

THE CHURCH AND AUTHORITY

1. Any Agreed Statement on Authority, insofar as it touches on Papal Authority, will immediately have a new status from the Agreed Statements of 1971 and 1973. It will no longer represent, at this crucial point (papal authority), faith held in common between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, because part of being an Anglican involves rejection of papal authority and living in a community apart from it. For most Anglicans papal authority has destroyed its own legitimacy by misrule, neglect, catastrophic errors, prolonged immobility and unresponsiveness. Any Anglican involvement in such an Agreed Statement would be speculative. It could not state what the Anglican faith at this point is, because there is none.

2. There is no infallible authority in anything, least of all in the Church, and the conversion of this idea into indefectibility is just as unacceptable. Both depend upon bad exegesis of Holy Scripture. Both are morally dubious, or even morally worthless, ideas. The search for such authority in the Church is an illusion. All attempts at theological definition by alpha - privative are unhelpful, except in relation to God Himself (e.g. the Definition of Chalcedon).

Christian authority is unique (St. Mark 10⁴⁵) and is ultimately only pastoral and moral and personal. Juridical authority is merely a framework, and without the support of moral qualities, loses its validity.

3. Those who belong by Baptism to the Body of Christ should participate in some significant way in the resolution of matters which seriously affect their interests. The Church is not a democracy, but a unique society. Nevertheless, the largely or exclusively hieratic structure of Church authority, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, obscures the true nature of the People of God.

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