

## Review of Authority in the Church III, The Gift of Authority

(A report from the Diocesan Doctrine Commission.)

### 1. Introduction: method and context

*The Gift of Authority* is the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). It has only the authority of the Commission, and is intended to stimulate discussion. The reception of the Document across the Churches has been quite mixed. The Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission has prepared this response at the request of the Synod as a contribution to the discussion. References to the Document in this Report follow the convention of citing it as “ARCIC III”.

#### **Method**

1.1 Ecumenical dialogue often seeks to find agreement between disagreeing parties by looking for common ground. This common ground may lie directly behind the disagreements. Alternatively, it may come from elsewhere in their beliefs and practices and be used as way of seeing the points of disagreement in a fresh light, which reduces their dissimilarity or identifies them as different ways of expressing the nature or meaning of this common ground. That is, against a common ground it is hoped that a disputed belief or practice will allow each party to obtain two things. First, the essential or core meaning and significance each individually attaches to the belief or practice will be affirmed in a positive light by both parties. Secondly, the barrier raised by the disagreement will be reduced, because its specific features may be seen as attempts to express common ground, although under different circumstances.

1.2 Three ways of achieving these goals are evident in ARCIC III. First, ARCIC III works to reach agreement in principle, hoping that this will accommodate differences in practice. Secondly, it goes behind the entrenched positions to a common inheritance and gives the terms used by the relevant ecclesiastical positions a wider meaning, and thus develops umbrella concepts. Thirdly, it puts forward a scriptural basis against which to convincingly advance the new ecumenical agreement.<sup>1</sup>

1.3 When ecclesiastical confessions use certain concepts or phrases to state their position, often these key terms can only be appropriately understood if we identify other concepts which the key idea assumes or brings with it. To pay little or no attention to these auxiliary concepts in ecumenical dialogue is to invite an estimate of the dialogue as misleading or inadequate. Of key concern here is the Reformation term *sola scriptura*, “by Scripture alone”. This concept carries with it three others: the sufficiency of Scripture for our knowledge of God and faithful living, its clarity, and its final authority in matters of Christian belief and practice. More than this, under these concepts is a foundational theological truth about the person and work of God. This foundational truth not only makes sense of the concepts involved in the term “by Scripture alone”, but also claims to be an appropriate description of spiritual reality, especially in contrast to an inappropriate one it sees underlying the Roman Catholic view of authority.

#### **Confessional Context**

1.4 Pertinent to ARCIC III, on the question of authority, the position of reformed Anglicanism is evident in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and its ordinal, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith, and the occasional writings of ABP Cranmer and other Reformers. It is effectively summarised in Article VI -

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

In the theological world of these formulations, Christ directly and personally rules his church by means of the apostolic witness to himself, the enscriptured form of which is the New Testament in its canonical setting, and by the Spirit who also speaks this word of Christ not only in the apostolic writings themselves but also in our contemporary proclamation of that witness. In this way, the New Testament writings have a normative role and objectivity which ought make our proclamation, whether in the form of articles of faith, preaching, or theological reports and the like, statements which recognize rather than manufacture the truth. But, for all the Spirit's use of these proclamations, they only have the authority of experience, which may err (Articles XX, XXI).

1.5 An important corollary of this is the role we ought assign to the authority of traditions which came from the historical experience of the Church. ARCIC III has much to say about tradition. Three attitudes emerged in the 16th Century. First, that Church traditions have equal authority with the Bible, and in fact, since the Bible may only be authoritatively interpreted by the teaching office of the Church, tradition stands over the Bible. This is the position of Roman Catholicism. Secondly, the radical Anabaptists denied that Church traditions had any authority at all. This may be summed up by a slogan from a later movement, “no creed but the Bible.” Thirdly, the Reformers recognised that the traditions of the Church did have authority, but only subordinate to the teaching of the Bible which must stand over them, and also could not be held necessary for salvation. In this way, because the word “tradition” is also used by the New Testament to refer to the teaching of the Apostles handed down to

<sup>1</sup> See Gerald Bray, “Article Review: The gift of authority - Authority in the church III”, *Churchman* 113 (1999) 199-214.

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us, which we receive in the form of the canonical books of the New Testament, "Church tradition" is better termed "custom".

