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SOME ASPECTS OF THE ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE ON AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

1. The work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission

After three years of dialogue and work the Preparatory Commission¹ published the *Malta Report*², containing the list of topics necessary to discuss. One of the main problems the *Malta Report* recommended to the Commission for further study was „[...] the question of authority, its nature, exercise, and implications”³ In 1969 The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) was established. The Commission elaborated and published documents on Eucharist⁴, ministry and ordination⁵, salvation⁶, nature of the Church⁷, on mixed marriages⁸ and moral life⁹ The Commission has also published the additional document clarifying the question of Eucharist and ministry¹⁰ The

¹ The Commission was established by *The Common Declaration by the Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury*, in: *Growth in Agreement. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. H. MAYER, L. VISHER, New York / Geneva 1984, 125-126.

² *Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission, 1968. (The Malta Report)*, in: *Growth in Agreement...*, 120-125.

³ *The Malta Report* 22.

⁴ *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: An Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine*, London 1972.

⁵ *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: The Agreed Statements: Eucharistic Doctrine 1971, Ministry and Ordination 1973*, London 1973 (further: *Canterbury Statement*).

⁶ *Salvation and the Church. An agreed Statement by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*, London 1987.

⁷ *Church as Communion. An agreed Statement by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*, London 1991.

⁸ *Anglican-Roman Catholic Marriage. The Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its Applications to Mixed Marriages*, London 1975.

⁹ *Life in Christ. Morals, Communion and the Church. An agreed Statement by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*, London 1994.

¹⁰ *Clarifications of certain aspects of the Agreed Statements on Eucharist and Ministry of the First Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission together with a letter from Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, London – Vatican 1994.

issue of the authority in the Church was the subject of two consecutives ARCIC statements from Venice: *Authority in the Church I. The Venice Statement*¹¹ and Windsor: *Authority in the Church II. The Windsor Statement*¹² (the second being followed by the *Elucidations*¹³ to the first one). These agreed statements were largely discussed by theologians and evaluated by the respective Church authorities. In the succeeding years the second Commission (ARCIC II) continued to work, undertaking other important matters. But the questions concerning the authority in the Church still waited to be explored more deeply and fully. Finally in May 1999 the Commission published its third document on the authority in the Church, *The Gift of Authority. Authority in the Church III*¹⁴

2. A remark on the methodological approach to the authority in the Church

The problem of the authority in the Church is very complex. For the methodological clarity we may distinguish two main lines of authority. The first one is the authority of the sources of teaching. They are the Scriptures, Tradition, Magisterial teaching and community of the faithful. The second line may be described as the authority of the forms of governing. It contains the ministerial authority of bishops (called *episkopē*), the synodal authority and, as the third, the primatial one. Certain aspects of the subjected matter belong to the category of the sources of teaching and others in the category of the forms of governing, because distinctive categories of the authority are not totally disjunctive, sometimes being mutually inter-dependent. Hereafter the authority of the sources of teaching with the addition of the authority of the episcopal ministry are to be spoken about.

3. Scriptures and Tradition

The question of the Scriptures and Tradition has taken a privileged place in the documents of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue. Even if this subject was not the most disputed in the history of our relations, it plays an important role in the theology of our respective Churches. One of the principles of the

¹¹ *Authority in the Church. A Statement on the Question of Authority, its Nature, Exercise and Implications Agreed by the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission*, London 1976 (further: *Venice Statement*).

¹² Text of this Declaration as well as the Elucidation in: *Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission, The Final Report, Windsor 1981*, London 1982 (further: *Windsor Statement*).

¹³ *Authority in the Church I. Elucidation, 1981*, in: *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. The Final Report, Windsor 1981*, London 1982 (further: *Elucidation*).

¹⁴ *The Gift of Authority. Authority in the Church III. An Agreed Statement by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*, London 1999.

