

THE NATURE AND EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH:

notes on the implications of Anglican formularies and theology.

By the Bishop of Ossory

These notes are merely reflections on aspects of the theme of authority as it appears to one Anglican. They were occasioned partly by some of the papers prepared for the Commission, by John Coventry's Christian Truth, by Carolyn M. Craft's article 'Implications of Infallibility', and partly by the desire to work out some preliminary comments for the June meeting.

Article 6: Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation.

'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever 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, or be thought requisite necessary to salvation.'

Article 19: Of the Church.

'..... As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred; so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.'

Article 20: 'The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: And yet it is not lawful

for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and keeper of holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.'

Article 21: 'General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes. And when they be gathered together (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God), they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture.'

What is fundamental is the Lordship of Christ. Ultimately, the only authority for the Christian is the authority of Christ, and 'the Holy Spirit keeps the Church under the Lordship of Christ.' (cp. Poringland Note). That authority is mediated through the Church's teaching and proclamation, witness and life. The human authorities in the Church endeavour to reflect Christ and His Authority and to do this, in their inadequacy, calls for 'a continual summons to reform.' (cp. Poringland).

By what means is this achieved, so that what is proclaimed has the authority of authentic Christianity? The object of the continuous process (semper reformanda) is to ensure, (through the Spirit's guidance who leads into all the truth), that the Church remains in the truth. What is the criterion and what sort of process does its application involve ? John Coventry sees it this way: 'Only the living Church can sift authentic from

inauthentic expression. This leaves us with two questions, vital for our method as Christian thinkers today. The first question, classically known as the problem of scripture and tradition, can be formulated thus: what is the theological criterion of Christian truth for the Christian thinker today ? The second question is whether there are authoritative organs in the Church for settling controversy about Christian truth: ie. organs which can use the theological criterion authoritatively.' ¹⁾

What answers do Anglican formularies and Anglican theological tradition suggest in reply to these questions ?

THE QUESTION OF THE CRITERION

As to the first question, that of the theological criterion for Christian truth, the Anglican answer clearly posits the primacy and centrality of Holy Scripture. Article XX declares that both the Church's legislative authority (*ius statuendi*) in respect of rites and ceremonies and the Church's judicial authority (*auctoritas*) in controversies of faith are delimited by Scripture. In the first instance, the form and content of worship must be consonant with the 'thrust' of Scripture. Note, for example, the preface prefixed to the Irish revision of the Book of Common Prayer in 1878: ' ... all men ... professed their love and reverence for the Book of Common Prayer in its main substance and chief parts, and confessed that it contained the true doctrine of Christ, and a pure manner and order of Divine Service, according to the holy Scriptures and the practice of the Primitive Church.' In the second place, that judicial authority which the Church possesses in matters of faith is controlled by Scripture. In assessing the nature and extent of the Church's authority here, this can be illustrated

1) Christian Truth, John Coventry SJ., p.59.

by the relationship of a judge to the law. He administers and interprets the law but he is himself under the law. Similarly, the Church's authority is declarative of and interpretative of the faith 'once for all' committed to her and which is her 'rule'.

Article XX describes the Church as 'a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ', (testis et conservatrix), but of a Divine self-revelation which in Christ is complete. The Church's role of witness and keeper places Scripture within the continuing life of the Body of Christ, so that the Anglican answer has never been a completely sola scriptura one. 'The Church to teach and the Bible to prove' is more than a catchword and it corresponds to a reality in Anglican thought and practice.

How close would this come to Coventry's answer, 'Hence there is not, there cannot be, an empirically decisive theological norm or criterion for all Christian truth. Scripture can only be interpreted in the light of tradition. Traditions must always be challenged and criticised in the light of Scripture. The two norms must always be held in balance, in a lived tension, in what must always remain a search for, a guidance into all truth' ? ¹⁾

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

Certainly, Anglicanism takes full account of Holy Scripture as originating within and continuing to inform the worship, proclamation and mission of the living Church, which is 'the witness and keeper of holy Writ.'

Equally, Anglican theology of yesterday and today sets great store by the tradition of the undivided Church. Archbishop Wake

1) loc. cit. p.73

expressed the universal Anglican conviction, writing to the Roman Catholic theologian Du Pin in 1719: 'Certainly I would make bold to claim that, whatever other churches adhere firmly to the Vincentian rule, the Church of England is pre-eminent amongst them; nor will ever repudiate anything which has been believed everywhere, always and by everyone.' ¹⁾ This is the whole drift of classical Anglican theology and formularies and needs no further illustration. The canon of 1571 gives direction to the clergy to 'see that they never teach ought in a sermon, to be religiously held and believed by the people, except what is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old and New Testaments, and what the Catholic Fathers and ancient bishops have collected from the same doctrine.' ²⁾ It continues in such contemporary documents as the Anglican/Methodist Report(1963) and the Interim Statement (Towards Reconciliation, 1967). The latter would agree with Coventry that 'scripture and tradition ought not to be put over against one another' (Report) as do the older Anglican writers. But like them, the contemporary Report insists that Scripture 'is the supreme standard of faith ... in relation to that for which it claims to be authoritative, the ground and content of saving faith' (p.15). Moreover, the Anglican appeal to antiquity had demonstrated that the Fathers proved the rule of faith from the Scriptures. Jeremy Taylor wrote: 'We are acquitted by the testimony of the primitive Fathers from any other necessity of believing than of such articles as are recorded in Scripture.' The words are taken from a book The Liberty of Propheying (Sect. V) which is an early example of the same genre as Coventry's Christian Truth, being an attempt to

1) William Wake, I, p.282, by Norman Sykes.

2) Gee and Hardy, Documents Illustrative of English Church History, p.476

establish a criterion. In it the appeal is to Scripture, tradition and reason, with Scripture occupying the chief rôle and it is of interest that Taylor emphasises here the matter of fundamentals. The appeal to Scripture is to 'all the articles of faith [which] are clearly and plainly set down in Scripture.' Non-fundamentals are a different matter and frequently can no more be guaranteed by Scripture than they can be by tradition.¹⁾ One may compare E. J. Bicknell: 'This view of the sufficiency of Scripture is for questions of doctrine the unanimous view of the early Fathers,'²⁾ and R. P. C. Hanson's Tradition in the Early Church (1962).

