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AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH A CHALLENGE FOR BOTH ANGLICANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

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(The following talk was given at Eduard King's House, Lincoln, United Kingdom, November 18, 2000.)

1. The Relevance of Authority

In religions, or churches, the problem of authority is not only a problem of mere organization, but also of theology. Religious authority is a theological issue. Indeed, possessors of religious authority legitimize their authority by the will of God. They claim to speak in the name of God and to formulate divine truths, imposing a particular way of life on people. Despite these claims, how can an individual be sure that a religious authority speaks in the name of God, or, that religious authorities do not impose truth claims and rules of conduct from God but from themselves? Given this uncertainty, one can understand why modern people, especially in the West, have become rather critical towards authorities. Because of the possibility of the abuse of power, obedience towards an authority, religious authorities included, is not as self-evident as it used to be.

Although often ambiguous, still, authority is an important and constructive reality in the life of human beings. When there is too little authority, families, schools, churches and states are in danger of disintegration, or may deteriorate into a kind of chaos. When there is too much authority, people loose their freedom and dignity. The way in which the nature of authority is conceived and then exercised in a given society largely determines the dignity of human life and the possibility of living together in relative harmony.

2. Growth of New Denominations and the Question of Authority

Despite modern criticism, it seems obvious that there is a strong link between a positive exercise of authority and the capacity of religious bodies to remain unified. In their comments on the Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission 2000[1], David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson observe that the twentieth Century, the age of ecumenism, is undoubtedly marked by an impressive search to unite churches. They have counted some hundred successful unions, for example, the churches of South and North India (respectively in 1947 and 1970). At the same time, with the spread of Christianity, they observe a massive increase in denominationalism across the world. In the 20th century, new Christian denominations clearly outnumber the unions that have lasted. Thus the number of Christian denominational bodies in the world, which in the year 1900 stood at 1,880 distinct denominations, rapidly increased from year to year throughout the century. As of A.D. 2000 the total is 33,800 distinct and organizationally separate denominations"[2].

At the present, where is the greatest fragmentation? Protestantism clearly has the longest and most extensive record of fragmentation: in 1970, 211 million Protestants were spread over 8,100 denominations. By A.D. 2000 this number rose to 9,000 Protestant denominations, which shelter some 342 million Protestant believers. Today, however, Orthodoxy (with its 215 million affiliated members) also experiences a similar trend, especially since the collapse of Communism. Furthermore, the 120 million professing members (80 million affiliated), which form the Anglican Communion, are surrounded by over forty schismatic denominations, with 7.6 million church members. "These groups are out of communion with Canterbury, but their bishops and clergy and laity still regard themselves as in the original Anglican tradition"[3]. Even the Roman Catholic Church, which today is the home of one billion church members, must admit to 6.7 million non-Roman Catholics. Nevertheless, one may ask whether the outspoken universal authority structure of the Roman Catholic Church does not, at least in part, offer an explanation for the high degree of

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unity amongst the large percentage of Roman Catholics within the total Christian world. Regardless of this, anyone who looks at history cannot escape the question: what is the connection between unity and authority?

3. Anglicans and Roman Catholics and the Question of Authority

The question of authority in the Church, particularly the authority of the Bishop of Rome, was a major cause of the division that occurred at the Reformation. Anglicans insisted that the Pope claimed too much authority. They then interpreted the way that he exercised authority was against the will of God. As a result, for four centuries, the now divided churches developed their structures of authority separately from each other, and Anglicans lived without the ministry of the Bishop of Rome. Clearly, 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) is, to our knowledge, the only international bilateral dialogue which has dealt, in such an exhaustive and systematic manner, with the question of authority in the Church.

Nevertheless, one may ask whether the outspoken universal authority structure of the Roman Catholic Church does not, at least in part, offer an explanation for the high degree of unity amongst the large percentage of Roman Catholics within the total Christian world. Regardless of this, anyone who looks at history cannot escape the question: what is the connection between unity and authority?

