

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC PERMANENT JOINT COMMISSION

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FUNDAMENTALS

A joint examination of the Anglican and Roman Catholic positions by the Rt.Revd. Edward Knapp-Fisher, Bishop of Pretoria and the Revd.Fr.Edmund Hill, O.P.

Introduction

We were asked to examine this subject in the light of the Malta Report. The first thing to be done was to decide what was meant by 'fundamentals' in this context. We explicitly hold in common the fundamentals summed up in the Apostles' and Nicene creeds, and we did not consider that we were required to examine these formulae in detail. In the light of the Malta report we eventually selected four topics to examine, and find out where our two communions are agreed and where they seriously differ on them. They are:

- 1) Revelation and Faith,
- 2) Scripture and Tradition,
- 3) Church and Authority,
- 4) Dogmatic definitions and Comprehensiveness.

Method. We first of all each drew up a draft of our respective positions on these topics, and then met to discuss them together.

In the light of this discussion we have composed this joint report.

Sources. Catholic: Constitutio de Fide Catholica of the first Vatican Council; Constitutio Dogmatica de Divina Revelatione, and Constitutio Dogmatica de Ecclesia Christi, of the second Vatican Council

Anglican: The 39 Articles; The Report on Doctrine in the Church of England, 1938; The Revised Church Catechism; The Book of Common Prayer.

1) Revelation and Faith

1. On this topic we found ourselves in complete substantial agreement.

2. The Catholic Church is committed to the statement that God can be known with certainty from created things by the light of human reason (Vat.I, De Fid. Cath. cap.2, Dz 1785 ed.31^a). But this is not a commitment to any particular proofs. It simply asserts the validity of natural theology, without prescribing any particular metaphysics. Its scriptural warrant is Rom 1:20.

This is in agreement with the Anglican position, since Anglicanism does not accept the neo-Calvinist rejection of natural theology. Cf. the Report on Doctrine (p.44),

which emphasises the interdependence of 'general' and 'special' revelation, and the necessary co-operation of human minds with the prevenient action of God. Cf also Joseph Butler, Analogy of Religion, where he states that God is the source of all knowledge about the world and himself (II,7), and quotes with approval Origen's dictum, that 'Scripture proceeds from the Author of Nature' (Introd. p.5).

3. But Butler also affirms the inadequacy of natural religion in isolation: 'No revelation would have been given, had the light of nature been sufficient... Though natural religion is the foundation... of Christianity, it is not in any sense the whole of it' (II,1).

So too Vat. I (loc.cit.) declares that God has 'revealed himself and the eternal decrees of his will in a supernatural way', both to give strength and clarity to the gropings of natural theology; and also, and primarily, to bring man to a supernatural end, viz. to a participation in divine good things which wholly surpass human understanding.

It is important to state that this in no way commits Catholics to a theory of 'propositional revelation', though Vat.I tends to use language which can be and has been interpreted in this way. But such a theory is implicitly ruled out by the whole history of dogmatic development and theological reflection; and almost explicitly by Vat.II, which gives a far rounder description of revelation than Vat.I as more dramatic than didactic, as an 'economy achieved by deeds and words inherently interconnected' (De Div. Rev. I,2). It concludes a brief survey of progressive historical revelation, culminating in Christ, by asserting that the 'Christian economy, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away, and no further public revelation is to be expected before the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory' (I,3).

Anglicans and Catholics agree that the propositional element belongs properly, not to revelation itself, but to its dogmatic and theological interpretation by the Church, which is expressed in propositional forms.

4. Faith is the response to divine revelation, to which man owes 'the obedience of faith' (Rom 1:5, 16:26); or rather it is owed to 'God revealing' (Vat.II, De Div. Rev. I,5). This response is only possible with the 'prevenient and assisting grace of God' (ibid.). Vat. I gave a rather thin intellectualist idea of faith (De Fid. Cath. 3, Dz 1789), but this is filled out and incorporated in a larger vision by Vat.II, which speaks of man 'freely committing his whole self to God' by faith (loc. cit.).

