

Zeitschrift: Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift : neue Folge der Revue internationale de théologie
Band: 100 (2010)
Heft: 1-2

Artikel: An Anglican view of the office of the papacy
Autor: Chapman, Mark D.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-405065>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 14.03.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

An Anglican View of the Office of the Papacy

Mark D. Chapman

Introduction

Dr Pusey changed the title of the final volume of his three-volume series of *Eirenica* following the First Vatican Council. The question which had formed the title for the first edition, ‘Is Healthful Reunion Impossible?’,¹ was changed in 1876 to ‘Healthful Reunion as Conceived Possible Before the Vatican Council’. His labours to find a consonance between the teachings of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, which had occupied him for much of the 1860s, were scuppered by the declaration of infallibility in 1870. Afterwards Pusey wrote to Newman: ‘I have done what I could, and now have done with controversy and *Eirenica*’.² Although the public response was more muted than that following the creation of an English Roman Catholic hierarchy in 1850, and did not result in the same level of cries of ‘no-popery’,³ the future of ecumenism looked bleak after the Council. Indeed, to some it seemed to be a vindication of the traditional hostile English attitude to Rome. As Odo Russell, unofficial representative for the British Government in Rome, wrote to Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, shortly after the declaration:

The independence of the Roman Catholic hierarchy has thus been destroyed and the supreme absolutism of Rome has at last been obtained, established and

¹ *Is Healthful Reunion Impossible? The Second Letter to the Very Rev. J. H. Newman D.D.* (Oxford: Parker and London: Rivingtons, 1870); second edition *Healthful Reunion as Conceived Possible before the Vatican Council* (1876).

² Pusey to Newman, 26 August 1870, in Henry P. Liddon, *Life of Pusey*, four volumes (London: Longmans, 1897), vol. iv, p. 193. On Pusey’s ecumenism, see my essays, ‘Pusey, Newman, and the end of a “healthful Reunion”: The Second and Third Volumes of Pusey’s *Eirenicon*’ in *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologieggeschichte/Journal for the History of Modern Theology* 15:2 (2008), pp. 208–31; and ‘A Catholicism of the Word and a Catholicism of Devotion: Pusey, Newman and the first *Eirenicon*’ in *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologieggeschichte/Journal for the History of Modern Theology* 14:2 (2007), pp. 167–90.

³ Josef L. Altholz, ‘The Vatican Decrees Controversy, 1874–1875’ in *The Catholic Historical Review* 57 (1972), pp. 593–605.

dogmatized for which the Papacy has contended for more than a thousand years.⁴

For others in the Church of England the declaration of infallibility was not necessarily bad news: the irrationality of the doctrine of infallibility provided a welcome fillip for more ‘rational’ churches. Thus, according to Christopher Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln, who responded to the Council in 1870, the Church of England offered a refuge for those who might be led into complete infidelity following the victory of Ultramontaniam. He claimed that unlike Rome, the Church of England exhibited a

religious system, rational, Scriptural, and primitive, recognising and expanding all the faculties of men and supplying all his needs, conducive to the progress of literature, science and art, and ministerial to the peace of households and the welfare of society.⁵

Anglican reason was thus pitted against Roman unreason. Given that Wordsworth had given the prestigious Cambridge Hulsean Lectures in 1848 under the title, *Babylon; or, the Question Examined, Is the Church of Rome the Babylon of the Apocalypse?*,⁶ it is no surprise that he held out little hope for union with the Roman Catholic Church. There seemed to be very little room left for inter-church conversations following the Council, something which was demonstrated even more conclusively by Leo XIII’s declaration of Anglican orders as null and void in 1896.⁷

Ecumenical debate has obviously moved a long way since the 1860s and ’70s. The tone and the mood have changed significantly. In general, Anglican bishops no longer denounce the pope as the Antichrist or compare Rome with Babylon. The anti-Catholicism of the past is no longer acceptable. Similarly the triumphalism of pre-Vatican II Roman Catholicism has made way for the ‘change of heart’ announced in the Council’s

⁴ Russell to Granville, 18 July 1870, in Noël Blakiston (ed.), *The Roman Question: Extracts from the Despatches of Odo Russell from Rome, 1858–1870* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1962), p. 459; cited in Robert Fitzsimons, ‘The Church of England and the First Vatican Council’ in *Journal of Religious History* 27 (2003), pp. 29–46, p. 29.

⁵ *The Guardian* (29 June 1870), p. 764. On Wordsworth and the Council see Fitzsimons, ‘The Church of England and the First Vatican Council’, esp. pp. 32–3.

⁶ Originally published as *Is the Church of Rome the Babylon of the Book of Revelation?* (London: Rivington, 1850).

⁷ 18 September 1896 at: <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113curae.htm>

Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) of 1964.⁸ The Holy Spirit, it claimed, could use the other churches and ecclesial communities as ‘means of salvation which derive from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church’.⁹ The Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, which was initiated at the 1966 meeting between Michael Ramsey and Paul VI, has been one of the most fruitful ecumenical discussions emerging from the implementation of *Unitatis Redintegratio*.¹⁰ The first Commission produced reports on Eucharist, Ministry and two on Authority which were drawn together into the lengthy Final Report of 1982. Through the ARCIC process there was a very real desire on the part of the Roman Catholic representatives to move on as a ‘pilgrim church’. The Report claimed, for instance, that ‘contemporary discussions of conciliarity and primacy in both communions indicate that we are not dealing with positions destined to remain static’.¹¹ The mood in which the discussions were undertaken was one of openness, humility and trust. The tone of the Final Report was optimistic; it claimed to have reached what was called a ‘substantial’ degree of unity.¹²

In many ways ARCIC has proved to be one of the high points of ecumenical dialogue following Vatican II; it certainly moved beyond the mutual suspicion and polemics of the past. Shortly before the Final Report was published Pope John Paul II acknowledged this, describing the method as going

behind the habit and thought and expression born and nourished in enmity and controversy to scrutinise together the great common treasure, to clothe it in a language at once traditional and expressive of the insights of an age which no longer glorifies in strife but seeks to come together in listening to the quiet voice of the Spirit.¹³

⁸ ‘Decree on Ecumenism’ in Walter M. Abbott SJ (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Chapman, 1966), pp. 341–66, here p. 351 (§7).

