

PAPAL PRIMACY: AN ANGLICAN PERSPECTIVE

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I am grateful to the Ecclesiastical Law Society and the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland for their invitation to address this theme, although I have to confess, as a non-lawyer, I do feel rather a fraud standing here. I take comfort, however, first from the fact that, albeit welcome, your invitation was unsought, and second from my understanding that the purpose of canon law is to give legal expression to the theology of the church and that the purpose of the theology of the Church (in its positive and articulated aspects) is to explain the purposes and the work of God. In other words, the ultimate point of canon law is and must be pastoral, as is well expressed by the last canon, Canon 1752, of the 1983 Code of Canon Law for the Roman Catholic Church, with its reference to 'the salvation of souls, which in the Church must always be the supreme law'. I hope, therefore, that these reflections from a theological and pastoral perspective will not be considered inappropriate. Let me begin with a few words of personal explanation, which might help explain my interest in the subject, the context in which I consider it, and my aim in this lecture.

1. INTRODUCTION

As Chairman of the Church of England's Faith and Order Advisory Group and a member both of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations and of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, I have rather obvious and particular reasons for interest in addition to those which should motivate anyone who wants to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. (Please do not infer from those last words that I think there is only one possible answer—it is just that the question of papal primacy is ecumenically unavoidable and the question of the ministry of Peter, which may or may not be the same thing, is biblically and theologically unavoidable.) As some of you may know, I was closely involved in the preparation of the response of the House of Bishops of the Church of England to Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Ut unum sint*, and gave a paper on the same theme as this present paper at a symposium in Rome on Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church in December 1997.¹ I was a participant in the Mississauga meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in 2000, and had previously been a fraternal delegate at the 1999 special assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops.

Let me begin with my conclusions. I believe that there is a universal ministry in the service of the mission and unity of the Church which is a gift of God

* This is the text of the fourth biennial Lyndwood Lecture delivered in London on 13 November 2002.

¹ Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church.

for the Church and for the world. This ministry is sometimes called ‘Petrine’, and there is certainly an analogy between some of the rôle of Peter and that of the papacy today, although not only the difficulty of demonstrating any clear principle of transmission of this ministry to the occupant of a particular see but also the complexity of the relationship between the primacy of the Church of Rome and the primacy of its Bishop mean that the term ‘Petrine ministry’ needs careful exposition. I shall try to relate universal primacy first to the common episcopal vocation to share in the ‘care of all the Churches’,² and in particular of course to that special form of episcopal ministry which is primacy in the wider sense.

I do however believe in the papal ministry of service on theological grounds and I also find it increasingly validated by the needs of ecumenism and in the light of growing globalisation. In other words, theological and practical considerations join hands. There remain big questions of course, and not simply about the historical and current exercise of papal primacy. The joke question, ‘Is the Pope a catholic?’ isn’t really a joke. It’s a serious question to which my answer would be, ‘Of course he is—but I would like him to be more Catholic!’

I maintain that in the providence of God and by God’s grace the institution of the papacy has been preserved through and despite the difficulties of history and the mistakes made by different Churches so that in due course it might become fully an instrument of unity. In this process I believe recent Anglican experience to be relevant. The growth of the Anglican Communion has made Anglicans realise the need for universal structures in support of unity, and among these the personal ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury has developed in ways that may have a contribution to make to the renewal of the papacy itself.

2. THE PAPACY AS AN ECUMENICAL CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

The Rome paper to which I have referred was entitled ‘*Primacy and Unity*’: *An Anglican Contribution to a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue*, picking up a phrase from *Ut Unum Sint*. Pope John Paul II had written there of his awareness that:

for a great variety of reasons, and against the will of all concerned, what should have been a service sometimes manifested itself in a very different light. But ... it is out of a desire to obey the will of Christ truly that I recognise that as Bishop of Rome I am called to exercise that ministry ... I insistently pray the Holy Spirit to shine his light upon us, enlightening all the Pastors and theologians of our Churches, that we may seek—together,

² Cf *May They All Be One: A Response of the House of Bishops of the Church of England to Ut Unum Sint* (London CHP, 1997) 44: ‘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’.

of course—the forms in which this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognised by all concerned.³

This is an immense task, which we cannot refuse and which I cannot carry out by myself. Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea ‘that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me’.⁴

I hope that no one is in any doubt about the seriousness—and the remarkableness—of that invitation. Without commenting at this stage on the content of what Pope John Paul wrote, the mere fact of his having written in this way came as a surprise to many in both Roman Catholic and the other churches.

