

DRAFT TOWARDS PREPARATION OF TEXT ON "AUTHORITY, PRIMACY AND COMMUNION" (cf. ARCIC letter of 14th Sept. 1987)

## I

We have no intention of repeating what has been stated in ARCIC I's lengthy consideration of this subject in two Agreed Statements and an Elucidation (cf. The Final Report, pp.52-98). We take for granted the place these documents must have as we continue to seek the ways towards the fulness of communion between our two churches. We urge their more profound study, in order that the important principles they have formulated may be more fully appreciated.

While The Final Report noted that this is an area in which problems to be resolved still remain if an agreement in all essentials is to be reached, it also made clear important matters upon which our two traditions are agreed. The following deserve to be recalled: 1) A proper understanding of all forms of authority in the life of God's people must be grounded in the understanding of the communion which constitutes the very life of the Church (cf. F.R., Introduction, Authority I n.1 etc.). All authority, even that of Christ himself, is for the sake of communion: communion with God in Christ through the Spirit, and communion of men and women with each other in Christ (cf. Final Report, Introduction, n.5). 2) The first authority which is "active in the Church" is that of Christ's Lordship through the action of the Holy Spirit (Authority I n.3; cf. n.1). 3) Christ's Lordship is exercised in the Church by the authority of his word living in the whole Church, illuminated and applied through the action of the Holy Spirit; therefore, the recognition of what the Lordship of Christ requires of his people is shared in by all members of the believing community (Authority I n.6). 4) The authority belonging to episcopate - a gift of the Spirit for the maintaining of apostolic faith and right order in the Church's life and communion - "belongs primarily to the bishop" (Authority I n.5), who must "discern" the insights which emerge within the believing community and "give authoritative expression to them" (Authority I n.6); he "can require the compliance necessary to maintain faith and charity" in the daily life of the community (Authority I n.5; cf. Elucidation n.5). 5) This episcopate is exercised by the Church's bishops in a collegial manner (Authority I nn.8, 10). 6) It belongs to the bishops of "principal" sees to foster this collegial action (Authority I nn.11, 12). 7) While agreement could not be found concerning the ultimate determination of the scope of the Roman primacy, large areas of agreement were recognized, in particular: that it is called to be an episcopate serving the koïnônia at the universal level (Authority I nn.23, 24(d)), and to be a "visible expression" of the unity in truth of the Christian community which is "the will of God" (Elucidation n.8).



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The Final Report of ARCIC I acknowledged that its discussion of authority in the Church concerned itself, for the most part, with the episcopate of ordained members of the Church, giving as its reason "that this was the area where most difficulties appeared to exist". In making this explanation it also pointed to a number of texts in which it had been made clear that this extended treatment in no way implied a devaluing of the proper and active role of other members of the Church (Elucidation n.4). A further reflection upon the relationship between these two roles will help to clarify important aspects of this question taken for granted by The Final Report.

It is the Lord's authority which, before all else, rules the Church. This authority (exousia) carries forward God's final triumph over all evil, giving grounds for hope even when from a human point of view there is nothing to hope for. It finds expression through that obedience which faith requires (cf. Rom 1:5; "akouo", "hypakouo"), an obedience which is realized in the common search which leads all members of the Church to a communion in word and sacrament.

It is this same authority of the Lord which commissions the episcopate of the ordained ministry. Their authority can be said, in a certain sense, to "reflect Christ's authority" (Authority I n.7) when they speak in his name. There is a distinction to be made, however, between aspects of the ordained ministry: in sacramental ministry Christ's grace-giving presence fulfills his covenanted promise; in the preaching ministry, his grace-giving presence finds full expression only if it is faithful to his mind and will as expressed in his word. There remains a further aspect of episcopate to be considered, namely its jurisdictional function and disciplinary authority, which in practice has varied in different times and places, and which needs to be the subject of further discussion between us. Even though the latter were willed by God himself, its enactments are not necessarily the expression of God's will. The authority associated with episcopate is not to be confused with the Lord's own authority. It is completely subordinated to his, and stands judged by his divine authority as the latter finds expression through the obedience of faith within the Church's communion.

The second Vatican Council put these principles beyond all doubt for Roman Catholics (cf. Lumen gentium n.12; Dei verbum n.10). The Final Report clearly implies that members of the commission believed that our two communions should have no difficulty in reaching a substantial agreement on the nature of the relationship between the Lord's authority and that belonging to the episcopate of the ordained ministry.



