

the Eucharist:
sacrament of unity

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An occasional paper of the House of Bishops
of the Church of England

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*This report has been approved by
the House of Bishops*

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foreword

by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York

The Eucharist stands at the very heart of the life, worship and mission of the Christian Church. Under various names – Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist – this central action of the Christian community is celebrated by Anglicans week by week and day by day. In the Eucharist we commemorate sacramentally the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are united with him through the power of the Holy Spirit. Receiving the blessed tokens of his Body and Blood, we truly participate in his risen life and offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, which is our reasonable service (Romans 12.1). In this sacrament we proclaim the faith of the Church and are united with all the faithful, gathered in their local communities, as we are united with the Lord. As our historic formularies, approved liturgies and formal ecumenical agreements show, the Church of England upholds the faith of the Church through the ages with regard to the Eucharist.

In 1998 the three Roman Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland published *One Bread One Body*. It was both a teaching document on eucharistic theology and a firm restatement of the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to eucharistic sharing, interpreted and applied to the ecumenical situation in these islands. The Bishops invited ecumenical partners to study the document and to respond. We have taken up that invitation in the statement that follows.

There is a great deal in the eucharistic theology of *One Bread One Body* that we warmly endorse. As we show in what follows, it is strongly echoed in our own theology. It is significant that the General Synod and the 1988 Lambeth Conference judged the report of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) on the Eucharist (as well as that on Ministry) to be consonant with the faith of Anglicans. However, we do not draw the same conclusions as the Bishops’ Conferences do with regard

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to eucharistic sharing, including eucharistic hospitality. We take issue with the discipline that the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in these islands are seeking to apply. We find it to be hurtful and unhelpful. We do not believe that it follows from the eucharistic theology on which Anglicans and Roman Catholics largely agree. We share with the Roman Catholic Church a conviction that the Eucharist is a sacrament of unity. Nevertheless, in a divided Church there are differences of emphasis concerning the relationship between the Eucharist and unity. Briefly expressed, is eucharistic sharing a sign only of 'full' sacramental communion between the churches, or may it appropriately also be a means towards its full realization – a sacrament of unity that is growing as well as of unity that is complete?

One Bread One Body makes explicit a number of erroneous assumptions by the Roman Catholic Church about the Church of England, the Reformation, Anglican teaching regarding the Eucharistic sacrifice and the presence of Christ in the sacrament, and Anglican ministerial and episcopal orders. We take this opportunity to correct these misapprehensions, as well as to set out the positive teaching of the Church of England on the Eucharist.

This ecumenical exchange, in the cause of truth and understanding, is conducted in a spirit of fraternal respect and goodwill towards our colleagues, the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church.

Once again we are grateful to the Faith and Order Advisory Group (FOAG): its Chairman, the Right Revd John Hind, members and staff who have prepared this statement on behalf of and in consultation with the House of Bishops. This document takes its place alongside other recent teaching documents of the House, also prepared by FOAG: *Apostolicity and Succession, May They All Be One* (a response to the Papal Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*), and *Bishops in Communion*.

On behalf of the House of Bishops:



✠ George Cantuar:
Archbishop of Canterbury



✠ David Ebor:
Archbishop of York

abbreviations

ARCIC	Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission
ASB	<i>The Alternative Service Book 1980</i>
BCP	<i>The Book of Common Prayer</i> (1662)
BEM	<i>Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry</i> (see References, page 26)
FOAG	Faith and Order Advisory Group
OBOB	<i>One Bread One Body</i> (see References, page 25)
Porvoo	The Porvoo Common Statement

introduction

- 1.** We are grateful for the invitation extended in *One Bread One Body* (OBOB) to ecumenical partners to respond to this important statement. In their Foreword the Presidents of the three Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland state that, although it is primarily intended as a teaching document on eucharistic doctrine for the Roman Catholic faithful, 'we offer it also to our fellow Christians'. The Introduction notes that the document tries to 'take special account of the ecumenical situation in our countries' and draws on the 'growing agreement' on the Eucharist that is evident in ecumenical dialogues. Quoting from the Pope's encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, it acknowledges that Christians in these islands 'increasingly have "a burning desire to join in celebrating the one Eucharist of the Lord"'.
- 2.** In OBOB the ecclesial status of non-Roman Catholic Christian Churches is commented on, as are the ordained ministries and Eucharists of those churches – with specific reference to Anglican orders. Furthermore, the bishops of the three episcopal conferences clearly hope for ecumenical responses to OBOB: 'We look forward to continuing dialogue, especially in response to the publication of this teaching document. We hope that it will provide an opportunity for further joint reflection, discussion and prayer' (5: such references are to paragraph numbers in OBOB).
- 3.** We note that the document has been presented and discussed at the Assembly of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (as it then was: now Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) in February 1999 and at the meeting of the Enabling Group of Churches Together in England in March 1999. The Ecumenical Committee of the United Reformed Church has made a written response. The response of the Church of Ireland General Synod Committee for Christian Unity is

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now also to hand and its main concerns are reflected in what follows. The meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, in Mississauga, Toronto, in May 2000 has given fresh impetus to the search for full visible communion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics and has made the issue of eucharistic communion even more acute.

