

A CRITIQUE OF EUCHARISTIC AGREEMENT, edited by John Lawrence. SPCK, London, 1975. 79 pp. £1.50.

In 1973 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge published a collection of four recent ecumenical statements on the Eucharist entitled *Modern Eucharistic Agreement*: namely the statement of the Anglican–Roman International Commission (the Windsor Statement, 1971) the American Lutheran–Roman Catholic Statement (1971), the statement of the Groupe des Dombes (French Catholic and Protestant, 1972), and the World Council of Churches (1971). Now the same publishers, fearing that ‘euphoria’ might cause ‘serious theological difficulties to be overlooked’ have commissioned this collection of essays by a number of Anglican theologians: Bishops R. R. Williams, R. P. C. Hanson, and G. Leonard and Dr. E. L. Mascall and Professor P. E. Hughes; the introduction is by a layman—the editor John Lawrence.

The essays do not seem to have been coordinated, and they represent a variety of opinions. Several of the authors comment on the consensus the four independently composed statements show—greater indeed than that represented by the five essays themselves. The authors suggest reasons that have made this consensus possible: regular meetings of the same theologians, the desire for agreement, general acceptance of scholarly conclusions, especially in biblical studies. One might add, the movement of the Spirit. Bishop Hanson points out that Roman Catholic theologians in the course of independent conversations, held in at least three different places, have shown the same ‘move away from the theology of the late Middle Ages and of the Counter-Reformation... to doctrine based upon the New Testament and the early centuries of the Church’ (p 34).

Bishop Williams points out that there is agreement not only on sacrifice and presence, but also on what he calls the ‘mystery’ of the Eucharist, in other words the truth that every celebration is linked to those that have gone before since “the night in which He was betrayed”, and with all those that will take place “until he comes”, as well as to the Lord’s Easter victory. (p 14). Concerning sacrifice, several contributors discuss Jeremias’s view that *anamnesis* is the calling of

Christ’s sacrifice to the mind of the Father (Acts 10:4). As not all agree with this exegetical theory, it is important to state that the understanding of eucharistic sacrifice does not depend on it. More striking than the fact that several statements make use of the concept of *anamnesis* is the argument that there is in the Eucharist a movement from man to God, which can be called, for example, the entry into Christ’s movement of self-offering. On the subject of presence, most of the contributors concur that it is at the same time objective, personal and dynamic. Bishop Hanson thinks the appropriate adjective is ‘spiritual’; Bishop Williams doubts whether ‘presence’ is the appropriate noun.

The three bishops express general agreement with the documents, while seeking clarification on some points. Professor Hughes, on the other hand, attacks such agreed statements as the papering over of cracks, and substitutes the slogan ‘the Lord’s table for the Lord’s people’. His essay owes more to the heart than to the head, Dr Mascall’s essay is a brilliant survey of recent thought on the Eucharist. In particular his exposition and criticism of theories of transfinalisation, transignification and transvaluation is a masterpiece of clarity, conciseness and logic. The book would be worth getting for this essay alone.

The collection is very much a miscellany; the publishers perhaps would say it needs to be so in order to represent the richness of the Anglican mind; but it would have been good to have included an essay by a Conservative Evangelical. How typical, one wonders, is Bishop Hanson’s bold and generous statement? ...“The Anglican protest, if protest it was, has been heard. This does not mean and this should not mean, that all that remains now is that all Roman Catholics should become Anglicans. It does mean that there is now found to be no insuperable barrier between the Anglican communion and the Roman Catholic communion. No further point now remains in being Anglican for the sake of being Anglican.” (p 34).

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