This harmonises more easily with the Anglican view, substantially no different, which has been summarised by Dr. Austin Farrer, in a lecture in 1958, as follows: 'Faith is an ever deepening relationship between man and God, open to all, but possible only by man's response to the loving initiative of God'. It is this conviction of the primacy of God's action in faith which underlies the 39 Articles (9, 12, 13), which assert: 'that we are justified by faith only is a very wholesome doctrine and full of comfort', and that 'good works are the fruits of faith and follow after justification'.

This conviction is shared by the Catholic Church, and though Catholic theologians might have some qualms about 'faith only', they would be qualms more about justification than about faith; the sort of qualms the epistle of James expresses about the teaching of St. Paul; two distinct emphases which should not be hard to reconcile by a sane and total exegesis. The primacy of God's action is without question common ground.

5. For both communions, on the other hand, faith, while distinct from reason, is essentially reasonable. It is reasonable in three respects, according to the Catholic view, from which the Anglican does not differ substantially:

- i) reasonable arguments can be proposed to support the fact of revelation, e.g. miracles and prophecy fulfilled (De Fid. Cath. 3, Dz 1790); such reasonable arguments are doubtless more of Newman's convergence-of-probabilities kind than some R.C. apologetics of the manuals would give one to suppose, but the point of the Vat.I statement is to authenticate the Church's age-long tradition of apologetics;
- ii) faith is reasonable in that the divine revelation to which it adheres is not contrary to the findings and insights of human reason (loc.cit. 4, Dz 1795);
- iii) finally in that it is properly cultivated by the rational processes of study and enquiry which we call theology.

It may be that the Catholic tradition on the whole follows a more Thomist line in the kind of distinction it makes between faith and reason, while Anglicans would generally prefer a more Augustinian view of the matter, which tends to make the realm of faith more comprehensive and the sphere of reason more subordinate. But either option is compatible with the most impeccable orthodoxy.

II Scripture and Tradition

1. On this matter we were able to agree on many points. Some at least of those upon which we differ may prove on further examination to be more apparent than real; and we are

encouraged by the fact that there has been movement towards understanding and agreement on matters on which in the past any possibility of agreement seemed remote. On the other hand, we recognize that real differences continue to exist.

2. The primacy and uniqueness of Scripture as the basis of doctrine is a foundation of the Anglican position which is explicitly maintained in Anglican formularies. Art.VI, On the Sufficiency of Holy Scripture, declares that "Whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of Faith, or thought requisite or necessary to Salvation". This is endorsed by the Doctrine Report: "From the Christian standpoint, the Bible is unique as being the inspired record of a unique revelation. It is the record of the special preparation for Christ, and of His direct impact upon men through His life, death and resurrection. It sets before us that historical movement of divine self-disclosure of which the Gospel is the crown." This position is based on the recognition that Scripture is itself tradition, but tradition of a unique character and authority.

3. The suspicion that Catholic theology is based upon a two-source theory, i.e., that Scripture and Tradition are equally authoritative but not invariably and clearly related to one another, is common among Anglicans. This suspicion derives from a statement of the Council of Trent, quoted by Vatican I, which describes revelation as being "contained in written books and in unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the lips of Christ, or passed on as it were by hand from the Apostles at the dictate of the Holy Spirit, have come as far as us". (De Fid. 2, Dz 1787.) Traditions required to be accepted by Roman Catholics as implicit in Scripture (relating, for example, to the Papacy and the Blessed Virgin Mary), are not so accepted by Anglicans, who cannot therefore regard them as de fide, 'as requisite or necessary to Salvation'.

4. We recognize however that the statement of Trent is rather archaic in its preconceptions and that there is now general agreement that it does not impose a 'two-source theory', nor even necessarily a 'parallel-channels' theory, since it says nothing about the relation of Scripture to Tradition. Although Vatican II clarifies some issues (and, significantly, speaks of Tradition, not Traditions), it still leaves the matter of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition open, and makes two important points about the transmission of revelation. First, that the Apostles were commissioned to preach the Gospel "as the fount of all saving truth and discipline of manners"; and, secondly, that it is the Gospel, as the totality of revelation,

which is traditioned' (to use Dr. Prestige's word: Fathers and Heretics, Ch. 1.), "both by the Apostles and by those men who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, committed the message of Salvation to writing". (De Div. Rev. II,7).