- 4.** It seems appropriate to us that it should be the House of Bishops, as the body within the General Synod (which also includes laity and clergy) particularly charged with oversight of doctrine and worship, that makes the Church of England's response to this teaching document. Our reflections are offered in OBOB's spirit of fraternal openness and charity and in the interests of ecumenical understanding. We fervently share the desire of the bishops for the full visible unity and communion of all Christians, when – amongst other blessings – they can celebrate the Eucharist together (OBOB Foreword).

affirmations

5. As its use of agreed ecumenical texts that have been approved by the General Synod and the Lambeth Conference as consonant with the faith of Anglicans (especially the Lima report of the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, and the *Final Report* of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission) suggests, we are able to affirm a great deal of the eucharistic theology of this document and find little that we cannot accept. As the *Final Report* of ARCIC suggests, Anglicans and Roman Catholics can share a common eucharistic faith. However, while we generally endorse the eucharistic theology of OBOB, we draw somewhat different conclusions at some points to those set out in the 'General Norms' for eucharistic sharing, and also dispute some of the perceptions of Anglicanism that are presupposed in OBOB.
6. We find much that strongly resonates with the Church of England's theological tradition and with its eucharistic theology in particular. There is substantial common ground between the theological exposition of the Eucharist in OBOB and the Church of England's historic formularies: the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662) [BCP] and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. These formularies are held to be consonant with Holy Scripture and with the witness of the early, undivided Church. The doctrine of the Church of England 'is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures' (Canon A 5). Anglican clergy and lay ministers are required to assent to 'the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation'. The Church of England believes that it has been 'led by the Holy Spirit' to bear 'witness

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to Christian truth in its historic formularies' (Canon C 15: Preface to the Declaration of Assent).

7. The doctrinal formularies, the forms of worship and of the administration of the sacraments, together with the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, are, therefore, said to be 'agreeable to the Word of God' (Canons A 2, A 3). The form and manner of ordaining bishops, priests and deacons, and the government of the Church of England, are said to be 'not repugnant to the Word of God' (Canons A 4, A 6). Article VI states:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or should be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

The Articles teach that the ecumenical creeds 'ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture' (Article VIII).

8. On this basis we are able to affirm a substantial number of theological and ecclesiological points in OBOB. We summarize these points in bold, adding a brief commentary:

Summary and commentary

9. **The special responsibility of the episcopate for doctrine, unity and the integrity of the sacraments (1, 9).** This principle is also strongly emphasized in the Church of England's Ordinal and Canons. Canon C 18 states: 'Every bishop is the chief pastor of all that are within his diocese, as well laity as clergy, and their father in God; it appertains to his office to teach and uphold sound and wholesome doctrine, and to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange opinions.' The Canon goes on to describe the diocesan bishop as the principal minister of the sacraments and as having oversight of worship in the diocese. In Anglicanism, however, bishops share their oversight with priests, and lay people play their part in the oversight

of the Church through its synodical structures. The House of Bishops of the Church of England has recently explored the theme of episcopal collegiality in the context of the conciliar life of the whole Church in its paper, *Bishops in Communion*. Thus in Anglicanism, as well as in Roman Catholicism, it is the special calling of bishops, both individually and collegially, to have oversight of the ministry of Word and Sacrament and to teach and shepherd the faithful, ‘speaking in the name of God and interpreting the gospel of Christ’. Bishops are called ‘to maintain and further the unity of the Church, to uphold its discipline, and to guard its faith’ (*The Alternative Service Book 1980* [ASB] Ordinal).

- 10. The vital and central place of the Eucharist in the life and worship of the Church (3).** As Anglicans we share this deep appreciation of the Eucharist and a commitment to its vital and central place in the life and worship of the Church (see further below). We would add to what OBOB says here that, for us, the Eucharist undergirds the mission of the Church. It unites Creation and Redemption, life and liturgy, porch and altar. It galvanizes Christians for witness and service in the world and strengthens us to go forth for Christ to win others to his cause. There is a real empowering in the Eucharist for all who are brought into communion with Christ and his people here. The Eucharist is central because mission is fundamental and mission cannot be separated from unity. The Eucharist is often called the sacrament of unity: it is equally the sacrament of mission.
- 11. The theological framework provided by the theology of *koinonia* (12).** The New Testament uses the term *koinonia* for the communion, fellowship or mutual participation that baptized believers share with the Holy Trinity and with one another in the Body of Christ. Anglicans, like others influenced by the ecumenical movement and in particular by the theology of Vatican II, have extensively used and developed the theology of *koinonia*. It is a theme that has run through the teaching of recent Lambeth Conferences. The theology of *koinonia* has helped us to recognize the many ‘bonds of communion’ that we already share with the Roman Catholic Church. The

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Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission has pioneered the theology of *koinonia* (see ARCIC, *Church as Communion*).

