

ARC 216

SECRETARIATUS
AD CHRISTIANORUM UNITATEM FOVENDAM

Roma, Dec. 14, 1979

CITTA DEL VATICANO
Prot. No. 5126/79

Roman Catholic Comments on the 'Venice' Statement

At Venice last summer the secretaries were invited to submit comments they have received on the 'Authority' statement, for consideration at Wychroft.

In the past, attempts at summarizing comments most of which were already concise did not prove useful enough to justify the effort involved. I am therefore distributing copies of a selection of the comments sent to me, which have not been very plentiful.

The principle of selection-aimed at time-saving- is simple. I have excluded personal comments whose language and tone suggest they are dictated merely by emotion and habit, and included those which suggest theological reflection and/or pastoral concern. This is not to say that the comments distributed show no trace of emotion or habit - merely that it has not been allowed to dominate, much less exclude reflection.

Most of the comments are made or sponsored by episcopal conferences.

May I take this chance to offer greetings for Christmas and the New Year? I look forward to seeing you at Wychroft.

W.A.Purdy



LIVERPOOL INSTITUTE of HIGHER EDUCATION

CHRIST'S COLLEGE
Woolton Rd. L16 8ND
Tel 051 722 7331

S.KATHARINE'S COLLEGE
Stand Park Road L16 9JD
Tel 051 722 2361

NOTRE DAME COLLEGE
Mount Pleasant L3 5SP
Tel 051 709 7454

DISCUSSION ON 'AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH'. DIVINITY DEPARTMENT. 25th APRIL 1977.

1. Emphasis was placed on the community as the people of God and on the Holy Spirit working in and through the community.
2. Leadership in the Church should arise out of, and reflect the needs of, the community and should not be imposed from above.
3. It is impossible to organise the Church on one model of the early Church in the New Testament for no one model was evident there, only a diversity of ministries serving the one body.
4. The importance of service and the Church as servant was emphasised as a crucial dimension of our understanding of authority.
5. While the developing organisation of the Church in the first five centuries seemed to be parallel to the organisation of the secular state, it was not felt that the present 'democratic' system of government could form the model to be used by the Church today, although the idea was expressed that secular models should not be rejected entirely.
6. The bishop served a useful purpose in the Church but there was disquiet about the trappings which his office had acquired and of the bishops' own understanding of their office.
7. Disquiet was voiced at the subordinate role given to women in the Church and, in some cases, to the laity.
8. It was considered that this report was a useful contribution to the on-going debate between the two Churches but that it marked only a beginning. Each Church had moved its position and had made 'concessions' to the other, but more would have to be made. (Par. 23)
9. It was felt to be important that this document was read in the context of the documents on Ministry and Sacraments.
10. Par. 14 and 15 were commended.
11. It was said that many R.C. laity no longer followed the 'teaching of the Church' or 'Papal pronouncements' particularly on moral issues. e.g. the response to 'Humanae Vitae' resulted in divergent views even among hierarchies.
12. Too much emphasis put in the document on authority being given by subordinates to metropolitans and patriarchates. Did not the patriarch insist on a quasi 'ius divinum'?

De Bilt, Juni 1977

A. Nobellaan 521
Tel. 030-76 0185

Some remarks on the Statement "Authority in the Church"
(Agreed by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission,
Venice 1976)

We are thankful for the fruit-bearing dialogue between the Anglicans and the Roman-Catholics for so many years. This not only for the promotion of unity between Christians as a happy sign of our time, but also, and perhaps firstly to create the precondition of all unity i.e. the awakening to understand the contents of the one's own faith and daily life.

Especially now the dialogue between the two partners have reached a pause after the three statements on "Eucharist", "Ministry", and "Authority in the Church", we render an account of what is passed.

I was fortunate to be able glance over the "Analyse critique" on the statement "Authority in the Church" by Father C.J. Dumont o.p. of 28 Nov. 1976, received from the Secretariat for promoting Christian Unity.

Above all we want to underline in agreement with Father Dumont: "Il s'agit d'une étape d'un dialogue entre deux communions déterminées, l'anglicane et la catholique romaine". (page 5, 2^a) This is important for a correct appreciation of the document.

Pope Paul sed in his speech to the members of the Secretariate for Christian Unity (12-11-1976):

"Above all we should avoid acting as if we had reached the goal. Otherwise we render a bad service to our progress in the dialogue. Its progress would slow down and bring us in a "coul-de-sac"."

In his first critical remarks "Le caractère de la méthode employée" (page 6), Father Dumont observes: the statement uses "la méthode dite "inductive", qui part des faits connus pour rejoindre les principes qui les justifient". He continues: "Une telle méthode risque assurément d'étonner non seulement les simples fidèles mais encore nombre d'évêques formés les uns par une catéchèse, les autres par un enseignement théologique, qui procédaient selon une voie inverse: à partir des textes faisant autorité (Ecriture et documents dits du magistère) on déduisait les vérités que nous devons croire et les vertus que nous devons pratiquer". (the underlinings in the text quoted, by me).

This remark of Father Dumont seems to me very important. However, I ask myself: Are the two methods - deductive or inductive in a theological approach, more or less a question of choice? It seems to me, that under this difference in method one finds a different attitude of faith between the two partners of the dialogue.

It might be, that the two partners have come to a dead lock on the surface of the problem, which could have an influence in the three statements hitherto published. Besides, it could have consequences not only in the understanding of the faith as a problem of truth, but also in the daily, liturgical, and devotional life of a Christian, which we can ^{not} exclude in the dialogue as a source of Revelation.

In so far as I see, we need as faithful Christians the deductive method as startingpoint in our theological reflections. We cannot start from zero in principles of faith. But I would drop this question, which only causes confusion.

In the christian dialogue the faith as grace, from the point of view of truth and even, in the practice give us preconceptions coming from the source of Revelation, which cannot be discovered neither from human science, nor from daily experience. Neither can they give us the last foundation in this science.