⁹ *Documents*, p. 346.

¹⁰ Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury (Michael Ramsey), ‘The Common Declaration’ (1966) in Christopher Hill and Edward J. Yarnold (eds), *Anglicans and Roman Catholics*, pp. 10–11. On the history of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue see Mary Reath, *Rome and Canterbury: The Elusive Search for Unity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).

¹¹ ‘Authority II’, §33 (page numbers in ‘ARCIC I: The Final Report’ in Hill and Yarnold (eds), *Anglicans and Roman Catholics*, pp. 12–76), here p. 75.

¹² ‘Preface’, p. 13.

¹³ Pope John Paul II, Castelgandolfo, 4 September 1980, cited in Hill and Yarnold (eds), *Anglicans and Roman Catholics*, p. 96.

At the same time, however, despite this progress and spirit of generosity between the Communion, the issue of papal primacy in particular and ecclesiastical authority more generally continued to prove one of the major difficulties. While there were significant agreements on ministry and the eucharist (although obviously *Apostolicae Curae* remains a major stumbling block), the question of authority – particularly of the relationships between different forms of conciliarity and universal primacy – was very different. The history of Petrine primacy in both Communion was too sensitive a topic to allow for easy reconciliation, despite the more eirenic language. As the Final Report noted, '[r]elations between our two communion in the past have not encouraged reflection by Anglicans on the positive significance of the Roman primacy in the life of the universal Church'.¹⁴

At first sight, the recent common statement between the Roman Catholic and Old Catholic Church, *Kirche und Kirchengemeinschaft*, contains a number of parallels to the ARCIC process.¹⁵ As with ARCIC the relationships between the local and universal church, and the idea of universal jurisdiction comprise an important section (esp. §3). Similarly, Petrine primacy is a major theme (§5). Indeed, in its appendices it acknowledges the importance of Anglican ecumenism by republishing the joint Anglican-Old Catholic statement on Petrine primacy of 1985 (Appendix 7). However, the text is at times quite different from the ARCIC documents: this is most obvious in §6.3.4 on canon law, where the debate reads as a discussion between different types of Catholics rather than between different churches/ecclesial communion. As I will show below, the reasons for this fundamental difference stem from the particularities of Anglican history: the Reformation with its distinct approach to authority was profoundly important in shaping Anglican identity which is quite distinct from Old Catholic identity. Consequently, before discussing the ARCIC documents and their responses, it is necessary to outline the particularities of Anglican history, which help to explain the highly contested nature of authority. As Yves Congar observed in what remains one of the few sympathetic Roman Catholic discussions of Anglicanism:

¹⁴ 'Authority II', §13, p. 66.

¹⁵ *Kirche und Kirchengemeinschaft: Bericht der Internationalen Römisch-Katholisch – Altkatholischen Dialogkommission* (Paderborn: Bonifatius and Frankfurt a.M.: Lembeck, 2009).

There is no other Christian communion which is so difficult to understand apart from its history as Anglicanism; the prime characteristic of its theology is to share in this relatively unique inseparability from the march of national history and of the general movement of ideas within the nation.¹⁶

Imperial Sovereignty and Catholicity

The problem of universal primacy was highlighted by the break with Rome in the 1530s.¹⁷ This was simply because at its beginnings the rationale and purpose of the Church of England were explained not doctrinally, as was the case with most of the other churches of the Reformation, but principally in terms of the rejection of Roman authority. It was not merely that Rome had strayed from the truth, but rather – and more importantly – no prince or potentate, ecclesiastical or temporal, had any right whatsoever to interfere in the spiritual or temporal affairs of a sovereign state. This even found expression in the earliest English-language liturgy, Thomas Cranmer's Litany of 1544. This was a simplified form of its Latin predecessors designed to be read in procession in parish churches and produced in the context of a war against France.¹⁸ It implored the Good Lord to deliver the English 'from the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities'. While this phrase was removed from the Prayer Book in 1559, it nevertheless exemplifies something of the thrust of the English Reformation: the identity of the English Church was established on the basis of hostility towards the authority of the papacy.

Although it has been the subject of much historical debate, it is undeniable that a theory of 'imperial' sovereignty was one of the key aspects of the religious changes in England in the reign of Henry VIII.¹⁹ In his momentous preamble to the Act in Restraint of Appeals of 1533, for instance, his chief minister and vicegerent in spirituals, Thomas Cromwell,

¹⁶ Yves Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians* (London: Chapman, 1964), p. 249. See also Aidan Nichols OP, *The Panther and the Hind* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993).

¹⁷ On this see J. Robert Wright, 'Anglicans and the Papacy' in Peter J. McCord, *A Pope for All Christians* (London: SPCK, 1976), pp. 176–212.

¹⁸ Charles C. Hefling and Cynthia L. Shattuck (eds), *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer: a Worldwide Survey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 23.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Geoffrey R. Elton, *England under the Tudors* (Third Edition, London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 160–8; and Walter Ullmann, 'This realm of England is an empire', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 30 (1979), pp. 175–203.

manifestly declared and expressed, that this realm of England is an Empire, and so hath been accepted in this world, governed by one supreme head and king, having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same, unto whom a body politic, compact of all sorts and degrees of people, divided in terms and by names of spirituality and temporality, be bounden and owe to bear, next to God, a natural and humble obedience.

Church affairs like testaments, tithes, and dispensations from canon law (which were necessary if one needed a marriage annulled) were to be ‘finally and definitively adjudged and determined, within the king’s jurisdiction and not elsewhere’.²⁰ Church and state alike were thus placed under the sole authority of the Crown, with no other jurisdiction allowed any say whatsoever in English affairs. In the religious sphere this was quickly enshrined in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion as Article 37 on Civil Magistrates: ‘The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England’.²¹ This meant that the particular or national church was the sole authority in Controversies of Faith (Article 20) and ceremonies (Article 34).