- 12. The stress, in keeping with the consensus of ecumenical theology, on the baptismal basis of *koinonia*.** Echoing the teaching of Vatican II, OBOB affirms that there is a real, though imperfectly realized, bond of communion between all who have been brought into the Body of Christ through baptism (22). Vatican II made it possible for the Roman Catholic Church to recognize baptisms performed in Anglican churches (among others). This development has enabled ecumenical theology to make our common baptism pivotal to its understanding of unity. We believe that, since Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church has acknowledged this degree of communion not only with individual baptized Christians, but also with their communities as ecclesial societies. *Ut Unum Sint* states that

the elements of sanctification and truth present in the other Christian Communities, in a degree which varies from one to the other, constitute the objective basis of the communion, albeit imperfect, which exists between them and the Catholic Church. To the extent that these elements are found in other Christian Communities, the one Church of Christ is effectively present in them. (11)

The truth of the baptismal foundation of *koinonia* is fully shared by Anglican ecclesiology. It is seen, for example, in the teaching of the Lambeth Conferences as far back as at least 1920 and it continues to the present day. It seems to us vital to maintain the coherence and symmetry between the communion created by baptism and the communion expressed through the Eucharist. We are convinced that the mutual recognition of baptism that Anglicans and Roman Catholics now enjoy has further ecumenical potential and we would be sorry to see any retrenchment of the gains achieved by the Second Vatican Council on this front.

- 13. The recognition that communion is latent as well as patent.** It is given in baptism, yet comes to fuller expression in the Eucharist. This dynamic understanding of *koinonia* – that there are degrees to which communion is realized or expressed – is a welcome emphasis in OBOB. The Second Vatican Council’s teaching about ‘a real, though imperfect communion’ finds an echo in Anglican ecumenical theology. The latent unity of our common baptism needs to be brought to its fuller realization, not least in the Eucharist.
- 14. The sense of an eschatological imperative of the Holy Spirit to fuller communion.** It is the Holy Spirit who urges us forward from the real, though incompletely expressed, communion we share in baptism to its fuller expression in the Eucharist as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. The Anglican practice of extending an invitation to share in eucharistic fellowship to baptized communicants of other Christian churches can be seen as a proper pastoral anticipation of the eschatological summons to the marriage supper of the Lamb and as a foretaste of full visible unity (see further below).
- 15. The emphasis that faith provides the essential context of the eucharistic celebration.** OBOB stresses the need for the response of faith to the presence of Christ, a presence assured to us by his promises in the gospel. It also emphasizes that such faith and trust is vital for the faithful discipleship that flows from participation in the Eucharist (15, 17, 53). Anglicans rejoice to find this emphasis. In line with the sixteenth-century Reformers, Anglicans have understood such faith as *fiducia*, trust and affiance in Christ, and have distinguished this conceptually from assent (*assensus*) to the truth of Scripture, the creeds and the teaching of the Church (though the two are, of course, inextricably connected in the life of Christian discipleship). The theme of the personal response of faith to divine grace is quite pronounced in the Church of England’s formularies: e.g. *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662) and *Common Worship* words of administration (‘feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving’); the Post Communion of the Church of England’s eucharistic rites in the BCP and *Common Worship*; and Article XXVIII.

