

## ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

THE EUCHARIST

A working paper prepared by the Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission, Southern Africa, May 1970, on the basis of the document The Eucharist issued by the International Commission at Windsor, January 1970.

I THE CENTRALITY OF THE EUCHARIST IN THE LIFE OF  
THE PEOPLE OF GOD

1. It is through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that God has reconciled men to Himself and, in Him, offers unity to all mankind. Our relationship with one another as children of God is inaugurated by baptism into Christ through the Holy Spirit, and is expressed and deepened through the Eucharist.
2. The centrality of the Eucharist in the obedience and worship of the people of God derives from its institution by Our Lord on the night before He died. Whether or not the Last Supper was itself a Passover meal, it is in the context of the Passover that its institution and the Cross must be understood. The Passover was the celebration of Israel's deliverance from slavery and of their constitution as God's people sealed by the Covenant of Sinai. It foreshadowed the universal deliverance from sin offered for the reconciliation of all men by Christ through the New Covenant sealed with His blood.
3. Christ made upon the Cross the one true perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. He was raised from the dead and entered into His glory. He is the head of His body, the Church, who through the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist deepens the union of His members with Himself in His death and resurrection.
4. When the Church gathers for the Eucharist it is Christ crucified and risen who gives thanks and unites us with His thanksgiving for all God's mercies in creation and redemption.

It is Christ, priest and victim, who offers to the Father the total self-surrender which found its supreme expression in His death and unites us with His self-offering.

It is Christ who proclaims forgiveness of our sins and identifies us with His perfect obedience.

It is Christ who unites us with Him in His intercession for ourselves and for all mankind.

It is from Christ that we receive this bread of life and the cup of salvation, and in Him that we are offered anew to the Father's service.

In the Eucharist therefore it is the whole Church which shares Christ's priesthood and is associated with His sacrifice, although the ordained minister who presides has particular liturgical functions as the representative of Christ and His people.
5. It is through our obedience to Christ's command, Do this in remembrance of Me, that the Eucharist has become the central action of Christ in His body the Church, whereby its life is built up, its fellowship strengthened and its mission furthered. It is in the Eucharist that the Church becomes most intensely itself; for the identity of the Church as the Body of Christ is both expressed and effectively fostered by its being gathered around and partaking of His Body and Blood. In the Sacrament of the Eucharist the visible elements have present in them a spiritual reality: the crucified and risen Christ, who through them according to His promise offers Himself to all His people.

6. When His people gather for the Eucharist to commemorate His saving acts for our redemption, Christ, sacramentally present, makes effective among us the eternal benefits of His victory on the Cross and elicits and renews our response of faith, thanksgiving and self-surrender. This response must inform the whole life of every Christian and be continually expressed in all his activities. "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Rom. 12:1.)

7. In the Eucharist we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Everything that is offered to us in the eucharistic gift belongs to the age of fulfilment, inaugurated by Christ's coming into the world. We look back with thanksgiving to what Christ has done for us: we greet Him present among us: we look forward to His final coming in the fullness of His kingdom when "the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be everything to everyone". (1 Cor. 15:28.)

## II EUCHARISTIC LANGUAGE

1. In the course of the Church's history several traditions have developed in expressing Christian understanding of the Eucharist: for example, various names have become customary as descriptions of the Eucharist, viz., the Lord's Supper, the Mass, the Holy Communion, the Liturgy, the Holy Mysteries. Some of these have acquired emotive content after divisions have arisen, and have been taken as slogans. Perhaps the Eucharist has become the most universally acceptable term, since all are agreed that the giving of thanks over bread and wine constituted a basic theme in all primitive Christian liturgies. Underneath the use of differing terms lie the real problems of belief and practice.

2. God speaks to us using His material creation as a language. This is illustrated by the great value the Fathers placed upon signs and symbols, the mysteria of the Greek-speaking Church.

3. Christ and the early Church, in expressing the meaning of His death and resurrection, found the language of sacrifice indispensable. For the Hebrew, sacrifice was a traditional means of communication with God. This involved a wide range of expression, for example, the Passover, which was essentially a communal feast; the Day of Atonement, which was essentially expiatory; the Covenant, which was essentially the establishing of communion between God and man. The institution and celebration of the Last Supper, within the Passover setting, was one of the principal ways by which the sacrificial meaning of Christ's death and resurrection was expressed. Hence it was by a natural development that the Eucharist itself came to be described in sacrificial terms. In the mind of the early Church there was a close nexus between the Cross as a sacrifice and the Eucharist.

