

THE ECUMENICAL BURDEN OF A COVENANTED FUTURE:
Why the Hope for the Anglican Communion Rests on an Embrace of its Ecumenical Charism
~ A Submission to the Covenant Design Group ~

The Rev'd Matthew S. C. Olver
Curate – Church of the Incarnation, Dallas, Texas
Ecumenical Officer – Diocese of Dallas
Member of ARC-USA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I	Introduction	pp 1
Part II	The Contribution of ARCIC to an Ecumenical Theology of Authority and Primacy	pp 6
Part III	<i>Au Contraire?</i> – Why a Universal Primacy Is not Necessarily Un-Anglican	pp 14
Part IV	Two Covenant Proposals Implied by a Universal Primacy	pp 24
Part V	The Third Covenant Proposal: Formal Ecumenical Consultation	pp 30
Part VI	Conclusion	pp 31

THE ECUMENICAL BURDEN OF A COVENANTED FUTURE:

Why the Hope for the Anglican Communion Rests on an Embrace of its Ecumenical Charism

The Rev'd Matthew S. C. Olver
Curate – Church of the Incarnation, Dallas, Texas
Ecumenical Officer – Diocese of Dallas
Member of ARC-USA

I. INTRODUCTION

The Windsor Process, initiated by *The Windsor Report* (henceforth TWR), and the subsequent Covenant Process that was recommended by TWR (§118-120¹), have drawn a vast and varied set of responses from around the Anglican Communion², and each response carries within it an implied interpretation of the purpose and nature of the Covenant – and thereby the Communion – itself. This paper works under the assumption articulated by Archbishop Rowan Williams at the end of the 2008 Lambeth Conference: not only do “we need to develop covenantal commitments,” and not only is “a Covenant is needed,” but our only future is a “covenanted future.” Such a future is one that “has the potential to make us *more* of a church; more of a ‘catholic’ church in the proper sense, a church, that is, which understands its ministry and service and sacraments as united and interdependent throughout the world.”³

Viewed from the gifted place of hope, the Covenant Process is an opportunity for the Communion to have the conversation about its own ecclesiological self-understanding that has been necessary since at least as early as the first Lambeth Conference of 1867. While it has been

¹ *The Lambeth Commission on Communion: The Windsor Report 2004* (Morehouse Publishing/Anglican Consultative Council, 2004), 48-50. Appendix Two of TWR presents a possible draft, which the Commission was at pains to emphasize “is only a preliminary draft and discussions document” (§118).

² In this paper, when I used the terms “Anglican,” “Anglicanism” and “Anglican Communion,” I assume what the drafters of TWR assume, which is the definition set forth in Resolution 49 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference, later incorporated into the Preamble of the Constitution of The Episcopal Church (and other Provinces), which states:

The Conference approves the following statement of nature and status of the Anglican Communion, as that term is used in its Resolutions:

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, which have the following characteristics in common:

- a. they uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorised in their several Churches;
- b. they are particular or national Churches, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a national expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and
- c. they are bound together not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the bishops in conference.

The Conference makes this statement praying for and eagerly awaiting the time when the Churches of the present Anglican Communion will enter into communion with other parts of the Catholic Church not definable as Anglican in the above sense, as a step towards the ultimate reunion of all Christendom in one visibly united fellowship.

³ The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev'd Dr Rowan Williams, “Concluding Presidential Address to the Lambeth Conference 2008,” 3 August 2008, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2008/8/3/ACNS4511>.

an incredibly painful, some might even say disorienting process, thus far, there are few who would argue that the admittedly ambiguous nature of Anglican ecclesiology – and therefore of Anglicanism itself – cannot continue without a serious and substantive reflection on its self-understanding sometime in the near future. If not now, it is increasingly clear that there will not be another ‘when.’ The consent to the election and then the consecration of Gene Robinson to the episcopacy in The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the authorization of rite of blessing for same sex unions in the Diocese of New Westminster in the Anglican Church of Canada were simply the occasions that highlighted the long-prescient problem within Anglicanism’s self-understanding: namely, that it lacks what Archbishop Williams has described as

a set of adequately developed structures which is able to cope with the diversity of views that will inevitably arise in a world of rapid global communication and huge cultural variety. The tacit conventions between us need spelling out – not for the sake of some central mechanism of control but so that we have ways of being sure we’re still talking the same language, aware of belonging to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ. It is becoming urgent to work at what adequate structures for decision-making might look like.”⁴

The problem is not simply, as some have claimed, over whether the Holy Scriptures are “the revealed Word of God,”⁵ “containing all things necessary to salvation”⁶ and as “the rule and ultimate standard of faith.”⁷ The problem includes the interpretation of Scripture, but interpretation simply leads in the direction of the more substantive problem that now looms over the Communion, and to which Archbishop Williams refers. That foundational problem is the lack of structures that allow for the exercise of authority within the Communion, that are able to determine the limits of diversity for the sake of unity in faith and order, and that allow for a clear and unified witness to the Gospel revealed in Jesus Christ. There are some who have forcefully argued as of late that the divergence of opinion in this particular matter has exposed contradictory theological and ecclesiological positions that are at such fundamental odds with each other, that and more calls for “listening” or “reception” or “dialogue” will simply spell the end of the Communion if there is not clarity about how the present theological incoherence can be resolved.

The focus on this submission and proposal will be very narrow but assumes much of what some of the other submissions⁸ to the CDG have highlighted as it concerns the second draft of the Anglican Covenant (henceforth referred to as the St Andrew’s Text). By way of affirmation, I am most notably encouraged by the way in which ecumenical concerns and considerations have come to the fore much more significantly in the St Andrew’s Text than in

⁴ The Most Rev’d Dr Rowan Williams, “The Challenge and Hope of Being Anglican Today,” 27 June 2006.

⁵ From the version of what is known as “The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral,” adopted by the House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church in 1886 (quoted in *The Book of Common Prayer (1979)* The Episcopal Church (Church Publishing: New York, 1990), 876 (this will be cited in the future simply as BCP; other Prayer Books will be noted specifically).

⁶ Article VI “Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation” of the Articles of Religion (quoted in BCP 877) and used in Resolution 11 of the Lambeth Conference of 1888, which is what is now known as “The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral.”

⁷ Resolution 11, Lambeth Conference of 1888, quoted in *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences 1867-1988*, Roger Coleman ed., (Anglican Book Centre: Toronto, 1992), 13.

⁸ E.g. The Rev’d Dr Philip Turner, “A Self-Defining Moment for the Anglican Communion: A Comment on the St Andrew’s Text of the Anglican Covenant,” 1 May 2008, <http://anglicancommunioninstitute.com/content/view/139/2/>.

the first draft.⁹ The explicit use of the Anglican-Orthodox statement on ecclesiology, *The Church of the Triune God* (Cyprus, 2007) is an obvious example among many of this new ecumenical sensitivity. Closely related is the shift to a conscious and linguistically-careful recognition of the Communion's participatory action in the wider Church Catholic. This is important because, among other reasons, it acknowledges the simple fact that the actions of part of one Christian communion will affect not only others in their ecclesial community, but Christians in other fellowships as well.¹⁰

This emphasis on ecumenism points to a fact that must be considered at the onset of this discussion: the centrality of ecumenism to the irreducible core of the Anglican Communion. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (1868, 1888) is a landmark text in the history of ecumenism for a number of reasons, not least being the early date of its arrival. One of the central assertions that it makes, implicit as it may be, is that the Anglican Communion is a provisional reality, a claim that is neither an accident nor an anomaly. This fact is distinctive among Christian bodies, not simply among those who consider themselves "catholic" in some form, but among Protestant bodies as well. This claim to provisionality, in fact, has been intimated toward and reiterated in various forms from that point on, both in official documents and in the writings of major Anglican theologians and historians, such as Archbishop Michael Ramsey and Stephen Neil.¹¹

⁹ My thanks to Mr Christopher Wells (University of Notre Dame) for his permission to make use of his comments in "The ecumenical mind of the Covenant Design Group: Notes on the St. Andrew's draft," published 6 March 2008, <http://covenant-communication.com/?p=615>.

¹⁰ See "Ecclesiological Reflections on the Current Situation in the Anglican Communion in Light of ARCIC: Report of the ad hoc sub-commission of IARCCUM presented to the Most Reverend and Right Honorable Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams and to the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Walter Kasper," 8 June 2004, §2,

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/catholic/iarccum/docs/2004report.cfm>.

For example, in §44: "We have tried to show how the decision of the Episcopal Church USA to proceed with the recent consecration despite sustained strong opposition from large segments of the Anglican Communion calls into question significant portions of our agreed statements on authority and ecclesiology: the nature of ecclesial communion; the mutual interdependence of churches; the role of episcopal and collegial authority in maintaining the unity of the communion; the process of discernment in the communion."

See also this comment in the observations presented by the Windsor Continuation Group to the 2008 Lambeth Conference: "Some partners are beginning to raise questions about the identity of their Anglican partner. In the light of the ecumenical movement, there can no longer be tensions in one Communion that do not have wider repercussions across the whole Christian family" (§1.f),

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/windsor_continuation/docs/WCG%20Observations%20080724.pdf.

¹¹ E.g. Stephen Neil in *Anglicanism*, 4th ed. (Oxford: New York, 1977), 406: "Christian Churches, like Christian individuals, if they desire to follow their Master, must be prepared to die for His sake; but it may be incumbent on them, as on their Master, at certain moments to say, 'My time is not yet come.' ... Churches cannot enter into union with one another except by dying to their existence as separate Churches; they ought not to do so, unless they are assured that God himself is calling them to death with a view to a better resurrection. It should be our prayer that Anglicanism "will not unduly or selfishly cling to their Anglican life in separation."

Also, Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, first U.S. edition (Cowley: Cambridge, MA, 1990), 222, 223: "Hence the movement towards reunion consists not only or even primarily in the discussions between churches or in their schemes of readjustment, imperative as these may be. It consists rather in the growth within every part of the Church of the trust of the Body and the Passion, no less than the "outward marks" which express those truths."

"No "unchurching," and no denials of the experience of any Christians need accompany the firmest insistence upon Episcopacy, so long as the insistence is made in terms of the universal Church. The truth manifested in Congregational fellowship, in Presbyterian order, in every section of Christendom will be preserved as parts, but

By “provisional reality,” I mean simply to say that Anglicanism has been unambiguous not only that the Communion is not constitutive of the “one, holy catholic and apostolic church” named in the Nicene Creed but that, if the Communion is faithful to its calling in God’s Providence, it will one day cease to exist as a distinct, ecclesial community when the gift of “home reunion” has been fully received. The fact that the Communion is a “fellowship” within that larger Church Catholic is made patently clear in the St Andrew’s Text by distinguishing it from the churches of the Anglican Communion by the use of the uppercase “Church” (a practice which I also will follow in this essay).¹² It is this very tension that the Quadrilateral expresses, being both an attempt at self-definition and a proposal of “mere Catholicism” to stand as the basic center and foundation upon which any possibility of true unity in the Faith can rest.