4. The Previous Work of ARCIC I (1976, 1981)

During its first phase of existence (ARCIC I, 1969-1981), this Commission has twice dealt 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"*, in 1981, these "Agreed Statements" were collected together in a *Final Report*[4]. Because of the time limit, let us simply summarize here the progress which was made in these two statements. This can be seen in the convergence of the understanding of authority achieved by the two statements mentioned. The commission summarised the consensus it had already reached in the following way (*Gift*, 1):

• First, ARCIC I acknowledged "that the Spirit of the Risen Lord maintains the people of God in obedience to the Father's will. By this action of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the Lord is active in the Church" (cf. *The Final Report, Authority in the Church I*, 3).

• Secondly, it recognised "that because of their baptism and their participation in the *sensus fidelium*, the laity play an integral part in decision making in the Church" (cf. *Authority in the Church: Elucidation*, 4).

• Thirdly, it stressed "the complementarity of primacy and conciliarity as elements of oversight (*episcope*) within the Church" (cf. *Authority in the Church I, 22*). In their response to *Ut unum sint*, the House of Bishops of the Church of England[5] recognise that "Anglicans and Roman Catholics are at one in their understanding of the episcopate as a ministry involving not only oversight of each local church but also a care for the universal communion of which each church is a member" (nr. 44).

• Fourthly, ARCIC I accepted "the need for a universal primacy exercised by the Bishop of Rome as a sign and safeguard of unity within a reunited Church" (cf. *Authority in the Church II*, 9). Although the Commission did not take over the Roman Catholic terminology of a primacy by divine right (*iure divino*), it nevertheless stated that the churches of the Anglican Communion might recognize the develop-

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ment of universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome as a gift of divine providence, in other words, as an effect of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Church (cf. *Authority in the Church II,* 13). Again, we can point here to the comments of the Bishops of the Church of England: "ARCIC I sees the office of the universal primate as a special and particular case of this care for universal communion which is proper for the episcopal service itself. Anglicans are thus by no means opposed to the principle and practice of a personal ministry at the world level in the service of unity" (nr. 44).

• Further, ARCIC I underlined "the need for the universal primate to exercise his ministry in collegial association with the other bishops" (cf. *Authority in the Church II,* 19).

• And finally, ARCIC I displayed "an understanding of universal primacy and conciliarity which complements and does not supplant the exercise of *episcope* in local churches" (Cf. *Authority in the Church I,* 21-23; *Authority in the Church II,* 19).

5. ARCIC II: The Gift of Authority (1999)

During the second phase of its existence, the *Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission* (ARCIC II, 1983-) has dealt once more with the problem of authority in an explicit way. In May 1999, it published a third "Agreed Statement" on authority. The document received the following title and subtitle: *The Gift of Authority (Authority in the Church III)*[6]. In a time when authority is often experienced as a coercive reality, which hinders individual freedom, the title of the Statement is surprising. Can authority really be a gift? The Commission thinks it can, at least under certain conditions. Indeed, the title stresses an easily forgotten aspect of authority in the Church, namely, that authority is a gift from God to his Church. Ultimately, it is the authority of Jesus Christ which is manifested in the different forms of authority that are exercised within the Church. These manifestations of Christ's authority have no other purpose than to serve the Church in its growth towards full faithful obedience to the Word of God, that has been definitively addressed to her in Jesus Christ.

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.

Why did the Commission find it necessary to return to the issue of authority in the Church? First, because *The Final Report* recognised that, despite the considerable progress achieved, some serious issues had still to be resolved. Second, 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*). Third, it is hoped that this further Statement would contribute to the discussion of authority that is taking place in both churches[7]. 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*[8].

Our presentation 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 of ARCIC asks for a careful reading, in which each individual section of the document is not considered in isolation, but placed in its proper context. Let us here just summarize the main points on which the Commission is of the view that it has deepened and extended its agreement.

a. *God's "Yes" to us and the "Amen" of the Church to God*

First of all, the leitmotiv, which carries the whole discourse of the Statement, 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). Indeed, the authority of Christ is present and active in the Church when the proclamation of God's "Yes" calls forth the "Amen" of all believers (nrs. 7-18). 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

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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, about such issues as freedom and obedience, the individual's belief and the belief of the Church, Scripture and Tradition, the Word of God and the Authority of the Church, ordained ministry and laity, local and universal Church, synodality and primacy[9].

b. *The relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the Exercise of Authority*