That the one whose definitions on matters of faith and morals are, albeit in certain very restricted and highly specific circumstances, said to be infallible and irreformable *ex sese non e consensu ecclesiae*⁵ and who is claimed to have by divine institution ordinary, immediate and universal jurisdiction over the whole Church⁶ should not only ask, but express the need to ask, the help not only of those already in full communion with him but of others also, was unprecedented.

I believe that invitation to have been an inspired contribution to resolving what is undoubtedly (as Pope Paul VI had already said)⁷ one of the gravest obstacles to the full visible unity of the Church; more than that, I think it substantial evidence that God has allowed the papacy to continue, like some other elements in the life of the church (for example, Holy Scripture, the diaconate) whose use have become distorted or ossified over time so that, when the *kairos* came it might be revived for the sake of the whole Church. The parallels with Holy Scripture or the diaconate may not be exact but may at least illustrate the point. The Bible, sometimes hidden and reserved in the Church even for generations, has at several points enabled the renewal, the reformation and the purification of the Church.

The diaconate, sometimes reduced in the Orthodox Churches to a liturgical, until recently in the Western Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches to a

³ Homily in the Vatican Basilica in the presence of Dimitrios I, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch (6 December 1987), 3. AAS 80 (1988), 714.

⁴ *Ut Unum Sint* 95,96.

⁵ *Pastor aeternus* First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ, First Vatican Council, Session 4, 18 July 1870 (Text and translation in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. NP Tanner (Sheed and Ward and Georgetown University Press 1990), vol 2, pp 811–816, ch 4.

⁶ First Vatican Council, First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ, ch 3.

⁷ From the Address of Pope Paul VI to the Secretariat [sic] for Promoting Christian Unity given at the conclusion of its Annual General Meeting, 28 April 1967: *Vatican Information Service*, ii (1967), 4.

transitional, and in the Protestant churches to a charitable and social function, has re-emerged in recent years as a sign and instrument of the Church's identity as a doxological community, whose doxology is seen in proclamation and service and whose ordained ministries are not merely functional but are also representative demonstrations of its character.

An important aspect of ecumenical method is to develop together a greater range of skills in discerning within the bewildering diversity of what we have inherited from the past what is genuinely 'of the tradition' and what is merely ephemeral. In this exercise, Anglicans will always want to give pride of place to Scripture as the unique, normative and irreplaceable witness to revelation, and will evaluate the rest of tradition, including historical developments, in the light of Scripture, applying to this evaluation the judgment of baptised and converted reason.

I have set out the triad of Scripture, tradition and reason like that in order to indicate something of the subtlety of their interaction in Anglican practice and also to show how this might help us re-evaluate the papacy and its ecumenical potential. This is necessary not just because of the long history of anti-papal polemic but also because of one particular criticism that has been made of the ARCIC reports on authority. It was a charge levelled against the earlier reports and has been repeated with some vehemence with regard to the third report, *The Gift of Authority*. The claim is that the Commission has simply sanctified the historical development of the papacy without discrimination.

I do not in fact agree with that criticism, but it needs to be addressed, and Christians clearly still have some way to go in coming to a common mind about providence in history and how to judge historical developments. I also think that Anglican theological method as it has evolved has a contribution to make in this area. That the Bible tells us nothing about the institution of the papacy, nor even of any presence of the apostle Peter in Rome, cannot be decisive for Anglicans either one way or the other. After all, the Bible doesn't tell us anything about the canon of Holy Scripture either.

From the Bible we learn that the Lord Jesus chose twelve and that among them he gave Peter a special commission as the rock on which his Church was built, that he gave him the keys of the kingdom and commanded him to strengthen his brethren. The New Testament also tells us that Peter occupied a special place in the primitive community after the resurrection of Jesus and the descent of the Spirit. Nor can apostolic elements right at the foundation of the Church of Rome be dismissed, though we shall not be able to appeal to Scripture for support even of early claims that Peter and Paul together were the *coryphaei* of the Church of Rome, nor of the body of evidence for Peter's martyrdom there.

