

THE EUCHARISTA. Centrality of the Eucharist in Christian life

1. While the whole Church is an extension of the Incarnation (^{though we} ~~taken in~~
~~in such a sense as to have the lordship of Christ over his Church~~
~~the broad sense as including the Paschal Mystery~~), the Eucharist is so in
 a unique way. Baptism is our first entrance into a eucharistic community.
 The sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist is not just the sacrifice of the cross,
 but the sacrifice of Christ's whole life of obedience to the Father which
 culminated in his death on the cross and his glorious resurrection.

2. The Eucharist is the pre-eminent public worship given to the
 Father by the Church united with Christ.

3. In our union with Christ, the head of the Church, who is the source
 of all grace, the Lord of all creation and the epiphany of his Father's
 love, we are one with all men and all creation (cf. Eph. 1.10; 1 Cor. 10.17).
 Therefore the Eucharist is the source of the building-up of the Church.
 At the Eucharist the Church becomes most intensely herself.

4. This building-up is necessary for Christ's mission. Indeed, the
 Church cannot have a mission without a worshipping assembly, which is the
 "summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same
 time, it is the fountain from which all her power flows." (Vatican II,
 Liturgy, 10). This human koinonia is given only by God; but the efficacy
 of Christ's redemptive work, made present and actualized in the Eucharist,
 requires the response in faith of the Church in its members. This response
 is expressed by their renewed identification with Christ in his perfect
 self-oblation to the Father which was consummated upon the cross and of
 which the entire incarnate life is the expression.

B. The Eucharist is a Sacrament

The Eucharist must be always seen as a sacrament, i.e. as both sign and cause of what is signified. It is not, therefore, a physical re-enactment of an historical event or a merely commemorative service. It is rather a "memorial" in the biblical sense of anamnesis (ækkaron). This means that the Eucharist is at once a living and effective image of Christ and the redemptive mystery of His Body and Blood. In the cultic rite Christ as Priest and Victim offers to the Father the total self-surrender which inspired his whole life and found consummate expression in his death and resurrection. Through the same rite Christ offers to the men of a given time in the history of the world the fullness of his Body and Blood and, therefore, the full efficacy of the life and death which he gave for them.

Because his Paschal Mystery looks to the full salvation of all men and of the whole world, the Eucharist as the anamnesis of the Paschal Mystery guarantees and advances, signifies and provides a foretaste of ~~this~~ ^{the} consummation of God's purposes.

We should understand the Eucharist in sacramental terms. We must not limit ourselves to a static view of the sacrament, but see the risen Lord as present and operating in it in a way that is beyond human comprehension. For he is present and operating by the agency of the Holy Spirit through whom Christ is active in the Church and in the world, and consequently in the individual faith-response of the believer.

The Eucharist is a mysterion, a work of the Holy Spirit, which we cannot totally comprehend.

C. The Eucharist as Sacrifice

Christ is present in his memorial (anamnesis, LEKKARON) in a sacramental, not a natural way. Through a cultic act and through his minister Christ, already present in other ways, makes himself present in a unique way in that sacrifice and its efficacy to the assembled people. He is the Christ, risen in the Spirit, giving us under the signs the Body and Blood given for our salvation.

What is new in the ^{Eucharist} Mass is this spirit-filled action of the Church by which the people of God, on a given day and with its given needs, unites itself to the risen Christ to share in the mystery of his death and resurrection and in his intercession. Consequently by the Church's adoration, intercession, union with Christ, self-oblation and offering of the memorial in the Eucharist, what was already present in Christ is actualized here and now for the Church.

When we say we offer the sacrifice for N. we mean: through an act of the Church united with Christ, he gives us his Body and Blood to give us fulness of life; this implies a share in his intercession, so that we plead his once-for-all sacrifice on N's behalf.

Although all the faithful share Christ's priesthood and offer his sacrifice in the Eucharist, the ordained minister who presides at the Eucharist is in a special way the representative of Christ and his people. Thus the minister reflects Christ's two-fold role as mediator, standing both with God over against us, and with us over against God. Therefore the priest is both appointed by God and recognized by God's people.

D. Real Presence.

We agree in accepting Cyril of Jerusalem's words as an apt account of the eucharistic presence:

We beseech the God of mercy to send the Holy Spirit on the offerings placed before us to transform the bread into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood of Christ. What the Holy Spirit has touched is totally sanctified and transformed.

While Anglicans have always believed in the real, unique and objective presence of the living Christ in the eucharistic elements, they have consistently abstained from attempting to define the manner of that presence. The passage from St. Cyril of Jerusalem would be accepted by Anglicans provided that the words "totally sacrificed and transformed" are not understood to imply that the sacramental signs of bread and wine are so annihilated as to overthrow the nature of the sacrament.