The Interim Statement (pp.7-8) makes another point, also heavily stressed in the Anglican tradition; 'the products of the traditionary process must be tested by the Scriptures to which they claim to be subservient, and wherever they are found deficient they must be reformed.' A typical earlier expression of this would be that of Francis White: 'The Church of England in her public and authorized doctrine and religion proceedeth in manner following. It buildeth her faith and religion upon the sacred and canonical Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles, as upon her main and prime foundation. Next with the Holy Scripture, it relieth upon the consentient testimony and authority of the Bishops and Pastors of the true and ancient Catholic Church; and it preferreth the sentence thereof before all other curious and profane novelties. The Holy Scripture is the fountain and lively spring, containing in all sufficiency and abundance the pure Water of Life, and whatsoever is necessary to make God's people

1) see The Spirit of Anglicanism, pp.68-74.

2) A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-nine Articles (1936 ed.), p.170

wise unto salvation. The consentient and unanimous testimony of the true Church of Christ, in the primitive ages thereof, is canalis, a conduit pipe, to derive and convey to succeeding generations the celestial water contained in Holy Scripture. The first of these, namely the Scripture, is the sovereign authority and for itself worthy of all acceptation. The latter, namely the voice and testimony of the primitive Church, is a ministerial and subordinate rule and guide, to preserve and direct us in the right understanding of the Scriptures.' 1)

In other words, the appeal to Scripture and the appeal to tradition work for the same objective, the maintaining of the Church in truth, but they are not equally yoked. Or as Archbishop Laud put it (in his Conference with Fisher) 'though they do materially, yet they do not equally confirm the authority either of other. For Scripture doth infallibly confirm the authority of Church traditions truly so called: but tradition doth but morally and probably confirm the authority of Scripture.'

For Anglicans the role of tradition is then seen as a confirmatory and subordinate one, but what about Laud's adverb 'infallibly'? How is the appeal to Scripture affected and modified by the results of modern biblical scholarship? While the appeal to Scripture would nowadays involve less appeal to the text or texts and more appeal to the implications of the whole teaching of Scripture and to the fundamentals declared in it, 2)

2) cp. H. E. W. Turner, 'The Authority of Scripture', (p.8), ARCIC Sub-Commission paper (ARCIC 18): 'In using the Bible as a doctrinal norm Anglicans prefer to argue from broad sweeps of Scripture than to build too much upon particular texts which are sometimes torn from their exegetical and historical contexts. There are certainly cases where a positive answer can be found from Scripture and others where Scripture returns a decisive negative. The chief problem is how to interpret the silences of Scripture. Are they to be taken as hostile or neutral?'

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1) Anglicanism (1935), ed. P.E. More and F.L. Cross, pp. 8-9.

this is not altogether new - Hooker rejected Puritan biblicism and at the same time established the principle of Scripture as having ultimate binding authority but the appeal to it taking due account of reason and of the testimony of antiquity. This is the universal Anglican answer to John Coventry's first question and possibly four points might be made about it.

(1) The impact of textual difficulties on the appeal to Scripture is not solely a recent phenomenon. It was noted by, for example, Taylor, Chillingworth and Hyde, to mention only three seventeenth-century writers. It did not impair the effectiveness of the appeal for them, since they held that the essentials or fundamentals were plain in Scripture.¹⁾

This bears on the contemporary aspect of the problem and on the view sometimes expressed that a difficulty is that fundamental and non-fundamental cannot always be effectively distinguished. But what are the Creeds if they are not such an attempt by the Church ?

(2) It is sometimes implied that, if modern scholarship has appreciably weakened any thought of 'infallibility' as applied to Scripture then, in some obscure way, it has correspondingly strengthened the reliance on tradition and/or the teaching office of the Church. This is surely a major fallacy: 'If Scripture itself is not infallible in any meaningful way, is it not

cont./ The silence of Scripture is sufficient for an Anglican to preclude the definition of a dogma (see Article VI), prescinding from the question whether the proposed dogma is viable as a theologoumenon or a pious opinion. He would exclude all egorical and typological considerations as not providing express Scriptural warrant for this purpose. He would interpret the obscure in the light of the clear and appeal to clear related Scriptural principles in his assessment of the silence of Scripture.'

1) cp. The Spirit of Anglicanism(1965), pp.348-350

inappropriate to expect any other Christian document to be ?'
(See a valuable article, 'Implications of Infallibility' by Carolyn M. Craft, Anglican Theological Review, Vol.LVI, No. 4, p.412, October 1974).

(3) The Anglican position is more positive about the unique rôle of Scripture than is Coventry and the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,¹⁾ in that there is discernible in both the latter a blurring of the edges as between Scripture, tradition and the teaching authority of the Church viewed as components in the total operation of ascertaining Christian truth.

(4) Embedded in this position is the Anglican insistence on the hapax, 'the faith once for all delivered', the 'deposit' which must be guarded. For Anglicans, the faith does not develop but we develop and grow into it. The faith once for all delivered is progressively understood, lived and taught. But such a development is prevented from adding anything to (or subtracting anything from) the content of revelation: 'In any notion of development Anglicans would want to distinguish very carefully between the organic and the logical.'²⁾ D. W. Allen makes the point on the general position of the Anglican Caroline theologians 'based as it was on their belief in an unchanging deposit of faith.' This remains an element in Anglicanism today and his summary is worth noting in connection with our subject and John Coventry's questions: 'These theologians generally believed that the Church possessed a divinely given rule of faith, knowledge and acceptance of which were requisite for salvation. The Dominical promise to the Church was held to imply that this rule would be preserved in at least some

1) eg. loc.cit., p.73 and Constitution, (7)-(10).

2) Paper, 'Some Notes on Indefectibility and Infallibility' by the Bishop of Barking and Fr. A. Stewart (ARCIC 110, E, 4).

part of the Church, thereby assuring the continued availability of salvation. Thus the Church was held to be indefectible.

