



The Doctrine Commission Of the Anglican Church of Australia

Response of the Doctrine Commission on the Agreed Statement of Christology

The Doctrine Commission recommends to the Standing Committee of General Synod that Standing Committee:

1. commend the work of the International Anglican Oriental Orthodox Commission, and locally of the Anglican Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum;
2. welcome the progress towards agreement on Christology by the International Anglican Oriental Orthodox Commission, and note the Agreed Statement from November 2002;
3. encourage the Commission to consider elucidation of the Statement (see further Appendix), particularly of clause 2, so as to resolve possible ambiguities regarding the use of “nature”;
4. encourage the Commission to separate consideration of matters concerning the Assyrian Church of the East or other Churches from any agreed statement on Christology.

Appendix

The Doctrine Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia offers the following reflections concerning the Agreed Statement on Christology of the International Anglican Oriental Orthodox Commission.

In clause 2, we note that the statement “that in the one incarnate nature of the Word of God, two different natures continue to exist” uses the word “nature” in two different ways. Although these correspond to the inherited uses of our two traditions, and it is desirable to express our common confession of the genuine divinity and humanity of Christ as well as his personal unity, such use in one sentence without elucidation may lead to confusion. We also note that this formulation does not occur in other agreed statements between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and western Churches.

Further, we note that the phrase “continues to exist” differs from the expressions used both by St Cyril (who speaks of the two natures as “perceived”), and by the Definition of Chalcedon (which speaks of the two natures as “made known”) in their understandings of the hypostatic union.

We also note that in clause 3 the phrase “perfect humanity, without sin, which he took from her” is ambiguous, and may refer to the humanity of Christ as without sin and derived from his mother Mary (which we would affirm), or (also) imply a view of Mary as without sin which we would not all hold.

We note also that the use of the term “natural” in the first part of clause 7 may be ambiguous, and encourage its elucidation. Similarly we note that the phrase “one personal will” may require elucidation.

Further and finally regarding clause 7, the statement that the “natures are distinguished in our mind in thought alone” {emphasis ours} may require elucidation, in that its focus on the intellect may not seem to allow for the ways in which our traditions may affirm that the natures are seen or perceived by reflection or contemplation (cf. Cyril, Ep. 46, ad Succensum I).

By and on behalf of the Doctrine Commission,

Andrew McGowan