

DRAFT RESPONSE TO THE EUCHARIST STATEMENT : MILL HILL

1. In spite of the firm statement of the 'once for all' nature of Christ's sacrifice, some have still been anxious that the term anamnesis may cover the reintroduction of a repeated immolation. Others have doubted whether the term sufficiently implies the reality indicated by traditional sacrificial language concerning the eucharist, and in particular that the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Mass as a sacrifice has sufficiently been affirmed. Moreover, the accuracy and adequacy of the Commission's exegesis of 'anamnesis' have been questioned on the ground that other possible interpretations of this word have been disregarded. We acknowledge that the Commission's theology, here as elsewhere, is not the only possible theology, but it is an agreed theology which has led us to consensus.

Some critics have been unhappy at the realistic language used in Windsor, and have questioned such words as 'become' and 'change'; there have also been requests for a greater emphasis on the eschatological dimension of the eucharist, but in our opinion this is not an area of disagreement between us. Others have wondered whether the permanence of Christ's presence in the eucharistic elements has been sufficiently protected, with a consequent request for a treatment of the reserved sacrament, and of devotion to it. Similarly there has been request for clarification of the Commission's attitude to receptionism, and of the apparent inconsistency

in speaking of Christ's presence both 'in' and 'through' the eucharist.

2. Behind these criticisms there lies a profound but often unarticulated anxiety that the Commission has been using new theological language to hide basic controversial issues. Related to this anxiety is the further question as to the nature of the agreement the Commission has claimed: is there an ambiguity (either deliberate or indeliberate) in the language of the Statement which enables members of the two churches to see their own faith in Windsor without real consensus? (This is a criticism which has been made of all three documents).
  
3. In general the Commission has sought to avoid the use of polemical terms. Our response to the criticism of the use of the term anamnesis is that the Commission deliberately used the term because of the Biblical account of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper:

- (a) Paul, I Cor. XI, 25: 'Do this in commemoration of me'.  
Luke XXII, 19: ditto
  
- (b) Justin (Apol. I 66), recalling the Last Supper writes:  
Jesus, taking bread and having given thanks, said,  
"Do this for my memorial, this is my body"; and  
likewise taking the cup and giving thanks he said,  
"This is my blood".

The Greek tradition corroborates the use of the word, and in the Latin tradition, when Trent elucidates the will of Christ regarding

the relation between his own sacrifice and the eucharist, Trent used the words "commemoratio" and "memoria" (Section XXII cap.I). As regards contemporary theological approaches, it is noteworthy that this same terminology is adopted by Faith and Order in its document (WOC 1975) on the Eucharist.

Tradition understood the word as belonging to the order of sacramental realities. In the sacramental order the once-for-all event of salvation becomes effective in the present through the action of the Holy Spirit. With regard to what Christ accomplished for our redemption, Christian doctrine has used the word "sacrifice" in two ways, intimately associated but at different levels. In the New Testament "sacrifice" refers to the historical events of Christ's saving work for us. The liturgical tradition of the Church used the same word also to designate in the eucharistic celebration the anamnesis of this historic event. Therefore, it is possible to say at the same time that there is only one unrepeatable sacrifice in the historic sense, but that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sacrifice in the liturgical sense, provided that it is clear that this is not a repetition of the historical sacrifice.

Hence there remains one, historic, unrepeatable sacrifice, offered once for all by Christ and accepted once for all by the Father. In the liturgical action of the Church, Christ in the Holy Spirit unites his people in a sacramental way with this unique sacrifice. And so, even though the Church is active in the celebration of the memorial, this adds nothing to the efficacy of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, for this action is itself the fruit of this sacrifice.

As the community of believers, gathered together by the Holy Spirit and already redeemed, it is the Body of Christ, offering and presenting itself as a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice to God. When, therefore, the Church celebrates the Eucharist and thanks God for the gift of Christ's sacrifice, its members identify themselves with the will of Christ, who has offered himself to the Father on their behalf, and, in this response, "enter into the movement of his self-offering".

4. Criticism has been evoked by the Statement's use of the word 'become' to describe how bread and wine can be sacramentally the Body and Blood of Christ in the eucharist. It has been suspected of expressing a materialistic conception of Christ's presence. The footnote on the word transubstantiation, which speaks also of 'change', has seemed to some to confirm this. It is feared that this implied a view of Christ's presence in the eucharist which is limited to a physical presence in the elements.

In order to respond to these comments, the Commission recalls the fact that it is the glorified Lord himself whom the community of the faithful encounters in the eucharistic celebration through the preaching of the word, through the fellowship of the Lord's Supper and in the heart of the believer, and, in a sacramental way, through the gifts of his Body and Blood, already given in the cross for their salvation.

