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## Book Reviews

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**THE FINAL REPORT: Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission**

Catholic Truth Society 1982  
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The long-awaited (and much leaked) final report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission was published on 29 March 1982. Pre-publication headlines suggesting that Anglicans were being asked to accept the papacy, hook, line and sinker (or rather cathedra, tiara and curia?) have ensured that it will be controversial. That it is, but not in the way suggested. *The Times* leader was nearer the mark in saying: 'Among Anglicans and other Protestant churchmen the Commission's statement may be received as a description of how many of them, and some Roman Catholics, would like the primacy of Rome to function. They will have difficulty in believing that it conveys a reliable portrait of what the primacy has been or what it now is.' It lays before us a concept of primacy in collegiality that many Anglicans, including readers of *Churchman*, could accept. In the process, it defines away many of the papal claims which have caused so many problems; but the ideal is so far removed from the present reality (and in places the former can be unpacked in terms of the latter, albeit with difficulty) that it is difficult to conceive of it as an achievable concept.

*The Final Report* contains all the material emanating from ARCIC since its creation in 1970, together with the Malta Report (1968) of the Preparatory Commission and the Common Declarations of 1966 and 1977. The material previously unpublished consists of a preface and introduction, together with the documents agreed at Windsor in 1981—*Authority in the Church: Elucidation and Authority in the Church II*.

*The Elucidation of Authority I* reacts to the comments and criticisms received about the first statement, including the Church of England's response (cf. FOAG report to General Synod, GS 394). There is some useful clarification here (e.g., on the place of Scripture, the role of the laity, etc.), and some further development of the Commission's ideas about conciliar and primatial authority. It has to be said, however, that they have not fully rebuffed the charge that they merely assume a universal primate to be a necessity for a united church, and commend the primacy of the Roman see solely on the basis of history. They point out that their argument is more than historical: 'According to Christian doctrine the unity in truth of the Christian community demands visible expression. We agree that such visible expression is the will of God and that the maintenance of visible unity at the universal level includes the episcopate of a universal primate. This is a doctrinal statement.' It may be; but it still needs explanation and justification. It is, at the very least, arguable that the Anglican Communion provides an adequate visible expression of unity in truth without such a figure.

*Authority in the Church II* deals with the four outstanding issues which the Commission stated were in need of further thought: the Petrine texts, *Jus*

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*divinum*, jurisdiction and infallibility. The statement needs to be read in the light of the discussion of primacy in *Authority I* and of the ecclesiology of the introduction to the whole report. This latter section develops the concept of *koinonia* as 'the term that most aptly expresses the mystery underlying the various New Testament images of the church' (p.6). According to Professor Chadwick, the 'Report is made possible by a shared understanding of the nature of the church as a universal communion of which the eucharist is the effectual sign, the episcopate is the bond, and the primacy of the Pope its visible link and focus' (*The Times*, 29 March 1982). So primacy is 'a necessary link between all those exercising *episcopate* within the *koinonia*. All ministers of the Gospel need to be in communion with one another, for the one church is a communion of local churches. They also need to be united in the apostolic faith. Primacy, as a focus within the *koinonia*, is an assurance that what they teach and do is in accord with the faith of the apostles' (p.7). The church as the sacrament of God's saving work needs to be visibly expressed.

In discussing 'the small print of primacy', the statement itself rehearses the New Testament material relating to Peter and recognizes that the transmission of his leadership is not recorded; neither is the transmission of apostolic authority 'very clear'. They again base their argument on the descriptive statements that 'the church at Rome, the city in which Peter and Paul taught and were martyred, came to be recognized as possessing a unique responsibility among the churches', and that 'Fathers and doctors of the church gradually came to interpret the New Testament data as pointing in the same direction' (pp.83f.). They admit that this understanding has been questioned, but still insist that 'it is possible to think that a primacy of the bishop of Rome is not contrary to the New Testament and is part of God's purpose regarding the church's unity and catholicity, while admitting that the New Testament texts offer no sufficient basis for this.' The ministry of Peter should be an analogy for the exercise of such a primacy.

