

## The Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue about Authority in the Church

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When Christian Churches try to grow towards full visible *communion* with each other, they have to accept a common form of authority. This implies a common vision about the nature of authority in the Church, and about the way it is exercised in practice. The question of authority in the Church, particularly the authority of the Bishop of Rome, was a key element in the division that occurred at the time of the English Reformation. For four centuries both Churches developed their structures of authority in separation from each other, and Anglicans lived without the ministry of the Bishop of Rome. The theme of authority could not be absent from the agenda of the dialogue between the two Churches. The *Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission* (ARCIC), the official dialogue structure between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church,<sup>1</sup> is, to our knowledge, the only international bilateral dialogue structure which has dealt in such an exhaustive and systematic manner with the question of authority in the Church. After an examination of the themes "Eucharist" (Windsor 1971), and "Ministry and Ordination" (Canterbury 1973), during the first phase of her existence (ARCIC I, 1969-1981), this Commission has dealt twice with the problem of authority in the Church (*Authority in the Church I and II*) (Venice 1976 and Windsor 1981). Together with a number of "Elucidations," these Agreed Statements were collected in a *Final Report* in 1981.<sup>2</sup> They show clearly that

1. See A. Denaux, "Brève histoire de l'ARCIC," *From Malines to ARCIC: The Malines Conversations Commemorated*, ed. A. Denaux and J. Dick, BETL, 130 (Leuven, 1997) 111-132; W. Purdy, *The Search for Unity: Relations Between the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches from the 1950s to the 1970s* (London, 1996).

2. Cf. Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Final Report, Windsor, September 1981* (London, 1982). References to *Authority I* and *II* will be: I or

the question of "Authority in the Church," even if it is linked to that of "Ministry," cannot simply be identified with it. During the second phase of its existence, the *Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission* (ARCIC II, 1983-) has, apart from other points of concern,<sup>3</sup> dealt once more with the problem of authority in an explicit way. In its meeting in Rocca di Papa (1998), it completed the final draft of an Agreed Statement that bears the title *The Gift of Authority (Authority in the Church III)*, and which was published on 12 May 1999.<sup>4</sup> In what follows we will give a short, outline commentary of the thought process which has taken place in ARCIC on this theme, so that its relevance for ecumenical dialogue comes to the fore. Our attention will be directed mainly to *Authority III*.<sup>5</sup>

In order to have a proper hermeneutical key to read the ARCIC Statements, the reader should bear in mind at least two things. First, in accordance with the mandate given by the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, all the Agreed Statements of ARCIC were written in function of the goal to be achieved, i.e., the restoration of complete communion of faith and sacramental life between the two

II, plus the paragraph number. One can find a collection of all official texts of and about ARCIC I in C. Hill & E. J. Yarnold (eds.), *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity* (London: SPCK/CTS, 1994). See also M. J. Van Dyck, *Growing Closer Together: Rome and Canterbury: A Relationship of Hope* (Middlegreen, 1992).

3. Until now, ARCIC II has issued four documents: (1) *Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*, ARCIC II (London: Catholic Truth Society/Church House Publishing, 1987); (2) *The Church as Communion: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*, ARCIC II (London: Catholic Truth Society/Church House Publishing, 1991) (= *PCPCU Information Service* no. 77 [1991,2] 87-97); (3) *Life in Christ. Morals, Communion and the Church. An Agreed Statement by ARCIC II* (Rome/London, 1994) (= *PCPCU Information Service* no. 85 [1994,1] 54-70); (4) *Clarifications of Certain Aspects of the Agreed Statements on Eucharist and Ministry of the First Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission together with a letter from Cardinal Edward Iridis Cassidy, President Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* (Rome/London, 1994) (= *PCPCU Information Service*, no. 87 [1994,4] 237-242).

4. *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III: An Agreed Statement by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission ARCIC*, published for the Anglican Consultative Council and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (London: Catholic Truth Society/Toronto: Anglican Book Centre/New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1999) (= *PCPCU Information Service*, no. 100 [1999/I] 17-29); see also W. Henn, "A Commentary on The Gift of Authority of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission," *PCPCU Information Service*, no. 100 (1999/I) 30-42; M. Tanner, "The Gift of Authority: A Commentary," *Anglican World* (1999) 33-36.

5. Bibliographical data about the discussion concerning *Authority I* and *Authority II* are to be found in A. Denaux & L. Fuchs, "ARCIC Bibliography 1966-1996," *From Malines to ARCIC: The Malines Conversations Commemorated*, ed. A. Denaux and J. Dick, BETL, 130 (Leuven, 1997) 193-307, esp. 243-252.

churches. This is true also with respect to the agreements on authority in the Church. They are trying to bring more near "the restoration of full ecclesial communion," i.e., a full, visible unity. Second, in order to realize that goal, ARCIC has developed a characteristic ecumenical method and style. The members of ARCIC have, in the spirit of Phil 3:13, "forgetting what lies behind and straining to what lies ahead," tried "to discover each other's faith as it is today and to appeal to history only for enlightenment, not as a way of perpetuating past controversy" (*Final Report*, Preface). When studying the divisive issues between the two Churches, ARCIC avoided the emotive language of past polemics and tried to formulate the common faith, which it believed was never totally lost, in fresh expressions of faith, grounded in Scripture and the ancient common traditions. It asked of this new language only that it be consonant with and an adequate articulation of the faith and doctrine of their church.

#### Nature and Exercise of Authority in the Church (1976)

The first document, *Authority in the Church I* (1976), develops its vision in six steps: (1) Christian Authority (I,1-3); (2) Authority in the Church (I,4-7); (3) Authority in the Communion of the Churches (I,8-12); (4) Authority in Matters of Faith (I,13-18); (5) Conciliar and Primal Authority (I,19-23); and (6) Problems and Prospects (I,24-25).

The starting point is the authority which the Risen Lord receives from God, and which takes form in God's authoritative Word in the Scriptures and is active in the Church through the action of the Holy Spirit. This exercise of authority and the corresponding faithful obedience of the Church is ultimately directed towards the emergence of the *koinonia* between God and humanity and between human beings (I,1-3). Authority and obedience within the Church always have a missionary dimension: they enable Christians so to live that the authority of Christ will be mediated through them. "This is Christian authority: when Christians so act and speak, men [and women] perceive the authoritative word of Christ" (I,3).

On the basis of this foundation the attention of the document then goes on to authority *in* the Church. The Holy Spirit gives different gifts so that the Church may be a communion which tries to give conscious obedience to the Lord Jesus. The gift of *episcopate* (literally, "inspection, oversight") of the ordained ministry is given by the Holy Spirit to certain persons, so that the members of the Church can place themselves

fully under the lordship and the authority of Jesus Christ. This pastoral authority belongs primarily to the bishop (I,5-7).

The gift of *episcopate* also plays a role in the communion of Churches. Each bishop is not only responsible for the *koinonia* in his diocese, but also for the communion of his church with the other churches (I,8). In the course of history regional or ecumenical councils brought to expression this reality. Moreover, a function of oversight of other bishops of their regions was assigned to bishops of certain prominent sees (I,9-10). It is within the context of this historical development that the see of Rome, whose prominence was associated with the witness of faith (*martyrium*) there of Peter and Paul, eventually became the principal centre in matters concerning the Church universal. "The importance of the bishop of Rome among his brother bishops, as explained in analogy with the position of Peter among the apostles, was interpreted as Christ's will for his Church." The purpose of his function of *episcopate* is to promote Christian fellowship in faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles. Although neither theory nor practice has ever fully reflected these ideals, yet this primacy means "that the bishop of Rome exercises his oversight in order to guard and promote the faithfulness of all the Churches to Christ and one another. Communion with him is intended as a safeguard of the catholicity of each local church, and as a sign of the communion of all the churches" (I,12).

This authority also plays a role in matters of faith. In the course of history the Church tried to reformulate the content of its faith again and again, in consonance with the apostolic witness. Decisions of local churches, which affected the whole Church, were gradually recognized and received. Considerable weight was thus attached to their confirmation by the principal sees, and in particular by the see of Rome. The agreement of the Roman see was regarded as necessary for the general acceptance of synodal decisions in major matters of more than regional concern, and also, eventually, for their canonical validity (I,13-17). Hence, the Church has the obligation and the competence to make declarations in matters of faith. When conflict endangers unity the Church must have the effective means of resolving it. In both traditions the appeal to Scripture, to the creeds, to the Fathers, and to the definitions of the councils of the early Church is regarded as basic and normative. But the bishops have a special responsibility for promoting truth and discerning error. Even when they sometimes fail, there is confidence that such failures cannot destroy the Church's ability to proclaim the Gospel, because of the assistance of Jesus Christ and because the Holy Spirit will lead the

Church into all truth. That is why the Church, in spite of all its failures, can be described as indefectible (I,18).