5. We agree that Traditioning must be a continuing and living process which goes forward, not by material accretion, but by a deeper penetration into and understanding of the Gospel in all its implications. (De Div. Rev. II, 8). But although the Constitution goes on to affirm "the close connexion between sacred tradition and sacred Scripture, which both emanate from the same source, coalesce in some sense into one and tend to the same end," it does not describe and define this close connexion. (De Div. Rev. II,9.) From the negative point of view, this means that the Roman Catholic Church rejects a sola scriptura position. The message of Salvation is handed on in and by the Church, of which the chief - but not the only - instrument is the written books of Holy Scripture, particularly those of the New Testament.

We recognize in theory that Scripture and Tradition are mutually inclusive realities. Scripture is the primary element in Tradition, and plays a unique and decisive part in the process of traditioning. Tradition therefore derives its authenticity and authority from Scripture; and many theologians maintain that all revelation is to be found ultimately in Scripture, and that the primary (some would say the only) function of tradition is to interpret Scripture. This means the rejection of any idea of revelation through propositions rather than through a sequence of unique historical events, of which Scripture is the record: but it is still essential to have some regula or analogia fidei - some standard by which the meaning of Scripture can be discerned and understood. What is required is a living response to the Gospel, guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church (magisterium) to interpret Scripture, yet always subject to Scripture as the controlling standard of reference for any traditional doctrine and practice.

Anglican difficulties about the teaching and interpreting authority of the Church derive from rejection of the claim of any one part of a still-divided Church to be the whole Church, and to possess an absolute and infallible authority in teaching and interpreting the Gospel. The practical application of the Vincentian Canon is impossible for a divided Church. We shall return to this point in the last section of this paper.

6. We must next attempt to say something about inspiration and the context, if not the method of interpretation.

"The Church, ex apostolica fide, regards all the books of the Old and New Testaments (Canon of Trent) as sacred and canonical,

in that being written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they have God for their author. He chose men to compose them by using all the means at their disposal to write all that He wanted written... So everything written by the sacred writers must be regarded as being asserted by the Holy Spirit: and so Scripture must be confessed to teach firmly, faithfully and without error the truth which God wanted written for our salvation." (De Div. Rev. III, 11.) A note attached to the English translation of this document elucidates the implications of its teaching. "The Bible was not written to teach the natural sciences, nor to give information about purely political history. It treats of these and all other matters only in so far as they are involved in matters concerning Salvation. It is only in this respect that the veracity of God and the inerrancy of the inspired writers are engaged. This is not a quantitative distinction, as though some sections treat of salvation (and are inerrant), while others give merely natural knowledge (and are fallible). It is formal and applies to the whole text. The latter is authoritative and inerrant in what it affirms about the revelation of God and the history of salvation. According to the intentions of its authors, divine and human, it makes no other affirmations." This is a bold statement: but those who would disagree with it could be answered by the contention that where Scripture appears to make other assertions these must not be regarded in isolation but as contributing to the whole biblical record of the drama of salvation.

The Constitution stresses the human as well as the divine quality of the Bible, and compares this divine/human conjunction in scripture with that in the Incarnation. It reaffirms that all theological interpretation is subject to the judgment of the Church, which is charged by God with the mandate and ministry of preserving and interpreting God's Word. (ibid. III, 13.) Roman Catholics, like Anglicans, are committed to a strong doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy, without however being committed to any 'fundamentalist' idea of these doctrines. Both our Communion can only rejoice that ever since the promulgation by Pope Pius XII of the Encyclical Divino afflante Spiritu, Roman Catholic exegesis has been liberated from a thralldom to fundamentalism which appeared to threaten it at the time of the Modernist crisis and the early days of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. Vatican II gives open encouragement, for example, to Roman Catholic scholars to collaborate with those of other Churches in biblical translations. (De. Div. Rev. VI, 22.)

There is much here upon which our two Communion can agree.