The Statement deals with the question of the relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the exercise of authority. This is an issue which the authorities of both churches have requested. The Statement does not take its starting point in Scriptures, but it begins with a very rich, composite description of the apostolic *Tradition* (*Gift,* 14-18). "Tradition" refers to the process by which the revealed Word, to which the apostolic community originally bore witness, is received and communicated in the life of the whole Christian community[10]. The Holy Spirit guides this tradition, or the 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 expresses the apostolicity of the Church (*Gift,* 17), and makes the witness of the apostolic community present in the Church through its corporate *memory* (*Gift,* 18). From this, we see that 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 recognizes the historical growth of these Scriptures (*Gift,* 20-21), an insight that was gained by historical-critical exegesis.

The faith of the community precedes the faith of the individual (Gift, *23). This means that neither historical-critical exegesis nor the interpretation of the individual believer can open up the full meaning of the Scriptures, even though both are indispensable in the process of biblical interpretation, which continuously unfolds in the history of the Church.*

On the other hand, the commission 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). This means that neither historical-critical exegesis nor the interpretation of the individual believer can open up the full meaning of the Scriptures, even though both are indispensable in the process of biblical interpretation, which continuously unfolds in the history of the Church. This constant attention to the harmony between Scripture, Tradition, authority and obedience is beautifully expressed in the paragraph about the canon. "The 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).

c. *Reception and Re-reception*

Thirdly, ARCIC II underlines the necessity of constant reception of Scripture and Tradition, and of re-reception in particular circumstances (*Gift,* 24-25). 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 Christ, at His return, will recognise in her the community He founded. However, the Church must continue to remain free to "receive" the apostolic Tradition in new ways according to the situations by which it is confronted. 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 (*Gift,* 24). The paragraph about "re-reception" (*Gift,* 25) strikes a note of thoroughgoing realism and opens up a promising avenue towards ecumenical *metanoia* and renewal. Indeed, for an ecumenical agreed statement to be forceful, it is not sufficient to put it forward as an ideal description of "Tradition" and its "reception" upon which everyone can easily agree. It should be accepted that the division between the churches has also created gaps during 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

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Tradition may be forgotten, so to say, 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, theologians and the wisdom of holy persons. This can lead to a rediscovery of elements that had previously been neglected and to a sifting of formulations which, in a new context, are seen to be inadequate or even misleading. This whole process may be termed as "re-reception". Although no concrete examples are given, paragraph 62 clearly shows that the universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome could be subject to a "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 the Apostolic Tradition has been obscured by the polemics of division and that, therefore, an ecumenical *metanoia* is needed, the ecumenical movement will not make much progress.

d. *The Ministry of* Episcope *and the* Sensus Fidelium

Fourthly, throughout the Statement, much attention is given to a balanced interplay of the respective roles of the whole people of God and of those in authority. At different occasions, it is said that the exercise of authority is always at the service of personal faith within the life of the Church (paragraphs 23, 29, 49). Within the process of Tradition, the *sensus fidei* of the believer has its role to play. This means "an active capacity for spiritual discernment, an intuition that is formed by worshiping and living in communion as a faithful member of the Church". When this capacity is exercised, in concert through 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 *episcope*, watching over the living memory of the Church (*Gift*, 29). As teachers of faith, the bishops have a distinctive voice in forming and expressing the mind of the Church (*Gift*, 29-30). This mutual cooperation between the *sensus fidelium* of the people of God, and those who exercise the ministry of "memory", is described through the patristic imagery of a "symphony" (*Gift*, 30). The cooperation of the ministry of *episcope* and the *sensus fidei* of the whole Church, in the reception of the Word of God, is a vital element in discovering God's truth and God's will for His Church (*Gift*, 29, 36, 43). In this respect, the Commission introduces the notion of synodality (from the Greek word *syn-hodos*). This means that all the faithful are called to walk together in Christ who is the Way. This occurs first of all within the local church, which is maintained in the Tradition by God's Spirit, but also within the communion of the whole people of God and all the local churches. On both levels there is a cooperation between the *sensus fidei* of the faithful and the exercise of *episcope* (*Gift*, 34-40).

