

19. The Bishops collectively have a responsibility for defending and interpreting the apostolic faith. The primacy accorded to the bishop of a principal see implies that, after consultation with other bishops, he may speak in the name of his colleagues in order to express their common mind.

Such primatial statements are only one of the ways by which the Holy Spirit ensures that the People of God remain faithful to the truth of the Gospel. This fidelity, finding its expression in a common faith, is the basic element of the koinonia. To serve this common faith is an essential function of episcopate and this service necessarily involves an exercise of episcopal authority.

20. Primacy, to be a genuine expression of episcopate, must so operate as to foster the koinonia which it exists to serve. This it does by helping the bishops to fulfil their task of apostolic leadership in their own churches and to share in the wider responsibilities of the episcopate. The purpose of primacy is to assist the churches in strengthening the bonds of Christian love and unity, in listening to one another, and in helping one another towards the fulness of Christian life and witness. It is no part of this purpose to impose uniformity where diversity is legitimate, or to centralise administration to the detriment of the local church.

Of its nature primacy cannot function in isolation. The primate's ministry depends upon his collegial association with his fellow bishops through his episcopal ordination. If he has to intervene in the life of a local church he should not do so in such a way as to usurp the responsibility of its bishop.

21. Just as a primate cannot function in isolation, so a council cannot act without a primate. At various times in the Church's history either the primatial or the conciliar element in the exercise of episcopate has been given the greater

emphasis, sometime to the point of serious imbalance. Where churches have been separated from one another, this has tended to aggravate the imbalance. Nevertheless a healthy interaction between these two complementary elements serves to maintain the koinonia of the churches.

28.8.76 : 11.40 a.m.

ARCIC/156/VI/1

If God's will for the unity in love and truth of the whole Christian community is to be fulfilled, this general picture of the complementary primatial and conciliar aspects of episcopate serving the koinonia of the churches needs to be realised at the universal level.

The only primatial see which makes any such claim and which has exercised and still exercises such episcopate is the see of Rome. Consequently that see appears as the most fitting to hold such a universal primacy in any future reunion. Clearly in view of the history of Anglican/Roman division such a new situation would challenge the Roman see so to develop and refashion the manner of its episcopate as to win the love and confidence of the wider communion now entrusted to its care\*.

At the same time the achievement of such a wider koinonia would involve humility and readiness for adjustment on both sides.

This consensus on the basic principle of primacy is of fundamental importance. None-the-less it does not wholly resolve all the problems associated with papal primacy. We are not at present able to envisage any interpretation of the claim that the Roman primacy is of "divine right" which would be mutually acceptable. Similarly the expression of primacy in terms of universal jurisdiction remains a stumbling block to Anglicans, where it seems to them to go beyond what we have agreed upon as the character and function of primacy. We note, however, that the concept of jurisdiction is already under active consideration by Roman Catholic theologians.

\* For statements of the primatial ideal and historical comment on defections from it cf. Paras. 12 and 19/20.