What bearing the scriptural and other early evidence has on present dilemmas is of course precisely the point at issue and I can only state (not having time to argue) the rather obvious fact that everyone, including those whose

intention is to start from Scripture actually start from how they have already received Scripture and bring to their reading tools of interpretation derived from elsewhere.

All the institutions and practices of the Church have changed and developed over the centuries as have also the value we set on them and the way we understand them. New institutions have arisen, old ones have changed or fallen into desuetude: Scripture; the three-fold ministry; the creeds; the monastic life; different patterns of church-state relations; liturgies; ethical judgments—the list could go on. These things are affected by political considerations, doctrinal developments, the need to react to heresies and other threats from both within and without, by the growth or contraction of the Church, persecution, political vacuums, changing economic circumstances, or quite simply new questions for which earlier precedent does not easily give any guidance. Some such developments have served the mission of the Church well, others have been ambiguous or even negative; some have left permanent marks on the Church, others have been of only passing significance. It is important to be clear about this, and to realise that questions concerning the papacy in history and what place a renewed papacy might have in a renewed and united Church cannot simply be based on Scripture however necessary it must always be to test these things by Scripture.

I believe whatever the blend of historical, political and theological factors which led to the emergence of the papacy, the institution of a universal primacy has the potential to make an important (and possibly indispensable) contribution to the unity of the Church and the needs of an increasingly integrated if disintegrating world. Notwithstanding past and present difficulties, difficulties which still loom large for many people, this institution has been sustained by God for just such a time as this and Pope John Paul's encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* may be a critical text as we go forward, as he himself said, 'together, of course'.

There are many omissions from this paper, but one particular matter that needs noting is the question of the relationship between the papal (i.e. personal) primacy of the Bishop of Rome and the primacy of the Church of which he is the chief pastor, namely Rome, understood either or both as 'the mother and mistress of all churches' or 'the church which presides in love'. The present understanding of the papal primacy by many of its supporters as well as of its opponents hinges exclusively on judgments about the place of Peter in the New Testament and in the intentions of Jesus and the way in which the special vocation and mission of Peter either is or is not transmitted in the Church.

It can however legitimately be argued that the primacy of the Church of Rome is historically, logically and therefore possibly theologically prior to that of its bishop. This subject also comes up from time to time in discussion about the Archbishopric of Canterbury, not least when suggestions are made about whether the presiding bishop of the Anglican Communion should always be Archbishop of Canterbury. I cannot develop this theme

here but would want to argue that the two strands of primacy are both important. The personal element is vital, but the personal is not detached from the network of relationships in the local church. The primacy of a see and the primacy of its bishop both have a part to play.

3. SOME ANGLICAN VOICES

I have been asked to offer an Anglican perspective on the question of papal primacy. Let me offer a word of caution. Although I think what I shall argue is authentically Anglican, it is, rather obviously, only *an* Anglican perspective; it is not the only one that could be offered and there are many Anglicans who would express things differently, and some indeed who would reject my whole approach. In the earlier lecture on this subject to which I referred, I included quite an extensive catena of classical Anglican observations on the papacy. Quite purple some of them were too. Nor is this an area in which members of the Church of England only will be found to take the different positions. The Church of England may have been the mother from whom the Anglican Communion grew, but the Church of England is not the Anglican Communion. This is quite important for our present subject. When, in an unforgettable phrase, the Thirty-Nine Articles state that 'The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England',⁸ the statement must be seen firstly as an assertion about the unitary state under the monarch as 'head of all causes as well spiritual as terrestrial' rather than a statement about the Church as such.

This is not to deny the profound ecclesiological implications of the Reformation in England, but it is to try to see it in its context, and above all it is to make the point that whatever its implications for the Church of England both at the time and since, this particular Article cannot properly be exported. In other words it is a statement about England and not about the Catholic Church even in its Anglican dress, and should not be taken as normative for Anglican ecclesiology. Thus, members of the Church of England differ in their approaches to the papacy, and non-English Anglicans must be allowed to have their own histories. Hence the complexity. That something similar might be said of other Churches too is not really to the point, because the difficulty Anglicans find in speaking with a clear or single voice on this and some other important matters does highlight one of the main problems facing the Anglican Communion at the moment.