His Body and Blood are given through the action of the Holy Spirit, appropriating bread and wine that they may become the food of the new creation already inaugurated by the coming of Christ.

'Becoming' does not here imply a material change. The liturgical use of the word does not imply that the bread and wine become Christ's Body and Blood in such a way that in the eucharistic celebration the presence is limited to the consecrated elements. It does not imply that Christ becomes present in the Eucharist in the same manner that

he was present in his earthly life. It does not imply that this becoming follows the physical laws of this world. Here we are indicating a sacramental presence in which God uses the elements of this world to convey the realities of the new creation: bread for this life becomes (the) B(b)read of life.

In the sacramental order the realities of faith become present in visible and tangible signs, enabling the Christian to avail himself of the fruits of the once-for-all redemption. In the eucharist the human person encounters in faith the person of Christ in his sacramental Body and Blood. The community, the Body of Christ, by partaking together of the sacramental Body of the Risen Lord, grows into the unity God intends for his Church. In fact, in the purpose of God, the ultimate change that is sought is the transformation of men into the image of Christ. The bread and wine become the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ in order that the Christian community may become more truly what it already is, the Body of Christ.

5. This can only be realised when the Eucharistic gifts are received in faith. In the mystery of the Eucharist we have to discern not one but two complementary movements within an indissoluble unity - that of Christ giving his Body and Blood and that of the communicants feeding upon them in their hearts by faith. As a result of this duality of movement, some traditions have placed a special emphasis on the association of the Real Presence with the elements and others on the association of the Real Presence with reception by faith. In the past acute difficulties have arisen when one or

other of these emphases has become almost exclusive. In the opinion of the Commission neither emphasis is incompatible with eucharistic faith provided it is expressed in such a way as not to deny the complementary movement emphasised by the other position. Eucharistic doctrine must hold together these two movements since the Eucharist is that sacrament of the New Covenant in which Christ gives himself to his people so that they may receive him in faith.

6. The practice of reserving the Sacrament for reception after the dispersal of the congregation dates back to the early days of the Church. In so far as it maintains the duality of movement of which we have spoken, (for example, communion for the sick), this practice clearly accords with the purpose of the institution of the Eucharist. But later there developed a tendency to stress the veneration of Christ's presence in the consecrated elements. In some parts of the Church this tendency became so pronounced that the original purpose of reservation was in danger of becoming totally obscured. We contend that wherever this occurs it is a real abuse and unacceptable to either church, because it appears to be totally dissociated from the eucharistic celebration of the community.

In discussing the question of reservation, we must begin by clarifying further our understanding of the Eucharist. Adoration in the celebration of the Eucharist is first and foremost offered to the Father. It is to lead us to the Father that Christ unites us to himself through our receiving of his Body and Blood. While

we also adore Christ in the Eucharist, it is always Christ gloryifying his Father whom we adore. The movement of all our adoration is through, with, and in Christ in the power of the Spirit. The whole eucharistic action, of which adoration is properly a part, is a continuous movement in which Christ offers himself in his sacramental Body and Blood to his people and in which they receive him in faith and thanksgiving.

Consequently, reservation for the purpose of taking communion to the sick and dying is rightly understood as an extension of the eucharistic celebration. Differences arise between those who would only practice reservation for this reason, and those who would also regard it as a means of eucharistic devotion. For the latter, adoration of Christ in the reserved sacrament should be regarded as an extension of eucharistic worship, even though it does not include sacramental reception, which remains the primary purpose of reservation (Eucharistiae Sacramentum, 1973, para.5). We agree in regarding as unacceptable any dissociation of this devotion from its ultimate purpose, which is communion in Christ of all his members.

7. In spite of this clarification, others still find any kind of adoration of the reserved sacrament unacceptable. They believe that it is in fact impossible in such a practice truly to hold together the dual movements of which we have spoken: and that this devotion can hardly fail to produce such an emphasis upon the association of Christ's sacramental presence with the consecrated bread and wine as to suggest a static and too localised presence that disrupts



the movement as well as the balance of the whole eucharistic action. (Cfr. end of Article 28).

The fact that there can be a disagreement of practice, even when there is a common eucharistic faith, clarifies what we mean by a "substantial" agreement. Since this divergence of opinion can exist even within the same Church, as is in fact the case, it shows that a difference of devotional expression may well co-exist with a real consensus on the essential features of the eucharistic faith. Supporters of both positions justify their practice by their intention to be true to the common faith. Different cultural and historical backgrounds and diverse Christian traditions oblige the Church to express its faith in a variety of forms by which, despite divergencies, the common faith may be lived out and enriched. This important principle applies not only to the Eucharist.