Reformation was to underline the unique authority of the Scriptures in transmission of the God's Revelation¹⁵ The famous principle *sola scriptura* (as one of the *Articles of Religion*) took the form of so called «*Doctrine of the necessaria*», pointing that all the things necessary for salvation can be found in the Bible¹⁶ This has obviously put in question the worth of the authority of the Tradition in the Church. Nevertheless the present Anglican theology seems to be ready to recognise the interpretative role of the Tradition towards the Scripture. The Anglican-protestant aptitude can be described as a temptation of absorption of the Tradition into the Scriptures, and the Catholic aptitude as the absorption of the Scriptures into the Tradition. However, according to ARCIC, this two elements should be rather considered as the „unity in diversity”¹⁷

¹⁵ This principal role of the Scriptures describes B. LAMBERT: „The primacy of the Word of God in Protestantism is a fact, a climate, a dogma. It belongs to the whole Protestant tradition, right from its manifold origins. It holds the title role in every denomination, without exception. It is a pre-requisite to their activity, their thought, their life. It is the measure, the norm, the regulating principle of Protestant orthodoxy. It has an equal authority over official and individual thought. It is the inspiration for a way of life and for the organization of human life” IDEM, *Ecumenism: Theology and History*, London 1967, 26. See also *Anglicanism and the Bible*, ed. F.A. BORSCH, Wilton 1984.

¹⁶ Article VI (*Of the Sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for salvation*): „Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is 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 name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church” Quotation after *The Book of Common Prayer*, London 1844. Cf. J.W.C. WAND, *What the Church of England Stands for: A Guide to its Authority in the Twentieth Century*, London 1951, 35. G. D. YARNOLD points on the basic statements contained in the VI-th Article of Religion: „(1) God is the ultimate source of all authority. (2) The scriptures contain the Word of God to man. (3) The books of scripture were written under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. (4) Their inspiration was recognized by the Church, under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit; and so the Canon of scripture was fixed. (5) The Church lives under the authority of scripture, which is the final arbiter in all matters of faith and morals” IDEM, *By What Authority? Studies in the Relations of Scripture, Church, and Ministry*, London 1964, 24-25. See also A. DE MENDIETA, *Rome and Canterbury. A Biblical and Free Catholicism*, London 1962, 129; J. DILLENBERGER, C. WELCH, *Protestant Christianity*, New York - London 1988², 39-41.

¹⁷ G. TAVARD puts the things as follows: „One need not separate in order to distinguish, and one need not absorb in order to unite. The unity of Scripture and Tradition is a unity in distinction. It is similar in this to many of the religious unities of Christianity: the unity of God, the unity of Christ, the unity of the Body of the Church, the unity of marriage, the unity of friendship are all unities in distinction. If this applies so often in Christianity, there is an antecedent presumption that we should look for the same kind of unity as regards Scripture and Tradition. There must be in them a common element, within which their distinction can be maintained. [...] The mystery in which Scripture and Tradition are one can be no other than God's self-revelation to man” IDEM, *The Authority of Scripture and Tradition*, in: *Problems of Authority*, ed. J. M. TODD, London 1962, 36-37. Tavard considers the liturgy as a privileged place for the „unity in diversity” of the Scriptures and Tradition: „The liturgy does not only stand at the origin of the New Testament; it provides also the locus where the passage from Scripture to Tradition takes place, or as I would prefer to say, where Scripture becomes Tradition. Tradition is nothing if it is not the Tradition of Scripture, just as the sacraments are nothing if they are not the sacraments of grace. [...] Tradition

The *Venice Statement* and its *Elucidations* have emphasised the authority of the Scripture underlying the normative role of the person and teaching of Jesus in the transmission of the Revelation. The *Gift of Authority* has contributed to the elaboration of the subject in exposing the normative function of the Scriptures in this process of the transmission of the Revelation «within Tradition»¹⁸ The Tradition itself is described by ARCIC as „a dynamic process, communicating to each generation what was delivered once for all to the apostolic community”¹⁹