"For whether the Catholic Church of this present age may err or not, this is certain - she cannot err universally in anything that is necessary to salvation, nor with obstinacy." (Bramhall). Both the Scriptures and the Apostles' Creed were referred to frequently as being the infallible rule of faith. "The Scriptures and the Creed are not two different rules of faith, but one and the same rule, dilated in the Scripture and contracted in the Creed; the end of the Creed being to contain all fundamental points of faith, or a summary of all things necessary to salvation." (Bramhall). This divine revelation the Church declares and witnesses to. She has not been given the power or authority to add to it, nor to declare beliefs - however valuable and true - to be necessary to salvation which were not taught as such by the Apostles.' Allen goes on to quote Charles Gore, showing how this conviction remains in modern Anglicanism: 'Gore's remarks are apposite: "She is not a perpetual oracle of divine truth, an open organ of continuous revelation; she is not so much a 'living voice' as a living witness to a once spoken voice." 1)

This echoes Article XX's description of the Church's authority in relation to its function as witness and keeper, and I want to return to this concept of witness because it seems to be very important for the discussion of this subject. The same test is applied to those modern dogmas which are claimed as a development of the apostolic faith or as being implicit in it. In the latter case, where a doctrine is advanced on the grounds that it is an authentic evolution from the primitive faith in which, it is claimed, the doctrine is implicit, there appears to be an

1) D. W. Allen 'A Note on Infallibility', p.12, an ARCIC sub-commission paper (ARCIC 18).

assumption that in this process the Church cannot err and has been infallibly guided.¹⁾ It is precisely this assumption which Anglican formularies and thinking have questioned and rejected, stressing not only the criteria of Scripture and the Vincentian Canon but the teaching of the Fathers and the practice of the early Church which show an inbuilt resistance to anything which appeared to be an addition to the faith. The modern dogmas of 1854, 1870 and 1950 evoked Anglican reaction on precisely these grounds, among others. It is not a gut-reaction, but arises directly from a theological stance in which the primacy of Scripture (within the three-fold appeal), the distinction between fundamentals and accessories, the once-for-all givenness of the faith, linked with the belief in the continuing role of the Holy Spirit as guide to truth, all combine to produce a certain attitude.

It is an attitude critical of the very concept of infallibility, and more inclined to think in terms of indefectibility, and P. E. More was right when he affirmed a close connection between the fundamentals/accessories distinction and the denial of infallibility in the Anglican outlook.²⁾ Chillingworth long ago caught and expressed something like this when he differentiated between 'being infallible in fundamentals and being an infallible guide in fundamentals', adding 'that there shall always be a Church infallible in fundamentals, we easily grant; for it comes to no more but this, that there shall always be a Church.'³⁾

HOW DOES A CRITERION WORK ?

We are beginning therefore to move further into the area

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- 1) 'The notion of the development of doctrine which prevails in the Roman Catholic Church seems to require the assumption that this development has been infallibly guided', ib. ARCIC 110, A.1.
 - 2) Anglicanism ed. More and Cross, p.xxviii.
 - 3) ib.

surrounding Coventry's second question. For Anglicans 'the Church hath authority in controversies of Faith' and as a witness and keeper of holy Writ we have seen something of the criterion it may use in establishing Christian truth. Consideration of the infallibility/indefectibility area, central to Anglican/Roman Catholic divergence here, will have some further light thrown on it by the question of the authority of General Councils for Anglicans and also by the question of the sensus fidelium.

In a paper prepared for the Windsor 1970 meeting of ARCIC, the Dean of Christ Church noted an agreement between the two communions on the principle of authority,¹⁾ but he noted also that differences of emphasis were important, particularly 'a theological difference towards the preservation of the Church from error.' He wrote: 'Since Jewel and Laud, Anglicans have been reserved towards assertions of the 'infallibility' of the Church, and have much preferred to speak of its indefectibility. Certainly, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; truth will not be abolished from the earth. The Holy Spirit continues a ceaseless work of rectification and reform. But the empirical church is most likely to heed this guiding hand if its pastors are well aware of their own imperfection and blindness. Laud and Bramhall criticise the Council of Trent from this point of view. Trent's decrees on justification and on sacramental theology were congenial enough to them. Their criticisms revolve round the attitude to authority:

1) 'Authority, its nature, exercise and implications', by Henry Chadwick, (ARC/PJC 5, pp.8-9): 'Whatever individual Roman Catholics and Anglicans may have thought or now think, the two communities are not divided on the principle of authority. Both believe that faith is submission to God and is a gift of divine Grace; that the Church has an indispensable role in transmitting and teaching the Word of God and has authority in controversies of faith; that scripture, while always the prime criterion and vehicle of the Word of God, needs the living voice
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Trent was over anxious to define where legitimate alternatives should be left open, and this over-anxiety is the result of a desire to vindicate, against Protestant appeals to sola scriptura, the living voice of the Church as judge in controversy.

Laud and Bramhall regard Papal infallibility as a consequence of over-stating the case in a controversial setting - vulnerable because it may buy subjective certainty at the expense of truth; dangerous because belief in a single infallible teacher will lead to the production of definitions, not because the Church needs them, but because silent oracles are not respected and definitions must be made simply to maintain the claims of the defining authority.'

Does later history confirm this ? In view of the accepted role of dogma in the history of the Church, Anglican difficulties about the point raised by Dr. Chadwick are such as those voiced by Carolyn Craft: 'Unlike most earlier pronouncements of Christian doctrine, there was no necessity (in terms of a rampant heresy to be combatted) for the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption and papal infallibility. Indeed, the effect of the infallibility doctrine was not to preserve the unity of the Church, but to disunify it further (by the Old Catholic schism).'¹⁾

What are the implications of Anglican formularies and theology for concepts of indefectibility and infallibility ? What do the latter concepts mean in terms of Anglican/Roman Catholic divergence

cont./ of the church to convey the message to contemporary man; that God has appointed orders of ministry for the Church; that the priest is entrusted with the power of the keys as well as authority to celebrate the eucharist; that the preaching of the Word and the ministry of the sacraments are a supernatural and charismatic function; and so on.'

1) loc.cit., pp.414-5.

and is there any likelihood of convergence here, or must the question of the exercise and the instruments of authority in the Church continue to divide Christendom ?

Granted that the word 'indefectible' was not in general use at the time when Anglican formularies were being written, what of the thing itself ? Classical Anglican theology would hold that the Church cannot fail and will continue, that the Spirit of truth is with it and will guide the Church into all truth. In other words, the Scriptural promises, 'I am with you always', and Matt. 16:18 and John 14:16 are the basis of its perpetuity: 'The Church of Christ which was from the beginning, is and continueth unto the end' (Hooker, E.P.III, 1 10).

Moreover, this unfaillingness relates not only to the Spirit's continuous guidance to the complete truth (John 16:13) but also to the Church's function of 'witness and keeper' - 'the Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth' (1 Tim. 3:15).

