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B. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit discloses the meaning of Creation

12 Creation and salvation, which is "new creation", are closely linked. Scripture sees salvation history as a marvel of creation; God's work of creation, especially of humankind, is related to his Word and to his "breath of life", the Creator Spirit. Throughout the Old Testament the Spirit and the Word of God never cease to act together. In the New Testament the Word of God made flesh by the action of the Spirit does nothing without the Spirit and the consummation of his work is the gift of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit at work in justification and regeneration

13 The Holy Spirit was active and creative at the conception of Jesus (Mt. 1,18-20; Lk. 1,35), at his baptism (Mk. 1,9-11; Mt. 3,13-17; Lk. 3,12-13), and during his entire public ministry (Mk. 3,22-30; 9,29; Mt. 12,25-32; Lk. 11,20; 4,1-14; 10,21).

A new stage in the work of the Spirit, namely the founding of the Church, was begun through Christ's death, resurrection and the giving of the Spirit to the disciples.

Today from every side we hear the question once posed by Paul. "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7,24). With or without their knowing it, the questioners are asking about justification: how may a sinner find a gracious God? how may a meaningless life be given meaning?

The Holy Spirit is present and active within us throughout the entire experience of conversion which begins with an awareness of God's goodness and an experience of shame and guilt, proceeds to sorrow and repentance, and ends in gratitude for the possession of a new life given us through God's mercy in Jesus Christ.

Justification is not an isolated forensic episode, but is part of a process which finds its consummation in regeneration and sanctification, the participation of human life in the divine.

14 Here, of course, the key concept is "prevenience", a concept emphasized by both the Council of Trent and John Wesley. Always it is the Spirit's special office to maintain the divine initiative that precedes all human action and reaction. The Holy Spirit is God himself, present and active in human hearts and wills, "nearer to us than breathing, closer than hands or feet". This is why, when some wrongly denied the Church's latent sense of the Spirit's prevenience, the Church's positive response was rightly to reaffirm the truly splendid title: Lord and Giver of Life.

The Council of Trent teaches that the beginning of justification in adults takes place by means of the Lord's prevenient grace which moves us to conversion, enabling us freely to choose to follow the inspiration God gives us when he touches our heart with the light of the Holy Spirit. "When Scripture says, 'Turn to me, and I turn to you' (Zech. 1,3), we are reminded of our freedom. When we answer, 'Turn us, Lord, to you and we shall be turned' (Lam. 5,21), we confess that we are prevented (moved first) by grace" (Session 6: Decree on Justification, Ch. 5, DS 1525).

15 In justification God through the atoning work of Christ restores a sinner to a right relationship with himself. In such a restoration, both the initiative, the agency and the consummation is the ministry of the Holy Spirit as he brings Christ to us and leads us to him. When a sinner is led to Christ and receives him, he is re-born and given the power to turn away from a life curved back upon itself toward a "new life", opened out to love of God and neighbour.

Thus the tragic malignancies of sin may be healed; thus the deformed self may be formed, reformed and fulfilled. Blind eyes may be opened; atrophied wills renewed; minds bemused by idols of pride, avarice and greed, may be liberated so as to judge by other norms. Thus a new future, for self and society, may be opened up to permanent and constructive "revolution". This is our re-

conciliation to God who was in Christ reconciling us to himself. And this is justification: to be regarded and treated as righteous, for Christ's sake; and yet also to be put in the way of becoming righteous. All of this is done by the initiatives of the Father's redeeming mercy, manifested in the Son's atoning grace, through the Holy Spirit's activity within our hearts.

16 "The Spirit himself is bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8,16). We receive the Spirit of adoption, who dwells in Christians, pouring God's love into our hearts, enabling us to say "Abba" and in the Our Father to pray for forgiveness, conscious of weakness but fully confident of God's merciful love for us in Christ. Moreover, when we do not know how to pray, it is the Spirit who intercedes for us (Rom. 8,26).

17 According to the Fourth Gospel, the ultimate purpose of the mission of Jesus was to give the gift of the Holy Spirit to His disciples (Jn. 20,22-23). The Holy Spirit brings about the forgiveness of sins because it is His role to teach us, the disciples of Jesus, all things necessary for our salvation and bring to our remembrance all that Jesus said (Jn. 14,26). Because He is the Spirit of Truth, He bears witness to Jesus and enables us to be witnesses in our turn (15,26-27). He guides us into all the truth, declares the things that are to come, and so glorifies Jesus (16,13-14). By revealing to us the sonship of Jesus and the meaning of His mission, the Holy Spirit by the very fact shows the wrongness of the fundamental sin: lack of faith in Jesus (Jn. 16,8-11).