1.6 To sum up, in the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Book of Common Prayer and the Homilies there are three layers evident in their theological position on authority -

- i. key concepts, like "by Scripture alone"<sup>2</sup>.
- ii. supportive concepts, like "the sufficiency of Scripture"<sup>3</sup>, "clarity of Scripture"<sup>4</sup>, "the final authority of Scripture in all matters of faith and faithful living"<sup>5</sup>.
- iii. God works directly and personally in the world through Word and Spirit, which includes God's word written.<sup>6</sup>

1.7 Two consequences flow from this. First, because these concepts are a summary of key components in the reformed Anglican doctrine of the sovereignty of Scripture in the life of the Church, any agreement on authority in the Church which does not explicitly support and guard these concepts is unacceptable. Secondly, if a disagreement between different ecclesiastical positions runs all the way through these layers, then it is hard to see how on their own terms these positions can be reconciled without one or both parties changing their stance.

1.8 Four questions are crucial in our appraisal of ARCIC III -

- i. Does ARCIC III explicitly support the key features of the Anglican doctrine of the sovereignty of Scripture, and guard against their dilution?
- ii. To what degree has ARCIC III reconciled the confessional stances of our two communions, Anglican and Roman Catholic?
- iii. If there is reconciliation, have Anglicans changed from their confessional position?
- iv. Has ARCIC III advanced from the Bible itself a new understanding of authority to which we ought submit?

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<sup>2</sup> Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Article VI, and Cranmer's First Homily, "A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture", first part: "Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the New Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions, devised by men's imagination, for our justification and sanctification. For in holy Scripture is fully contained what we ought to do, and what to eschew, what to believe, what to love, and what to look for at God's hand at length . . . if it shall require to teach any truth, or reprove any false doctrine, to rebuke any vice, to commend any virtue, to give good counsel, to comfort or exhort, or to do any other thing required for our salvation, all those things, saith St. Chrysostom, we may learn plentifully of the Scripture."

<sup>4</sup> "There is, saith Fulgentius, abundantly enough, both for men to eat, and children to suck. There is whatsoever is meet for all ages, and for all degrees and sorts of men ... And, moreover, the effect and virtue of God's word is to illuminate the ignorant, and to give more light unto them that faithfully and diligently read it, to comfort their hearts, and to encourage them to perform that which of God is commanded. ", First Homily, first part. The second part of the First Homily is given over to an extensive examination of the clarity of scripture in a pastoral context: "Some go about to excuse them by their own frailness and fearfulness, saying, that they dare not read holy Scripture, lest through their ignorance they should fall into any error. Others pretend that the difficulty to understand it, and the hardness thereof, is so great, that it is meet to be read only of clerks and learned men .... And if you be afraid to fall into error by reading of holy Scripture, I shall shew you how you may read without danger of error. Read it humbly with a meek heart and a lowly heart .... For humility will only search to know the truth; it will search, and will bring together one place with another, and where it cannot find out the meaning, it will pray, it will ask of others that know, and will not presumptuously and rashly define any thing which is knoweth not. Therefore the humble man may search any truth boldly in the Scripture, without any danger of error." Bp John Jewel, in part IV of his *An Apologie of the Church of England* (1562) summarises the attacks on the clarity of scripture made by Cardinal Hosius and others, and dismisses them as so much ignorance and unbelief.

<sup>5</sup> Refer Articles VI, VII, VIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXIII, XXIV; *An Apologie*, passim; First Homily.

<sup>6</sup> Roman Catholic critics made a common accusation against the place given the Bible in evangelical Protestantism. They charged that without the intermediary work of interpretation by the papal magisterium, the teaching of the Bible was not only obscure, but "a bare letter, uncertain, unprofitable, dumb, killing and dead". Cardinal Hosius asserted that to hear God speak, to be directly taught of God, one needed to listen to the church, not the Scripture, "for the Scripture is a creature, and certain bare letter." Jewel's reply was to the contrary: "St Ambrose also, to Gratianus the Emperor: 'Let the Scripture; saith he, 'be asked the question; let the apostle be asked; let the prophets be asked; and let Christ be asked.'" *An Apologie*, part 1. In his First Homily, Cranmer stresses that Scripture, whether read in private or taught in public, is God's direct instrument, and that in this reading and teaching it is God who is dealing with us: "They have the power to turn through God's promise, and they be effectual through God's assistance, and (being reverently received in a faithful heart) they have ever an heavenly spirit working in them: they are lively, quick, and mighty in operation, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and enter through, even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, of the joints and the marrow." The same confidence in God personally and directly working through the reading and preaching of Holy Scripture resounds in Heinrich Bullinger's *Decades*, which Archbishop Whitgift made mandatory reading for his many clergy who were not university graduates. See, Bullinger, *Decades* 5.3, p 93 in the Parker Society edition; 5.3, pp 94-7; 4.7, pp 275-6, 283-4, 289-91; 5.4, pp128-34.