The faith of the Roman Catholic Church is that the whole reality of the bread becomes the whole reality of the body of Christ (Trent and Mysterium Fidei). (This position many believe to be in harmony with the Anglican understanding.) We are not committed to the philosophy in which this truth was articulated, even though it was through this philosophy in particular historical circumstances that the Church stated the truth.

E. Practice

"The eucharistic bread and wine remain the Body and Blood of Our Lord as long as these eucharistic elements exist" (Anglican-Orthodox Conference at Bucharest, 1935, p. 7, n. 5).

At the Eucharist the Church offers adoration. Primarily the Church, united with Christ, adores the Father. It also adores Christ himself, present in the eucharistic elements, though neither of our Communion considers it normal to attend the Eucharist in order to adore without receiving.

Adoration of our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament is not a characteristic form of Anglican devotion whether within or outside the action of the eucharistic rite. Anglican formularies and prayer-books do not make provision for such acts of devotion for either congregational or private use. But in practice those who desire to engage in such acts are not discouraged from them. Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is provided for in the prayer-books of most Provinces of the Anglican Communion, but primarily for the purpose of the communion of the sick rather than for that of adoration, although in practice many use it for the latter purpose,

particularly in their private prayers. Reservation is regarded as essentially an extension of the eucharistic rite itself as the consecrated elements are accorded due reverence as uniquely indwelt by the living Christ, both in the immediate context of the Eucharist, where adoration is primarily directed to God the Father, and where they are reserved in tabernacle or aumbry.

It is characteristic of Roman Catholics to express their adoration of Christ present in the eucharistic elements, not only during the Mass but before the Blessed Sacrament reserved. Many find it a help to prayer if they direct their attention outside the Mass to the Blessed Sacrament. This is because the Blessed Sacrament reserved is an extension of the *Saving* *work of the* Mass, in which Christ is given not simply to be adored but to be offered to the Father and received by the faithful.

We agree that the positions of our respective Churches show points of convergence.

F. Eucharist in a divided Church

It is a paradox and a scandal that, while baptism admits us into the eucharistic community, we are unable fully to share one another's Eucharist. At one another's celebration we can share in acts of adoration, intercession, penitence; God's word calls us together to hear and proclaim that ~~Word~~ and to desire the fulness of the Word in the Eucharist. Yet, still divided as we are in our allegiance and in some of our beliefs, we are unable, to our sorrow, to come together to the altar to receive the Body and Blood. We may hope that our willed communion (votum eucharistiae)

when present or
~~is~~ the celebration of the Eucharist by our separated brethren, *even though* when we cannot *per* together eat Christ's Body and drink his Blood, constitutes the disposition *sufficient* necessary for us to receive Christ's eucharistic gift. The pain of our inability yet to communicate *as members of one Church* at the same altar is a necessary and creative condition of our being brought by the Holy Spirit to full organic unity according to Christ's will. Major obstacles to this are the Roman Catholic inability to recognize the validity of Anglican orders and the ambiguity which attaches to the term "ecclesiastical communities" (Vatican II). *New ways* of solving these problems *must* be urgently sought.

Many feel however that / the developments in ecumenical dialogue are narrowing the theological horizon.

However, we share already a fellowship in Christ which we recognize as a fruit and realization of the eucharistic life, although we cannot yet receive Holy Communion together. This is the fellowship which shared communion will further deepen and intensify.

We conclude, therefore, that in the present state of affairs reciprocal intercommunion cannot be the normal practice. Even when the problems connected with the ministry which we have mentioned above have been solved, the Churches will not thereby be united. Until sufficient koinonia in the Church is agreed upon and established, the full koinonia of the Eucharist is impossible, as Eucharist and Church are co-extensive. We would nevertheless encourage further research into the possibility of wider admission to communion between our two Communion in exceptional pastoral situations.

G. Communion under ^{both} ~~one~~ kinds

This is no longer a major problem between us. The Roman Catholic Church is now aware of the desirability of this practice, and is adopting it to an increasing extent.

H. Conclusion

Although the inability of the Roman Catholic Church to recognise the validity of Anglican orders remains an obstacle to unity, we are agreed that there is not sufficient disagreement between us on eucharistic doctrine to constitute an obstacle to full communion.

*Some
taken by
itself.*

Alan Clark, Auxiliary Bishop of Northampton
(Chairman)

E. G. Knapp-Fisher, Bishop of Pretoria

Barnabas Ahern, C.P.

Jean M. Tillard, O.P.

A. A. Vogel

E. J. Yarnold, S.J.