Even though there were important links and discussions with continental protestant churches in the centuries following the break with Rome, the principal focus of the English Reformation was on the character and nature of the Church of England rather than its international or confessional allegiances.²² However, although the doctrinal settlement of Edward VI’s reign was clearly strongly reformed, the Church that emerged from the Reformation continued to see itself as in some sense catholic and universal. It expressed its doctrine in terms of the three creeds (the Nicene, Apostles’ and so-called ‘Athanasian’), which meant that it regarded itself as part of the one catholic and apostolic church. The title page of the Book of Common Prayer expresses something of this sense of catholicity: the book contains the orders and rites ‘of the Church according to the use of the Church of England’. The implication is evidently that there is a wider church beyond England. Unlike most of the continental churches, the

²⁰ The statute is at 24 Henry VIII. c. 12. 3 S. R. 427.

²¹ Article 36 of Cranmer’s original Forty-Two articles of 1553.

²² On this, see Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: the Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618–19)* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005). See also Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of the Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559–1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

Church of England also kept – probably rather accidentally²³ – its own version of the threefold ministry of the pre-Reformation church. This understanding of the catholic dimension of the Church of England has been retained to the present day. The preface to the declaration of assent, for example, which is said by all those taking up an ecclesiastical office in the Church of England, declares that church to be ‘part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit’. However, precisely how this catholicity is to be expressed remains unclear: even today, according to the terms of the English establishment, the final authority over the church is still the English sovereign, although most of the imperial powers have been delegated to parliament and more recently to the general synod. Nevertheless, the scope of extra-provincial authority is severely curtailed by the effects of establishment and the theory of a national independent church.

Apologetics and the Papacy

In the early period of Anglican apologetics, particularly with the formulations following the Elizabethan Settlement of religion after the reign of Mary I, this problem of how a national church could be catholic became one of the most important aspects of the self-definition of the Church of England. Catholicity could never be conferred by being in communion with the universal primate, nor indeed with any other bishop outside England. The foremost figure in this process of self-definition was John Jewel (1522–1571), Bishop of Salisbury from 1560. As bishop-elect he preached a sermon where he challenged his Roman Catholic opponents ‘to bring any one sufficient sentence out of old Catholicke Doctor, or Father; or out of any old Generell Councell; Or out of the Holy Scriptures of God’ to justify their practices.²⁴ Jewel’s claim was that the Church of England was

²³ See Mark D. Chapman, ‘The Politics of Episcopacy’ in *Bishops, Saints and Politics* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), pp. 9–32; German translation: ‘Bischofsamt und Politik’ in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 97:4 (2000), pp. 434–62. Also in Ingolf U. Dalferth (ed.), *Einheit bezeugen/Witnessing to Unity*, Frankfurt am Main, 2004, pp. 170–97.

²⁴ *The Works of Bishop John Jewel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Parker Society [PS], 1845–50), 4 vols, i, p. 20. On the use of the Fathers in Anglican theology, see Jean-Louis Quantain, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

the true inheritor of the apostolic and early church and had returned to the purity of the past. He developed this theme in his *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, which became the semi-official theology of the Church of England in the reign of James I.

Jewel justified the abolition of certain abuses in the Church by citing the Fathers and Scripture. He thus sought to ‘shew it plain, that God’s holy Gospel, the ancient bishops, and the primitive Church do make on our side, and that we have not without just cause left these men, and rather have returned to the apostles and old catholic fathers’.²⁵ The counterbalance was consequently to show that the Church of Rome had ‘forsaken the fellowship of the Holy Fathers’.²⁶ Arguing against Roman Primacy, Jewel directly challenged the Pope:

Tell us, I pray you, good holy Father, seeing ye do crake so much of all antiquity, and boast yourself that all men are bound to you alone, which of all the fathers have at any time called you by the name of the highest prelate, the universal bishop, or the head of the Church? Which of them ever said that both the swords were committed to you?²⁷

Jewel addresses this question by turning to the writings of the Fathers to defend his own church:

As for our doctrine, which we might rightlier call Christ’s catholic doctrine, it is so far off from new, that God, who is above all most ancient, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ... So that no man can now think our doctrine to be new, unless the same think either the prophets’ faith, or the Gospel, or else Christ himself to be new.²⁸

Here Jewel develops an understanding of what can be called the ‘temporal’ or ‘contained’ catholicity implicit in the English Reformation. Catholicity is understood through a return to the past rather than as something conferred by any institution in the present.

This method came to be adopted by figures from across the theological spectrum. In the next century, William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury executed in 1644, developed a theology of the limited nature of provincial authority,²⁹ a theme that had been enunciated in the Thirty-Nine Articles

²⁵ PS III, p. 56.

²⁶ PS IV, p. 901.

²⁷ PS I, p. 43.

²⁸ PS I, p. 39.

²⁹ ‘A Relation of the Conference between William Laud and Mr. Fisher the Jesuit’ in *The Works of William Laud* (Oxford: Parker, 1849), ii, p. 247.

(Art. 21), which stated that all institutions of the church can err. Laud claimed that ‘if a General Council will go out of the Church’s way, it may easily go without the Church’s truth’.³⁰ He was keen to emphasise that since no one part of the church was free from error, each church was free to make its own decisions as long as it was in obedience to the rule of Scripture.³¹ Laud thereby develops a theory of the autonomy of the local church, which had a duty to reform itself:³²

[W]hen the universal church will not, or for the iniquities of the times cannot, obtain and settle a free General Council, it is lawful, nay sometimes necessary, to reform gross abuses by a national, or a provincial.³³

Since there can be no universal teaching office exempt from error, provincial councils, Laud claims, have the duty to ‘decree in causes of faith, and in cases of reformation, where corruptions have crept into the sacraments of Christ’.³⁴ Laud develops this idea further by limiting the claims of all other bishops. He thus suggests that the authority of the ‘patriarch’ of Rome is essentially the same as that of the other patriarchs, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose authority is equivalent to that of a patriarch.³⁵ There can be no appeal beyond the patriarch who is ‘supreme in his own patriarchate’.³⁶ While the Bishop of Rome might have authority in Rome, it was impossible for his jurisdiction to be exercised over the whole church, since this would threaten the claims of the local church, as well as the king’s sovereignty.³⁷ This understanding of provincial autonomy was often defended using the example of St Cyprian:³⁸ indeed, it comes as little surprise that Peter Heylyn gave his hagiographical biography of Laud

³⁰ ‘Conference’, p. 266.

³¹ ‘Conference’, p. 366.

³² ‘Conference’, p. 235.

