



# News Release

Monday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001  
09.00hrs. For immediate release.

## Bishop 'misrepresented Anglicans'

Church Society, a leading Evangelical group in the Church of England has written to the Vatican to distance itself from the views being espoused by many liberal Anglicans.

In October the Vatican news agency reported on the comments of the Bishop of Chester, Dr Peter Forster, made during a visit to Rome. Bishop Forster is reported as saying 'Anglicans have come to accept the wisdom and need of a universal primacy, exercised by the Bishop of Rome.'

Such statements have angered those within the Church of England who uphold its foundational teaching because it represents a denial of the faith which has shaped the Church.

However, it has become increasingly clear that the Vatican is not prepared to fudge issues. Recent statements have reiterated the traditional Roman Catholic view that the Church of England is not properly a church and that its Bishops and clergy are not properly ordained.

Evangelicals have welcomed such honest recognition of the differences that exist.

The text of the letter is attached.

*For further information please contact:*

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*Church Society exists to uphold biblical teaching and to promote and defend the character of the Church of England as a reformed and national Church.*

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9<sup>th</sup> November 2001

To: **Prefect Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger**  
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Vatican City

**Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy**  
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City

Dear Sirs,

On 10<sup>th</sup> October 2001 the Vatican news organization reported on statements made by the Anglican Bishop of Chester, Dr Peter Forster ([www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).

The reported views of Bishop Forster were discussed at a recent meeting of the Council of Church Society, the senior body representing reformed and evangelical views in the Church of England. We reject the reported statements as being entirely inconsistent with the historic formularies of the Church of England.

Since the Final Report of ARCIC came before the General Synod of the Church of England in 1986 we have noted with care the various ecumenical documents which have been published with varying degrees of authority.

After considering the Final Report for four years your office published 'Observations'. Correctly, you pointed out that some statements could be construed as embracing the Reformed position and thus you could not accept the ambiguous nature of ecumenical language. We agree with you fully on this matter.

Following this some members of ARCIC II published 'Clarifications' which claimed to show that your observations were incorrect. We disagreed with the analysis set out in 'Clarifications' but requests to have the report discussed by the General Synod have been ignored.

When 'Ut Unum Sint' was published we noted the comments that the office of the pope might be adjusted in order that it be more acceptable to non-catholics. However, no specific proposals were made to indicate what this might actually involve.

The ARCIC report, 'The Gift of Authority' was then published which was quite explicit in maintaining the traditional primacy and authority of the pope. Again the General Synod is likely to be denied an opportunity to discuss this report. However, it is the assertions made in 'The Gift of Authority' which now seem to be quoted as if they are the official view of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

We, as reformed Anglicans, cannot and will not accept the role of the pope as set out in 'The Gift of Authority'. It is entirely inconsistent with the reformation doctrine of *sola scriptura* which remains the official doctrinal position of the Church of England. We believe that the views of Anglicans are being seriously misrepresented in ecumenical dialogue.

In the light of these things we welcomed the publication of '*Dominus Iesus*' which seems to us to be refreshingly honest when compared to the ARCIC reports. We do not believe that anything is to be gained by pretending that we agree when we do not.

We would urge you to continue your robust rejection of the views of liberals within the Anglican Church. We believe that the current methodology of ecumenical dialogue is fatally flawed and serves no useful end. We believe that a better course of action is to admit our differences and face up to them.

Yours sincerely,

The Revd David Phillips,  
General Secretary, Church Society on behalf of the Council.