

- 20 19. The bishops collectively have a responsibility for defending and interpreting the apostolic faith. When primacy is accorded to a bishop this implies that, after consultation with his fellow bishops, he may speak in their name in order to express their common mind. If his position is recognised by the faithful to give him a general responsibility for the defence of the faith, the Church will rightly expect him to speak on occasion on his own initiative. < H.C.

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 fundamental to the koinonia. To serve this common faith is an essential function of episcopus and this service involves an exercise of episcopal authority.

- 21 20. Primacy, to be a genuine expression of episcopus 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. Rightly exercised it will respect and promote the Christian freedom and spontaneity of the local churches. It is no part of its 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.

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21. Just as a primate cannot function in isolation, so a council needs a ^{president} (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, sometimes 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. This interaction in its turn rests ~~upon the responsible participation of the whole people of God.~~ upon the responsible participation of the whole people of God.

22. 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 union. Clearly in view of the history of Anglican/Roman Catholic division the prospect of 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 to be entrusted to its care.* At the same time the achievement of such a wider koinonia would involve humility and readiness for change and adjustment on both sides.

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

23. What we have written above amounts to a consensus on the basic principles of primacy in the Church and on the need of a universal primate to realize and maintain the universal koinonia. This consensus is of fundamental importance. While it does not wholly resolve all the problems associated with papal primacy, it provides us with a solid basis for confronting them.

For example, Anglicans have commonly queried doctrinal claims, advanced on behalf of the Roman see, which go beyond the principles stated above. We ask whether there is any material or substantial affirmation or claim made for the see of Rome by the First and Second Vatican Councils which is out of line with these principles or which requires a different, wholly independent, theological justification.

Again, Anglicans have consistently opposed the claim to infallibility made on behalf of the Roman Pontiff. We note that the decree of Vatican I writes limitations into the circumstances under which the bishop of Rome may define matters of faith and morals. His definitions cannot fall outside the area of faith and morals. He speaks in no personal capacity, but exclusively by virtue of his office "as pastor and teacher of all Christians". Moreover, his authority is in no sense independent: he speaks in the Church, for the Church, to the Church, and in so doing he is invested with the infallibility "wherewith Christ endowed his Church". It follows that he does not speak as an inspired oracle or prophet, but this gift of divine assistance may not only enable him to speak to the universal Church, in time of bewilderment or painful division or other urgent necessity, a word of clarity and faith, but also may, under the conditions and severe qualifications mentioned above, negatively prevent him from formulating positive truth in a way which will lead the Church into error. Roman Catholics ask whether traditional Anglican opposition to this doctrine has taken full account of the careful limitations stated above.

Finally, the expression of primacy in terms of "universal

jurisdiction" remains a stumbling-block to Anglicans, when 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. Moreover, the manner and scope of its exercise in any future united church has already been the object of official assurances.

These clarifications and signs of progress encourage us to think that, although all difficulties have not been dissipated, we have advanced much further in convergence, in an area where convergence has never been supposed easy.

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We are convinced that if the agreement set out here is accepted by our authorities it will help us to deepen that experience of the mystery of the Church which in many places we are already beginning to share. This will open wider the way to unity in faith. Growing experience of brotherhood will make us realise increasingly how our traditions converge, how what each tradition cherishes complements the riches of the other within the whole treasure of the mystery of the Church.

28.8.76: 6.0 p.m.

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