Within our two traditions, different Juridical and constitutional forms for the exercise of episcopate have evolved and are in the process of evolving. We must seek a mutual understanding of these, in order to make an evaluation of them in the light of the principles which we share.

The Anglican communion, while retaining a common tradition of order and government, has developed differing forms of Jurisdiction in different places. The growth of synodical government has brought into being a high degree of consultation in the formulation of Jurisdictional processes. These processes involve both clergy and laity, both in their formulation and in their execution. They also include in part the exercise of episcopate. In an endeavour to be sensitive to patterns of culture and broad aspirations, the Anglican tradition has developed a diversity which has given the episcopal office a greater or lesser degree of Jurisdiction according to a locally evolved pattern (Cf. APPENDIX: "Authority in the Anglican Communion").

In the Roman Catholic Church, the exercise of episcopate in the service of communion has been hinged on the role of the local bishop and that of the college of bishops under the headship of the Bishop of Rome. In the past there has been a lack of sufficient collegiality within the college and a lack of adequate consultation of the laity and priests. However, since Vatican Council II there has been a marked growth of collegiality between bishops and between the college and its head. Similarly, there has been a development of a variety of structures to enable the proper consultation of clergy and laity and to involve them in the process of making decisions. More time is needed for these changes to reach a fully satisfactory stage.

The Final Report of ARCIC I has made clear that, despite some unresolved issues, an immense common ground in understanding of authority already exists. The resolution of remaining difficulties calls for "an increase of fidelity" in response to the call of God (Vatican Council II, Unitatis redintegratio n.6) within each of our traditions. As we seek this greater fidelity, we must listen to the constructive criticisms made by our sister church.

Anglicans would criticise the timidity with which the Roman Catholic Church has implemented the principle of collegiality which was affirmed by the second Vatican Council and which is of fundamental importance to the exercise of episcopate within the Church's essential communion. They would point to the slowness with which the Roman Catholic Church has been prepared to give non-ordained members an opportunity to contribute to the decisions which shape the Church's life in the Lord. As they envisage the prospect of a restoration of full communion between our two churches, Anglicans would ask whether the Roman Catholic Church has given sufficient reflection to the manner in which the Anglican Church



exercise of episcopate within the Church's essential communion. They would point to the slowness with which the Roman Catholic Church has been prepared to give non-ordained members an opportunity to contribute to the decisions which shape the Church's life in the Lord. As they envisage the prospect of a restoration of full communion between our two churches, Anglicans would ask whether the Roman Catholic Church has given sufficient reflection to the manner in which the Anglican Church would be asked to relate to the Petrine primacy, so that the assurance already given by Paul VI may be fulfilled: "There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and the worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church - this humble 'Servant of the Servants of God' - is able to embrace her ever beloved Sister in the authentic communion of the family of Christ" (1970 Reference?).

For their part, Roman Catholics would see the Anglican Church as having displayed a timidity in the exercise of a decisive episcopate, in not being able to speak with a united voice in dealing with the challenges presented by the Church's contemporary situation, so that at times "comprehensiveness" seems to become doctrinal incoherence.

In neither of our Churches are structures of authority completely fixed. At this time in which the Spirit of God is calling us to renewal, each Church may well learn from the other, and thus achieve a better balance, shedding some of its own weaknesses and acquiring something of the other's strengths.

#### IV

The deliberations of ARCIC I made it clear that the principal difficulty in reaching a common mind on the question of authority in the Church concerns the nature of the Petrine office. The Final Report's discussion of this office has led Anglicans to recognize that they do not see separation from the pope as essential to Anglican identity. As a consequence they ask themselves what the papacy means in the life of the Roman Catholic Church, and how the ministry of the pope could strengthen the life and witness of the Anglican Churches (Cf. Anglican Consultative Council, Emmaus Report, 1987, p.64).

In the interests of our common search for a resolution of our differences, the Roman Catholic communion must make clear to Anglicans - through renewed reflection, and a practice very conscious of the need to remove unnecessary obstacles to reunion - what is meant when it is claimed that the papal office is "a sign of the visible koinonia God wills for the Church and an instrument through which unity in diversity is realized" (Final Report, Authority II, n.11).



Anglicans - and, indeed, Roman Catholics themselves - will fail to appreciate the true nature of this ministry, if they do not place it within the context we have already outlined. Understood within this context, the Petrine office must be seen as one of the variety of gifts bestowed, in Christ, for the service of others (1 Pet 4:10): the bearer of this office does not give unity to the Church; he is called to serve and give expression to the unity which is a gift of God himself; the faith which, together with his brother bishops, he must articulate is the faith which lives in the whole Church through its obedience of faith (Rom 1:5; cf. Vatican Council II, Dei verbum, n.10).

