

COMMENT ON WINDSOR STATEMENT(ARC XI, Jan.24,1972)

The United States Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation (ARC) rejoices that the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) at its third meeting (Windsor, Sept. 7, 1971) issued an "Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine". In accordance with the suggestion of the International Commission, the United States Consultation discussed this Statement at some length at its eleventh meeting (Jan. 20-24, 1972) and offers its initial evaluation.

We recognise that according to the intention of its authors, the Agreed Statement is not a celebration of a reconciliation already achieved between our two Communion but rather a group consensus which, it is hoped, will serve as an instrument or catalyst for such reconciliation. Consequently, the statement should not be viewed as a complete and definitive body of eucharistic doctrine. It is a marker along the way to a fuller and more embracing consensus.

In its broad outlines, the statement meets with our warm approval. We accept it as a helpful study document to promote full communion between our Churches. We especially commend the expressed intention of the Commission "to seek a deeper understanding of the reality of the eucharist which is consonant with biblical teaching and with our common inheritance" (no.1). In addition, we welcome the real progress shown in this statement which, in our judgment, expresses positions that may be accepted by both Anglicans and Roman Catholics in loyalty to their respective Churches.

In its closing paragraph, we note, the statement claims that the participants believe that they "have reached substantial agreement on the doctrine of the eucharist." We agree that if all Anglicans and Roman Catholics were to see this statement as an adequate expression of the essentials of their eucharistic faith, as the signers evidently did, divergencies on eucharistic doctrine would no longer constitute an obstacle to full unity between our two Communion. The majority of the members of our Consultation, both on the Anglican and on the Roman Catholic side, find the Agreed Statement substantially adequate.

However, as the authors of the statement well know, there are in both our Communion important constituencies who would not be satisfied with the Agreed Statement. Even in our own Consultation there are a few who find the statement, on one point or another,

either too vague or too restrictive for them to accept it as an adequate expression of the essentials of their eucharistic faith.

The hesitations voiced in our Consultation have focused on two main issues - sacrifice and real presence. Regarding sacrifice some feel that a statement of this kind should clearly affirm that the eucharist is a sacrifice. While the Agreed Statement can be read as implicitly affirming this, some Anglicans and Roman Catholics, even in our own Consultation, feel that this point needs to be made explicit before sufficient agreement can be said to have been reached. In this connection some would like to see greater clarity as to the notion of sacrifice as the word is used in the statement.

With regard to real presence, some members of our Consultation found that the first sentence of paragraph 6, affirming that "the bread and wine... in this mystery, become his body and blood." could, taken in itself, suggest an unduly materialistic understanding of the real presence. In some future modification, this sentence could perhaps be phrased in a more inclusive way, so as to do justice to those traditions that insist as well on a more dynamic or spiritual interpretation of the real presence. In this way the statement could hopefully be made acceptable to a wide constituency who might not be satisfied with the present form of the statement.

Recognising the great progress represented by this important statement of the International Commission, and the desirability of extending and deepening the consensus that the members of the Commission have already found among themselves, we invite the people of our respective Communion in the United States to join together in studying the statement thoughtfully and prayerfully. We commit ourselves to facilitating this process in whatever way we can. In this connection we should like to call attention to the statement of principles regarding methodology which our Consultation has adopted at its current meeting. These principles, we believe, are pertinent to the present discussion of eucharistic doctrine. In view of the ultimately ineffable nature of the eucharistic mystery, theological reflection will always fall short of the reality we experience in eucharistic worship.