The Church's indefectibility is then not just her perpetuity her actual lastingness, but her perpetuity in truth, for if the Church is not in the truth, then the Church ceases to be the Church. (cp. Chillingworth). But the Articles make it clear that a particular Church can err and be deficient in its witness. In other words, the indefectibility of the Church means that, on the basis of the promises, the Church, in spite of divagations and errors, remains fundamentally in the truth.¹⁾ What our Lord promised to his Church was not infallibility, but an infallible guide, the Holy Spirit.²⁾ The words correspond to a deep

1) cp. Mascall (Coventry, loc.cit. pp.81-2) and Kung, Infallibility ?, p.152.

2) E. J. Bicknell, A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-nine Articles, pp.342-3.

ecclesiological feeling in Anglicanism and are part of the explanation why 'the general tenor of Anglican thought is hostile to the idea of infallibility'.¹⁾ The Spirit's guidance is not irresistible and the Church is not necessarily at all times perfectly responsive to her infallible guide. At particular times and places in history, a particular Church has on specific issues failed in fidelity to the apostolic faith or in doctrinal reliability - so asserts Article 19.

Coventry would accept, I think, that indefectibility does not necessarily argue an uninterrupted reliability but rather an ultimate reliability. For Anglican theology, ultimate reliability is obtained by the appeal to Scripture primarily, to tradition or to the universal Church interpreting Scripture, and by rational argument. It is a process, and a slow process, and it seems that it is in this area where the criterion of Christian truth and the mechanics of working it out or applying it meet, that there is marked divergence between the two Communions. Coventry's second question was whether there are authoritative organs in the Church for settling controversy about Christian truth and he defines these as organs which can use the criterion authoritatively. (Would Orthodoxy say that there were no such organs, only the Church ?)

A number of strands appear to be interwoven here. The gradual process referred to seems to go naturally with the concept of indefectibility as outlined, while the acceptance of 'instant' propositions fits better with the concept of 'infallibility' and of an infallible teacher or teaching office.²⁾ There immediately surfaces the question of the function and, indeed, in a sense, the

1) ARCIC 110, B.4.

2) On Vatican I and infallible propositions there is a qualified divergence as between, for example, Coventry, p.83 and Hans Kung, Infallible ?, pp.157-8

question of the existence of magisterium in the nineteenth-century signification of the term. In this area where the criterion and the manner of its use and application merge, what can be said about Anglican attitudes to the authority of General Councils, of the sensus fidelium and of the magisterium ?

GENERAL COUNCILS, MAGISTERIUM, SENSUS FIDELIUM.

Article XXI on General Councils has been quoted and Anglican thinking generally accords with the Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum: 'Although to councils, especially general councils, we gladly accord enormous honour, yet we judge that they ought to be put far below the dignity of the canonical scriptures. Moreover, we make a considerable distinction among the councils themselves ... ' 1) This commentary from the circle in which Article XXI was first compiled (as Dr. Chadwick notes) maintains that in spite of great Anglican respect for councils 'we do not, however, think that our faith is bound by councils except so far as they can be confirmed out of the holy Scriptures.' In a paper The Status of Ecumenical Councils in Anglican Thought 2) the Dean of Christ Church discusses the question and outlines a sketch of the Anglican position. Two of his comments bear directly on what has been said heretofore on criteria and authority and on the relevance to the latter of the gradual process of reception: 'The insistence that general councils remain subordinate to Scripture brought out the importance of reception in the acknowledgment of their authority, and led to considerable interest in the historical process by which these councils came to be regarded as having special status', and 'In the

1) Cap.14, (ed. Cardwell, p.6).

2) Paper to Anglican Theological Commission for Joint Doctrinal Discussions with the Eastern Orthodox Churches, by Prof. Henry Chadwick (AO/JDD 19 and circulated also as ARCIC 99/1).

last analysis the acceptance of a council as General rests with the universal Church whence, in the first place, a council derives its authority and credibility. And the universal Church judges by the apostolic tradition stemming from Scripture.' 1) Ultimately then, the authority of Councils is based on the truth of their conclusions and pronouncements for which the standard of assay is the Gospel, the revelation uniquely attested in the Scriptures.

There is a certain measure of kinship here with the Orthodox view as expounded by Meyendorff: 'It is not "ecumenicity" but the truthfulness of councils that makes their decision binding on us. Here we touch on the basic secret of Orthodox doctrine on the Church. The Church is the miracle of God's presence among mankind beyond any formal "criterion" or any formal "infallibility". In the course of history, councils - particularly "ecumenical" councils - have been merely means of proclaiming the truth; ... the totality of the Orthodox faith remains continually in the Church the truth lives and works always and everywhere in the Church. It might also declare itself in a new "ecumenical" council that gathered together not only the Orthodox Churches but also the Christians of the West.' 2) Many Westerns will find this position satisfying at a deep and inarticulate level and frustrating at an upper surface level where concept and practice must meet. Indeed Coventry has expressed something of both feelings but he sees Orthodox and Roman Catholics as ultimately appealing to the same principle: 'The ultimate ground in both for accepting an authoritative voice is 'consensus', the way the Church has come to experience the Church.'

1) ib. p.6.

2) J. Meyendorff, 'What is an ecumenical Council?', Vestnik, No.1 1959. See also his The Orthodox Church (Eng.ed. 1962) C.II

I would agree that we must assess this matter of consensus, and as between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, but it seems to me that the sentence is a true account only if it be understood that a different ecclesiology is involved and a different attitude to criteria, as between Rome and Orthodoxy. Meyendorff himself in another book sees the difficulty and underlines the points just made: 'The Western Christian today may find himself somewhat perplexed by this absence of a precise and definite theological criterion. If he is a Roman Catholic he is accustomed to think of tradition as something that is recognized or can be defined by the doctrinal authority of the Roman see, or, if he is a Protestant, as something which is determined ultimately by Scripture alone. He has difficulty in seeing how the Church can continue to express itself organically in the maze of dogmatic controversies without a permanent criterion of truth.' 1)

Rejecting both the Roman primacy as an exclusive and divine privilege exercised by virtue of a commandment of Christ and papal infallibility, Meyendorff notes: 'These differences were concerned with the nature of authority in the Church, and essentially with the nature of the Church itself.' 2)

This is not the place to analyse the Orthodox concept of the Church except in so far as this bears on the subject of authority and I refer to Orthodoxy simply in support of the contention that a magisterium in the modern Roman Catholic sense - and the concept itself is a quite modern one - is not of the esse of the Church and that there is no evidence in the early tradition for such an authoritative function tied to specific individuals. Orthodoxy would appear to say, with Meyendorff, on the basis of its

1) The Orthodox Church, p.30.

