



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

August 2020

My dear friends and colleagues,

On the feast of the Transfiguration, when Jesus went up the mountain with Peter and James and John, and in their sight met Moses and Elias, His face, we are told, shone like the sun. It must have left the disciples reeling! They would have wondered what was going on. But as well as confusing them it must also have proved a real tonic. They had already followed Jesus for some time, seen all manner of incredible things, but only now do they glimpse “reality”. Only now do they see Jesus (if only for a moment) as he really is, ever was and always will be. Here was his glorious divinity shining through his frail humanity. What a wonderful moment to ease their human fears!



From the
Archdeacon's desk

But such a blessing wasn't given to indulge them! The apostles would *need* this vision of glory, for they were heading down a dark and dangerous road. Jesus had said he would die, so it was a journey leading to pain, death and ridicule – the complete opposite of what the Jewish world expected concerning the Messiah. Jesus would not only confuse them in the coming weeks – he would break their hearts and confound their hopes. The whole world would reject them. So this moment of clarity was given to provide hope in darkness. When they were at their lowest, the memory of that brilliant light would point them to reality and reassure their broken spirits.

What does this mean today? Well, although Christian life brings unsurpassed joy, that is not to say it is easy. Far from it! God did not promise an easy life at Baptism – but warned the way will be hard. Christians must take up the cross daily – daring to swim against the tide of this fleeting, selfish world.

When we stand up for Jesus the world hates us. If we *really* follow him we soon discover the pain of the cross. But persevere – this is the road to resurrection! It's easy to wear the appearance of faith. To go to church, spout Christian ideals, challenge no-one and guard your worldly heart. That is easy and many do it, even those in mitres and birettas! If you, like some of the mainstream Churches, peddle what *purports* to be a Christian life, only emphasising the bits that cause no offence and watering down the bits that do, you can be certain of worldly support. But to stand up for Jesus is something else altogether.

If we defend the faith that comes from the apostles, refusing to water scripture down to appease current secular opinion, we can be assured of ridicule and pain. And indeed we who do refuse to compromise scripture and tradition to accommodate what modern society wants know this only too well. Many of us soon discovered in our former churches that we were no longer wanted. If we did not subscribe to the “improved” revelation of the modern world then we were to be sidelined. So what sees us through these difficult moments of faith?

Well, to every believer God grants bright moments of clarity – small glimpses to aid us on our journey. And remember that on that mountain something other than the transfiguration of Jesus occurred. The apostles themselves were transformed. Their faith was changed. Their fear was turned into confidence.

May God bless and transform your life too.

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E.J. Bicknell on Anglican Orders (first published in 1919)

The validity of our orders has constantly been denied by theologians of the Church of Rome on various grounds. The earliest and simplest line of attack was to assert that the line of succession had been broken. An absurd story commonly known as the 'Nag's Head fable' was fabricated. This alleged that Archbishop Parker was not duly consecrated, but underwent a mock ceremony at the Nag's Head Tavern in Cheapside. This has long been abandoned by serious Roman controversialists, though traces of it still linger among the ignorant. A second attempt was made to show that Bishop Barlow, who was the principle consecrator of Parker, was himself never rightly consecrated. This objection too has failed. Three other bishops took part in the consecration, and we are told all laid their hands on his head and said the words. The position of Barlow did not really, therefore, affect the validity of the act. But there is no reason whatever to doubt Barlow's own consecration. It may also be observed that even if the English church had lost her orders in the time of Elizabeth, she would have recovered them later through Laud. At the consecration of Laud there met not only the English but also the Irish and Italian lines of succession. All the bishops who survived in 1660 had been consecrated by Laud. As we shall see in the latest Papal pronouncement on our orders, the historical arguments are all tacitly dropped.

A second line of attack has been to argue that our orders are invalid owing either to 'insufficiency of form' or 'lack of intention'. These two arguments are closely connected, but ought to be kept distinct.