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- 16. The centrality of the ministry of the Word as well as that of the Sacraments to Christian life and worship (23).** Anglicans are greatly encouraged by the emphasis in OBOB on the ministry of the Word alongside the ministry of the Sacraments. They will be aware of the new impetus that Vatican II gave to the liturgical use of the Bible in the vernacular and to Bible study in the Roman Catholic Church. The balance and integration of Word and Sacrament have typically been pronounced in Anglican liturgy since the Reformation, marking it as an expression of reformed catholicism.
- 17. The affirmation that the Eucharist is ‘the action of the whole Church’ and that it is, therefore, ‘the people of God . . . the worshipping community’ that celebrates the Eucharist (39).** At the Reformation the Church of England emphasized the importance of the comprehending participation of the laity. This has influenced the corporate sense of eucharistic celebration in Anglican churches ever since and has also revitalized Anglican worship through the Parish Communion movement and ecumenical liturgical renewal. *Common Worship* refers to the president, rather than the celebrant, at the Eucharist, implying thereby that the whole community, including the priest, corporately celebrates the rite.
- 18. The balancing emphasis on the need for order and authority in the presidency of the Eucharist (40).** Against radical, anarchic trends at work among some groups at the time of the Reformation, the Thirty-nine Articles insisted on proper order and authority in the ministry of Word and Sacrament and grounded this in the principle of transmitted authority in the Church (Article XXIII). The Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552 provided for episcopal ordination in continuity with the pre-Reformation Church. After the upheavals of the Commonwealth period, following the English Civil War, the 1662 Preface to the Ordinal insisted on invariable episcopal ordination for public ministry in the Church of England. This is one of the ways in which our concern for order and authority in ministry is expressed. The House of Bishops of the Church of England has recently returned to this theme in its report, *Eucharistic Presidency*. The report sees the president

at the Eucharist as representing both the Body and the Head of the Church and resists any tendency to polarize priest and people in the Eucharist.

19. **The theme of the covenant (24).** This central biblical theme is most welcome to Anglicans and figures particularly in the classic Anglican divinity of the seventeenth century. It is grounded in the covenantal nature of baptism. Through baptism we are incorporated into God's covenant of grace in Jesus Christ and this is renewed in every Eucharist, where the covenant theme is rehearsed in the Words of Institution. (Needless to say, the Words of Institution are an invariable part of Anglican eucharistic liturgies.)
20. **The language of atonement solely through the person and work – the incarnation, death and resurrection – of Christ (13).** This doctrine may be said to belong to the essence of Christianity. It has recently been reaffirmed by the Roman Catholic Church, together with the Lutheran World Federation, in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. This orthodox understanding of the atonement is, of course, strongly affirmed in the BCP, the Thirty-nine Articles, and all modern Anglican liturgies. The Church of England's Doctrine Commission has recently expounded it in its report, *The Mystery of Salvation* (1995).
21. **The invocation of 'mystery' with regard to the whole sacramental action of the Eucharist (4, 5, 8, etc.).** The language of mystery, applied to the Eucharist, figures both in the BCP second Post Communion, which speaks of 'these holy mysteries . . . of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ', and in *Common Worship*, where the Short Preface for Maundy Thursday says that 'he instituted these holy mysteries'.
22. **The understanding of the term 'memorial' (*anamnesis*) as 'making effectively present here and now an event in the past' (33).** The use of St Paul's term *anamnesis* to interpret the way in which the sacrifice of Christ is made dynamically present and effective in the Eucharist is now part of an

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ecumenical consensus (cf. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*). This usage is shared by Anglicans and has been affirmed in the Church of England's formal response to the *Final Report* of ARCIC. The Porvoo Common Statement (32h) says: '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.'

- 23. The sacramental identification of the Eucharist with the one full and sufficient sacrifice of Christ (30).** An identification that is effected sacramentally makes the essential connection between the Eucharist and the death of Christ, while completely precluding any suggestion of a repetition of Calvary. This sacramental identification is strongly affirmed in the BCP:

who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death.

It is equally affirmed in recent Anglican liturgies and in the received work of ARCIC, which speaks of us being drawn into the movement of his self-offering. Another weighty example is *Saepius officio*, the response of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to *Apostolicae curae* (the negative evaluation of Anglican orders by Pope Leo XIII in 1896). Advised by some of the most learned Church of England bishops of the day, the Archbishops insisted that 'we truly teach the doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice'. They justified this statement by referring to the eucharistic rite of the BCP and expounding it in the following terms:

For first we offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; then next we plead and represent before the Father the sacrifice of the Cross, and by it we confidently entreat remission of sins and all other benefits of the Lord's Passion for all the whole Church; and lastly we offer the sacrifice of ourselves to the Creator of all things which we have already signified by the oblation of his creatures.

In *Common Worship* we are said to plead Christ's sacrifice in the Eucharistic Prayer: 'Father, we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross' (Prayer G).

