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ARCIC 236/Conclusion/1

CONCLUSION

In our conclusion to the Venice Statement we affirmed that we had reached "a consensus on authority in the Church and, in particular, on the basic principles of primacy", which we believe to be of "fundamental importance" (para. 24). Nevertheless we showed that four outstanding problems related to this subject required further serious study since, if they remained unresolved, they would appear to constitute insurmountable obstacles to our growing together towards communion. After four years of intensive study we are able to present a fresh appraisal of their significance. This has given a new perspective to our conclusions. The four difficulties were the interpretation of the Petrine texts, the doctrinal understanding of the language of "divine right", the affirmation of papal infallibility and the nature of the jurisdiction exercised by a universal primate. It seems to us now that our understanding of the Petrine texts, of 'divine right' and of universal jurisdiction indicates that any differences between us in these areas need not impede a realistic coming together of our two communions. On the contrary respect for these differences would give enrichment to our common life. It is only in the matter of infallibility that serious differences remain, though Anglicans would not deny that the Bishop of Rome, as have other church leaders, has on occasions spoken infallibly, and thus served to keep the Church from error. ^{cannot} What Anglicans/agree is that infallibility is inherent in the office of universal primate even given the ~~safeguards~~ ^{conditions prescribed} rigorously ~~observed~~ in the Catholic tradition, such as those included in Vatican I.

We do not want to minimise this difficulty. When we consider it not in isolation but in the whole framework of what we agree, we pose ourselves the question: is this problem still of sufficient magnitude to forbid us entering upon a process of unity by stages? We are convinced that there are many difficulties that will never be resolved without ~~having~~ the courage to take the first step.