4. It was around this point that controversy was later to rage. Some parties took any sacrificial content in the Eucharist to detract from the 'once and for all' nature of Christ's self-offering on the Cross, because they thought it meant regarding the Eucharist as a repeatable sacrifice in its own right. Others insisted on the sacrificial character of the Eucharist and by their language and practices (for example, Chantry Masses) appeared to lend colour to these suspicions. This casse-tete can be avoided by recourse to the Passover. The events of the exodus were accepted by the Hebrews as having happened once and for all in history, and the annual Passover sacrifice was seen by them as the 'remembering' (i.e., the making effective in the present) of these events in the continuing life of Israel. Similarly the Covenant, though seen as once made on Mount Sinai, was regularly renewed.\* In the same way we all accept Christ's death and resurrection as having taken place once and for all in history. We therefore see the Eucharist as the regular 'remembering' of His historical self-offering in the continuing life of the Christian Church.

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\* See the meaning of the Hebrew root zkr and see the works of J. Jeremias, in particular The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, pp. 163-4.

5. This relationship between Christ's sacrifice and the Eucharist gave rise to the use in the Greek Church of the term mysterion. This was translated into Latin as sacramentum. Hence the Eucharist is seen in the Western Church as the sacrament of Christ's 'once and for all' sacrifice. Against this background we ought to be able to speak of the Eucharist in sacrificial terms, but when a phrase such as 'the Sacrifice of the Mass' is used, this raises in the minds of many Anglicans historical objections which stem from past controversies.
6. We suggest that the whole language of sacrifice be reconsidered, both in the light of Hebraic usage and also in the light of the growing irrelevance of the sacral terms when used in the modern Western situation. This situation might be met, for example, by St. Augustine's definition: *Sacrificium est omne opus quod agitur ut sancta societate inhaerzamus Deo.* (City of God, 10(b).) Such a reconsideration could have the effect of deepening our understanding with regard to the eucharistic sacrifice.
7. Another recovered insight of recent years has been the sense of the Eucharist as the community meal. This goes back far into Hebraic practice, not only of the Passover but of the predominant type of offering - the communal meal type of sacrifice (cf. Ex. 24; 1 Sam. 9:13.). Inherent in the idea of eucharistic sacrifice is that of the communal meal, which establishes fellowship between man and God, and man and man. This cardinal aspect of the Eucharist should not be neglected.
8. The mode of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist has often been a fruitful cause of discord in the Western Church. This has led to arguments focussed too narrowly on the way in which Christ is present in the consecrated bread and wine. Yet all agree that the presence of Christ in the eucharistic community is the ultimate meaning of the sacrament. The real presence of Christ in the elements, as understood by the Western Catholic tradition, should be seen as a dynamic presence, finding its fulfilment in the unity of the body of Christ and in the sanctification of the believer. The terms 'transubstantiation' and 'consubstantiation' were originally linked with a specific philosophical system and ought not therefore to be serious bones of theological contention. Perhaps the term 'real presence' has similar philosophical connexions, but it has a certain popular appeal, and even in the authentic Catholic tradition is to be distinguished from a purely local presence. Devotional language of the 'prisoner in the tabernacle' type implies a false understanding of the mode of the eucharistic presence.
9. Liturgical renewal, a thorough understanding of the origins of sacrifice, a deeper study of the use of typology and symbolism, and a careful consideration of all aspects of the Eucharist, should go a long way to overcome problems of the use of language.\*

### III EUCCHARISTIC PRACTICE

#### 1. Holy Communion

The Anglican Church, in common with the Eastern Churches and in conformity with the practice of the primitive Church, always administers Communion in both kinds. This practice is not intended to deny that the whole Christ is present in either species, but to show obedience to Our Lord's command, to adhere to primitive norms, and to express as fully as possible the unity of priest and people in sharing the eucharistic meal.

Anglicans find no insuperable practical difficulties in administering a common cup with reverence even to large numbers including children. If either element is finished before all have communicated provision is made in the rubrics of the Prayer Book for further consecration. If a large amount of the consecrated elements be left over, the priest consumes them himself or calls on some of the communicants present to assist him with their consumption.