The Scriptures and Tradition are situated in their rapport to the Revelation: the Tradition perpetuated in the community of the faithful being on the origin of the Scriptures in their written form²⁰ Understood in this way the Tradition contains not only the written word, but also the baptism, the profession of faith, the celebration of the Eucharist, the apostolic ministry – all of that being the constitutive elements of the ecclesial community²¹

In its largest sense the Tradition is the «living corporate memory of the Church» and as such inseparable from the Church itself²² The Tradition is constantly revived by the Holy Spirit who instructs the Church about the words and deeds of the Lord actualising them *hic et nunc*. This action of the Holy Spirit gives to the Tradition the dimension of a dynamic process of the transmission and of the interpretation of the Revelation.

whose ever-flowing stream runs through the history of the Church is no other than a transmission of the apostolic faith and witness recorded in the New Testament. Scripture, as the message of the eyewitnesses of the death and resurrection of Christ, is the content of Tradition. But Scripture points to the apostolic faith only insofar as it is read as an inspired book; that is, insofar as the liturgical experience manifests its inspiration. [...] As a consequence or implication of this, Tradition is also the transmission of doctrine. But here again this does not take place outside of the liturgical framework of the Church's life; and it can neither duplicate, nor be connumerated with, Scripture” IDEM, *The Authority of Scripture and Tradition*, 39-40. Y. CONGAR quotes the words of Dom Guéranger pointing on the liturgy as a place of accomplishing of the Tradition by the power of the Holy Spirit: „C'est dans la liturgie que l'Esprit qui inspira les Ecritures parle encore; la liturgie est la Tradition même à son plus haut degré de puissance et de solennité” IDEM, *La Tradition et la vie de l'Église*, Paris 1984², 100.

¹⁸ „Within [emphasis mine] Tradition the Scriptures occupy a unique and normative place and belong to what has been given once for all” *Gift of Authority* 19.

¹⁹ *Gift of Authority* 14.

²⁰ E.J. YARNOLD stresses this point in commentary to the ARCIC documents: „Tradition is prior to Scripture, but once Scripture is inspired, written, and canonized, the two are inseparable. Tradition is the living interpretation of Scripture; the Church is guided by Scripture as interpreted within a living tradition. There is no suggestion here that tradition is a source of revelation distinct from Scripture which may preserve truths on which Scripture is silent. *Sola scriptura*, yes; But Scripture interpreted and applied within the Church is tradition” IDEM, *Tradition in the Agreed Statements of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*, in: *The Quadrilog: Tradition and the Future of Ecumenism*, ed. K. HAGEN, Collegeville 1994, 243.

²¹ *Gift of Authority* 14.

²² „Tradition makes the witness of the apostolic community present in the Church today through its corporate memory”. *Gift of Authority* 18.

4. Church teaching

The ARCIC's *Venice Statement* considers the Scriptures, the creeds, the Fathers and the council definitions of the early Church as basic and normative for the Church teaching²³. The *Windsor Statement* accords a special authority to the councils' definitions²⁴. In the same time admits that also a pope exercising the universal primacy, teaching in unity with his brothers bishops can express the faith of the Church and take decisions in the name of the whole Church²⁵.

The *Venice Statement* stresses on the prophetic function of the Church teaching. In the faithfulness to the apostles' faith the Church must present the Good News in the language of the contemporary man. Only then the message can be understood and a man can give his personal response of faith²⁶. This can sometimes imply the necessity of reformulation of the dogmatic definitions²⁷. The new formulae however must be consonant with the apostolic witness, being nothing more than new expressions of the same faith²⁸. The Church – continues the *Windsor Statement* – has a right and duty to make decisions in the matters of faith²⁹.