One significant problem that I think bears mention at the onset, since it is related to the discussion which follows, is the development in the St Andrew’s Text where “final determinations are to be made by the Anglican Consultative Council (8.1)”¹³ and not the Primates’ Meeting, as Resolution III.6 of Lambeth 1998 and the TWR (§A1.5) have encouraged.¹⁴ The consistent direction of the central documents in the Communion over the past 20 years – e.g. the *The Virginia Report* (TVR), *The Windsor Report*, the latest document from the Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC), *Communion, Conflict, and Hope* (2008) – has been to see the role of the episcopacy as a ministry fundamentally of teaching and guarding. While the desire for a more democratic style of relating may have been the impetus for this switch, such a move confuses the roles of the various orders of the ministry and places the bishops in an equal position with the other Orders and the laity, at least as it concerns doctrinal matters of faith and order, so as to profoundly obscure their particular episcopal charism: “to be one with the apostles in proclaiming Christ’s resurrection and interpreting the Gospel” and “to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church.”¹⁵

The purpose of this paper is to offer first, a theological rationale and second, three distinct proposals for how the ecumenical aspect of the Covenant can be strengthened even more, with particular attention given to the notion of primacy. And I trust that the merits of each will be considered on their own. The documents of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) will serve as my main interlocutor, with the voices of the resolutions of the Lambeth Conferences and other major Communion documents harmonizing and providing counterpoint. The question and nature of primacy was not avoided in ARCIC; in fact, it was considered straight away in their second document, *Authority in the Church* and it is an issue with which the Communion must find clarity as it looks forward to a covenanted future. Any

only as parts of the whole. The Episcopate expresses another factor in the truth, namely the one historic family wherein all sections, including those now possessing Episcopacy, shall be made full. No Christian shall deny his Christian experience, but all Christians shall grow more fully into the one experience in all its parts.”

¹² See Note 2 on Resolution 49 of the Lambeth Conference of 1930 and the subsequent adoption of the same language into the Preamble of the Constitution of The Episcopal Church (TEC).

¹³ The Rev’d Dr Philip Turner, “A Self-Defining Moment for the Anglican Communion: A Comment on the St Andrew’s Text of the Anglican Covenant,” 1 May 2008, <http://anglicancommunioninstitute.com/content/view/139/2/>.

¹⁴ See also TWR §104, 106. This shift in the St Andrew’s text is found in the “Draft Procedural Appendix for the Anglican Covenant,” in §4.5, 5.4, 6.5, 7.6 and 8.1-5.

¹⁵ From “The Examination” in the service for the Ordination of a Bishop, *The Book of Common Prayer* (TEC) (Church Publishing: New York, 1979), 517.

self-conscious notion of the Communion's ecumenical vocation, and thus her provisionality within the providence of God, demands that the principles of theology within the ecumenical dispute¹⁶ and the ecumenical relationships themselves be central to the Anglican consciousness and thus to any Anglican Covenant. The Covenant's purpose must be clear: the basic self-preservation of Anglicanism as some kind of good *qua* good must be rejected outright. As Stephen Neil astutely notes, "The Anglican Churches has been the first in the world to consider soberly and seriously the possibility of their own demise."¹⁷ The very notion of a denomination or separated ecclesial communities, seen through the ecumenical lens of the Gospel's demands, requires that it "must be prepared to lose its individual life in a larger whole." The assumption of this proposal is that "God has entrusted to us in our Communion not only the Catholic faith, but a special service to render to the whole Church."¹⁸ Anglicanism has a great many charisms, one of them being this very tension between a self-conscious Catholic identity always informed by a profound sense of the need for reform, married to a realistic acknowledgment that the movement of the Spirit will one day correspond to a church that is "not longer in any strict sense of the term Anglican."¹⁹ These charisms and others must be preserved and nurtured, but never for her own sake: always for the good of the Gospel and the whole Catholic Church. Provisionality presumes not only that the various churches have charisms peculiar to their expression of the Christian Gospel, but that each particular church is also in want and is in need of the charisms of their brethren if they are to receive the fullness of catholicity.²⁰ Thus, at this critical juncture in the life of the Anglican Communion, we must carefully consider where we lack and are in need and what gifts we might re-receive from our separated brethren.

¹⁶ This language comes from the title to section II in Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, translated by Sister Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1987).

¹⁷ Neil, *Anglicanism*, 404.

¹⁸ The Report of the Lambeth Conference 1948, quoted in Neil, *Anglicanism*, 405.

¹⁹ Neil, *Anglicanism*, 404.

²⁰ E.g., from *Unitatis reditengratio*: "On the other hand, Catholics must gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren. It is right and salutary to recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood. For God is always wonderful in His works and worthy of all praise.

Nor should we forget that anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can be a help to our own edification. Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it can always bring a deeper realization of the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Nevertheless, the divisions among Christians prevent the Church from attaining the fullness of catholicity proper to her, in those of her sons who, though attached to her by Baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her. Furthermore, the Church herself finds it more difficult to express in actual life her full catholicity in all her bearings" (§4.8-4.10). Austin Flannery, O.P., gen ed., *Vatican Council II: Volume 1 – The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, new revised ed (Costello Publishing Company/Dominican Publications: Northport, NY/Dublin, Ireland, 1998), 380. All subsequent citations from Vatican II documents will be from Flannery and will be cited simply by paragraph number.

II. THE CONTRIBUTION OF ARCIC TO AN ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY OF AUTHORITY AND PRIMACY

While it could be considered an improper insertion of a seemingly random set of documents into the present conversations around Anglican identity, the strong influence of the ARCIC corpus, particularly the way it holds together the necessity of primacy within a communion ecclesiology, can be seen throughout much of TWR. Probably the most influential submission to the 2003 Windsor Commission was a document produced by a sub-committee of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), which was established in 2001 in response to the meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops at Mississauga, Canada, called in May 2000 by then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, and the then-President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Edward Cassidy. The purpose was clear: to “seek a way forward in the continuing relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church.”²¹ The report from the sub-committee to the Windsor Commission, entitled “Ecclesiological Reflections on the Current Situation in the Anglican Communion in Light of ARCIC,”²² came at the request of Archbishop Rowan Williams, in consultation with Cardinal Walter Kasper of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The purpose and intent of the report is laid out in its Introduction:

It is a significant confirmation of the progress we have made, and of the importance of our common commitment to the goal of full ecclesial communion, that the appearance of a fresh obstacle to achieving that goal has led to a common initiative to address that difficulty.²³

It is not going too far to say that this kind of constructive contribution is unique in the history of ecumenism: in response to a major crisis in one ecclesial community, their major ecumenical partners join with them to pray and consider how the theological contributions of their bi-lateral dialogue over the last thirty years could contribute to the preservation of unity and truth in the community in crisis. Such a response also makes an incredibly important theological and ecclesiological point that must remain in the foreground of any useful Covenant: “what one communion does has consequences for the other.”²⁴ The basic historical fact that it was from the Roman Catholic Church that the Church of England separated itself *in toto* seems to have had a serious impact on the serious commitment the Communion has exhibited in the way in which ARCIC has proceeded. And from the perspective of the Catholic Church, it was in *Unitatis reditengratorum* (The Decree on Ecumenism) at the Second Vatican Council that the Anglican Communion was singled out as “occupying a special place” among churches and ecclesial communities that have roots in the reformations of the sixteenth century, due precisely to the fact that in the Communion, “Catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist” (§13.3). It is on this “presumption” that the Roman Catholic Church has “proceeded to maintain relations at

²¹ *Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 years of Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue*, An Agreed Statement by the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission, Preface.

²² “Ecclesiological Reflections on the Current Situation in the Anglican Communion in Light of ARCIC: Report of the ad hoc sub-commission of IARCCUM presented to the Most Reverend and Right Honorable Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams and to the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Walter Kasper,” June 8th, 2004, cited at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/catholic/iarccum/docs/2004report.cfm>

²³ “Ecclesiological Reflections,” §2.

²⁴ “Ecclesiological Reflections,” §2.

the highest level possible.”²⁵ Thus the historical facts that led to the existence of two separate ecclesial communities, the importance of ARCIC’s theological work, and the way the Roman Catholic Church’s commitment to the Anglican Communion evidenced in the submission of the IARCCUM sub-group to the Windsor Commission all point to why the ARCIC corpus should be a matter of careful consideration for the Communion – and the Covenant Design Group in particular – as it approaches the end of the Covenant process.

The first document to examine notions of primacy, and in particular the primacy of the bishop of Rome, was *Authority in the Church I* (1976; henceforth *Authority I*), and the subsequent Elucidation document (1981). This was the first of what would be three documents on authority (the others coming first in 1981 as part of ARCIC I and second in 1998 in ARCIC II). The question of ordained ministry more generally was the second topic treated by ARCIC in 1973, but that discussion was limited purposefully in order that still vexing questions – particularly the judgment about Anglican orders in the papal bull *Apostolicae curae*²⁶ and “the question of primacy,”²⁷ – could be considered more substantively.

In the Preface to *Authority I*, “the problem of papal primacy” is set out as the precise issue around which “our historical divisions found their unhappy origin.” And yet, an incredibly bold claim is made at the same time: “Communion with the see of Rome,” write the co-chairs, “would bring to the Churches of the Anglican Communion not only a wider *koinonia* but also a strengthening of the power to realise its traditional ideal of diversity in unity.” While a seemingly-radical statement, it sets out the assumption that is assumed by much of the official documents and statements by the Communion with regards to the Petrine ministry: while communion with a historic see, particularly the See of Rome, is understood to not be antithetical to Christ’s desire for the Church, such “communion” does not imply a universal jurisdiction that in any way impedes upon the ministry of a local bishop nor any power with regard to the constitution of the Deposit of Faith that is ever severed from the function of a synod or council. We also do well to remember from the outset that *Authority I*, as part of *The Final Report of ARCIC I*, was received by the Lambeth Conference in 1988, whose Resolution 8.1 states that the *Report* is “consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans and believes that this agreement offers a sufficient basis for taking the next step forward towards the reconciliation of our Churches grounded in agreement in faith.”²⁸ The document begins with a robust, theological grounding of the notion of authority in the Christian Church, and it is to this that I turn first.

²⁵ Representatives from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity cited in “Ecclesiological Reflections,” §48.

²⁶ Promulgated by Pope Leo XIII, 18 September 1896.

²⁷ §17, quoted in *The Final Report*, The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission [ARCIC I], Windsor, September 1981 (Forward Movement/U.S. Catholic Conference, 1982), 50. All subsequent quotations from the ARCIC I documents will be parenthetical by paragraph. It is instructive that just two years after the document on ministry was published, then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Donald Coggan, wrote Pope Paul VI to inform him “of the slow but steady growth of a consensus of opinion within the Anglican Communion that there are no fundamental objections in principle to the ordination of women to the priesthood” (9 June 1975). While the development was seen as a possible and serious impediment to organic unity, nonetheless it was an example of the new kind of relationship that was developing between the two communions.

²⁸ Quoted in *Resolutions*, 202.

The argument that is put forth in *Authority I* has its source in the very heart of the Christian faith, which is “the confession of Christ as Lord” (§1). Authority begins in Jesus the Word, to whom “God has given all authority in heaven and on earth” (§1). Thus, from the beginning, it is implicit that any authority in the Church begins as a participation in the person of Jesus Christ. “The authentic foundation of the faith” is found in Sacred Scripture and it is “through these written words [that] the authority of the Word of God is conveyed” (§2). The work of God the Holy Spirit is “to maintain the people of God in obedience to the Father’s will” and to safeguard “their faithfulness to the revelation of Jesus Christ and [equip] them for their mission in the world” (§3). The scriptural theology must be noted: Scripture is an authoritative revelation not just of Truth or of God, but specifically of the Second Person of the Trinity, Christ the Word. Thus, to submit to the authority of Scripture is to submit to Christ Himself, the One in whom all authority rests.²⁹

In addition to the Holy Spirit’s work in inspiring Sacred Scripture, the Spirit also works to give “to some individuals and communities special gifts for the benefit of the Church, which entitle them to speak and be headed (e.g. Eph 4:11, 12; 1 Cor 12:4-11.)” (§5). This authority is related to what is described in Acts 2: “the apostles’ doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers” (§5) and is understood to be a ministry exercised primarily by the bishop. The basic purpose of such authority speaks to the very essence of the Church: the preservation and promotion of “the integrity of the *koinonia* in order to further the Church’s response to the Lordship of Christ and its commitment to mission” (ibid.). And so it should not be a surprise that the bishops “can require the compliance necessary to maintain faith and charity in its daily life” (ibid.). In this, the bishop does not act alone but as a part of all those entrusted with such a ministry. The *Elucidation* goes on to say that there are times when it is incumbent upon the bishop,

to declare a person to be in error in respect of doctrine or conduct, even to the point of exclusion from eucharistic communion, he is acting for the sake of the integrity of the community’s faith and life (§5).

