CONFIDENTIAL A/R.C.I.C. 20

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

Second Meeting - Venice: 21st - 28th September 1970

THE CHURCH AND AUTHORITY

(This document was submitted to the full Commission by the Sub-Commission on 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 individual 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 through the Spirit, 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, as 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."

inherits this task, though not in such an exclusive sense that he possesses it as no other bishop or council of bishops can. When he is seen to speak with the voice of the universal Church, he speaks a truly Petrine utterance. But this function does not exclusively inhere in the office of bishop of Rome as such. Anglicans attach great importance to the Lord's commission (or commissions) to St. Peter; but they can not accept either explicit or implicit assumptions that the Petrine text of Matt. 16 can be transferred to the bishops of Rome, or that 'the Petrine office' and 'the Papacy' are virtually synonymous and interchangeable terms.

12. In preference to infallibility, Anglicans have preferred to speak of the Church's indefectibility. The Lord has promised to be with his people to the end of the world. The Spirit is given to guide the Church into all truth. Yet the empirical Church remains a Community of men who are subject to blindness and sinfulness. Therefore any given definition of authority is open to the possibility of error, so that even general councils (which, for Anglicans, remain the highest authority under the word of God) are capable of one sidedness, inadequacy, or other error (as, for example, Ariminum 359 and Ephesus 449). Yet the Church is indwelt by the Spirit and is not only safeguarded from a total and final departure from the truth but also granted continual correction. Anglicans see the classical definitions of Nicaea and Chalcedon as providing both a negative barrier to distortion and also a positive clarification and explication of the faith for the edification of the Church.

13. 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

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.

14. As a corollary to this view one could suggest that from an Anglican standpoint the papal office could serve in a united Church, 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 would be a far more practical guarantee for comprehensiveness in an age of theological pluralism if in the Church's life and structure there were a visible focus not only of unity but also of final authority. Such a focal point could 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.

Conclusion

15. It will be seen that within the disagreements and agreements many lines of convergence have already appeared. 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.

16. The principle of the Primacy of Scripture can be the basis for a conception of the hierarchy of truths. (Decree on Ecumenism) 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) of 1968 of the Anglican/ Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission 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 oecumenical 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."

17. Differences concerning theologies and devotional practices should not constitute an obstacle to communion. Perhaps the same principles could be applied to our differences on the interpretation of papal authority. Rather should they provide a reason for working together towards further doctrinal convergence.

18. The question is bound to be raised whether our goal is union or something else. We are clear that our final goal is union, but there may be an interim stage on the way. None of us thinks that communicatio in sacris can be achieved without mutual agreement on a profession of faith.

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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,

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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 a 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 document is Holy Scripture. The authority of the creeds and definitions of Councils is recognised partly through their consonance with Scripture and partly through their reception by the people of God. They have also an inherent authority as the work of assemblies of men who, though fallible, meet under the inspiration of the Spirit, and are exercising together the charisma of discerning the truth among the conflicting voices of debate.

6. The decisions of 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. They do not proclaim new truths, though they may often have had to deny new errors. The teaching office of the Church is normally exercised through bishops, after consultation with theologians and others. In the Anglican Communion a special dignity and voice are 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.

The Roman Catholic view of the Koinonia and of Authority in the Church

7. The Roman Catholic teaching on the koinonia, although at present undergoing considerable development, can be most conveniently expressed in the form of the most authoritative recent statement, which is that of Vatican II. The Council 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 and indefectibly survives in the Roman Catholic Church.

8. As formulated in Vatican II, the episcopate exercises its universal responsibility in the Church in collegial fashion, that is, through mutual consultation and participation of all in the process leading to a decision. On important matters of doctrine, the college, collectively or by its president, may decide to speak with ultimate authority. When such a decision formulates the content of the Revelation given once and for all to the Apostles, it is protected from error by the charism which is usually called "infallibility".

It is the Roman Catholic faith that the Bishop of Rome enjoys a special function of service and guidance in the Collegiality of the Episcopate. Yet this function takes place within the Church, whose assent (Vatican II) cannot fail to be given to infallible definitions although its consent is not constitutive of the truth of the defined doctrine.

In the language of the first and second Vatican Councils the function of the Bishop of Rome includes potestatem ordinariam et immediatam over all the Churches. As this power does not take away the "ordinary and immediate" authority of each bishop or the responsibility of the whole Episcopal College for the whole Church, all members of the College are to work together for the peace and harmony of its parts.

The Anglican view of the Koinonia and of Authority in the 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 recognition of apostolic faith and order present in the Roman Catholic Church (although regretting that this was overlaid with certain errors), to the Holy Orthodox Church and to non-episcopal Churches (with both of 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). While Anglicans have often regarded the split between Canterbury and Rome as analogous 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 between Rome and Canterbury as parenthetic 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 such other substantial movements in church history as the Eastern Schism and the Great Schism.

10. A modern Anglican would wish to say more about faith and less about order taken in isolation than was common in the nineteenth century. Anglicans share with the Roman Catholic Church the fundamental doctrinal pattern (of God, the Trinity, Creation, Man and sin, Incarnation, Redemption, Church, Grace, Sacraments, the Last Things), and are divided from it 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. Some questions of eucharistic theology remain to be clarified.

11. Any view of the papal authority 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 been expounded up to the present time in the Roman Catholic Church.

Anglicans believe that the commandment given to Peter is inherited in a general sense by the whole Church (to which the power to bind and loose is entrusted by the Lord in Matt. 18) and in a particular sense by every bishop of the ecclesia catholica. The Petrine duty of shepherding the flock is fulfilled by every act of the teaching ministry of the Church, whether exercised by individual bishops in their own dioceses, or by bishops in Council. As a bishop of the universal Church, the bishop of Rome certainly

inherits this task, though not in such an exclusive sense that he possesses it as no other bishop or council of bishops can. When he is seen to speak with the voice of the universal Church, he speaks a truly Petrine utterance. But this function does not exclusively inhere in the office of bishop of Rome as such. Anglicans attach great importance to the Lord's commission (or commissions) to St. Peter; but they can not accept either explicit or implicit assumptions that the Petrine text of Matt. 16 can be transferred to the bishops of Rome, or that 'the Petrine office' and 'the Papacy' are virtually synonymous and interchangeable terms.

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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.

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