Although as Anglicans and Catholics accept the indefectibility of Church's teaching, the Anglicans would rather see it limited to the fundamental truths of the faiths, which is not easily accepted according to the Catholic position³⁰. In the other place however the *Windsor Statement* accords to the councils and universal primates the possibility of error³¹. This seem to contradict the opinion expressed in the *Venice Statement* about the indefectibility of a council pronouncing in the fundamental matters of faith³², what is close to the catholic teaching³³. The Anglicans can accept this last statement not without difficulty. The last for them lies in giving the convincing argument for the God's guarantee of the infallibility of the conciliar decisions³⁴. In the same time the *Elucida-*

²³ „In both our traditions the appeal to Scripture, to the creeds, to the Fathers, and to the definitions of the councils of the early Church is regarded as basic and normative” *Venice Statement* 18.

²⁴ *Windsor Statement* 24, 26.

²⁵ *Windsor Statement* 28.

²⁶ *Venice Statement* 15.

²⁷ *Windsor Statement* 27.

²⁸ It is stressed by the *Venice Statement* 15: „All such restatement must be consonant with the apostolic witness recorded in the Scriptures; for in this witness the preaching and teaching of ministers, and statements of local and universal councils, have to find their ground and consistency”

²⁹ „In its mission to proclaim and safeguard the gospel the Church has the obligation and the competence to make declarations in matters of faith” *Venice Statement* 18.

³⁰ *Elucidation* 3.

³¹ „However, neither general councils nor universal primates are invariably preserved from error even in official declarations” *Windsor Statement* 27. Cf. *Elucidation* 3.

³² „When the Church meets in ecumenical council its decisions on fundamental matters of faith exclude what is erroneous” *Venice Statement* 19.

³³ Cf. F. A. SULLIVAN, *Magisterium. Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church*, Dublin 1983, 4-6.

³⁴ Cf. A. HANSON, *The Agreed Statement on Authority. An Anglican Note*, „One in Christ” 13:1977, 185. See also I. T. RAMSEY, *The Authority of the Church To-day*, in: *Authority and the*

tions underlay the possibility of erroneous council decisions and the indefectibility only of what is the fundamental matter of faith and the central truth of salvation³⁵ All this points on the difficulty of the Commission to state clearly about the indefectibility of conciliar decisions.

The last ARCIC's document the *Gift of Authority* brings at last the definition of the indefectibility³⁶ and precises that the infallibility of the Church teaching stays in the service of the indefectibility of his Church, promised by Jesus³⁷ The documents of ARCIC treat the issue of the Church teaching in a rather complex way. The impression stays however that they reflect more the catholic teaching, what puts the reached consensus in ambiguity³⁸

5. Church community

To receive the Church teaching the community of the faithful must recognize in it true apostolic teaching. This is done by the *sensus fidelium* (or *common sense*) in the process of reception. This last is possible only if there is a harmony between the *sensus fidelium* of the whole Church and proclaimed truth³⁹ Each individual believer is called to receive what the community of the faithful professes and teaches as the authentic truths of the Gospel⁴⁰ In this way he incorporates himself into the *sensus fidelium* of the whole community⁴¹

The Church's teaching, based on the Scripture and apostolic Tradition, plays the role of transmission of the faith and in the same time receives the reception

Church. Papers and Discussions at a Conference between theologians of the Church of England and the German Evangelical Church, ed. R. R. WILLIAMS, London 1965, 61-82.

³⁵ *Elucidation 3.*

³⁶ „In their concern to make the Gospel accessible to all who are open to receive it, those charged with the ministry of memory and teaching have accepted new and hitherto unfamiliar expressions of faith. Some of these formulations have initially generated doubt and disagreement about their fidelity to the apostolic Tradition. In the process of testing such formulations, the Church has moved cautiously, but with confidence in the promise of Christ that it will persevere and be maintained in the truth (cf. Mt 16.18; J 16.13). This is what is meant by the indefectibility of the Church” *Gift of Authority* 41. Cf. *Venice Statement* 18; *Windsor Statement* 23.