³³ ‘Conference’, p. 170.

³⁴ ‘Conference’, p. 171.

³⁵ ‘Conference’, p. 190.

³⁶ ‘Conference’, p. 189.

³⁷ ‘Conference’, p. 225.

³⁸ See ‘Cyprianus Anglicus: St Cyprian in Anglican Interpretation’ in *Bishops, Saints and Politics*, pp. 33–52. See also my essay, ‘Catholicity, Unity and Provincial Autonomy: On Making Decisions Unilaterally’ in *Anglican Theological Review* 76 (1994), pp. 313–28.

the title *Cyprianus Anglicus*.³⁹ This means that each church expresses a form of ‘contained catholicity’ in only very loose connection with other churches.⁴⁰

Tradition and Development

There were obvious implications in this theology of ‘contained catholicity’ for the understanding of tradition: where there could be no authoritative living voice then tradition was understood as something fixed and finalised in the teaching of the church of the first four centuries, which was always related to scripture as the final arbiter in doctrinal dispute.⁴¹ Authority could not be located in the present, either in Pope or Council. In one of his important Anglican writings, Newman clearly enunciated the difference between a Roman Catholic and an Anglican understanding of tradition. Adopting a method similar to his intellectual forebears in apologetics, he suggested that even though the Church of Rome may

profess a reverence for Antiquity, she does not really feel and pay it. There are, in fact, two elements in operation within her system. As far as it is Catholic and Scriptural, it appeals to the Fathers; as far as it is a corruption, it finds it necessary to supersede them. Viewed in its formal principles and authoritative statements, it professes to be the champion of past times; viewed as an active and political power, as a ruling, grasping, ambitious principle, in a word, as what is expressively called popery, it exalts the will and pleasure of the existing Church above all authority, whether of Scripture or Antiquity, interpreting the one and disposing of the other by its absolute and arbitrary decree.⁴²

³⁹ Peter Heylyn, *Cyprianus Anglicus or, The History of the Life and Death of the Most Revered and Renowned Prelate William, by Divine Providence, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* (London: A. Seile, 1668).

⁴⁰ See esp. ‘From Carthage to Truro: Archbishop Benson and the Unity of the Church’ in *Bishops, Saints and Politics*, pp. 53–65.

⁴¹ The classic recent formulation of this theology is by Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), p. 180. The Catholic Church is constantly under judgement; it subjects its pride to the humiliation of the cross. ‘These are Catholicism’s own themes, and out of them it was born. But they are themes learnt and relearnt in humiliation, and Catholicism always stands before the Church door at Wittenberg to read the truth by which she is created and by which she is to be judged’ (p. 180).

⁴² John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church viewed relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism* (London: Rivington, 1837), p. 100.

According to the Newman of the early days of the Oxford Movement, Roman Catholicism exalts the present at the expense of the past revelation found in Scripture, which had functioned as the sole doctrinal norm for the Church of England.⁴³ Newman thus sought to purify his church by returning to the truths established in the past. He shared this method with the other leaders of the Catholic revival in the Church of England. In his sermon on *Primitive Tradition*, for instance, Keble limited tradition solely to

those rules, in which *all* primitive Councils are uniform, those rites and formularies which are found in *all* primitive liturgies, and those interpretations and principles of interpretation in which *all* orthodox Fathers agree ... genuine canons of the primitive Councils, and the genuine fragments of the primitive Liturgies, are reducible into a small space; even although we go so low down in both as the division of the Eastern and Western Churches, including the six first Councils general, and excluding image-worship and similar corruptions by authority.⁴⁴

Such a temporal conception of catholicity set the Church of England apart from the Roman Catholic Church, with its very different understanding of tradition. This has been restated in more recent writings. In a piece of Anglican polemic of the 1940s, for instance, the future Irish Bishop Richard Hanson noted that the Roman Catholic ‘religion is a religion which looks to the present, and to the future for its revelation, indeed one which may confidently expect new revelations and new fundamental doctrines of Christianity to emerge in the future into public gaze’. Because of this, according to Hanson, it had ‘reversed the current of original faith’. For Anglicans, development was quite different from innovation, and could take place ‘only in the enunciation of certain formulae necessary to protect the original tradition of the Church from error’.⁴⁵ For such thinkers, since Anglicans lacked an authoritative teaching office there could be no development of doctrine, even though the original deposit would have to be expressed afresh in every generation.⁴⁶ Instead, all doctrinal change

⁴³ See Peter B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760–1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), ch. 2.

⁴⁴ John Keble, *Primitive Tradition Recognised in Holy Scripture* (London: Rivington, 1836), p. 40.

⁴⁵ Richard P. C. Hanson and Reginald Fuller, *The Church of Rome. A Dissuasive* (London: SCM, 1948), pp. 84, 102.

⁴⁶ See also Richard P. C. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church* (London: SCM, 1963). On development see the classic discussion by Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, second edition 1987); and

was to be subjected to the fixed criteria of the past, and could never be final and absolute. Because there was no authoritative teaching office, Anglicans – at least on their own understanding – tended towards humility and openness.⁴⁷

ARCIC and Primacy

These historical illustrations, which are obviously far from comprehensive, reveal the serious questions arising from the issue of papal primacy for Anglican theology. A lack of historical awareness in much ecumenical discussion has meant this issue has sometimes been downplayed. What it reveals, however, is a very different ecclesiology.⁴⁸ Roman Catholic and Anglican conceptions of the nature of authority, catholicity and of tradition are profoundly different. Nevertheless, while this difference was acknowledged in the various ARCIC documents, it was not seen to be insurmountable. This is true of both the ARCIC I reports on authority, as well as in the later Report, *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III* from ARCIC II,⁴⁹ and the more recent agreed statement by the International Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission, *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*.⁵⁰ Thus in the first report on Authority, the individual bishop's office was understood as that of connecting

Aidan Nichols OP, *From Newman to Congar: The Idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), pp. 1–16.

⁴⁷ On this see the essays in Kenneth Stevenson (ed.), *A Fallible Church: Lambeth Essays* (London: DLT, 2008), esp. Mark D. Chapman, 'Where is it all going? A Plea for Humility', pp. 122–41.