Roman Catholics see the primacy of the bishop of Rome as a ministry of unity and communion in the universal Church. They see this primacy as willed by Christ, as his gift to the Church. It is meant to be a visible foundation for the unity and communion which Christ wishes his Church to possess. In the words of Pope Paul VI, it is intended to be "the indispensable principle of truth, charity and unity; a pastoral mission of guidance, of service and of brotherhood" (28/4/67).

Thus, the exercise of the primacy is justified in so far as it is a true service of unity and communion at the universal level. It is vitally important that the fostering of unity through an exercise of primacy be balanced by a spirit of collegiality and a respect for the autonomy of local Churches, ensuring that Christian freedom gives expression to a healthy catholicity in the life of the universal Church.

In a recent talk, a leading Anglican ecumenist asked the question: "Can the universal, immediate, ordinary jurisdiction of the pope become a kind of reserve power for coping with a crisis or scandal, rather than the justification for a detailed centralized bureaucracy attempting to do the impossible?" To answer this question it may help to distinguish between disciplinary or administrative authority and doctrinal authority.

If administrative authority is highly centralized in the Church, it does become bureaucratic; it does tend to smother healthy pluralism and freedom; it does become self-perpetuating and self-justifying, losing sight of the fact that it exists to foster communion and catholicity, not to stifle and destroy it. A proper understanding of the Petrine office, however, dissociates it from the development of a centralized administrative responsibility: "The extreme centralization of the Catholic Church is due not simply to the Petrine office but to its being confused with the patriarchal function which the bishop of Rome gradually assumed over the whole of Latin Christianity. Uniformity of Church law and liturgy and the appointment of bishops by Rome arose from the close union of these two offices. In the future they



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should be more clearly distinguished" (Joseph Ratzinger, "Primacy and Episcopacy", Theol. Digest 19(1971)p.206. Describing the situation of the early Church, this author writes: "Rome's primacy...has directional significance for the unity of faith, but it has no strictly administrative character", p.203. On the distinction between the papal and patriarchal offices, cf. also, J. M. R. Tillard, The Bishop of Rome, pp.49-50).

Thus, if the Anglican communion were united with the Roman Catholic Church, we may look forward to its being recognized as a separate patriarchate, retaining its administrative and disciplinary autonomy - with "the universal, immediate, ordinary jurisdiction of the pope" becoming "a kind of reserve power for coping with a crisis or scandal" (It should be pointed out that the word "ordinary" is used by Vatican Council I in this context in a technical canonical sense, to mean "connected and imparted with the office, not delegated". It does not mean that it is to be exercised to meet the ordinary day to day needs and cases that arise in any diocese - which should be the responsibility of the local bishop). Indeed, Vatican Council I says of the papal jurisdiction, "This power of the sovereign pontiff in no way obstructs the ordinary and immediate power of episcopal jurisdiction, by which the bishops, established by the Holy Spirit, as successors of the apostles, feed and govern as true pastors the flock committed to each one. On the contrary, this power is asserted, strengthened and vindicated by the supreme and universal pastor, as Gregory the Great says: "My honour is the honour of the universal Church. My honour is the solid strength of my brothers (in the episcopal dignity). Then am I truly honoured, when honour is not denied to each one to whom it is due" (Denz.8., n.3061. In his official comment on the text of the Constitution, Pastor aeternus, during Vatican Council I, Mgr Zinelli ruled out the ordinary intervention of the Pope in the day to day affairs of dioceses so strongly that he declared that such a use of papal authority would be "non ad aedificationem sed ad destructionem").

The other authority possessed by the Pope is doctrinal. It is concerned with the unity of faith which is the essential basis of true communion. Roman Catholics see it as analogous to the power given to Peter to confirm his brethren (Lk 22:32). They believe that, because he is giving expression to the unfailing faith living in the Church, under certain stringent conditions the pope has power to issue statements about the faith which are safeguarded from error. Here again it could be said that such a power is best described as "a kind of reserve power" for use in the face of crisis or emergency (Cf. G. Sweeney: "If papal definitions should disappear from human history there need be no regrets. They belong only to times when the Church is sick, and torn by dissensions that cannot be cured by discussion and agreement. The Petrine prerogative is not a glory of the Church; it is a disagreeable necessity, like the skill of a surgeon. The

desire for its use is, as has been remarked, a pathological condition", "The Forgotten Council", Clergy Review 56(1971)p.752). But Roman Catholics would see such a final authority as necessary to preserve the unity in faith that is essential for the life and mission of the Church in all circumstances.