Furthermore, the document states that two forms of authority have been developed in the course of the Church's history: *conciliar* and *primatial*. In times of crisis or when fundamental matters of faith are in question, the Church can meet in ecumenical council. When, faithful to Scripture and consistent with Tradition, it makes judgments on fundamental matters, it is protected from error by the Holy Spirit. The people of God acknowledges such a decision because, by its *sensus fidelium*, it recognizes in it the apostolic faith. This reception does not create truth or legitimize the decision (*Elucidation* 1981, 3). This binding authority is ascribed in both traditions to decisions of the ecumenical councils of the first centuries (I,19). Sometimes primacy is accorded to a bishop. This implies that, after consulting his fellow bishops, he may speak in their name and express their mind. Such a primacy will foster the *koinonia* by helping the bishops in their task of apostolic leadership both in their local church and in the Church universal (I,20-21). Primatial authority is to be seen as complementary to conciliar authority. Both aspects of *episcopate* serve the universal *koinonia* of the churches (I,22). "The only see which makes any claim to universal primacy and which has exercised and still exercises such *episcopate* is the see of Rome, the city where Peter and Paul died. It seems appropriate that in any future union a universal primacy such as has been described should be held by that see" (I,23). This is not only a historical argument, but at the same time a doctrinal position: "According to Christian doctrine the unity in truth of the Christian community demands visible expression. We agree that such visible expression is the will of God and that the maintenance of visible unity at the universal level includes the *episcopate* of an universal primate." Not only Catholics but also Anglicans can subscribe to such an assertion, because Anglicanism has never rejected the principle and the practice of primacy. Moreover, in view of the historical development, it seems appropriate to locate this universal primacy in the see of Rome, and even this historical development cannot be dissociated from the providential action of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that all that has evolved historically or that is currently practised by the Roman see is necessarily normative. Indeed much Anglican opposition has been directed against the manner of the exercise, and particular claims, of the Roman primacy rather than against universal primacy as such (*Elucidation* 1981, no. 8).

### Difficulties Concerning the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome (1981)

In its second Statement, *Authority in the Church II* (1981), the Commission focuses on four problems related to the primacy of the bishop of Rome, on which agreement had not yet been reached: the scriptural basis of the Petrine office (II,2-9), its institution *iure divino* (II,10-14), the nature of the jurisdiction ascribed to the bishop of Rome as universal primate (II,16-22), and the affirmation of papal infallibility (II,23-33).

The Petrine texts of the New Testament attribute to Peter a special position among the Twelve, already during Jesus' ministry, and also in the period of the early Church (II,3). Yet, responsibility for pastoral leadership was not restricted to Peter (II,4). In spite of his failure Peter receives a particular call by Christ (Lk 6:14; John 21:15-17), a position of special importance. Peter's role in strengthening the brethren (Lk 22:32) is a leadership of service (Lk 22:24ff.). He serves the Church "by helping it to overcome threats to its unity (e.g. Acts 11:1-18), even if his weakness may require help or correction, as is clear from his rebuke by Paul (Gal 2:11-14). These considerations help clarify the analogy that has been drawn between the role of Peter among the apostles and that of the bishop of Rome among his fellow bishops" (II,5). Even if some aspects of the authority of the apostles and, more particularly, Peter's leadership cannot be transmitted, however, this does not exclude the continuation of a ministry of unity guided by the Spirit among those who continue the apostolic mission (II,6,8). Therefore, "it is possible to think that a primacy of the bishop of Rome is not contrary to the New Testament and is part of God's purpose regarding the Church's unity and catholicity, while admitting that the New Testament texts offer no sufficient basis for this" (II,7). The Commission finally concludes that "a universal primacy will be needed in a reunited Church and should appropriately be the primacy of the bishop of Rome" (II,9).

In the second place, the Commission deals with the assertion of the First Vatican Council that the primacy of the successor in the chair of Peter is of 'divine right' (*iure divino*). The Council used the term *iure divino* to signify that this primacy derives from Christ. It means at least that "this primacy expresses God's purpose for his Church," but in this context the term need not be taken to imply that "the universal primacy as a permanent institution was directly founded by Jesus during his life on earth" (II,11). Neither does this doctrine entail the consequence "that a Christian community out of communion with the see of Rome does not belong to the Church of God"; such a community "may lack nothing ... except that it does not belong to the visible manifestation of

full Christian communion which is maintained in the Roman Catholic Church" (II,12). In the past, Roman Catholic teaching that the bishop of Rome is universal primate by divine right or law has been regarded by Anglicans as unacceptable, because it seemed to imply a denial that the churches of the Anglican Communion are churches. When, given the recent developments, Anglicans are now ready to accept that the universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome emerges by divine providence (*divina providentia*), it is reasonable to ask whether a gap still really exists between this view and the Roman Catholic assertion of a primacy by divine right (*iure divino*). The primacy of the bishop of Rome can thus be affirmed as part of God's design for the universal *koinonia* in terms which are compatible with both traditions. The language of divine right used by the First Vatican Council need no longer be seen as a matter of disagreement between the two Confessions (II,13-15).

In the third place, the Commission deals with the difficult question of papal jurisdiction. "Jurisdiction" is defined as "the authority or power (*potestas*) necessary for the exercise of an office." Because there are different levels of *episcopate*, the jurisdictions associated with them are not in all respects identical (II,16). Hence, within the universal *koinonia* and the collegiality of the bishops, the universal primate exercises the jurisdiction necessary for the fulfillment of his functions, the chief of which is to serve the faith and unity of the whole Church (II,17).

The attribution of universal, ordinary and immediate jurisdiction to the bishop of Rome by the First Vatican Council is, even when these technical terms are rightly understood, a source of anxiety to Anglicans. They fear, for example, that the diversity of local traditions and the rightful freedom of conscience, thought and action could be imperilled by the exercise of such a jurisdiction (II,18). But this can be counterbalanced by a collegial exercise of the Petrine Office and the recognition of the moral limits to its exercise (II,19-20). Nevertheless, there remain specific questions about their practical application in a united Church. "Anglicans are entitled to assurance that acknowledgement of the universal primacy of the bishop of Rome would not involve the suppression of theological, liturgical and other traditions which they value or the imposition of wholly alien traditions." The Commission believes that the vision of universal jurisdiction it has developed provides grounds for such assurance (II,21).

Finally, the Commission treats the question of papal infallibility. Its members are agreed that the Church, according to the promise of the Lord, will be fundamentally kept in the truth. This implies that at certain moments the Church can, in a matter of essential doctrine, make a

decisive judgement via decisions taken by universal councils or, in a united Church, via a decision of the bishop of Rome as universal primate who, with due respect to rigorous conditions (cp. Vat. I), can speak with authority in the name of the Church. In spite of this agreement over the need of a universal primacy in a united Church, there remains a disagreement concerning the function of the "acceptance" or "reception" by the Church of such papal definitions. Whereas Roman Catholics would conclude that, when it is plain that all conditions are fulfilled, a papal definition is preserved from error without any subsequent assent of the Church (cp. *non autem ex consensu Ecclesiae* of Vat. I), "Anglicans do not accept the guaranteed possession of such a gift of divine assistance in judgement necessarily attached to the office of the bishop of Rome by virtue of which his formal decisions can be known to be wholly assured before their reception by the faithful" (II,31).

On the basis of this second Statement the Commission is able to affirm that the Church needs both a multiple, dispersed authority, within which all God's people are actively involved, and also a universal primate as servant and focus of visible unity in truth and love. Moreover, some difficulties concerning the relationship between conciliarity and primacy will not be wholly solved until a practical initiative has been taken and both Churches begin to live together more visibly in the one *koinonia* (II,33).