Although some of the statements about inspiration in the Doctrine Report (pp. 31 et seq.) might be differently expressed today, there is much here which is consistent with the teaching of Vatican II on this point. "The Bible is more than a collection of utterances which are 'inspiring and therefore inspired' It makes its special appeal partly in virtue of its unity as a whole. This unity consists in the presentation of a self-revelation of God through history and experience, a self-revelation which develops in relation both to the response and to the resistance of men to the Divine initiative, and which culminates in the Incarnation. ... While resiting the view that all parts of the Bible stand on the same spiritual level, we also repudiate any effort to concentrate all attention on the directly edifying passages. Those which in themselves are on a lower spiritual level have their place in the whole, which derives part of its power from the universality of its range, and part even from the intractability of some of its material."

The Report appears to reject any concept of the inerrancy of the Bible; but in fact what it rejects is "the tradition of the inerrancy of the Bible commonly held in the Church until the beginning of the nineteenth century". It seems reasonable to suppose that the inerrancy to which reference is here made is denied to biblical affirmations relating to, for example, the natural sciences, but not to those relating to salvation. "The authority ascribed to the Bible must not be interpreted as prejudging the conclusions of historical, critical and scientific investigation in any field, not excluding that of the biblical documents themselves." (ibid.)

7. The Apocrypha. It is to be noted that the different authority accorded by our two Communions to the Apocrypha is a matter which calls for examination. For Roman Catholics these books form an integral part of the Canon of Scripture (Canon of Trent.) Anglicans regard the Apocrypha as extra-canonical and of secondary authority, to be read "for example of life and instruction... but not to establish any doctrine". (Art. VI)

8. We recognise that the safeguarding of tradition is a special responsibility of the bishops of the Church. While there would be Anglicans who might not lay such emphasis on this point as Roman Catholics, the special - if not exclusive - responsibility of bishops for preserving and interpreting Scriptural truths is emphasised in the Consecration of Bishops. All bishops at their Consecration promise "that they will teach or maintain nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation but that which they shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scriptures..."

that they will faithfully exercise themselves in the same Holy Scriptures, and call upon God for the true understanding of the same, so that they may be able by them to teach and exhort with wholesome doctrine, and to withstand and convince the gainsayers... to be ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word".

III Church and Authority

1. We take it that in this context of 'Fundamentals' we are not concerned with wholesale ecclesiology, or with every aspect of ecclesiastical authority, but only with what we call the believing Church, and with magisterial or teaching, or dogmatic authority.

2. However, wider ecclesiological doctrines and views inevitably affect our ~~ideas~~ ideas on these restricted topics, and so a very brief foray into this field seems called for, because here there are important points of agreement and of difference between us.

3. We agree in rejecting an ecclesiology that regards the Church as a contrivance of purely human convenience or necessity, something created by believers to help them lead a Christian life, rather than something created by Christ by the very act with which he elicits the faith of believers.

This defective idea of the Church seems to lie behind some of the statements of a document which is of immediate relevance to us in South Africa, The Message to the People of South Africa, (1968); for example the statement that 'If the Church ceases to be obedient to Christ, it ceases to be the Church'.

With such a view of the Church, it is of course important to prevent it, and whatever authority it exercises, from getting in between, or mediating between the believer as an individual and God-in-Christ; though with such a view of the Church it is hard to see how the believer in 1970 can have direct access in immediate faith to God revealing himself in Christ, who is historically distanced by 1940 years from the believer.

The Catholic view of the Church, Roman and Anglican, which we think we share, sees it as the creation of Christ, as stated above, and as the continuation among men of his incarnate and risen presence, and his redemptive act. Thus the Church is the context or frame in which the believer has direct, immediate access in faith (and hope and charity) to God revealing himself in Christ. And so Church teaching authority, whatever its scope, does not mediate between the Christian believing and God

revealing in any unacceptable way which reduces the immediacy of the faith contact with God.

4. In line with this view of the Church, we are agreed that faith has a necessary social dimension; it is not a purely individual response to God's word, but a shared response, so that when I respond in faith I am sharing in and contributing to the whole Church's response of faith. The bearing of this on the question of Church authority will become clear below. Cf. Doing Theology Today (1969) p.4.: 'Faith is not only an individual necessity, but also a corporate possession, which has a precise historical origin, and has assumed particular historical form'.