2) ib. p.212.

ecclesiology, that 'the fullness of this reality - hence also the fullness of truth and fullness of the magisterium - is present in every local church, in every Christian community gathered around the eucharistic table and having a bishop at its head.' 1) The local churches are united by the identity of their faith and their witness to the truth.

Perhaps there is a hope that an ecclesiology, similar to that of the Orthodox, which hinges on the rôle of the local church and of the episcopate, and which offered a way in for the Canterbury agreement on Ministry and Ordination, may also help us forward in the matter of authority and its exercise in the Church, for all this bears particularly on Church, koinonia and authority. 2)

Anglicans would keep step so far with this, but one suspects that they will want to bring in a criterion when Orthodoxy goes on to speak of truth as something which is experienced rather than demonstrated, as indeed the Orthodox also hold indefectibility to be experienced: the Orthodox is able 'to appeal to his separated brethren to accept, not some external 'criterion' - Rome or sola scriptura - but the living Truth as experienced in a liturgical communion and in the Church as the 'Temple of the Holy Spirit.' 3) Again, 'There does not exist, therefore, any visible criterion of Truth, apart from the consensus of the Church, the normal organ of which is the ecumenical council. But this council ... is not an authority ex sese, outside and above the local churches; it is merely the expression and witness of their accord 4).... the permanence of Truth in the Church is thus a fact of a supernatural order, similar in every respect to the nature of a sacrament. It

1) ib. p.212

2) cp. 'It is to this notion of the local Church, and not only to that of a universal collegium of bishops, that Roman ecclesiology should pay more attention', ib. p.216.

3) ib. p.227

4) Note the word 'witness' applied to a Council.

can be detected by religious experience, but is not amenable to rational explanation or capable of being subjected to legal norms.' 1) Anglicans would go along with much of this, but would insist that, within the life of the Church, the criterion of the appeal to Scripture, antiquity and reason as a continuing process has a necessary authenticating and corrective function which essentially cannot be separated from the guidance of the Spirit of Truth. 2) This function of the Spirit and his lordship play a formative role in the Anglican and Orthodox concepts of authority (see also the Poringland paragraphs 1 and 2) and bear on the whole question of the existence and function of a magisterium. Thus Gerasimos Papadopoulos writes 'It must not, however, be thought that we identify the infallible teaching of the Church with an Ecumenical Council as such. The Council is merely the instrument through which is expressed the infallibility of Christ, Who in the lordship of the Holy Spirit exercises His own authority over His Church We therefore find it difficult to accept the attitude of Rome in assigning to the magisterium of the Church the function which properly belongs to the Holy Spirit alone ... ' 3)

1) ib. p.214.

2) ib. p.226: 'But the Orthodox Church does not claim to possess any infallible and permanent criterion of Truth or any monolithic structure; it sees unity in a communion of faith, of which the Church itself - or rather the Holy Spirit always dwelling in the Church - is the unique judge. The Spirit of Truth dwells in the communion of the faithful who are united by the bond of charity, and while he normally speaks through those who have the Charisma to teach, namely, the bishops, he belongs properly to the Church as a Body. This Body is totally present everywhere that the Eucharist is celebrated, in every local church, and no authority, apart from that of the Spirit can possibly impose itself on the people of God united in Jesus Christ.'

3) The Orthodox Ethos (1964), ed. A. J. Philippou, p.102.

There is a clear sense then in which Orthodoxy will answer in the negative Coventry's second question about organs in the Church which can use the criterion authoritatively. Anglicans would have some sympathy with this stand-point and for similar theological reasons. But if they would find such a 'standing committee', a too sharply differentiated ecclesia docens over over against an ecclesia discens, both unacceptable and undesirable they would still insist that 'the Church hath authority in controversies of faith' and the different Anglican provinces have machinery for applying this consistently with the episcopal constitution of the Church.

In most Anglican Churches the organs of authority would be Bishops, synods and ecclesiastical courts, within the setting of a concept of authority such as that outlined, for example, in the Preamble and Declaration to the Constitution of the Church of Ireland (1) and (4) :

(1) The Church of Ireland doth, as heretofore, accept and unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as given by inspiration of God, and containing all things necessary to salvation; and doth continue to profess the faith of Christ as professed by the Primitive Church.

(4) The Church of Ireland, deriving its authority from Christ, Who is the Head over all things to the Church, doth declare that a General Synod of the Church of Ireland, consisting of the archbishops and bishops, and of representatives of the clergy and laity, shall have chief legislative power therein, and such administrative power as may be necessary for the Church, and consistent with its episcopal constitution.

Dean Chadwick's contribution to the Mélanges Congar (1974), a paper entitled 'Some Reflections on Magisterium in the Early Church' is very relevant here, even if one may feel that the use of 'magisterium' could almost be regarded as anachronic because

of the overtones the term has acquired since it began to be used in a specific way and context from 1870 onwards. ¹⁾ The paper draws attention to the growth in importance both of the individual bishop and of the churches of apostolic foundation in respect of authority. It underlines the role of the local church as guardian of truth; stresses the primary role of Scripture as the source of doctrine and notes the differentiation between the rule of faith and fundamentals and secondary matters which permit of divergences within the Church. His conclusion is important and for Anglicans it confirms what their classical theologians have always maintained about the authority-process and the authenticating process for Christian truth as this operated in the early Church. It is, in effect, the method and process of the three-fold appeal which is part of the Anglican ethos: Dean Chadwick writes of the process in the early Church: 'They judge by rational argument, and by the appeal to consensus. Both the bases of the teaching office and the very teaching office itself are multiple, never thought of as being concentrated in one community or one see. Moreover, a crucial part in the 'authority process' is played by subsequent reception by the faithful.' ²⁾

Of the Fathers, the Dean of Christ Church says in the same paper: 'At least they can teach the contemporary church that there can be alternative ways of approach.' ³⁾ Anglicans would want to maintain in discussions with their Roman Catholic brethren that such a concept of authority as that outlined in Chadwick's conclusion remains a live option. It is in fact what the Report of Section I (The Renewal of the Church in Faith) said to the Lambeth Conference of 1968: 'The inheritance of faith which characterizes the Anglican Communion is an authority of a multiple kind.' This

1) ib. pp.163-75. Circulated as ARCIC 108.