### Reactions of the Churches Involved (1988, 1991)

The Commission submitted its Final Report to the authorities of the Churches from which it had received its mandate. The Commission thought that it had "reached agreement on essential points of eucharistic doctrine" (Windsor Statement, Preface), a "consensus" about the nature of ministry, i.e., "on essential matters where it considers that doctrine admits no divergence" (Canterbury Statement, 1973, conclusion), "a consensus on authority in the Church and, in particular, on the basic principles of primacy" (Venice Statement, 1976, no. 24), and a certain convergence on the four problems related to primacy which had not yet been solved: the interpretation of the Petrine texts of the New Testament, the meaning of the language of 'divine right,' the affirmation of papal infallibility, and the nature of the jurisdiction ascribed to the bishop of Rome as universal primate (*Authority in the Church II*, 1981, no. 1). It was the first time that the Final Report of an official dialogue was submitted to the judgement of the respective Churches.

In preparation for the 1988 Lambeth Conference the *Anglican Consultative Council* sent copies to each Province and asked for their opinion about the Final Report. The answers of 19 of the 29 Provincial Synods were summarized and discussed in the *Emmaus Report* (1987).<sup>6</sup> The 1988 Lambeth Conference (Resolution 8) issued a twofold assessment of the documents. On the one hand it stated that it "recognises the Agreed Statements of ARCIC I on *Eucharistic Doctrine, Ministry and Ordination*, and their *Elucidations*, as consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans and believes that this agreement offers a sufficient basis for taking the next step forward towards the reconciliation of our Churches." However, with respect to *Authority in the Church (I and II)*, together with the *Elucidation*, the Conference did not go so far. It agreed to welcome these documents "as a firm basis for the direction and agenda of the continuing dialogue on authority," but an analysis of the content of the Statements on authority was not given.<sup>7</sup> Even if this Resolution does not have binding, legal force within the Anglican Communion, it articulates its common mind.

In the Roman Catholic Church the Report was sent by Card. Willebrands, Chairman of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, to all Episcopal Conferences to ask for their evaluation. Some responses were published afterwards, namely, those of the United States, England and Wales, and France.<sup>8</sup> It is not known how many Episcopal Conferences finally sent a response. However, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was quick to publish its *Observations on the Final Report of ARCIC I* and to send them to the Chairmen of the Episcopal Conferences and to the patriarchal Synods of the Eastern rites "in a spirit of contribution to the dialogue and in order that the faithful

6. *Emmaus Report* (London: ACC/Church House Publishing, 1987).

7. *The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988: The Reports, Resolutions & Pastoral Letters from the Bishops* (London: ACC/Church House Publishing, 1988) 210-212, esp. 211: Resolution 8.3: "Welcomes *Authority in the Church (I and II)* together with the *Elucidation*, as a firm basis for the direction and agenda of the continuing dialogue on authority and wishes to encourage ARCIC II to continue to explore the basis in Scripture and Tradition of the concept of a universal primacy, in conjunction with collegiality, as an instrument of unity, the character of such a primacy in practice, and to draw upon the experience of other Christian Churches in exercising primacy, collegiality and conciliarity" (= C. Hill & E. Yarnold, *Anglicans and Roman Catholics* [n. 2], 153).

8. Bishop's Conference of England and Wales, *Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I* (London, 1985) (= *The Tablet*, 11 May 1985, 491-495; C. Hill & E. Yarnold, *Anglicans and Roman Catholics* [n. 2], 94-110); U.S.A. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Evaluation of the Final Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission," *One in Christ* 21 (1985) 320-329; La Conférence Episcopale Française, "Évaluation du Rapport final de l'ARCIC," *La Documentation Catholique* 67 (1985) 867-876.

would more easily appreciate the Final Report of ARCIC in the light of the fundamental principles of the Catholic doctrine."<sup>9</sup> In a common declaration issued by Pope John Paul II and Dr. R. Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, on the occasion of the visit of the Pope to the *Church of England* (May 1982), both Church leaders communicated their decision to start up a new International Commission. The task of the new Commission (ARCIC II) would be to continue the work already begun: "to examine, especially in the light of our respective judgements on the Final Report, the outstanding doctrinal differences which still separate us, with a view towards their eventual resolution; to study all that hinders the mutual recognition of the ministries of our Communion; and to recommend what practical steps will be necessary when, on the basis of our unity in faith, we are able to proceed to the restoration of full communion."<sup>10</sup> On 30th October 1982, in the Campo Santo Teutonico at Rome, Cardinal J. Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, delivered a lecture entitled: "Probleme und Hoffnungen des anglikanischen-katholischen Dialogs." The text of this personal, very lucid analysis of some of the presuppositions of ARCIC I was translated into different languages in 1983.<sup>11</sup> The official response of the Roman Catholic Church (*Catholic Response to the Final Report*) finally appeared in 1991.<sup>12</sup> One may ask why the official Catholic response was published so late. The question is still more urgent when

9. This document was dated 29th March 1982 and published in *Osservatore Romano* in English on 6th May 1982 (= C. Hill & E. Yarnold, *Anglicans and Roman Catholics* [n. 2], 79-91: *Observations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the Final Report of ARCIC I [1982]*). In a later publication (see n. 11, p. 252-253) Cardinal Ratzinger mentions the shock felt by some at the hasty reaction by an official organ of the teaching authority of the Pope. He explains that this merely shows that ARCIC I had not taken sufficient account of the concrete ways authority is exercised in the two communions.

10. "Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and the Archbishop of Canterbury (May 29th 1982)," *PCPCU Information Service* no. 49 (1982, II/III) 46-27, esp. 47.

11. J. Ratzinger, "Probleme und Hoffnungen des anglikanisch-katholischen Dialogs," *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 12 (1983) 244-259 (English translation: "Anglican-Catholic Dialogue - Its Problems and Hopes," *Anglicans and Roman Catholics* [n. 2], 251-282).

12. "Riposta cattolica al 'Rapporti Finale' della prima commissione mista internazionale tra la Chiesa cattolica e la Comunione anglicana (ARCIC-I) (1971-1981)," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 6 Dec. 1991, p. 10; English translation: "Catholic Response to ARCIC-I," *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 16 Dec. 1991, p. 21-22; cf. *Response of the Holy See to the Final Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, 1982: with a Statement from the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales* (London: CTS Publications, 1991) (= C. Hill & E. Yarnold, *Anglicans and Roman Catholics* [n. 2], 156-166). We refer to the edition of Hill and Yarnold which, in contrast to the original publication, is numbered.

one observes that, as regards content, the Catholic Response did not add new insights to the remarks of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in 1982.<sup>13</sup> Did the responses of the Episcopal Conferences arrive too late? Were they so numerous that more time was needed to integrate them into the Catholic Response? Were there tensions between the two Roman dicasteries which were involved in the editing of the Catholic Response, namely the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity? Did the Roman authorities wait for the response of the Lambeth Conference, which only took place in 1988? One can but guess at the true reason. Whatever the reason may be, and however one may evaluate the Catholic Response,<sup>14</sup> one has to recognize in any case that the Roman Catholic Church fulfilled its task very carefully. Its response is extensive. It enters thoroughly into the different positions taken by ARCIC. In general the Catholic Response gave a warm welcome to the Final Report and expressed its gratitude for the achievement of points of convergence and even of agreement. It judged, however, that it was not yet possible to state that a substantial agreement was reached regarding the Eucharistic Doctrine and the Ordained Ministry, nor that the Statements on these matters correspond fully to the Catholic doctrine. For this reason, the Response asked for further clarifications on several points.

With respect to the two Agreed Statements on *Authority in the Church*, the Catholic Response recognizes that, even if no substantial agreement has been reached, but only a certain convergence, there is nevertheless encouraging progress on certain points.<sup>15</sup> Despite all this,

13. Moreover, a comparison of the two texts shows that the Remarks of the Congregation (1982) are more clearly structured and presented than the Catholic Response (1991), which gives a somewhat messy impression! The *Remarks of the Congregation*, B,III, surprisingly only deal with *Authority in the Church II*, and the *Elucidation*. The Congregation organizes its critical remarks around five points: 1) Interpretation of the Petrine Texts of the New Testament; 2) Primacy and Jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome; 3) Infallibility and Indefectibility; 4) General Councils; and 5) 'Reception'.

