be a sharing of power and responsibility (however that is institutionalised);
- both communities require protection (e.g. through Bills of Rights, institutional arrangements, guarantees from outside bodies, etc.);
- the constitutional position of Northern Ireland cannot be changed without majority consent;
- violence is an unacceptable way of promoting constitutional change;
- The Preamble of the Agreement together with Article I (the status of Northern Ireland) are congruent with these realities and criteria.

Many different political solutions can be built on these criteria and realities. The key thing is that the parties to the conflict enter into a process of developing their relationships. It is this alone which will lead to the finding of a way for the two communities in Northern Ireland to live together.

CONCLUSION

By itself the Agreement cannot bring peace and reconciliation. It is not a solution but a framework which may provide an opportunity for the conflict to be worked on and ameliorated. The adequacy of the framework and the attitudes of all the parties to the Agreement and to each other will determine if it is ultimately of any use or not.

We believe that the understanding of the situation contained in the Preamble and the broad thrust of the approach (whatever about its precise details) of Britain and Ireland working together to create an agreed authority are the right ones. However, the grave disagreements in the early part of 1988 between the two Governments raise profound questions about what common understanding there actually was between them. Part of a common understanding, and a necessity for creating an agreed authority, is a clear agreement about what powers and responsibilities each party actually has and an acceptance of them. The two Governments need to show that they are genuinely engaged in a sustained long-term and common effort.

It is possible for the reasons outlined in this document that a sufficient basis of understanding and agreed authority will not in fact be achieved in the foreseeable future. All we can say is that if this is so then the possibilities of ever resolving the conflict in Northern Ireland are very small indeed and that the possibilities for further violence are very much increased. For the collapse of any understanding between the British and Irish Governments will stoke the fires of violence. Either the two Governments work together to provide a stable framework in which the two communities can find ways of living together or the eventual disintegration of Northern Ireland is likely in the long term. The fact of the Agreement and its attempt to create a stable framework has changed the situation fundamentally. Things will never be the same again in Northern Ireland whether it works or not. There is no way back to the situation before the Agreement.

We, therefore, believe that the process which the Agreement represents is of vital importance and the destruction of this process would be disastrous. Because of the lack of Unionist involvement in the drawing up of the Agreement and of consent to it, it cannot, however, be the final word. There has to be a move beyond the Agreement (which may or may not mean its replacement) to a situation which involves the Unionist community. It may be that the real importance of the Agreement, beyond giving a formal recognition to the unique relationship between the two countries, has been that it has forced Nationalists, Unionists and Republicans to re-examine where they are going, what their objectives are and what they are doing to achieve them. It may be also that the Republic needs to embark on this process in a much deeper way than has happened to date.

In *Understanding the Signs of the Times* we saw the Agreement as a recognition that things could not go on the way they were going in Northern Ireland. We viewed it as an opportunity for all the parties in the conflict to face reality, to change course and to create new relationships or else be sucked into further destructive conflict. We can see at present some signs of realities being faced

and changes of position being made. Yet the cutting edge of the process will have to go much further and deeper if the fundamental stalemate is to be broken. The almost paradoxical comfort of the present position for many, the significance and identity that the conflict brings to lots of people, the pain and price of the changes for all the parties provide plenty of opportunities for reality not to be faced, for delusions to flourish, for destructive fantasy activity and for scapegoats to be found. Yet the longer we drift apart and the longer violence and destructive conflict go on the more difficult it will be to find any structures that hold us together in Northern Ireland. Time is running out. Either we make friends or we pursue our own ruin.

The Politics of Reconciliation

The politics of reconciliation is the only realistic and responsible politics in Northern Ireland. It is either that or our eventual destruction as a community. For a politics of reconciliation to be possible there needs to be a social and spiritual breakthrough which will change people's views of one another. This breakthrough or change of heart will involve a recognition, in the words of the late John McMichael of the UDA, 'That there is no section of the divided Ulster community which is totally innocent or totally guilty, totally right or totally wrong. We all share the responsibility for creating the situation either by deed or by acquiescence. Therefore, we must share the responsibility for finding a settlement and then share the responsibility of maintaining good government.' All of us have met people who have had a change of heart, who have moved from destructive to positive activity and are involved in grass roots community activities, employment projects, cross-community work and so on. Much more is needed and it may be that the most profound conversion will be required in the apparently more 'respectable' parts of our community.