It is not only our friends in other Churches who notice this. There is a widespread recognition among Anglicans that the present instruments of communion are insufficient in a number of areas, and especially in the two closely related areas of the integrity of doctrine and the unity of the Church. Even among those who would be most resistant to any form of the papacy as an answer to this deficit there are many who consider that a stronger sense of the universal and binding nature of Christian truth is necessary. This is the agenda of the *Virginia Report* about which more later. I think this is

⁸ Articles of Religion, Art XXXVII.

important not only because of the need to make our instruments of unity more secure, but also because it illustrates the way in which changing circumstances force the Christian community to review the way in which inherited patterns either do or do not serve the Church in its contemporary faithfulness to its mission.

In one way or another, issues concerning levels of authority in the Church, including questions of subsidiarity and regionalisation, are becoming more important and not merely for the Church's own sake. How can Christians learn to address and speak to the actual structures and questions of a changing world? At the widest level this means that globalisation poses huge questions to the Church. From the earliest days the Church's own structures reflected the *οικουμενη*, a concept allied to but not identical with that of the *catholica*, but Christian disunity and fragmentation mean that Christians are in serious danger of being overtaken by events.

I said earlier that I want to see papal primacy in the context of primacy generally, and to see primacy as a particular form of the episcopal office. Indeed, one of my draft titles for this lecture was 'not more than a bishop'. Of primacy (or seniority) the Dublin Report of the Anglican-Orthodox dialogue said, 'seniority is understood as a ministry of service and support to the other Anglican Churches, not as a form of domination over them ... Thus, even though the seniority ascribed to the Archbishop of Canterbury is not identical with that given to the Ecumenical Patriarch, the Anglican Communion has developed on the Orthodox rather than the Roman Catholic pattern, as a fellowship of self-governing national or regional Churches'.⁹ There are some principles here which we would not want to lose in the re-appropriation of the papacy. We take comfort from the knowledge that many Roman Catholics feel the same. The relation between the idea of particular Churches and that of the universal Church, and the place of particular sees are lively debates in many Churches, including some who would use very different language to describe things.

Speaking in Rome in October 2001, the Bishop of Chester, Peter Forster, declared that 'Anglicans have come to accept the wisdom and need of a universal primacy, exercised by the Bishop of Rome. It is recognised that such a need, for the mission of the Church, will discernibly grow as the process of globalisation progresses'.¹⁰ In speaking like this, he was able to draw on a substantial body of authoritative statements by particular Provinces and by the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Consultative Council on behalf of the Communion as a whole. No sooner had his words been reported, however, than representatives of one Anglican organisation attacked what he had said, and wrote to Rome denouncing him. They even went so far as to express their gratitude for the text *Dominus Iesus* precisely because it

⁹ Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: The Dublin Agreed Statement (SPCK, 1984), p 18, para 27(g).

¹⁰ Peter Forster, Bishop of Chester, speaking as a fraternal delegate from the Anglican Communion at the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (11 October 2001). Text in PCPCU Information Service 109, p 85.

appeared to have hardened the fault lines between Anglicans and Roman Catholics and made unity more difficult. Little did they know of the debate about that document within the Roman Catholic Church.

This reaction highlights usefully the fact that there are some Anglicans for whom the idea of a universal ministry is *a priori* unacceptable, quite apart from problems connected with the actual exercise of that ministry. There cannot be any doubt but that to have a Pope for all Christians would require considerable changes both in Churches who do not currently receive his authority and indeed for the Roman Catholic Church as well.

Notwithstanding the hostile voices to which I have referred, Anglican Churches have generally and authoritatively, though not uncritically, expressed their openness to re-receive the papacy as an instrument of unity. Thus when the 1988 Lambeth Conference considered the *Final Report* of ARCIC I, the bishops felt able to welcome the agreed statements, 'Authority in the Church (I & II), together with the Elucidation, as a firm basis for the direction and agenda of the continuing dialogue on authority and wishes to encourage ARCIC II to continue to explore the basis in Scripture and tradition of the concept of a universal primacy, in conjunction with collegiality, as an instrument of unity, the character of such a primacy in practice, and to draw upon the experience of other Christian Churches in exercising primacy, collegiality and conciliarity'.¹¹

The General Synod of the Church of England had already said much the same, and agreed that these texts 'record sufficient convergence on the nature of authority in the Church for our communions together to explore further the structures of authority and the exercise of collegiality and primacy in the Church'.¹² The Church of England handled its response to ARCIC *Final Report* in parallel to its response to the Faith and Order report *Baptism Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) which had also been published in 1982. This is relevant not simply from the general point of view of ecumenical method, but also because of what BEM said, or rather more accurately, did not say, about such matters.