It can be made clearer by the following exposition.
Perhaps it gives us the key of the weakness of this document.

A. The startingpoint of the statement.

1. Already the title of the document "Authority in the Church" poses questions which touch directly on our problem, perhaps in the positions of the two communities.
 - a. What do the two partners understand by the expression: "Authority"? Alas, they don't give in the text a more precise theological description, drawn from the source of Revelation. We need this preconception, otherwise we talk at cross-purposes.
 - b. What do the two partners mean by the notion "Church"? This word, too need a more precise theological description for the same reason.
 - c. The two former questions are so important, also that of the little word "in", in the title, is not clear. We could ask: Why do they speak in the title about "Authority in the "Church" and not about "Authority of the Church"? Also "Authority" as a quality, given by the Holy Spirit as a charism, so that the Church itself is subject of ~~the~~ "Authority"? Is she "of the Church"; then she is "in the Church" as well. For an outsider there must be a reason to speak only about "in the Church".
2. Couldn't it be, that we discover behind these questions and their reflections another preconception about: What is "Church", between the Anglicans and the Roman Catholics? This possible different (pre)conception of "Church" cannot only be a question of theological description; we have the impression, that the difference touches the faith itself in "what is Church". It has its consequences in the life, the daily life of the Christians of the both communities in their decisions of conscience.
3. We find that the fundamental question for the three statements ~~is~~ in the preconception of faith, in what to understand by "Church".
Prof. Nikos A. Nisiotis is quite right, when he says:
"Ohne eine gründliche und wohl durchdachte Ekklesiologie läuft die Frage nach den Grundelementen der Lehrautorität Gefahr, eine polemische, funktionel und juristisch geprägte Selbstrechtfertigung der getrennten kirchlichen Institutionen zu bleiben". (Una Sancta", 1976/4, pag. 280)
Is'nt it possible, that many a reader gets the impression, especially in relation to the chapter 5 and 6 of the statement, that for lack of a distinct ecclesiology, these chapters give us more or less a functional description of the authority with practical consequences, with which the two partners can find an agreement? But is'nt it a real agreement?
Could'nt it be that in an analogical sense this remark can be applied to the other statements?

B. Some remarks about the faithful preconception of "Church"

1. As a Roman Catholic it strikes me, that the importance of the local church is so unilaterally accented, that the ecclesiological preconception in the statement is more of a congregationalistic conception of "Church", in this case a kind of federation of local churches. Only once in the text of the statement will you find the idea of "body of Christ". (n. 3, pag. 8).

This "biological" approach of the mystery of the Church, as we find it in the letters of St. Paul to the Corinthians and the Ephesians, has not been stressed enough, so it seems to me, in the document.

2. In this order of conception, the Church as a body cannot exist without its head, Christ, and vice versa after the Resurrection by the mission of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, there is never a moment in the order of salvation, a Christ without his body. So Christ always includes his body in his act of salvation. (Cor. 12, 12) (Christus totus)
3. In this conception there exists a Church as a whole, the universal Church as the living body of Christ as her head. In the Roman Catholic conception the local (regional) churches are members of this body and in this participation they find their place. And so every local church possesses the plenary of the means of salvation as sacramental expression of the universal Church. The local churches together are never the unique beginning of the universal Church.
4. The first important result of this notion of "Church" is, that the Church as the body of Christ is co-subject of the action of salvation by Christ in this world. The Church is a sign of the presence of Christ in the world. She is "universale salutis sacramentum", she is the universal sacrament of salvation (expression of the 2. vatic. Counc. Lumen Gentium 48), which must be applied to the local churches as members of the universal Church. And so for instance, the Authority is not only in the Church, but above all of the Church.
5. Now it becomes clear, why we ask: what must we understand by "koinonia"? In the statement we have the impression, that "koinonia" is the meeting of the local churches. For the Roman Catholic faith this meeting is a sacramental event of the "pre-existence" of the body of Christ. The same as it is in the local church, where the faithful around the bishop in the Eucharist-celebration is the sacramental expression of the body of Christ, the presence of Christ and his redeemed people. So the bishop (priest) acts "in persona Christi", (Constitutio de sacra Liturgia, n. 33) the head of his body, the faithful people.
6. Perhaps would be interesting for our Roman Catholic brothers, to know why the Anglican Christians use the expression "Anglican Communion" instead of "Anglican Church", where as they otherwise speak about the "Church of England", "the Episcopal Church of America" etc.?
Is'nt this a sign of another preconception of "Church"?
7. Finally, the Roman Catholic preconception of "Church" could give us perhaps a deeper insight into the position of the See of Rome. The life of the body of Christ in history is not only stipulated by a human history, but above all, the development of the Church through the centuries is stipulated by the Holy Spirit, sent daily by her Head, Christ Himself, like a "biological" process. Then, it becomes clear, that the ministry of Peter, sacramentally represented in the bishop of Rome, might find a foundation in a "divine right". Neither should it be only "interpreted as Christ's will for the Church", nor as a kind of product of "the shared responsibility of all the bishops". (nr. 12, pag. 12) Because the text of nr. 12 is not clear in its formule, you can give this explanation. At any rate, for the Roman Catholic

the ministry of the bishop of Rome is an aspect of faith in the preconception of "Church".

C. The Authority

For lack of a clearer theological description of the notion "Authority" in the text, it remains difficult to get at the back of the dialogue in the Statement.

It is not easy to give a short description of this idea in the Bible. Perhaps the description by Kittel, in his "Theologisches Wörterbuch", Bd. 2, pag. 565, nr. 4 gives us some explanation.