2) ARCIC 108, p.8.

3) ib. p.1.

was spelt out in the Report and the finding confirmed in Resolution 43 (c).¹⁾

What bears on the work of the Commission both from past and present Anglican thinking, from the thought and practice of Orthodoxy and from that of the early Church, is that there are several models of authority in the Christian Church, several concepts of how to ensure the continuing of the Church in Christian truth, and that this plurality and its implications must be faced. One model may have a more ancient lineage than another, one may be tidier and more efficient than another, one may be more open to criticism from the sources than another, and the influences of sociological and even political development on the different models of authority may not be discounted, but none can be separated from ecclesiology and from the doctrine of the Spirit, and no single model can be said to carry with it an exclusive de fide stamp, an element of ecclesial essentiality. Doubtless the fact that such radical differences as exist between the Roman and the Orthodox Churches in this whole area have not made it impossible for the Pope to assert that the two Churches are in 'almost complete' communion, will be a hopeful sign.

Consideration of the Orthodox position has highlighted an element which runs through the whole area of the permanence of the

1) See The Lambeth Conference 1968: Resolutions and Reports, p.82: 'This inheritance of faith is uniquely shown forth in the holy Scriptures and proclaimed in the Catholic Creeds set in their context of baptismal profession, patristic reasoning, and conciliar decision. These the Anglican Communion shares with other Churches throughout the world. In the sixteenth century the Church of England was led to bear a witness of its own to Christian truth, particularly in its historic formularies - the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal, as well as in its Homilies. Together, these constitute a second strand in the Anglican tradition. In succeeding years the Anglican Communion has continued and broadened this responsible witness to Christian truth through its preaching and worship, the writings of its scholars and teachers, the lives of its saints and confessors, and the utterances of its councils. In this third strand, as in

Church in the truth, namely, the consensus ecclesiae and the sensus fidelium, and presumably there is a certain distinction of form here. Papadopoulos says 'The Orthodox understanding of the tradition of the Church has been expressed in the simple yet profound statement that only in the general conscience of the Church can the essence of the faith be dynamically reinterpreted for the situation in which we are called to live. This is the true life of the Church, our life in the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁾ John Coventry asks 'Must not Catholics and Orthodox, beneath their differences, be appealing ultimately to the same principle, the consent of the Church as to its faith, in this case to its self-understanding?' ²⁾ If this general conscience is an informed conscience, and if this consent is on an authentic basis of truth, Anglicans would hardly disagree, but I think they will always tend to ask about such consent and about the sensus fidelium, What are the guarantees ?

There would be definite Anglican uneasiness in this area (as instanced in, for example, the matter of the Mariological dogmas) which would make for heavy emphasis on the modificatory clauses in Lumen Gentium, 12, ³⁾ and for a backward look to the second paragraph

cont./ the Preface to the Prayer Book of 1549, can be discerned the authority given within the Anglican tradition to reason, not least as exercised in historical and philosophical inquiry, as well as an acknowledgement of the claims of pastoral care. To such a threefold inheritance of faith belongs a concept of authority which refuses to insulate itself against the testing of history and the free action of reason. It seeks to be a credible authority and therefore is concerned to secure satisfactory historical support and to have its credentials in a shape which corresponds to the requirements of reason.'

1) The Orthodox Ethos, p.101

2) loc.cit. p.88.

3) 'The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One (cp. Jn.2:20, 27), cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural sense of the faith which characterizes the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when,

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of Article XIX. In fact, the Anglican formularies and theology generally are saying that there is a danger of subjectivism in an undifferentiated concept of the sensus fidelium and a non-recognition of the historical reality that people have erred in matters of faith, for not every widely held position in the Churches has been soundly based. In other words, you cannot effectively talk about or use the concept of the sensus fidelium without the check or guarantee visualised in the Articles and so used in the early Church. To borrow a phrase from Jean Tillard, 'the sensus fidelium implies, at every level submission to the objective data of faith.' This paper, written for the Commission, puts its finger incidentally on the relevance of a profound Anglican conviction to this section of the whole problem and expresses it: 'The more and more profound rooting in Christ, from which the sensus fidelium takes its origin, cannot be accomplished by a choice between the Word and Spirit. The Spirit, in fact, causes the believer to enter into the experience of what the Word reveals. And this content is what the same Holy Spirit has caused to be understood by those who have transmitted, in the inspired Books, the Revelation of the Good News. The sensus fidelium is therefore not the same as a free personal interpretation of Scripture. On the contrary, it springs from the Word proclaimed by the Church, received in the Church and understood by the Church on the objective basis of what the sacred Books say.'¹⁾

cont./"from the bishop down to the last member of the laity", it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. ... It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints (cp. Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights, and applies it more thoroughly to life. All this it does under the lead of a sacred teaching authority to which it loyally defers.' (Lumen Gentium, 12)

- 1) Sensus Fidelium by J.M.R. Tillard, O.P., (circulated paper), p.10 and cp. ib.: 'The situation of the "lived tradition" which finds expression in the inspired Books is not identical with the situation of the "living tradition" that followed it. The prevalent direction of the latter is from the Scripture data to life. One

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This part of Tillard's paper corresponds to the Anglican insistence, already referred to, that consensus relates all the time to criterion as the living Church uses its authority in questions of faith and the maintaining of itself in the truth. William Payne's comment is typical enough: 'For though the Scripture be our only Rule of Faith and Doctrine necessary to be believed by us, because we know of no other revelation but that, and nothing but revelation makes any doctrine necessary to be believed, yet we are very willing to take the sense and meaning of Scripture both from itself and from the Primitive Church too. So, according to Vincentius Lirinensis, to have the line of Scriptural interpretation be directed by the rule of Ecclesiastical and Catholic judgement; that is, to have the Primitive Church direct us in interpreting Scripture where it stands in need of it, or there is any controversy about its meaning. Let the Scripture, therefore, as sensed by the Primitive Church, and not by the private judgement of any particular man, be allowed and agreed by us to be the Rule of our Faith; and let that be accounted the true Church, whose Faith and Doctrine is most conformable and agreeable with the Primitive.' ¹⁾

cont./ must also handle with great care the distinction between written tradition and oral tradition both going back to Apostolic times. The fixing of the Scriptural Canon, on the basis of the experience of the first generations and after a period of indecision, has in fact the real purpose of giving the texts an objective and normative priority. And it would be easy to show that it is to the texts quoted by the Fathers themselves, the privileged witnesses of Tradition, that the Liturgy - lex orandi lex credendi - constantly sends us back. To sum up: once the documents expressing the Apostolic faith have been put in writing and once a choice has been made of those documents in which the first generations recognize what truly comes from the authorized witnesses, Scripture has the value of a primary norm of faith.'

