

Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States of America

Agreed Report on the Local/Universal Church

November 15, 1999

Introduction

The Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have been in high-level, official dialogue with each other for more than thirty years.¹ Again and again during that time we have discovered that we already share a “real though as yet imperfect communion” (CC 2) rooted in a common faith and shared inheritance (MR, 3 and 4), and that we are often involved together in the life of service and mission to which the Gospel calls us. Again and again, we have discovered convergences in thought and practice, and have found ways in which our differences are complementary, to the benefit of each of our churches and the increase of Christian unity. We have also been able to recognize a significant and hopeful extent of agreement on matters which have in the past been divisive and even church-dividing, such as the mode of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, the ordained ministry, and the role of the Bishop of Rome in the apostolic mission of the church. These were treated in the 1981 *Final Report* of ARCIC I, the responses made by our churches to it, the clarifications offered by ARCIC II, and the acceptance of these clarifications by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Within our real communion, however, imperfections remain. Often these take the form of important differences and disagreements. Of great significance at the present time is the fact that Anglicans and Roman Catholics have different understandings and structures of authority. These have engendered different experiences and expectations, indeed different cultures, of authority within each church. Our differing traditions of authority set us apart and are in that sense divisive. But are they “church-dividing?” Do they stem from fundamentally different understandings of the Gospel so that they must continue to stand in the way of full communion between our churches?

In their *Common Declaration* (October 1989) Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie and Pope John Paul II maintained, “The ecumenical journey is not only about the removal of obstacles but also about the sharing of gifts.” Voices within our churches suggest that our Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions of authority contain precisely such gifts to be shared.

¹ The Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the USA (ARC-USA) was planned jointly in 1965 and first met in 1966. The Most Rev. Michael Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Pope Paul VI established the official international dialogue in 1966. Subsequent to the work of a joint preparatory commission, the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) first met officially in 1970.

Voices in each Church recognize and express a need for the gifts of the other. Anglican statements² have called for a primatial counterweight to the centrifugal forces of provincial and diocesan autonomy (e.g., by giving more authority to the Anglican Consultative Council or the Lambeth Conference of Bishops or the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Primates of the Provinces of the Communion), in recognition that “the unity in truth of the Christian community demands visible expression” (FR, Elucidation [1981], 8). Roman Catholic statements³ have called for the implementation of collegial and local structures to complement the exercise of primacy and better to safeguard the legitimate and necessary autonomy of local churches.

We welcome the publication of *The Gift of Authority*, an agreed statement of the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, in May 1999, and we hope that it proves to be a significant step forward in our coming to a common mind on these issues. Since it appeared just as this report was being completed, together with other Anglicans and Roman Catholics, we shall be reflecting on this rich text in the months ahead.⁴

In the realm of authority, therefore, it is necessary once again to assess areas where we differ in order to discern in what ways we may be divided, and in what ways we each may possess gifts in which the other may benefit by sharing.

In 1991 the Second Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II) released its agreed statement *Church as Communion*. Not only did this statement explicate the ecclesiology underlying the *Final Report* of ARCIC I and *Salvation and the Church* of ARCIC II, but it also substantiated the claim that “Anglicans and Roman Catholics are already in a real though as yet imperfect communion . . .” (CC, 2; see also 47, 50 and the *Common Declaration* of October 1989).

Although the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have not issued official evaluations of *Church as Communion*, in the first part of our report we intend to explore the implications of this communion ecclesiology because “within the perspective of communion the outstanding difficulties that remain between us will be more clearly understood and are more likely to be resolved” (CC 2). The ARCIC consensus that our communion is “real though as yet imperfect” provides the context for investigating the issues of authority. These issues cannot be addressed adequately without collaborative discernment and implementation.

² ER, 66; VR.

³ CD 36-38; Code of Canon Law (1983), canons 439-446, 447-459.

⁴ *The Gift of Authority*. An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, ARCIC. New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 1999.

We intend this agreed report of ARC-USA to be a contribution to the healing of wounds and the sharing of gifts. In the context of our relationship, each of our churches needs to reach a more profound understanding of authority and to embody it more faithfully. Each church needs to learn better how to learn from the other. As we strive together to cooperate more fully with the Holy Spirit, we hasten “progress towards that goal which is Christ’s will—the restoration of complete communion in faith and sacramental life” (Common Declaration of Paul VI and Archbishop Donald Coggin, 29 April 1977).

Concepts

In general, discussions of “communion,” “local church,” “particular church” and “universal church” have been hobbled by problems of definition; these are not univocal terms in theology. We Anglicans and Roman Catholics, however, share a common theology of “communion,” “local church,” “particular church,” and “universal church” which is grounded in a common profession of faith in the Triune God who is the “divine life-giving source” of the Church. “We are thus directed to the life of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the life God wills to share with all people. There is held before us the vision of God’s reign over the whole creation and of the Church as the firstfruits of humankind which is drawn into that divine life through acceptance of the redemption given in Jesus Christ” (CC, 3). We rejoice in the extent to which this common theology is contributing to an emerging ecumenical consensus through such groups as the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (JWG).⁵ Anglicans and Roman Catholics enjoy a remarkable range of agreement that must remain the context for exploring our differences.

I. Communion

“Communion” has emerged in the ecumenical movement as the concept that best expresses the reality of the Church as diverse yet one in faith, as both local and universal (JWG, 5). An ecclesiology of communion may be found in the *Final Report* (FR, Introduction, 4), as well as the documents of the Second Vatican Council⁶ and of the decennial Lambeth Conferences of Bishops of the Anglican Communion.⁷ We recall here, therefore, just one of the many articulations of our Anglican-Roman Catholic understanding of communion:

⁵ See Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Sixth Report (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), pp. 23-37. Also in *Information Service*, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, N. 74 (1990, III), 75-84.