We need to break out of the vicious circle of seeing the 'other' side as always to blame, and ourselves as always the righteous, the innocent and good ones. We have to learn that the 'other' side is human like ourselves, with a good and a bad side, (this partly is what is meant by loving our neighbour) and somebody to be lived with, even if we have significant disagreements with him. We need to learn about the threat we pose to and the fear we induce in the other; that the problem is ourselves (the beam is in our eye) as well as our 'enemy'. The other, although different, is human like us. He, too, has his fears, interests and desires and wants to pursue them and, therefore, we should treat him as we would want to be treated (Matt. 7:12). We do not want to be victims, therefore we must not victimise others. The other is our neighbour with whom we must learn to live.

Can these insights of the Gospel be brought to bear on our Northern Irish situation? Can Northern Irish Catholics and Nationalists understand the sense of threat that Irish Nationalism and Catholicism pose to Northern Protestant Unionists? Can Irish Protestants understand the sense of grievance and injustice felt by many Northern Catholics? Can we all understand that our own fears and insecurities help to create and maintain our enemies? ('The judgement we give is the judge-

ment we get'. Matt.7:2). Can we allow our politicians not only to represent our interests, fears and aspirations, but also to take into account those of the other community? We need to face the reality of ourselves, handle our own fears, insecurities and aggressions, and the dark side of our identities and cultures and not lay them on others (the teaching of the parable of the mote and the beam).

The sense of impotence in Northern Ireland in the face of the enmity of the past is matched by an equally powerful sense of impotence to shape the future - the enmity seems to march implacably forward. There is a seemingly endless chain of wrong, retribution and new wrong. The sense that nothing can be done, that nothing can change, is shared widely in Northern Ireland; the young particularly feel it. Yet Jesus has brought the possibility of forgiveness into history, he gives a promise that things may be different if only we turn round. Gordon Wilson so memorably showed us after Enniskillen that events could be given a new direction by forgiveness. A politics of forgiveness could be powerful.

Fear, enmity, resentment and insecurity are at the heart of inter-communal relationships. We have the resentment from being a victim and the fear of becoming a victim. Identity and internal cohesion have come from the enemies that have surrounded us. As long as we remain afraid of each other we arm ourselves and live defensive lives; the other dominates our lives. Resentment leads to thoughts of revenge; the other, again, dominates our lives. Whenever fear, enmity, resentment and insecurity dominate, division breeds, leading to hatred, violence, destruction and war.

Those we fear have great power over us and they create a whole network of anxious questions in us: what are they going to do to us? How can we protect ourselves? How can we destroy them? Maybe they are going to destroy us. They want what we have. Who will support us? Who will support them? And on and on. Once we accept these questions as our own and we are convinced that we must find answers to them we become more and more settled in the house of fear. Once these fearful, survival questions become more and more our guiding questions we tend to dismiss words spoken from the house of love as unrealistic, pious and just plain useless - words like peace, forgiveness, reconciliation and new life. The 'realism' of the house of fear is that we always retaliate when offended, we are always ready for war, that we must dominate or be dominated, that we always look for revenge.

Jesus never accepted the questions posed to him. He exposed them as coming from the house of fear. Therefore, Jesus always transformed the question by his answer. He recommended the surprising action - turning the other cheek, going the second mile - to break the cycle of action and reaction which rapidly leads to violence. The house of love is the house of Christ - the place where we think, speak and act in the way of Christ. Our identity becomes formed in Christ, not in opposition to or rivalry with others. Christ breaks down the middle wall of partition and invites us all into a space created by Him to find there people who were previously our enemies. In the reality of the universal reconciliation in Christ we witness to the possibility that the world may be brothers and sisters, one common humanity. Jesus tells us that love is stronger than fear, that there is the possibility of moving from the house of fear to the house of love. Wherever we

see people overcoming their fears and approaching each other in mutual vulnerability we catch a glimpse of the love in the house of God and taste the fruit of that love.

Solutions to the Northern Ireland situation can only be based on partnership and co-operation, but such co-operation and partnership offer a threat to present identities which have been based on opposition to the other. We need to transform the anxiety about identity into a common task of responsibility for survival and creating a new future. This would not abolish the differences between Protestant and Catholic, Nationalist and Unionist but harness them for that common task. New possibilities and identities will be given to us in the process. The call is to leave the safe, secure and familiar places, to reach out to the others, even when that involves risking one's security. Is there any other way? In Northern Ireland the ways we currently protect our communities and identities (violence, separation from the other, refusal to share power, refusal to accept responsibility) endanger us as much as our enemies.