Several Anglican churches criticised the Faith and Order Commission for not making any reference to a universal ministry in the service of unity. The Episcopal Church in the USA noted 'that there is no treatment of the Petrine ministry within the context of the ministry of bishops, and [felt] that this is a lack which ought to be remedied'.¹³ The Scottish Episcopal Church was even more explicit, and, in assenting to the relevant paragraphs, recognised 'that these principles point to the propriety of a personal embodiment of episcopate at world level'.¹⁴ The Anglican Church of the Province of New Zealand saw this particular lack as an example of a more general failure: 'We

¹¹ Lambeth Conference 1988, Resolution 8.3 Text in Coleman R. (ed.) *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences 1867-1988* (Anglican Book Centre, 1992), p 203.

¹² General Synod. Report of Proceedings (November 1986, vol. 17, no 3) pp 944-976.

¹³ *Churches Respond to BEM II*, p 61.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p 50, para 18.

are conscious of the fact that, in the BEM document, there is no reference to a possible rôle of the Bishop of Rome as a central focus of unity. Nor is there any mention of the rôle of patriarchs, archbishops, and primates generally'.¹⁵

The Church of England was more reticent, and also recognised that not all in the Anglican garden was rosy, admitting that, 'together with the Anglican Communion as a whole, [it needed] to consider the structures of oversight that properly belong to the Communion and the relation of personal oversight, primacy and collegiality appropriate at a level above the provincial'.¹⁶ I think the particular features of English history and to some extent that of British history as a whole make this coyness quite understandable. It is interesting to note that the 1938 report of an Archbishops' Commission on Doctrine in the Church of England, which dealt extensively with questions of authority and episcopacy, did not really mention primacy as such, even in its discussion of the episcopate, and the Petrine primacy only in a very thin note. Just as an aside, when people are inclined to be a bit despondent about ecumenical prospects today they could well consider how far we have come since 1938.

Despite the absence of any clear reference to a universal ministry in the Lima text, there were clues pointing in this direction, and many people noticed a hint in the statement that 'the ordained ministry should be exercised in personal, collegial and communal way',¹⁷ and that this principle applies at different levels of the Church's life. There was also felt to be a further helpful pointer in the assertion that, 'at the regional level there is ... need for an ordained minister exercising a service of unity'.¹⁸ It seems therefore that on the basis of responses at both provincial and world-wide levels the official voices of the Anglican Communion have been clearly open, with varying degrees of caution or enthusiasm, to a universal ministry of unity.

The bishops of the Church of England said in their response to *Ut Unum Sint* that 'Anglicans are ... by no means opposed to the principle and practice of a ministry at the world level in the service of unity'.¹⁹ Similarly, the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, in its *Virginia Report*, one of the preparatory documents for the 1998 Lambeth Conference, asked whether a universal primacy may not be necessary for the universal Church: 'Is not universal authority a necessary corollary of universal communion?'

Thus the question about universal ministry appears to be unavoidable for a universal communion. Now I hope you can see where this is going. The Roman Catholic Church prefers to call itself simply the Catholic Church, which is obviously problematic for other Christians, but it contains an

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p 68, para 4.10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 77, para 158.

¹⁷ *BEM Ministry* 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 27.

¹⁹ *May They All Be One*, p 44.

important point. There can be only one Catholic Church (we say so in the creed), and if this Catholic Church needs a personal ministry of unity, there can only be one Pope. As the Anglican Communion has grown from its English roots and become world-wide, Anglicans have discovered precisely the need for this ministry of unity. But of course Anglicans even at their most gung-ho do not believe that their communion is the Catholic Church. There is not therefore any appetite for building the Archbishop of Canterbury into a rival Pope, although some of the concrete demands of communion, mission, mutual love and encouragement are increasingly forcing some papal aspects on him. As Anglicans rediscover, painfully and not without considerable conflict, what it means to be part of the universal Church, they also find themselves reinventing a new kind of universal ministry. That is why the present developments in the Anglican Communion are so ecumenically interesting, and especially at a time when the Roman Catholic Church is having to wrestle with similar questions but from an opposite direction! Thus the Archbishop of Canterbury will not challenge the Pope but he may well have some things to teach him about how to be the Pope—I am not going to enter into any debate about the relative balance between how much he has to teach and how much he has to learn!