### Contemporary Context

Two other contemporary and important contexts are relevant.

1.9 First, there has already been much informed comment about the document. In particular, Gerald Bray has written a helpful review article in *Churchman*, 113 (1999) 199-214. A leading Roman Catholic theologian, Hans Kung, has observed that Anglicans have conceded the official Roman Catholic position, and gained nothing for their own supposed, confessional understanding. This report is indebted to Gerald Bray's work.

1.10 The second context is that of the postmodern attitudes which prevail in western society, especially on the near impossibility of a text being read objectively. Here, the meaning of a text or texts depends largely on the meaning given to it by the reader or the reader's community. In asserting the clarity of Scripture and its final authority over Church councils, reformed Anglicanism is affirming a high view of the ability of the text, read charitably, to convey its own innate meaning even in the face of the preconceptions we may bring to it as individuals or a Church. With respect to postmodern scepticism concerning the possibility of objective reading, has ARCIC III safeguarded this optimism?

## 2. Summary of Contents

2.1 ARCIC III addressed three main issues -

- i. The relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the exercise of teaching authority, § 7-30, 32-38, 41-44.
- ii. The role of the college of bishops, church councils or synods, and lay people, in deciding the doctrine, practice, mission and care of the church § 39-40.
- iii. The Petrine ministry of universal primacy in relation to Scripture and tradition, § 31, 45-48; that is, the role of the Pope (and elsewhere).

## 3. Two leading themes in ARCIC III: "tradition", and "the Yes/Amen of 2 Corinthians 1:18-20"

Two key ideas act throughout ARCIC III as touchstones of interpretation seeking to give its contents meaning and coherence.

3.1 First, "tradition" is given four distinct meanings, which are spelled out in the footnote on page 16 -

- i. "Tradition" with a capital T, means "the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the church".
- ii. "Tradition" with a small t, which is unfortunately lost at the beginning of a sentence, means "the traditionary process", i.e. the handing on of revealed truth.
- iii. "Traditions" in the plural, means "the peculiar features of liturgy, theology, canonical and ecclesial life in the various cultures and faith communities."
- iv. "Tradition" in the phrase "apostolic Tradition" means the "content of what has been transmitted from apostolic times and continues to be the foundation of Christian life and theology".

3.2 The idea of "tradition" in the New Testament is a "handing on" of what has been "received",<sup>7</sup> and especially the "handing on" of the oral and enscriptured teaching of the apostles.<sup>8</sup> Thus we can see some reason in using "tradition" to cover all the main elements involved in the question of authority in the churches. However, such are the differences between evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics over the content and nature of authority, that the use of the term as an umbrella or generic concept is inadequate. The first use, above, does not help at all. The "Gospel" mentioned there is the "Gospel as transmitted by the church down the ages". That is, this first use of "Tradition" in ARCIC III includes not only the writings of the New Testament, but also includes the interpretative process which the Church has engaged in down the centuries (refer 4.1 and 4.2 below), and is called the "traditionary process". Preferable is the use of the conventional term "gospel", by which can be quite correctly taken to mean the name of the four first four books of the New Testament, the content of apostolic preaching, and even the New Testament itself, for its focus is Christ. A special difficulty is that ARCIC III does not repudiate the notion that the "gospel" which the churches proclaim also includes the churches' historical experience in interpreting and communicating the New Testament gospel. Without this level of clarity, the normative value of the New Testament is weakened in a Roman Catholic and liberal Protestant direction.

3.3 In ARCIC III's solution to our disagreements over authority, the prominence given to the second definition is of concern because there are good reasons (refer 1.3-1.8 above) why the reformation faith of Anglicans is

<sup>7</sup> The contamination of tradition by cultural accretions is warned against in Mk. 7:13, Col. 2:8, and 2 Thess. 3:6.

