

THE AGREED STATEMENT ON EUCHARISTIC DOCTRINE
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FAITH AND ORDER DISCUSSION

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The Faith and Order Statements published under the title One Baptism - One Eucharist - One Mutually Recognized Ministry (Geneva 1975) were finalized by the Commission at its Accra meeting 1974 and transmitted to the churches for study, evaluation and reaction by the Nairobi Assembly 1975. So far nearly 100 member churches of the WCC and several Roman Catholic institutions have responded to these statements - an unprecedented reaction in the history of the WCC. This is, among others, one indication that these statements represent to a considerable degree the present stage of convergence and agreement in the wider ecumenical discussion aiming at unity and mutual recognition in matters of faith and order. Since the ARCIC statements are in many ways related to and influenced by this wider ecumenical discussions it is only appropriate that they are also evaluated in this context.

There is no need here to point to the differences between the Faith and Order statements and the ARCIC statements with regard to their origin, status and aim. These are obvious. A critical comparison has to be limited to the statements on the eucharist and on the ministry, since ARCIC has not dealt with baptism and Faith and Order is only just now entering the area of authority in its present study programme.

Using the Faith and Order document on the eucharist (E), to which I have to limit myself, as a criterion for evaluating the corresponding ARCIC statement (ED) is by no means a value judgment but merely a methodological way of approach, since our purpose is primarily to put critical questions to the ARCIC documents and not to the Faith and Order texts.

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The first and overwhelming impression of a careful reading and comparison of both statements is the large extent of common theological direction. There is no single aspect in ED which does not also appear in E. E is, however, more extensive than ED and tries to present a fairly comprehensive description of eucharistic doctrine and practice, while the very short and dense text of ED focusses on two traditional controversial issues between the two partners in dialogue. At the same time this text ~~nevertheless~~ tries to combine with the treatment of these issues short indications of other aspects which also belong to the whole area of eucharistic doctrine. This formal difference in length, purpose and structure between the two statements has two consequences: (a) E contains several aspects of eucharistic doctrine and practice which are not present in ED. (b) Some aspects of eucharistic doctrine are spelled out somewhat more extensively and clearly in E compared with the corresponding short indications in ED.

This observation raises the following question: Should not a future revision of ED aim, among others, at

- (a) an inclusion of such other basic aspects of eucharistic doctrine and practice, which are not yet present in the document (e.g. institution of the eucharist, its universal character in space and time, its relationship to creation and world, reservation). These may be in no way controversial but their inclusion could make the statement in a ~~more~~ fuller sense a common statement on eucharistic doctrine; and
- (b) a more extensive formulation of such aspects of eucharistic doctrine which at present are only mentioned in short and therefore rather general and formal references (e.g. "through the Holy Spirit" (2 and 3), "mission of the church in the world" (4), "thanksgiving" (3), "self-surrender" (3), the whole para. 6, epiklesis)? (They are open to the verdict of fulfilling a "alibi function": Dear reader, we are aware of the fact that there are still other aspects and dimensions!)

← A short document like ED has the advantage that it limits the possibility for critical reactions, but with this goes the disadvantage that its short indications are open to different interpretations and that its silence on some other important aspects will be criticized.

In so far as both statements cover the same ground there remain only a few observations and questions which concern special aspects of eucharistic doctrine.

(a) To my mind E spells out more clearly than ED ~~in~~ the effect ^{of} ~~the~~ the Eucharist also for the individual believers (e.g. E 5, 10, 22). Should there not be a better balance in ED between the complementary personal and corporate (ecclesiological) aspects of the eucharist?

(b) E seems to incorporate the role of the Holy Spirit in eucharistic doctrine and reality more consistently than ED which only at the end (in 10 and 11) really comes to this fundamental aspect.

(c) The concept of anamnesis may perhaps require further thought and clarification in both statements. I prefer the statement in ED 8 which ~~it~~ makes it clear that it is Christ who acts in the anamnestic action of the church. E 5 creates the impression that "the making effective in the present of an event in the past" is primarily an action of the church itself.

(d) The intimate relationship between word and sacrament is more clearly expressed in ED 13 than in E where e.g. in 2 and 7 the impression can be created that the word fulfills only a inviting, preparatory function in a process culminating in the eucharist.

(e) E (e.g. in 4) avoids the language of change concerning the elements. In facing the issue of transubstantiation ED somehow has to face this question. Nevertheless, its statements e.g. in 6 and 10 may create difficulties which may demand some rethinking. Is there not a certain tension within the first sentence in 6 between the two formulations "effectually signi-

fied by the bread and wine" and "become his body and blood"? How can one avoid the impression of a materialistic, spatial "imprisonment" of Christ's presence in the elements? And how does ED 11 fit into the picture, where "earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine"?

(f) There seems to be a certain tension between the first sentence of 11 in ED, where it is the "Lord of glory" who is present, and the rest of the statement which speaks of the presence of the crucified and risen Christ (e.g. in 6)?