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PRIMACY AND HISTORY

It has been alleged that the Commission commends the primacy of the Roman See solely on the basis of history. But the Commission's argument is more than historical (cf. para 23).

The unity in truth of the Christian community demands visible expression. We agree in seeing such visible expression, therefore, as the will of God. The maintenance of that visible unity requires episcopate. This argument is a ~~about~~ ^{doctrinal argument about the nature of} ~~theology~~ ^{and} Church order. But the way episcopate is realised concretely in ecclesial life (the balance ~~sometimes~~ fluctuating between conciliarity and primacy) ^{will} depends on contingent historical factors and ^{on} development under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

[These contingent historical factors and this development are not arbitrary in that] ^{through} while it is possible to conceive a universal primacy located other than in the city of Rome, the original witness of Peter and Paul and the continuing exercise of a universal episcopate by the See of Rome presents a uniquely ~~strong~~ ^{to locate} presumption in its favour. Therefore, while ~~the location of~~ a universal primacy in the Roman See is an affirmation at a different level from the ^{assertion of the} necessity for a universal primacy itself, it cannot be dissociated from the providential action of the Holy Spirit.

^{the design of God through the Holy Spirit} (This guidance) has ~~we believe~~ been directed ~~at once~~ ^{to preserve} the fruitful diversity within the Koinonia of local Churches (conciliarity) and the unity in essentials which must mark the universal Koinonia (primacy). As para. 22 ~~points out~~, the history of ^{our} separation has underlined the necessity for this proper theological balance, ^{which has often been distorted or destroyed by human prejudice and other historical factors}

The Commission does not therefore say that what has evolved historically or what is currently practised by the Roman See ~~is~~ ^{is} necessarily ^{normative}: only that visible unity requires the realisation of a 'general pattern of the complementary primatial and conciliar aspects of episcopate' in the service of the universal Koinonia of the Churches'. Indeed much ~~past~~ Anglican objection has been directed against the manner of the exercise and ~~the~~ particular claims of the Roman Primacy rather than against universal primacy as such; ~~matters on which we see no serious ground for disagreement~~ ^{objections which shared by many Roman Catholics}

Anglicanism has never rejected ^{the principle or practice of} primacy. ~~such~~ ^{and} New reflection upon it has been stimulated by the evolving role of the Archbishop of Canterbury within the Anglican Communion. The development of this form of primacy was precisely ^{arose} prompted by the realization of the need (in an expanding Communion of Churches) for a service of unity in the faith. ^{out of} It found its expression in successive Lambeth Conferences.

The Commission has already pointed to the possibilities of mutual benefit and reform which should arise from a shared recognition of one universal primacy - ^{which does not inhibit conciliarity} a prospect (which) should be met with faith not fear' (Co-Chairmen's Preface to the Venice Statement). Anglicans sometimes fear the prospect of over centralization, Roman Catholics the prospect of doctrinal incoherence. Faith, banishing fear, might see simply the prospect of ~~a more just and~~ ^{the right} ~~stable~~ balance between a primacy serving the unity and a conciliarity ~~guaranteeing~~ ^{maintaining} the just diversity of the Koinonia of all the Churches.