1. First of all the "Authority" (greek: "eksousia"): "spielt eine wichtige Rolle zur Deutung von Werk und Person Jesus".
It expresses an aspect of the mystery of the Person "Jesus". It bestows a special quality upon the work i.e. the words and deeds of Jesus.
2. A more precise description of the Authority (eksousia) by Kittel, could perhaps be sufficient as a starting-point for the dialogue: "Es bezeichnet die ihm (Jesus) von Gott gegebene Vollmacht und Macht zum Handeln". The following remark is then important: "Ist er der Sohn, so ist auch die ihm gegebene Vollmacht nicht als beschränkte Beauftragung zu denken, sondern als Verwaltung in freier Willenseinheit mit dem Vater zu verstehen."
3. So "Authority" in our case is the verification of the Person of Jesus Christ as the executor of the Will of the Father in Heaven for the redemption of the world. So the world knows, that He is ^{the} true and the warranted Person, sent by the Father. After and through his death and resurrection, the Father "gave Him as Head of all, in the Church, which is his body". (Eph. 1,22) And so the Church becomes co-subject of this Authority. The Church is now the universal sacrament of the Authority of Christ "hic et nunc".
In Her we find the verification of the words and deeds of Christ. She is the warranted body of all salvation.
4. In this body, the college of the bishops in its apostolic succession from the college of the Apostles is the highest sacramental expression of the Authority coming from the Father in Heaven in words and deeds, given by his Head in the mission of the Holy Spirit. (Jo. 20, 21-22)
As members of this college every bishop possesses this Authority by participation as "in persona Christi". He is "the eikoon of the Father". (Ignatius of Antiochia, to the Trall. chapt. 3)
And so the "Authority" of the bishop of Rome by his ministry of Peter, in the college of the bishops, is the verification of the guarantee of the unity of this college and also of the Church, as the sacramental expression of this unity by the Head of the body, Jesus Christ.
5. In this "Authority" the Church has received her "indefectibility", her "infallibility", in words and in deeds of salvation.
In this "Authority" we acknowledge the "charismata", as, for instance the acknowledgement of the full redeemed persons, the saints.
6. In the first chapter "Christian Authority", n. 2, page 7, we get the impression that "the Authority of the Word of God", comes to us "through written words", i.e. through "things" and not through "persons". But "Authority" in its proper conception is a quality of a "person".

The "Word of God" is a person. Now arise the danger, that "written words" become the "bearer" of the "Authority", but we should not forget, if we speak about "authority" of the Scripture, we speak about an improper authority. This idea has its origin in the Reformation. And so the text gives in this first chapter the impression as if the first Authority, coming to us after the Pentecost, is that of the Scripture. This impression get its confirmation in the previous sentence in the text, where "the inspired documents came to be accepted by the Church as a normative record of the authentic foundation of the faith". The little word "a" gives the possibility of other "normative records". But they are of second-rate. In the Roman Catholic conviction of faith however, (the same as in that of the eastern brothers) the first normative record of autentic foundation of the faith is the Authority of witness of the Church. This interprets "authentically the Word of God, written or transmitted, committed to the living Authority of doctrin of the Church". (Conc. Vat. 2, Constitutio dogmatica "the divina revelatione" "Dei Verbum". cap. 2, n. 10)

"The Holy Tradition and the Holy Scripture constitute a unique holy depot of the Word of God, committed to the Church". (idem, n.10) The Old Testament came to be accepted by the Authority of the Church, being the sacramental expression of the Holy Spirit. This is the Authority of Christ himself in the college of the Apostles and of their successors. The New Testament on the other hand is a product of the Holy Spirit, sacramentally present in the Authority of the Church, in the college of the Apostles, acknowledged by the college of their successors. And so the normative record of the Holy Scripture can never be separated from that of the Church as the first sacrament of the Authority of Christ, as though there was an Authority of the Father in Heaven outside of the Church. It is striking, that a clear exposition is not shown to its full advantage in the document.

D. Conclusion

On reading the text of the statement with the preconception of "Authority" and "Church" in the Roman Catholic faith, we agree generally to the practical consequences in the document, especially with regard to the functional aspects of the bishop of Rome.

But for lack of clearness in the description of "Authority" and "Church" as a preconception of faith, I am afraid, that finally we come to a superficial agreement, which may be illusory. At the back of the reality of a living faith, in his daily life, expressions and decisions, there is greater difference in faith, as a problem of truth, than we generally think. It is not possible to separate the aspect of truth from the functional engagements. Historically speaking - it seems to me - above all, that, the established difference in the preconception of "Church" is influenced by the Reformation of the 16th century. This must have his repercussion in the other two statements on the "Eucharist" and the "Ministry".

The time has come, when we need, before anything, a dialogue on the theme:

"What is "Church" "

Francis Thyssen

HIERARCHY THEOLOGY COMMISSION

ENGLAND AND WALES

A response to the Venice Statement: Authority in the Church

1. We read this document not as a statement of agreement but as an agreed statement; it includes an agreement to differ on certain points. All the signatories acknowledge, for example, the problems and prospects precisely as described in §24; but we take it as their agreed intention to give far greater weight to the shared convictions set out in the main body of the document.

We also read it as a document addressed to the world wide Anglican Common and the whole Roman Catholic Church.

2. The statement considers the authority that belongs to the ministries of episcopate and primacy in the context of the wider issue of Christian authority and its various manifestations in the Church. We endorse both this approach and the analysis set out of Christian Authority and Authority in the Church.
3. The method in the statement is to read history in the light of our primary confession of faith that there is one authority in the Church, namely that of Christ, and so discern God's will for his Church today. This method is fully appropriate for the matter under examination; it leads inevitably to definite conclusions; if it is followed through, it will lead to that visibly Christian unity, which is the whole aim of the ecumenical movement.

4. Episcopacy

By the method chosen the statement legitimately comes to the following conclusion about the ministry of episcopate:

"This service of the Church, officially entrusted only to ordained ministers, is intrinsic to the Church's structure according to the mandate given by Christ and recognised by the community.' §5.

The ministry of episcopate was considered at length in the agreed statement: Ministry and Ordination.