1) Anglicanism, (ed. More and Cross), p.141.

Consensus and criterion can no more be separated from one another than either can be separated from the unceasing work of the Spirit within the living and learning Church. Lumen Gentium (12) gives more than a formal nod in this direction when it speaks of the sensus fidelium as clinging 'without fail to the faith once delivered to the Saints', but this raises sharply the question of the later dogmas. This remains an honest and serious difficulty for Anglicans, in spite of Tillard's differentiation between the Marian dogmas and the central dogmas of faith,¹⁾ and the concept of the hierarchy of truths is not much help here. Questions are raised for Anglicans about the doctrinal 'control' or lack of it in the sensus fidelium (from which the desire for the dogmas is claimed as originating), and also about the nature of the magisterium which defined them, and the rationale of its procedure in doing so. Is

1) loc.cit. p.14: 'However, it can happen that the Magisterium feels the need to express for the whole People of God, in a conceptual manner, the content of this lived reality. We have already noted that the Marian dogmas - dogmas based above all on the sensus fidelium and "defined" not in order to combat heresy but to fix a devotion and contribute to Mary's glory - originated in this desire. Again it seems to me that what we have been presenting enables us to grasp more clearly how these dogmas belong to a different category from the great Christological or Trinitarian dogmas. The current of the life and devotion of faithful people goes beyond rigorous concepts, for it carries along with it a whole wave of feelings and attitudes of the heart that locutiones formales cannot succeed in fixing. The Magisterium can draw from this combination of elements "some particles of the ingot of truth that can never be completely minted." It will also happen that a more favourable cultural context makes it possible to grasp better what was contained in the implicit content of lived faith What we have developed hitherto shows that saying this in no way comes down to depreciating their value: they are "truths" of the sensus fidelium, genuine truths, but deriving from a particular register of "knowledge of God" through faith.'

there in fact a 'clinging to the faith once delivered to the saints' (Lumen Gentium, 12) ? Describing the interaction, the conspiratio, between the sensus fidelium and the Magisterium, as exercising all its activity upon the Word as received and lived in the Church, Jean Tillard asks the final question:

'Our Christian brethren, belonging to a tradition that regards with suspicion anything that seems to add to the absolute authority of the Word of God but that at the same time is careful to respect the work of the Spirit in the new People - do they see in a Magisterium conceived in this manner an insurmountable contradiction of their profound conviction ?' ¹⁾

Something of an Anglican answer may have appeared in the preceding pages and it could be added that part of the problem is in the area of defining or interpreting the faith once for all delivered: 'The scope of infallibility goes no further than the revelation entrusted to the apostles' (Coventry, p.85). If the magisterium is felt to be adding to the faith rather than defining or interpreting, then we have a problem. Coventry's further suggestion has a direct bearing here also, 'the sensus fidelium of other Christians cannot simply be disregarded in evaluating the prophetic and teaching process by which the Church expresses its faith.' ²⁾ It is indeed one aspect of the stage which the dialogue must very shortly reach.

The report of Section III (Renewal in Unity) to the Lambeth Conference of 1968 noted: 'Although the declaration and guardianship of the faith has traditionally been regarded as belonging fundamentally to the episcopal office, the collegiality of the episcopate must always be seen in the context of the conciliar character of the Church, involving the consensus fidelium, in which the episcopate has its place.' ³⁾ Here again, John Coventry raises a point with direct ecumenical implications when he writes that 'Roman Catholic

1) loc.cit. p.16

2) loc.cit. p.95

3) Report, p.138.

theology needs to be more aware that it cannot at the same time insist on the ordinary teaching of bishops as a reliable guide, and ignore the teaching of leaders in other Churches who are recognised to be true bishops. Indeed, one must look beyond episcopacy, if the assertion of the Decree on Ecumenism that the Holy Spirit operates in other Christian bodies is to be taken seriously.¹⁾ Both the criterion for Christian truth and the existence of different models for its application within the Body are constantly surfacing. The same report to the Lambeth Conference of 1968, referring to one model, says of the teaching of both Vatican Councils on the infallibility and immediate and universal jurisdiction of the Pope: 'We are unable to accept this teaching as it is commonly understood today.'²⁾ There is no need to elaborate on the Anglican position in respect of the 'Petrine claims', save to suggest that the basis of this position relates to the subject of authority, in that it can find no New Testament foundation for the transmission by Peter of any privilege which he may have had, or for a papal primacy de iure or for papal infallibility, nor for regarding the later 'Petrine developments' as a necessary completing of Christian doctrine.³⁾ Inevitably, the doctrine raises the question as to how the deposit of faith was 'preserved and expounded' (Declaratio of 1973, (3)) and the Church's perpetuity in truth ensured before the dogma of papal infallibility was promulgated. (Some of the questions which Anglicans are asking today are outlined in an article by Carolyn M. Craft to which reference might be made to avoid duplication of material.⁴⁾ The weakness of the section of John Coventry's Christian Truth on the extraordinary teaching office of the Pope does not help with answers⁵⁾).

1) loc.cit., p.90

2) loc.cit., p.138

3) cp. R.P.C.Hanson 'The New Testament Basis for a Petrine Office etc' ARCIC 107

4) 'Implications of Infallibility', Anglican Theological Review, Vol.LVI, No.4, October 1974, pp.401-418.

5) loc.cit., pp.91-94.