18 The Holy Spirit sanctifies the regenerate Christian. Sanctification is a process that leads to perfect love. Life in the Spirit is human life, lived out in faith, hope and love, to its utmost in consonance with God's gracious purposes in and for his children. As Wesley put it, the end of human existence is the recovery and the surpassing of the perfection in which that existence was first conceived and created:

"...Hence (in the end of creation) will arise an unmingled state of holiness and happiness far superior to that which Adam enjoyed in paradise... And to crown all, there will be a deep and intimate and uninterrupted union with God — a constant communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, of all the creatures in him" (*The New Creation*, § 18).

The Holy Spirit and the Christian Community

19 The chief mark of the post-Easter Church is that God gives to it the Spirit and thus creates the community of the New Covenant. The risen and exalted Lord takes possession of the world through his body, the Church, into which members are baptized in the Spirit. Our obedience is a sign of Christ's Lordship as we show in our lives his dying and his rising. His Spirit of power and love makes obedience possible by breaking the slavery of sin and giving freedom. Yet disobedience remains and only the daily offering of our bodies as a living sacrifice can display the triumph of his grace. By the Spirit we drink the cup of Christ and share his life.

By grace we are saved through faith, not because of works (cf. *Eph.* 2,8-9). Baptism, which is celebrated within the believing community, is the outward sign and means both of grace and of faith.

20 The Holy Spirit gives to us a variety of spiritual gifts (charismata) (cf. *1 Cor.* 12,4) which equip the different members of the body for ministry: these are not confined to such gifts as prophecy or speaking with tongues. In the Charismatic Movement or neo-Pentecostalism many have come to a new experience of life in the Spirit: but they must remember that the Spirit's work is not easily distinguished from the actions of the free human beings through whom he works: not all human works are the work of the Spirit. Guided by the Spirit's gift of discernment (*1 Cor.* 12,10) we must develop criteria to distinguish those that are. The fruit of the Spirit is "love, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (*Gal.* 5,22-23). And these are the evidence of true faith.

21 The Spirit guides the development of the Church. In every age, as the Paraclete, he reminds us of all that Jesus said, leads us into all truth, and enables us to bear witness to salvation in Christ.

The Holy Spirit inspires Christians as they seek to obey Christ's commission to make disciples of all nations.

At the last God will triumph over sin and death and in fulfilment of his pledge of the Spirit bring all who love him to unending glory.

The Holy Spirit transforms the human community into the Kingdom of God

22 God inaugurated his Kingdom in Christ.

The coming of this Kingdom involves the transformation of the human community now marred

by sin with its resultant oppression and poverty into a community of justice, love and peace.

The Holy Spirit, applying the finished work of Christ, wills to accomplish this social and political transformation in and through people, especially in and through those who acknowledge the risen Christ as the Lord of history. And therefore we are to pray for, work toward, and hope for the attainment of this goal.

The present work of the Holy Spirit is the first fruits of this transformation (*Rom.* 8,23). Though we have no grounds for thinking that this transformation will be complete in this world, we nevertheless believe that all Christians must strive for it in order to bear witness to God's promise to complete this transformation in the world to come.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT, CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AND AUTHORITY

23 Still bearing in mind the signs of the work of the Spirit which we believe to be discernible today (cf above para. 6) we pass from general agreements on the Holy Spirit to considering Christian experience (seeing it as the Spirit's guiding and ordering work in the Church).

PART I CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Christian experience is a rich field largely unexplored at least in ecumenical dialogue.

We agree that "Life in the Spirit is human life lived out... to its utmost in consonance with God's gracious purpose" (cf above para. 13). It is faith's awareness of the Holy Spirit's initiative within the human heart, stimulating and guiding the believer to yet more faith and hope and love. Such awareness sees both the world and history as interpersonal, as lying within God's care and providence. This awareness is focussed in God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ and directed toward life together in the Church, in which the Holy Spirit presides, indwelling, inspiring and conforming Christians to the mind that was in Christ (*Pbil.* 2,5).

24 Christian religious experience includes the assurance of God's unmerited mercy in Christ, the inner witness of the Spirit that we are indeed children of God, pardoned and reconciled to the Father (*Rom.* 8,12-17). The same Spirit also guides the faithful to a knowledge of all the truth

as it is in Christ Jesus, and to an ever more faithful obedience to God's righteous rule within the human community at large. Despite our inability to manifest it perfectly, the fruit of the Spirit (*Gal.* 5, 22-23) is ever a potent factor in drawing others into Christian fellowship.