Because he is called to articulate the faith which is living in the Church, as its representative (Cf. Gasser's commentary on the Vatican I definition, Mangi 52:1213), the pope must listen to the Church before issuing his teaching.

As its true character is more and more recognized in both of our communions, Roman Catholics look forward to a future in which it is recognized that this ministry of universal unity, already an "antecedent probability" if God's Church is to be effectively united in life and witness, finds its origin in the intentions of the Church's Lord, whose words to Peter were "not precepts merely, but prophecies and promises, promises to be accomplished by him who made them, prophecies to be fulfilled according to the need, and to be interpreted by the event" (J. H. Newman, Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, London, 1960, pp.112-114).



## APPENDIX

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### AUTHORITY IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION.

The subject of authority is high on all current Anglican agendas. This is no new matter as reference to the proceedings of the Lambeth Conferences back to 1948 will indicate. It would seem that the matter has been provoked both by internal concerns within the 'developing Anglican communion the one hand and, because of ecumenical encounters notably with the Roman Catholic Church on the other. The book "Authority in the Anglican Communion" published in 1987 could be said to represent the current state of the internal debate within Anglicanism. The book is offered, inter alia, "to the Anglican Communion ..." as an aid to its deliberations on authority. Attempts to analyze authority within the Anglican Communion once the preliminary semantic ground has been cleared have revealed latent questions that have proved very difficult to answer. Indeed the very posing of these questions has raised the issues as to what fundamental consistency there lies within Anglicanism as a Christian tradition. Useful definitions were given by Professor Stephen Sykes in a document prepared for the Anglican Primates Meeting in 1978. Sykes' initial analysis seeks to define authority, first as relating to "decision making" and second, as a "theological topic".

In speaking of the Anglican experience of authority, Sykes identifies what he describes as "Anglican monuments" being the Articles the Ordinal and the Book of Common Prayer. Within this group there is reference to "the over-arching authority of Scripture". Secondly, Sykes goes on to identify and to seek to define "lay authority". Thirdly, he speaks of the reception of theological criticism emphasizing the work and



achievements within the theological community. Lastly, he cites the concept of "dispersed authority", a phrase which has its roots in the proceedings of the 1948 Lambeth Conference. In an attempt to carry the debate forward and to meet widespread concern, the Anglican Consultative Council considered the problem under the heading of "Unity and Diversity within the Anglican Communion, a Way Forward". Within this report there were noted "the instruments of unity " which one presumes are also to some extent instruments of authority. The instruments of unity are described as:

1. The Archbishop of Canterbury
2. The Lambeth Conference
3. The Anglican Consultative Council, and
4. The Primates Meeting.

However, it must be noted that none of these persons or bodies has coercive authority throughout the Anglican Communion. Their utterances carry weight, but not writs of enforcement. Whereas Anglicanism may be said to hold a core of essentials as described though perhaps not defined by the Lambeth quadrilateral and to place matters beyond these in lesser categories, though some having greater significance than others, the problem remains as to how firm the core is. Also other issues not considered by the framers of the Quadrilateral have emerged. Two points must here be noted about Anglican authority, both in the sense of decision-making and an enduring canon of reference. First, as Sykes notes, the participation of the laity is profoundly and, one would judge, irradicably embedded within the Anglican process of both decision-making and the determination of both Church Order and Doctrine. Second, the concept of dispersed authority appears to hold within it latent ambiguities. Changes within the Anglican Communion in decisions and attitudes dealing with both faith and order have tested the concept of

dispersed authority very considerably. It needs to be borne in mind that the provinces of the Anglican Communion have a very high degree of autonomy. The potential for change within the individual provinces would seem, in a number of cases, to be greater than when those provinces were constituted. In matters of faith, order and morals the instruments of unity need, it would seem, a clearer definition and a more clearly articulated role. In comparing the concept and the exercise of authority within our two traditions we recognize, to say the least, a very considerable disparity. If from an Anglican point of view Roman Catholic patterns of authority seem to be too centralized, too authoritarian and too restrictive, from a Roman Catholic point of view the concept and exercise of authority within the Anglican Communion might well seem to be so dispersed as to raise the question where is the solid core of enduring belief, order and morals, to which appeal may be made.

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