5. However, we differ on how the Church, about whose nature we are thus far agreed, is to be identified. In the Roman Catholic view, 'This Church (of Christ), constituted and organised in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church which is governed by the successor of Peter and the bishops in his communion...' (Vat.II, De. Eccl. I, 8). The use of the expression 'subsists in' instead of simply 'is', is significant, and likely to be fruitful for further ecumenical dialogue, because it allows for the recognition by the R.C. Church of various measures of ecclesiality in other communions.

Even so, however, it is not compatible as it stands with the Anglican view as it stands of the Church of Christ as a still divided Church, which cannot be said to 'subsist' in any one communion more than in any other - or at least in any one episcopal communion (?).

We consider that this point of difference on the 'identification' of the Church of Christ calls for detailed and, above all, historical examination. We think and hope that each party might improve the realism of their view-point by a sympathetic consideration of the other one and by criticising each in the light of history.

Thus the Roman Catholic theologian needs to ask whether in actual historical fact the breaking asunder of Christendom into a number of communions has not really limited the authority with which the Roman Catholic Church can speak in the name of Christ; a particularly telling historical case, which calls for theological analysis, is the Great Schism of the West, 1376-1416 A.D., and the resultant conciliar movement. In the light of this, is communion with the successor of Peter such a simple, or realistic touch-stone of where the Church of Christ subsists?

Anglican theologians, on the other hand, need to ask themselves whether the picture of a Church that is now divided but was once undivided will really stand up to critical historical

examination. This is important, since it is on the strength of such a picture that the authority of the first seven (?) ecumenical councils is accepted, but not that of, say, the fourth Lateran or the Council of Florence. But can one in fact say that the Chalcedonian Church was undivided, or even the Nicene - or even the apostolic Church, which suffered almost from its inception from the schism between the Old Israël and the New? Is not then an undivided Church, in the Anglican sense, to some extent a nostalgic imposition on historical reality, and can it in that case really be made into a prerequisite for an effective dogmatic or teaching authority?

6. Meanwhile, such a marked disagreement necessarily produces disagreement about such authority, and in particular about its 'infallibility'. Here, Anglicans would claim that a Church militant visibly united in faith and charity might be an infallible instrument of the Holy Spirit in matters of faith, but contend that no part of a still divided Church can claim infallibility for its teaching. Cf. Report on Doctrine, p. 26: 'Some of us look forward to a reunion of Christendom having its centre in a primacy such as might be found in a papacy which has renounced some of its present claims'.

Many Anglicans, however, would assert that only the total Church, militant expectant and triumphant, is the absolutely infallible instrument of the truth of Christ; i.e. that in a fallen world even a visibly united Church militant could not claim to make an absolutely infallible response to the revelation of Christ.

7. As infallibility is the most obvious stone of stumbling in this field, some explanation of the Roman Catholic doctrine, while not of course leading directly to agreement, might here be useful to clear the air and avoid misunderstandings.

The definition of Vat. I (Const. de Eccl. Christi, 4, Dz 1839-40) must now be read in the light of Vat. II, De Eccl., and in particular of II.12, on the prophetic gift of Christ in which the people of God participates. This states and briefly describes the infallibility of the Church (the whole people of God) which was presumed by Vat. I in its definition of papal infallibility, but was not there further elucidated (*loc.cit.*). Here, the basic infallibility of the Church is presented as infallibility in faith: 'The body of the faithful (universitas fidelium) possessing the anointing of the Holy one (1 Jn 2:20) cannot err in believing, and thanks to a supernatural sense of faith which characterises the people as a whole, it manifests this its special property when from the bishops down to the last

member of the laity (Augustine, De Praedest. Sanct. 14,27, PL44, 980) it gives its universal consent about matters of faith and morals. By this sense of faith... the people of God indefectibly adheres to the faith once handed to the saints, under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in loyalty submitting to which it accepts not now the word of men but truly the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13)'

7a. This brings us to a first and important distinction in the meaning of the word infallibility; it can have an active and a passive sense: it can mean 'not being misleading' (active), and also 'not being misled' (passive). When we talk about infallibility in faith, we are using the word in its passive sense, primarily; and this sense in our context is prior to the other, because it is on the Church's infallibility in believing, in its not being misled, that any infallibility it may have in teaching, its not being misleading, is based.