25 Both Catholics and Methodists have found in John Wesley's Christian experience and his comments on "experimental religion" an edifying instance of that to which we are pointing. After a full dozen years of faithful ministry in Christ's name and to the needy (in Oxford, in Lincolnshire and Georgia) Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed" and he came into an "assurance" that God had taken away his sins and had saved him from the law of sin and death (cf. *Journal*, May 24, 1738 (1)). Significantly, it was this deeply personal experience that led Wesley into a yet more effective ministry, still more deeply grounded in his awareness that it was the Holy Spirit who enabled him to communicate to others the gospel of salvation by faith and holiness in heart and life. Thus, the doctrine of the "witness of the Spirit" (i.e. the hinge of any idea of Christian experience) looms large in Wesley's teaching, early and late (*Discourse I*, 1748, and *Discourse II*, 1764). It must be acknowledged that later Methodist theologians have tended to be more "rationalistic" or more "pragmatic". However we have found new meanings in the evident similarities between Wesley and the mainstream of Catholic spirituality. This convergence could have significant implications for our own growing spiritual awareness of "oneness in Christ" and for the future of the cause of Christian unity. Thus we have agreed that a reclamation of our complex heritage by both sides would benefit our respective communities and also enhance our present experience of unity in the Spirit.

26 In the Post-Reformation Roman Catholic tradition generally, it has been the saints and spiritual masters, rather than the scholastic theologians, who have stressed the centrality of Christian experience. In this matter, however, Vatican II appears as a turning point. The Council documents speak frequently of the transforming activi-

(1) "About a quarter before nine, while he (the reader of Luther's Preface to Romans) was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from sin and death" (cf Dublin report, note 6 to no. 12, which recalls that Methodists do not see "assurance" as "a form of certainty which removes the need for hope")

ties of the Holy Spirit, in persons, in the Church, in the world. They stress the task of discerning "the signs of the times" and of the Spirit's leading in these shadowed, changing times. It is not an exaggeration to say that these post-conciliar years have witnessed a rediscovery within the Catholic fold of Christian faith as "experience", understood afresh as intimacy with Christ in prayer and as liberating presence in persons and communities. The most evident signs of this "new spirit" include the rise of various centres of spirituality, houses of prayer, the charismatic renewal, cursillos and marriage-encounter movements, Bible study groups, new ministries, more active roles for women in the church, new efforts in the promotion of justice, new missionary ventures. These "signs" might quite properly remind Methodists of how their early "class meetings" could look if they, too, were updated.

27 We are able, therefore, to affirm together the crucial importance of "heart religion" since we agree that Christianity is a communion of believers, a "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 *John* 1, 1-3; for the Spirit's role in this, cf. III, 24, IV, 13). We form a mystical body whose Head is Christ (*Eph.* IV). Our common aim is to live together, in the Spirit, that Christ may be formed in us, our hope of glory, to the end that the Father's righteous will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven. The Holy Spirit is the prime artisan of our Christian experience, since it is he who "completes the work of Christ by placing himself as the innermost reality in each human being" (P. Evdokimov, in "Panagion et Panagia", BSFEM, 27, 1970, p. 61). It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to pray "Lord Jesus" and "Abba, Father"; it is he who fashions us in the image of Jesus; it is he who calls us into obedience to the Father's righteous rule on earth and beyond all this to our very first duty of glorifying God and enjoying him forever.

28 Together, then, we affirm that the Christian experience toward which we aspire as one includes mystery and clarity, feeling and reason, individual conscience and acknowledged authority, charisms and sacraments, spiritual exercises and service, individual and communal "discernments of spirits", local community and worldwide mission, fidelity to the past and openness to the present and future. We are agreed that Christian experience requires for its development the disciplines of prayer and devotion, the truth accessible in Holy Scriptures, the nourishment of the sacraments, the encour-

agement that comes from God's abundant gifts of grace and wisdom, for witness and service in the world.