5. Primacy

As regards the ministry of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome the statement concludes:

'Communion with him is intended as a safeguard of the catholicity of each local church, and as a sign of the communion of all the churches'. §12

As Catholics we see this intention to be divine, not merely human.

It is obvious that the statement does not present a fully worked out understanding of primacy at its various levels; but the argumentation provides a basis for discerning when the exercise of primacy falls short of the ideal and in what sense communion with the universal primate is needed for a church to have the wholeness and catholicity intended by Christ.

6. Human Weakness

The statement refers in §7 to 'Human weakness' and in §12 observes that 'neither theory nor practice has ever fully reflected these ideals'. If we understand rightly the action of God in Christ healing human weakness and never overcome by sin and failure, we cannot require perfection in the ministers before responding in faith to the ministries of episcopate and primacy which God wills for his Church.

7. Authority in matters of faith

Since episcopate and primacy are not only concerned with matters of doctrine, it is appropriate that the statement considers the particular question of authority in matters of faith as part of the full service exercised in these ministries.

The statement recognises the Church's need for authority in matters of faith:

"When decisions (as at Nicaea in 325) affect the entire Church and deal with controverted matters which have been widely and seriously debated, it is important to establish criteria for the recognition and reception of conciliar definitions and disciplinary decisions." §16

This authority has been exercised and the statement accurately sets out the balance between what is of lasting value and the need for subsequent restatement. §15

8. Conciliar and Primatial Authority

In both our churches the debate on authority in doctrinal matters continues. The statement, particularly in §9, both secures what is required by faith and leaves open the areas still under discussion.

The authority of an ecumenical council is clearly stated:

'When the Church meets in ecumenical council its decisions on fundamental matters of faith exclude what is erroneous'. §19

With the statement we follow the argument to its conclusion:

'It seems appropriate that in any future union a universal primacy such as has been described should be held by that see (viz. Rome)'. § 23

9. Problems and Prospects

It is clear that problems remain. The statement itself acknowledges some of them:

(a) Petrine texts. This Commission thinks that these texts may bear more weight than the statement seems to suggest. Nevertheless, Roman Catholic convictions about the Roman See do not rest on any particular text, but rather on a converging of the Scriptures and practice.

(b) Divine right. The statement itself speaks of what God intends. It provides the basis for assessing the importance in God's plan for a church to be in communion with the Roman See if it is to achieve that fulness intended by Christ.

(c) Infallibility. This difficulty is mentioned. The explanation given in the Venice Statement reflects classical Roman Catholic theology.

The Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary are part of Roman Catholic faith. We do not understand them without reference to the great convictions of the Christian faith.

(d) Universal jurisdiction. Although ultimate responsibility and therefore appropriate authority rest in the one who exercises universal primacy, nevertheless the manner of its exercise will vary. For example, as understanding develops of the church as *koinonia* and the primacy as a ministry of episcopate for the whole church, universal jurisdiction undergoes re-examination.

10. Now that we have before us all the agreed statements we will need to consider the terms and concepts which have arisen from and formed our thinking in the past; they are not easily separated from convictions we hold as central. Now we must ensure that the new approach, reflected in these statements, secures what is indeed central and does not avoid other issues which must be faced.

The Theology Commission. October 1977

FOR THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

4 November 1977.

A Submission from the Irish Theological Commission on the
Anglican/Roman Catholic Agreed Statement Authority in the Church

Patrick J. Corish
M. Ledwith
S. Quinlan

Patrick J. Corish

There is indeed a great deal for Christians in both communities to welcome in this statement, particularly its deeply-felt desire to pass beyond the polemics of the centuries of division, and the clear evidence of a genuine meeting of minds in charity.

What is also welcome - and in this the Statement differs from its two predecessors - is that it clearly sets out the weighty problems which have still to be faced in this question, probably the most searching one existing between the two churches. The third paragraph of the Preface notes with great realism that 'it was precisely in the problem of papal primacy that our historical divisions found their unhappy origin'.

The subsequent history of the Anglican and Catholic churches has been marked by genuinely divergent attitudes towards church authority. The basic divergence remains, despite the degree of convergence noted in the Statement. The Anglican attitude has been shaped by three main factors: (i) the primacy ultimately afforded to 'God's word written' - see especially Article VI of the Thirty-nine Articles; (ii) a recognition of the Church's role as guardian of the faith, concretised in her bishops; and (iii) a real distaste for defining more than what is minimal in matters of doctrine.

In consequence, the Anglican Church tolerates a considerable latitude in personal opinion. From the point of view of the present Report, two main currents may be distinguished within it. The first, most commonly referred to as the 'Evangelical' tradition, finds itself most at home among those churches shaped by the 'Protestant' reformation of the sixteenth century, with more particular affinities with Calvinism. In consequence, it will lay heavy emphasis on Article VI: 'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary for salvation, so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith ...'. The second tradition, 'High Church' or 'Anglo-Catholic', will be more conscious of the Church's teaching authority, as enshrined in the Creeds, the Liturgy and the episcopal office, but it will share with the evangelical tradition a reluctance to define dogma, and ultimately, it will share the evangelical view that the final judgement is to be sought in 'God's word written'.

From this it would seem clear that Anglicans of all traditions must have a real difficulty with any doctrine of Church authority acceptable to Roman Catholics, despite real advances in mutual understanding. Certainly any attempt to push ahead too fast may well be seen as raising dangers of division in areas where they rightly see their own differences as differences of degree rather than of kind.

It is not just an 'evangelical' Anglican who would find difficulty with the points set out in no. 24. The text quite rightly speaks of 'Anglicans' without qualification. High Church Anglicans deeply devoted to Mary conceived without sin and assumed into Heaven would feel a genuine dismay at the thought that such things could be imposed as a text of communion, as 'dogmas of faith'.