⁶ See LG, 8, UR, 3, and CD as well as the more recent UUS, 49, and *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993), 9-17.

⁷ “An Appeal to All Christian People,” Resolution 9, Lambeth Conference 1920; “The Anglican Communion: Its Meaning, Organization, and Future Policy,” Lambeth Conference 1948; “Full Communion and Intercommunion,” Resolution 14, Lambeth 1958; “Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission,” Resolution 8, Lambeth 1988; The Agros Report of the Ecumenical Advisory Group of the Anglican Communion in preparation for Lambeth 1998.

For a Christian the life of *communion* means sharing in the divine life, being united with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, and consequently to be in fellowship with all those who share in the same gift of eternal life. This is a spiritual communion in which the reality of the life of the world to come is already present. But it is inadequate to speak only of an invisible spiritual reality as the fulfilment of Christ's will for the Church; the profound communion fashioned by the Spirit requires visible expression. The purpose of the visible ecclesial community is to embody and promote this spiritual communion with God (cf. paras. 16-24). (CC, 43; see also the biblical and theological bases for this understanding in 6-11.)

II. The Local Church

The church is local because:

it is a gathering of the baptised brought together by the apostolic preaching, confessing the one faith, celebrating the one eucharist, and led by an apostolic ministry. This implies that this local church is in communion with all Christian communities in which the essential constructive elements of ecclesial life are present. (CC, 43)

In this we agree with the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches who describe a local church as “a community of baptized believers in which the Word of God is preached, the apostolic faith confessed, the sacraments are celebrated, the redemptive work of Christ for the world is witnessed to, and a ministry of episkope exercised by bishops or other ministers is serving the community” (JWG, 15).

The Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church most often use the term “diocese” to refer to the local church, and that is the usage we have followed in this report. The Eucharist actualizes and expresses the local church as the several parishes gather around the bishop and celebrate the Eucharist in obedience to Jesus' command to “do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19; cf. I Cor. 11:24-25).

We agree, then, that the whole church is present in the local church in that “Each local church is rooted in the witness of the apostles and entrusted with the apostolic mission” (FR, *Authority in the Church* I, 8). We recognize that in a “particular church . . . the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is truly present and operative” (CD, 11; see also LG, 23).

“For churches of the ‘Catholic’ tradition the bishop is essential for the understanding and structure of a local church” (JWG 15-16). In the tradition that we share, a parochial congregation sees in its bishop a personal sign and expression of its continuance in the apostolic tradition and a personal link to all the other local churches which confess and live by the apostolic faith. As successor to the apostles, the bishop is the primary liturgical presider, the primary preacher, and the primary teacher. Each parish depends on its being in communion with the bishop as the unitive sign of its life of witness to the Gospel.

III. The Universal Church

The Church is universal because it is sent by the risen Christ in the power of the Holy

Spirit to proclaim the Good News throughout the world to *every* person and “to unite in one eucharistic fellowship men and women of *every* race, culture, and social condition in *every* generation” (CC, 34; italics added). The Eucharist actualizes and expresses the Church’s unity across time and space since those who share in it have “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Ephesians 4.5-6a).

For all the local churches to be *together in communion*, the one visible communion which God wills, it is required that all the essential constitutive elements of ecclesial communion are present and mutually recognized in each of them. Thus the visible communion between these Churches is complete and their ministers are in communion with each other. This does not necessitate precisely the same canonical ordering; diversity of canonical structures is part of the acceptable diversity which enriches the one communion of all the Churches. (CC, 43; cf. CC, 45, quoted in footnote 15)

The church is universal, therefore, not simply as the aggregate of all the local churches. Rather, the Church is universal in virtue of the one Christian faith, realized in various ways. Again, our Anglican-Roman Catholic consensus converges with that of the Joint Working Group: “The universal church is the communion of all the local churches united in faith and worship around the world” (JWG, 19). Because the church is situated across the world within cultures which transcend merely diocesan boundaries, both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have developed wider, regional structures that are intermediate between the local church and the universal church. We will examine the import of this development in a future report.

Our Anglican-Roman Catholic Consensus

From these considerations, the main elements of our remarkable consensus can be discerned. We agree that the unity of faith and the communion of the faithful must be visible, for “it is inadequate to speak only of an invisible spiritual unity as the fulfilment of Christ’s will for the Church; the profound communion fashioned by the Spirit requires visible expression” (CC, 43). That is, “The gift of communion from God is not an amorphous reality but an organic unity that requires a canonical form of expression” (JWG, 42).

I. The Local and Universal Church

We also agree that the church local and the church universal are co-constitutive and co-inherent, since in a “particular church . . . the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is truly present and operative” (CD, 11) and the church universal is the communion of the local churches.

Thus, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* can speak for Anglicans, too, in saying:

In Christian usage, the word “church” designates the liturgical assembly, but also the local community or the whole universal community of believers. These three meanings are inseparable. “The Church” is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself

becomes Christ's body(#752).⁸

The Church is, therefore, *both* local and universal. The church local is not merely a subdivision of the church universal, nor is the church universal merely an aggregate of the local churches. Each is fully interdependent with the other. When the balance between local and universal is upset, there is danger for the church's institutional embodiment. The Church of Christ may appear to be a simple aggregate of local communities, or it may appear as a totality that diminishes legitimate and necessary diversities. When, however, the proper balance is kept, the Church's real catholicity is more easily seen, because the Church appears as a communion of communities whose very diversity manifests the riches of the one faith in the one God known through the one Christ.

II. The Eucharist

We also agree that the celebration of the Eucharist in communion with the bishop as the primary presider is essential, effectual, and indispensable to the life of the Church. The Eucharist, celebrated in obedience to Jesus' command "Do this in memory of me," actualizes the Church's unity and vitality in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Eucharist the Church as local and universal is manifested and celebrated: "At every eucharistic celebration of Christian communities dispersed throughout the world, in their variety of cultures, languages, social and political contexts, it is the same one and indivisible body of Christ reconciling divided humanity that is offered to believers. In this way the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church's catholicity in which God is glorified" (CC, 36).