29 Further, since it is in our totality as human persons that God joins us to himself, we are agreed that our affective states are also subject to the Spirit's absolute "prevenience". As we seek to be instructed by the Scriptures and by the spiritual treasures of the Christian tradition, our "spiritual senses" are developed to greater and greater keenness. In the Spirit, we see the Lord, hear his voice, taste his sweetness, breathe the fragrance of his presence, experience the healing power and the gift of new life of him who dwells in our hearts and speaks to us through the witness and need of others. At the same time, this experience is open to the rule of reason and to all responsible uses of practical knowledge. "Knowledge and vital piety" belong together, as correctives to imbalances from either side. By the same token, there must be careful balancing between the voice of individual conscience and the voice of legitimate external authority, in church or society — by the constant acknowledgement that both conscience and all external authorities are regulated by the Word of God, by the faith of the Church and by the shared experience of the Christian faithful.

30 Catholics and Methodists agree that progress in purification from sin and its effects as well as growth in holiness, namely love of God and neighbour, requires the development of our God-given powers of spiritual discernment in individual and social experience. We rejoice in our mutual discoveries of significant resources in our respective traditions which aid such development, such as the *Sermons* and spiritual directives of John Wesley and, say, the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius Loyola. We are convinced that as we recover and reclaim this rich mutual heritage for ourselves, we might grow closer to each other on a deeper level.

31 We also rejoice to recognize the emergence of new communities of fellow Christians who are seeking to support each other in their Christian witness and service — as what St. Ignatius spoke of as "friends in the Lord". These experiences in community demand of all who share in them unfeigned fidelity in faith, voluntary moral discipline and sacrificial service. They call us all to a livelier concern for more apt understanding of Holy Scriptures as we are guided by the same Spirit who inspired them. Equally, we acknowledge

ourselves as under the imperatives of love that follow from the summons to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, in our lives and in his world. The Holy Spirit is God's first gift to those who believe and to all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of the Father. Out of these shared convictions, we call upon all our sisters and brothers in Christ to join in more ardent pursuit of these higher levels of Christian experience and more effective ways of expressing our faith, hope and love in and to the world for which Christ died. In this way we shall be drawn into an actual communion in Christ and, as we may hope, more readily thereafter into *communio in sacris*, full sacramental fellowship.

32 Our respective liturgical traditions give expression to this common faith:

"Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord", (Methodist Service of Holy Communion: and Roman Missal, Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit).

"Father all-powerful, and ever living God, we do well, always and everywhere, to give you thanks; in you we live and move and have our being. Each day you show us a Father's love; your Holy Spirit, within us, gives us on earth the hope of unending joy. Your gift of the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is the foretaste and promise of the Paschal Feast of heaven...".

(*Roman Missal*, Preface VI for Sundays in Ordinary Time).

PART II THE HOLY SPIRIT AND AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

33 To men and women sealed by the Spirit in baptism, gathered in the Church, in the communion of Christ's gift of himself, Christ's authority is mediated through the Spirit, who is Love, and hence all authority that flows from this source is part of God's good gift. Whether it be the personal authority of holiness or the charisma of episcopate conferred by the Spirit on the ordained ministry, whether it be teaching or disciplinary, authority implies that what is propounded, com-

manded or recommended ought to be accepted on the ground that it comes from this source.

34 There is no disagreement that the Church has authority to teach. In the Church, the revelation of God in Christ comes to us through Scripture, and to maintain God's people in the truth is the loving work of the Spirit in the Church. But this maintenance is not a matter of mere repetition of formulae. The Spirit moves the Church to constant reflection on the Scriptures which he himself inspired and on their traditional interpretation, so that she may speak with undiminished authority to men in different times and places, in different social and cultural settings, facing new and difficult problems. This is not of course to question the abiding importance of credal statements and such Conciliar pronouncements as the Chalcedonian definition. The enduring validity of these does not restrict the power of the Spirit to speak in new ways to the Church, whose living voice never speaks in isolation from its living past. It stands under the living word of God. The old oppositions of Scripture and Tradition have given way to an understanding which we share, that Scripture in witness to the living tradition from which it arose has a normative role for the total tradition of the Church as it lives and is guided still by the Spirit of truth.

35 Ours is not the only dialogue in which special difficulties have been voiced, and persist, in the matter of papal claims and the character of dogmatic definitions (Paul VI's address to S.P.C.U. plenary 1968). We should take notice of the progress of other dialogues, but we believe that emotions surrounding such relatively modern terms as infallibility and irreformability can be diminished if they are looked at in the light of our shared doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit. The papal authority, no less than any other within the Church, is a manifestation of the continuing presence of the Spirit of Love in the Church or it is nothing. Indeed it should in its exercise be pre-eminently such a manifestation. It was declared at Vatican I to be "for the building up and not the casting down of the church" — whether of the local Church or the communion of local Churches.