14. C. Hill and E. Yarnold (*Anglicans and Roman Catholics* [n. 2]) collect the most important reactions from official bodies (the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the French Roman Catholic Episcopal Commission for Christian Unity, and the Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States), from members of ARCIC (H. Chadwick, C. Hill, and E. Yarnold), and from experts (F. Sullivan, J. Vercruyse, and J. McHugh). A critique that was frequently heard, is that the *Catholic Response*, in comparing the ARCIC expressions of faith more with the formulations than with the content of Catholic faith, did not do sufficient justice to the ecumenical method of ARCIC, which has always tried to express the common faith in formulations which go beyond the times of division.

15. More specifically the Catholic Response underlines the fact that Anglicans recognize that a "primacy of the Bishop of Rome is not contrary to the New Testament, and is part of God's purpose regarding the Church's unity and catholicity" (*Authority II*, 7).

there are still other areas that are essential to Catholic doctrine on which complete agreement or even, at times, convergence has eluded the Commission (*Catholic Response*, 9-10), and where the Statements of ARCIC I are not consistent with Catholic faith. They concern more specifically the nature of the primacy of the bishop of Rome and the infallibility of his Teaching Office (*Catholic Response*, 11-12, 14). The Catholic Response focuses on four points.

Firstly, there is the question of the relationship between the Teaching Office of the Church and the *assent* or *reception* of the faithful. The *Final Report* is not clear on this point. On the one hand it says, and rightly so, that reception of a defined truth by the People of God "does not create truth nor legitimize the decision" (*Authority I, Elucidation*, 3). On the other hand, it would seem elsewhere in the *Final Report* that the "assent of the faithful" is required for the recognition that a doctrinal decision of the Pope or of an Ecumenical Council is immune from error (*Authority II*, 27 and 31). "For the Catholic Church, the certain knowledge of any defined truth is not guaranteed by the reception of the faithful that such is in conformity with Scripture and Tradition, but the authoritative definition itself on the part of the authentic teachers" (*Catholic Response*, 15).

Secondly, the Catholic Church has difficulties with the assertion of the *Final Report* that the scope of doctrinal definitions by the Councils which are free from error, is limited to "fundamental doctrines" or "central truths of salvation" (*Authority I, Elucidation*, 3). "The Catholic Church believes that the Councils or the Pope, even when acting alone, are able to teach, if necessary in a definitive way, within the range of *all* truth revealed by God" (*Catholic Response*, 16).

A third difficulty concerns the view of ARCIC I as to the measure in which the *communio* with the See of Rome affects the "ecclesial" status of a Christian community. The text of *Authority II*, 12, which was quoted above, refers in this respect to *Lumen Gentium*, 8 and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 13, but it does not do justice to these conciliar texts. "It is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that a church not in communion with the Roman Pontiff lacks more than just the visible manifestation of unity with the Church of Christ which subsists in the Roman Catholic Church" (*Catholic Response*, 17).

If this is taken with the statement made by His Grace Archbishop Runcie during his visit to Pope John Paul II in 1989 (cf. *PCPCU Information Service* no. 71 [1989, III-IV] 111-123, esp. 118) and the reference to infallibility in *Authority II*, then one can rejoice in the fact that centuries of antagonism have given way to a reasoned dialogue and theological reflection undertaken together (*Catholic Response*, 9).

Finally, the manner in which ARCIC I speaks of the role of Peter among the twelve (*Authority II*, 3 and 5), does not express the fullness of the Catholic faith, as it is defined by the First Vatican Council, namely, that the bishop of Rome inherits the primacy from Peter who received it "immediately and directly" from Christ (*DS* 3055; cf. *LG*, 22), and from which it becomes clear that the primacy of the bishop of Rome belongs to the divine structure of the Church. From a Catholic viewpoint, it is not possible then to accept the interpretation given by ARCIC I, that the divine institution of the primacy does not include "that the universal primacy as a permanent institution was directly founded by Jesus during his life on earth" (*Authority II*, 11). "The Catholic Church sees rather in the primacy of the successors of Peter something positively intended by God and deriving from the will and institution of Jesus Christ" (*Catholic Response*, 18).

### Authority, God's Gift to Church and World (1999)

On 12 May 1999 ARCIC issued a third Agreed Statement on authority in the Church. The document is the result of five years of dialogue, study and prayer.<sup>16</sup> It received the following title and subtitle: "*The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III*."<sup>17</sup> In a time when

16. The Statement was drafted in the plenary sessions of ARCIC, which always took place at the end of August and the beginning of September, in Jerusalem (1994), Venice (1995), Malines (Belgium) (1996), Alexandria (near Washington, DC) (1997), and Rocca di Papa (near Rome) (1998). The Commission worked on a *Draft*, which was prepared by four of its members and which afterwards was redrafted in the light of the discussion during the plenary sessions. These were respectively (according to the official numbering of the ARCIC archives) the pieces ARCIC II (Authority) 326/94: *The Exercise of Authority in the Church* – pre-draft Text, *Birmingham Draft*, 9 April 1994; ARCIC II (Authority) 341/95: *Authority in the Church*. Draft prepared for Venice Meeting; ARCIC II (Authority) 355/96: *The Gift of Authority*, *Birmingham Draft*, January 1996; ARCIC II (Authority) 384/97: *The Gift of Authority (Authority in the Church III)*, *Storington Draft*, January 1997; ARCIC II (Authority) 403/98: (same title as in 1997), *Rome Draft* (2-10 January 1998). The drafters were the Anglicans Rt Revd John Baycroft, bishop of Ottawa, Canada, and Revd Dr Nicholas Sagovsky, University of Newcastle, UK; and the Catholics Prof. Jean M. R. Tillard OP, Dominican Faculty of Theology, Ottawa, Canada, and The Revd Peter Cross, Professor of Systematic Theology, Catholic Theological College, Clayton, Australia. In 1997, reactions were asked of some external readers: cp. ARCIC II (Authority) 387/97 (Mary Tanner); 388/97 (Jared Wicks); 389/97 (Msgr. Michael Jackson); 394/97 (John Suggit). See also the pieces 390/97 (Timothy Galligan); 396/97; 397/97; 398/97; 400/97 which show the input of subgroups during the plenary session in Alexandria.

17. Cf. note 4. We refer to this document as follows: *Gift*, plus the paragraph number.

authority is often experienced as an institution which should be distrusted because it hinders individual freedom, the title of the Statement is worth considering. It stresses an easily forgotten aspect of authority in the Church, namely, that authority is a gift from God to his Church, which has no other purpose than to serve the Church in its growth to a full faithful obedience to the Word of God, that has been definitively addressed to her in Jesus Christ. The subtitle makes clear that the Statement builds on all the previous ARCIC work on authority, which is summarized in the first paragraph (*Gift*, 1). Nevertheless, the Commission found it necessary to return to the issue of authority in the Church. Why? Firstly, because the *Final Report* recognized that, despite the considerable progress achieved, some serious issues had still to be resolved. Secondly, because the official Anglican and Catholic responses to *The Final Report* both requested ARCIC to do so. They indicated that the Statements in the Report provided a good foundation for further dialogue. The principal points they put to the Commission were: the relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the exercise of teaching authority; collegiality, conciliarity, and the role of laity in decision making; the Petrine ministry of universal primacy in relation to Scripture and Tradition (*Gift*, 3). Thirdly, it is hoped that this further Statement will contribute to the discussion of authority that is taking place in both Churches.<sup>18</sup> Finally, unless both Churches can reach sufficient agreement about authority, which touches so many aspects of their life, they will not reach the full visible unity to which they are both committed. One can thus say that, even if *Authority III* builds on and subscribes to the previous ARCIC work on authority, at certain points it goes beyond the positions taken in *Authority I* and *II*.<sup>19</sup>

18. Anglicans were asked by the 1998 *Lambeth Conference* to reflect on and study important questions about authority in the Anglican Communion raised in *The Virginia Report: The Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission* (1997), which was prepared for the Conference. Among these questions is the issue of universal authority in the Church. Pope John Paul II in his 1995 Encyclical *Ut unum sint* also called for a patient and fraternal dialogue about the ministry of unity of the Bishop of Rome so that it can be accepted by all. Two recent decisions, which have rendered the dialogue more difficult, are not mentioned explicitly, but they certainly play a role in the background (especially in the approach to the notion of "Tradition"), namely, the decision by the 1988 Lambeth Conference to admit women to the episcopal ministry, and the Declaration *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* of the Roman Catholic Church (1994).

