

1st draft

RESTRICTED: TENTATIVE DRAFT

THE CHURCH AND AUTHORITY

1. The people of God, the community of the redeemed, the fellowship of the spirit, the Body of Christ - this Church or congregation of believers is entrusted with the proclamation of the gospel to all the world in anticipation of the final coming of the kingdom of God. A koinonia of believers who respond ^{to the call} of God in faith, it is at the same time, as a community, a divine gift to its members. The community is made one by Christ, and all its members are united by their shared relation to their one Lord. All actions of the Church, notably baptism and eucharist, derive their meaning from an immediate reference to him, Who is the prime actor in both sacraments. Believers know the Word of God to be mediated to them in the Bible because its focus is found in him. The tradition of the community in Bible, ministry, catechesis, and liturgy is both witness to and preserver of the authentic doctrine and fellowship of the apostles.
2. Because it is to be the means of bringing reconciliation to the world the Church must be one in itself, undivided by barriers of class, education, culture, language and race. Because the Lord is Saviour of all the World, the Church must express this universality. Therefore local Churches are one not only in their shared receiving of the Word and sacraments but also in being constituted ^{as a} single family (or "federation") in a universal church of churches, an ecclesia including also all departed saints.
3. A chief bond of the local and universal unity is found in the apostolic ministry of which the Lord is the giver. This ministry of oversight, with the preaching and sacramental life which it exists to serve, becomes integral to the sacred trust which is handed on from the apostolic age. As a vehicle of tradition, the ministry has often functioned as a strong brake on any hasty innovation or

consciously radical shift in the direction taken by the Church. It has also been one of the main signs and instruments of present unity and historical continuity through the stormy vicissitudes of history. At moments of extreme crisis, under threats of disintegration, it has made large claims for its authority. To Ignatius of Antioch the Word spoken by the Spirit to the Churches was "Do nothing without the bishop."

4. There are therefore three elements constitutive of the Church:

1) the profession of the apostolic faith, (2) the use of the sacraments, and (3) the oversight of a fully accepted apostolic ministry.

5. For both Anglicans and Roman Catholics authority is located in the tradition of the christian community, of which the principal and supreme part lies in Holy Scripture. The creeds and definitions of Councils depend for their authority partly upon their consonance with Scripture and partly upon their reception by the people of God, as well as upon their inherent authority as assemblies of men who, although fallible, meet under the inspiration of the Spirit, and are exercising together as bishops the charisma of discerning the truth among the conflicting voices of debate.

6. The decisions of Councils, such as Oecumenical Councils, especially Nicaea and Chalcedon, which have been reached on central matters of the faith are accorded so deep and wide a consensus that there is no question of their being reversed. The theologian's task is not to redo their work, nor merely to repeat what they have said in the same words, but to stand on the basis of their achievement to speak to the contemporary Church in the language of today.

They do not truly proclaim new truths, though they may often have had to deny new errors. (Positive proposals are now normally in the

form of commendation to the earnest prayer and study of the faithful. (The normal teaching/^{office} of the Church is exercised through bishops, after consultation with theologians and scholars expert in biblical studies or relevant departments of theology, philosophy, ethics etc. Even in the Anglican Communion, without a Papacy or even Patriarchate, it is natural and right that a special dignity and voice should be located in the president of the Council of bishops, and when matters of deep pastoral concern are at stake he may speak with a special paternal authority. A committee cannot be a father in God.

7. The Roman Catholic Church adds a precision to the statement that local churches are "constituted as a single family". It holds that full world wide communion, based on agreement in formulations of faith, involves an actual "togetherness" of the individual members and constituent local Churches of the universal Church, such that "schism" contradicts full communion. The most authoritative recent statement of this position is that given by Vatican II in its Decree on Ecumenism:

"(The) separated Churches and Communities, though we believe that they suffer from defects already mentioned, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic* Church* ((In the linguistic usage of Vatican II "the Catholic Church" means the Roman Catholic Communion. Cf. Lumen Gentium n.8. "This Church", i.e. the Church founded by Christ, "subsists in the Catholic Church", i.e. the Roman Catholic Communion))

"Nevertheless, our separated brethren are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those whom he has regenerated and vivified into one body and newness of life - that unity which the Holy Scriptures and the revered tradition of the Church proclaim. For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the all-embracing means of salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. (n.3)

"Cf.: The ecclesial communities separated from us lack that fullness of unity with us which should flow from baptism. (n.23. In the context the reference is to "The separated Churches and Ecclesial Communities in the West". But it seems that Vatican II could make the same point in substance with reference to the Eastern Orthodox Communion. And it is implied that "fullness of unity with us" is a deficit on the side of the the separated bodies to which there is no corresponding deficit of equal weight in our position as separated from them.

"Cf. also: for although the Catholic Church has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all means of grace ...(n.4).

"And of: (As obstacles are overcome) all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into that unity of the one and only Church which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never use, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time. (n.4).