Unmasking the Idols

Idolatry - putting other aims, purposes or goals before God - necessarily results in violence. For our violence is directly related to the falseness of the objects we worship and the more deceptive they are, the greater stake we have in maintaining our loyalty to them, forcing others to be loyal to them and protecting them through coercion. Living in this land we have come to understand that in our worship of the gods of nationalism, of loyalism and republicanism, we have forced others to fit into our 'space' or have been happy to have them expelled. But God is the God of the whole earth who gives space to all. He excludes no one unless they wish to be excluded. The God of Jesus Christ challenges our narrow allegiances (to nation, group, class or party), puts them in a new light, and frees us for new possibilities and for co-operation with our fellow human beings. In following this God we follow the way of unmasking idolatry; we do not confuse anything in the world with God. Idolatry leads to violence and conflict. We are shown in the Bible the end of the road where violence and conflict take us; we are shown that the other in the conflict and violence is the same as ourselves - he is our past or our future; so that we may learn to stop. Following the way of unmasking idolatry therefore offers the possibility of survival. Jesus Christ does not need defenders. He calls us to share his vulnerability, to be with others, those different from ourselves and most of all with the victims (Matt.25: 31-45). There are enough victims already in Ireland.

NOTES:

1. Report on *Human Rights and Responsibilities in Britain and Ireland*, edited by Sydney Bailey, Macmillan, London, 1988.
2. Material in this section has been taken from Kevin Boyle, Tom Hadden and Paddy Hillyard *Ten Years on in Northern Ireland*, The Cobden Trust, 1980, pp. 100-103.
3. *Ireland: A Positive Proposal*, by Kevin Boyle and Tom Hadden, Penguin Special 1985, pp. 80-83.

PRAYERS FOR IRELAND

Members of the Group from its four different traditions - Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian - have written prayers for use in different liturgical settings, so that our situation of conflict can be brought before God.

A Prayer of the Faithful for Use During a Parish Mass

God our Father, source of all true peace,
help us to bring your peace with us wherever we go.
Throughout his life on earth your Son, Jesus Christ,
recognized no barriers of class or race, politics, creed or sex,
but instead reached out in love and in forgiveness to your entire human family.
May we who call ourselves by His name reflect His all-embracing love,
His total forgiveness and enable us to realise that,
unless we regard all your people as our own,
we ourselves are barriers to the very peace for which we pray.
Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.

A Meditation on the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father	You are in heaven. You are not confined to Ulster or to Ireland. You hold the whole world in your hand.
Who art in heaven	
Hallowed be Thy Name	Keep us from insulting your holy name by claiming it for our side and our people only.
Thy kingdom come	It is not our rule and power but your kingdom of justice and righteousness that we must seek.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven	Let everyone in Ireland do your will, Unionist and Republican, Protestant and Roman Catholic: your will and only yours in this tortured land.
Give us this day our daily bread	The future is in your hand: give us patience to live one day at a time, doing so by your grace and to your glory.
Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us	We have sinned so often. We don't deserve to be forgiven because we find it hard to forgive those who have offended us. Teach us, O God, to forgive and may we too be forgiven as Christ forgives.
Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil	So often, O God, we want our own way. May we not be tempted to think and work only for ourselves. Save us from the sin of selfishness.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. For ever and ever. Amen.	Yes, Lord, yours is the kingdom. You and you alone must rule in our hearts and in our land. Yours is the power, the power of love that drives out fear and hatred. And yours too the glory - not of flag or tribe or nation but of love triumphant. And so, our God and Father, may that be our prayer and our commitment, not just for now but for always. Amen.

A Prayer for Occasional Use in an Anglican Service

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Father of all who are called by His Name, we ask Your blessing on this divided land and her divided peoples;

Help us, Lord, to be open and honest with each other, ready to be enriched and challenged by the different insights and traditions of others;

Help us so to examine ourselves and our own traditions that we may be enabled to see where we have hurt or misunderstood others, and lead us to seek both their forgiveness and Yours;

Help us so to understand Your Gospel that we may be inspired to work for the reconciliation of all Your people and for the fulfilment of Your Kingdom here in our own land, in our own time;

And help us all, whatever tradition we belong to, so to focus ourselves on You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that our hostilities may melt away in the consuming fire of Your love.

We ask this in Jesus' Name, and for His sake. Amen.

A Prayer for our Situation

God of compassion and mercy, we bring before you our broken world and our divided society seeking your healing transforming grace.

It is all too easy for us to point the finger at others, but we know now in your presence that you have bound us together in one bundle and that we are united to you in our common need of forgiveness and renewal.

So we lift into your presence today, not only those who are the obvious victims of our conflicts, but all, including those we would call our enemies. Break down the walls of hatred, distrust and bitterness and open up for us a way to reach one another in truth and love. Touch the hearts of all who have turned to violence, but move us all to work for a society to which every person can belong, where we can share our gifts in mutual respect and be open to the new future, which you offer us together.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.