19. In his internal *Report and Analysis of Gift*, the *Faith and Order* observer, Michael Root (see ARCIC II [Authority] 431/99, p. 9-15), points to the question of the relationship between *Auth. III* (= *Gift*) and *Auth. I* and *II* with respect to the question of "reception." *Gift*, § 42 and 43, has some descriptive, indicative statements about the subordination of the teaching authority to Scripture and about reception being integral to the process of teaching. These statements go beyond what *Auth. II*, § 25 and 29, says

The Statement *The Gift of Authority* displays the following structure:

I. INTRODUCTION (nos. 1-6)

II. AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH (nos. 7-31)

Jesus Christ: God's "Yes" to Us and Our "Amen" to God (nos. 7-10)

The Believer's "Amen" in the "Amen" of the Local Church (nos. 11-13)

Tradition and Apostolicity: The Local Church's "Amen" in Communion of the Churches (nos. 14-18)

The Holy Scriptures: The "Yes" of God and the "Amen" of God's People (nos. 19-23)

Reception and Re-Reception: The Church's "Amen" to the Word of God (nos. 24-25)

Catholicity: The "Amen" of the Whole Church (nos. 26-31)

III. THE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH (nos. 32-40)

Proclaiming the Gospel: The Exercise of Authority for Mission and Unity (no. 32-33)

Synodality: The Exercise of Authority in Communion (nos. 34-40)

Perseverance in Truth: The Exercise of Authority in Teaching (nos. 41-44)

Primacy: The Exercise of Authority in Collegiality and Co-ciliarity (nos. 45-48)

Discipline: The Exercise of Authority and the Freedom of Conscience (nos. 49)

The Church's "Amen" to God's "Yes" in the Gospel (no. 50)

IV. AGREEMENT IN THE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY: STEPS TOWARDS VISIBLE UNITY (nos. 51-63)

Advances in this Agreement (no. 52)

Significant Developments in Both Communions (nos. 53-55)

Issues Facing Anglicans (no. 56)

Issues Facing Roman Catholics (no. 57)

Renewed Collegiality: Making Visible our Existing Communion (nos. 58-59)

Universal Primacy: A Gift to be Shared (nos. 60-63)

This survey can only give a taste of the full riches of the agreed Statement. It can in no way replace the reading of it. Each sentence counts towards the building up of the theological vision which is put forward here. An assessment doing justice to the new Statement asks for a careful reading, in which each individual section of the document is not considered in isolation, but placed in its proper context.

*Authority in the Church* (*Gift*, 7-31)

A careful reading of the subtitles of the second Section "Authority in the Church" (*Gift*, 7-31) reveals the leitmotiv which carries the whole

about reception and the Anglican reservation stated there, in such a sense that the Commission judged that the specific language of *Auth. II* was no longer necessary. This does not imply that what *Auth. II* had to say about reception has now been rejected as mistaken.

discourse. It is derived from 2 Cor 1:18-20, where Paul defends the authority of his teaching by pointing to the trustworthy authority of God himself. "Paul speaks of the 'Yes' of God to us and the 'Amen' of the Church to God. In Jesus Christ, Son of God and born of a woman, the 'Yes' of God to humanity and the 'Amen' of humanity to God become a concrete human reality. This theme of God's 'Yes' and humanity's 'Amen' in Jesus Christ is the key to the exposition of authority in this statement" (*Gift*, 8). Hereby the theological framework is given in which any reflection about ecclesial authority has to be situated. The ministry of authority in the Church has no other purpose than to help the Church and the world to hear God's "Yes" and to enable them to say a wholehearted "Amen" to it. This framework also gives a "catholic" openness to the Statement, in that it refuses to get caught up in false polarities which often have hindered the dialogue in the past, such as freedom and obedience, the individual's belief and the belief of the Church, Scripture and Tradition, Word of God and Authority of the Church, ordained ministry and laity, local and universal church, synodality and primacy. In all these fields, the false dichotomy of either/or should give way to the catholic paradox of both/and.<sup>20</sup>

Moving forward within this controlling theme, it is first said that the faithful "Amen" of the individual Christian, whatever the concrete circumstances of life in which it originated, is always embedded both in the faith of the Christian community, the local church, that is, the eucharistic community where he/she is at home, and at the same time, the community of faith throughout all times and places (*Gift*, 11-13). "The believer is incorporated into an 'Amen' of faith, older, deeper, broader, richer than the individual's 'Amen' to the Gospel" (*Gift*, 13).

Then the Statement deals with the question of the relationship among Scripture, Tradition and the exercise of authority, something which was explicitly asked for by the authorities of both Churches. The Statement does not take its starting point in Scriptures, but begins with a very rich, composite description of the apostolic *Tradition* (*Gift*, 14-18). The living tradition precedes the written record of it in the Scriptures. "Tradition" refers to the process, through which the revealed Word, to which the apostolic community originally bore witness, is received and communicated through the life of the whole

Christian community.<sup>21</sup> The Holy Spirit guides this tradition, or handing on of the Gospel, through the ministry of Word and Sacrament and in the common life of the people of God (*Gift*, 14). Tradition is "the channel of the love of God," "integral to the economy of grace, love and communion," and is "both a treasure to be received by the people of God and a gift to be shared with all humanity" (*Gift*, 15), "an act of communion" which "unites the local churches" with each other and "with those that preceded them in the one apostolic faith" (*Gift*, 16). In that sense Tradition expresses the apostolicity of the Church (*Gift*, 17). Tradition makes the witness of the apostolic community present in the Church today through its corporate *memory* (*Gift*, 18).

Then, the *Holy Scriptures* are situated within Tradition (*Gift*, 19-23). They occupy a unique and normative place, since they are the uniquely inspired witness to divine revelation. The Church regards this corpus alone as the inspired Word of God written and, as such, uniquely authoritative (*Gift*, 19). The Commission is aware of the hermeneutical problem involved here. On the one hand, it pays attention to the historical growth of these Scriptures (*Gift*, 20-21). This insight was introduced by historical-critical exegesis. On the other hand, it points also to the fact that the revealed Word of God can be understood in its full meaning only within the Church. The faith of the community precedes the faith of the individual (*Gift*, 23). That means: neither historical-critical exegesis, nor the interpretation of the individual believer, can open up the full meaning of the Scriptures, although both are indispensable in the process of interpretation of the Scriptures which continuously unfolds in the history of the Church. This constant attention to the harmony among Scripture, Tradition, authority and obedience is beautifully expressed in the paragraph about the canon: "The formation of the canon of the Scriptures was an integral part of the process of tradition. The

20. Cf. W. Henn, "A Commentary on The Gift of Authority" (n. 4), p. 30.

21. As is stated explicitly (*Gift*, p. 16, note 1), the Commission here uses the ecumenical language which was accepted at the Fourth World Conference of Faith and Order in Montreal in 1963 (Section II, § 39): *Tradition* (with capital) refers to "the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church," while the uncapitalized word *tradition* refers to "the traditionary process," the handing-on of the revealed truth. The plural *traditions* refers to peculiar features of liturgy, theology, canonical and ecclesial life in the various cultures and faith communities. These usages, however, often cannot be sharply distinguished. The phrase *apostolic Tradition* refers to the content of what has been transmitted from apostolic times and continues to be the foundation of Christian life and theology.

Church's recognition of these Scriptures as canonical, after a long period of critical discernment, was at the same time an act of obedience and of authority. It was an act of *obedience* in that the Church discerned and received God's life-giving 'Yes' through the Scriptures, accepting them as the norm of faith. It was an act of *authority* in that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, received and handed on these texts, declaring that they were inspired and that others were not to be included in the canon" (*Gift*, 22).

Further, two very important paragraphs are devoted to the notion of "reception" and "re-reception" of the Tradition (*Gift*, 24-25). About "reception," two things are said (*Gift*, 24). First, the process of reception throughout the centuries is at one and the same time an act of faithfulness and of freedom. The Church must remain faithful to its apostolic origin so that the Christ, at his return, will recognize in her the community he founded. However, the Church must continue to be free to "receive" the apostolic Tradition in new ways according to the situations with which it is confronted.<sup>22</sup> Further, the Church has the responsibility to hand on the whole apostolic Tradition, even though there may be parts which it finds hard to integrate in its life and worship. It may be that what was of great significance in the past will again be important in the future, though its importance is not clear in the present.<sup>23</sup> The paragraph about "re-reception" (*Gift*, 25) strikes a note of thoroughgoing realism and opens up a promising way towards ecumenical *metanoia* and renewal. Indeed, for an ecumenical agreed statement to be forceful it is

22. This assertion about "reception" in "faithfulness and freedom" (*Gift*, 24) offers, it seems to us, an interesting hermeneutical key for further discussions about the theological legitimacy of new developments in the Church, for example, the ordination of women. Faithfulness to the apostolic Tradition does not mean necessarily or exclusively "unchangeability," but implies by nature also freedom for renewal, under the influence of new circumstances. Not only traditions can change, but also, at least in a certain sense, Tradition itself, although the latter has to keep and to cherish the "once for all." If one understands the distinction between Tradition and traditions in such a way, that the former is unchangeable while the latter changeable, this makes Tradition an a-historical reality. As a historical given the apostolic Tradition is always intrinsically interwoven with traditions. The process of discernment between changing and unchanging aspects of Tradition is therefore a delicate undertaking.