III. Episcopacy

⁸ See also the sections on The Church and The Ministry in "An Outline of the Faith, commonly called the Catechism" in BCP: "The Church is one, because it is one Body, under one Head, our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. . . . The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love. . . . The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members. . . . The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons, . . ."

We also agree on the roles of the bishop in service of the unity of the church local and the church universal. In interdependence with the whole people of God (laity and clergy), the bishop is to symbolize, preserve, and promote the unity and mission of the local church, to foster its communion with all the local churches, and to share in leading the church into that full unity for which Christ prayed. These responsibilities are specifically enjoined on the bishops in our rites of the ordination.⁹ These rites also provide that at least three bishops, themselves ordained in apostolic succession, ordain the new bishop. In this way, these rites give the Church's affirmation that the local church and its bishop belong to the communion of the whole church that is constituted and sustained by the apostolic faith. The new bishop is a sign of continuity, a personal symbol of the historic succession of the apostolic church. The new bishop now shares in the corporate responsibility of all the bishops for the unity and fidelity of the church universal. In the Episcopal Church, this responsibility is most obviously exercised in synodical, conciliar and collegial forms, such as diocesan and national councils and committees and the General Convention (including the House of Bishops) of the Episcopal Church and Lambeth Conferences of the Anglican Communion. In the Roman Catholic Church, this responsibility is most obviously exercised in diocesan synods, episcopal conferences (like the National Conference of Catholic Bishops) and ecumenical councils and synods of the Catholic Church (CC, 33; see also BEM, 29, JWG 16).

IV. Primacy

The Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church share a high degree of agreement that primacy at the universal level ought to complement the collegiality of all the bishops: "If God's will for the unity in love and truth of the whole Christian community is to be fulfilled, this general pattern of the complementary primatial and conciliar aspects of *episcopus* serving the *koinonia* of the churches needs to be realized at the universal level" (FR, *Authority in the Church* I, 12, 23). We further agree that universal primacy must be exercised in a manner that fosters genuine *koinonia* (FR, *Authority in the Church* I, 21): "In the context of the communion of all the Churches the episcopal ministry of a universal primate finds its role as the visible focus of unity" (CC, 45). We recognize that ARCIC I has deemed it appropriate that in any future union the universal primacy be held by the see of Rome (FR, *Authority in the Church* I, 12 and 23).¹⁰ At the same time, we also recognize that the primacy has been and is one of the major barriers to unity—a recognition made by Pope Paul VI in his address to the members of the Secretariat for Christian Unity on April 28, 1967.¹¹

V. Authentic Catholicity

⁹ See, e.g., "The Examination" in *The Ordination of a Bishop*, BCP; "Ordination of a Bishop," *The Roman Pontifical*. International Commission on English in the Liturgy, 1978.

¹⁰ See also Elucidation [1981], 8.

¹¹ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 59 (1967): 497-98.

In sum, we agree that the Church's authentic catholicity requires visible manifestation of the unity of faith in a communion in which the local and the universal church are interdependent and co-constitutive. The unity of the communion is effected by the Eucharist and preserved by its bishops, whose unity with each other is manifested in conciliar practice and primatial service. We are agreed that the Church's catholicity does not require ecclesial uniformity. Indeed, it is antithetical to it: "Amid all the diversity that the catholicity intended by God implies, the Church's unity and coherence are maintained by the common confession of the one apostolic faith, a shared sacramental life, a common ministry of oversight, and joint ways of reaching decisions and giving authoritative teaching"(CC, 39). Catholicity is realized in each local church's recognition of the other local churches as embracing the same Gospel, celebrating the same Eucharist, living in the same communion, and pursuing the same mission. Their mutual recognition and communion show that their diversity is compatible with the unity of faith.

Divisive Issues

While we share a significant degree of agreement on important matters of faith and order, major differences remain between us. Many—but by no means all—Anglicans and Roman Catholics will regard some or all of them as "church-dividing;" that is, differences requiring that we remain visibly separated until these differences are resolved. We hope and urge that members of both our churches approach these differences with prayer and with repentance for our churches' share in these divisions. Both churches have found that the work of ARCIC I has been a positive step toward unity, and that it has pointed the direction for further dialogue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics (SA 8, 14).¹² In other words, at the highest levels, our two Churches remain committed to the goal of full communion and the restoration of visible unity. Even so, serious differences remain between us.

¹² See RFR 1, 5, 30, 31 and Resolution 8, Lambeth 1988.

Some of these have been identified by ARCIC I: the Roman Catholic doctrine of infallibility and the Roman Catholic attribution to the Pope of universal immediate jurisdiction.¹³ Others have been identified by our churches in their responses to the work of ARCIC I, as in the official responses to *Final Report* which have raised questions about the degree of agreement actually reached.¹⁴ Questions have emerged through events and developments during the time of our official dialogue, such as the ordination of women which, among other issues, raises the question as to the authority of the church regarding the discipline and administration of the sacraments and the discernment of the signs of the times.¹⁵ We are convinced that, no matter how serious the differences between Anglicans and Catholics on the exercise of authority in the church may appear, with the help of the Holy Spirit they can become differences which enrich, gifts to be shared with one another and with the whole Church of Christ. In fact, they *must* become so because our churches' commitment to full visible unity means that we cannot rest until contentious differences are changed into gifts.

Certain issues of authority which remain are variously refracted when they are put into the context of the Church as local and universal. We single out five areas: requirements for full communion; primacy; the balance between local and universal church; episcopacy and apostolicity; and the relations between ecumenical experience and ecumenical theology.