⁴⁸ A good overview of the issues is offered by Peter-Ben Smit in 'The Developing Understanding of Authority and Primacy in Anglican–Roman Catholic–Old Catholic Dialogue after the Second Vatican Council' in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 8 (2008), pp. 211–31. See esp. pp. 212–17.

⁴⁹ *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III* (An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission) (London, Toronto and New York: CTS, Anglican Book Centre and Church Publishing, 1999). It is not clear to me that the work of ARCIC II has been able to act with the openness and trust that was demonstrated in ARCIC I which goes a long way to explaining why its reports have been largely ignored, at least in much of the Anglican Communion.

⁵⁰ *Growing Together in Unity and Mission* (2006) at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20070914_growing-together_en.html (accessed 19 November 2009).

the local church with the ‘universal communion of which it is part’.⁵¹ The Petrine office is regarded as an extension of this office which co-ordinates all churches: ‘Communion with him is intended as a safeguard of the catholicity of all the churches’.⁵²

I will focus on the first two reports on Authority, principally because they provoked significantly more theological reflection than the later report, especially in Rome.⁵³ Indeed, it is not clear to me that the work of ARCIC II has been able to act with the openness and trust that was demonstrated in ARCIC I. The problems over primacy and infallibility were discussed in detail in the second report on authority, which noted the significant agreement over the need for some form of primacy:

If the leadership of the bishop of Rome has been rejected by those who thought it was not faithful to the truth of the Gospel and hence not a true focus of unity, we nevertheless agree that a universal primacy will be needed in a reunited Church and should appropriately be the primacy of the bishop of Rome.⁵⁴

The Petrine Office would function in a reunited church as a ‘sign and safeguard’ of the ‘visible koinonia’ of the unity present in the company of faithful believers.⁵⁵ However, the Report went on to claim:

The doctrine that a universal primacy expresses the will of God does not entail the consequence that a Christian community out of communion with the see of Rome does not belong to the Church of God. Being in canonical communion with the bishop of Rome is not among the necessary elements by which a Christian community is recognized as a church.⁵⁶

This could be perceived as a major concession from the Roman Catholic side: communion with the papacy was not an absolute requirement for a true church. Similarly, it was acknowledged that the language of divine right which had been used at Vatican One no longer had to be regarded as

⁵¹ ‘Authority I’, §8 (p. 45).

⁵² ‘Authority I’, §12 (p. 47); cf. §23 (p. 52).

⁵³ For a Roman Catholic interpretation of *The Gift of Authority* see Bernd Sixtus, ‘Of Keys and Gifts: How to Read the Gift of Authority’ in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 4 (2004), pp. 172–83. For Anglican responses see the essays in Peter Fisher (ed.), *Unpacking the Gift: Anglican Resources for Theological Reflection on The Gift of Authority* (London: Church House Publishing, 2002).

⁵⁴ ‘Authority II’, §9 (p. 65).

⁵⁵ ‘Authority II’, §11 (p. 66).

⁵⁶ ‘Authority II’, §12 (p. 66).

a matter of disagreement.⁵⁷ In turn, the universal primate was to exercise his ministry only ‘in collegial association with his brother bishops’.⁵⁸

With regard to infallibility, there was a recognition that the Church ‘can in a matter of essential doctrine make a decisive judgement which becomes part of its permanent witness’, but at the same time, the Report noted that the

purpose of this service cannot be to add to the content of revelation, but is to recall and emphasize some important truth; to expound the faith more lucidly; to expose error; to draw out implications not sufficiently recognized; and to show how Christian truth applies to contemporary issues.⁵⁹

Most importantly, perhaps, the Report claimed that

The Church’s teaching authority is a service to which the faithful look for guidance especially in times of uncertainty; but the assurance of the truthfulness of its teaching rests ultimately rather upon its fidelity to the Gospel than upon the character or office of the person by whom it is expressed. The Church’s teaching is proclaimed because it is true; it is not true simply because it has been proclaimed. The value of such authoritative proclamation lies in the guidance that it gives to the faithful. However, neither general councils nor universal primates are invariably preserved from error even in official declarations.⁶⁰

In what could appear as a threat to the doctrine of infallibility the Report asserted: ‘If the definition proposed for assent were not manifestly a legitimate interpretation of biblical faith and in line with orthodox tradition, Anglicans would think it a duty to reserve the reception of the definition for study and discussion.’⁶¹ What becomes clear in reading the two reports on authority, together with the vigorous responses from the Roman Catholic side, is the contentious nature of the Petrine office within the Roman Catholic Church itself: the Church of England’s ambivalence towards universal primacy has highlighted issues faced by the Roman Catholic Church over the relationship between collegiality and universal primacy. Ecumenism is addressed as much internally as externally.⁶²

⁵⁷ ‘Authority II’, §13 (p. 67).

⁵⁸ ‘Authority II’, §21 (p. 69); cf. ‘Authority I’ §§21, 23 (pp. 51, 52).

⁵⁹ ‘Authority II’, §27 (p. 71).

⁶⁰ ‘Authority II’, §27 (p. 72).

⁶¹ ‘Authority II’, §29 (p. 73).

⁶² There are strong resonances here of the debates between Ratzinger and Cardinal Walter Kasper over the relationship between universal and particular churches. The

Roman Catholic Responses to ARCIC I

This internal aspect of Roman Catholic ecumenism is clearly illustrated by the brief and direct observations on the ARCIC Final Report made by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in 1982. The understanding of tradition is perhaps the key difficulty that is highlighted in the observations: tradition is not simply restricted to the past revelation but depends on the living voice of authority in the church, exercised by the unitive office of the papacy, directly instituted by Christ.⁶³ Unity is thus not the ‘last triumph’, as Archbishop Benson of Canterbury held,⁶⁴ but the necessary possession of the church:

visible unity is not something extrinsic added to the particular churches, which already would possess and realize in themselves the full essence of the Church: thus unity pertains to the intimate structure of faith, permeating all its elements. For this reason the office of conserving, fostering and expressing this unity in accord with the Lord’s will is a constitutive part of the very nature of the Church.⁶⁵

In 1983, Cardinal Ratzinger wrote a lengthy article explaining the thinking behind the CDF’s response to ARCIC I.⁶⁶ What was central, he held, was the precise co-ordination of the relationships between Scripture, tradition, councils, episcopate and reception:⁶⁷ the concept of universality was not

Ratzinger/Kasper debate: the universal church and local churches. The debate was set off by the letter issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church understood as Communion* (25 June 1992) at:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_28051992_communionis-notio_en.html (accessed 28 August 2009). For a useful synopsis and review of the debate, see Kilian McDonnell OSB, ‘The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal Church and Local Churches’, *Theological Studies* 63 (2002), pp. 227–50.