In the preface, they claim to have been determined 'in the spirit of Philippians 3:13, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead", to discover each other's faith as it is today and to appeal to history only for enlightenment, not as a way of perpetuating past controversy' (p.1). In one sense that has much to commend it: it recognizes that what was said in the past does not necessarily apply today. But you cannot have it both ways. It may have been 'appropriate' for a primacy of the bishop of Rome to be recognized in AD 451, but for it to be so today it must have a justification which is other than historical.

Secondly, the statement defines the 'divine right' language applied to the Roman primacy by the First Vatican Council in terms of the belief that it 'derives from Christ', and that it 'expresses God's purpose for his church'. It need not mean that Jesus himself instituted it during his early life, or that the universal primate is 'a source of the church'. In terms of their understanding of *koinonia*, he is to be a sign of the visible *koinonia* God wills for his church, and therefore it must only be applied to the primate in collegiality. Consistent with the decrees of Vatican II, they further suggest that it does not entail the consequence that those out of communion with the see of Rome do not belong to the church of God.

Thirdly, the statement and the elucidation define jurisdiction as 'authority or power (*potestas*) necessary for the exercise (effective fulfilment) of an office'.

Different levels of *episcopate* have therefore different jurisdiction, and that of the universal primate has been called 'ordinary and immediate' because it is inherent in his office, and 'universal' because it must enable him to serve the unity and harmony of the *koinonia* as a whole and in each of its parts. His jurisdiction, however, should be exercised in collegial association with his brother bishops, and his authority should not undermine that of a metropolitan or diocesan bishop. There are also moral limits to the exercise of universal jurisdiction—as yet undefined. In applying such authority, 'Anglicans are entitled to assurance that acknowledgement of the universal primacy of the bishop of Rome would not involve suppression of theological, liturgical and other traditions which they value or the imposition of wholly alien traditions.'

Understandably, the fourth section on infallibility is the longest of all. It begins by acknowledging that the church as a whole is the guardian and teacher of the truth, that doctrinal decisions made by any legitimate authority must be consonant with the community's faith as grounded in Scripture and interpreted by the mind of the church, and that no teaching authority can add new revelation to the original apostolic faith. The rest of the section seeks to answer their own question: 'Is there "a special ministerial gift of discerning the truth and of teaching bestowed at crucial times on one person to enable him to speak authoritatively in the name of the church in order to preserve the people of God in truth"?' The short answer is 'yes', but only after full consultation and discussion. The statement clearly sees synodal decision as the norm, but recognizes that there may be circumstances in which a primate has to articulate or clarify matters of faith which the community already believes 'at least implicitly', in order to preserve the church from fundamental error. This service has been exercised by the bishop of Rome as 'the focus of the *koinonia*'. But the term 'infallible' is 'applicable unconditionally only to God', and its use applied 'to a human being, even in highly restricted circumstances, can produce many misunderstandings' (p.97). So the church needs both a multiple dispersed authority and 'a universal primate as servant and focus of visible unity in truth and love.'

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It would be wrong to underestimate the achievements of the Commission. They have created an ideal of primacy in which both Anglicans and Roman Catholics can see elements of primacy as they know and experience it: on the one hand a recognition of the universal primacy as a focus of unity within the world-wide church; on the other a recognition that primacy does not 'lord it' over the church but acknowledges the legitimate authority and individual traditions of local churches. They have sought a marriage of the Anglican view of 'dispersed' authority with the Roman Catholic concept of a centralized authority based on the bishop of Rome. In the marriage, the Roman primacy has survived: the more rigorous interpretation of papal claims have not. Instead, universal jurisdiction and infallibility have been re-expressed in the context of the Anglican 'dispersion'. To say that, does not imply that the marriage has no problems, or that it will survive! There are at least three major areas of concern.