e. *Infallible Teaching of the Church and the Assent of the Faithful*

Fifthly, ARCIC II accepts the possibility that, in certain circumstances, the Church can teach infallibly at the service of the Church's indefectibility (paragraphs 41-44). In the course of history, the Church is confronted with the question how the *Truth* of the Gospel is to be discerned in situation of crisis and transition. What roles do the Teaching Authority and the people of God play in this process of remaining in the Truth? First, 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 (*episcope*), or the college of the bishops, may together come to a judgement which, being faithful to 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). 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 to the episcopal teaching authority. 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 because of the specific office of the person or persons who proclaim them within the

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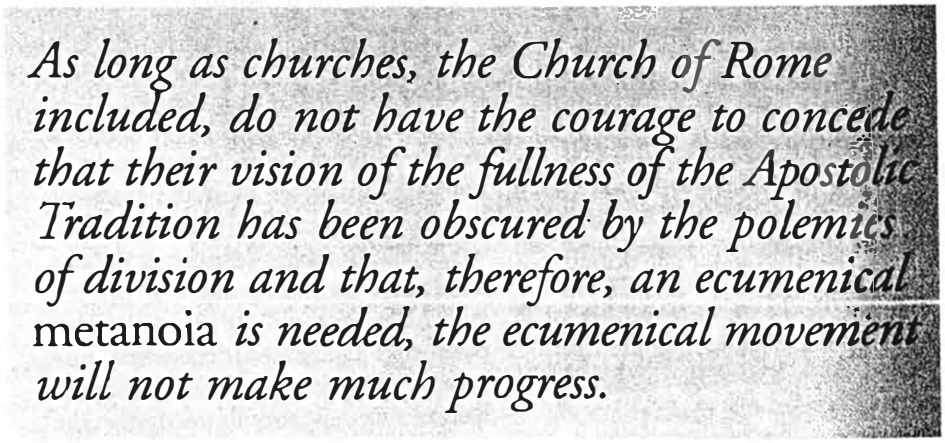

sensus fidei of the whole people of God. When the people of God respond by faith and say 'Amen' to authoritative teaching it is because they recognise that this teaching expresses the apostolic faith and operates within the authority and truth of Christ, the Head of the Church. The truth and authority 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). This quotation makes it clear that, in the eyes of the Commission, the "reception" of a doctrinal decision by the faithful is not a criterion that guarantees the truth of a given decision. The certainty that the decision is true lies in the recognition (by the *sensus fidei*) of its divine origin as well as the specific office which the bishops have received from God to formulate this truth. It remains to be seen whether ARCIC's view on the reception by the faithful of doctrinal decisions offers a sufficient answer to the critical remarks of both mandating churches[11].

f. *The Universal Primate and his Specific Ministry*

In the sixth place, the crucial issue of *primacy* is treated (*Gift,* 45-48), as a matter about which both churches have expressed questions or observations. The Commission 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). The Commission then refers to the results already reached in the Statements of ARCIC I. Namely, that a universal primacy, exercised collegially in the context of synodality, is integral to *episcope* at the service of universal communion. Furthermore, that such a primacy has always been associated with the Bishop and See of Rome. Also discussed is how the ministry of the Bishop of Rome assists the ministry of the whole episcopal body in the context of synodality, promoting the communion of the local churches in their life in Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel (*Gift,* 46-48).

This paragraph elucidates that when one accepts the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, one has also to recognise the 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.

Within this wider ministry, ARCIC II declares, the Bishop of Rome offers a specific ministry concerning the discernment of Truth (*Gift,* nr 47). Since this ministry has often been misunderstood, the Commission underlines the intrinsic link between this office and the faith of the whole Church. I quote: "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 *episcope* and not outside that college". Therefore, the primate 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 recognise the 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 recognised (*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 following 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).