Put in other words, when bishops make such a judgment, they are enumerating diversity’s limits in a particular arena. There is agreement that the ministry of oversight, exercised first by the bishop and then by those under the direction of the bishop, is a service that “is intrinsic to the Church’s structure according to the mandate given by Christ and recognised by the community” (*Authority I* §5).³⁰

This penultimate point – the bishop exercising his authority as one member of the college of bishops – highlights a tension that will run throughout all of the ARCIC documents as they consider authority: the relationship of the local church (i.e. a local community under the authority of one bishop [see §8]) to the universal. This can be seen in the way that *koinonia* is

²⁹ This theological insight is very pertinent to the reference in the introduction to some Anglicans who see the present crisis as fundamentally one over the authority of Scripture. The fact that Scripture requires interpretation means that judgments about what interpretations falls within the acceptable limits of diversity must come through the judgment of the Church, ultimately through the episcopate. Thus, the “authority of Scripture” arguments turn into a red herring. There are not many who simply want to jettison Scripture or say that it simply has no authority. But it is up to the Church’s teaching ministry to guide the Church in the ways in which Scripture’s authority has a direct bearing on the way Christians live their lives and thereby express in their bodies such that the Scriptures, and the Word Himself, are the final authority in the life of the Christian and in the Church’s communal life.

³⁰ The basis of this overview in *Authority I* comes in large part from *Lumen gentium*, §24-28.

extrapolated: “*koinonia* is realised not only in the local Christian communities, but also in the communion of these communities with one another” (§8). The proclamation of the Gospel, then, is not simply an action of the local church “but of all the churches together” (ibid.). The episcopacy expresses this in many ways, not least of which is our common belief that several bishops (traditionally at least three) participate in the ordination of a bishop. The common proclamation of the Gospel has involved from the earliest parts of the Church’s life the necessity for council among the Church’s leaders, as the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 demonstrates (§9).

An episcopal ministry of oversight that was beyond the bounds of a single diocese was a practice that developed quite early in the life of the Church and it is something with which the Church of England and other parts of the communion are quite familiar (see Section III for a discussion of the canons related to the Archbishop of Canterbury):

Early in the history of the Church a function of oversight of the other bishops of their regions was assigned to bishops of prominent sees. Concern to keep the churches faithful to the will of Christ was among the considerations which contributed to this development (§10).

Such a reality is also an expression of the interplay between the local and the universal because the responsibility received at ordination is at once for the local church and at the same time “in living awareness and practical service of the other churches” (§10). The purpose of this overseeing bishop is the same as that of the local bishop:

The bishop of a principal see should seek the fulfilment of this will of Christ in the churches of his region. It is his duty to assist the bishops to promote in their churches right teaching, holiness of life, brotherly unity and the Church’s mission to the world.

When he perceives a serious deficiency in the life or mission of one of the churches he is bound, if necessary, to call the local bishop’s attention to it and to offer assistance (§11).

While a rather massive historical leap, it is on this assumption, explains the document, that some type of universal ministry can be considered:

It is within the context of this historical development that the see of Rome, whose prominence was associated with the death there of Peter and Paul, eventually became the principal centre in matters concerning the Church universal” (§12).³¹

Communion with the bishop of Rome is not meant to be a stifling of the distinctive, local features in regional churches. Rather, “the purpose of this episcopal function of the bishop of Rome is to promote Christian fellowship in faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles” (ibid.).

³¹ This mention of the deaths of Peter and Paul in Rome in conjunction with the primacy of the See of Rome is a direct reference to *Adversus haereses* (c. 175-185 A.D.) by St Irenaeus of Lyons, the earliest extant record of patristic support for a primatial ministry exercised by the Bishop of Rome. His argument is quite straightforward: we are to embrace “that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] that faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every church should agree with this church, on account of its pre-eminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere,” cited in *Adversus haereses* 3.3.1-2 in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Translations of the Writings of the Fathers*, vol. 9 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1880); <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-fragments.html>. He implies an oral apostolic tradition of the preeminence of Rome, based upon the martyrdoms of St’s Peter and Paul in the ancient city. He also makes it clear that this is not the only basis for this preeminence. The consistent and faithful preservation of the apostolic faith by the local church in Rome was also an important factor in such a development.

Such a belief is not tied necessarily to particular ecclesial structures, as the history of the Catholic Church has shown. At its core, such a ministry of “primacy, rightly understood, implies that the bishop of Rome exercises his oversight in order to guard and promote the faithfulness of all the churches to Christ and one another” and not to imply “submission to an authority which would stifle the distinctive features of the local churches” (ibid.). At its best, the purpose of a universal, episcopal primate is to be a sign and preservation of catholicity, pointing and exhibiting the unity of the local churches in the one Church, bound together in the one Faith in the one Lord.

The language used in the document’s brief discussion of the First and Second Vatican Councils as it pertains to the Bishop of Rome, it should be noted, is a clear weakness and an example of where attempts at a charitable reading of historical circumstances led to a profound mischaracterization:

On the basis of this analogy the First Vatican Council affirmed that this service was necessary to the unity of the whole Church. Far from overriding the authority of the bishops in their own dioceses, this service was explicitly intended to support them in their ministry of oversight” (§12).

Such a characterization by the authors of the document puts them in a very small minority of theological readings of the relevant texts, particularly this section from *Pastor aeternus* (1869). This particular document, promulgated at the First Vatican Council, was a cause of intense concern among other ecclesial communities, Anglicans not least among them³²:

We teach and define as a divinely revealed dogma that when the Roman Pontiff speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, *such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the Church, irreformable* (emphasis added).³³

Authority I goes on to claim that Vatican II brought more nuance to the matter and “placed this service in the wider context of the shared responsibility of all the bishops” (§12), while still quoting verbatim from *Pastor* concerning infallibility.³⁴ The difficulty of discussing this matter is due in large part to the recent history of the exercise of the prerogative as defined by Vatican I regarding *ex cathedra* statements, the second and last being the declaration of the dogma of the Assumption by Pope Pius XII in 1950, just twenty-six years before the publication of the document. The deficiency of ARCIC’s methodology of coming together to re-read and re-receive the past is seen most clearly in matters such as these where the history is quite recent. In

³² E.g. Recommendation 1 from the 1878 Lambeth Conference: “No bishop or other clergyman of any other Church should exercise his functions within that diocese without the consent of the bishop thereof.” Quoted in Coleman, *Resolutions*, 4.

³³ *Pastor aeternus*, (18 July 1870) Chapter 4 – “On the infallible teaching authority of the Roman pontiff, quoted in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Volume II-Trent to Vatican II*, edited by Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (Sheed & Ward/Georgetown University Press: London/Washington DC, 1990), 816.

³⁴ *Lumen Gentium* §25.3, quoted in Austin Flannery, O.P., gen ed., *Vatican Council II: Volume I – The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, new revised ed (Costello Publishing Company/Dominican Publications: Northport, NY/Dublin, Ireland, 1998), 380. All subsequent citations from Vatican II documents will be from Flannery and will be cited simply by paragraph number.

fact, the ARCIC members are engaging in a practice that is not foreign at all to Roman Catholic theologians where the need to clarify and re-interpret authoritative statements of the past comes very close to articulating a different position all together.

Nonetheless, the document provides an overview, albeit a brief one, of the historical development of the papacy through at least the beginning of the Middle Ages:

Among the complex historical factors which contributed to the recognition of conciliar decisions considerable weight attached to their confirmation by the principal sees, and in particular by the see of Rome. At an early period other *local churches actively sought the support and approbation of the church in Rome*; and in course of time *the agreement of the Roman see was regarded as necessary to the general acceptance of synodal decisions* in major matters of more than regional concern, and also, eventually, to their canonical validity. By their agreement or disagreement the local church of Rome and its bishop fulfilled their responsibility towards other local churches and their bishops for maintaining the whole church in the truth. In addition *the bishop of Rome was also led to intervene in controversies relating to matters of faith in most cases in response to appeals made to him*, but sometimes on his own initiative (§17, emphasis added).

Here we see an inkling of the development that has become a sticking point for both Anglicans and Orthodox Christians: the intervention of the Bishop of Rome at his own initiative in the matters of the local church. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that the theological rationale for the ministry of primates and metropolitans generally opens the door for a universal ministry with a similar focus and, it would seem, the need for similar canonical authority:

The bishop of a principal see should seek the fulfilment of this will of Christ in the churches of his region. It is his duty to assist the bishops to promote in their churches right teaching, holiness of life, brotherly unity and the Church's mission to the world (§11).

And so it is not surprising, then, that they would conclude that one of the first and intrinsic ministries of the bishop of Rome was to “promote Christian fellowship in faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles” and to “guard and promote the faithfulness of all the churches to Christ and one another” (§12) by serving as the arbiter in theological disputes.

The tension noted earlier is seen also in the discussion of the conciliar tradition of authoritative expression and that of the primatial. Article XIX indelicately rejects any possibility of the infallibility of a synod or council, even in matters of faith. But this is held up alongside an explicit embrace of much of what was articulated in the so-called “ecumenical councils,” most notably what is known as the Nicene Creed, which the Quadrilateral assumes to be so basic to the Church’s faith that it, along with the other catholic creeds, is a precondition for any “home reunion.” “Creeds, conciliar definitions, and other statements of belief are indispensable,” the document acknowledges, but we must remember that they “are always instrumental to the truth which they are intended to convey” (§14). Even when the teachings of a council are understood universally to express the apostolic faith, the pressure of history and culture demand that the Gospel be “translated” such that “the hearers in their situation may understand and respond to them.” But such inculcation has clear boundaries: consonance “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” (§15). An authoritative statement is not free from the need for clarification and restatement, provided that

such work “always builds upon, and does not contradict, the truth intended by the original definition” (ibid.). The ministry of the bishop has a unique responsibility in “defending and interpreting the apostolic faith” (§20). And it is on this basis that the argument is made that the primacy of a bishop

implies that, after consulting his fellow bishops, he may speak in their name and express their mind. The recognition of his position by the faithful creates an expectation that on occasion he will take an initiative in speaking for the Church. Primatial statements are only one way by which the Holy Spirit keeps the people of God faithful to the truth of the gospel (ibid.).

And so primacy is understood as an intrinsic part of the catholic vision of Christianity, whose purpose is to preserve the faithfulness of the Church to its inheritance.

The Scriptural witness as it concerns the Petrine ministry was considered in detail in *Authority II* (1981). There is agreement that the New Testament “attributes to Peter a special position among the twelve” (§3). But such a ministry always falls within the wider apostolic ministry, such as in the witness of Matthew’s Gospel where the ministry of “binding and loosing” is first directed toward Peter (16:19) and then to all the apostles (18:18) (§4). His special position is held in tension with the examples of his dramatic failures, which roots him in the fallen creation that strives to incorporate with the initiatives of divine grace. The interpretation of the Petrine texts were varied in the early Church, and it was clearly a development that lead to a more harmonious reading of the texts as pointing to a distinct, Petrine ministry (§6). In short, the New Testament does not provide an explicit articulation of a peculiar Petrine ministry, nor does it contain an “explicit record of a transmission of Peter’s leadership” (§6). Nonetheless, it is possible to think that a primacy of the bishop of Rome is not contrary to the New Testament and is part of God's purpose regarding the Church's unity and catholicity, while admitting that the New Testament texts offer no sufficient basis for this (§8).