So it seems to me that the question of how Anglicans see the Pope is inseparable from the question of how they see the Archbishop of Canterbury, with all the qualifications to which I have drawn attention. So many of these principles can be applied either to the actual ministry of the Bishop of Rome or to an evolving universal personal ministry within the Anglican Communion. Nonetheless, in this remarkable and changed situation, serious questions have to be asked both about the theory and the exercise of papal authority. Some of these questions were raised in the response of the English bishops to *Ut Unum Sint*. In order to avoid misrepresentation, it might be advisable for me simply to quote a few of the most relevant paragraphs from *May They All Be One*.

46. As to doctrine and the controverted dogma of Papal Infallibility, we refer to our response to the ARCIC I statements on Authority in the Church for an extended comment. At that time we wrote: We would wish to emphasise the importance of the discussion that needs to go on about the organs by which, under God, an all too human Church is preserved from fundamental error, and enabled despite all weaknesses and human failings to be the vehicle of the gospel of forgiveness and new life. It would be one thing for Anglicans to say 'yes' to the universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome as the person who particularly signifies the unity and universality of the Church and to acknowledge his special responsibilities for maintaining unity in the truth and ordering things in love; it would be quite another to agree to infallibility without the understanding of reception as we have described it.

47. In matters of discipline and the oversight of the communion of the Church we should not minimise the serious obstacles that still exist because of the present Roman Catholic understanding of the jurisdiction

attributed to the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. The claim that the Bishop of Rome has by divine institution ordinary, immediate and universal jurisdiction over the whole Church is seen by some as a threat to the integrity of the episcopal college and to the apostolic authority of the bishops, those brothers Peter was commanded to strengthen. This is not an argument for a primacy of honour only, or for the exclusion from a universal primacy of the authority necessary for a world-wide ministry in the service of unity. Although the question of jurisdiction is more difficult than the issue of primacy as such, ARCIC I and II and the international Roman Catholic-Orthodox dialogue have already made considerable progress, and we are confident that God will lead us to a proper common understanding and practice as the churches grow together.

48. Another major question concerns the necessity of visible communion with the Church of Rome and the Bishop of Rome as 'an essential requisite of full and visible communion'. We have no difficulty in accepting the need for all Churches to be in visible communion with each other, nor with the ancient understanding that the Church of Rome and the Bishop of Rome have a particular responsibility for expressing and safeguarding the unity of the Church. Nevertheless, the ministry of unity has manifestly not always ensured visible communion. Many individuals and communities share responsibility for the inability of the Church of Rome to fulfil this ministry. Part of the remedy undoubtedly lies in a common exploration of the way in which the Church of the first millennium maintained her unity. The bishops, successors of the Apostles, in communion with the Bishop of Rome, were central to the structures evolved both in East and West in reference to the apostolic heritage.

Not the least of the benefits flowing from the Encyclical was the challenge it offered to other Churches to consider their own structures. The English bishops were happy to acknowledge a coincidence of concern at this point.

53. The relationship in both theory and practice between the Pope and the college of bishops is one particular area where we have already indicated a need for further investigation. This is not a purely Roman Catholic question, and many Churches are currently discussing the interrelationship between primacy and collegiality. This is the subject of special studies in the Church of England and the Anglican Communion as a whole. It is closely related to another area of concern in modern Anglican ecclesiology, namely the relationship between the responsibilities possessed by a 'Province' for its own affairs and its responsibility towards other Provinces and churches. It is widely recognised that within our Anglican Communion there is a danger that 'provincial autonomy' may be taken to mean 'independence'. Some consider that a primatial ministry with an appropriate collegial and conciliar structure is essential if this danger is to be avoided.

The general conclusion to be drawn is that despite some dissentient voices, Anglicans are keen to discuss what kind of renewed papacy could serve the

whole Church, and to offer some of their own experiences of primacy as a contribution to this renewal.