23. According to W. Henn ("A Commentary on The Gift of Authority" [n. 4], 32), the fact that *Gift*, 24 stresses the reception of the *whole* Tradition may be an answer to the critical remark of the *Catholic Response* (no. 16) concerning *Authority I. Elucidation*, 3, that the scope of doctrinal definitions would be limited to "fundamental doctrines" or "central truths of salvation" (see above). ARCIC I seemed to suggest that the Church could somehow stand over and above revelation, declaring what are the central and normative doctrines, while leaving to the liberty of the individual believer those which are not deemed to be central. In this matter also, one should search for a balance between, on the one hand, the traditional conviction that the

not sufficient for it to put forward an ideal description of "Tradition" and its "reception," upon which everybody easily can agree. One has to accept that the division between the Churches has caused gaps in the process of reception. Division has obscured in a certain way our view of the fullness of Tradition. The collective memory of the people of God can be affected or even distorted by human finitude and sin. Some aspects of apostolic Tradition may be forgotten, so to speak, to the detriment of the Church communities involved. Therefore, fresh recourse to the Tradition is needed, with the help of the insights of biblical scholars and theologians and the wisdom of holy persons. This can lead to a rediscovery of elements that were neglected, to a sifting of formulations which, in a new context, are seen to be inadequate or even misleading. This whole process may be termed "re-reception." In this paragraph no concrete examples are given. However, paragraph 62 shows clearly that the universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome could be subject to "re-reception," even from both sides, Anglicans as well as Roman Catholics. As long as churches, the Church of Rome included, do not have the courage to concede that their vision of the fullness of apostolic Tradition has been obscured by the polemics of division, and that therefore ecumenical *metanoia* is needed, the ecumenical movement will not make much progress.

Finally, authority in the Church is related to the *catholicity* of the Church (*Gift*, 26-31). The process of tradition occurs in time, from one generation to another (diachronic aspect), but it entails also the communion of the churches in all places (synchronic aspect) (*Gift*, 26). The diversity of traditions is thus a concrete manifestation of catholicity (*Gift*, 27). The process of tradition is the responsibility of the whole people of God, in which all bodies, bishops, clergy and lay people have their part and work together. Theologians in particular serve the communion of the whole Church by exploring whether and how new insights should be integrated into the ongoing stream of Tradition (*Gift*, 28). Within this framework, the *sensus fidei* of the believer has its role to play. This is described as "an active capacity for spiritual discernment, an intuition that is formed by worshipping and living in communion as a faithful

authority of God underlies the whole of revelation (and hence should be accepted) and, on the other hand, the methodological principle of any ecumenical dialogue, as formulated by Vatican II (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 11), namely the "hierarchy of truths." From *Gift*, 24 it is clear now that ARCIC II subscribes to the traditional conviction but, at the same time, throughout its Statement the Commission applies the hermeneutical principle of the "hierarchy of truths," i.e. by situating the "teaching authority of the Church" within the framework of a Trinitarian vision of authority and obedience (see especially *Gift*, 7-10).

member of the Church." When this capacity is exercised in concert by the body of the faithful we may speak of the exercise of the *sensus fidelium*. The latter contributes to, receives from and treasures the ministry of those within the community who exercise *episcopate*, watching over the living memory of the Church (*Gift*, 29). However, those who exercise *episcopate* in the Body of Christ need to be alert to the contribution of the *sensus fidelium*. This mutual cooperation between the *sensus fidelium* of the people of God and those who exercise the ministry of "memory," is described by the patristic image of a "symphony" (*Gift*, 30). In addition to the broad communion in time and space, this "symphony" of *sensus fidelium* and *episcopate* is an indispensable dimension of catholicity. Meanwhile, the Commission is aware that there exists a distance between this ideal description, with which it agrees, and the concrete reality. To the extent to which the real communion between churches is still imperfect, the way they live their catholicity is affected, not least in their interpretation of Scripture and Tradition. Therefore, they mutually have to give and receive, so that they grow in understanding and experience of the interaction between *sensus fidelium* and the service of "memory" (*Gift*, 31).

#### *The Exercise of Authority in the Church* (*Gift*, 32-50)

Authority in the Church is not only embedded within this larger theological framework, it is also always a concrete reality. The way authority is exercised is important. The Commission was conscious of the fact that authority, even ecclesial authority, can be abused and deformed (*Gift*, 5, 48), and that it should therefore always refer to "the mind and the example" of Jesus Christ (*Gift*, 5, 9, 35, 48, 49). Nevertheless, this third Section deals with more than with the style in which authority is to be exercised. It is also concerned with the purpose, subjects, characteristics and levels of its exercise.<sup>24</sup> The line of thought of this section touches five themes: unity and mission, synodality, truth, primacy and discipline.

Jesus entrusted his disciples the task of preaching the Gospel, and the authority necessary to fulfil it. Hence, the ultimate reason for the existence of authority in the Church is to enable the Church to fulfil its *mission* to those outside it (*Gift*, 32). The latter, however, is only possible when the Church is one. Therefore, those with authority within the Church have the responsibility to promote the *unity* of the whole Church (*Gift*, 33). This reflection on the basic purpose of authority within the Church forms an "inclusio" with the last sentence

of this section: "The aim of the exercise of authority and of its reception is to enable the Church to say 'Amen' to God's 'Yes' in the Gospel" (*Gift*, 50).

The manner in which authority has to be exercised in the Church, is described with the key word *synodality* (*Gift*, 34-40). What is meant, in accordance with the Greek word *syn-hodos*, is that all the faithful are called to walk together in Christ who is the Way (*Gift*, 34), first of all within the local church which is maintained in the Tradition by God's Spirit (*Gift*, 35). Within this context, the authority of the bishop is described in a powerful way. He is endowed with the pastoral authority needed for the effective exercise of *episcopate* within a local church. This includes responsibility for making and implementing decisions for the sake of *koinonia*. The faithful have a duty to receive and to accept them. However, it is not arbitrary power given to one person over the freedom of others. It functions within the working of the *sensus fidei* of the faithful who recognize God at work in the bishop's exercise of authority. Within the Eucharist, this synodality is expressed in the prayerful dialogue between the bishop-president and the people of God (*Gift*, 36). No local church that participates in the living Tradition can regard itself as self-sufficient. Forms of synodality, then, are needed to manifest the communion between the local churches, and also on that level it should be possible to take the proper decisions (*Gift*, 37). In order to realize this synodality, bishops meet together collegially. Each bishop is both a voice for his local church and one who ensures that the voice of other churches is heard in his church. Bishops have a magisterial role: to articulate the *sensus fidelium* and determine what is to be taught as faithful to the apostolic Tradition. Consulting the faithful is an aspect of episcopal "oversight" (*Gift*, 38). Paragraphs 39 and 40 offer an interesting account of how this synodality found expression in both Churches from the Reformation until now.