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\* We ask for further study to be made of "The Emerging Consensus on the Eucharist", Faith and Order Commission of the W.C.C.

When it is difficult to convey the consecrated wine from the church building to sick persons it is Anglican practice to reserve the sacrament by intinction and to administer it in that manner or, less frequently, in one kind.

In the Roman Catholic Church a growing number of communicants are now aware of the desirability of receiving Communion in both kinds, and are availing themselves of the permission granted by Vatican II for this practice. It seems likely that the knowledge that this is practicable will stimulate the growth of this practice.

2. Admission to Holy Communion

It is on grounds of discipline not doctrine that Anglicans generally admit members to Communion only after their Confirmation. Confirmation is normally administered, after a period of instruction, to those between the ages of 9 and 15. Auricular Confession is not obligatory but may be recommended in preparation for both Confirmation and Holy Communion.

Roman Catholics admit children of about 7 years to Communion, frequently before they have been confirmed and sometimes before Confession.

In both our Churches these practices are at present being re-examined.

3. Reservation

"The Eucharistic bread and wine remain the Body and Blood of Our Lord as long as these elements exist." (Anglican - Orthodox Conference, Bucharest, 1935.)

In the Eucharist the Church offers adoration to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. It also adores Christ Himself present in the eucharistic elements, although in neither of our Churches is it regarded as normal to attend the Eucharist in order to adore without receiving Communion.

Adoration of Our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament is expressed within the eucharistic rite by many Anglicans in prayer, hymns, posture and gesture. Some Anglicans also engage in both public and private extra-liturgical devotions to Our Lord present in the Sacrament. Other Anglicans do not believe that such extra-liturgical devotions are justifiable; within the liturgy itself they would understand their adoration of Christ as directed to Christ in glory rather than to His presence in the elements.

Since Vatican II Roman Catholic thought has been directed towards emphasising the classical shape and action of the Eucharist involving a deeper and more active involvement of the laity in the liturgy. This has given a new balance to devotions focussed on the Reserved Sacrament.

We thankfully recognize the many points of agreement in eucharistic doctrine and practice between our two Churches, and believe that many more are emerging. We acknowledge however that there is not unanimity nor uniformity within the Anglican Communion on such matters as the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. Further study must be given to this subject in the light of consideration of the permissible limits of diversity in belief and practice within the unity of the Church.

4. Special Intentions

A phrase such as "We offer the Holy Sacrifice with special intention for N." would be acceptable to both Churches only if it is understood to mean that we plead Christ's 'once and for all' sacrifice on N's behalf.

5. Eucharist and Ministry in a divided Church

It is a scandal and paradox that although Baptism admits us into the eucharistic community we cannot fully share one another's Eucharist.

The Lambeth Conference, 1968, suggested these norms for Anglicans with regard to intercommunion:

"Whenever intercommunion is proposed between Churches we believe that there should first be found a basic agreement on the meaning of the Eucharist. Any consensus between Churches should include mention of those essential elements to be found in any service of the Eucharist." (Report, p.128.)

The Conference also recognized that there is a place for 'reciprocal intercommunion' between Churches which have not yet achieved full unity but are working towards that end. (Report, p. 127.) The Provincial Synod of the Church of the Province of South Africa has since given permission for individuals "on ecumenical occasions and in cases of special pastoral need to participate, in such measure as their consciences allow, in the Eucharistic Services of other Churches holding the apostolic faith as contained in the Scriptures and summarized in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds".

Since Vatican II the position of the Roman Catholic Church has been set out in the Council Decree Unitatis Redintegratio, No. 8, and the Directory Ad totam Ecclesiam, No. 55, as well as in the directive of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 5 October 1968, which reads as follows:

"These texts determine quite precisely the conditions required for an Anglican or a Protestant to receive Eucharistic Communion in the Catholic Church. It is not sufficient that a Christian belonging to one of the Confessions referred to above is in fact well disposed, and on his own initiative asks for Communion from a Catholic Minister. There are two conditions which must first be fulfilled: that the person has the same faith concerning the Eucharist that is professed by the Catholic Church; and that the person is unable to approach a Minister of his own Confession."