This matter of the 'Marian Dogmas' provides a useful yardstick to measure our difficulties, as the issue presents itself in a very concrete way. In the more subtle issues of papal primacy and infallibility the questions dividing us seem on the whole fairly set out in the statement. Here and there I am not happy, for instance the opening sentence of No. 12: 'It is within the context of this historical development (sc. the need for bishops to reach a common mind on important issues) that the see of Rome, whose prominence was associated with the death there of Peter and Paul, eventually became the principal centre in matters concerning the Church universal'. One has a horror of being 'polemical', but I do feel I have to record a professional conviction as a historian that the sentence as so phrased is not altogether dispassionate. In particular, the word 'eventually' seems weighted. I may be wrong. In their historical dimension, such questions are matters of opinion.

I should not like to give a negative impression of this document. In many ways it is a very honest one, especially in the way it faces the real difficulties still felt by Anglicans (I would feel that the suggestions as to how these differences might be bridged incline to the optimistic). I am not sure that I would agree with the opening sentence of this section (24), that 'what we have written here amounts to a consensus on authority in the Church, and in particular, on the basic principles of primacy'. Further, I would regard the Anglican view that comes through this document as markedly 'High Church', and cannot help feeling that the 'evangelical' strain in Anglicanism might have some reservations. The conclusions might have been further balanced by setting out some difficulties Catholics may feel with the Anglican position.

This, however, is to drift into theological questions. Perhaps the most important points that a historian may legitimately make are (i) that because of its theological development Anglicanism of even the most 'High Church' tradition will have real problems with the Catholic position on Church authority; and (ii) that same 'High Church' tradition will feel special inhibitions because of the danger of scandalising its 'evangelical' brother within the Anglican community.

A Comment from the viewpoint of Dogmatic Theology

This comment was expanded by the author into an article in 'The Furrow' of April 1978.

M. Ledwith

The Venice Statement is the result of six years of intensive work: a serious effort of scholarship to assess areas of doctrinal convergence and disagreement. It is a remarkable achievement, characterised by honesty and openness, at times perhaps tinged with a regrettable ambiguity. The spirit that dictated the selection of the key words episkope and koinonia for their freedom from theological bias dominates the entire document. There is no doubt that a 'significant convergence' has been reached, even if the extent of this convergence was widely misrepresented in the media at the time the Agreed Statement was published, and even if the document itself seems at times to be not completely aware of the real extent of remaining disagreement.

In preparation for this Statement the Commission began the study of the most difficult of its problems: really the fundamental ecumenical difficulty: how the Christian community is kept faithful to the Gospel, or, more succinctly, authority in the Church. The precedents for this dialogue are not encouraging. The first unofficial conversations between Lord Halifax and the Abbe Portal were followed by Apostolicae Curiae in 1896. The promising results from Malines between 1921 and 1926 indicated an agreement on a primacy of honour for the Pope in a united Church, that the episcopate

is a matter of divine law, that the Eucharist is a true sacrifice in a mystical manner and that the Body and Blood of Christ are in the Eucharist. However, these results were followed by Mortalium Animos in 1928. The alleged Marian tendency in the Roman Catholic Church culminating in the 1950 Definition were understood as a stumbling block by the Anglicans who thereafter turned their attention to the Methodists and Presbyterians. This was reversed only at the meeting of Pope John with Archbishop Fisher which prepared the way for a new Anglican-Roman Catholic initiative culminating in the Common Declaration of 1966, the birth of the Permanent Joint Commission (1969) and the ARCIC.

Much of the achievement and of the deficiencies in the Commission's work stems from its method. It is empirical and inductive: an attempt is being made to go behind the post-Reformation controversies and discover the belief of the united Church that existed before them. This method has obvious advantages, but it also has serious deficiencies: in particular it becomes impossible to evaluate developments in the post-Reformation universal Church. Without doubt the degree of convergence that the Venice Statement achieves is considerable, but the limitation on its method is serious since it is only within this context that the developments of 1870 and 1950, and the present difficulties relating to the ordination of women and appropriate sexual mores could be successfully evaluated.

The first critical observation of the Statement that could be made is that it is not so much about authority in the Church as about who exercises that authority. It deals very inadequately with the deep theological questions so necessary here: revelation, authority and the relation between revelation and doctrine. The real problem is to determine the authentic interpretation of tradition, on the surface an ecclesiological problem, but really the manifestation of a much more fundamental one, the ability of the human to grasp the divine in an imperfect although authentic way. It is on this question that the real difference between Catholicity and Protestantism hinges. Time and time again in the document, despite the high estimate of tradition it contains, the vital question of how a true tradition is to be determined is not faced, and a Barthian tendency in the evaluation of human witness before God can be detected.

The Agreed Statement was published mainly to benefit from the observations and criticisms of interested parties: if the document is to be of service one needs to be clear on what is agreed and equally clear on what differences remain. One would be hesitant to agree with the statement of paragraph 24: "what we have written here amounts to a consensus on authority in the Church," for there is agreement only on some basic issues and disagreement on others of equal importance. Often when the really difficult issues are approached the document retreats in to ambiguity. A prime example of this is the question of the nature and scope of the authority of the teaching office. Despite the declaration towards the end that the universal primacy in any future united church should be held by the See of Rome, a formidable list of objections is given to that primacy as it is presently exercised. A future acceptable primacy would then hardly have a recognisable continuity with what we know. The chief difficulty seems to lie with papal infallibility: unfortunately the precise areas of difficulty are not sufficiently elaborated. It certainly appears that the Statement in its attempt to substitute 'indefectibility' for "infallibility" (paragraph 18) has accepted Kung's understanding of the former term; an understanding that actually embraces less than many representative Anglican theologians would wish to claim. A second major difficulty is how the document understands doctrinal development, especially in reference to theories of the primacy (paragraph 12). Theological understandings of primacy have varied through the years, as the document states, but it appears to take little notice of the fact that dogmatic interpretations have been attached to these variations and have been understood as progressions in to the understanding of the faith. The document suggests that certain developments were

mistaken and can be now abandoned without regret. It is hard to see how this position can be reconciled with the present Catholic understanding of doctrinal development.