On the basis of the previously articulated concept of primacy in general, they again reiterate their presumption “that a universal primacy will be needed in a reunited Church and should appropriately be the primacy of the bishop of Rome” and not contrary to Scripture.³⁵

The issue of jurisdiction is given an interesting and creative walk-through in the second section of *Authority II*. The working definition for jurisdiction is “the authority or power (*potestas*) necessary for the exercise of an office” (§16). The jurisdiction of a diocesan bishop differs from an metropolitan, not because there are degrees of *episcopate* but because it corresponds to the function of the office in which the bishop sits. A similar parallel is drawn here as in the first *Authority* statement: as the metropolitan or primate exercises their jurisdiction in a way that preserves the unity and faith of a particular region of the church, so within the universal *koinonia* and the collegiality of the bishops, the universal primate exercises the jurisdiction necessary for the fulfilment of his functions, the chief of which is to serve the faith and unity of the whole Church (§16).

The unspoken challenge to the complete and outright rejection of universal jurisdiction by some Anglicans is that this very principle is at work in the ministry of the metropolitan or primate in most provinces in the Anglican Communion.³⁶ If the ministry of a universal primate is dismissed

³⁵ See *Authority I*, §23.

³⁶ It is very important to note, however, that the polity of the various provinces in the Communion differs considerably in this very matter. In The Episcopal Church, for instance, there is no archbishop or metropolitan, and

based on an *a priori* rejection of any episcopal ministry that stands over the ministry of the diocesan bishop, than the unbroken witness of the metropolitan powers of the archbishops of Canterbury and York, and subsequently in most provinces of the Anglican Communion, stand as a looming challenge. The question that remains is what authority is inherently part of the ministry of a universal primate.

The language of Vatican I is “universal, ordinary and immediate,” language that has been of great concern to many (§18), as was expressed in *Authority I* (see §24d). Thus the primacy question is, What is intrinsic to the ministry of the universal primate? Only then can the question of his *potestas* be considered. The service of the unity and faith of the whole Church is one way that *Authority II* summarized this ministry. Then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, in *The Principles of Catholic Theology*, summarized the Papal ministry in this way that sounds quite similar:

When the Patriarch Athenagoras, on July 25, 1967, on the occasion of the Pope’s visit to Phanar, designated him as the successor of St. Peter, as the most esteemed among us, as one who preside in charity, this great Church leader was expressing the essential content of the doctrine of primacy as it was known in the first millennium.³⁷

Both agree that the nature of the exercise of the office cannot be “in isolation but in collegial association with this brother bishops (see *Authority I*, §21, 23)” (§19). And the diocesan bishop, as was also stated in *Authority I*, has responsibility “for the universal Church” (*ibid.*). It is very important, however, to remember that “the universal primate is not the source from which diocesan bishops derive their authority” (§19). And yet, given the concept of primacy,

the universal primate has the right in special cases to intervene in the affairs of a diocese and to receive appeals from the decision of a diocesan bishop. It is because the universal primate, in collegial association with his fellow bishops, has the task of safeguarding the faith and unity of the universal Church that the diocesan bishop is subject to his authority (§20).

This is the precise point at which the practical concerns of this primate’s ministry raise to the fore in the minds of many Anglicans. What kinds of checks are in place to ward off the misuse of such extraordinary *potestas*? Such a question is very difficult to answer, and it is for this very reason that Anglicans and other Christians outside the Roman Catholic Church must engage vigorously about this matter.

One of the concluding paragraphs of *Authority I* expresses precisely the crux of the argument of ARCIC and of the posture I trust the Communion will continue to hold:

The Commission does not therefore say that what has evolved historically or what is currently practiced by the Roman see is necessarily normative: it maintains only that visible unity requires the realization of a “general pattern of the complementary primatial and conciliar aspects of episcopate” in the service of the universal “*koinonia* of the churches” (§23).

The conclusion of the third *Authority* document (1998) focused on universal primacy as “a gift to be shared.” Such a gift “could be offered and received even before our churches are in full

thus no bishop who has any type of jurisdiction in another diocese. The presiding bishop in the TEC, however, now uses the title “primate” though having no jurisdiction anywhere in TEC. For an in depth discussion of this matter in TEC from the perspective of canon law, see “Is The Episcopal Church Hierarchical?”, Mark McCall, http://anglicancommunioninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/is_the_episcopal_church_hierdoc.pdf.

³⁷ Ratzinger, *Principles*, 199 (emphasis added).

communion” (§60).³⁸ A ministry styled, in Pope John Paul II’s quotation in *Ut unum sint* from Gregory the Great, as the *servus servorum Dei* (§88), who will “help to uphold the legitimate diversity of traditions, strengthening and safeguarding them in fidelity to the Gospel” (ibid.).

What is envisioned is something that makes demands of both communions:

that Anglicans be open to and desire a recovery and re-reception under certain clear conditions of the exercise of universal primacy by the Bishop of Rome;

that Roman Catholics be open to and desire a re-reception of the exercise of primacy by the Bishop of Rome and the offering of such a ministry to the whole Church of God (§62).

Is this even possible, and it is even Anglican? To this question we now turn.

III. AU CONTRAIRE? WHY A UNIVERSAL PRIMACY IS NOT NECESSARILY UN- ANGLICAN

There is an important historical question as to whether “the rejection of the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome has been a distinguishing feature of Anglicanism,” In other words, is “being out of communion with the Roman see...an accidental and contingent fact of history” or is it “the very substance of being an Anglican”?³⁹ The response of the Scottish Episcopal Church to the *Authority* documents in ARCIC I summarizes quite well the approach which I hope to enjoin on the Covenant drafters:

As Anglicans seek no longer to justify our existence in separation from the Pope, but rather to understand what the Papacy means in the life of the Roman Catholic Church and how the ministry of the Pope could strengthen the life and witness of the Anglican Churches, we ask the Roman Catholic Church to be willing to aid us patiently in this process of reappraisal of an office we have lived without for so long, and which has developed considerably during that period. We also ask the Roman Catholic Church to foster the ecumenical vocation of the Bishop of Rome that the universal pastorate of the Pope may be to become an experienced reality within the Anglican Communion on our way to the fullness of unity, and without the precondition of subscription to Roman Catholic formulations of Papal authority in their entirety.⁴⁰

But the question remains: can such a perspective truly be called Anglican?

I believe it fair to say that the following statement in the final section of the *Elucidation on Authority I* (1981) would receive little objection, even in the present climate: “Anglicanism has never rejected the principle and practice of primacy” (§8.6). Rather, “much Anglican objection has been directed against the *manner of the exercise* and *particular claims of the Roman primacy* rather than against universal primacy as such” (§8.5, emphasis added). But we

³⁸ “The Gift of Authority III,” Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, 1998, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_12051999_gift-of-authority_en.html.

³⁹ *Emmaus* (The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission 5.iii), 64.

⁴⁰ “Response of the Scottish Episcopal Church,” pp 10, quoted in *Emmaus* (The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission 5.iii), 64-5.

should not pretend as though Anglican attitudes have always been warm to the papacy.⁴¹ They most certainly have not if, in fact, there is even something that might formally be called “the Anglican perspective on the Papacy.” Former Archbishop of Canterbury William Sancroft (1677-1690) wrote that, “the bishops of this church [*ecclesia anglicana*] are really and sincerely *irreconcilable* enemies to the errors, superstitions, idolatries and tyrannies of the Church of Rome.”⁴² But the evidence is certainly more mixed and nuanced than any quote or reference could imply. William Laud (1633-1645) could affirm that the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England “are but two distinct members of that Catholic Church which is spread over the face of the earth.” “The Roman Patriarch, by ecclesiastical constitutions, might perhaps have a primacy of order; but for principality of power, the patriarchs were as even, as equal, as the Apostles were before them.”⁴³ He continues that “a ‘primacy of order’ was never denied [to St Peter] by the Protestants;” but on the other hand, a “‘universal supremacy of power’ was never granted him by the primitive Christians.... ‘Christ promised the key to S. Peter’ ...but so did He to all the rest of the apostles; and so their successors as much as to his. So it is *tibi et illis*, not *tibi non illis*.”⁴⁴ He raises the question of *potestas* as was seen earlier in the ARCIC discussions, which poses the question again to the wider church: what *potestas* is necessary to the execution of the office of the universal primate? Laud is a helpful representative of a good deal of Anglican consideration on the Papacy: while primacy is a given within the received catholic ecclesiology, the concern is that the shape of such a primacy neither subvert the rightful authority of the diocesan bishop nor subsume the essentially conciliar nature of an ecclesiology with the local bishop at the center.

The tenor of the Anglican consideration of the Papacy was distinct from that of the Continental reformers, as was much of Anglican theology. Just as one must be very careful not to overlay the continental Reformation debates about Scripture and salvation onto the sixteenth century situation in England, so too general “Protestant” perspectives on the Papacy cannot be assumed to characterize the reformed church in England. As Bishop John Hind writes, “this was no mere controversy between *sola Scriptura* on the one hand and Scripture and Tradition on the other, still less a simply dispute over the interpretation of Scriptural texts.” The tone of Anglican reflections on the papacy had an “appeal to the early Fathers” front and center.⁴⁵ John Bramhall (1594-1663), archbishop of Armagh, provides a lengthy but instructive example of this in his appeal to Cyprian of Carthage, which I will quote at length:

...we dare not rob the rest of the Apostles to clothe St. Peter. We say clearly with St. Cyprian,... ‘The rest of the Apostles were given the same thing that Peter was, endowed with an equal fellowship both of honour and power; but the beginning cometh from unity,

⁴¹ Much of the citations about early Anglican views of the papacy were first brought to my attention in Bishop John Hind’s essay “Primacy and Unity: An Anglican Contribution to a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue” in James F. Puglisi, ed., *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church: “Towards a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue, A Symposium Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Society of the Atonement, Rome, December 4-6, 1997* (Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier Book: Collegeville, MN, 1999), 35-57.

⁴² E. Cardwell, *Documentary Annals of the Reformed Church of England* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1844) II, 375-76, quoted in N. Sykes, *Old Priest and New Presbyter: Episcopacy and Presbyterianism since the Reformation with especial Relation to the Church of England and Scotland* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1957), 177.

⁴³ William Laud, *The Works, II: Conference with Fisher*, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology (John Henry Parker: Oxford, 1849), 346; 186.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁴⁵ *Petrine*, 40.

the primacy given to Peter, to signify one Church and one Chair.’ It is well known that St. Cyprian made all the Bishoprics in the world to be but one mass, ‘*Episcopatus unus est Episcoporum concordia numerositate diffusus*’; ‘whereof every Bishop had an entire part,’ – ‘*cujus a singulis in solidum pars tenetur*.’ All that he attributeth to St. Peter is this ‘beginning of unity,’ this primacy of order, this pre-eminence to be the chief of Bishops, to be Bishop of ‘the principle Church from whence Sacerdotal unity did spring.’... This primacy neither the ancients nor we do deny to St. Peter—of order, of place, of pre-eminence. *If this ‘first movership’ would serve his turn, this controversy were at an end for our parts.* They thirst after a visible monarchy upon earth, an absolute ecclesiastical sovereignty, a power to make canons, to abolish canons, to dispense with canons, to impose pensions, to dispose dignitaries, to decide controversies by a single authority. This was what made the breach, not the innocent primacy of St. Peter.⁴⁶

What Archbishop Bramhall’s rather lengthy quote points to is the way in which the exercise of the primacy of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Church of England overlaps considerably with the way in which Anglicans who are open to a universal primacy have tended to summarize how the Petrine ministry should be shaped. In fact, I think it is safe to say in a generalized way that office of the Archbishop of Canterbury as the *primus inter pares* within the Anglican Communion functions in large part in the way in which Anglicans would sketch the role of a universal primate.