- 24. The teaching that in the Eucharist Christians are united sacramentally through the Holy Spirit with Christ's perfect self-offering or sacrifice to the Father (34).** Clearly, when in the Eucharist we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice in thankful response to the sacrifice of Christ for us, we do not do this in our own strength or merits, for (as the BCP says) we are unworthy to offer any sacrifice to God. We are enabled to do this solely because he unites us with himself in his perfect offering to the Father – an offering or oblation that consecrated his whole life and ministry to the Father's saving purpose and culminated in the Cross. Our self-offering is held within his. We are drawn into the movement of his self-offering because we have nothing to offer outside his perfect and sufficient sacrifice. Both his sacrifice and our response receive sacramental expression in the Eucharist. This theme is strongly present in both the BCP (cf. the first Post Communion: 'mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving . . . and here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee . . . through Jesus Christ our Lord') and in modern Anglican liturgies, as well as in the pioneering work of ARCIC.
- 25. The understanding of a sacrament as an 'instrumental sign', in the context of faith, of divine grace (16).** The language of sign and symbol is inevitable with reference to the sacraments. It is vital to affirm that the sacraments effect what they signify and are means of grace, provided that the grace that is offered is not rejected. Anglican formularies, while stressing the vital role of faith, are clear about the effect of the sacraments, by virtue of the promises of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Article XXV of the Thirty-nine Articles speaks of the sacraments as 'effectual signs of grace'; and Article XXVII states that 'Baptism is . . . a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church.' In the late sixteenth century, Richard Hooker insisted that the sacraments 'really give what

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they promise, and are what they signify', because the work of the Holy Spirit, which is 'the necessary inward cause' of grace, is by divine institution inseparably connected to 'the necessary outward mean', the sacrament itself. The sacraments are, therefore, Hooker affirms, 'means effectual whereby God when we take the sacraments delivereth into our hands that grace available unto eternal life, which grace the sacraments represent or signify' (Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V. lx. 1; V. lvii. 5).

- 26. The affirmation that in the Eucharist there is a true, real and personal communion of the Christian with Christ (50).** This is, of course, the *sine qua non* of eucharistic theology and a truth that probably all historic traditions of the Church affirm. The Church of England's formularies and liturgical texts, as well as her divines ancient and modern, affirm a real union, communion and participation in Christ, in his Body and Blood. The BCP Prayer of Humble Access, for example, employs the Johannine image of indwelling but, far from Platonizing this, refers in strongly physical language to the sanctifying of our bodies as well as our souls. In *Common Worship* we confess that Christ 'instituted these holy mysteries, that we might be partakers of the divine nature' (Short Preface for Maundy Thursday). Richard Hooker typically uses the language of incorporation, participation, indwelling, 'mystical conjunction' and mystical, nuptial union.
- 27. The sense that, in the Eucharist, Christians are in communion with the saints and the faithful departed (36).** This awareness of a communion that is much wider than the present generation and spans this world and the next is essential to an understanding of the Eucharist. It is also fundamental to Anglican eucharistic theology. Anglicans have not generally seen the Eucharist as actually benefiting the departed. Our liturgies do not provide for the invocation of the saints. However, the truth of the communion of saints is clearly affirmed in the BCP. The Prayer for the Church Militant blesses God 'for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear' and prays for 'grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom'. The *Sanctus* is prefaced

with the words: 'Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name'. And the Collect for All Saints' Day addresses 'God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son'. In *Common Worship* the sense that in the Eucharist Christians are in communion with the saints and the faithful departed is made even more explicit (especially in Eucharistic Prayer G and in the Extended Preface for All Saints' Day). *Common Worship* provides for the saints to be mentioned by name in the eucharistic prayer and in the prayers of intercession at the Eucharist.

- 28.** Furthermore, we welcome the ecumenical sensitivity in certain areas of this statement, its striving for common ground. When the Eucharist is rightly spoken of as a sacramental sacrifice, the emphasis is on the eucharistic sacrifice of the thanksgiving, prayer, worship, gifts and self-dedication of Christians in union with the one, full, perfect and sufficient atoning sacrifice of Christ.

reservations

- 29.** However, there is a difficulty for ecumenical convergence in eucharistic doctrine over the rather specific and tightly drawn way in which the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is defined in this document. Belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is clearly taught in the Church of England's eucharistic theology. A real and true communion with and participation in Christ through the sacraments is upheld in our liturgical texts, from *The Book of Common Prayer* to *Common Worship* (in the eucharistic prayers we pray 'that . . . these gifts of bread and wine may be to us his body and blood'). But our divines have consistently been loath to speculate as to the mode of that presence and have been content to reverence the mystery. Of course, that certainly does not mean that the Church of England does not accept the doctrine of the real presence, which we take to be the essential dogmatic concern of this expression. The Porvoo Common Statement (32h) affirms that 'the body and blood of Christ are truly present, distributed and received under the forms of bread and wine'. (See also ARCIC, *Final Report*, 'Elucidation of Eucharistic Doctrine'.)
- 30.** The Church of England is not correctly referred to as one of those 'Christian communities rooted in the Reformation' (41, 117). The Church of England traces its origins back to the beginnings of Christianity in England and is continuous with the Church of the Apostles and Fathers. The particular churches of the Anglican Communion belong to the one holy catholic and apostolic Church of Christ, reformed and renewed at the Reformation (though not, of course, only then).
- 31.** It is not a characteristic of Anglicanism to proclaim its credentials or to make comparisons with other churches. The Church of England simply states that it is a true and apostolic church of Christ (Canon A 1) and that it is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church (Canon C 15: Preface to the

Declaration of Assent). Anglicans look for clarification of the unresolved ambiguities in the official stance of the Roman Catholic Church towards various ‘ecclesial communities’, as Vatican II calls them. We refer to the discussion of the Vatican II term *subsistere in*, with respect to the Catholic Church, in the House of Bishops’ response, *May They All Be One* (paras 56ff.), to *Ut Unum Sint*.

