

18.12.80
2.10 pm.

7. A comparison of the preceding paragraphs 5 and 6 shows that there is significant common ground shared by Anglicans and Roman Catholics although the term 'infallibility' is an unsolved difficulty. It is not in dispute that the Church can make a decisive judgement in matters of faith (provided it be consonant with Scripture) and so exclude error. This judgement is normally given through synodal decision, but in special circumstances the primate acting in communion with his fellow bishops may articulate the decision even outside a synod. Although reception by the people of God does not confer authority on a definition, the assent of the faithful is the final sign that the Church's authoritative decisions in matters of faith have been truly preserved from error by the Holy Spirit.

8. Anglicans and Roman Catholics agree that the faithfulness of God protects the Church from irrevocable commitment to error in essential matters of faith. In order to formulate its teaching in defence of the proclamation of the Gospel the Church had recourse to ecumenical councils and primatial sees. Only when a genuine balance is struck between conciliar and primatial authority can the Church fully discharge its teaching office. Misunderstandings have arisen from the impression that preservation from fundamental error belongs exclusively to a particular office rather than to the whole Church. Other misunderstandings have derived from the false assumption that such authoritative institutions must have the effect of stifling the freedom of the Spirit to inspire other agencies and individuals.

It is clear, moreover, that the effective fulfilment of their responsibilities by these organs is impaired by divisions among Christians.

9. There remains a problem concerning the proper subject-matter of authoritative definitions. This was faced at Vatican I, which restricted such definitions to matters of 'faith and morals'. Particular difficulties

arise in respect of the Marian definitions and divergent views as to their relation to Scriptural faith. We recognise that Christian understanding of Mary must in no way be divorced from the doctrines of Christ and the Church nor can it detract from the all-sufficiency of his saving work through which she is herself redeemed.

We agree in rejecting any interpretation of the role of Mary that contradicts the affirmation that there is but one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ. We further agree in recognising in Mary a model of holiness, obedience and faith for the Church.

The issue between us is that of the appropriateness and need for the Church to make statements of essential doctrine in Marian rather than in directly Christological terms. Such questions need further examination in the light of the growing relationship between our Churches.