In the course of history, the Church is confronted with the question how the *truth* of the Gospel is to be discerned in situations of crisis and transition. What roles do the Teaching Authority and the people of God play in this process of remaining in the truth? The Commission pays attention to this important question in the following four paragraphs (*Gift*, 41-44). First, in this process of discernment, the Church can trust Christ's promise that the Spirit will guide his Church into all truth. In technical terms this is what is meant by the *indefectibility* of the Church (*Gift*, 41). Further, in specific circumstances, new formulations of faith need to be tested. Therefore, in such circumstances, those with the ministry of oversight (*episcopate*), that is to say, the college of the bishops, may together come to a judgement which, being faithful to

24. Cf. W. Henn, "A Commentary on The Gift of Authority" (n. 4), 33-34.

Scripture and consistent with apostolic Tradition, is preserved from error. This is what is meant when it is technically affirmed that the Church may teach *infallibly* (*Gift*, 42).<sup>25</sup> This exercise of teaching authority requires the participation of the whole body of believers and in this participation the *sensus fidelium* is at work. "Reception" of teaching is integral to this process. A matter of discussion is how one should understand the *reception* of the whole people of God in connection with the episcopal teaching authority.<sup>26</sup> In this matter, the Commission comes to a balanced formulation, with due attention to both aspects. On the one hand, the *sensus fidelium* is at work before the decision is taken. Before taking a doctrinal decision, bishops have to listen carefully, not only to the witness of Scripture and Tradition, but also to the *sensus fidei* of the whole people of God. On the other hand the *sensus fidelium* is also at work after a decision is taken, namely by its "reception": "Doctrinal definitions are received as authoritative in virtue of the divine truth they proclaim as well as in the specific office of the person or persons who proclaim them within the *sensus fidei* of the whole people of God. When the people of God respond by faith and say 'Amen' to authoritative teaching it is because they recognize that this teaching expresses the apostolic faith and operates within the authority and truth of Christ, the Head of the Church. The truth and authority of its Head is the source of infallible teaching in the Body of Christ. God's 'Yes' revealed in Christ is the standard by which such authoritative teaching is judged. Such teaching is to be welcomed by the people of God as a gift of the Holy Spirit to maintain the Church in the truth of Christ, our 'Amen' to God" (*Gift*, 43). The quoted text makes clear that, in the eyes of the Commission, the "reception" of a doctrinal decision by the faithful is not a condition which guarantees the truth of the decision that has been taken. The certainty that the decision is true lies in the recognition (brought by the *sensus fidei*) of its divine origin as well as in the specific office which the bishops have received from God to formulate this truth.

Then the crucial issue of *primacy* is treated (*Gift*, 45-48), about which both churches still had questions or observations. The Commission

25. It is worth noting that *Gift*, in contrast to *Auth. II*, 23-33, does not use the noun *infallibility*, but only the adverbial and adjective forms *infallibly* and *infallible*. This different use of language has to do with a different focus of the two documents: *Auth. II* refers mainly to the Roman Catholic language concerning the Petrine Office, as it was developed in the line of Vatican I; *Gift* 42 refers rather to the Church as a whole in its teaching office.

26. We refer to the wish, mentioned above, of the churches involved to continue the dialogue about "the role of the laity in decision making," and to the first point of criticism in the *Catholic Response* (no. 15).

starts by affirming that the synodality of the Church has been served not only by conciliar and collegial authority, but also by primatial authority. Forms of primacy exist in both Churches (*Gift*, 45). Further, the Commission refers to the results already reached in the Statements of ARCIC I: namely, the common recognition that a primatial authority is needed at the level of the universal Church and that this specific ministry always has been exercised by the bishop of Rome. The Commission points to the New Testament basis of these affirmations, adds a text of Augustine in which the relationship between Peter, the other apostles and the whole Church is expressed very well, and points to some historical examples of the exercise of this ministry for the sake of the universal Church or of a local church (*Gift*, 46). Within this wider ministry, the Bishop of Rome offers a specific ministry concerning the discernment of truth, which has often been misunderstood. "Every solemn definition pronounced from the chair of Peter in the church of Peter and Paul may, however, express only the faith of the Church. Any such definition is pronounced *within* the college of those who exercise *episcopate* and not outside that college." Therefore he proclaims not his own, personal faith, but that of the whole Church. "... The universal primate must discern and declare, with the assured assistance and guidance of the Holy Spirit, in fidelity to Scripture and Tradition, the authentic faith of the whole Church, that is, the faith proclaimed from the beginning. It is this faith, the faith of all the baptised in communion, and this only, that each bishop utters with the body of bishops in council. It is this faith which the Bishop of Rome in certain circumstances has a duty to discern and make explicit" (*Gift*, 47). This paragraph elucidates that when one accepts the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, one has also to recognize this specific ministry of the universal primate. The Commission believes that it is a gift to be received by all the churches. Its members are very conscious of the fact, however, that authority is exercised by fragile Christians for the sake of other fragile Christians (cf. 2 Cor 4:1-7). This is no less true of those who exercise the ministry of Peter, as Pope John Paul II himself has recognized (*Ut Unum Sint*, 4). Human weakness and sin do not only affect individual ministers, but also authority structures. Therefore, loyal criticism and reforms are sometimes needed (cp. Gal 2:11-14) (*Gift*, 47). The same sense of reality is also present in the next paragraph (*Gift*, 48), where it is said that the exercise of authority must always respect conscience, because the divine work of salvation affirms human freedom. Therefore, the Christian disciple freely takes on the *discipline* of being a member of the Body of Christ. On the other hand, there is also a discipline required in the

exercise of authority: those exercising authority must themselves submit to the discipline of Christ, observe the requirements of collegiality and the common good, and duly respect the consciences of those they are called to serve (*Gift*, 49). The third section closes with a paragraph which summarizes all that is said in the light of the leitmotif of God's "Yes" in the Gospel and the "Amen" of the Church (*Gift*, 50).

It seems to us that the way ARCIC II treats the question of primacy, meets the wishes or remarks of the mandating churches. The four critical remarks of the Roman Catholic Church are not responded to one by one in an itemized way, but they are all dealt with more or less explicitly. We have already mentioned that, with respect to the "reception" of definitive decisions of the teaching office by the people of God, the Commission takes a viewpoint that underscores the anti-Gallican tendency of the *non autem ex consensu ecclesiae* of Vatican I (*Gift*, 43; cf. *Catholic Response*, 15).<sup>27</sup> The second remark concerning the "fundamental doctrines" (*Catholic Response*, 16) is answered implicitly in *Gift*, 24.<sup>28</sup> The third difficulty, that is, about the "ecclesial" character of churches not in communion with the Bishop of Rome (*Catholic Response*, 17), seems to be envisaged by formulations such as "the mutual interdependence of all church life is integral to the Church as God wills it to be. No local church ... can regard itself as self-sufficient" (*Gift*, 37), and "the exigencies of church life call for a specific exercise of *episcopate* at the service of the whole Church" (*Gift*, 46). Finally, the Roman Catholic Church judged that the description of ARCIC I did not express the fullness of the Catholic faith, which "sees in the primacy of the successors of Peter something positively intended by God and deriving from the will and institution of Jesus Christ" (*Catholic Response*, 18). That the primacy is positively intended by God, was affirmed already by ARCIC I when it stated that this primacy comes forth from divine providence (*providentia divina*) (*Authority II*, 13-15). This conviction is reaffirmed by ARCIC II, when it speaks about the primacy as a "gift of God" that is needed for the

27. W. Henn ("A Commentary on The Gift of Authority" [n. 4], 38-39) discusses extensively the agreements between *Gift*, 47 and the *relatio* of Bishop Vincent Gasser in Vatican I (11 July 1870) concerning the precise meaning of the formulation of the dogmatic definition of papal infallibility. Cp. Mansi, *Collectio Conciliorum Recentiorum*, Vol. 52 (Arnhem, 1927) 1204-1230, esp. 1213-1214; J. T. O'Connor, *The Gift of Infallibility: The Official Relatio on Infallibility of Bishop Vincent Gasser at Vatican Council I* (Boston, 1986) 43-44: "Indeed we do not separate the Pope, defining, from the cooperation and consent of the Church, at least in the sense that we do not exclude this cooperation and this consent of the Church ... Finally, we do not separate the Pope, even minimally, from the consent of the Church, as long as that consent is not laid down as a condition which is either antecedent or consequent."