I. Requirements for "Full Communion"

In the same *Common Declaration* quoted near the beginning of this Report, Archbishop Runcie and Pope John Paul II reiterated that our goal is full communion, that is, confessing the one faith, embracing one baptism, celebrating the same Eucharist, living in the same communion, and pursuing the same mission of concern for others (CC, 45). In pursuit of that goal, they urged "our clergy and faithful not to neglect or undervalue that certain yet imperfect communion we already share," an echo of UR, 3 and FR's Introduction. The recognition that we already share a degree of communion is based upon a renewed understanding of baptism as incorporation into Christ and upon an ecclesiology of communion, according to which essential elements of the Church of Christ are shared in different degrees and ways between our churches. We have a remarkable range of agreement on the constitutive elements of "ecclesial communion," which are outlined in *Church as Communion*, 45.¹⁶ Yet we still disagree (within

¹³ FR *Authority in the Church I*, 24; *Authority in the Church II*, 9 and 15.

¹⁴ *The Emmaus Report* of 1987 and "The Official Roman Catholic Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I (1991)" in *Common Witness to the Gospel. Documents on Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations 1983-1995*. ed. Jeffrey Gros, E. Rozanne Elder, and Ellen K. Wondra. Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1997. 69-77. See also the report of the National Ecumenical Consultation of the Episcopal Church, Nov. 5-9, 1978 (The Detroit Report) and the "Evaluation of the ARCIC Final Report" by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in *Origins* 14.25 (December 6, 1984).

¹⁵ ARCIC *Elucidation* 1979, 5. "This question [about conferring priestly ordination on women] puts into clear relief the need to reach an understanding of how the Church authoritatively discerns the teaching and practice which constitute the apostolic faith entrusted to us." Homily of Pope John Paul II during the Solemn Vespers service celebrated with the Archbishop of Canterbury at St. Gregory's Church on the Caelian Hill, Rome, December 5, 1996. See also "Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns," Lambeth 1988, 136-146; and "Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate," 1989 (The Eames Report).

¹⁶ CC 45 states that ecclesial communion is "rooted in the confession of the one apostolic faith, revealed

each of our churches and between our two churches) on the requirements for *full* communion with each other.

Anglicans and Roman Catholics take the Second Vatican Council's dictum as a given: "in order to restore communion and unity or preserve them, one must 'impose no burden beyond what is indispensable' (Acts 15.28)" (UR, 18). We do not agree, however, on what is indispensable. No wonder, then, that, after recording the elements of ecclesial communion on which our churches agree (CC, 45) and reaffirming "a significant degree of doctrinal agreement" (CC, 49), ARCIC II could still say only that we are able "to recognise in each other's Church a true affinity" (CC, 49).

in the Scriptures, and set forth in the Creeds. It is founded upon one baptism. The one celebration of the eucharist is its pre-eminent expression and focus. It necessarily finds expression in shared commitment to the mission entrusted by Christ to his Church. It is a life of shared concern for one another in mutual forbearance, gentleness, and love; in the placing of the interests of the others above the interests of self; in solidarity with the poor and the powerless; and in the sharing of gifts both material and spiritual (cf. Acts 2:44). Also constitutive of life in communion is acceptance of the same basic moral values, the sharing of the same vision of humanity created in the image of God and recreated in Christ, and the common confession of the one hope in the final consummation of the Kingdom of God."

The Roman Catholic Church

On the one hand, the Roman Catholic Church sees itself as having a particular reality not shared by other churches, including those of the Anglican Communion. It states that the Church of Christ “subsists in the Catholic Church” (LG, 8) and so “it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation [*generale auxilium salutis*], that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained” (UR, 3). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* specifies the “fullness of the means of salvation” as “correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life, and ordained ministry in apostolic succession” (#830). Baptism indeed “constitutes a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been reborn by means of it” (UR, 22) but it is “oriented toward a complete profession of faith, a complete incorporation into the system of salvation such as Christ himself willed it to be, and finally, toward a complete participation in Eucharistic communion” (ibid.). Thus, in his recent encyclical on ecumenism, Pope John Paul II deemed it important to say that “The Catholic Church, both in her praxis and in her solemn documents, holds that the communion of the particular churches with the church of Rome, and of their bishops with the bishop of Rome, is—in God’s plan—an essential requisite of full and visible communion. . . of which the eucharist is the highest sacramental manifestation, . . .” (UUS, 97).

On the other hand, Vatican II also teaches that reality of the Church admits of different means and degrees of participation in its fullness (LG, 13). As a requirement of full communion with the Catholic Church, then, must another church “accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her” (LG, 14), *as the Catholic Church understands these?* If so, what role does the “hierarchy of truths” (UR, 11) play here, with its notion that “neither in the life nor the teaching of the whole Church is everything presented on the same level?”¹⁷

There are no a priori answers to these questions. Instead, possible directions to take might be discerned in the common declarations between the pope and the heads of certain eastern churches, for example the Armenian Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, and the Assyrian Church of the East. Two critical factors entered into the recognition of these other churches as being in very close but still imperfect communion with the Roman Catholic Church: apostolic succession in the episcopacy and the sacrament of orders. The first is a means for safeguarding the faith that comes to us from the apostles and the second is necessary for the valid celebration of the Eucharist, the chief sign and means of the Church’s unity (UR, 2). We reiterate here our earlier observation that “the Roman Catholic Church has been willing to join in a common declaration of faith which deliberately avoids conciliar language that has proven controversial. One such declaration was deemed sufficient to permit some sacramental sharing. . . .” (SA, 30).

The Episcopal Church

¹⁷ SPCU, “Reflections and Suggestions concerning Ecumenical Dialogue [1970]” IV, 4 b; quoted in JWG, Appendix I.