36 This primary aspect has been obscured by the emotions and polemics surrounding such terms as infallibility and universal and immediate jurisdiction. As with other dogmas, the terms which express the dogma of 1870 belong to their time,

and must be understood in the context of that time and of the debates of that era. The truth behind them is capable of fuller understanding in new settings by all concerned. Already Vatican II's Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and other documents have done something to adjust an imbalance left by the unfinished business of Vatican I.

The terms referred to are not to be explained away: from different standpoints we are agreed that this would be neither useful nor honest. Yet they are not claims about human qualities or glorifications of an office. They are to be understood in the light of the total conception and the total responsibility of teaching and disciplinary office in the Church — a pastoral office mirroring the constant presence and solicitude of the Spirit within the Church, leading into truth and disciplining in love. Thus, and thus only, whatever its forms and nomenclature, can any authority be understood and legitimised.

However the claims implied in such terms are circumscribed and clarified, it is unlikely that Methodists in the foreseeable future will feel comfortable with them. But Methodist awareness of the papacy has enlarged and greatly altered in recent times, and the general idea of a universal service of unity within the Church, a primacy of charity mirroring the presence and work in the Church of the Spirit who is love, may well be a basis for increased understanding and convergence.

37 We have said above that the personal authority of holiness (para. 33) also shows the Spirit present and at work. This points to the question of a relationship which we discussed as long ago as Denver (1971) — that of authority and conscience. This has often been seen less as a relationship than as a Protestant/Catholic antithesis. If what we have agreed so far is true, this view can only be a distortion. That authority is a service of the Gospel, that the assent of faith is free or nothing, that the one witnesses to the other, no Catholic will deny: that Christian conscience is formed within the life of the Church, which is life in the Spirit, no Methodist will dispute. More questions on this relationship must arise in our next phase of work, on practical, ethical and moral judgments, but these agreed principles will apply.

38 We have agreed that:

"The coming of this Kingdom involves the transformation of the human community now marred by sin with its resultant oppression and poverty into a community of justice, love and peace" (n. 22 above).

We are not under the illusion that the signs of the activity of the Holy Spirit we started by pointing to are signs to be found everywhere. There is much cause for disquiet, in the impatience and contempt, not for tyrannical and arbitrary authority but for the fundamental authority which alone makes ordered life possible. The contempt for human life, for diplomatic immunity, for our natural inheritance, are saddening signs of the times. What we said above about the criteria by which alone authority can be understood or legitimised clearly applies, for Christians, to all authority ecclesiastical or secular. Hence, it is that we see concern for the poor and the oppressed and for the conservation of God's gifts as one test by which all authority is to be judged. All arbitrary and absolute authority, denying the respect due to human beings and to creation, is unchristian.

III. CHRISTIAN MORAL DECISIONS

INTRODUCTION

39 The Christian vocation is heard in the teaching of Christ, the Saviour, who instructed his disciples to "be perfect therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5,48). The perfection of God is his love, for God is love (1 Jn. 4,8,12). The Christian is aware that discipleship of Jesus means imitation of him whose love was so great that he did not hesitate to lay down his life for all (Jn. 15,13). The Church announces the totality of the mystery of Christ. It echoes his call to us to be converted and to follow along his way, stressing in all things the primacy of charity. The Church is the heir of divine revelation and proclaims Christ and his message to further his mission and to summon men and women to respond in faith, hope and love.

40 The Church is also called "God's people" (1 Peter 2,9-10). It is within the setting of the Christian fellowship that one hears the call of Christ and is moved to respond with the fullness of one's being. The call is never ending and the response should be constant and willing. Through the power of the presence of the Holy Spirit, God's gift to his people, the Church accepts responsibility for taking part in the formation of the individual conscience, always aware that it is the secret core and sanctuary where each of us enjoys an intimacy with God. The Christian derives much benefit from the riches of the Church, i.e. the Scriptures,

the community, worship and teaching, all of which have their effect in order that each person may bring forth much fruit.

41 The Christian likewise is called to live in the setting of creation, and enjoys the society of men and women. Here the Church stands as a student and teacher. It learns from human developments and is enriched by advances in empirical sciences and behavioural studies. It thus becomes aware of human problems and difficulties and is prepared to bring its own insights and sensitivity to the search for solutions. It is strongly aware of the presence of evil which seeks to challenge the Kingdom of God. It therefore does not hesitate to identify and confront what is evil in order to preserve and affirm what is good.

