

The Church - Authority.

I Purpose:

Not to describe positions which hold here and now, but to reflect on an ecclesiology which would help shape the future Church, built upon the primary biblical concept of koinonia (organic unity).

This method enables us better to shed past accretions and to enrich authentic traditions, in order better to carry out the Church's mission to the world.

This exercise is only possible because we take development seriously, and look at it together: development of the Church's self-understanding, and therefore of its doctrinal understanding of the revealed word. For example, the authority of the Church and in the Church, seen in the light of koinonia.

II Church as Koinonia

(a) Visible and "invisible" communion; in this context, common profession of faith, full sharing in sacramental life, and oversight by a fully accepted apostolic ministry.

(b) Church of Churches: Universal church - local church; local church - universal church. Concordia ecclesiarum - concordia episcoporum. Collegiality, patriarchal and papal principles (with reference to Vatican II and Lambeth '68).

(c) Actual situation: 'communio realis non plena' between Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church.

- What is the 'special relationship' between the two Churches?
- What does each Church find of itself in the other ('realis')?
- What does it not find ('sed non plena')?
- What are the critical points at which koinonia is now broken and need healing?
- Use of categories: heresy and schism?
- When doctrinal questions are settled, by what act or acts should full communion be re-established?

III Koinonia and Authority: Authority of and in the Church

a. Criterion of Scripture for nature, location and exercise of authority

b. "Indefectibility" and "infallibility" of the Church

- the examination of these concepts as a means of seeing possibilities of future convergence as well as of determining present divergences.

- is the main difficulty the understanding of the concept of infallibility; or its Scripture - tradition support; or its concrete exercise up to the present?

1. Location of infallibility within the Church -

- sensus fidelium

- collegium episcoporum and General Councils
(marks of Councils; councils since the East-West schism)

- Bishop of Rome

2. Exercise of authority through infallibility

- Councils since East-West schism

- the Immaculate Conception; the Assumption

c. Problems concerning the non-infallible exercise of authority, doctrinal and disciplinary

- authority as a ministry of reconciliation

- Universal Church

- Synodal principle

- Local Church

- authority of charisms (the prophetic element),
and of sound learning