8. Vatican II thus combines the Roman Catholic Church's traditional claim to actualise at all times the divinely given unity of the Church (her unity is the Church's unity) with a positive attitude to the other Christians. It distinguishes between the complete or "perfect" ecclesiastical communion (preserved, it is implied, in the communion of the ^{Roman}/Catholic Church) and measures of imperfect or incomplete communion which associate other bodies with the Roman Catholic Church to the extent that these other bodies possess, acknowledge, and utilise elements of that Christian wholeness which, as a whole, survives and will survive in the Roman Catholic Church.

9. The Anglican Communion has never claimed to be the unique and complete embodiment of the Body of Christ. From the end of the sixteenth century it has looked beyond its own borders, both to a free recognition of the true faith and practice present in the Roman Catholic Church, and to the ^{Orthodox Churches of the East} Eastern Churches (with whom it has shared the hope that the See of Rome could cease to make claims to universal jurisdiction which appear divisive to non-Roman Catholics). The existence of the long schism between East and West has not been a source of comfort to Anglicans. While they have often regarded the split between Canterbury and Rome as analagous to that between Constantinople and Rome, and have assumed the validity of both Roman and Orthodox sacraments (including ordination), they have thought of the schism as parenthesis and impermanent, never as a happy division that we need not seriously lay to heart, but as a bleeding wound needing to be healed. And the possibility of a temporary division in the body seems imposed by the logic not only of the sixteenth century but by other substantial movements in church history as the Eastern Schism and the Great Schism.

10. The Branch Theory of the Church can hardly be plausibly stated as it was in the seventeenth century or by the Oxford Movement. Its principal defect seems to be its placing of the main criterion of the Church in order and apostolic succession, and in making all else seem secondary. It made Bishops part of revelation. Perhaps it was a complicated way of observing that, by virtue of its commitment to the succession of bishops and its providential preservation of Catholic essentials, the Anglican Church stands necessarily closer to Rome and Constantinople than it does to Baptists, to Congregationalists and protestant free churches. The Branch Theory emerged from an ecclesiology which maintained the Church to be a visible historical entity (over against those who placed its constitutive elements wholly in the realm of the intangible and invisible) but allowed for the possibility of a temporary division under necessity. A modern Anglican would wish to say more about faith and less about order taken in isolation. It seems more profitable to avoid pressing the image of the body and its limbs (that may be severed) and to think more of what we share with others with whom we seek Communion. Before all else Anglicans share with the Roman Catholic Church the fundamental doctrinal pattern (of God, the Trinity, Creation, Man and sin, Incarnation, Redemption, Church, Sacraments, the Last Things), and are divided principally by the problem of papal authority (and what seems to Anglicans the occasionally autocratic style of magisterium), with the attendant problems of doctrines such as the Assumption which have been declared binding by papal declaration, and by the confused questions of eucharistic theology. To Anglicans these latter problems will not look anything like as grave as the former.

11. A moderate Roman Catholic view of the papacy would maintain that Christ entrusted the ^{apostles} bishops, as a college with St. Peter as its head, with the task of serving the Church by teaching the gospel, presiding over worship, and exercising pastoral oversight. The college of bishops, with the Pope at their head had succeeded to these duties. The Pope exercises these functions in two ways: with the college of bishops, and by his own authority; but in either case his power ^{according to sound interpretation} probably derives from his position as head of the college, and is not independent of the bishops.

(He also has his diocesan powers as Bishop of Rome.)

12. The authority of the Pope is ^{of divine origin} de iure divino (Vatican I).

This does not, however, imply that the particular form into which the Pope's powers have now evolved is the only form possible, or that they are completely incapable of modification.

13. ~~However it is defined doctrine that the Pope's power to teach at recognisable moments with the sure guidance of the Holy Spirit is inalienable. (The power is however so highly circumscribed and so rarely used as to make little practical impact on a Roman Catholic's life.)~~ He exercises it as head of the college, and therefore does not speak his own mind, but witnesses to the faith of the Church (though a count of heads is not implied.) He has therefore the duty to consult the Church; but the validity of his definitions does not depend on the subsequent consent of the Church.

14. Reunion is not possible unless Anglicans ^{& Catholics} can bring themselves to acknowledge papal authority, including infallibility in the ^{lead a common understanding of the} function of the Pope in the Universal Church circumscribed form outlined above.

15. Vatican I's definition of the papal primacy included the phrase "potestatem ordinariam et immediatam" over all the Churches; but this should be balanced by Vatican I's assurance that this does not interfere with the divinely-instituted "ordinary and immediate power of the bishops' jurisdiction",

and Vatican II's great emphasis on the episcopal powers.

16. Any view of the papacy likely to commend itself to Anglicans would have to make clear that a notion of "primacy of service" was central. Precise theological definition might well for many be less fundamental. It is unlikely that many Anglicans would be content with the 1870 definition as it has often been expounded in the Roman Catholic Church, or at least until the time of Vatican II. At the same time, Anglicans would wonder whether there might be some latitude in interpretation even of the teaching of Vatican I. If this were so, then even the apparently insurmountable barrier posed by Vatican I and the idea of "immediate and universal jurisdiction" might be less a stumbling block than it now appears to many.