Here we would suggest that faith, as a positive response to the divine word, must be infallible, i.e. cannot be a misled response, or it would not be faith in God's word. And this should give Roman Catholic theologians something very important to think about in this context. For if true (i.e. non-misled or infallible) faith can be found outside as well as inside the visible Roman communion, as all are agreed it is to be found; and if this infallible faith of believers is the ground of the Church's infallible, i.e. non-misleading, teaching; then the genuine faith of non-Roman Christians should make a contribution to the Church's genuine teaching, and the non-representation of that genuine faith in the authoritative councils of the Church may be argued at least to restrict the scope or effectiveness of its infallible teaching.

7b. But faith does not end with being a true, or infallible, or non-misled response to the word of God revealed in Christ; it has to be confessed, or stated in words - 'with the heart one believes unto justice, but with the mouth one confesses unto salvation' (Rom.10:10). And clearly any true believer can, and most true believers do from time to time, in one respect or another, give a misleading expression to or account of the faith that is in them. No individual believer as such, in other words, enjoys an active infallibility of faith, or a certainty simply in virtue of his being a true believer, that he will not be misleading sometimes in his expression or confession of the faith.

But while this is tolerable for the individual believer, it is not tolerable for the universitas fidelium, or for the expression of faith confessed by the Church as a whole, Indeed

it is in the nature of the case that diverse and divergent expressions of faith on the part of individual believers will lead to dialogue, discussion, thrashing out of the points at issue. And it is here that Catholics hold that the teaching authority of the Church, vested in the bishops and the pope, has a part to play which is at the service of the right expression of the true 'non-misled' faith of true believers; that for the sake of the very vitality and deepening of that faith it is necessary that the Church should be able to achieve a true, non-misleading, that is actively infallible, expression of its common faith. So while it is inevitable that there should be wide varieties, and at times acute conflicts of opinion in the Church on matters touching faith, and not only inevitable but in some way healthy and desirable; nonetheless to safeguard the security and assurance of faith it is also required that there should be the real possibility within the Church of ultimately achieving an infallible or non-misleading decision on such points, and a non-misleading expression of the faith concerning them.

7c. Here some further distinctions, or rather clarifications may be opportune. The bishops and the pope, in exercising their teaching authority, whether infallibly - that is in a manner guaranteed not to be misleading - or not, are at the service of the believing Church and represent the believing Church. That is, rather than speaking to the believing Church in the name of God, as it might be said that the prophets and above all Christ did, they speak out from and in the name of the believing Church.

Thus the utterances of the magisterium (the teaching authority) are not on the side of God's revealing word, addressed to the faithful as from God, they are not therefore mediating God's word; they are on the contrary on the side of the believing Church's response to God's word, they have the character of a confession of faith. They serve the faith of the Church by helping to give it articulate expression; they also serve to set the bounds in which the quest of fides quaerens intellectum is to be conducted.

7d. When the bishops and/or the Pope so articulate the faith of the Church in a solemn conciliar or papal definition, they are held to do so infallibly; i.e. to be guaranteed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit not to be misleading when they do so. But this does not mean - and this is another important clarification - that such an articulation of faith in one particular is ever adequate. Indeed it must be accepted,

from the very nature of the God who has revealed himself and his saving will in Christ, that all such articulations of the faith ever made or to be made, from the credal formulae on, must be inadequate. That is they are always, in the current language, open-ended, leaving the mystery inviolate, and ever the object of the devout exploration or quest of faith.

7e. In exercising their teaching authority the pope and bishops, successors of the apostles, witnesses-in-chief to the resurrection faith, do not always or even most commonly, claim to speak infallibly, in a way divinely guaranteed not to be misleading. In performing their service of guiding the believing Church's quest of fides quaerens intellectum, they may well be too busy and fussy and cautious as guides, and doubtless have often tended to inhibit or stifle this quest. But without their authority, giving articulate form (basically in the creeds) to the Church's common and 'non-misled', direct and immediate faith response to the word of God, the quest cannot really proceed. A seeker needs clues, guide-lines, compass bearings. Cf Vat.II, De Eccl. III, 25: '(Bishops) are authentic teachers, that is teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach to the people: committed to them the faith they must believe and put into practice. By the light of the Holy Spirit they make that faith clear, bringing forth from the treasury of revelation new things and old, making faith bear fruit and vigilantly warding off any errors which threaten their flock... Under the guiding light of the Spirit of truth, revelation is thus religiously preserved and faithfully expounded in the Church. The Roman Pontiff and the bishops... strive painstakingly and by appropriate means to enquire properly into that revelation and to give apt expression to its contents. But they do not allow that there could be any new public revelation pertaining to the divine deposit of faith'.