The opinions of particular Anglicans is instructive (as much as it is *ad hoc*), but this does little to answer the question as to what Anglicans as a Communion have said about universal primacy. *The Virginia Report* (TVR) offered the Communion in 1997 a sustained exploration of the notion of “communion” as grounded in God the Holy Trinity, something that would be taken up later in *Church of the Triune God*. TVR confronted the issue of the ordination of women to the presbyterate and the episcopate and in the Introduction framed the question in this way: “How [can] Anglicans remain together in the highest degree of communion possible while endeavoring to come to a common mind on a matter which touches the fundamental unity of the Communion.” The *Final Report* of ARCIC I had direct bearing on the intentions of the Committee, as it was Lambeth 1988 which both instructed the creation of a committee to explore “the meaning and nature of communion; with particular reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, the unity and order of the Church, and the unity and community of humanity”⁴⁷ (Resolution 18) and encouraged ARCIC,

to explore the basis in Scripture and tradition of the concept of a universal primacy, in conjunction with collegiality, as an instrument of unity, the character of such a primacy in practice, and to draw upon the experience of other Christian Churches in exercising primacy, collegiality and conciliarity.⁴⁸

The Committee set both of these as the framework for the *Report*. The importance of this fact is that the question of universal primacy was of central concern to the Lambeth Conference and to the Committee as it set about its task of considering both the ordination of women and the more general question of the limits of diversity within the life of the Communion.

⁴⁶ J. Bramhall, *Schism Guarded*, section I, chapter i, quoted in P. E. More and F. L. Cross, eds., *Anglicanism. The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, Illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (SPCK: London, 1962), 66, no. 28.

⁴⁷ Resolution 18, Lambeth Conference 1988, 207.

⁴⁸ Resolution 8, Lambeth Conference 1988, 203.

The Church has a life that can be viewed from many levels and the universal perspective is essential.

The universal doctrine of the Church is important especially when particular practices or theories are locally developed which lead to disputes. In some cases it may be possible and necessary for the universal Church to say with firmness that a particular local practice or theory is incompatible with Christian faith (§4.25).

The episcopacy is obviously a major piece of the universal ministry of the Church, as a bishop is ordained both for a diocese and as a sign of the Church's catholicity throughout the world. The Report begins its discussion of episcopal ministry in this way:

A ministry of oversight (*episcopate*) of interdependence, accountability and discernment is essential *at all levels of the Church's mission and ministry*, and for the sake of the Church's wellbeing, must be exercised at every level in a way that is personal, collegial and communal (§5.5).

After discussing the way in which *episcopate* functions for the life of the Church within the context of the Church's common life and in relationship to local councils and synods (cf. "The churches of the Anglican Communion may be said to be episcopally led and synodically governed"; §5.11), the Report moves on to the issue of primacy:

Primacy and collegiality are complementary elements within the exercise of episcopate. One cannot be exercised without reference to the other in critical and creative balance. Further, both in turn must be open to the Christian community in a way that is both transparent and accountable, and in the decision-making of the Church, upholds a reception process in which critique, affirmation and rejection are possible (§5.13).

Here are raised some of the questions left unanswered in the *Authority* documents. And it is these same questions which reverberate in the minds of nearly all non-Roman Catholic Christians with a concern for the visible unity of Christians. Many could agree: "The role of primacy is to foster the communion by helping the bishops in their task of apostolic leadership both in their local church and in the Church universal" (§5.14). But was kind of allowance, and therefore accountability, is accounted for in light of the destructive potential of sin within the context of a universal primacy?

There is a clear concern for the proper expression of autonomy in each particular diocese. At the same time, however, it is understood that there are times of need when the exercise of the ministry of primacy (in the Anglican Communion by the primate of a province⁴⁹) might be necessary for the unity of the Church. The Report goes on to quote from *Authority I* on the limits of primacy:

Primacy fulfils its purpose by helping the churches to listen to one another, to grow in love and unity, and to strive together towards the fullness of Christian life and witness; it respects and promotes Christian freedom and spontaneity; it does not seek uniformity where diversity is legitimate, or centralise administration to the detriment of local churches (*Authority I*, §21).

⁴⁹ We must be clear, however, that not all the provinces in the Anglican Communion are structured in the same way. In The Episcopal Church USA, for example, the presiding bishop is the primate but is not an archbishop and does not have archiepiscopal or metropolitan powers. Thus, the presiding bishop cannot interfere in the life of any TEC diocese without the express permission of the diocesan bishop.

Again, the question is raised: how can a universal primacy be construed that has both that which is intrinsic to primacy and also the necessary relationship to the conciliar life of the Church?

At the end of the decade one question for Anglicans is whether their bonds of interdependence are strong enough to hold them together embracing tension and conflict while answers are sought to seemingly intractable problems. In particular the call for more effective structures of communion at a world level will need to be faced at Lambeth 1998 for the strengthening of the Anglican Communion and its unity into the next millennium. A further question concerns the wider ecumenical community. *Is there a need for a universal primacy exercised collegially and respecting the role of the laity in decision-making within the Church?* This question was referred to the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) by Lambeth 1988 and is also raised by the Bishop of Rome's invitation in *Ut Unum Sint* (§3.54).

It is the very lack of any specific action on the part of the Communion that this proposal seeks to address.

In *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, former Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey considers the papacy within the concept of theological development. “The canon of Scripture is itself a development,” he reminds, but one which within itself contains “a special authority to control and to check the whole field of development in life and doctrine.”⁵⁰ Thus, we see one way of restating Article XX on the authority of Scripture. A papacy which functions in a similar way to Scripture (“checking the whole field of development in life and doctrine”), “depresses the due working of the other functions of the one Body,” he contends. But a papacy which grows “out of a primacy given by our Lord to S. Peter and symbolizing the unity of the Church,” “which expresses the general mind of the Church in doctrine, and which focuses the organic unity of all the Bishops and of the whole Church, might well claim to be a legitimate development in and through the Gospel.”⁵¹ He cites favorably the before-quoted section from St. Irenaeus regarding Rome’s special authority on account of “its contacts with other Churches and with their traditions” which “made it a trustworthy teacher of the truth.”⁵² In spite of the moments within the history of the Papacy when it conspicuously caused scandal to the Christian cause, and in spite of the developments within the last 500 years, this “cannot justify a wholesale refusal to consider the Petrine claims.” In fact, he uses the title connected to his own office – *primus inter pares*—as the framework for the “organ of unity and authority” that would be needed in a united Church in God’s providential future.⁵³ A summary of what Ramsey thinks can be assumed about the Petrine office are as follows (quoting from a paper from Dr B.J. Kidd contributed to what is known as the Malines Conversations):

1. That the Roman Church was founded by S. Peter and S. Paul the two chief apostles, of the circumcision and of the Gentiles, and is thus the only See in Christendom known to have *two* apostles for its founders.
2. That the Roman See is the only known Apostolic See in the West.
3. That the Bishop of Rome is the Patriarch of the West; or as Augustine said of Pope Innocent I, ‘president of the Western Church’ (*Contra Iul. Pelag. I, 13*).

⁵⁰ Ramsey, *Gospel*, 64.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 64, 65.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 227.

4. That he has a primacy among all the bishop of Christendom; so that, without communion with him, that is no prospect of a reunited Christendom.
5. That to the Roman See the Churches of the English owe their Christianity through ‘Gregory our father’ (Council of Clovesho, A.D. 747, c.xvii)...who sent up baptism’ (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Ano 565*).⁵⁴

Ramsey’s conclusion is probably his most instructive and most important contribution to this conversation.

The relationship between the Pope and the bishops is one that is nearly impossible to define, and will continue to be so if it is simply discussed and debated. Such understanding can only come, Ramsey writes,

by the recovery everywhere of the Body’s organic life, with its Bishops, presbyters and people. In this Body Peter will find his due place, and ultimate reunion is hastened not by the pursuit of ‘the Papal controversy’ but by the quiet broth of the organic life of every part of Christendom.⁵⁵

I will return to this insight at a later point, but I think it is important to note that it is through experience, he argues, that the right exercise of the Petrine office will be discovered. The present reality of the lack of communion between the Bishops of the Anglican Communion and the Bishop of Rome, particularly in light of *Pastor aeternus* at Vatican I and the reaffirmation of its basic principles in *Lumen gentium* at Vatican II, means that the only way forward on this will be a renunciation of some of these claims on the part of the Roman Catholic Church (which, for the sake of argument, it should be assumed is not possible) or a movement on the part of Anglicans to formally embrace one or more aspects of the Petrine ministry to the extent that it depends upon and expresses “the organic unity of the Body” of Christ.⁵⁶ Such a movement on the part of the Anglican Communion, which would be a profound act of humility, cannot but be exactly the kind of thing Pope John Paul II had in mind in *Ut unum sint* when he made the following proposal:

Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea “that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:21)?⁵⁷

Has the Anglican Communion responded in good faith to this call *as a Communion*?

In 1989, then Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, gave an address in the Church of Saint Andrew and Saint Gregory on the Caelian Hill, “the church on the site of the monastery from which Pope Gregory the Great had dispatched Augustine to Canterbury,” just after Pope John Paul II had preached at vespers. Runcie declared that Anglicans

⁵⁴ Ibid., 228.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 228.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 228.

⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism (St Paul’s Books and Media: Boston, 1999), §96.

are also discovering the need of wider bonds of affection. Gregory's example of a primacy for the sake of unity and mission – which we also see embodied in the ministry of his successor, John Paul II – which begins to find a place in Anglican thinking.

I tried to give voice to this at the last Lambeth Conference [1988] where I spoke of the need for a personal focus of unity. Within the Anglican Communion *my own office is in part a response to this need*. But for the universal Church I renew the plea I made at the Lambeth Conference: could not all Christians come to reconsider the kind of primacy the bishop of Rome exercised within the early Church, a 'presiding in love' for the sake of the unity of the Churches in the diversity of their mission?⁵⁸

It is difficult to imagine that Archbishop Runcie did not have in mind the passage from Ratzinger's *Principles of Catholic Theology* on the Petrine ministry as it functioned in the first millennium that has already been quoted. This quote from Runcie embodies in as clear a way as any document cited so far the ecumenical provisionality that I have attempted to argue is part of the very fabric of Anglicanism.

Paul Avis offers an incredibly helpful discussion of the relationship between conciliarity, collegiality and primacy as it concerns the two communions in *Beyond the Reformation*.⁵⁹ His way of distinguishing between Anglican and Roman Catholic understandings of primacy, particularly in a post-Vatican I world, are to characterize the latter's understanding as *monarchical* rather than *primatial*, and quotes Rahner as an example: "The fundamental structure of the Church...demands a bipolar unity of a monarchical and a Conciliar element, inseparably linked to each other."⁶⁰ We must remember that the development of expressions of authority within Anglicanism as it developed into a communion, demarcated by the first Lambeth Conference in 1867, is quite close in proximity to the development of *Pastor aeternus*, promulgated in 1870. Thus Avis' claim "that way that Anglican principles and structures of conciliarity have developed has been influenced by reaction to papal claims and to the way that authority has been exercised concretely in the Roman Catholic Church."⁶¹ And while he notes that the history of Anglicanism "from Jewel to Gore have excoriated the papacy for abuses of power and distortions of authority, they have nevertheless tended to leave the door open to a reformed, constitutional papacy."⁶² In unison with the *Elucidation to Authority I*, Avis maintains: "it can confidently be said that Anglicanism as a whole has never excluded the possibility of accepting a universal ministry of the Bishop of Rome." The ministry as expounded by Vatican I, however, is deeply problematic to Anglicans and the interpretation offered by Avis is worth quoting at length:

As far as Anglicans are concerned, papal universal jurisdiction, which is claimed by Vatican I to be fully episcopal, makes the pope bishop of the whole Church and therefore of every diocese (Williams 1997); it puts two bishops into each diocese (cf. Wright 1988). Although this interpretation of what was defined by Vatican I and re-

⁵⁸ *One in Hope* (CHP/CTS: London, 1989) 21, cited in Stephen Platten, *Augustine's Legacy: Authority and Leadership in the Anglican Communion* (Darton, Longman, Todd: London, 1997), 117.

⁵⁹ Paul Avis, *Beyond the Reformation? Authority, Primacy and Unity in the Conciliar Tradition* (T&T Clark: London, 2006).

⁶⁰ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, VI (Darton, Longman & Todd: London, 1969), 340, quoted in Avis, *Reformation*, 173.