17. The original text of the statement on the papacy by Lambeth 1968 contained these words. "Within the whole College of Bishops and in oecumenical councils it is evident that there must be a president whose office involves a personal concern for the affairs of the whole Church. This president might most fittingly be the occupant of the historic See of Rome." The text then went on to suggest that a Papacy so understood would be regarded as "having a primacy of love, implying both honour and service, in a renewed and reunited Church." Even though these words, as they stand, were not included in the final text of the Lambeth 1968 Statement, many Anglicans would argue that they do represent something like a moderate Anglican view on the role of the Papacy in a reunited Church. The final statement of Lambeth 1968 included these words "As a result of the emphasis placed on collegiality at the Second Vatican Council, the status of bishops in the Roman Catholic Church was in great measure enhanced, though the teaching of the First Vatican Council on the infallibility and

immediate and universal jurisdiction of the Pope was unaffected. We are unable to accept this teaching as it is commonly understood today. The relationships between the Pope and the episcopal college of which he is a member are, however, still being clarified, and are subject to development.... We recognise the papacy as a historic reality whose developing role requires deep reflection and joint study by all concerned for the unity of the whole Body of Christ." If there are substantial Anglican hesitations about the papacy as such, it would not be unreasonable to say that these generally have far more to do with the actual exercise of papal authority (at various periods in history) than with papacy itself or the subtleties of definition.

18. As a corollary to this moderate Anglican view - if such it be - one could suggest that from an Anglican standpoint the papal office could serve, at the very least, as a most valuable sign of the visible unity of Christ's Church. But it could also be much more than this. In the Anglican tradition, the notion of comprehensiveness (of unity and diversity, or diversity within unity) is especially cherished. But there can be no serious or theologically sound basis for such comprehensiveness unless at some point in the Church's life and structure there is a visible focus not only of unity but also of final authority. Only such a focal point can protect legitimate and enriching diversity from the tyranny of sectarianism. It could even be argued that only given such a safeguard can one take diversity as seriously as it must be taken in any Church which claims true Catholicity. One can see that the papal office, understood in this way (at least as a beginning) could well aid the fulfilment of one of the central convictions and hopes which make Anglicanism what it is.

19. After these Roman Catholic and Anglican views of papacy a possible line of convergence is now suggested. (1) There is no question of the Roman Catholics' being asked to deny 1854, 1870 and 1950. However, all agree that dogmas can be restated. Some would favour the following reinterpretation. Infallibility is not an essential attribute of papacy. The Church had the right to develop the papacy in this way under the guidance of the Spirit, but that development could be terminated. The 1870 definition, which implies that the power is of the essence of papacy, should be seen as the best answer available to the Church in the context of the historical situation in 1870. Historical research and ecumenical developments now enable a new question to be asked: is infallibility an essential attribute of papacy or a legitimate, providential but dispensable development? To this new question a new answer could be given. (2) The mariological definitions which rise from papal infallibility are not at the top of the hierarchy of doctrines (see following section) of which Vatican II speaks. Much could be achieved without the insistence that Anglicans should accept them as de fide. (They might in fact be reinterpreted as Christological statements about the relation of Christ to the Church.) (3) Anglicans need not be asked to subscribe to the belief that the Pope has in the past been infallible. Ex hypothesi, from the time of full reunion, this (inessential?) power which Roman Catholics believe to have been exercised in the past, will be bound to undergo some transformation which we cannot account for.

20. In preference to infallibility, Anglicans have preferred to speak of the Church's indefectibility; that is to say that the gates of Hell will not prevail against the Church (Mt 16: 18).

The Church, though not explicitly promised protection from error at all times, is safeguarded from a final and total departure from the truth. For the Church is indwelt by the Spirit and derives its authority from that fact. There is a tendency among some Roman Catholic theologians to go some way towards interpreting infallibility as indefectibility.

21. The theology of both Churches today recognises the Primacy of Scripture. This point is no longer an obstacle to unity. The practice of both Churches also acknowledges the freedom of scholarly enquiry.

22. The principle of the primacy of scripture can be the basis for a conception of the hierarchy of truths (ref.) which will help our growing together. The truths which are necessary to communion between the Churches are those which directly relate to the Incarnation and Redemption as recorded in the Scriptures. As the Malta Report (VII) already stated "Both communions are at one in the faith that the Church is founded upon the revelation of God the Father, made known to us in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, who is present through the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures and his Church, and is the only Mediator between God and man, the ultimate Authority for all our doctrine. Each accepts the basic truths set forth in the ecumenical creeds and the common tradition of the ancient Church, although neither communion is tied to a positive acceptance of all the beliefs and devotional practices of the other."

23. Differences concerning these beliefs and practices should not constitute an obstacle to communion. Rather should they provide

a reason for working together towards further theological convergence.

24. The question is bound to be raised whether our goal is organic union or intercommunion. We are clear that our final goal is union, but the second may be a necessary stage towards the first; but because of the many complicated non-theological factors that may take a long time to sort out, and perhaps also because some questions of divergent theological interpretations which may be clarified by going together, full communion is likely to be achieved before full organic union is in sight. But none of us thinks that communicatio in sacris can be achieved without mutual agreement on doctrinal essentials.

All communion is for the sake of unity.