In July 1997 the Episcopal Church formally accepted the *Concordat of Agreement* with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. This approval was based upon the Episcopal Church's recognition of "the essentials of the one catholic and apostolic faith" in the ELCA, despite their considerable canonical, liturgical, and theological differences; and both churches' strong commitment to the goal of full communion. Such recognition was based on the lengthy and detailed official Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue series, and the reception of that dialogue by the Episcopal Church, culminating in resolutions of the 1982 General Convention in which the churches constituting the ELCA were "Recognize[d] . . . as Churches in which the Gospel is preached and taught" (TFC 1). Thus the way was cleared to move toward full communion: "By full communion we here understand a relationship between two distinct churches or communions. Each maintains its own autonomy and recognizes the catholicity and apostolicity of the other, and each believes the other to hold the essentials of the Christian faith" (TFC, p. 107 n. 2).¹⁸

Thus, the Episcopal Church has made clear its ecumenical "bottom line." The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (1886/1888) sets out four elements as the basis for unity: the Holy Scriptures as the rule and standard of faith; the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as authoritative statements of faith; Baptism and Eucharist using Christ's own words of institution and elements; and the historic episcopate, locally adapted. The Episcopal Church, acting both through official resolutions and official dialogues with other churches, has acted in consistency with this Quadrilateral. In doing so, the Episcopal Church has specified precisely what it must retain to be faithful to the Gospel and what it can—and perhaps even should—forego for the sake of the unity that Christ desires for the Church.

II. Primacy and the Bishop of Rome

ARCIC I has sketched the benefits that Anglicans and Roman Catholics would gain from a common recognition of the primacy of the bishop of Rome (FR, Preface to *Authority in the Church* I). To reap these benefits, however, we must face and overcome the challenges to both churches that are linked to the role of the Bishop of Rome, whose office, as Pope John Paul II has recognized, "constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians, whose memory is marked by certain painful recollections" (UUS, 88).

¹⁸ This recognition is in accord with the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (1886/1888) and subsequent statements by the Lambeth Conferences of 1958 and 1988, the latter of which commended to churches in the Communion the 1983 Cold Ash statement.

Authority in the Church I and II, as well as the *Elucidation* of 1981, detail consensus on the basic principles of primacy reached by ARCIC I. “The *episcopate* of the ordained ministry” is recognized as one of the “gifts of the Spirit for the edification of the Church” (FR *Authority in the Church I*, 5). “This pastoral authority belongs primarily to the bishop” who does not, however, act alone (ibid.). Rather it is the whole community which shares in “The perception of God’s will for his Church”; and so it is the whole community which “must respond to and assess the insights and teaching of the ordained ministers.” Thus there is a “continuing process of discernment and response” (ibid., 6) under the leadership and guidance of bishops who are in communion with each other. This pattern is one of synodality, collegiality, and conciliarity: a “communion of these communities with one another” (ibid., 8). But in addition, ARCIC I states, “If God’s will for the unity in love and truth of the whole Christian community is to be fulfilled, this general pattern of the complementary primatial and conciliar aspects of *episcopate* serving the *koinonia* of the churches needs to be realized at the universal level” (ibid., 23). This universal primacy is one of service:

Primacy fulfils its purpose by helping the churches to listen to one another, to grow in love and unity, and to strive together towards the fullness of Christian life and witness; it respects and promotes Christian freedom and spontaneity; it does not seek uniformity where diversity is legitimate, or centralize administration to the detriment of local churches. A primate exercises his ministry not in isolation but in collegial association with his brother bishops. (Ibid., 21)

Further, ARCIC concludes, in light of both historical and current considerations, it is *appropriate* that in any future union a universal primacy be held by the Roman see (ibid., 23; cf. *Authority in the Church II*, 9). Thus, ARCIC I’s work on authority has provided principles for agreement on these topics. Yet problems and disagreements about the role of the Bishop of Rome in a united and universal Church remain.

One of the areas of disagreement is posed by the Roman Catholic Church’s understanding of full communion that identifies communion with the Bishop of Rome as “an *essential* requisite of full and visible communion” (UUS, 97; italics added). “The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of the unity of the bishops and of the multitude of the faithful” (LG, 23; “*Romanus Pontifex, ut successor Petri, est unitatis . . . perpetuum ac visibile principium et fundamentum.*”). This understanding is reflected in the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that particular churches are fully catholic through their communion with the Church of Rome (#834).

ARCIC I accurately noted the remaining obstacle: “if it were . . . implied that as long as a church is not in communion with the bishop of Rome, it is regarded by the Roman Catholic Church as less than fully a church, a difficulty would remain” (FR, *Authority in the Church I*, 24b). The Anglican Communion understands itself to be already part of the Catholic Church.¹⁹ Further, Anglicans hold that the divisions between churches mean that full catholicity is not a

¹⁹ LC 20; LC 78.

characteristic of any one church.²⁰

²⁰ LC 20; “Report on Ecumenical Relations,” Lambeth Conference 1988, esp. 29-35.

Thus, many in both churches have called for a renewed understanding of primacy in the Roman Catholic Church. Not least among these voices has been that of John Paul II himself in *Ut Unum Sint*, 96, in his important invitation to “church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue” on “the ways in which the papal ministry might become a service of love recognized by all Christians.”

III. The Balance between the Local and the Universal Church

Because we profess one Body and One Spirit, one hope in God’s call to us, one Lord, one Faith and one Baptism, one God and Father of all (Eph. 4:4-6), our churches agree that the Church is necessarily both local and universal. A completely autonomous local church is a contradiction in terms, according to our shared understanding. We differ between and among ourselves, however, on how to best maintain and invigorate the indispensable communion of local churches.