⁶³ ‘The Observations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the Final report of ARCIC I’ in Hill and Yarnold (eds), *Anglicans and Roman Catholics*, pp. 79–91, here p. 86.

⁶⁴ Edward White Benson, ‘Growing Unity’ in *Living Theology* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1893), pp. 131–145, here p. 133.

⁶⁵ ‘Observations’, pp. 86–7.

⁶⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue – Its Problems and Hopes (1983)’ in Hill and Yarnold (eds), *Anglicans and Roman Catholics*, pp. 251–82.

⁶⁷ ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue’, p. 256.

an add-on to the nature of the church, but ‘extends into that very nature’.⁶⁸ In other words, unity was a necessary ingredient of the church and not a future hope: speaking against those whom he regarded as holding to the ‘romantic idea of provincial churches’, he claimed that ‘the priority of the universal Church always preceded that of the particular Churches’.⁶⁹ ‘Unity,’ he asserted, ‘is a fundamental, hermeneutic principle of all theology’.⁷⁰ Unity could never be achieved through conciliarity unless there was a principle of unity: indeed, rather obscurely, he held, that with no emperor, conciliarity was doomed to failure.⁷¹

When speaking of tradition Ratzinger sees it ‘not only and not even in the first place’ as a set of ancient doctrines or texts, but as ‘a certain way of co-ordinating the living word of the church’,⁷² which was guaranteed ‘in the authority of the person who expresses it’.⁷³ There can be no ‘second sifting through of what the universal church teaches as the universal church’.⁷⁴ The idea that the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church could be equivalent to those of the Anglican Church was impossible: tradition was not fixed and final and grounded in the sufficiency of Scripture – as Anglicans, along with other churches of the Reformation had always claimed – but was open and a matter of authoritative truth. For this reason, Ratzinger wrote,

ecumenical dialogue does not mean opting out of living, Christian reality, but advancing by means of the hermeneutics of unity. To opt out and cut oneself off means artificial withdrawal into a past beyond recall; it means restricting tradition to the past.⁷⁵

In short, he concludes, ‘a superficial unity which jumps the gun without inward preparation through actual living could only prove harmful’.⁷⁶ What he welcomed, above all, was the ‘new openness to the meaning of

⁶⁸ ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue’, p. 259.

⁶⁹ ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue’, p. 260.

⁷⁰ ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue’, p. 267.

⁷¹ ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue’, p. 262; cf. ‘Postscript’, p. 278.

⁷² ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue’, p. 265.

⁷³ ‘Observations’, p. 87.

⁷⁴ ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue’, p. 259.

⁷⁵ ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue’, p. 267.

⁷⁶ ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue’, p. 271.

“catholicity” in the original sense of the word’ which developed as the national churches became international communions.⁷⁷

Not surprisingly, both the response by the CDF and the Cardinal Prefect’s elucidation provoked a vigorous reaction, not least within the Roman Catholic Church.⁷⁸ In a postscript Ratzinger responded to his critics, where he focused on the importance of truth: where there was a reduction of the teachings of the different churches to matters of custom, then there would always be compromises. But where tradition was about truth then compromise would be impossible, since substantial issues were at stake. This meant that truth could not be found in the ‘perpetual conciliarity of the Church’, which was in practice little more than a ‘cosmopolitan debating society’.⁷⁹ Ratzinger concluded that

the model of conciliarity is unsuitable for the oneness of the universal Church in and from the particular Churches and should be given up. The dialogue should be conducted much more explicitly against the background of the actual history of the Church and the experiences it has undergone.⁸⁰

Truth was thus related to a hermeneutics of unity, which was fundamental to ecumenism. Thus, Ratzinger claimed: ‘my conviction is that the indispensability of the Petrine principle would come to light and at the same time we would also see the breadth of its possible forms of realisation’.⁸¹ As Miroslav Volf has commented: ‘the systematic vortex of [Ratzinger’s] eucharistic ecclesiology takes him precisely to the (un)ecumenical position he held before Vatican II’,⁸² where the unity of the church is to be found

in the *communio* of the individual congregations with one another. The characteristic sign of the true *communio* over against the false *communiones* of

⁷⁷ ‘Anglican–Catholic Dialogue’, p. 271.

⁷⁸ The bitterest was probably the response by the French Bishops. See Hill and Yarnold (eds), *Anglicans and Roman Catholics*, pp. 171–184. See also the English and Welsh Bishops’ response: Hill and Yarnold (eds), *Anglicans and Roman Catholics*, pp. 94–110. See also Raymond G. Helmick SJ, ‘John Paul II and Ecumenism’ in Gerard Mannion, *The Vision of John Paul II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), pp. 215–34, esp. p. 220.

⁷⁹ ‘Postscript’, p. 277.

⁸⁰ ‘Postscript’, pp. 277–9.

⁸¹ ‘Postscript’, p. 279.