These two difficulties seem to be far more serious than the four which the Commission names as part of its work for the future. These two difficulties are more serious because they are close to the heart of the question about the very nature of authority, as mentioned at the outset above. The four problems that are mentioned are also difficult but very much less so. An understanding of the Petrine texts acceptable both to Anglicans and Roman Catholics will be difficult but not impossible to attain; the same holds true of the papal claim to universal jurisdiction. Attempts have been made to suggest the Pope might hold the same position in a future united church as the Archbishop of Canterbury now holds within the Anglican Communion. It should be remembered that the Archbishop of Canterbury has only limited canonical authority over the Church of England and no canonical authority at all over the remaining twenty two churches of the Anglican Communion. In addition a uniate model of Anglican/Roman Catholic union such as was proposed by Beauduin at Malines might prove acceptable to the Church of England, but it would certainly be offensive to the other Anglican Churches.

In relation to the remaining difficulty that the document acknowledges, the Marian dogmas, it is regrettable that more account was not taken of the teaching of Marialis Cultus (1974) indicating that Marian devotion should always bear a "biblical Imprint" because of the salvational and Christological implications that these dogmas possess. Difficult those these obstacles may be which the document mentions, the two mentioned above are far more serious; more serious still in passing unnoticed in any formal way.

The Venice Statement marks a very significant stage in the revived dialogue between the Anglicans and Rome. In view of the many difficulties remaining in the document perhaps the International Commission was wise in referring the Agreement to the Churches at this stage in order to test its fidelity in representing the belief of the faithful. A real danger is that exaggerated presentations and popularisations of the document may arouse feelings in the Churches that will militate against considering it as a possible basis for the future expression of a united faith. Without doubt we are only at the beginnings here: it is certainly a long way from the stage appropriate for discussion at parish level.

The New Testament Perspective

Sean Quinlan

Generally speaking the treatment of the N.T. in this document is quite sober.

There is need however for clarification of the passage 24 (a), p. 15: "Claims on behalf of the Roman See as commonly presented in the past have put a greater weight on the Petrine texts (Matt. 16. 18, 19; Luke 22. 31, 32; John 21. 15 - 17) than they are generally thought to be able to bear. However, many Roman Catholic scholars do not now feel it necessary to stand by former exegesis of these texts in every respect".

In the above quotation it is difficult to know what is meant by "greater weight", "in every respect", in the absence of specific details.

N.T. scholarship deals with the position and status of Peter in the N.T. The link between Peter and the Bishops of Rome is not a N.T. datum: it belongs to the life, history and dogma of the Church of post-N.T. times. Once the link is accepted it seems

certainly legitimate to find more of Peter in the Bishop of Rome than in other Bishops. Such a succession should certainly involve succeeding to any plus in Peter over against the rest of the apostolic band, even if one wishes to quibble about using later words like "primacy".

Certainly modern Catholic N.T. scholars would present the portrait of Peter in the N.T. along different lines from the older fashion of quoting certain texts in a monolithic fashion, without paying attention to their place in a proper chronological sequence in the total N.T. context.

On the surface there is a conflict of "foundation" texts in the N.T. One has the Tu es Petrus of Matt. 16: 16-19, but also the "household of God built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets" of Ephesians, 2: 19-20, to which one might add Rev. 21:14. Which is the foundation, or is Peter a foundation plus?

Modern Catholic scholars place the N.T. books in chronological sequence, and one result is this: Peter is seen to have greater stature in N.T. books written after his death than in earlier ones such as Paul's letters and the Gospel of Mark.

These scholars also recognize that the N.T. may report as ipsissima verba Jesu what may not be, or at any rate not fully, his ipsissima verba. And they find warrant for this, when they present good arguments, in the document, The Historical Truth of the Gospels. (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1964):

- (a) "they (the Apostles) too interpret his words and deeds according to the needs of their listeners".
- (b) "from the many things handed down they selected some things, reduced others to a synthesis, (still) others they explicated as they kept in mind the situation of the Churches".
- (c) "for the truth of the story is not at all affected by the fact that the Evangelists relate the words and deeds of the Lord in a different order, and express his sayings not literally but differently"

Before however looking at Matt. 16: 16 in the light of the foregoing it must be stressed that in the N.T. as a whole Peter is facile princeps. Such universal recognition is inconceivable without granting to Peter an extraordinary position already during the earthly life of Jesus. In Mark, the earliest Gospel, Peter is the most prominent of all the Apostles: in the Gospels and in Acts he heads the apostolic lists: according to Paul, I Corinthians 15:5, Christ first appeared to Cephas, (also in Luke, 24:34), a remarkable fact, granted the differences between Peter and Paul in the matter of Jewish -Gentile relationships,

The classical Petrine text is Matt. 16: 16. Does this text give the ipsissima verba Christi, or is it a case of "not literally but differently", something "explicated" in terms of the "situation of the Church" in the last third of the first century?

The question arises because of difficulties facing the exegete. This is the only text in the Gospels where the idea of the Church exists. It is part of the Caesarea Philippi episode in the Synoptics and it is extraordinary that it should have been omitted by Mark (and Luke), when both agree with Matthew so closely at this point in other respects. And it is a detailed and most striking passage.

The language of the passage is quite similar to Paul's in the latter's description of his own post-Resurrection experience of Jesus in Galatians, 1: 16: "Reveal", "Son", not "flesh and blood". For these and other reasons scholars are prepared to see it as a construct

under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit which arose in the life of the post-Resurrection Church: A construct, to be sure firmly rooted in Peter's pre-eminence in the lifetime of Jesus, but, as it stands, filling out Peter's role as the Church began to acquire the elements of a rudimentary "magisterium" as it faced new pastoral questions authoritatively. It is no longer Christ speaking per se but per ecclesiam suam.