- 32.** A further major stumbling-block is the view, adopted in the document, of the defectiveness (‘lack of validity’) of Anglican orders and consequently of Anglican celebrations of the Eucharist (41). We are of course fully aware of the precedents for this stance in *Apostolicae curae*, in the teaching of Vatican II and, most recently, in Cardinal Ratzinger’s commentary on Pope John Paul II’s *motu proprio*, *Ad tuendam fidem*. We believe that the matter of Anglican orders needs to be considered in the light of developments during the past century, not least the work of ARCIC on ministry and Eucharist. This new context for the question of Anglican orders was recognized by Cardinal Willibrands, President of the Pontifical Council for the Unity of Christians (now the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), in correspondence with the Co-Chairmen of ARCIC in 1985.
- 33.** We believe that the term ‘validity’ needs considerable unpacking. In our paper, *Apostolicity and Succession*, we have set out our understanding of the apostolicity of the Church’s ordained ministry and its relation to the transmission of ministerial orders. This understanding is reflected in the Porvoo Common Statement between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches. Anglicans do not accept the arguments of *Apostolicae curae* and the deduction made in the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that Anglican celebrations of the Eucharist lack the fullness of the means of salvation that are claimed for the Roman Catholic Church (41) because they have ‘not retained’ (in a sense that is not specified here or in Vatican II) ‘the authentic and full reality of the eucharistic mystery’ (91; *Lumen Gentium* 22; *Unitatis Redintegratio* 22). Nevertheless, the Church of England, within the Anglican Communion, is dedicated to working towards the

healing of the breach between the Anglican and Roman Catholic communions.

- 34.** Anglicans hold that there is an integral relationship between the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist within the theology of *koinonia*. OBOB also recognizes this, but the images of baptism as ‘the gateway’ and ‘the door’ (18, quoted from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*) are not fully followed through. Both baptism and the Eucharist point beyond themselves to an ultimate fulfilment. They have a proleptic, eschatological nature in relation to the final manifestation of God’s kingdom. Anglicans therefore take issue with the general Roman Catholic ban on non-Roman Catholics receiving Holy Communion at Eucharists celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church. They also find confusing the qualifications set to this prohibition by the permission given for it in exceptional or unique circumstances. While Anglicans recognize that conscience must guide the individual’s decision in such circumstances, they are baffled by the rule that an individual who is allowed to receive on a special occasion may not do so thereafter. The liturgical action of The Peace, in which Anglicans and Roman Catholics often share, is not carried through into sacramental communion. It is scarcely surprising that, given their repudiation of Pope Leo XIII’s rejection of the validity of Anglican orders, Anglicans should find the ban on Roman Catholics receiving communion at Anglican celebrations of the Eucharist, even in the most exceptional circumstances, an ecumenical, theological and pastoral affront. They hope that mutual ecclesial recognition will become possible in due course, in acknowledgement of the ecclesial authenticity of Anglican ordinations. They long for the Roman Catholic prohibition on mutual eucharistic hospitality to be lifted as part of the process of growing into full visible unity.
- 35.** While we appreciate the intention to safeguard the integrity of the Eucharist from indiscriminate celebration in inappropriate circumstances (for example, without agreement in the apostolic faith), we do not believe that eucharistic communion should be reserved for the end point of unity already achieved between separated churches. Since the Lambeth Conference of 1968, Anglicans have come to accept that shared eucharistic

communion (in various degrees) may be an appropriate anticipation of full visible unity (cf. Canon B 15A). The unity in the Body of Christ brought about by baptism calls for further expression or realization in the Eucharist before this ultimate point is reached. The Eucharist is one of God's greatest gifts to the Church and is given to build up the Body of Christ. We endorse the ecumenical insight that Christ builds up his Church as a eucharistic community. We do not believe that, because the Eucharist is undoubtedly a fundamental expression of the unity of the Church and a means of building it up, eucharistic communion must be reserved for full ecclesial communion, visibly and structurally expressed.

