

3. The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission

I. The Windsor Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine

At its meeting at Windsor September 1st-8th, 1971, the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission produced an Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine. Permission was then given by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Vatican for the publication of the Agreed Statement on December 31st, 1971. There has since been an immense amount of comment on and correspondence about the Agreed Statement in the religious and secular press, in journals and reviews. Commentaries on it have been written by the Reverend J.W. Charley: "The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreement on the Eucharist" (Grove Books) and by Bishop Alan Clark: "Agreement on the Eucharist" (R.C. Ecumenical Commission). The Statement has been translated into French, German, Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Swahili, Japanese, and possibly other languages.

A. Anglican response so far to the Agreed Statement

The Archbishop of Canterbury in January 1972 expressed the hope that it would be widely read and the belief that "it will be valued, not only as an ecumenical essay, but also as a simple guide for practical teaching on the meaning of the Sacrament". In November 1972 the Archbishop of Sydney spoke of "the ambiguities that are bound to result when the parties on each side are inclined to 'soft-pedal' traditional dogma in their quest for a mutually acceptable formula". He added, however, that "the Agreed Statement affords great encouragement to biblically-minded Roman Catholics and Anglicans alike".

The following Anglican Church Bodies have so far made comments on the Agreed Statement:

1. Episcopal Church of the United States of America

On 29th October, 1971, the House of Bishops welcomed the Statement and commended it to the Episcopal Church "for study and for action at the next General Convention".

2. Church of the Province of New Zealand

In April 1972 the General Synod commended the study of the Statement "as an ecumenical essay and as a guide to the meaning of the Eucharist", referred it to a Commission, which reported in November 1972, and commended it to Anglican-Roman Catholic study groups.

3. Church of the Province of South Africa

On 10th November 1972 the Provincial Standing Committee passed a resolution which "takes note of the Agreed Statement .... commends it to the Church for study, and requests that a resolution supporting the Statement be placed on the agenda of Provincial Synod" which meets in November 1973.

4. Church of Ireland

The House of Bishops is making a comment on the Agreed Statement which welcomes it and commends the Commission's approach and theological method.

5. Church of England

In May 1973 the Convocations of Canterbury and York are debating the resolution: "That this Convocation welcomes the Agreed Statement on the Eucharist produced by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and commends it to the General Synod for consideration."

N.B. In February 1972 the Church of England Evangelical Council gave a partial welcome to the Statement but asked for clarification and revision, particularly of the section on the Presence of Christ.

B. Roman Catholic response so far to the Agreed Statement

The following Roman Catholic Church Bodies have made official comments:

1. In March 1972 the Theological Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales gave a warm welcome to "an important advance in mutual understanding of the Eucharist" but asked for clearer statement of its sacrificial nature and of the role of the Christian people in the abiding offering of Christ.
2. The Canadian Episcopate and Theologians commended the Statement's fidelity to Catholic doctrine and welcomed its general release for discussion but felt a danger in the lack of reference to the adoration of the Sacrament and a malaise over the note on transubstantiation.
3. The Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S.A. Catholic Bishops' Conference, after comments by its Theological Committee and by A.R.C. (U.S.A.) expressed the hope that "on the principles of the Agreed Statement, whatever differences appear to divide the Anglican and Roman Catholic Communions on the subject of the Eucharist can be solved." (? September 1972)

C. Anglican-Roman Catholic Commissions' response to the Agreed Statement

A.R.C. IX U.S.A. (21st January 1972) welcomed the Statement, but with reservations on Presence and Sacrifice. The Joint Study Group in Scotland felt the same, adding that we need to examine "what precisely belonged to faith and what to theology in our approach to the Eucharist." The English A.R.C. in March 1972 recommended the Statement for study by joint groups at local level. The South Pacific A.R.C. in February 1973 "fully approved" the Agreed Statement. There are other Anglican-Roman Catholic Commissions in Belgium, Canada, France, Japan, Papua-New Guinea, Southern Africa and Wales, which have studied the Agreed Statement.

D. The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission's survey of reactions to the Agreed Statement

A Sub-Commission met at Gazzada from August 27th-30th, 1972, prior to the full meeting of the Commission there and classified reactions to the Agreed Statement as follows:

1. Rejection

- (a) A priori rejection by some Anglicans and Roman Catholics - as expected!
- (b) Rejection by Roman Catholics because the "traditional" position was not expressly stated; and by Anglicans because certain 'Roman errors' (particularly over transubstantiation, presence, and sacrifice) were not proscribed.

2. Qualified and Critical Welcome

- (i) Sacrifice: The majority welcomed the clarification of the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist which the Statement contains. Criticism was made, however, of (a) inadequate reference to the Resurrection; (b) lack of explicit affirmation that the Eucharist is a sacrifice; (c) little reference to Christ's offering to his Father; or to (d) the Church's participation in the offering of the Eucharist; (e) inadequacy of explanation of sacrifice in terms of "Memorial-meal"; (f) obscuring of safeguards written into the Thirty-Nine Articles.
- (ii) Presence: Those Roman Catholics and Anglicans who are accustomed to reserve the sacrament were anxious that the permanence of Christ's presence was not stated. Some Evangelicals were concerned at the realist language exemplified by the use of the word "become" (the body and blood of Christ).
- (iii) Transubstantiation: Some Roman Catholics cannot accept the Note which appears to them to curtail the full doctrine of Transubstantiation. Some Anglicans are concerned that the Note may contain a cryptic endorsement of Transubstantiation.

3. Favourable Reactions have been received from (a) many whose welcome of the Agreement is based on non-theological factors, including those who would always welcome an agreement just because it is an agreement; (b) many who have been prepared for the document by their ecumenical involvement in joint prayer and study; (c) those who find it a more positive and comprehensive expression of the meaning of the Eucharist, and welcome the assurance that this is a shared Eucharistic faith already lived in our two Communion; (d) those who welcome its freshness of approach, its clarity and conciseness.

In the Press Release issued at the end of the Gazzada meeting the Commission commented that "it was felt that some of the objections arose from a misunderstanding of the scope of the document. Other difficulties, it was hoped, would dissolve in the light of background material to the Windsor Statement which is to be published (in the 1973 No.2 issue of ONE IN CHRIST in April 1973). The Commission felt that some major questions would be further clarified after the publication of the projected documents on Ministry and Authority. At this time, therefore, it seems premature for the Commission to attempt detailed answers to queries and objections which have been received."

II. The Present Work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission is due to meet at St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, August 28th - September 6th, 1973, to continue the study of Ministry to which its meeting at Gazzada in September 1972 was devoted. Further preparatory work is being done by groups in England, Canada, and South Africa, and by a Sub-Commission which is to meet in Norwich in June 1973 to work towards a draft statement on Ministry. It remains to be seen whether or not the Commission is able at its Canterbury meeting to produce an Agreed Statement on the doctrine of the Ministry.