What is important is the link forged between Peter and such a "magisterium", and the acceptance of it as inspired canonical Scripture in the heart of the Gospels. The Church, so to speak, needs Peter more than Christ on earth did.

The images used, "Rock", "Keys", "binding and loosing", are images involving a principle of stability and principles of decision in persona Petri, even if again one wishes to quibble about using a later word like "jurisdiction". If one accepts a continuity between Peter and the Bishops of Rome, it will be necessary to assign to Rome a certain Petrine uniqueness in the matter of stability and decision.

SOME OBSERVATIONS OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOP'S
CONFERENCE ON THE AGREED STATEMENT ON AUTHORITY OF THE
ANGLICAN - ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION, published
Venice, 1976.

1. To do justice to the document it is necessary to take account of the nature of the "Agreed Statements". They are agreed by a Commission appointed by the highest authorities in the two Churches. They are the first word of doctrinal reconciliation, not the last. The aim of the Agreed Statements produced to date by the International Commission - on the Eucharist, the Ministry, and Authority in the Church - is to declare what we have in common in regard to these matters as convictions of the faith "we both profess and affirm to be of God" (Bishop A.C. Clark). The Agreed Statements do not claim to settle here and now, and in detail, all of those doctrinal differences which divide us because of our allegiance to what we consider as essential to the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. They reflect a stage in the dialogue between the two Churches, and are happily such as to encourage us to believe that our differences can be and are being healed. On some points they indicate a genuine consensus, on others a convergence, sometimes considerable, and on others continuing division. It is in dealing with matters on which there is convergence but not complete accord that the Statements are likely to show a certain ambiguity of language. But even an ambiguous or polyvalent formula may represent an advance, be it only in the readiness to rethink a position.

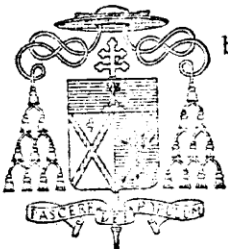
In assessing the contents of the Statement on Authority, Catholics should be aware of the ferment going in Catholic theology on such matters as the evolution of the Roman Primacy, the episcopate and ecclesiastical authority, which will undoubtedly challenge many inherited beliefs and practices.

The Statement on Authority should ^{be} commended on the following reasons:

a. The insistence throughout that the source of all authority in the Church is Our Lord Jesus Christ acting through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is sent to create a koinonia, "a communion of men with God and with one another" (1) This communion is the innermost essence of the Church and all authority within the Church must be seen and assessed in relation to it.

b. The recognition given throughout to scripture and tradition as necessary points of reference for all exercise of authority as regards both its object (the integrity of the koinonia and its commitment to mission: 5) and its manner. The idea of tradition is not fully worked out, but perhaps this is work for another day.

c. The care taken to bring out the eminently pastoral purpose of the exercise of authority. Thus the episcopate of the ordained ministry exists to maintain the faith in its apostolic authenticity, and so to build up the local and the universal koinonia, and to sustain and further the Church's commitment to mission.



J.P.
SACS
6. XII. 1978

- d. Throughout the Statement we are made aware that authority exists in the Church as a whole, though it is shared by different "depositories" (the faithful, deacons and priests, bishops, patriarchs, councils local and general, the bishop of Rome), on different grounds (holiness of life, special gifts of the Holy Spirit, ordination), and on different levels (eg. the local church, regional groupings, universal assemblies).
- e. The acknowledgement that the structure of the exercise of authority, including the episcopal office and the Roman Primacy, developed historically. The description of this development is accurate enough in its main outlines, though certain reservations are called for from the Catholic side (see below).
3. One of the most important assertions in the Statement is that there is in the Church an authority which is proper to the ordained ministry by virtue of Christ's mandate or institution, and which is therefore attributable neither to historical development nor simply to the will of the community: "this service of the community, officially entrusted to ordained ministers, is intrinsic to the Church's structure according to the mandate given by Christ and recognised by the community" (5).

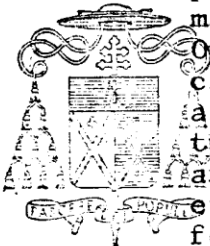
There appears to be no doubt that the Anglican Communion accepts the ordained ministry as being ^{of} the "esse Ecclesiae", but no such certainty exists with regard to the sacramentality of order in the strict sense of the term, or with regard to the ordering of the ordained ministry into bishops, priests and deacons.

Many Anglicans would not see ordination as a sacrament in the technical sense although they regard ordination as conveying the commission and enabling of the Holy Spirit (see the Agreed Statement on Ministry, 15 and note 4).

Concerning the manner in which the episcopate as we know it in both Churches is of the Church, Anglicans decide for themselves as to whether it is of the "esse", the "bene esse", or the "plene esse" of the Church.

One must conclude that the strict sacramentality of order and the precise manner in which the episcopate is of the Church are not matters affecting the integrity of the apostolic faith itself. Official Catholic teaching is indeed otherwise, but we cannot close our eyes to the fact that responsible Catholic theologians are greatly concerned about the way in which the threefold structuring of the ordained ministry can be said to be "de jure divino" and irreversible. It would be very difficult to assert on the evidence of the New Testament that the episcopate in its present form is irreversible, a fact which in the ecumenical field puts the ball squarely into our court.

4. There is no definition of 'authority' in the Statement. We are perhaps more accustomed to words like "potestas" and "jurisdiction" which convey the idea of the right of Primate and bishop to be obeyed. Do the words favoured by the Statement - "oversight", "responsibility" convey the same idea? In certain instances they do, since both the Agreed Statement on Authority and the Agreed Statement on Ministry, which complement each



JLJ
SACBE

6. XII. 1978

other attribute to the bishop a right to obedience in the direction of the community in matters of belief, worship, and discipline (eg Authority 5: "since the bishop has general oversight of the community, he can require the compliance necessary to maintain faith and charity in daily life".) Neither Vatican II nor our own theology would isolate the bishops of the Church, including the Pope, or the local churches from the universal koinonia in matters of faith. And even our most conservative theology allows for nuances when it comes to deciding on responses to one's bishop or the Pope.