7f. The magisterial declarations of pope and bishops are not the same as tradition, but they serve to give definite shape or form to the traditio, and expression to the traditum.

IV Dogmatic Definitions and Comprehensiveness

1. It is clear that the members of any human society must share certain fundamental convictions and assumptions about the nature and objects of that society. Although the Church is a divine society, in that it is created, sustained, indwelt and directed by God, its human members must be united in believing basic truths revealed by Him in Christ. We agree that the biblical truths summarized in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds are such fundamentals, which must be accepted and believed by all the members of Christ's Church.

2. Difficulties and differences however arise when we attempt in practice to distinguish between truths which are fundamental, upon which no disagreement can be permitted (de fide), and those upon which some degree of latitude in understanding and interpretation can be allowed. Anglicans do not accept as clear developments of Scriptural truth certain dogmas required to be accepted de fide by Roman Catholics, for example, those which relate to the position and authority of the Pope, and to the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Further, although Anglicans respect the authority of General Councils, they cannot accord this status to councils of any part of the divided Church; and they maintain that even those recognized as General Councils "may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining to God".
(Art. XXI.)

3. We recognize that dogmatic definitions can never be regarded as exhaustive statements of revealed truth, since they are necessarily expressed in the thought-forms and language of their time. They constantly require interpretation and re-interpretation; and because they express insights of faith they rarely terminate discussion, but rather direct and promote it along certain lines.

4. The statement of the Decree of Ecumenism (Ch. II, 11) about a hierarchy of truths appears to open up new possibilities of constructive discussion about doctrinal matters with other Churches. It must not, however, be assumed that Roman Catholics would regard this as permitting comprehensiveness in matters of faith to the degree to which it has been allowed to Anglicans. The meaning and implications of recognising a hierarchy of truths requires elucidation, as does its relation to the distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals - a distinction which may perhaps be more usefully defined as one between primary and secondary (or accessory) truths. This matter may be more clearly defined by reference to two practical examples:

a) The Incarnation. It is obvious that we agree that the doctrine of the Incarnation is primary, the apex of the hierarchy of truths. To this, belief in the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is secondary or accessory, but is required de fide of Roman Catholics. For Anglicans these are matters upon which disbelief or a reverent agnosticism is permissible. Can such latitude in belief on these points even be contemplated by Roman Catholics as consistent with loyal membership of the Church?

b) The Eucharist. We agree in our belief in the real sacramental presence of the crucified and risen Lord in the Eucharistic elements, and would regard this belief as fundamental. But there is a wide diversity among Anglicans as to the manner of Christ's presence in this mystery, based on the conviction that it is as impossible to understand as is the deity of the man Jesus Christ. Is it possible to agree that belief in transubstantiation is secondary or accessory to belief in the real presence of Christ? The Decree of Ecumenism (55) appears to suggest that this may not be beyond possibility, by its provision for a non-Roman Catholic, in certain circumstances and under defined conditions, to be admitted to the Eucharist, Penance and Holy Unction by a priest "so long as he declares a faith in these Sacraments in harmony with that of the Church, and is rightly disposed". (*Italics ours.*)

5. Finally, it seems to us to be of the greatest importance to attempt to draw a distinction between beliefs which are contradictory (mutually exclusive), and those which are - or may ultimately be seen to be - complementary. The great difficulty of drawing this distinction in practice cannot excuse a failure seriously to examine our differences in the light of it. Anglicans must admit that many of the different views amongst them in which they have acquiesced, even upon fundamentals, may have to be recognized as contradictory. But we believe that many of the apparent doctrinal differences between us may prove, on further examination, to be rather complementary than contradictory aspects of truth.

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AFT
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