Anglicans have long experience of primacy at the level of the province. Although diocesan bishops are chief pastors and ordinaries of the local churches, archbishops (or their equivalent, for example 'presiding bishops') have a jurisdiction where provincial matters are concerned and a limited but real authority for the sake of the unity of their province. Primacy is thus a particular form of episcopacy and conforms to the general Anglican polity whereby the people of God as a whole are involved, through synods and in other ways, in the governance of the Church.

Speaking generally of primacy, the *Virginia Report* (a report of the Inter-Anglican Doctrinal and Theological Commission in preparation for the 1998 Lambeth Conference) considered that its role is 'to foster the communion by helping the bishops in their task of apostolic leadership both in their local church and in the Church universal. A Primate's particular rôle in episcopate is to help Churches to listen to one another, to grow in love and unity, and to strive together towards the fullness of Christian life and witness. A Primate respects and promotes Christian freedom and spontaneity; does not seek uniformity where diversity is legitimate, or centralise administration to the detriment of local churches'.

Further, 'A Primate exercises ministry not in isolation but in collegial association with other bishops. If there is a need to intervene in the affairs of a diocese within the Province, the Primate will consult with other bishops, and if possible act through the normal structures of consultation and decision-making. The Primate will strive never to bypass or usurp the proper responsibility of the local church'.

The Primates' Meeting arose as a particular instrument for unity following the 1988 Lambeth Conference which envisaged these regular meetings of the Primates of the different provinces of the Anglican Communion (though not all provinces actually use the term 'Primate'), giving guidance on doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters.

In the absence of a general law of the Anglican Communion, the primacy of the Archbishop of Canterbury is technically simply that of the Church of England, and, in a different sense, that of the southern province! In the wider Communion he only has legal status in a few other Churches whose canon law accords him a particular primatial or visitatorial rôle.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, however, this ministry has been developing *de facto* into a worldwide primacy, as the Anglican Communion has itself grown and acquired a greater ecclesial identity and reality. The first Lambeth Conference of 1867 aroused great concern lest the Conference itself or the Archbishop might have any pretensions to extended jurisdiction! By the end of the twentieth century, however, the lack of jurisdiction at any level wider than the provincial was proving to be one of the major

obstacles to the effective pastoral and mission witness of the Communion. This led to the recognition of the need for some 'instruments' of communion at the world level.

The need for this has been seen in situations where particular local churches (dioceses or provinces) have found themselves unable to resolve their own internal affairs. The most extreme case of this occurred during the civil war in Rwanda, but there have also been instances, for example, where the Archbishop of Canterbury's adjudication has been necessary over disputed episcopal elections. Sometimes the canon law of particular Churches provided for this, but in the most serious case I have mentioned some innovative approaches to law and jurisdiction are necessary.

Nobody, as far as I can tell, wants to give the Archbishop of Canterbury any ordinary jurisdiction over the constituent churches of the Communion, but his ministry of encouragement throughout the Communion undoubtedly needs some legal undergirding and there are also some questions where the relations between member Churches are at stake or the unity of the whole Communion is at issue where the absence of a legal framework is an impediment.

The *Virginia Report* referred openly to the primacy of the Archbishop of Canterbury within the Communion, although it was careful also to link this to the Primates' Meeting as reflecting both primacy and collegiality at the world level of the Communion as a whole. One aspect of his primacy is that it is he who invites bishops to attend the Lambeth Conference. The basis of this is that communion with the see of Canterbury (that is, the church of Canterbury and its bishop) is part of the definition of being Anglican.

The 1978 Lambeth Conference was careful to relate the Archbishop to the other Primates, and to see both within the context of the episcopate as a whole. 'In order that the guardianship of the faith may be exercised as a collegial responsibility of the whole episcopate, the Conference affirms the need for Anglican bishops from every diocese to meet together in the tradition of the Lambeth Conference and recommends that the calling of any future Conference should continue to be the responsibility of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and that he should be requested to make his decision in consultation with the other primates'.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's worldwide ministry arises from his ministry of primacy in a particular Church, in which he is both a diocesan bishop and an Archbishop. For Anglicans, therefore, universal primacy as actually experienced is inseparable from provincial primacy and diocesan episcopacy. At all events the current experience of Anglicans is pointing them towards the need for a world-wide ministry of unity with greater canonical authority than at present possessed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other structures of the Anglican Communion at the world level.