Anglicans hold that the Church Universal is the Body of which Jesus Christ is the Head and all baptized persons are members. Within the Anglican Communion, local churches are organized into provinces, each of which is an independent church with its own primate. All the primates are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. The communion of local churches in each province is symbolized by the communion of bishops with each other.

The Roman Catholic Church holds that the Church of Christ “subsists in the [Roman] Catholic Church which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him” (LG, 8). Hence, the Petrine office is an indispensable element of the mutual coinherence of the universal church and the local church. Communion with the bishop of Rome symbolizes and actualizes the unity of the church.

Thus, in the theology and practice of the Church, Anglicans tend to emphasize conciliarity, while Roman Catholics tend to emphasize primacy. Each of these emphases brings with it certain gifts. But each also presents certain challenges. As ARCIC I noted, “Although primacy and conciliarity are complementary elements of *episcopate* it has often happened that one has been emphasized at the expense of the other, even to the point of serious imbalance. When churches have been separated from one another, this danger has been increased. The *koinonia* of the churches requires that a proper balance be preserved between the two with the responsible participation of the whole people of God” (FR, *Authority in the Church* I, 22).

Many Anglicans have called for a renewed understanding and a reformed exercise of conciliarity in the Anglican Communion. The Lambeth Conferences have repeatedly stated that “resolutions passed by a Lambeth conference do not have legislative authority in any province until they have been approved by the provincial synod of the province” (As quoted in SA, 7). How then, Anglicans ask, can the Church be truly one and catholic if each province of the Communion may determine matters of faith without the assent of the other provinces and the Archbishop of Canterbury—and sometimes even in the face of their disapproval? A common liturgy, a common heritage, and bonds of affection with the See of Canterbury may not be sufficient to sustain authentic communion and to render it visible. And the various international structures of the Anglican Communion which function as instruments of communion—the office

of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates' Meeting, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Lambeth Conference—individually and together lack formal authority to speak definitively to and for the Communion.

For instance, neither the Porvoo Agreement among the Anglican and Lutheran Churches of Northern Europe, nor the proposed Concordat between the Episcopal Church in the USA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America require the prior or the subsequent approval of the whole Anglican Communion to become operative and binding. While these agreements are significant and hopeful ecumenical breakthroughs, Roman Catholics may wonder how well they reflect and safeguard the communion of the Anglican Church. In this light, we greet with hope the Virginia Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, in which many of the issues mentioned here are addressed; and the increasing significance of the Anglican Consultative Council, with its synodal relationship of bishops, other clergy, and laity. We also look forward to the studies urged by the 1998 Lambeth Conference, which are expected to clarify how the structures of the Anglican Communion may more effectively express the balance between local and universal church.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church faces continuing concerns about the exercise of primacy by the Bishop of Rome as that may restrict the legitimate autonomy of local churches. The Roman Catholic position that the pope possesses supreme, ordinary, universal and immediate jurisdiction over the whole church is not acceptable to Anglicans as long as the limits to that jurisdiction remain unclear (*Authority in the Church* I, 24d; cf. *Authority in the Church* II, 18-22).²¹ Anglicans see the need for “further discussion of the relation between primacy and episcopal collegiality” (ER, 66) in order to be assured that primacy not “be exercised heteronomously, to the detriment, rather than to the welfare of the Body of Christ” (ER, 66).²² Such discussions could be devoted to issues such as the norms and procedures for selecting bishops, relations between a diocesan bishop and officials of the Holy See, and the theological nature and authority of episcopal conferences in relation to the Roman See and to local bishops. Pope John Paul II’s invitation to “church leaders and their theologians to engage” with him in dialogue on the universal primacy exercised in service to the unity of the Church in *Ut Unum Sint* (#96) may help to stimulate such discussion.

²¹ ARCIC II's *The Gift of Authority* (May 1999) pursues these questions, and is now under study in both churches.

²² Resolution III.8, h and I. Lambeth Conference 1998.

The Church's mission and witness are effective to the extent that its local and universal actualizations work to nourish and complete each other. Ecclesial structures, policies, and practices can diminish or obscure the unity of the Church, making faith in Christ seem to be a divisive, not a reconciling, power. On the other hand, ecclesial structures, policies, and practices can inhibit local churches from exercising their proper autonomy in living the Gospel in their particular circumstances. Then the authentic fullness of the Church's faith is obscured. So the challenge that faces both our churches is to renew our structures, policies, and practices so that the proper balance between the church local and the church universal can be realized.

IV. Episcopacy and Apostolicity

Anglicans and Roman Catholics share the catholic understanding of the role of the bishop in the local church (see above; cf. JWG, 16). While "Differences between World Communions are connected with the role and place of the bishop in relation to the local church" (JWG, 15), these differences do not divide our two churches.

Furthermore, as part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, the Episcopal Church believes that episcopacy is one element among many which together preserve the church's apostolicity. These elements include "Scripture, Tradition, Creeds, the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, the witness of saints, and the *consensus fidelium*, which is the continuing experience of the Holy Spirit through His faithful people in the Church."²³ The Roman Catholic Church believes that "What was handed on by the apostles comprises everything that serves to make the people of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith. In this way, the church, in its doctrine, life, and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that it itself is, all that it believes" (DV, 8). Thus, for both churches, not the bishops alone, but the entire church hands on the apostolic tradition. However, each church gives different weight to the role of the episcopate in the transmission of the apostolic heritage.

The Roman Catholic Church holds that there is an essential role for bishops: episcopacy is not the sole carrier of apostolicity, but it is the primary carrier. DV, 7 reflects this conviction in teaching that "In order to keep the gospel forever whole and alive . . . the apostles left bishops as their successors, 'handing over their own teaching role to them [*suum locum magisterii*].'" DV, 10 states ". . . the task of giving an authoritative interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." In Roman Catholic understanding, this teaching office is vested in the episcopate. In line with this, the Roman Catholic Church's official response to the *Final Report* noted its reservation: "the unbroken lines of episcopal succession and apostolic teaching stand in causal relationship to each other" (RFR, 27).

