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CHURCH AND AUTHORITY

Emergence of Christian Authority

1. From the beginning of the Church the confession of Christ has been the heart of the Christian faith. This Lordship of Christ is fundamental because, through his obedience unto death, God exalted him by the Holy Spirit, giving him all authority in heaven and on earth. As Lord of the Church he bestows the Holy Spirit to create a communion of men with God and with one another. To bring to perfection this koinonia is God's eternal purpose, and the Church exists to serve its fulfilment when God will be all in all.

2. Through the gift of the Spirit the apostolic community came to recognise in the words and deeds of Jesus the saving activity of God and their mission to proclaim to all men the good news of salvation. Therefore they preached Jesus through whom God has spoken finally to men. Inspired by the Holy Spirit they transmitted what they had heard and seen of the life and words of Jesus and their interpretation of his redemptive work. Consequently the inspired documents in which this is recorded came to be accepted by the Church as the authentic foundation of the faith. To these the Church has recourse for the inspiration of its life and mission; to these the Church refers its teaching and practice. Through these written words the authority of the Word of God is conveyed. Entrusted with these documents, the Christian community is enabled by the Holy Spirit to live out the gospel and so to be led into all truth. It is therefore given the capacity

for assessing its faith and life and to speak to the world in the name of Christ. Shared commitment and belief create a common mind in determining how the gospel should be interpreted and obeyed. By reference to this common faith each individual tells the truth of his own belief.