- 36.** We believe that a more flexible approach to this issue is offered in the Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II. We agree with the Council that *communicatio in sacris* should not be 'used indiscriminately for the restoration of unity among Christians' and that such common worship should both 'signify the unity of the Church' and 'provide a sharing in the means of grace'. However, while insisting that 'the fact that it should signify unity generally (*plerumque*)' rules out *communicatio in sacris*, the Council adds: 'Yet the gaining of a needed grace sometimes (*quandoque*) commends it' (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 8). This is presumably the rationale for the degree of intercommunion that the Roman Catholic Church permits with the Orthodox. As we point out in paragraph 49, the Orthodox do not completely fulfil either of the two criteria required by OBOB for eucharistic sharing.
- 37.** The ecumenical method that has been pursued consistently by the Church of England and is embodied in the Meissen, Fetter Lane and Reuilly Agreements (and which has been repeatedly endorsed by the Lambeth Conferences), is that of seeking full visible unity by clearly defined and mutually agreed stages. This approach suggests that various degrees of real communion, grounded in baptism, may appropriately be expressed by degrees of eucharistic sharing. The degrees of eucharistic sharing that we have in mind are: first, mutual eucharistic hospitality; then the participation of ministers, excluding presidency or concelebration, in each other's churches' eucharistic services

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(as provided for in our ecumenical canons and ecumenical agreements); finally, full interchangeability of ministries as part of full visible unity.

- 38.** While we warmly welcome in principle OBOB's emphasis on the proper conditions for receiving communion at the Eucharist (that communicants should manifest Catholic faith with regard to the Eucharist and that their action should express visible communion with the Catholic Church), we are concerned that too much weight is being placed on the sacramental intention of the communicant (rather than of the Church) and we believe that pastoral and theological difficulties could arise if this approach were generally applied to the recipients of the sacraments.
- 39.** As the Roman Catholic bishops will no doubt be aware, Anglicans understand the term 'Catholic' in a different sense to the one apparently intended in this document (see *May They All Be One*, the response of the Church of England's House of Bishops to *Ut Unum Sint*, especially p. 24, n. 4). For Anglicans, the Catholic Church consists of all those local churches throughout the world who share the Catholic faith (understood as grounded in the Scriptures and expressed in the ecumenical creeds) and the Catholic sacraments (understood as primarily the dominical sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist), served by the apostolic ministry of oversight (*episkope*). For Anglicans, the visible Church of Christ is found wherever the 'pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance' (Article XIX). This is the sense in which the BCP uses the expressions 'Catholic Church' (in the prayer 'For all Conditions of men') or 'universal Church' (in the Prayer for the Church Militant) – terms that also appear in *Common Worship*. The Church is said to be 'the mystical body of thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people' (BCP, second Post Communion) and is said to be made up of 'all who profess and call themselves Christians' (BCP prayer 'For all Conditions of men'). Anglicans have consistently recognized all those who have been baptized with water in the name of the Holy Trinity as members of the

Catholic Church (significantly in the 1920 Lambeth Conference's 'Appeal to all Christian People' for the unity of the Church).

- 40.** The document calls into question the conviction of non-Roman Catholic Christians, including Anglicans, that they are members of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, through faith and baptism. It implies that they do not value the Eucharist as Roman Catholics do and accord it a similar central role in their lives and worship. It suggests that they do not believe in a real presence and in the eucharistic sacrifice and that they do not identify with the whole Church when they participate in the Eucharist.
- 41.** As we have shown above, Anglicans treasure the Eucharist as the central moment of their devotion and worship. They believe that the Eucharist unites and sustains the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. They share a belief in the real presence of Christ and in the eucharistic sacramental sacrifice (in the senses expounded above) with the Roman Catholic Church and with other traditions of the Christian Church, though they do not define these doctrines as tightly as that Church does. Anglicans believe that they have retained the full integrity of the eucharistic mystery (subject, of course, to its final eschatological revelation and fulfilment).
- 42.** We are aware of the anguish – highlighted by the response of Interchurch Families – caused to the partners of a mixed marriage by the pastoral discipline set out in OBOB. We believe that it is vital to do justice to the truth that in the case of a Christian couple, one of whom is a Roman Catholic and the other, say, an Anglican, there is a double bond of unity in Christ – through baptism and through marriage. That twofold sacramental bond seems to be nullified when communion together at the Eucharist is forbidden. The unity in Christ between husband and wife that is created sacramentally or covenantally through marriage, building on baptism, should not be put asunder at the Eucharist.