6. Some Remaining Questions

So far we have briefly dealt with six issues where, in our opinion, the Commission has deepened and

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extended its agreement on the exercise of authority in the Church. We would like now to conclude our paper in formulating some questions which have been asked from different angles. At the same time, we will give some elements of an answer.

a. *Too Idealistic?*

A remark that is sometimes heard is that the document is too idealistic. It does not take into account the real difficulties between our two churches. It sometimes looks at them "through rose-tinted glasses". For example, is the description of synodality within the Roman Catholic Church (*Gift,* 40 and 54) in accordance with the actual functioning of the Synod of Bishops and of the national or regional Bishops' Conferences? Does the observation that the Anglican Communion is reaching towards universal structures, while the Roman Catholic Church is strengthening its local and intermediate structures, cover the whole truth?[12]

In order to answer these questions, one should of course pay due attention to the nature of the document. The *Gift of Authority* is an agreed statement which offers a vision of the future, reunited Church rather than gives a description of the two churches in their actual state. In this respect, the text formulates an ideal, a vision of the Church which should inspire our two Communions. Without vision, there is no growth. Without ideal, there is no dynamics. This implies that there is and probably will always be a tension between the ideal and the reality. Nevertheless, the text contains paragraphs that are aware of the negative results of our division (*Gift,* 25), and of the fragility of those who exercise authority (*Gift,* 48). Moreover, the document invites both Churches to a thorough examination of conscience about the manner in which they exercise authority, in the light of the consensus reached with respect to authority structures (*Gift,* 56-57). An attentive reader will recognise all the burning issues with which both churches are faced.

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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[13]. 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 *episcope* and in the interchangeability of ministry. What consequences flow from this[14]? 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 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 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 *episcope* at other levels[15]? Above all, how will the Roman Catholic Church address the questions 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)?"

b. *Are Anglicans Urged to Say Yes to the Pope?*

Some people, especially in evangelical circles, feel that ARCIC II is going too far in asking Anglicans to re-receive the universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome. ARCIC does not speak for us, they declare. However, to say that "Anglicans (are) urged to say yes to (the) Pope" (headline of *The*

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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. Neither does it say that only Anglicans are asked to be open to and to desire a recovery and re-reception - under certain clear conditions of the exercise of universal primacy by the Bishop of Rome - but also that Roman Catholics are challenged to rethink and to re-receive this ministry in a way that is more acceptable to other Christians (*Gift,* 62). There is no question then that Anglicans are asked to accept the papal primacy as it now exists. For many Roman Catholics, it is clear that doctrinal dialogues are not enough but that concrete reforms of the Papacy are necessary, before its authority can be accepted by other Christians.

Concerning this, I refer to the proposals made by Archbishop Quinn[16]. He deals, amongst others, with questions concerning the nomination of bishops, the constitution of the college of cardinals and its relationship with the Bishops' Conferences, the urgent reform of the Roman curia, as well as the place of criticism and public opinion in the Church. The late Father Jean-Marie Tillard, who was a distinguished member of ARCIC and a good theologian, fully agreed with Quinn's suggestions. He even added that Vatican II left a dogmatic problem hanging, which is yet to be resolved. He calls it the "considerable vagueness in the notion of collegiality put forward by *Lumen Gentium.* Although *Lumen gentium* 22 speaks of the duties of the other bishops towards the Primate, it does not speak about the Primate's duty to respect collegial solidarity, because it affirms that the Head of the *Collegium* has as such a full, supreme and universal *potestas, quam semper libere exercere valet* (a power, which he can always exercise freely). This vagueness in the notion of collegiality is, according to J.M. Tillard, to a large extent the cause of the tension between the Roman sedes and local episcopates[17].

The final section of *Authority III* offers an attractive portrait of a renewed ministry of universal primacy, exercised in collegiality and conciliarity. The imagery offered is a ministry of the *servus servorum Dei* that would help to uphold legitimate diversity as well as to enhance unity, that exercises leadership in the world as well as in both communions, that possesses a distinctive teaching ministry, particularly in addressing difficult theological and moral issues, that would welcome and protect theological enquiry as well as other forms of the search for truth, and that gathers churches in various ways for consultation and discussion (*Gift,* 60-61). Obviously, this also is a vision of the future functioning of the Petrine Office, which is not yet fully realised.

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c. *How to Make Visible our Existing Communion?*

In her recent assessment of the Anglican - Roman Catholic relations from Malta to Toronto, Dr Mary Tanner complains that the Malta vision, of keeping theological convergence together with convergence in life, often seems to have been forgotten[18]. I would agree with her remark. This is not to say, however, that the members of ARCIC itself were not constantly aware of the necessity of combining theological and practical *rapprochement.* In this line, at the end of their last common Statement, they make some concrete proposals. Both Communions 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 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). At least the proposal of common ad *limina* visits to Rome sounds rather new, but even more startling is the Commission's affirmation that its work "has resulted in sufficient agreement on universal primacy as a gift to be shared, for us to propose that such a primacy could be offered and received *even before our churches are in full communion* (italics mine)" (*Gift,* 60). This is, according to Edward Yarnold, the most radical proposal ARCIC has ever done. How such a proposal can be put into practice needs further to be explored.