(a) As to 'insufficiency of form'. The Ordinal used in the consecration of Archbishop Parker was that of Edward VI, to which our Article refers. It has been maintained that the form of consecration and of ordination contained is invalid, on the ground that in the words that accompany the laying on of hands the archbishop was directed to say 'Take the Holy Ghost and remember that thou stir up the grace of God which is on thee by the imposition of our hands, etc.' In the revision of 1661 the words were expanded into their present form 'Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Bishop in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands; In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And remember, etc.' It has been argued that the earlier form was insufficient because the particular order was not specified, and indeed, that this insufficiency was felt by the Church of England is proved by the subsequent emendation. This argument is not very strong. The quotation from 2 Tim. 1.6 is sufficient to show that the office to which the words refer is the same as that to which S. Timothy was himself consecrated by S. Paul, namely the Episcopate. Nor is there any real doubt throughout the service what is taking place. Further, the Latin Pontifical is equally vague in its language, 'Receive the Holy Ghost', the office for which the Holy Ghost is being given determined by the context. So, too, the form in the Ordinal of Edward VI for the ordination of priests ran originally, 'Receive the Holy Ghost: whose sins thou dost forgive, etc.' In 1661 the words 'for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands' were inserted. Here, too, the quotation from Jn 20.23, 'Whose sins thou dost forgive, etc.' fixes the meaning. The insertions of 1661 were probably made in order to rule out the Presbyterian idea that bishop and priest were the same office. They must be viewed in light of contemporary Church history.

A further objection now proved to be unsound must be mentioned. In the Western rite for the ordination of priests there had been introduced a ceremony known as the 'porrectio intrumentorum'. The bishop presented the candidates for ordination with a paten and chalice, saying, 'Receive authority to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate Masses as well for the living as for the dead.' This was deliberately omitted in the second Prayer-Book of Edward VI. It was argued, therefore, that this omission rendered the 'form' invalid. In the seventeenth century a school of theologians had come to hold that this particular ceremony, with the words that

accompany it, was the actual matter and form of ordination. In the fifteenth century Pope Eugenius IV, in his letter to this to the Armenians which was appended to the decrees of the Council of Florence, had definitely committed himself to this view. Other controversialists were content to maintain that only certain powers of the priesthood were conveyed through this ceremony. But in the seventeenth century, owing to the researches of the Roman Catholic antiquarian Morinus, it was established beyond all doubt that the ceremony had not existed during the first thousand years of the Church's life. It was purely Western and Roman. If, then, it was essential for a valid ordination, the Church had possessed no valid orders for a thousand years. The objection, therefore, in its old form, fell to the ground.

(b) The opponents of Anglican Orders have therefore fallen back on the charge of 'lack of intention'. This is the argument of the Papal Bull 'Apostolicae Curae' issued in 1896, condemning our orders as null and void. The Pope maintains that the Ordinal of Edward VI and our present Ordinal are not so much absolutely and in themselves inadequate, but that the changes made in them at the Reformation are evidence of a change of intention on the part of the Church. The deliberate omission of any mention of the sacrificing power of the priesthood and of the 'porrectio instrumentorum', which was the visible sign of the conferring of that power, show that the Church of England does not intend to ordain a 'sacrificing priesthood'. Her offices betray a defective idea of the priesthood, and therefore true priests cannot be made by them.