⁶¹ Avis, *Reformation*, 174.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 174.

affirmed by Vatican II is unpalatable to many Roman Catholics and notwithstanding the fact that considerable energy has been expended by Roman Catholic scholars in arguing that it is not the correct interpretation (Pottmeyer 1998), Anglicans do tend to read it this way and can point to canonical texts, as well as to current practice in the Roman Catholic Church, in their support. Anglicans could say that the Church's centre is everywhere, because each local church is fully the Church of Christ; but the truth is that the unity of the Church demands a visible, physical symbol and Anglicans increasingly recognize this.⁶³

The issue of ordinary and universal jurisdiction, taking into account the various ways this could be construed, is problematic first because it both places two bishops in one diocese, and in fact makes every bishop a suffragan to the Bishop of Rome. And yet, Avis does not clarify how the same critique cannot be made of the ministry of metropolitans and primates in the Anglican Communion.

As has been alluded to many times so far, primacy is part of the fabric of Anglicanism, even at the universal level: in addition to being the Primate of All England⁶⁴, the Archbishop of Canterbury "has a presidential role as the one who calls together the Lambeth Conference and the Primates' Meeting and who presides at the Anglican Consultative Council." The 1998

⁶³ Ibid., 175.

⁶⁴ See Canon C17, "Of Archbishops" from the Canons of the Church of England, p120, <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/churchlawlegis/canons/complete.pdf>:

1. By virtue of their respective offices, the Archbishop of Canterbury is styled Primate of All England and Metropolitan, and the Archbishop of York Primate of England and Metropolitan.
2. The archbishop has throughout his province at all times metropolitanical jurisdiction, as superintendent of all ecclesiastical matters therein, to correct and supply the defects of other bishops, and, during the time of his metropolitanical visitation, jurisdiction as Ordinary, except in places and over persons exempt by law or custom.
3. Such jurisdiction is exercised by the archbishop himself, or by a vicargeneral, official, or other commissary to whom authority in that behalf shall have been formally committed by the archbishop concerned.
4. The archbishop is, within his province, the principal minister, and to him belongs the right of confirming the election of every person to a bishopric, of being the chief consecrator at the consecration of every bishop, of receiving such appeals in his provincial court as may be provided by law, of holding metropolitanical visitations at times or places limited by law or custom, and of presiding in the Convocation of the province either in person or by such deputy as he may lawfully appoint. In the province of Canterbury, the Bishop of London or, in his absence, the Bishop of Winchester, has the right to be so appointed; and in their absence the archbishop shall appoint some other diocesan bishop of the province. The two archbishops are joint presidents of the General Synod.
5. By ancient custom, no Act is held to be an Act of the Convocation of the province unless it shall have received the assent of the archbishop.
6. By statute law it belongs to the archbishop to give permission to officiate within his province to any minister who has been ordained priest or deacon by an overseas bishop within the meaning of the Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967, or a bishop in a Church not in communion with the Church of England whose orders are recognized or accepted by the Church of England, and thereupon such minister shall possess all such rights and advantages and be subject to all such duties and liabilities as he would have possessed and been subject to if he had been ordained by the bishop of a diocese in the province of Canterbury or York.
7. By the laws of this realm the Archbishop of Canterbury is empowered to grant such licences or dispensations as are therein set forth and provided, and such licences or dispensations, being confirmed by the authority of the Queen's Majesty, have force and authority not only within the province of Canterbury but throughout all England.

Lambeth Conference cautiously suggested there may be circumstances when the Archbishop of Canterbury ought to

exercise an extra-ordinary ministry of episcopate (pastoral oversight), support and reconciliation with regard to the internal affairs of a Province other than his own for the sake of maintaining communion within the said Province and between the said Province and the rest of the Anglican Communion.⁶⁵

And TWR described his office as “the pivotal instrument and focus of unity” (§99). Thus, not only is Anglicanism familiar with a certain expression of universal primacy as part of its very identity, “it seems to feel the need of it more and more,”⁶⁶ as TWR also recommends:

The Commission believes therefore that the historic position of the Archbishopric of Canterbury must not be regarded as a figurehead, but as the central focus of both unity and mission within the Communion. This office has a very significant teaching role. As *the* significant focus of unity, mission and teaching, the Communion looks to the office of the Archbishop to articulate the mind of the Communion especially in areas of controversy. The Communion should be able to look to the holder of this office to speak directly to any provincial situation on behalf of the Communion where this is deemed advisable. Such action should not be viewed as outside interference in the exercise of autonomy by any province. It is, in the view of the Commission, important to accept that the Archbishop of Canterbury is acting within the historic significance of his position when he speaks as a brother to the members of all member churches of the Anglican Communion, and as one who participates fully in their life and witness (§109).

Furthermore, it has been noted that the Archbishop of Canterbury convenes the Lambeth Conference and the Primates’ Meeting, and they are both dependent for their existence on his behest. *We recommend that this dependence on the See of Canterbury remain, and indeed, that it be enhanced* (§110; emphasis added).

While the particular way in which the Papacy is presently exercised is unacceptable to the Communion, in light of the above it is clear that Anglicans do not even, necessarily, “exclude the possibility of any jurisdiction pertaining to that role.” Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali has suggested that some form of “appellate jurisdiction” is something with which Anglicans could live.⁶⁷

Such a perusal of various Anglican sources could continue *ad nauseam*, but I believe it is most instructive to end this discussion by way of one of the most recent results of the Anglican Communion’s commitment to bi-lateral dialogue, this time with the Orthodox Churches, *The Church of the Triune God*. This document is the second statement produced by the International Commission for Anglican – Orthodox Theological Dialogue, the first being “The Dublin Agreed Statement” in 1984. This former document does mention the Bishop of Rome, but simply in a descriptive manner as it seeks to distinguish the various ways in which primacy is understood in the various churches. The five, principle sees, in the following hierarchy are noted: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, per canon 2 of the Council of

⁶⁵ Lambeth Conference 1998, Resolution IV.13.b, <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-4-13.cfm>

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 176. Avis points to C. Podmore’s work “Primacy in the Anglican Tradition,” in C. Podmore, ed., *Community, Unity and Communion* (Church House Publishing: London, 1998) and *Aspects of Anglican Identity* (Church House Publishing: London, 2005).

⁶⁷ Cited in Avis, *Reformation*, 178.

Constantinople (381) and canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon.⁶⁸ The practice of seniority and primacy is explicated in the two churches. They note together the “seniority on the universal level” of “the Pope within the Roman Catholic Church (and throughout the whole Christian world prior to the schism). The purpose of patriarchs, archbishops, metropolitans, and presiding bishops is “to strengthen unity and to give brotherly help to the bishops of the local churches in the exercise of their common ministry which exists to safeguard scriptural truth whenever it is threatened, to promote right teaching and living, and to further the Church’s mission to the world.”⁶⁹ This occurs in two, principle ways:

- (i) He encourages Christian fellowship and collaboration by initiating procedures which will lead to the summoning of a council or synod, and presiding over it.
- (ii) In certain situation, when appeals are made to him from the decisions of a diocesan bishop or a group of bishops, he initiates procedures whereby these decisions may be reviewed.”⁷⁰

But, they note, “the bishop who has seniority does not have the right to intervene arbitrarily in the affairs of a diocese other than his own.”⁷¹ The two churches recognize that the ministry and authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Archbishop of Canterbury, while not identical, is similar in that their seniority “makes no claim to a primacy or of universal jurisdiction.”⁷² The concerns about Roman primacy, particularly in light of the dogmatic teachings of the First Vatican Council, is that “the primacy of the Pope is closely like to his infallibility” and both Anglicans and Orthodox “consider that infallibility is not the property of any particular person within the Church.”⁷³

The most recent document, *The Church of the Triune God*⁷⁴, affords a bit more clarity on the shape of the Papal ministry. The theological concept and reality of “reception” forms a substantial section of the document and it is within this context that the ministry of the Bishop of Rome is raised. In defining reception from a classical perspective, the document explores how the reality of reception is entire pneumatological, as it is clearly an activity of the Spirit who leads the Church into all truth (Jn 16:13), in harmony with the way the discussion was begin in ARCIC in *Authority I*. “Since reception takes place in the Spirit, it always happens in and through an event of communion.”⁷⁵ Reception must not happen simply at the universal level, but must be “realized in the ecclesial community. Reception must take place within the concrete community of the Church.”⁷⁶ The function of *episcopo* has at its heart “the ministry of memory (*anamnesis*),” as the principle celebrant at the Eucharist, in a ministry that “ensures that the transmission of the Gospel is inseparable from the actualization of the Gospel.” The single bishop of a diocese or local church “guarantees that what is received is essentially what previous communities since the time of the apostles...have received.” Thus, in the classical model, “the

⁶⁸ *The Dublin Report*, Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue (SPCK: London, 1984) §22.

⁶⁹ *Dublin*, §25.

⁷⁰ *Dublin*, §25.

⁷¹ *Dublin*, §25.

⁷² *Dublin*, §28.

⁷³ *Dublin*, §29.

⁷⁴ *The Church of the Triune God*, The Cyprus Statement agreed by the International Commission for Anglican – Orthodox Theological Dialogue 2006 (The Anglican Communion Office: London, 2006).

⁷⁵ *Church of the Triune God*, §IX.12.

⁷⁶ *Triune*, §IX.13.

episcopal office is essential to the process of reception.”⁷⁷ But reception must also occur at the universal level:

for universal communion as ministry of universal reception is essential. This ministry should be episcopal in nature. It should be exercised by the head of a local church, to ensure that the universal catholicity does not ignore the catholicity of the local church. In every case the consensus of the whole community should be obtained. This should be transmitted through the local bishops rather than through individuals, so that the personal, communal, and collegial aspects of reception are held together. Granted these conditions, this ministry should be sought in the Bishop of Rome.⁷⁸

This survey has admittedly *ad hoc* in its scope. Nonetheless, the range of sources, the importance of the voices involved, and the centrality of recent Communion documents in this discussion all point in a similar direction. A summary of the Anglican position as it concerns a universal primacy is as follows:

- First, “Being out of communion with the Roman see” is not part of the substance of the Anglican Communion, but rather “an accidental and contingent fact of history.”⁷⁹
- Second, Primacy is part of the fabric of Anglicanism, and this derives from the very nature of the episcopacy. The ministry of the bishop is both local and universal, pointing and exhibiting the unity of the local churches in the one Church. We need to look no further than the canonical authority given to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in the present canons of the Church of England, whose origins are directly from her pre-Reformation history.
- Third, primacy always functions in a complementary way with conciliarism and cannot be exercised apart from it.
- Fourth, primacy at the level of a nation or province provokes the question: why not a primacy at the universal level? The concern about universal primacy comes from two sources: historical examples of the abuse of such primacy (either in the conduct of the person who held the office or in the use of the *potestas* endowed upon the office, such as in the dogmatizing of the two Marian dogmas), and the possibility of further abuse.
- Fifth, Anglicans would be willing to re-receive such a ministry, granted the proper conditions and the appropriate constitutional boundaries.

It is from here that I turn to the first two proposals that I make to the Covenant Design Group.

IV. TWO COVENANT PROPOSALS IMPLIED BY A UNIVERSAL PRIMACY

Proposal #1

- 1) **That any Church of the Communion – in the event that they propose to act, or undertake an action, that another Church of the Communion claims to threaten the unity of the Communion or the effectiveness of its mission and said proposal or action has been formally brought into the process for the resolution of covenant disagreements – may make a formal request to the Bishop of Rome to issue a**

⁷⁷ *Triune*, §IX.13.ii.

⁷⁸ *Triune*, §IX.13.iv.

⁷⁹ *Emmaus* (The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission 5.iii), 64.

judgment as to whether the act or proposed action of said Church is in conformity with the Faith of the one, holy Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The Instrument of Communion tasked with resolving covenant disagreements would understand such a judgment to hold moral authority within the context of their ministry of reconciliation.