⁸² Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 59–60.

heretics is *communio* with the *sedes apostolicae*. The *sedes apostolica* as such is Rome, so that one can say that *communio catholica* = *communio Romana*; only those who commune with Rome are standing in the true, that is, catholic *communio*; whomever Rome excommunicates is no longer in the *communio catholica*, that is, in the unity of the church.⁸³

A metaphysics of unity stands at the heart of Ratzinger's theology. As Volf puts it, perhaps rather bluntly: 'the one Christ acting as subject in the church is represented by the one visible head of the church ... Thus only the one Pope and the one bishop, not the college of bishops, can be grounded as structural elements through the doctrine of God'.⁸⁴

This unitive approach is clearly demonstrated in Ratzinger's postscript: the singularity of truth remained central in any conception of the church:

For if one were to agree completely on regarding all the different confessions simply as traditions, then one would have cut oneself completely loose from the question of truth, and theology would now be merely a form of diplomacy, of politics. Our quarrelling ancestors were in reality much closer to each other when in all their disputes they still knew that they could only be servants of one truth which must be acknowledged as being as great and as pure as it has been intended for us by God.⁸⁵

It is hard to know what to make of this final sentence: it could be read as if there was a desire to return to the belligerence of the past. However, this seems to me to be unlikely. The lack of humility and arrogance which characterised the pre-Vatican II churches – both Roman Catholic and others – is a situation to which few serious-minded Christians would wish to return. Instead what Ratzinger is stressing is the importance of the singularity of the one truth rather than a plurality of expressions. The rhetoric is strongly focused throughout on a oneness that is already present in the communion of the church: diversity is regarded as little more than a weakness and is associated with the loss of security and certainty. Consequently, for Ratzinger, a dialogue which fails to retain this unitive understanding of truth threatens to be little more than a liberal compromise which could hardly serve the cause of unity.

⁸³ Joseph Ratzinger, 'Kirche' in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1957–67), vol. 6, pp. 172–83, here pp. 178–9; cited in Volf, *After Our Likeness*. See esp. Joseph Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen: Kirche heute verstehen* (Freiburg: Heider, 1991); ET: *Call to Communion* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991).

⁸⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 71–2.

⁸⁵ 'Postscript', p. 281.

Implications from the Hermeneutics of Unity

Obviously the ecumenical theology adopted in the CDF response to ARCIC was not the only approach demonstrated through the pontificate of John Paul II. Displaying the humility and fraternal warmth which characterised his style, John Paul frequently recommitted himself to the ecumenical endeavour as one of his ‘pastoral priorities’: ‘the Catholic Church’, he claimed, ‘is committed to the ecumenical movement with an irrevocable decision and desires to contribute to it with all its possibilities’.⁸⁶ This was re-emphasised in the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* of 25 May 1995.⁸⁷ But it is still unclear precisely how the churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, are to respond to this challenge for the future of ecumenism. This is particularly true in the light of the current Pope’s hermeneutics of unity. Similarly, the response of the Church of England bishops to *Ut Unum Sint* shows that there has been little progress in agreeing an understanding of the ministry of unity.⁸⁸

The historical section of this paper was intended to show that the Church of England and the Communion which gradually developed from it have a completely different understanding of unity from that espoused by Cardinal Ratzinger. The relationship between local and universal is quite different. While Anglicans have seldom couched the language of ecclesiology in metaphysical terms, as has happened in the debate between Ratzinger and Kasper,⁸⁹ it is quite clear that for Anglicans the particular church, at least in practice, is prior to the universal. As I tried to make clear, in Anglican apologetics the catholic church is understood historically, principally in terms of the catholic creeds and the supremacy of scripture. It is temporal rather than spatial. This means that it is difficult to

⁸⁶ John Paul II, *Allocutio ad Patres Cardinales Romanaeque Curiae Praelatos et Officiales coram admissos*, 28 June 1985, cited in Helmick SJ, ‘John Paul II and Ecumenism’, p. 220.

⁸⁷ At: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html

⁸⁸ *May They All Be One: A Response of the House of Bishops of the Church of England to Ut Unum Sint* (London: Church House Publishing, 1997), pp. 17–18.

⁸⁹ See ‘Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion’ (1992) at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_28051992_communionis-notio_en.html (accessed 20 November 2009). See also Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (New York: Crossroad, 1989); *Call to Communion*.

see the churches of the Anglican Communion as having anything resembling a living authoritative and universal teaching office in the present. While Anglicans are likely to favour Kasper, and might even be inclined to see a greater degree of conciliarity between national and regional churches as crucial for the survival of their communion, what the CDF called ‘ecclesiological unilateralism’ is historically central to Anglicanism (§8).⁹⁰ From the very beginning of the separation from Rome, Anglican churches have been ‘self-sufficient’ and have made decisions on their own, which has recently threatened to tear the Communion apart.

For Old Catholics, however, the historical context in which the Union of Utrecht churches emerged is different: there is a greater degree of shared identity with Roman Catholics. The relationships between particular and local obviously loom large in the discussions, but Old Catholic identity did not emerge from a doctrine of self-sufficiency. Instead it developed out of different perceptions of the relationship between particular and universal from those being developed in Rome, especially in 1870. While it is difficult to see how the ‘differentiated consensus’ as suggested by *Kirche und Kirchengemeinschaft* (§34) could be compatible with Ratzinger’s hermeneutics of unity, the Report nevertheless makes sense within a shared ecclesiological framework. This is quite distinct from the ecclesiological emphasis of historical Anglicanism. What is also obvious to an Anglican reading the report is the lack of any serious reflection on the changes in internal Old Catholic identity which might have emerged through its long period of inter-communion with the Church of England.

Furthermore, from a Roman Catholic standpoint, it is possible to see internal unity and the overcoming of internal schism as having been given a higher priority than almost anything else in some of the recent actions of the Roman Catholic Church. This is demonstrated by the furore following the lifting of the excommunication of four Lefebvrist bishops, one of whom (the Englishman Richard Williamson) expressed extreme right-wing views.⁹¹ A similar – if rather less alarming – emphasis on unity had earlier emerged from the CDF Declaration *Dominus Iesus* of 2000:

⁹⁰ See my essay, ‘Catholicity, Unity and Provincial Autonomy’.

⁹¹ This has shocked many in the Roman Catholic Church, including the council of the European Society of Catholic Theology: see the statement of 17 February 2009 at:

http://www.kuleuven.be/thomas/evkt/index.php?id=66&mail_ID=161&mailUser=default (accessed 25 August 2009).

in connection with the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus Christ, the unicity of the Church founded by him must be *firmly believed* as a truth of Catholic faith. Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: “a single Catholic and apostolic Church”.⁹²

The one Jesus Christ requires the one church expressed in the one Catholic faith, which is upheld by the visible teaching office. This means that ‘the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense’.⁹³ *Apostolicae Curae* thus renders any further discussion of the question of universal primacy rather premature.