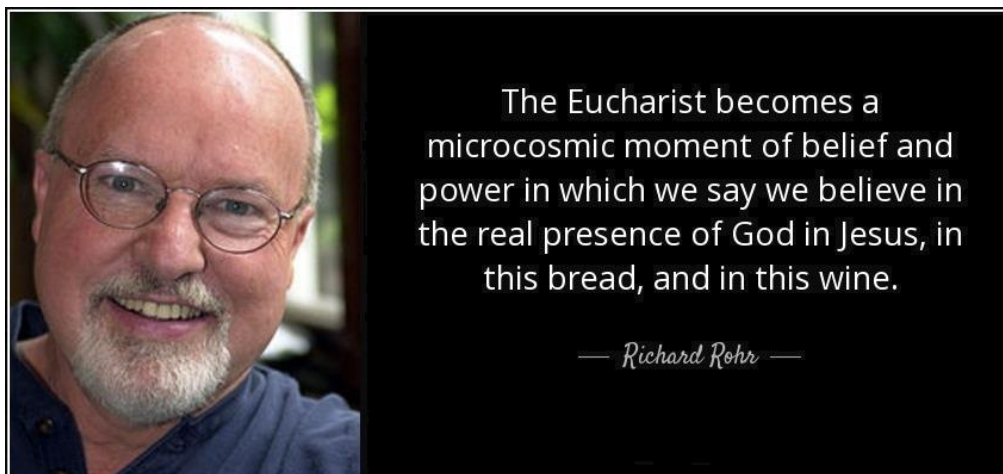
In reply to this charge it has been pointed out that any explicit mention of the sacrificial function of the priesthood is entirely absent from several forms that Rome acknowledges to be valid, including not only the Coptic rite, but the ancient Roman rite. But this hardly meets the objection. It is not at all the same thing never to have had any explicit mention of the sacrificing power of the priesthood, as to have cut it out after such mention has been inserted. In order to defend the action of the Church of England we must go back to first principles. Here, as elsewhere, the Church of England desired to return to antiquity. She appealed against one-sided and perverted medieval ideas to Scripture and primitive tradition. In the later Middle Ages the function of offering the Eucharistic sacrifice had assumed such undue prominence in the popular idea of the priesthood, that there was serious danger of forgetting the ministry of the Word and the pastoral work that belong essentially to the Office. The Reformers rightly desired to recall men to a fuller and better-proportioned view of the ministry. Accordingly, in the Ordinal the comparatively late addition of the 'porrectio instrumentorum' and the singling out of the sacrificial function of the priesthood were omitted. This did not mean that the Church of England in any sense intended to institute, as it were, a new order. The preface to the Ordinal, composed in 1550 and continued in 1552, makes it as clear as human language is able to make it, that she intended to continue those orders which had been in the Church from the days of the Apostles, namely Bishops, Priests and Deacons, in the same sense as they had always existed. When we turn to Scripture we find no stress laid upon the authority given to ministers to celebrate the Eucharist. It is preposterous to suppose that our Lord chose or ordained the Apostles chiefly or primarily to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice. In S. Paul's address to the presbyter-bishops of Ephesus, the stress is laid on the faithful preaching of the Word and the care of the flock (Acts 20.28-31). In the Pastoral Epistles, in the choice of presbyters the emphasis is laid on the possession of qualities of character which are needed for pastoral supervision and teaching (I Tim 3.1-7, cp. 5.17, Tit 1.7-9). So S. Peter places in the forefront of the duty of presbyters the general oversight of the flock (I Pet. 5.1-4). In such passages as these there is no explicit mention of the Eucharist. No one can doubt that it was the centre of Christian worship on every Lord's Day, nor that any one of the presbyter-bishops had authority, if need be, to preside. But when we compare the New Testament picture of the presbyters with the modern Roman idea of the priest, we feel the centre of gravity has shifted. So, too, in the early Church, the power to celebrate the Eucharist is not the predominant mark of the presbyter. It is not isolated from his other functions. It is not singled out for special mention in primitive ordinals. It was only during the Middle Ages and as a result of a one-sided view of the sacrifice of the Eucharist that an equally one-sided view of the office of priesthood came to be held. At the

Reformation the Church of England of set purpose returned to the primitive conception of the ministry.

Again, it is untrue to say that the Church of England denies the Eucharistic sacrifice. She only repudiates any form of corrupt teaching that makes it in any sense a repetition of the sacrifice once for all offered on Calvary. In her service the Church of England makes it abundantly clear that her intention is to confer the orders which our Lord instituted and the Apostles conferred. Her purpose is shown by her use of the language of the New Testament throughout her Ordinal. She means her orders to be those of the New Testament. As such she confers upon her priests authority to 'minister the Holy Sacraments'. This includes the celebration of the Eucharist. Here again her intention is that the Eucharist shall be all that the Lord intended it to be. The sacrifice of the Eucharist is not something additional; it is the Eucharist itself in one of its chief aspects. Whatever it means, it is included in our Lord's words of institution. Hence, in conferring authority to minister the Sacraments, she confers authority to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice. Indeed, she cannot do otherwise. Even if the Church of England had denied the Eucharistic sacrifice, that would not render her orders invalid. For, it is agreed, even by Romanists, that heresy does not render sacraments invalid. But she has not done anything of the kind. It is perfectly true that our Ordinal does not make explicit mention of 'the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ', because it is unnecessary. The full meaning of the Eucharist depends on the Lord's command, not on our theology. Inasmuch as our priests receive authority to celebrate it, they receive authority to fulfil all that it means.

So, then, our real quarrel with the Church of Rome is, at bottom, about the meaning of the priesthood and of the Eucharistic sacrifice. We contend that Roman teaching on both is so out of proportion as to be almost untrue. If the Church of Rome chooses to say that we do not intend to make priests exactly in her sense of the word, we are not concerned to deny it. We are content to make priests in accordance with the ministry of the New Testament and the Primitive Church.

The Roman arguments rest upon two great assumptions. First, that Rome is at all times infallible, and therefore her teaching at any time about the meaning of the priesthood must be accepted without question. Secondly, that Rome has a divine right to implicit and universal obedience, and therefore any change in the form of service without her consent shows a contumacious spirit. Neither of these assumptions can be granted, and without them the whole argument collapses.



(For variety I will often use as a "desk picture" some Isle of Sheppey scenes viewed from my desk, from the garden, or within a few minutes of it.)