- 43.** Moreover, the discipline defended in OBOB does not really face the issue raised by a community of Christians of different traditions who nevertheless constitute a Christian community in themselves, such as the ‘domestic church’ of the family and the community that exists in many ecumenical institutions and through local ecumenical commitments. We note that the interpretation of the norm on the admission of Christians of other ecclesial communities to communion (107ff.) does not consider that there may be unique occasions for joy or sorrow in the life of institutions and communities.
- 44.** At this point we wish to make a comment on the alternative that the bishops propose to actually receiving the sacrament. In 84 it is suggested that going forward with other actual communicants to receive a blessing may be understood as ‘spiritual communion’. We fully accept the ancient Catholic teaching that a person prevented from receiving the sacred elements may be brought into real communion with our Lord through faith (‘Believe and you have eaten’, as St Augustine says), just as the whole Christ is received when communion is administered in one kind. However, we do not think that this should be too readily applied to Christians who desire to receive the elements that are actually available. We find an uneasy tension between the pastoral economy recommended in 84 and the emphasis in 18 on the importance of actually receiving Holy Communion.
- 45.** Moreover, while we recognize that reciprocal blessings are not uncommon at eucharistic services involving Roman Catholics and Anglicans, and have proved fruitful in building up communion, we judge that a blessing is normally appropriate for catechumens and penitents, rather than for those who are regarded by their own churches as spiritually prepared to receive Holy Communion.
- 46.** With regard to the condition of manifesting Catholic faith as it concerns the Eucharist, we wonder how it is intended that this should be tested or measured. Anglicans are sensitive to the distinction (restated by Pope John XXIII at the opening of the Second Vatican Council) between the substance or deposit of

the faith and the various ways in which it is expressed in diverse contexts. We see how fruitful this distinction can prove in the recent theological agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and non-Chalcedonian Oriental Orthodox Churches.

- 47.** Anglicans would be unwilling to press lay people for an explicit form of doctrinal assent with regard to eucharistic theology. They would be inclined to say that communicants manifest the Catholic faith concerning the Eucharist when they identify themselves with the faith of the Church by their active participation in the liturgy, including reciting the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (or the Apostles' Creed), and by the assent that they make through congregational acclamations and the various Amens said by the people – not least at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer and at the moment of actual reception of the sacred elements. Anglicans would wish to ask: Is not that enough?
- 48.** With regard to the condition of being in communion with the Catholic Church (60), Anglicans wholeheartedly affirm the principle at stake here: the inseparable connection between sacramental and ecclesial communion. But, as we have already noted, Anglicans understand the term 'Catholic Church' in a broader and more inclusive sense than the sense that is operative in OBOB. Through many of the Collects, the intercessions, and the Prayer of Thanksgiving, Anglicans are forcibly reminded that in the Eucharist they are brought into a visible, spiritual communion with 'all who stand before you in heaven and earth'. They pray after communion that they may 'continue in that holy fellowship'. Anglicans rejoice that in the Eucharist they are brought into closer communion, not only with the Lord and with fellow worshippers, but with the whole Church, made up on earth of local churches, those that are episcopally ordered (as Anglicans believe all churches should be), being led by their bishops. Again, Anglicans would wish to ask: Is not that enough?
- 49.** We are particularly interested to note that the two criteria are not applied to the Eastern Churches in the way that they

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are to the churches of the Anglican Communion. Reciprocal eucharistic hospitality between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches is permitted (102–5, 117), in spite of the latter not being in communion with the Pope and not accepting the doctrine of transubstantiation, though they do, of course, like Anglicans, believe in the doctrine of the real presence. We believe that we have demonstrated substantial agreement between the Church of England's eucharistic theology and that set out in OBOB. The work of ARCIC on Ministry and Eucharist supports that contention (see also *May They All Be One*, para. 54). We would therefore be interested in exploring issues of ecumenical consistency in this connection.

- 50.** Finally, we ask the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in Britain and Ireland to reflect on the question: What are the implications of the fact that many Anglicans who are present from time to time at Roman Catholic Eucharists, though without communicating, find that they can, with a good conscience, say a heartfelt Amen at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer? Some Roman Catholic scholars have suggested that this should be regarded as the litmus test of the worthy communicant.

conclusion

- 51.** It is now thirty years since the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, in its agreed statement on the Eucharist, concluded: ‘We believe that we have reached substantial agreement on the doctrine of the eucharist.’ The statement recognized that ‘we are all conditioned by the traditional ways in which we have expressed and practised our eucharistic faith’. It concluded by expressing the pious hope that, in view of the agreement it had reached on eucharistic faith, ‘this doctrine will no longer constitute an obstacle to the unity we seek’ (ARCIC, *Final Report*, p. 16: ‘Eucharistic Doctrine’ 12). The present response is offered as further confirmation of what we see as genuine substantial agreement and as a contribution to the same patient search for full visible unity. We look forward to continuing the dialogue on this and related issues.

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