When Archbishop Wake spoke of the 'chair of Peter which is preserved in all Catholic Churches' ¹⁾ he was talking of that collegiality and its relationship to primacy and to the declaration and guardianship of the faith which the report to Lambeth 1968 stressed. By placing the questions of papacy, primacy and episcopacy within this context, and by referring to the enhanced status of bishops as a result of the emphasis placed on collegiality by Vatican II, the Report indicated that its rejection of the Pope's jurisdiction and infallibility did not exclude another way into the problem. In doing so, it was reflecting a considerable body of Anglican theologians from the seventeenth century onwards who balanced a firm refusal of the one with a measure of openness to the possibilities of the other. In effect, they were saying much the same thing as Karl Rahner in The Shape of the Church to Come (Part 3, C.2. Ecumenical Church, pp.102-107). The same theme has been developed by John Coventry in an article in The Month (March 1975): 'In a true and deep sense, you cannot ensure unity in faith before uniting; you can only begin to construct it when you have united The ideal becomes, not that of resolving the differences between past traditions, but rather of convergence towards a future plenitude in which each tradition can find itself accepted and fulfilled. In human and concrete terms this is a progressive discovery that 'they' have got 'the' faith. This is perhaps a new way of being pro fide.'

There is wisdom and insight here. Within the life-giving circle of full agreement on those credal fundamentals of the Gospel without which koinonia is impossible, ²⁾ the major themes which have surfaced in the work of the Preparatory and International Commissions can come together and perform their reconciling task; the themes of convergence by substantial agreement in those areas where the

1) See Norman Sykes, William Wake, I, p.274.

2) See Malta Report, (3), (5), (7).

Churches seemed to have grown apart and into opposing positions, the theme of partial communion and of unity by stages.¹⁾ In the end, the authorities in both communions must ask, Is that which remains of divergence sufficient to keep the Churches for ever apart? For when the contribution of the theologians is made, the initiative, in Rahner's phrase, must pass from the theologians to the office-holders.²⁾

SUFFICIENCY AND TRUSTWORTHY WITNESSES

What Anglican formularies say about the 'sufficiency' of Scripture suggests not simply the line of thought suggested by the concept in the paper ARCIC 110 (Paras. 5-13) but also another line, and this bears on the thought of 'fidelity' so developed in the same paper. The line suggested is that of 'a measure of authority sufficient for faith' and it ties in with the view that what we have in Scripture, the Creeds and the consent of the undivided Church is not infallible authorities but trustworthy witnesses to the supreme authority of Christ. 'A sufficient measure of authority' is guaranteed by a combination of the witnesses among which for obvious reasons the Bible is primary.³⁾ Reason tests the witnesses but always their acceptance remains an act of faith. Faith has never depended on indisputable evidence and to suggest otherwise is to have a wrong conception of authority (cp. ARCIC 110, (5)).

Lastly, since these notes have to do with the implications of Anglican formularies for the subject of authority, it may not be out of place to stress the obvious that there is no such thing as 'the Anglican faith', only the Christian faith as received, understood and

1) *ib.* (7), (17).

2) *loc.cit.* p.107.

3) This thesis is developed by Rupert E. Davies in Religious Authority in an Age of Doubt (1968). Compare Meyendorff's description of a General Council as a 'witness'.

lived by Anglicans. The reason for stating the obvious is to locate the nature and function of formularies such as the Thirty-nine Articles. They are a secondary (even a tertiary ?) standard of doctrine and they serve to delineate in broad outline an understanding of the nature of Christian truth and a method of authenticating what belongs to it. They fit into an approach which is both consciously and unconsciously part of the Anglican ethos, the appeal to Scripture, antiquity and reason. The Lambeth Conference of 1948 saw doctrinal authority as many-stranded and cross-checking. ¹⁾ Whether such a concept of authority is easy to live with has to be balanced with questions of whether it faithfully sets out the truth of Christian religion and whether it involves an exercise of authority which is credible and so can command allegiance in the modern world.

1) 'Authority .. is single in that it is derived from a single Divine source ... It is distributed among Scripture, Tradition, Creeds, the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, the witness of saints, and the consensus fidelium ... It is thus a dispersed rather than a centralised authority, having many elements which combine, interact with, and check each other '
Lambeth Conference 1948, Report, pp.84-5.

THE NATURE AND EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

These notes were completed before receiving from the Co-Chairman, Bishop Clark, the extract from P.J.Fitzpatrick's In the Breaking of the Bread. There would be an affinity, if no more, between some of the points made by Fitzpatrick and some of the positions outlined in this paper, though the approaches are from quite different angles. An example would be what he says about processes within the ecclesial circle which he sees as 'an exercise spread out in time and space, over the Church, and which will show itself in a multiplicity of ways' (p.20).

As far as one can understand his themes from reading only a part of the book, Fitzpatrick is critically dismissing all idea of privileged loci of belief, that is, loci which have an ultimate and authoritative status. For him they are really part and parcel of the process of correction and complementation which go to make up what he calls 'the ecclesial circle'. Thus he dismisses as privileged and separately definitive loci of belief not only infallibly guaranteed propositions, but the present faith of the Church and the biblical message as the ultimate criterion and its relation to the Scriptures which are its source. Reason must be given its full and proper place (p.11) and 'There is no privileged locus. There is no source, be it Scripture, Conciliar or Papal decrees, or any part of them, which is immune to the processes I have called Understanding and Confrontation.' (p.13).

Is he in fact describing a position and a process not ultimately at variance as far as results are concerned with the position and process referred to in this paper, the process of appeal to Scripture, tradition and reason ? (Save that in that process for Anglicans

Scripture remains a privileged locus, distinct from any other locus at least in that there is no substitute for it or conceivable alternative to it and that therefore it is indispensable for any evaluation of Christian belief and truth. Is it then in some sense privileged ?) At any rate, there could be some sort of discernible affinity between the process of the threefold appeal and Fitzpatrick's stress on process within the ecclesial circle: 'No one activity that makes up the circle can be isolated from the rest, or can claim to be exempt from those processes of correction and complementation to which all are subject' (p.19 and cp. p.22). If the Anglican objective in the use of the three-fold appeal is the ensuring that the Church remains in the truth, how does this objective differ in its results from Fitzpatrick's processes of understanding and confrontation, whether the loci are considered privileged or not ?

One might also compare what he says on indefectibility as seen within this process (pp.24-5) with the position described in this paper.

The thesis of Fitzpatrick's book also raises the question whether there might not be something in the suggestion that 'trustworthy witnesses' rather than infallible loci is what we have in Scripture, the Creeds and the faith and traditions of the Church, reason remaining the way in which the witnesses are evaluated.¹⁾ Much of the latter part of Fitzpatrick's work would seem to lend support to the contention of Rahner and Coventry that Churches holding much in common, as the Malta Report emphasises, should deliberately seek to grow into a common understanding of Christian truth through a gradual process of coming together by stages.

1) See p.31 of this paper.