

Authority in the Church I

Current Document Index

INTRODUCTION - [read](#)

1. The Lordship of Christ - [read](#)

I. CHRISTIAN AUTHORITY - [read](#)

2. The Spirit and the word - [read](#)

3. The action of the Spirit - [read](#)

II. AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH - [read](#)

4. The authority of holiness - [read](#)

5. The authority conferred by special gifts - [read](#)

6. The discernment and response of the community - [read](#)

7. The inadequacy of human authority - [read](#)

III. AUTHORITY IN THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCHES - [read](#)

8. Communion among the churches - [read](#)

9. Conciliarity - [read](#)

10. The emergence of primacy - [read](#)

11. Primatial authority - [read](#)

12. The primacy of Rome - [read](#)

IV. AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF FAITH - [read](#)

13. Unity in truth - [read](#)

14. The expression of truth - [read](#)

15. The communication of truth - [read](#)

16. Conciliar authority - [read](#)

17. The historical importance of the Roman see - [read](#)

18. Maintenance of the Church in truth - [read](#)

V. CONCILIAR AND PRIMATIAL AUTHORITY - [read](#)

19. Ecumenical Councils - [read](#)

20. The exercise of primatial authority - [read](#)

21. Primatial authority and diversity - [read](#)

22. The balance of authority - [read](#)

23. Universal primacy - [read](#)

VI. PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS - [read](#)

24. Problems - [read](#)

25. Prospects - [read](#)

CONCLUSION - [read](#)

26. The next stage - [read](#)

FULL TEXT

Authority in the Church

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC JOINT PREPARATORY COMMISSION

PREFACE

The Malta Report of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission (1968) outlined the large measure of agreement in faith which exists between the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Anglican Communion (♦ 7). It then went on to note three specific areas of doctrinal disagreement. These were listed in the Report as matter for joint investigation. Accordingly the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, proposed by the Report, was recommended to examine jointly "the question of intercommunion, and the related matters of Church and Ministry", and "the question of authority, its nature, exercise and implications".

To our previous Agreed Statements on the Eucharist (Windsor, 1971) and Ministry (Canterbury, 1973) we now add an Agreed Statement on Authority in the Church (Venice, 1976). The Commission thus submits its work to the authorities who appointed it and, with their permission, offers it to our Churches.

The question of authority in the Church has long been recognized as crucial to the growth in unity of the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Anglican Communion. It was precisely in the problem of papal primacy that our historical divisions found their unhappy origin. Hence, however significant our consensus on the doctrine of the Eucharist and of the Ministry, unresolved questions on the nature and exercise of Authority in the Church would hinder the growing experience of unity which is the pattern of our present relations.

The present Statement has, we believe, made a significant contribution to the resolution of these questions. Our consensus covers a very wide area; though we have not been able to resolve some of the difficulties of Anglicans concerning Roman Catholic belief relating to the office of the bishop of Rome, we hope and trust that our analysis has placed these problems in a proper perspective.

There is much in the document, as in our other documents, which presents the ideal of the Church as willed by Christ. History shows how the Church has often failed to achieve this ideal. An awareness of this distinction between the ideal and the actual is important both for the reading of the document and for the understanding of the method we have pursued.

The consensus we have reached, if it is to be accepted by our two communities consequences. Common would have recognition would bring changes not only to the non but also to the Roman Catholic sides the readiness to learn, necessary of such a wider koinonia, would demand humility and charity. The prospect should be met with faith, not fear. Communion with the see of Rome would bring to the Churches of the Anglican Communion not only a wider koinonia but also a strengthening of the power to realise its traditional ideal of diversity in unity. Roman Catholics, on their side, would be enriched by the presence of a particular tradition of spirituality and scholarship, the lack of which has deprived the Roman Catholic Church of a precious element in the Christian heritage. The Roman Catholic Church has much to learn from the Anglican synodical tradition of involving the laity in the life and mission of the Church. We are convinced, therefore, that our degree of agreement, which argues for greater communion between our churches, can make a profound contribution to the witness of Christianity in our contemporary society.

It is in this light that we would wish to submit our conclusions to our respective authorities, believing that our work, indebted, as it is, to many sources outside the Commission as well as to its own labors, will be of service not only to ourselves but to Christians of other traditions in our common quest for the unity of Christ's Church.

