

The Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches began official ecumenical discussions in 1970 and quickly discovered that they hold the same doctrine of the Eucharist. In 1971 ARCIC [Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission] issued a joint statement on the Blessed Sacrament. At the 1988 Lambeth Conference the Primates, Archbishops, and diocesan Bishops of the Anglican Communion world-wide adopted this Agreed Statement as an official teaching on Anglican Eucharistic doctrine. The following are excerpts from that joint statement.

The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreed Statement on the Eucharist

Introduction

Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ God has reconciled men to himself, and in Christ he offers unity to all mankind. By his word God calls us into a new relationship with himself as our Father and with one another as his children—a relationship, inaugurated by Baptism into Christ through the Holy Spirit, nurtured and deepened through the Eucharist, and expressed in a confession of one faith and a common life of loving service.

I

The Mystery of the Eucharist

Christ through the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist builds up the life of the Church, strengthens its fellowship and furthers its mission. The identity of the Church as the body of Christ is both expressed and effectively proclaimed by its being centered in, and partaking of, his body and blood. In the whole action of the Eucharist, and in and by his sacramental presence given through bread and wine, the crucified and risen Lord, according to his promise, offers himself to his people.

II

The Eucharist and the Sacrifice of Christ

Christ's redeeming death and resurrection took place once and for all in history. Yet God has given the Eucharist to his Church as a means through which the atoning work of Christ on the Cross is proclaimed and made effective in the life of the Church. The notion of memorial as understood in the Passover celebration at the time of Christ—i.e., the making effective in the present of an event in the past—has opened the way to a clearer understanding of the relationship between Christ's sacrifice and the Eucharist. The Eucharistic *memorial* is no mere calling to mind of a past event or of its significance, but the Church's effectual proclamation of God's mighty acts. Christ instituted the Eucharist as a memorial (*anamnesis*) of the totality of God's reconciling action in him.

III

The Presence of Christ

Communion with Christ in the Eucharist presupposes his true presence, effectually signified by the bread and wine which, in this mystery, become his body and blood.* ...its purpose is to transmit the life of the crucified and risen Christ to his body, the Church, so that its members may be more fully united with Christ and with one another.

The sacramental body and blood of the Saviour are present as an offering to the believer awaiting his welcome. When this offering is met by faith, a lifegiving encounter results. Through faith Christ's presence—which does not depend on the individual's faith in order to be the Lord's real gift of himself to his Church—becomes no longer just a presence for the believer, but also a presence with him.

The elements are not mere signs; Christ's body and blood become really present and are really given.

Through this prayer of thanksgiving [the Eucharistic Prayer]...the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit, so that in Communion we eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood.

We [the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches] believe that we have reached substantial agreement on the Doctrine of the Eucharist. It is our hope that in view of the agreement which we have reached on Eucharistic faith, this doctrine will no longer constitute an obstacle to the unity we seek.

*The word *transubstantiation* is commonly used in the Roman Catholic Church to indicate that God acting in the Eucharist effects a change in the inner reality of the elements. The term should be seen as affirming the fact of Christ's presence and of the mysterious and radical change which takes place. In contemporary Roman Catholic theology it is not understood as explaining how the change takes place.

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In 1994 ARC-USA published the following summary of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreed Statement on the Eucharist in order to make it widely available in a form that is "short, accessible, and easily reproduced."

WE AFFIRM that in the Eucharist the Church, doing what Christ commanded his apostles to do at the Last Supper, makes present the sacrifice of Calvary.

WE AFFIRM that God has given the Eucharist to the Church as a means through which all the atoning work of Christ on the Cross is proclaimed and made present with all its effects in the life of the Church.

WE AFFIRM that Christ in the Eucharist makes himself present sacramentally and truly when under the species of bread and wine these earthly realities are changed into the reality of his body and blood.

BOTH OUR CHURCHES AFFIRM that after the Eucharistic celebration the body and blood of Christ may be reserved for communion of the sick...Episcopalians recognize that many of their own Church members practice the adoration of Christ in the reserved sacrament.

WE AFFIRM that only a validly ordained priest can be the minister who, in the person of Christ, brings into being the sacrament of the Eucharist and offers sacramentally the redemptive sacrifice of Christ which God offers us.