This is in no way to seek to create a rival or 'Anglican' pope. Our experience has however enabled us to retrace some of the forces which led to the emer-

gence of the papacy and to look at that development with fresh eyes. The need for a universal ministry in the service of unity seems clear, as also does the need for the one exercising this ministry to have appropriate canonical authority for his task. At the same time, we judge it important that this authority should be in the support of the ordinary jurisdiction of the bishops of particular Churches and of the duly constituted provinces; it should not weaken that jurisdiction by claiming any authority higher than theirs, except in matters concerning the Communion as a whole.

Resolution III.3 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, for example, affirmed the principle of subsidiarity, and quoted the *Virginia Report*: 'a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more immediate or local level' with the rather important rider 'provided that these tasks can be adequately performed at such levels'.

The Conference also referred to the developing role for the Primates' Meeting, to which I have already referred. Under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, this meeting is specifically charged with 'positive encouragement to mission, intervention in cases of exceptional emergency which are incapable of internal resolution within provinces, and giving of guidelines on the limits of Anglican diversity in submission to the sovereign authority of Holy Scripture and in loyalty to our Anglican tradition and formularies'.²⁰ The Conference reaffirmed 'the rôle of the Archbishop of Canterbury as a personal sign of our unity and communion' and sought to hold this together with a variety of collegial and communal gatherings and partnerships.²¹ The recognition of a need for a universal focus becomes ever clearer, but there remains great sensitivity about any tendencies towards giving the Archbishop of Canterbury as such any jurisdiction in his capacity as 'personal sign'. On the other hand, this was not excluded as the Primates were asked to initiate a decade of study on the *Virginia Report* and particularly on its question 'whether effective communion, at all levels, does not require appropriate instruments, with due safeguards, not only for legislation, but also for oversight (para 5.20) as well as on the issue of a universal ministry in the service of Christian unity'.²²

Hardly surprisingly then, the Conference welcomed 'the invitation of Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint* (1995) to consider the ministry of unity of the Bishop of Rome in the service of the unity of the Universal Church' and strongly encouraged the provinces to respond.²³ Among the reasons for taking apparently church-dividing questions seriously is the need, if we are to be visibly united, not to require of each other any step or change which a Church believes would be unfaithful to the God-given inheritance we have received. That argument must of course be treated with circumspection, since just because a particular Church regards some-

²⁰ Lambeth Conference 1988, Resolution III.6(a).

²¹ Resolution III.6(e).

²² Resolution III.8(h).

²³ Resolution IV.23(e).

thing as God-given should not be taken for granted. Nevertheless Anglicans cannot avoid the 'given-ness' of the papacy for the Roman Catholic communion, since unity without the papacy as one of its central elements and instruments seems not within the realm of the imaginable! Of course, this immediately raises some important theological questions about what, if anything, really is (and what is not) *de iure divino* about the papacy. Once again the issue of development comes into the frame. At least since 1992 and the decision by the Church of England to admit women to the presbyterate no Anglican in this country can pretend that development in doctrine is not possible. Even those who think that the issue was not strictly a doctrinal development cannot escape the fact that it was handled as if it was a doctrinal issue and many of those both in favour and opposed seem to consider orthodoxy at stake. It is therefore, as both Clifford Longley (in *The Tablet*, 9 November 2002) and Bishop Geoffrey Rowell (in *The Church Times*, 8 November 2002) have argued, not for the first time, an issue which demands a clearer explanation by Anglicans of their sources of authority on the one hand and their theories of development in relation to those sources on the other. This is, rather obviously just at the moment, clearly not a question that touches only on the issue of the ordination of women.

You will understand that I speak as a bishop of the Church of England, in the Anglican Communion of Churches, and someone therefore who might reasonably be supposed to be broadly supportive of some version of the Anglican notion of dispersed authority. Indeed I am, especially when I consider some of the ways in which the centralised 'ultra-montane' theories of papal primacy have been exercised. On the other hand, (always a good Anglican expression) our own present structures are proving seriously wanting and I hope I have said enough to indicate how good I believe God has been to us even in our separation. He has certainly preserved the papacy for the sake of the coming Great Church, but he has also allowed the Anglican Communion to be a nursery in which some, although of course not all, of the features of that Church are to be seen.