First, there is the use of the term *koinonia* as the controlling model for their doctrine of the church. They acknowledge that the equation of *koinonia* and

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church is not a New Testament one; but its use is open to greater criticism than that, for the idea is clearly important in the understanding of the early church. As a basis for ecclesiology, it leads to a blurring of the spiritual and visible aspects of the church, as others have pointed out (cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*). It also tends to exalt and 'divinise the church beyond its due' (Avery Dulles). In the present context, this is shown in the tendency to set up an ideal which does not correspond to any present reality. For example, the Commission acknowledges that the practical application of jurisdiction may create problems, but believe they have agreed a series of principles which are in line with both Anglican and Roman Catholic understanding and are therefore capable of satisfactory expression in practice (cf. para. 22). But it is precisely here that the present divisions really bite. It is in matters like mixed marriages and marriage discipline, contraception, the freedom of one province to ordain women to the priesthood, etc., that the differences between an Anglican dispersed authority—with a primacy of honour, not jurisdiction—and a Roman Catholic concept of an authoritative primacy of service, is really felt. In terms of theology, the *koinonia* model of the church needs to be balanced by the concreteness of other models; in terms of practice, the implication of their defined primacy needs to be spelt out.

Secondly, the nature of authority is nowhere clearly discussed. We have in our modern secular world seen a shift from an extrinsic view of authority to a more intrinsic view, a tendency which many would see as not inconsistent with the Pauline view of the body of Christ. In the statement, the two are held in tension without full exploration. For example, the whole discussion of the promulgation and reception of doctrinal statements is shot through with this distinction. Is a statement true because it has been defined by legitimate authority, or is it true because it has been received by the faithful? The suggested answer is that it is both defined and received because it is true! So it must be 'manifestly a legitimate interpretation of biblical faith and in line with orthodox traditions'; if not, Anglicans would wish it to be reserved for discussion (p.95). In Christianity, extrinsic authority belongs ultimately to God; all other authorities are mediated, with the implication that they possess an intrinsic element. The statement would appear to recognize this at several points, but the crucial issue of how far the universal primate should have an extrinsic authority inherent in his office has not been resolved. The Commission have succeeded in providing welcome limits to such a concept, but the fundamental problem still remains (cf. pp.96, 97).

Thirdly, the importance given to historical arguments is open to criticism. We have already noticed their comments in response to the reactions to *Authority I* in this area. While I concede that, in their justification for retaining a universal primate based on the see of Rome, they have given some theological 'straws', I still feel that at crucial points in the argument historical precedent has been made to bear an undeserved weight. Divine providence is a notoriously difficult argument to use, but in order to justify the continuation of a Roman primacy it has to be advanced. There is, however, no *a priori* reason why the *rejection* of papal primacy by the churches of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, and by the Old Catholics in more recent times, could not also be said to be an act of divine providence! It was perhaps for this reason, and in order to avoid repeating dated historical stances, that the Commission set out to 'appeal to history only for enlightenment' (p.1). The result is that enlightenment has

been intermittent. The outcome of a careful historical study of the emergence of the papacy based on Rome, reveals that political as well as theological pressures were at stake (e.g. canon 28 of Chalcedon) in contrast to the emergence of the threefold ministry where, although political *models* may have been used, the pressure was theological. It is at least arguable that the development of the Roman primacy was a reflection of the imperial concern to use Christianity as a unifying force within the empire, i.e., as a political rather than a necessary theological unity.

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Finally, are they right in thinking that the difficulties will not be wholly resolved until a practical initiative has been taken and our two churches have lived together more visibly in the one *koinonia* (p.98)? That is probably true—it is arguably the logic of 'covenanting'. It nevertheless raises the difficult, if not unanswerable, question of how much theological agreement is needed for intercommunion, or for complete reunion. I personally believe that the time may be right for acts of intercommunion to be officially recognized, which presumably would require the Roman Catholic Church to 'look again' at *Apostolicae Curae*. Reunion is a different matter, for it raises more vexed questions of authority, as the Commission recognize. For that, a revolution in Roman thinking about primacy is essential. I hope that one day it may indeed come about, but there is a long way to go. As *The Times* said today (31 March 1982), 'the time scale of rapprochement with Rome is such as to allow plenty of time for the fruits of the Covenant to ripen.'

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