The Church is likewise aware of a person's propensity to sin and failures. It supports every effort to answer the call to perfection. The Church acts in mercy and kindness but when challenged in matters of morality is compelled in the Spirit to speak.

42 The Lord has called us to repent and believe that the Good News and therefore this call to conversion should manifest itself in the activity of the Christian. We have said earlier that "We acknowledge ourselves as under the imperatives of love that follow from the summons to seek first the Kingdom of God and *his* righteousness, in our lives and in his world" and to pursue "more effective ways of expressing our faith, hope and love in and to the world for which Christ died" (cf. above, § 31).

We acknowledge that belief and behaviour, faith and works, should not be separated. Therefore issues of ethics and morality, which involve the relation between conscience and authority, are not peripheral to but at the heart of the faithful hearing of the Gospel.

43 Whether we see conscience as a separate faculty or as the mobilising of all our faculties to discern the good and shun evil, we agree that the human capacity we call conscience is the gift of God and is of vital significance for the moral life.

Conscience does not act as an independent source of moral information. Since people have the responsibility of fostering, protecting and following their conscience, it needs to be formed and informed and must therefore be open to guidance from authority.

Therefore in moral decision-making, as in coming to terms with doctrinal formulations, the

Christian is one who stands under authority. The normative authority is Scripture interpreted in the light of Tradition (the living voice of the Church), Reason and Experience (cf. above, § 34).

44 People have both the responsibility to see that their conscience is open to authoritative guidance and the right freely and faithfully to follow that conscience. Thus we agree that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to conscience, or to be restrained from acting according to conscience, "as long as the just requirements of public order are observed" (Vatican II, *Declaration on Religious Freedom*, n. 2) and the rights of others are not infringed.

We are agreed that "freedom of conscience" does not mean "make up your mind on moral matters with no reference to any other authority than your own sense of right and wrong". There may come a point when the Church is compelled to say, "If you persist in exercising your freedom of conscience in this way you put yourself outside the Church".

45 We agree in asserting the importance of natural law which God himself enables us to perceive. In this perception the supernatural gift of prevenient grace plays a major part. "No man is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural: it is more properly termed *preventing grace*... Everyone, unless he be one of the small number whose conscience is seared with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience" (J. Wesley, Works, VI, 485). The natural law which is thus discerned stems from the generous provision of the Creator God.

What is revealed in Jesus Christ, our Incarnate Redeemer, is God's hidden purpose already being worked out through the whole of his creation; the "ethics of revelation" do not negate but are consistent with the created order within which God brings human nature to its fulfilment. ("Our human nature is the work of your hands made still more wonderful by your work of redemption", Collect of Christmas Day, Roman Breviary). Therefore moral theologies based on natural law and those that appeal more directly to an "ethic of revelation" need not be in conflict. Consequently the moral judgements the Christian makes, as a Christian, are not in fulfilment of an imposed divine imperative alien to his own well-being but are a response to the will of God to enhance and fulfil all that is genuinely human. While we can

distinguish between the duties one has as a member of the Church and as a member of the human community, these should be seen as harmonious, with conscience providing guidance in both spheres.

We recognize that in both our Churches official statements and actions are frequently assigned greater authority than they are entitled to. Conflict about what weight to give to such statements and actions can thereby arise within the individual conscience, and between Christians.

46 We have already indicated (above, §§ 27 and 34) that we are in agreement that the Church must always be subject to the headship of the Incarnate Lord and that the Holy Spirit makes Christ present to us, so mediating his authority to us in love through Word and Sacraments; these in turn are witnessed to by the worshipping community and by Creeds and Confessions. Only then do we come to the point of divergence, which must not be allowed to obscure this agreement. Within this context, what persons or bodies in the Church can give guidance on moral issues and with what authority?

47 In both our Churches we have various procedures for offering guidance on moral issues, and this Commission recognizes the need for closer study and comparison of these procedures. In neither Church does the following out of these procedures always match the ideal, for each Church recognizes "how great a distance lies between the message she offers and the human failings of those to whom the Gospel is entrusted" (Vatican II: Church in the Modern World, 43).

In both our Churches we are under ecclesiastical authority, but we recognize a difference in that some pronouncements of the Catholic Church are seen as requiring a higher degree of conscientious assent from Catholics than the majority of pronouncements of the responsible bodies of Methodism require of Methodists.

Where there are differences between us on what decisions should be made and what actions taken on particular moral and ethical issues, we need to look not just at these differences but at what gives rise to them, in each case enquiring whether they reflect only social and historical conditions or fundamental divisions over issues of conscience and authority.