This proposed paragraph would be inserted between §6.1 and §6.4 in the “Draft Procedural Appendix for an Anglican Covenant.”

Proposal #2

- 2) **To seek the affirmation of the universal ministry of the Bishop of Rome, in conjunction with the approval of the bishops in the Anglican Communion, when the Anglican Communion, on the initiative of one or more member provinces, considers moving into a process of "reception" about a matter of faith and morals, to ensure that catholicity has been preserved and to guarantee “that what is received is essentially what previous communities since the time of the apostles...have received.”⁸⁰**

This proposed paragraph would be inserted after §3.2.5b in the “St Andrew’s Text.”

At the Lambeth Conference in 1998, the Communion’s bishops declared that it “welcomes warmly the invitation of Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint* (1995) to consider the ministry of unity of the Bishop of Rome in the service of the unity of the Universal Church.”⁸¹ The two, radical steps outlined in these two proposals would have an incredible effect on both communions and in numerous ways. Because Anglicans are not yet at the point of full, organic unity with the bishop of Rome and hence the Catholic Church, the adoption of one or both of these proposal is not the end of the conversation among Anglicans about how the Pope should function with regard to the Communion. This is simply the first step. And while I will write more of this in the coming pages, I think that in light of history and the present theological climate any initiation action on the part of the Communion cannot be staid until a “perfect solution” has been achieved in ARCIC or other such body. In fact, I think it is very likely that the solution(s) that leads to full, organic unity will not come without sacrificial acts of humility on the part of both communions. Instead, in beginning with these proposal, Anglicans would accede to the Pope the ministry of love and unity that Christians from a very early time have understood to be his: that of adjudicating theological dispute. In short, Anglicans would seek to invite the Bishop of Rome to exercise the ministry once understood during the first millennium: that is the *primus inter pares*.

No Christian communion that has retained the three-fold order of ministry has made anything resembling a formal rejection of the fact that the bishop of Rome should exercise this very function. But, it has been a very long time since any Christians not in communion with the Pope have asked or allowed him to exercise this ministry. The Bishop of Rome presently exercises as much theological control as he ever has in the Church’s history. Given the way the Catholic Church has developed, particularly in the post-Reformation era and most especially in the wake of Vatican I, the Pope never really functions in the way he did in the first millennium.

⁸⁰ This language comes directly from *The Church of the Triune God*, §IX.13.iv.

⁸¹ Resolution IV.23.e, <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-4-23.cfm>.

Setting aside the situation of the uniate Churches, local synods are not settling doctrinal disputes on their own. The Pope, with much help from the Magisterium, is both preemptive and responsive to various issues as they arise. The point is that, at present, there is very little autonomy among local and national churches within the Roman Catholic Church that looks anything like the autonomy experienced in the Anglican Communion. The present organization of the Catholic Church means that it is nearly impossible for there to be a situation where a local church or churches would appeal to the Bishop of Rome to adjudicate because Rome would be likely already intervened, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith did recently on the invalidity of particular Baptismal formulae.⁸²

In making this move, the Anglican Communion would be making a historic step in the conversation begun in earnest in John Paul II historic request in *Ut unum sint*:

I am convinced that I have a particular responsibility...in acknowledging the ecumenical aspirations of the majority of the Christian Communities and in heeding the request made of me to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its missions, is nonetheless open to a new situation.⁸³

This would be, by far, the most substantial and creative response to the Pope's call, a response that seeks the ministry of the Bishop of Rome in its more primitive form. To make such a request would mean that Anglicans would allow the Pope to exercise this part of his ministry which has lain dormant for nearly a millennia. To make such a request would be for the Anglican Communion to simply put action behind what it has affirmed many times: that a universal primacy is necessary for the unity and catholicity of the Church that is proper to her. Such a perspective on the part of the Anglican Communion would provide an incredibly creative response to what has become known as the "Ratzinger Proposal," which the then-cardinal outlined in his monograph *Principles of Catholic Theology*.⁸⁴

In the second of three parts, which he dedicates to the question of the formal principles of Christianity within the context of ecumenical dispute, Joseph Ratzinger spends a good deal of time considering the Churches of the East. He begins with a most practical question: what are the "maximum demands" that must be articulated at the onset? The question that looms here is, of course, the question of Petrine primacy, particularly in light of *Pastor aeternus* in 1870. It is quite clear that Romans Catholics would not and cannot "simply declare the doctrine of primacy

⁸² On February 29, 2008, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a brief response to two questions: First question: Whether the Baptism conferred with the formulas "I baptize you in the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier" and "I baptize you in the name of the Creator, and of the Liberator, and of the Sustainer" is valid? Second question: Whether the persons baptized with those formulas have to be baptized *in forma absoluta*? The answer the first question was "no," and the second "yes." See <http://www.zenit.org/article-21925?l=english>.

The *Virginia Report* references the matter of the baptismal formula in this way: "The universal doctrine of the Church is important especially when particular practices or theories are locally developed which lead to disputes. In some cases it may be possible and necessary for the universal Church to say with firmness that a particular local practice or theory is incompatible with Christian faith. This was said, for example, to those churches in South Africa which practiced and justified racial discrimination at the eucharist. Similarly if a church were to develop a different baptismal formula than that delivered in Scripture and used throughout the world, a comparable situation would arise. The Chicago Lambeth Quadrilateral is a list of norms and practices which must characterise the Church at all times everywhere" (§4.25).

⁸³ *Ut unum sint*, §95

⁸⁴ See op. cit. (note 16).

null and void” for the sake of unity with the East. Nor, on the other hand – and this is supremely significant – is it possible for them “to regard as the only possible form and, consequently, as binding on all Christians the form this primacy has taken in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”⁸⁵ Ratzinger points to the symbolic gesture undertaken by Pope Paul VI when he knelt before the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch. It is precisely this kind of act that has the ability “to point the way out of the historical impasse.” His proposal is this:

Rome must not require more from the East with respect to the doctrine of primacy than had been formulated and was lived in the first millennium. When the Patriarch Athenagoras, on July 25, 1967, on the occasion of the Pope’s visit to Phanar, designated him as the successor of St. Peter, as the most esteemed among us, as one who preside in charity, this great Church leader was expressing the essential content of the doctrine of primacy as it was known in the first millennium. Rome need not ask for more. Reunion could take place in this contact if, on the other hand, the East would cease to oppose as heretical the developments that took place in the West in the second millennium and would accept the Catholic Church as legitimate and orthodox in the form she had acquired in the course of that development, while on the other hand, the West would recognize the Church of the East as orthodox and legitimate in the form she has always had.⁸⁶

The whole scheme is rather amazing, I think, given the entrenched history of nearly a millennium in separation from one another. There are a few points that I think important to highlight.

First, Ratzinger says “Rome *must* not require” and not “Rome *should* not require.” At the time of authorship, he was the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the oldest Curial office and the one who task it is “to promote and safeguard the doctrine on faith and morals in the whole Catholic world.”⁸⁷ Thus, it is safe to assume this to be the state of play in the Catholic Church, most especially since Ratzinger is now Pope Benedict XVI. The theological implication is that it would be improper at the minimum, and certainly a profound breach of charity, were the Roman Catholic Church not to require any more than what was believed at the point of separation. Second, he articulates “the essential content of the doctrine of primacy as it was known in the first millennium”: the Bishop of Rome as “the successor of Peter, as the most esteemed among us, [and] as one who preside in charity.” Even if the legacy of ARCIC were not in our hands, I would find it difficult to imagine the vast majority of the Anglican episcopacy would not be willing to accept such a definition of Petrine primacy and willingly embrace communion thereto. It is, in fact, a succinct summary of the way in which Anglicans understand the nature of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s primacy (except, of course, as successor of Peter) within the Anglican Communion: not one of jurisdiction or dogmatic power, but as the *primus inter pares*, the most esteemed one who presides in love. Third and finally, what Rome asks of the East in Ratzinger’s scheme is not an embrace of the doctrine of primacy that developed after 1054. Rather, it is a request for the basic acknowledgment that the post-1054 vision of the Petrine ministry is within the realm of legitimate possibility, while at the same time not subscribing to it themselves. This, for Anglicans, would be much harder, for it makes possible the scenario that occurred with the proclamation of both Marian dogmas – the

⁸⁵ Ratzinger, *Principles*, 198.

⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *Principles*, 199.

⁸⁷ John Paul II, The Apostolic Constitution *Pastor bonus*, 28 June 1988, §48.

insistence upon the faithful of beliefs that Anglicans as a Communion have not understood to have direct warrant in Scripture. But it would seem safe to assume that Ratzinger implies here that the East would not have to ascribe to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, but simply acknowledge that such a belief – the result of the post-1054 vision of the Papacy – is not *de facto* heretical.

Ratzinger is, large part, proposing the methodology that has characterized ARCIC from its inception: re-reception. ARCIC first described their methodology in *The Gift of Authority* (1999) where they explain that re-reception is the process whereby separated churches seek to re-receive “some element of the apostolic Tradition” which may have been “forgotten, neglected or abused” (§3). Articulated in such a manner, such creative theological work opens the way for significant progress and sidesteps the working assumption and ultimate goal (conscious or not) that often lurks in the back of each tradition’s collective mind: convince the dialogue partner of the rightness of their own position. Thus, within the scheme of the Papacy, both Anglicans and Catholics would re-receive an understanding of the Papacy that was widespread for much of the first millennium and is still affirmed by the Orthodox Churches. This is very much in the vein of what the Bishop of Rochester, Michael Nazir-Ali, in considering how “the service of love of the Bishop of Rome can be received again,” suggested that Anglicans may very well be willing to acknowledge: a Primate not only “who gathered the Church in different ways for consultation and decision,” but who could see one “function for the primate as a court of appeal.”⁸⁸

Such a radical act of humility on the part of the Anglican Communion would quite likely have a profound impact on the ministry of the papacy itself. One wonders if the Pope would temper the tendency to over-emphasize the jurisdictional side of his ministry in favor of the matyriological ministry of love that John Paul II highlighted so beautifully and profoundly in *Ut unum sint*. Given the important steps made in *The Church of the Triune God* with the Orthodox Churches, this step on the part of the Anglican Communion may nudge the Orthodox to exercise a similar, limited, ministry, in the face of the many disputes that infect their the relationships of the autocephalous churches. The fact is that both for Anglicans and for the Orthodox, we say one thing about the Pope and do something quite different. Both communions believe in good faith that the developments in the Papacy in the second millennium, particularly as they are articulated at Vatican I and II are beyond what Christ intended for His Church. What is unclear is how both churches will engage the question beyond negative pronouncements and veiled intimations.

The trajectory of all of the ARCIC texts, plus the responses by successive Lambeth Conferences, buttressed by *Ut unum sint* points, in my mind, to the undeniable fact that one of the Churches must undertake a truly profound act of humility and charity if the stated goal of full, organic communion is to be realized. Bruce Marshall, in a recent paper⁸⁹ on the future of ecumenism, argues that public acts of penitence must be undertaken by churches as a means of demonstrating their sincere desire to obey the Lord’s command for there to be no division among us. This would be a profound act of humility and charity on our part that is simply making clear

⁸⁸ Michael Nazir-Ali, “A Pope for all Christians,” *The Tablet*, 6 December 2006, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/articles/6539/>

⁸⁹ Bruce D. Marshall, “The Future of Ecumenism,” 30 January 2008, Albert Outler Conference, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas (as yet unpublished).

a reality that is very early in the Church's history and is an active response to Pope John Paul II's call in *Ut unum sint* to help his office reconsider how the ministry of the papacy could be reconsidered for the sake of the unity of the Church.⁹⁰

The Anglican Communion has said repeatedly and consistently that it believes that a ministry of universal primacy is important, and maybe even necessary, for the life of the Church, the articulation of her faith, and the preservation of her catholicity. In the Preface to Authority I, the bishop co-chairs write the following:

The prospect [of common recognition of Roman primacy] should be met with faith, not fear. Communion with the see of Rome would bring to the churches of the Anglican Communion not only a wide *koinonia* but also a strengthening of the power of realize its traditional ideal of diversity in unity.