As noted above, Anglicans hold that episcopacy is one element among many that together ensure the church's fidelity to the apostolic inheritance. While the Chicago Quadrilateral (1886) states that episcopacy is "essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches" of the

²³ 1948 Lambeth Conference Committee Report on "The Anglican Communion," pp. 84-86.

Church, and though the Lambeth Quadrilateral (1888) does not identify episcopacy as essential, still Lambeth 1888 terms episcopacy as “a *basis* on which approach may be with God’s blessing made towards” unity among divided churches.²⁴

²⁴ BCP, 876-877; italics added.

For Anglicans, the episcopate is not necessarily the primary carrier of apostolicity. The Episcopal Church holds that apostolic ministry resides with all Christians by virtue of their baptism. Ordained ministries exist “to serve, lead and enable this ministry” (PU 4). Among the ordained, bishops are to be “the focus and personal symbols of this inheritance as they preach and teach the Gospel and summon the people of God to their mission of worship and service” (PU 4). Both the teaching office and the governance of the church are conciliar. Thus, it is the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, not the House of Bishops alone, that states the teachings and canon law of the church, including canons specifying how bishops, priests, and deacons are to be disciplined.

Where the historic episcopate is absent, other ecclesial qualities may be recognized as indicating apostolicity. Thus, in the case of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Episcopal Church found that the basic teaching of the ELCA is “consonant with the Gospel and is sufficiently compatible with the teaching of [the Episcopal] Church” (TFC, 1) to warrant movement toward full communion with the ELCA. Because such full communion would eventually include the historic episcopate, the Episcopal Church was able to envision temporarily suspending its long-standing restriction of ministry in this case only.²⁵ This suspension was envisioned as preserving, not impairing, apostolicity. In light of the Roman Catholic Church’s understanding of episcopacy, however, it is unlikely that the Roman Catholic Church would find itself authorized to enact a similar suspension.²⁶

In sum, we are in significant agreement that bishops are successors to the apostles and hold the teaching office and the governance of the church. However, our two churches differ significantly in that the Roman Catholic Church sees bishops in apostolic succession as essential to apostolicity, while the Episcopal Church sees bishops as one important element of apostolicity. Further, the Roman Catholic church reserves the authoritative teaching office and governance of the church to its bishops, while the Episcopal Church holds that both functions reside with its bishops in council with other clergy and the laity. While these differences are significant, it is not yet clear whether or not they are church dividing. Therefore, the relation of episcopacy and apostolicity is an area that requires further theological reflection within the context of the significant agreement we already share.

V. Ecumenical Experience and Ecumenical Theology

²⁵ The Book of Common Prayer's Preface to the Ordination Rites states “No persons are allowed to exercise the offices of bishop, priest, or deacon in the Church unless they are so ordained [by solemn prayer and the laying on of episcopal hands], or have already received such ordination with the laying on of hands by bishops who are themselves duly qualified to confer Holy Orders” (BCP, 510). It is this clause which is to be suspended temporarily, and in the case of the ELCA only.

²⁶ See, for example, LG 22.

This Report has highlighted the scope of the “real though as yet imperfect communion” between Catholics and Episcopalians in the United States. The long and continuous work of Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States reflects our two churches’ eagerness for unity. Some members of ARC-USA have also been members of ARCIC. Over the course of more than three decades, the “real though as yet imperfect communion” our churches share has grown more extensive and deep in our local churches through shared Bible study and prayer, collaboration in service to society, interchurch marriages, covenants between Roman Catholic and Episcopal parishes, and covenants between Roman Catholic and Episcopal dioceses. Through such ecumenical experience, Episcopalians and Roman Catholics have come to recognize in each other a shared faith which issues in shared mission and service and which shapes their daily lives and their hopes for themselves, their families, their communities, and the world in which they live. Such experience not only points toward the future unity of the Church. It already manifests it. And the limitations and imperfections of the communion which we already share—so wrenchingly evident in the inability of people who work, study, and pray together to share the Eucharist together regularly—further fuel the desire for fuller communion—with each other and with the one God and the one Lord.

These experiences of unity, of communion, are not accidents. We hold that the work of the Holy Spirit can be discerned in them. It is, therefore, incumbent upon Church leaders to attend to what the Spirit may be saying and calling us to by means of these experiences. It is incumbent on us to reflect more deeply on these experiences in our dialogue on matters of faith and order. Clarification of doctrinal matters is not an end in itself, but a means to the larger end of recovering and receiving the communion which is God’s will for the Church. Official dialogue and the lived experience of the members of our churches must enrich and inform each other.

Since the communion that we already share in the United States may not yet be reflected on the universal level, the leaders of our churches must ask how they can nurture communion in local churches without diminishing communion with the universal church as our churches understand this. What further ways are there for members of our churches to express their common faith in worship, in study of Scripture, in service, in common life? In certain areas of the United States, Eucharistic sharing is a strongly felt need, and its lack, a frustration. Under what conditions might some regular sharing of the Eucharist be authorized? In both our churches, church leaders at all levels have vivid and direct experience of the great degree of convergence our churches have reached. How might these persons more effectively convey their own experience of catholicity and of communion which is real though imperfect?

Conclusion

In this Report, we have highlighted some of the many ways in which the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have recognized and understood the “real though as yet imperfect communion” that we already share. We have given some of the ecclesiology and theology that underlie this communion, showing that our remarkable consensus is not merely an accident, but a manifestation of our faith as it is expressed in both churches by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. We rejoice that our two churches share a converging theology of

the local and universal church, the Eucharist, episcopacy, primacy, and authentic catholicity.

