

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
Third Meeting - Windsor, 1st - 8th September 1971

COMMENTS BY SOUTH AFRICAN ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMISSION ON
NORWICH STATEMENT ON THE EUCHARIST

Comparison with the Venice document Church and Eucharist (1970) revealed that this latter document had been drastically changed. No explanations of omissions and changes in wording were given, but many of these appeared to be designed to evade two vital issues:

- i) The sacramental presence of Christ
- ii) The sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist.

The following detailed comments were made.

1. The entire section I. Church had been omitted. The disappearance of the ecclesiological setting of the Eucharist was disconcerting.
2. In section II. The Eucharist the following changes were noted:

- a) Subsections 2),3),4) and all except the last section of 9) had been omitted without explanation. Strong feelings were expressed about the omission of subsection 4) about which explicit recommendations had been made in our previous communication of February, 1971.

- b) In subsection 5) line 2, the words sacramentally present were omitted. Furthermore the words in his sacramental presence in the bread and wine (lines 12 & 13) had been changed to in and by his presence given through bread and wine. This appeared to be an attempt to overspiritualize Christ's presence. The objections which some would feel to concentrating Christ's presence in the elements was understood. However the question of the sacramentality of Christ's presence and its connexion with the elements cannot be simply evaded.

- c) Subsection 6) The same determination to avoid dealing with the sacramentality of Christ's presence appears to be the reason for changing we greet Him present (line 5) to we greet His presence. Why was a different translation of 1 Cor: 15:28 substituted ?

- d) Subsection 7) This has been transferred to section 2 of the new document.

e) Subsection 8) The first twenty seven lines have been omitted. The rest has been revised and with additions appears as section 4 of the new document. It is considered that the omission of the background represents a serious loss to the understanding of sacrifice in relation to the Eucharist. After omitting this background, the new document proceeds to make a statement about the Eucharist and sacrifice which seems wholly inadequate: for it does not get beyond the two mutually exclusive misconceptions which see the Eucharist as either a repeated sacrifice or as a mere memorial. The original document made it clear that the truth between these two extreme positions can only be attained by a grasp of the historical and biblical observations made in the omitted section. The special relationship of the Eucharist to the Cross is not brought out in the new document. In fact the added section tends to suggest that the Eucharist is a mere memorial. The conception of the Eucharist as an effective sign which unifies the community in Christ's sacrifice by means of the Christian sacrificial passover meal does not appear in the new document.

f) Subsection 10) This section has been radically changed and appears as section 5 of the new document. It was noted that it is remarkable that this revised paragraph appears to represent a complete change of direction from that taken by the new document up to this point. There is a concentration - divorced from sacramentality - upon the change which takes place in the elements. (New document, Section 5, last 3 lines). The words in which this change is expressed are likely to be unacceptable to many Anglicans, (particularly Evangelicals), because the implication of the words, no longer food and drink for the natural life seems to be that the consecrated elements had so ceased to be bread and wine that they would no longer be able to give physical sustenance to a human body.

With regard to the second paragraph of the new documents Section 5, some doubted whether the term transubstantiation could be divorced from the philosophical system which produced it. There was general agreement that the argument of this paragraph had no obvious relevance at the present time.

There appears to be no logical connexion between the third paragraph of the new documents Section 5 and the two previous paragraphs. Further, it is not clear to what the phrase this kind of definition refers. The many changes

made in the new document suggests a receptionist interpretation of the final section of this paragraph.

3. Section III. Eucharistic practice is entirely omitted.

Conclusion.

In the light of these criticisms the claims made to a greater measure of agreement in our understanding of the nature of the Eucharist (New document p 3) carries little conviction. The members of this Commission considered that a much greater measure of genuine agreement and understanding was reflected by the original Venice document on Church and Eucharist.

Johannesburg. May 1971