The directive adds that "a Catholic in similar circumstances may not ask for these sacraments except from a Minister who has been validly ordained".

Account should be taken of the current debate about Concelebration as a possible means of fostering joint participation in the Eucharist.

The question of Anglican Orders is clearly very important for our future progress towards unity. The problem might be resolved along one of two possible lines:

First, a thorough reappraisal of the historical and doctrinal issues might lead to a different conclusion.

Secondly, a broader restatement of the doctrine of the Ministry and Ordination as suggested in Concilium, Vol. 4 (4) pp. 45-53, and in the Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Vol. 6, might lead to conclusions based on the principle of Ecclesia Supplet, which would render no longer relevant the previous debate about intention.

APPENDIX

Comments on the Windsor paper, The Eucharist, made by Members of

the S.A. Commission

General

There is nothing in the paper which I cannot accept doctrinally, but as a basis of reasonable discussion it is wholly inadequate. It uses a narrow old-style eucharistic jargon. This means that

- (i) Real and basic issues are left untouched: e.g, the word sacrifice is bandied about without any definition of its meaning and practice related to the Eucharist.
- (ii) Terms and expressions are used which prejudice any understanding by Anglican evangelicals or by the Protestant Churches, and which do not reflect much contemporary thinking in the Roman Catholic Church.

To what extent would the document be subscribed by the whole Anglican Communion? The hesitations expressed by the commentator on sacrifice and real presence make it doubtful whether Section H is genuinely expressive of the state of affairs between our two Communion. Perhaps it would be more fruitful if dialogue here was between the Roman Catholic Church and the 'Low Church' group in Anglicanism.

The Evangelical comments raise what seem to be substantial points of difference between our two Churches. Unless mutually satisfactory explanations can be found, these appear to call the conclusion of the statement (H) in question.

- A.1. The relationship between Baptism and Eucharist needs to be much more fully developed even in a paper concerning the Eucharist.

The language of the Eucharist being an extension of the Incarnation is unhappy. Is what is meant not simply that it is useful to use the analogy of the Incarnation in trying to understand both the Church and the Eucharist?

In what sense does the Church as the extension of the Incarnation obscure the Lordship of Christ?

- A.2. A mere catechetical definition which begs innumerable questions.
- A.3. This requires much explanation and elaboration. The 'therefore' is by no means self-apparent.

- B. The word 'sacrament' is regarded as self-explanatory, and the New Testament and Eastern Orthodox term 'mystery', although mentioned, is virtually ignored. Nor is any mention made of the Communion meal aspect of Hebrew sacrifice (e.g., the Passover) which is also basic to Christian sacrifice.

- C. Anamnesis is set out as a translation of zikkaron. But if Biblical terms are used they must be defined biblically. To define zikkaron as making the Eucharist into 'a living and effective image of Christ and the redemptive mystery of His body and blood' is to tack an arbitrary definition of something on to a term which originally defined something else in a different situation.

The position of the priest is not solved by calling him a minister. In any case there seems to be a fair amount of First Century evidence that the bishop, not the priest, was the normal and canonical celebrant at the Eucharist. When we all agree that it is necessary to entrust the recitation of certain parts of the liturgy to a properly and traditionally constituted ministry, our emphasis should rather be on the people of God being the people of God in and through the Eucharist.

The mediatorial role of the minister is questionable. Christ, as mediator, is more than minister or servant. He is also Messiah, advocate or interceder, etc. The minister as minister is only minister or servant: it is as Christian - participating in and reflecting the various functions and privileges of the Redeemer - that he is other things too.

Any conception of a mediatorial priesthood must be totally unacceptable to many ....

- D. From what version does the quotation from Cyril of Jerusalem derive? The usual version (Palmer: Sacraments and Worship, following Migne) does not contain the word 'totally'. The whole paragraph is inadequate and skates over real difficulties.
- F. There have been a number of recent Roman Catholic statements and articles which have suggested ways out of the impasse created by the question of the validity of Anglican Orders: e.g., the address of Archbishop Ammassah to the Congress of the African Council of Churches at Abidjan, and an article by Fr. Buckley S.J. extracts of which are given in Theology Digest, Winter 1969.

Intercommunion is a particularly difficult question between our two Churches because different teachings about the Eucharist were directly involved in the original division between us.