28. See note 23.

unity of the universal Church, for which Christ has prayed (*Gift*, 46, 60). In that line of thought, one can say that "it is derived from the will and institution of Jesus Christ," even when one does not understand this expression in a literal-historical sense (*Authority II*, 11).<sup>29</sup>

### *Steps Towards Visible Unity* (*Gift*, 51-63)

In the fourth section (*Gift*, 51-63) the Commission looks back on the theological thought process which has been undertaken in sections two and three, the results of which will be submitted to the respective authorities. At the same time, the Commission makes some concrete suggestions as to how these new insights may be implemented in the life of the two churches. It frankly expresses its belief that "if this statement about the nature of authority and the manner of its exercise is accepted and acted upon, this issue will no longer be a cause for continued breach of communion between our two churches" (*Gift*, 51). The issues on which the Commission thinks it has deepened and extended its common agreement, are enumerated in *Gift*, 52. This short summary is useful, if only to establish "that I was not running or have not run in vain" (Gal 2:2!), or to list all the points for the reader who, after having worked through the preceding sections, may ask the question: "Where do we stand now?" The Commission points to significant developments which are taking place in both Communion. The Anglican Communion is reaching towards universal structures which promote the world wide *koinonia* (*Gift*, 53). In the Roman Catholic Church, a development is taking place in the opposite direction, to strengthen local and intermediate structures (*Gift*, 54). Both developments are complementary. They reflect a shared and growing awareness that authority in the Church needs to be properly exercised at all levels (*Gift*, 55).

29. We may refer here to the methodological principle, so important in ecumenical matters, that one should always keep in mind the distinction between the "treasure of faith" on the one hand and, on the other hand, the formulations thereof that are historically conditioned. In our opinion, this distinction should also be applied to the dogmas of Vatican I (cf. A. Denaux, "De Petrusdienst in de oecumenische discussie," *Communio* 23 [1998] 241-260, esp. 255-256). The conception that Peter received his primacy "immediately and directly" from Christ, is part of the historically conditioned formulation of Vatican I. The Fathers of the Council were not aware of the acute problems that arose afterwards, as a consequence of a historical-critical reading of the Petrine texts. But the meaning intended by this formulation, that is, that the primacy goes back to Christ (a larger notion than the "historical Jesus") and, in that sense, is positively intended by God, is certainly not excluded by the reading of ARCIC II. For the larger problem of the foundation of the Church by Jesus, see our contribution: "Did Jesus Found the Church?," *Louvain Studies* 21 (1996) 25-45.

Next, the Commission frankly confronts both Communion with some critical questions in the light of the consensus reached. Anglicans are asked the following questions: Is the Anglican Communion open to the acceptance of instruments of oversight which would allow decisions to be reached that, in certain circumstances, would bind the whole Church?<sup>30</sup> When major new questions arise which, in fidelity to Scripture and Tradition, require a united response, will these structures assist Anglicans to participate in the *sensus fidelium* of all Christians? To what extent does unilateral action by provinces or dioceses in matters concerning the whole Church, even after consultation has taken place, weaken *koinonia*? Anglicans have shown themselves to be willing to tolerate anomalies for the sake of maintaining communion. Yet this has led to impairment of communion manifesting itself at the Eucharist, in the exercise of *episcopate* and in the interchangeability of ministry. What consequences flow from this?<sup>31</sup> Above all, how will Anglicans address the question of universal primacy as it is emerging from their life together and from ecumenical dialogue (*Gift*, 56)?

In a similar way, some burning issues are facing Catholics. Is there at all levels effective participation of clergy as well as lay people in the synodical bodies that have emerged since Vatican II? Has the teaching of the Second Vatican Council regarding the collegiality of bishops been implemented sufficiently? Do the actions of bishops reflect sufficient awareness of the extent of the authority they receive through ordination for governing the local church? Has enough provision been made to ensure consultation between the Bishop of Rome and the local churches prior to the making of important decisions affecting either a local church or the whole Church? How is the variety of theological opinion taken into account when such decisions are made? In supporting the Bishop of Rome in his work of promoting communion among the churches, do the structures and procedures of the Roman Curia adequately respect the exercise of *episcopate* at other levels?<sup>32</sup> Above all, how

30. The "provincial" structure of the Anglican Communion does not allow this until now. Resolutions of the Lambeth Conference, for example, have no legal force.

31. The concrete background of these questions is well known: it refers to the decisions of the 1988 Lambeth Conference, and the subsequent measures taken in the *Church of England* and other provinces in order to accommodate the people who objected in conscience against the ordination of women to the priesthood (or to the episcopal ministry), and the ecclesiological implications of these measures. The question has been asked insistently by J. M. R. Tillard, "La leçon œcuménique de Lambeth 88," *Irénikon* 61 (1988) 530-535. See also Sara Butler, "Authority in the Church: Lessons from Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue," *Theology Digest* 45 (1998) 337-353.

32. These are also questions which are familiar to insiders (in casu: Roman Catholics). Cf. J. R. Quinn, "The Claims of the Primacy and the Costly Call to Unity,"

will the Roman Catholic Church address the question of universal primacy as it emerges from the "patient and fraternal dialogue" about the exercise of the office of the Bishop of Rome to which John Paul II has invited "church leaders and their theologians" (*Gift*, 57)?

These questions invite both churches to a thorough examination of conscience about the manner in which they exercise authority, in the light of their search for reconciliation with respect to authority structures.<sup>33</sup> This is not sufficient, however. Both Communion are challenged not only to *do* together whatever they can, but also to *be* together all that their existing *koinonia* allows (*Gift*, 58). Such cooperation would involve, for example, bishops of both churches meeting regularly together at regional and local levels, participation of bishops from one communion in the international meetings of bishops of the other, the association of Anglican bishops with Roman Catholic bishops in their *ad limina* visits to Rome, common witness in the public sphere in matters of faith and morals or on issues affecting the common good (*Gift*, 59).

The final section of *Authority III* offers an attractive portrait of a renewed ministry of universal primacy, exercised in collegiality and conciliarity, a ministry of the *servus servorum Dei*, that would help to uphold legitimate diversity and enhance unity, that exercises leadership in the world and also in both communions, with a distinctive teaching ministry, particularly in addressing difficult theological and moral issues, that would welcome and protect theological enquiry and other forms of the search for truth, and gather churches in various ways for consultation and discussion (*Gift*, 60-61). The Commission sees this primacy as a gift of God for the sake of unity. It addresses a remarkable invitation to *both* churches to re-receive this renewed ministry of universal primacy, albeit each in its own way: "that Anglicans be open to and desire a recovery and re-reception under certain clear conditions of the exercise of universal primacy by the Bishop of Rome; that Roman Catholics be open to and desire a re-reception of the exercise of primacy by the Bishop of Rome and the offering of such a ministry to the whole Church of God" (*Gift*, 62). When this happens, the "Amen" which

*Briefing* 26 (1996,8) 18-29; J. M. R. Tillard, "The Mission of the Bishop of Rome: What is Essential, What is Expected?," *Ecumenical Trends* 27 (1998,1) 1-9.

33. To say that "Anglicans (are) urged to say yes to (the) Pope" (headline of *The Church of England Newspaper*, 14 May 1999) tells only part of the story, because it does not mention that *The Gift of Authority* considers the ministry of the Bishop of Rome in the larger context of an 'inclusive' approach to authority in the Church, and that Roman Catholics, too, are challenged to rethink and to re-receive this ministry in a way that is more acceptable to other Christians.

Anglicans and Roman Catholics say to the one Lord comes closer to being an "Amen" said together by the one holy people witnessing to God's salvation and reconciling love in a broken world (*Gift*, 63).

### Conclusion

The *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* has undoubtedly gone a long and fruitful way in its reflection on authority and authority structures in the Church. The results of this dialogue have already partially entered the life of both churches and have been judged by its respective authorities. The recently published Statement, *The Gift of Authority (Authority in the Church III)*, the third agreed statement on this issue, is taking a decisive step further in the growing consensus between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. With respect to the Petrine ministry, no other dialogue has obtained such a far-reaching rapprochement. Therefore, *The Gift of Authority* merits being studied attentively in ecumenical and theological circles, being assessed by church authorities, and being put into practice as much as possible in the daily life of both churches. Moreover, the Statement may be of some use for the dialogue which the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches and the Churches of the Reformation have just started on this issue, and where reservations are much greater.<sup>34</sup> Both churches are now challenged to answer the question: is the agreement that has been reached sufficiently profound to allow decisive steps of rapprochement to be made with respect to the structures and the exercise of authority, and more specifically the Petrine office, steps that are more than the common gestures of courtesy? We can only hope that this question is answered positively at all levels of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

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34. See *Das Papstamt: Anspruch und Widerspruch. Zum Stand des ökumenischen Dialogs über das Papstamt*, ed. Johann-Adam-Möhler-Institut (Münster: Aschendorff, 1996); J. F. Puglisi (ed.), *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church: "Toward a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue." A Symposium Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Society of the Atonement. Rome, December 4-6, 1997* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).