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The problem with the work of ARCIC is that it is often done in splendid isolation. The theologians of ARCIC have done a rather good job, but does their work have any concrete effect on the life of their churches? In response to this, it must be reminded that the *Final Report* has been officially assessed by both churches. Nevertheless, the official responses focused their attention on ARCIC's theological statements, not on its practical proposals. There was need to set a step forward on a different level, and this was accomplished by the meeting of Anglican and Roman bishops from 13 countries at Mississauga (near Toronto), Canada, from 14-20 May 2000. This meeting, presided by His Eminence Edward Cardinal Cassidy and His Grace Archbishop George Carey, has not only published a Statement, called "Communion in Mission", but has also dressed an "Action Plan" to implement this Statement. One of the decisions is the establishment of a Joint Unity Commission, whose mandate includes several functions, one of them to oversee the preparation of a Joint Declaration and to plan the signing and celebration of the same. It is my strong hope that this Joint Unity Commission will be able, in collaboration with ARCIC, to promote the implementation of the dialogue in the concrete life of our two churches.

Conclusion

The *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* has undoubtedly gone a long and fruitful way in its reflection on the authority and the authority structures in the Church. The results of this dialogue have already partially entered the life of both churches and have been assessed 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 to advance 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 to be 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. Still, with respect to both churches, they are now challenged with the question: is the agreement that has been reached sufficiently comprehensive that decisive steps of rapprochement can be made concerning the structures of authority and the exercise thereof? More specifically, with respect to the Petrine office, can steps be made that go further than the common gestures of courtesy? We can only hope that these questions can be positively answered at all levels of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

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Notes:

1. D.B. Barrett & T.M. Johnson, Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 2000. - *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24 (2000) 24-25.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

4. Cf. ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION, *The Final Report*, Windsor, September 1981, London, 1982. 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.

5. *May They All Be One. A Response of the House of Bishops of the Church of England to Ut Unum Sint* (House of Bishops Occasional Paper), London, 1997.

6. *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*, n° 100 [1999/I] 17-29). We refer to this document as follows: *Gift*, plus the paragraph number. 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.

7. Anglicans have been asked by the 1998 *Lambeth Conference* to reflect and

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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* has 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 of 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).

8. In his internal *Report and Analysis of Gift*, the *Faith and Order* observer, Michael Root (see ARCIC II [Authority] 431/99, pp. 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*, para. 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*, para. 25 and 29, says about reception and the Anglican reservation there stated, 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.

9. Cf. W. HENN, *art. cit.* (n. 6), p. 30.

10. 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, para. 39): *Tradition* (with capital) refers to "the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church", while the uncapitalised 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.

11. Catholic Response to ARCIC-I. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English*, 16 dec. 1991, pp. 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, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-166). We refer to the edition of Hill and Yarnold which, in contrast to the original publication, is numbered. See *Catholic Response*, 15; *Towards a Church of England Response to BEM and ARCIC* (GS 661), London, 1985, para. 224-231.251 (= C. HILL & E. YARNOLD, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-138.149).

12. J. NILSON, "The Gift of Authority: An American, Roman Catholic Appreciation," in *One in Christ* 36 (2000) 133-144, esp. p. 136.

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

14. The concrete background of these questions is well known: it refers to the decisions of the 1988 Lambeth Conference, and the consequent measures taken in the *Church of England* and other provinces in order to meet 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 oecuménique 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.

15. 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." - *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.

16. J.R. Quin, *The Reform of the Papacy: the Costly Call to Christian Unity*, New York, 2000.

17. J.M. Tillard, "In Search of Vatican II: Archbishop Quinn's "The Reform of the Papacy"." - *One in Christ* 36 (2000) 176-184.

18. M. Tanner, "Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations from Malta to Toronto." - *One in Christ* 36 (2000) 114-125, esp. p. 121.

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