<sup>8</sup> So 1 Cor 11:2 and 1 Cor. 15:3ff. In 1 Tim. 6:20 and 2 Tim. 1:12,14 it is clear that the written apostolic witness is that tradition, or as it is named here, the 'deposit' or 'trust', which is to be guarded and handed on. Against Roman Catholic and liberal Protestant notions of a later, fruitful development of apostolic tradition, in the financial world of the New Testament this 'trust' is a fixed deposit, which is neither to attract interest nor suffer decrease. It is to be passed on to others unimpaired. Refer J.N.D Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: A. & C. Black, 1963) 150.

largely unconcerned with “traditionary process”, except negatively. In his homily “On the reading of Holy Scripture” Cranmer contrasts the contents of Scripture with “the stinking puddles of men’s traditions, devised by men’s imagination”. The problem is that ARCIC III gives a false status to the “traditionary process” by including it within the first definition, “the Gospel as transmitted by the church”, and not allowing the final results of such a process to be open to error (refer § 42).

3.4 As a description, the third definition is broadly acceptable, but it highlights three problems with the document. First, within the broader context of the umbrella use of “tradition”, to use this word to describe “peculiar features of liturgy” etc, is to over-inflate the real gravity these “peculiar features” ought to attract. To keep the perspective of the Book of Common Prayer, this use of the term “tradition” is better designated by the word “custom”. Secondly, ARCIC III does not acknowledge that the reformed Anglican understanding of “tradition” is in the BCP limited to just these “rites”, “ceremonies” and “customs”. As Article 34 shows, this limitation avoids confusing the historical experience of the Church with the normative teaching of Holy Scripture and the duty of edification which stand as perpetual hallmarks for judging those customs<sup>9</sup>. In placing all elements of authority in the Church (Holy Scripture and the various aspects of the duty and practice of edification) under the one conceptual framework of “tradition”, ARCIC III forces reformed Anglicanism to submerge its own primary interests in the nature and place of scriptural authority under Roman Catholic notions of an all embracing “Tradition” and “traditionary process” which in the end is infallible (e.g § 42 and 47). Thirdly, to place “theology” under this notion of “tradition” is from the point of view of reformed Anglicanism and the New Testament a category error. The proclamation and preaching of the teaching of Holy Scripture (i.e. theology) is not a third-hand activity to be placed beside liturgical practice or cultural peculiarities and within a hierarchical chain stretching from heaven to earth (refer 4.3 and 4.4 below), it is the ongoing direct and personal action of God in the world which saves (refer 1.3.iii and 1 Pet. 1:12, 23-5).

3.5 Reformed Anglicanism identifies the “apostolic Tradition” of the fourth definition with the New Testament (see footnote 8). Why is the term “New Testament” not adequate to describe “apostolic Tradition”?

3.6 The second key idea comes from ARCIC III’s interpretation and use of 2 Cor. 1:18-20. It makes from it a foundational theological truth. Against this foundation all the other elements concerning authority are defined and their coherence and meaning understood. ARCIC III expresses it this way -

- i. God has said his “Yes” to humanity, to us, in Jesus Christ, Son of God and born of a woman.
- ii. This has made possible our concrete “Amen” to God in the “Amen” of the local church.
- iii. In turn, this “Amen” is qualified in the “Amen” of the Communion of the Churches, understood in a global sense. This “Amen” manifests itself at several interlocking levels -
  - a. It is seen in the Churches’ tradition and apostolicity,
  - b. In the contents and use of the canonical Scriptures (which also contain the “Yes” of God to us),
  - c. In the Church’s “Amen” to the word of God in reception and re-reception of divine truth,
  - d. In the “Amen” of the catholicity of the whole church, including the primacy of the bishop of Rome (§ 7-31).

A christological reading of 2 Corinthians 1:18-20 as God’s “Yes” to us and our “Amen” to him is not without its merits, but the construction that ARCIC III has placed upon it has several difficulties.

3.7 It is more accurate to say that the incarnate Son of God himself, who is “of the same substance with the Father” and “of the same substance with humankind”, is the one who gives God’s saving acts for us their ground in human and divine reality. Further, absolutely central in these saving acts is Jesus Christ’s propitiatory and substitutionary atonement. That is, in contrast to the theology of the Reformers, ARCIC III does not think itself out from the cross. Against the prevailing Roman Catholic method of doing theology on the basis of the church’s historical experience, the Reformers followed the method encapsulated in the term, “the theology of the cross”. This helped them arrive at their radically different understanding of the nature of salvation, the condition of humanity, and the nature and content of the authority of the church. The omission of this perspective in ARCIC III fosters a “catholic” as distinguished from a “reformed protestant” reading of its arguments and conclusions.