³⁷ „In specific circumstances, those with this ministry of oversight (*episcopē*), assisted by the Holy Spirit, may together come to a judgement which, being faithful to Scripture and consistent with apostolic Tradition, is preserved from error. [...] This is what is meant when it is affirmed that the Church may teach infallibly. Such infallible teaching is at the service of the Church's indefectibility” *Gift of Authority* 42. Cf. *Windsor Statement* 23-28, 32.

³⁸ T. BRADSHAW points that the ARCIC statements on the authority of the Church teaching do not reflect the position of the evangelical Anglicans nor the Anglo-catholics, but only the contemporary idealistic interpretations of catholic theologians as Newman and Möhler. IDEM, *The Olive Branch. An Evangelical Anglican Doctrine of the Church*, Carlisle 1992, 119-120.

³⁹ *Elucidation 3; Venice Statement 6.*

⁴⁰ *Gift of Authority 12.*

⁴¹ „The believer is incorporated into an «Amen» of faith, older, deeper, broader, richer than the individual's «Amen» to the Gospel. So the relation between the faith of the individual and the faith of the Church is more complex than may sometimes appear” *Gift of Authority* 13.

from the *sensus fidelium*. Nevertheless, at this point a divergence occurs in the approach to the authority of the Church's teaching. The Anglicans perceive the Church teaching as authoritative only if approved by the *sensus fidelium* of the community of the faithful. The Catholics see the same otherwise: „any teaching is proclaimed because it is true”, and not „it is true only if proclaimed”⁴²

The Anglicans stress on the necessity of evaluation of any truth defined by the Church authority. No individual believer – they say – can be expected to accept the definitions not received in the process of reception, especially if a definition is proclaimed *ex cathedra*⁴³ The Catholics from their side point on the legitimacy of such decisions which are independent on the process of reception which itself has no power to attribute or to refuse the authority to the legitimately pronounced definitions. To reconcile the two given positions the Elucidations stress on the importance of the reception of the revealed truth taught in the form of a dogmatic definition⁴⁴

6. Episcopal ministry

The issue of the episcopal ministry was one of the most important questions discussed by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). This ministry of oversight and pastoral care – *episcopē* – has been retained within the structure of the Catholic Church as well as in the Anglican Communion.

In the documents of ARCIC the *episcopē* of ordained ministers has been described as a special charisma of the Spirit given for the building of the Church to those who – by ordination – receive authority of the apostolic teaching, presiding at the Eucharist and prayer⁴⁵ The episcopate itself is given to the Church by God's will and the ministerial authority of bishops is closely connected with and inseparable from the hierarchical structure of the Church⁴⁶ For the preserving of the continuity and unity of the Church the apostolic succession should be guaranteed in the ordination of each bishop⁴⁷ Bishops are responsible

⁴² „The Church's teaching is proclaimed because it is true; it is not true simply because it has been proclaimed” *Windsor Statement* 27.

⁴³ *Windsor Statement* 31.

⁴⁴ „On the one hand it [ARCIC] rejects the view that a definition has no authority until it is accepted by the whole Church or even derives its authority solely from that acceptance. Equally, the Commission denies that a council is so evidently self-sufficient that its definitions owe nothing to reception” *Elucidation* 3.

⁴⁵ *Venice Statement* 5.

⁴⁶ „The ministry [is] exercised by the bishop, and by ordained persons under the bishop's care, as they proclaim the Word, minister the sacraments, and take their part in administering discipline for the common good” *Gift of Authority* 30.

⁴⁷ „[Bishops], because they are representative of their Churches in fidelity to the teaching and mission of the apostles and are members of the episcopal college, their participation also ensures the historical continuity of this church with the apostolic church and of its bishop with the

for the preserving and promoting the integrity of the *koinonia* of the Church and are in their communities the focus of unity. The bishop – generally overseeing the community – can require from the faithful the compliance necessary to maintain faith and charity in the life of the community⁴⁸

Considering this, the far-reaching consensus in the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue can be assumed. When the next step to the visible unity could possibly mean the re-examining of the Anglican orders, the decision made by the Anglican Communion about the women's ordination creates a real obstacle to the continuation of the dialogue.