5. It may be that the most significant convergence of all concerns the Church's ability to decide with authority about essential matters of belief, worship, and discipline (13 - 14). Both Churches admit that "when conflict endangers unity or threatens to distort the gospel the Church must have effective means for resolving it" (18). Both Churches would hold that the appeal to Scripture, to the creeds, to the early Fathers, is "basic and normative" (18).

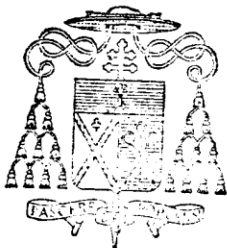
Both Churches would admit in this regard the importance of conciliar action, both local and ecumenical. Perhaps the most significant advance in the whole Statement is the authority accorded to the decisions of ecumenical councils on matters of faith: when the Church meets in ecumenical council its decisions on fundamental matters of faith are protected from error by the Holy Spirit and therefore exclude what is erroneous (19). Which means what we mean by "infallible". It follows that such decisions have "abinding authority", and therefore as regards their essentials an enduring authority.

This is a point of convergence of very great importance. Unfortunately it is not so certain that we and the Anglicans are completely at one here. They and we are indeed at one in holding that the bishops of the Church "have a special responsibility for promoting truth and discerning error" (18), and that in making binding decisions concerning faith they "share in a special gift of Christ to his Church" (19). We are at one in holding that there is an interaction of bishop and people in this matters, and that the ordained ministry is in the service of the community of faith.

Where we may still differ is in our understanding of the "reception" of conciliar decisions by the faithful. The Statement says that "the community.... must respond to and assess the insights of the ordained ministers" (6), and that "a substantial part in the process of reception is played by the response of the faithful" (16). These phrases are open to a perfectly orthodox Catholic interpretation. But the question that must be asked is whether or not the response/reception of the faithful is required to make the definitive decisions of ecumenical councils "binding"?

6. Perhaps our deepest divergence is that regarding the origin and nature of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome.

There has been real progress in this matter. According to the Statement Anglicans are prepared to acknowledge that the bishop of Rome, has a universal primacy (24b), a universal ministry of episcopate in safeguarding the "catholicity of each local church, and as a sign of the communion of all the churches" (12, and cf 17)



JLJ
SACBE
6.XII.1978

They are ready to admit that this universal primacy "is part of God's design for the universal koinonia"(24b), but not that communion with the bishop of Rome is necessary to full communion in the one Church of Christ. Catholic doctrine (Vatican I and Vatican II) maintains that communion with the Bishop of Rome is essential to full ecclesial communion "jure divino".

The inductive method used through out the Statement is probably not adequate to close the gap between us on this matter. In the Statement the Roman Primacy is seen to have originated in an historical process similar to that which gave rise to local primacies in the Church structure. It is true, of course, that the prominence of Rome "was associated with the death there of Peter and Paul", and that "the importance of the bishop of Rome among his brother bishops, (was) explained by analogy with the position of Peter among the apostles, was interpreted as Christ's will for his Church"(12). But the disadvantage of the method used to establish the Roman Primacy is to make it appear to be like the local primacies, that is, the result of a simple delegation or recognition of powers by the local churches. It is perhaps in this context that we can situate Anglican difficulties regarding papal infallibility (24c) and the Pope's possession of a universal immediate jurisdiction(24d).

From our point of view, the Statement is less than a "consensus" on all the basic principles of primacy(cfr.24). Complete consensus can only come by sharing in that intimate conviction on which the Catholic affirmation rests, namely, "that the authority of the Lord of the Church himself has been entrusted to the apostolic college, and within it by a special title to Peter, to continue to be exercised visibly and ministerially by their successors with the indefectible light and prompting of the Holy Spirit. This is not, for the Roman Catholic Church, the expression or conclusion of a particular theology (even if a particular theology has been worked out about it and is for that reason open to objective criticism) but an intimate and immediate conviction of faith (J. Dumont, O.P., Comment on the Document 'Authority in the Church', in Doctrine and Life, Feb. 1977).

7. All three Agreed Statements reflect a real progress which in certain matters is greater than could have been expected, and this progress offers a founded hope that the grave difficulties which still divide us can be overcome. We express our thanks to God for the progress achieved to date, and gratefully record our appreciation of the hard work and the loyalty of those who on behalf of the two Communion undertook the heavy responsibility of seeking a closer unity of belief in area in which there appeared to be small hope of substantial agreement.

Our Communion are still grievously divided on fundamental matters, and certain recent developments in the Anglican Communion seem likely to aggravate our division. Nevertheless, in obedience to the will of Christ for the unity of His Church, and encouraged by the growth in recognition and understanding between us, we urge that our theological dialogue be pursued with the utmost vigour.



J.P.2
SBCSC
6.XII.1978

8. In both Communion collaboration in common witness to Christ "in the work of evangelisation" should be "pursued to the limits allowed by truth and loyalty" (Declaration by Pope and Primate, 10). Practical response to the task of restoring unity is of twofold importance to the theological dialogue. It is a measure of the importance attached to the dialogue, and it helps to create the climate in which dialogue and doctrinal convergence can bear fruit and progress. Hence, our hope is that the possibilities of response and collaboration at every level in our Communion be thoroughly investigated. Should this not be done the seriousness of our intent may well be called into question, with a resultant dampening of the enthusiasm and hope of many who in both our Communion are committed to the cause of unity.

Finally, there is the need to encourage in our Communion more intensive prayer for openness of mind and heart to the will of Christ, and for the courage to meet his intentions for His Church.

6. XII 1978

+ Joseph Patrick Tygar
Archbishop - Bishop of Johannesburg
hon. vint SACSE