3.8 Exegetically, the “Amen” of 2 Corinthians 1:18-20 is the apostolic and congregational response to God’s fulfilment of his promises in Jesus Christ, and which has been preached by the Apostle Paul. What is offered to us in the (now enscripturated) apostolic gospel is Jesus Christ, God’s “Yes”. The only “amen” that can be uttered is in terms of that which has been preached. The “amen” appropriate to Paul’s hearers is believing what has been preached. Thus, the traditions of the church must be subject to this “Yes” if it is to be a right “amen”. That is, the only correct “amen” is “amen” to God’s “Yes”. As outlined in 3.6 (above), ARCIC III has added into the “yes” of the contemporary church somewhat more than belief in the enscriptured apostolic witness.

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<sup>9</sup> In their embrace of the place the Bible gives to edification, the Anglican Reformers also stood against “newfangledness”, that is, a behaviour that dispenses with the old just because it is old. See “Concerning the Service of the Church” and “Of Ceremonies”, Book of Common Prayer 1662.

3.9 The foundation that has been constructed from 2 Corinthians 1:18-20 does not bear the weight placed upon it. In so far as it provides “A scriptural image” which is “the key to this statement” (see Preface), this failure is a significant problem for the argument of the whole document.

#### 4. ARCIC III and the Final Authority of Scripture

4.1 With respect to the contemporary postmodern context (refer to section 1.10 above), the document does seek to take up the concerns of reformed Anglicanism concerning the proper reading of Scripture which are expressed by the concepts: “by Scripture alone”, “the sufficiency of Scripture”, “clarity of Scripture” and “the final authority of Scripture”. The truthfulness and authority of the church's teaching is to be measured by “its consonance with Scripture”. Thus, “. . . the Church. . . regards this corpus [i.e. the Holy Scriptures] alone as the inspired Word of God written, and as such, uniquely authoritative” (§ 19).

4.2 However, when this notion of the normative value of Scripture is explored elsewhere under related terms a different picture emerges. Those terms are: “Holy Scripture and apostolic Tradition”, “the Word of God”, “God's 'Yes' revealed in Christ” (§ 42-44). Here, the normative function which has been assigned to Holy Scripture is qualified to mean in effect, Scripture plus the Church's interpretation of Scripture. For example, in § 42, the truthfulness of teaching is now measured by its being “faithful to Scripture and consistent with apostolic Tradition”. The ultimate standard for testing of the Church's teaching thus floats between “Holy Scripture” and “Holy Scripture and apostolic Tradition”. (See also the treatment of the phrase “the inspired Word of God written, and as such uniquely authoritative” in the context of what follows, § 19-23)

4.3 Does ARCIC III allow for a resolution of this ambiguity in the direction of “the final authority of Scripture”? No, because it is the stance of ARCIC III that what is “handed on” is not only the teaching of the Bible itself, but also, for the believer, the faith of the church. It is the church which has authoritatively recognised the canon of scripture (§ 22), and ARCIC III makes the church the interpretative community upon which the meaning of scripture must depend. Thus the teaching content of Scripture is not allowed to transcend the community which reads it (e.g. § 23, cf. § 41). This description of the nature and operation of scriptural authority constricts that authority in the life of the believers.

4.4 Furthermore, the flexible use of the term “Tradition” adds the experience of the post apostolic Church to the “Gospel”, thus lessening the normative value of the New Testament. The net effect is that the Scriptures and their authoritative role are placed within a traditionary process, not over it; hence the unfortunate reference to “the dynamic interdependence of Scripture and Apostolic Tradition and the normative place of Scripture within Tradition” (§ 52). Notable in this regard is the way that the experience of local churches in their reception and re-reception of “apostolic Tradition”, in its dynamic and growing sense as opposed to a fixed written deposit of the faith (§ 14), is taken up and becomes part of that mandatory apostolic Tradition itself (refer § 13, 14-16, 19).