Conclusion

There are three important points that emerge from this discussion. First, it would appear that a hermeneutics of unity does not augur well for the immediate future of ecumenism, although it is also quite feasible that things could be very different depending on who succeeds the current Pope. This is as true for Old Catholics as for Anglicans. Nevertheless it is still possible for the divided churches to enter into open and honest discussion to ensure that there is no return to the polemics and arrogance of the past. Ecumenism can therefore have the limited goal of helping Christians better understand one another and to rid themselves of some of their worst excesses, rather than aiming at full visible unity.⁹⁴ It may also work more fruitfully when directed towards issues of common human interest, such as climate change or fair trade. Secondly, ecumenical conversations with Anglicans (and with other churches) have been equally addressed to a Roman Catholic audience. Within the documents that have emerged from ecumenical discussions between Roman Catholics and Anglicans there is remarkably little discussion of the nature and practice of authority in Anglicanism. This is true of the ARCIC Final Report itself as well as the various Responses. Collegiality is discussed less as a characteristic and problem for Anglicanism and more as an aspect of the theological struggles over authority in the Roman Catholic Church.

⁹² *Dominus Iesus* (October 2000), §16 at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html

⁹³ *Dominus Iesus*, §17.

⁹⁴ ‘The Observations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’, p. 79.

Finally, however, distinctively Anglican problems make ecumenism and the related issue of authority extremely precarious:⁹⁵ the globalisation of the Reformation idea of national churches has led to an extraordinarily weak system of authority in the Anglican Communion.⁹⁶ The so-called instruments of unity – the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates' Meeting and the Archbishop of Canterbury himself – have virtually no intrinsic authority. This means that there is no real mechanism for conflict resolution, which is why the proposed Anglican Covenant has become so crucial for the survival of the worldwide communion.⁹⁷ But recent events in the American Episcopal Church which have lifted a moratorium on the election of gay bishops,⁹⁸ as well as the Archbishop of Canterbury's response,⁹⁹ indicate clearly the problem of 'contained' or 'self-sufficient' versions of catholicity in reaching decisions. It may well be that it is rather too premature for Anglicans to address the issue of universal primacy when there is little agreed concept of primacy or authority in the Anglican Communion beyond the self-sufficiency of the national and regional churches.¹⁰⁰ Anglicans have become all too aware that pluralism carries with it the danger of anarchy, schism and incoherence. This may be one of the reasons why the present Pope retains such a high view of unity, and why Anglicans are struggling hard to find more.

⁹⁵ On the future of Anglican ecumenism, see the recent collection edited by Paul Avis, *Paths to Unity: Explorations in Ecumenical Method* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).

⁹⁶ For a brief account, see my *Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), chs 6 and 7.

⁹⁷ See the essays in Mark D. Chapman (ed.), *The Anglican Covenant: Unity and Diversity in the Anglican Communion* (London: Mowbray, 2008), esp. ch. 1.

⁹⁸ See the press release at the end of the General Convention at: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79901_112765_ENG_HTM.htm (accessed 25 August 2009).

⁹⁹ Communion, Covenant and our Anglican Future (27 July 2009) at: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2502> (accessed 25 August 2009).

¹⁰⁰ On this see the survey by Colin Podmore, 'Primacy in the Anglican Tradition' in *Community – Unity – Communion: Essays in Honour of Mary Tanner* (London: Church House Publishing, 1998), pp. 277–93.

The Revd Prof Dr Mark Chapman (born 1960 in Essex GB), studied in Oxford and Munich; from 1992, lecturer at Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford; from 2002, Vice-Principal; Reader in Modern Theology at the University of Oxford and Visiting Professor at Oxford Brookes University; Publications officer for Affirming Catholicism and Co-Editor of the Journal for the History of Modern Theology.

Address: Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford, GB-OX44 9EX, UK. E-Mail: MChapman@ripon-cuddesdon.ac.uk

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Das im 19. Jahrhundert wiederholt belastete Verhältnis der Kirche von England zur römischen Kirche ist in der Folge des ökumenischen Aufbruchs des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils einem intensiven zwischenkirchlichen Dialog gewichen, wie die ARCIC-Texte zeigen. Diese thematisieren auch die Frage des päpstlichen Primats und die Frage der Autorität in der Kirche. Ein kurzer Vergleich mit dem Bericht «Kirche und Kirchengemeinschaft» (in dem sich übrigens trotz langer kirchlicher Gemeinschaft keine Spur eines anglikanischen Einflusses auf die altkatholische Identität erkennen lässt) offenbart aber beträchtliche Unterschiede: Sie haben mit der Art der Identitätsbildung der anglikanischen Kirche in der Zeit der Reformation zu tun: Zentral für den Bruch mit Rom waren für die englische Kirche weniger Differenzen der Lehre oder der Frömmigkeitspraxis als vielmehr die Frage nach der amtlichen Weisungsbefugnis (authority) für die Kirche des Landes, die eben dem Papst abgesprochen wurde. Dennoch verstand sich die Kirche von England in ihrer Eigenschaft als nationale Kirche durchaus zugehörig zur universalen katholischen und apostolischen Kirche. Sie orientierte sich vor allem an der (in der Vergangenheit liegenden) Tradition der ersten vier Jahrhunderte, nicht an einem Lehramt welcher Art auch immer, das je und je in der Gegenwart der Kirche Weisung zu erteilen und damit auch eine Lehrentwicklung in Gang zu bringen zu vermochte. Diese Differenzen, die das jeweilige Verständnis des päpstlichen Primats mitbestimmen, kamen vielleicht weniger in den diesbezüglichen gemeinsam erarbeiteten ARCIC-Texten zum Vorschein als in römischen Stellungnahmen der Glaubenskongregation und den sie explizierenden Voten von Kardinal Ratzinger. Die von ihm vertretene Priorität der Universalkirche (und damit des päpstlichen Lehramtes) gegenüber einem zunächst orts- oder regional-kirchlich strukturierten Kirchenverständnis mit seinen zugehörigen synodalen Vernetzungen impliziert auch eine andere Hermeneutik der Einheit. Angesichts dieses Tatbestands müssen sich die Kirchen derzeit vielleicht andere Ziele setzen. Und für die anglikanische Gemeinschaft mit ihren gegenwärtigen internen Problemen mag es zu früh sein, sich mit der Frage eines Primats mit einem universalen Autoritätsanspruch auseinanderzusetzen.