CHURCH AND EUCHARIST

I. CHURCH

1. God calls all men to knowledge of His love which is revealed in creation and redemption. He calls His Church into being, and He calls men into His Church. The Church is *ecclesia*

2. It is to membership of a community that God calls men to respond by faith and commitment. In His Church they are intimately united with Him and one another in Christ through the Holy Spirit. ~~The~~ Church is *communion*. *

   While it is agreed that Church is communion, it is apparent that Church and communion are not identical. Consideration must be given to the relationship between Church and communion.

   Experience of relationships and work shared by members of different churches engaged in ecumenical activities makes it clear that communion cannot be confined within the limits of any particular denomination. There are degrees of communion. The measure of communion shared by members of different Christian churches is demonstrated by such a variety of facts as : a common faith in Christ based both on experience of His life and love, and on mutual acceptance of the Scriptures and the Creeds; on the assurance that only in Christ can salvation be found; upon agreement that all baptized into Christ share His priestly ministry; by participation in prayer and worship; and by the assurance that they are united in Him in faith, hope and charity.

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* In this paper the word *communion* is used as a synonym for *koinonia* unless otherwise stated. *Koinonia* is created not by men but by God Whose gift it is. It denotes both the common life itself, and the fellowship with God and one another which is shared by those who participate in it.

3. In spite of the considerable measure of communion experienced by those who belong to different churches, (they have to recognize that) they are not fully united in the Church. This is due to matters which remain at issue between them: For example:

Roman Catholics and Anglicans agree that Christ lives in the Church, and that He acts through the Holy Spirit with authority, through its (magisterium.) ~~Anglicans however cannot accept any special (identification) of Christ with any one part of the institutional Church.~~ They do not agree ~~Nor is there agreement between them~~ as to the locus of the magisterium or to the mode in which it is exercised. Anglicans believe that it is schism <u>within</u> the Church as well as separation <u>from</u> the Church which impairs communion - that the Church exists in the world in a divided state. Roman Catholics believe that the Church subsists in its essentials in the Roman Catholic Church, and ~~deny~~ that any other communion ~~possesses all~~ lacks some of the elements necessary to the existence of the Church.

4. God calls men into the Church to serve Him, one another and the world. The Church is diakonia

Himself to all His people.

"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.)

6. In the Eucharist we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Receiving a foretaste of the kingdom to come, we are spurred to hasten its present realization on earth. 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)

7. 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,: - Lord's Supper, Liturgy, Holy Mysteries, Synaxis, Mass, Holy Communion. 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.

8. 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. In the mind of the early Church there was a close nexus between the Cross as a sacrifice and the Eucharist. 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 appeared to lend colour to these suspicions. We believe that this conflict can be transcended by a fresh understanding of the Passover. We all accept Christ's death and resurrection as having taken place once and for all in history. As the events of the Exodus were accepted as having happened once and for all, as the annual Passover sacrifice was seen by them as the memorial (i.e. the making effective in the present) of this event in the continuing life of Israel, so we see the Eucharist as the memorial of Christ's historical self-offering in the continuing life of the Christian Church. Against this background it is possible to think 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. We suggest that the whole language of sacrifice, and the relevance of sacral terms when used in the modern Western situation, be reconsidered in the light of the Old and New Testaments.

9. Another recovered insight of recent years has been the sense of the Eucharist as the community meal. This goes back to the practice of the early Church where the Eucharist took place in the context of the agapé. This communal meal - the breaking of bread - which establishes fellowship between God and man and between men and men is a cardinal æspect of the Eucharist. By partaking of the one loaf and gathering round the same table at the invitation of the same Lord, we are one not only in commitment to Christ and to one another but also to the mission of the Church in the world.

10. 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. The real presence of the Risen 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 doctrinal explanation of transubstantiation has been linked with a specific philosophical system which is now open to question and need not necessarily continue to be an obstacle to unity. The meaning of the term real presence which is also subject to many different interpretations is in great need of serious reconsideration.

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* The term 'dynamic presence' is not intended to restrict the presence of Christ to His power alone.

III. EUCHARISTIC PRACTICE

1. Holy Communion

The Anglican Church, in common with the Eastern Churches and in conformity with the practice of the primitive Church, ~~always~~ normally 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 ~~a large amount~~ some 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.

When it is difficult to convey the consecrated wine from the church building to sick persons it is a not uncommon 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 the Church 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 at present normally

administered, after a period of instruction, to those between the ages of 9 and 15. Confession is not obligatory but may be recommended in preparation for both Confirmation and Holy Communion.

Western 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

IV. EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY IN A DIVIDED CHURCH

It is a painful fact that although we are all baptized into the one Church we cannot yet fully share in 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 concensus between Churches should include mention of those essential elements to be found in any service of the Eucharist." (Report.p128)

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.p127) 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 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".

NOTE. FUTURE WORK

We have been much encouraged both by a deeper appreciation of matters upon which we agree and by a clearer understanding of those upon which we differ. In respect to these differences we believe that we can begin to see various possible lines of convergence. But we recognize that much more work must be done on those aspects of the Eucharist to which some attention has been given in this paper. In addition we have not yet been able to give ~~any~~ adequate consideration to three important matters:

1. The Eucharist as the great Thanksgiving
2. Real Presence
3. ~~Reservation.~~ Reservation