4.5 The role assigned to bishops and the notion of papal infallibility also has the effect of adding historical experience into the “Gospel”. This is seen in the assumption that the development of church order after apostolic times demonstrates that episcopacy is of the essence of the Church (refer § 26-30, 36-39), as opposed to the view that episcopal order is beneficial but not essential (refer Articles 34 and 36). Further, the bishops play a vital role in the experience of local churches in unfolding authoritative “apostolic Tradition”. Distinctively in this “traditionary process”, bishops, and especially the bishop of Rome, may definitively determine what is and is not the genuine content of the apostolic Tradition. The exposition of the function and nature of episcopacy, from about § 36 to § 47, comes to two important conclusions. First, “In specific circumstances, those with this ministry of oversight (*episcopo*), assisted by the Holy Spirit, may together come to a judgment which, being faithful to Scripture and consistent with apostolic Tradition, is preserved from error (§ 42)”. Secondly, “The reception [by all the churches] of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome entails the recognition of this specific ministry [i.e. in formulating and teaching authentic faith] of the universal primate (§ 47).” In this way, “infallibility”, or preservation from error in teaching, is effectively transferred from the NT apostolic witness to us (refer § 41-2; p. 31 f.n. 2).

4.6 The result is an unacceptable hermeneutical and epistemological privilege given to ecclesiastical hierarchy. (Refer § 25; § 26; § 29-30; § 36; § 37-8; § 39-40; § 43; § 45-7; § 51-2; § 53-63. § 53 shows that the Virginia Report is prey to the same problem). This is far from the immediacy we see in Cranmer's description of God himself by his Spirit opening our eyes as we read the Bible (see 1.4 - 1.7 above). To recognise both from the New Testament and the post-apostolic experience of the Church that God works in a hierarchical fashion, and that this ought be respected, is one thing. It is all together another thing to give a hierarchical chain a spiritual determinacy in the way that ARCIC III does.

4.7 Overall then, ARCIC III gives the earthly church and episcopal functioning such a theological necessity that they have an indispensable intermediary role in our appropriation of the apostolic witness (refer § 12; § 16-17; § 23-4; § 43). But that intermediary role rightly belongs to Christ and the Spirit. Thus, at the least, this model blurs the New Testament promises concerning how Christ exercises his Lordship in the church today.

4.8 ARCIC III includes in the Gospel as traditioned, “a storehouse of doctrine and ecclesial decisions” together with “all those elements that are constitutive of ecclesial communion: baptism, confession of the apostolic faith, celebration of the Eucharist, leadership by an apostolic ministry” (§ 14). It also adds “the faith of the Christian community” (§ 12) to the individual's faith. Both suggestions add to the Gospel, and so distort it (refer § 12, 14).

The document suggests that the primacy of the bishop of Rome and papal infallibility are two such beliefs. What of other doctrines not taught by Holy Scripture and yet now recognised by the Roman Catholic Church as genuine to the “apostolic Tradition”, such as the immaculate conception and the bodily assumption of the mother of our Lord?

4.9 ARCIC III makes *koinonia* (communion, fellowship, participation) amongst churches dependent on agreement with all received Church dogma and on the hierarchical nature of community, reception and truth (refer § 6; § 13; § 15; § 36; § 55-6; § 58). In the New Testament, however, the outward form of our communion is the confession, “Jesus is Lord” (Rom. 10:5-13) and our access to and our participation with God the Father and each other is through the Son in the Spirit (Eph. 2:18). The reformed Church of England of the sixteenth century was able to have what they regarded as full spiritual fellowship with the non-episcopal churches of Scotland and continental Europe because they were able to grasp that “Church”, or the communion of churches, is primarily the work of God, which he has already done in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of his Son. The Church is indeed the body of Christ, the person and work of God in Christ, whose fellowship we enter into through faith in Christ, not acceptance of institutions.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 In reply to the questions raised in section 1.8 above, the Doctrine Commission is of the opinion that -
- i. ARCIC III does not sufficiently support the key features of reformed Anglican doctrine of the sovereignty of Scripture and guard against their dilution.
  - ii. ARCIC III has not reconciled the confessional stances of Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism.
  - iii. If ARCIC III represents the contemporary Anglican view of authority, a substantial change from the confessional position of the Anglican has occurred.
  - iv. ARCIC III has not demonstrated from the Bible a new understanding of authority to which we ought submit.
- 5.2 With respect to the question of ecumenical relations, is not the creed of Nicea-Constantinople a sufficient confession for eucharistic communion among the churches? We wish to suggest that the person and acts of God witnessed to by that creed are the appropriate theological bases for seeking restoration of relations between the churches, not questions of order.

5 October 2000