One way for Anglicans to go about responding faithfully to such a statement is to answer the following question: Is the fullness of the historic episcopate, put forth in the Quadrilateral as a necessary marker for Mere Catholicism, not lacking if cut off entirely from the Bishop of Rome? To put it differently, if the Quadrilateral's task is not just to define the basics of Anglicanism but to put forward a vision of Catholic Christianity that is a challenge to the one defined in *Pastor aeternus*, must it not one day include the ministry of the Bishop of Rome if its task of "home reunion" is to be brought about in grace? I believe it must.

These two proposals are by no means a cohesive plan for full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Theologically, the move would not be overly radical. But the Anglican Communion is at the biggest crossroads it has ever faced, and I think we would be foolish to not see in this moment not only an opportunity to clarify that the way in which we relate to one another must make provision to the adjudication of theological conflict, but an opportunity to move one step closer to our closest ecumenical partner and make the first gesture of humility. The Roman Catholic Church made a simple but important statement in the Decree on Ecumenism: "the Church must always be open to continual reformation" (§6.3). The Anglican Communion must be willing to say the same thing.

Anglicans are not the only Christians who are concerned with the relationship of the Bishop of Rome to all the Christians with whom he is not in communion. In the Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity, published under the title *In One Body Through the Cross*, the ecumenical group of authors propose the following:

In the present situation, the Roman Catholic Church has a special ecumenical place and must play a unique role. Including approximately half the Christians in the world, *it is an essential agent in any comprehensive realization of church unity*. While the papacy is undoubtedly a continuing stumbling block for many, *the bishop of Rome is also the only historically plausible candidate to exercise an effective worldwide ministry of unity*. This privileged role creates a great burden of responsibility. The bishop of Rome and the

⁹⁰ "Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea "that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (*Jn 17:21*)?", §96.

magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church must teach in a fashion capable of shaping the minds of the faithful beyond those currently in communion with Rome.⁹¹

The question is not necessarily if all Anglicans are ready for such a move, but whether the other forces of strain at play at the present time simply make the nature of these first two proposals untenable. I hope they do not, but I recognize that many in the Communion will see these proposals as non-starters, at least right now. And so this leads me to my third proposal.

V. THE THIRD COVENANT PROPOSAL – FORMAL ECUMENICAL CONSULTATION

In light of the arguments made thus far, as well as the acknowledgment at the end of Section IV, I put forward the following third proposal as a first step in cementing ecumenical charism of the Anglican Communion within the context of the Covenant.

Proposal #3

That any Church of the Communion – in the event that they propose to act, or undertake an action, that another Church of the Communion claims to threaten the unity of the Communion or the effectiveness of its mission and said proposal or action has been formally brought into the process for the resolution of covenant disagreements, a formal request is to be made both to all the churches and ecclesial communities with which the Anglican Communion, by means of the Anglican Consultative Council, is in formal, bi-lateral dialogue – necessarily including the Roman Catholic Church⁹² – and those churches with whom the Communion has agreements of full communion, to make a formal response within three months to the following two questions:

- a. **Would the reception by the Anglican Communion of the act or proposed action of said Church in the Communion which has been formally brought into process for the resolution of covenant disagreements constitute an impediment to the full communion agreement already in place or the stated desire for full organic communion between our churches?**
- b. **Do you understand the act or proposed action of a Church of the Communion which has been formally brought into process for the resolution of covenant disagreements to be essentially what previous communities since the time of the apostles have received?**⁹³

This proposal would seem to fit best somewhere in section §3.2.5, except that that the way in which each are laid out each bullet point must be some action in which the Provinces/Dioceses commit themselves to participate. Thus, within the St Andrew's Text, this would seem best to fit as a subsection of §4.1 in the "Draft Procedural Appendix for an Anglican Covenant."

⁹¹ Carl E. Braaten & Robert W. Jenson, eds., *In One Body Through the Cross: Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2003), 54-55, §65.

⁹² While the historical argument made above would imply that the request be made specifically to the Bishop of Rome, such a request would likely be made to the Cardinal President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and possibly the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁹³ This language comes directly from *The Church of the Triune God*, §IX.13.ii.

The general thrust of the proposal requires little explanation in light of the arguments put forward in this paper. However, I think it is important to be clear as to why both questions are vital. In the opening paragraph in the section on the Windsor Process in the Reflection paper published by the 2008 Lambeth Conference, the following sentence can be found: “Some wondered whether the Pastoral Forum should have members from outside the Communion.”⁹⁴ The history of ARCIC would lead one to think that at least one Roman Catholic on the Pastoral Forum, would be an acknowledgment of their commitment to the Anglican Communion through this period of difficulty. But more than that is needed. Format engagement with our full communion and ecumenical partners over controverted matters within the Communion is absolutely necessary to its future. There is lip service given to the fact that the actions of one church cannot but affect the life of others. The IARCCUM sub-committee’s submission to the Windsor Commission summarizes this brilliantly:

When such decisions are made by one part of the Anglican Communion with little attentiveness to the ecumenical relationships of their Communion with other churches and Christian bodies, is there not an undermining of the movement towards restoration of full communion to which the churches are committed, and does not there occur by default a serious diminishment of what our relations and our dialogue have already achieved?⁹⁵

The second question is related to the first, in the sense that it is a very different way of asking the question of whether a particular action would affect our ecumenical relationship or full communion agreement, but is distinct enough that it is worth considering in its own right. The language, as the footnote explains, comes from *The Church of the Triune God* in the section on the concept of reception. Development in matters of faith and order is only life-giving and fruitful to the spreading of the Gospel when its essence is “what previous communities since the time of the apostles have received.” To ask our ecumenical and full communion partners to think in this way about the possible actions of the Communion is, in itself, an apprehension of the Church’s catholicity and cannot help but promote the kind of theological exchange that buttresses the Church’s evangelical witness.

VI. CONCLUSION

Near the conclusion of Archbishop Rowan William’s pastoral letter to the Anglican Communion from June, 2006, he writes: “If we are to continue to be any sort of ‘Catholic’ church, if we believe that we are answerable to something more than our immediate environment and its priorities and are held in unity by something more than just the consensus of the moment, we have some very hard work to do to embody this more clearly.”⁹⁶ In the midst of the Communion’s profound struggles, the Archbishop sets before it the goal of deep catholicity with regard to the way in which we are ordered and achieve reconciliation in response to conflict over matters of faith and order. He is even more explicit later in the letter:

But what our Communion lacks is a set of adequately developed structures which is able to cope with the diversity of views that will inevitably arise in a world of rapid global

⁹⁴ “Lambeth Indaba: Capturing Conversations and Reflections from the Lambeth Conference 2008- Equipping Bishops for Mission and Strengthening Anglican Identity,” 3 August 2008, §146, <http://www.lambethconference.org/reflections/document.cfm>.

⁹⁵ “Ecclesiological Reflections,” taken from the boxed summary below §41, pp 19.

⁹⁶ The Most Rev’d Dr Rowan Williams, “The Challenge and Hope of Being Anglican Today,” 27 June 2006.

communication and huge cultural variety. The tacit conventions between us need spelling out – not for the sake of some central mechanism of control *but so that we have ways of being sure we're still talking the same language, aware of belonging to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ*. It is becoming urgent to work at what adequate structures for decision-making might look like.⁹⁷

Such a consideration, however, can never be separated from the ecumenical hue in light of the Gospel's demands.

No doubt keeping Archbishop Williams' words in mind, Cardinal Walter Kasper put the following question to the Anglican Communion quite literally as the Archbishop was in his second official meeting with Pope Benedict XVI:

Does it [i.e. the Anglican Communion] belong more to the churches of the first millennium -Catholic and Orthodox - or does it belong more to the Protestant churches of the 16th century? At the moment it is somewhere in between, but it must clarify its identity now and that will not be possible without certain difficult decisions.⁹⁸

The profound identity crisis is not merely existential, but tangible and threatening to devastate the Communion into a surfeit of little pieces. And it looks increasingly like this may occur more on account of simple inertia than through diabolical schemes hatched in dim rooms. As Oliver O'Donovan writes,

The church's old habits of negotiating stubborn oppositions by synthesizing them within a central, undogmatic stream of opinion—let us follow the convention and call the paradigm “liberal” without prejudice to any person or group claiming that title as their own—seem to have fallen away. When from as early as Queen Victoria's day British prime ministers preferred liberal bishops, it was because they seemed to be able to stop the church from falling apart....The historically centripetal middle had become a new centrifugal pole.⁹⁹

The next few steps taken by the Communion are steps of life and death.

The questions that face the Communion are so numerous and so multifaceted that one easily can sink into despair when trying to chart it all out. But the fact remains that Anglicans do not have a *de facto* rejection of the Petrine ministry and are at the same time profoundly in need of something new in the exercise of authority. The fact that the present exercise of the Papacy would not be palatable to Anglicans should not be a deterrent. The only way – may I repeat, the *only* way – Anglicans will ever receive the Petrine ministry is if they choose purposefully to do so. It can and will never be forced upon them unwillingly. And so if the ball is in the Anglican court, the *way* Anglicans receive the Petrine ministry are also up to them. The opportunities for Anglicans at this juncture is enormous. No one with any sense of history can deny that the threat is catastrophic, which means that the solution will be complex and multifaceted. Here and now is when the Anglican Communion has the chance to, in one act, perform three extraordinary feats:

⁹⁷ Williams, “Challenge” (emphasis added).

⁹⁸ Anna Arco, “Williams faces historic choice, says Vatican cardinal,” *The Catholic Herald* (on-line edition), 6 May 2008, accessed at <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/articles/a0000273.shtml>.

⁹⁹ Oliver O'Donovan, *Church in Crisis: The Gay Controversy and the Anglican Communion* (Cascade Books: Eugene, OR, 2008), 4.

- a) to challenge the Roman Catholic Church’s present exercise of the Petrine ministry by proposing to embrace a clearly historic function for the Bishop of Rome – that ministry of faith and charity expressed in the resolution of theological disputes at the request of the local church in question;
- b) to make a radical, and yet exceedingly humble, gesture to arguably the Communion’s most important ecumenical partner, placing them in a position where the next move is suddenly in their court, and putting our ecumenical relationship in a completely new light; and
- c) to embrace the peculiar ecumenical charism that the Communion first embraced in the Quadrilateral by both acknowledging its need for the charisms present in another ecclesial community, while simultaneously challenging that community to re-receive a part of its own history and take seriously its acknowledgment that the Church must always be open to continual reformation.¹⁰⁰

I am under no delusions that the Covenant, if it is to be embraced by a vast majority of the Communion, must be radical. And while I believe firmly that the Communion should seriously consider the first two proposals I have outlined, I realize that the forces pressing in on it may simply make such a consideration impossible at this juncture. Nonetheless, a first step is the third proposal that I have laid out on the formal engagement with all our full-communication partners and those with whom we are in formal bi-lateral dialogues, necessarily including the Roman Catholic Church. I trust that the Covenant Design Group will receive all three in the spirit in which they are offered, that of humility, prayerfulness, and ultimately hope grounded in the sure and certain promises of our Lord to His Church.

¹⁰⁰ From *Unitatis redintegratio*: “Every renewal of the Church is essentially grounded in an increase of fidelity to her own calling. Undoubtedly this is the basis of the movement toward unity.

“Christ summons the Church to continual reformation as she sojourns here on earth. The Church is always in need of this, in so far as she is an institution of men here on earth. Thus if, in various times and circumstances, there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline, or even in the way that church teaching has been formulated—to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself—these can and should be set right at the opportune moment.

“Church renewal has therefore notable ecumenical importance. Already in various spheres of the Church’s life, this renewal is taking place” (§6.1-3).