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Waiting to be resolved is the question of the adoption by both respective Communities of the doctrinal heritage from the period of separation, especially an eventuality of approval by Anglicans of the Marian dogmas. One awaits now the publication of the document on Mariology, actually still in elaboration by ARCIC.

The most difficult, however, may occur establishing of the mutually accepted criteria of discernment what in the separately developing tradition of our both Communities was the right path, and as such – guided by the Holy Spirit, and what was not. Without establishing of these criteria further consensus and steps towards full visible unity seem to be far from possible.

Niektóre aspekty anglikańsko-rzymskokatolickiego dialogu na temat autorytetu w Kościele

Streszczenie

Toczący się od ponad trzydziestu lat dialog anglikańsko-rzymskokatolicki na temat autorytetu w Kościele przyniósł znaczące zbliżenie w wielu kwestiach. Należą do nich m.in.: autorytet Pisma świętego i Tradycji, autorytet nauczania kościelnego i Wspólnoty kościelnej oraz autorytet posługiwania biskupiego.

original apostolic ministry. The communion of the churches in mission, faith, and holiness, through time and space, is thus symbolized and maintained in the bishop. Here are comprised the essential features of what is meant in our two traditions by ordination in the apostolic succession" *Canterbury Statement* 16.

⁴⁸ „Since the bishop has general oversight of the community, he can require the compliance necessary to maintain faith and charity in its daily life" *Venice Statement* 5. Cf. G.L. BRAY, *Sacraments and Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective*, Latimer Studies 18, Oxford 1984, 38-40.

Znaczącym osiągnięciem jest pokonanie post-reformacyjnej kontrowersji na temat Pisma świętego i Tradycji poprzez ukazanie ich w relacji do Objawienia. Pismo posiada normatywną funkcję w procesie przekazywania Objawienia „w obrębie Tradycji” (*within Tradition*). Sama Tradycja pojmowana jest jako „żywa pamięć Kościoła”, czyli dynamiczny proces, komunikujący każdemu pokoleniu to, co zostało raz na zawsze przekazane wspólnocie apostołskiej.

Nauczanie kościelne, pełniące funkcję profetyczną, ma przekazywać Dobrą Nowinę w języku zrozumiałym dla współczesnego słuchacza. Pociąga to za sobą konieczność nowego sformułowania definicji dogmatycznych tak, aby zachowując wierność nauczaniu apostołskiemu w nowy sposób wyrażały tę samą wiarę.

Wspólnota kościelna przyjmuje nauczanie Kościoła poprzez *sensus fidei*. Anglikanie przywiązują ogromną wagę do procesu recepcji nauczania kościelnego. Katolicy, nie umniejszając tej roli, wskazują na obiektywność prawdy objawionej, która nie jest legitymizowana poprzez recepcję, lecz domaga się przyjęcia, ponieważ jest prawdą.

Autorytet posługiwania biskupiego, *episcopē*, to udzielany przez Ducha Świętego charyzmat pasterskiej troski, nauczania, przewodniczenia Eucharystii i modlitwie. Biskup jest zwornikiem jedności swego Kościoła lokalnego, a przez udział w sukcesji apostołskiej gwarantem trwania w jedności Kościoła powszechnego.

Dla dalszego postępu na drodze dialogu pomiędzy anglikanami i katolikami potrzeba będzie jednak określenia jasnych kryteriów rozróżniania, co w okresie oddzielenia naszych Wspólnot było uprawnionym rozwojem Tradycji, a więc rozwojem dokonującym się pod przewodnictwem Ducha Świętego. Pytanie to staje się szczególnie aktualne w kontekście wprowadzenia święcenia kobiet we Wspólnocie Anglikańskiej.