We also recognize that there continue to be serious theological issues that divide us. Even so, our two Churches remain committed to the goal of full communion and the restoration of visible unity. For this goal to be attained, each of our two churches, and our two churches together, must carefully and prayerfully come to deeper understanding of the requirements for full communion, primacy, the balance between local and universal church, episcopacy and apostolicity, and the relation between ecumenical experience and ecumenical theology. While recognizing the complexity of these problems and the pain that our continued division causes, we also live in that hope that, by the work of the Holy Spirit, differences that divide will be transformed into differences that enrich our common faith and life.

Future Prospects

In order to address some of the theological issues that contribute to our continued division, ARC-USA has undertaken a long-term project of study and dialogue on ecclesiology and authority. We have begun by studying how the relation of the local and the universal church is understood; this Report is one result of that study. We are currently engaged in examining the national experience of our churches as hierarchical catholic churches in a democratic secular environment, and in studying the consensus Anglicans and Roman Catholics already share on the Eucharist. We expect this work to aid us in developing new ecclesial and theological perspectives on authority which, we hope and pray, will contribute to greater convergence between our churches on these important matters.

Our collaborative study is part of a multifaceted discussion of ecclesiology and authority that may lead to significant shifts in the understanding and practice of both churches. Among the more significant contributions to this conversation are: the responses to Pope John Paul II's invitation to conversation on the papacy in service to Christian unity, and, in particular, the response of the House of Bishops of the Church of England; the symposia on the papacy held in Rome in December 1996 and December 1997; Pope John Paul II's *Apostolos Suos* (1998) on the theology and authority of episcopal conferences; the Virginia Report of the Inter-Anglican Doctrinal Commission; the Resolutions of the 1998 Lambeth Conference which commend this report to the Anglican Communion for study; and ARCII's May 1999 statement *The Gift of Authority*.

Some of the issues that face us are theological. Clearly, the divine gift of communion is most fully realized in the celebration of the Eucharist. The limitations of our "real though as yet imperfect" communion are experienced most widely and painfully in our inability to celebrate the Eucharist fully and completely together. For this reason, ARC-USA is currently examining the agreements we have already reached. With many others engaged in this conversation, we urge shared prayer on more and more occasions.

Some of the issues that face us are practical. Within our respective traditions, communion among members of our churches may be obscured and diminished when the Eucharist is celebrated with less than the full and active participation of all, according to their distinctive

roles. For example, the existence of very large dioceses may diminish communion when the bishop is more an administrator than a primary presider or shepherd (CD, 22-23). Communion may also be obscured and diminished in situations where the closing or clustering of parishes damages communicants' recognition of the reality of the church in a particular place. Likewise, communities that are deprived of the celebration of the Eucharist for lack of a priest will have more difficulty in perceiving and living out their full ecclesial reality. We will explore the consequences of such phenomena and their implications for our movement toward full communion at a later stage in our ongoing study of authority in the church. We hope to profit from the contribution of others who seek to clarify these issues.

Communion may also be obscured and diminished when individuals enter into unauthorized sharing of the Eucharist. Our two churches currently have distinct policies on who may receive the Eucharist and under what circumstances. At the same time, members of our churches are experiencing such a high degree of communion of faith, service, and life that sharing the Eucharist seems to many not only desirable but warranted. But "It is no service to the unity of Christ's Church when one group contributes to the weakening of loyalty and undermining of discipline of another. Dealing honestly with the problems raised . . . is a pastoral responsibility of the church" (SES). It is incumbent upon church leaders at every level to address this situation with the utmost pastoral skill and with the greatest respect for the teachings of both churches. Pastoral skill and respect are both elements of our movement into full communion, a movement in which we must follow the guidance of the Spirit, as difficult as that may be at some points to discern.

Our proximity offers us many opportunities for growth in communion which even now is real yet imperfect. Among the salient practical issues posed is the question of joint decision-making. If our communion is real, our churches must continually examine their consciences according to the famous question posed by Faith and Order's third world conference at Lund, Sweden in 1952: "Should not our Churches ask themselves . . . whether they should not act together *in all matters* except those in which deep differences of conviction *compel* them to act separately?" (emphases added). This imperative has been echoed by John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint*, 96 and, earlier, in the Roman Catholic Church's 1993 Ecumenical Directory. It has also been reaffirmed in reports and resolutions of various Lambeth Conferences,²⁷ as well as in the policies and practices of local churches within the Anglican Communion.

²⁷ See, e.g., Resolution 50 of the Lambeth Conference of 1948, Resolution 44 of the Lambeth Conference of 1968, "What is the church for?" (Document 20 of the Lambeth Conference of 1978), "Ecumenical Relations" (Document 24 of the 1988 Lambeth Conference), and Resolution 13 of the Lambeth Conference of 1988.

Yet for each church the task remains of making decisions now in ways that render our communion as visible as possible, at the local, national, and international levels. Both churches continue to seek effective ways of structuring our diversity. Our churches must consider what we can do if we find that our decision-making processes are irreconcilable. What *should* we do? Finally, only our deepened communion and collaboration will enable us to answer these questions and find the way to the full unity to which we are called. Yet we are convinced that even now exploration of how we currently answer these questions may help us recognize new ways toward full unity.

It is undeniable that “. . . the precise shape the united church of the future should take and the forms of diversity it could embrace is an important but still unresolved question for all Christian communities” (JWG, 49). We ourselves do not yet see that shape, but we are confident that the Holy Spirit will lead the Church into all truth. We already rejoice in the Spirit’s having brought us to the remarkable degree of communion and agreement that we have highlighted in the first parts of this Report. We hope and pray that our work, present and future, may contribute to the resolution of this question and hasten the unity for which Christ our Lord prayed—in order that the world may believe.

SOURCES

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- CD *Christus Dominus*. Vatican II’s Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church, 1965.
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