

Sub-Commission 3

1. The eucharist and the priestly ministry
2. The ministry of the Word and sacraments
3. The cure of souls and the power of the keys
4. The priesthood of bishops and presbyters
5. The ordained ministry within the church

1. The eucharist and the priestly ministry.

A Even before the end of the first century A.D. the action of the presbyters in eucharistic worship was described in I. Clement as "offering the gifts " of the church.

In Justin Martyr the prophecy of Malachi I: 11 is taken as a prophecy of the world-wide extension of the christian eucharist. In view of the fact that, from earliest times, the eucharist was the celebration of the memorial of the death of the Lord, the sacrifice of the eucharist was related to the sacrifice of Christ. The question as to what that relation is, however, was not settled.

B Christians of the first and second centuries, in celebrating the eucharist, were aware of the unity of the eucharist and Christ's sacrifice, e.g. Irenaeus. Understanding of the eucharist as a memorial of the unique sacrifice of Christ leads to the president of the eucharist being seen as representing sacramentally the only priest of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ himself. This sacramental representation is the source of the priestly quality of the ordained ministry. At the end of the second century this aspect of ministry is well established.

C By the high middle ages the process was complete by which the ministry assumed a predominantly ritual-priestly function. In the 16th century the reformers generally expressed acute anxiety about the doctrine of sacrifice associated with the eucharist and, in consequence, about any sacrificial understanding of the rôle of the minister in the eucharistic action. Priestly language, where used, e.g. by Richard Hooker, was approved on the understanding the 'priest' was the equivalent of 'presbyter'. Two main grounds of objection on the part of the reformers were that the language of sacrifice and priesthood often seemed to them to imply that some repetition or addition to the sacrifice of Christ was involved, or that, and this especially in the case of Lutherans, the eucharist was some kind of 'work' by which man merited grace. In the first generations of the English reformation sacrificial language for both eucharist and ministry was used sparingly and often with an identification of sacrifice solely with the thankful offering of Christian life.

D Not all the charges brought against late medieval eucharistic theology and practice can be sustained. In particular we must now acknowledge that the pre-Reformation church affirmed the identity of the Mass and Calvary more firmly than has sometimes been alleged. Though some, e.g. Biel, seem to have come near to attributing to the Mass a certain value independent of the sacrifice of the Cross, and distinctions between the 'principal offerer' (Christ) and the celebrating priest could easily run into dangerous waters, the preponderant theological opinion was that the Mass was in an unbloody manner one and the same sacrifice as that of Calvary and that it was Christ who offered himself to the Father therein.

E But though formally correct in rejecting the notion of repetition of Calvary or adding to it, and in avoiding the idea of the Mass as a human 'work', Catholic theology did not, and except in a few instances could not, explain how the Mass and Calvary were one and the same, how it was that Christ was 'principal offerer', etc. This was the crucial deficiency. Without such an explanation the time-honoured assertions, repeated again and again, of the unity of Mass and Calvary, etc., failed to satisfy the early Reformers. ↑

F By 1600 ~~the~~ Anglican theologians, reacting against Calvinism, were beginning to recover confidence in using the language of priesthood and sacrifice. There is a legitimate Christian insight into the quality of Christian ministry preserved by the word 'priest', once it is seen that the sacrificial character of the eucharist does not derogate from the all-sufficiency of Calvary. Because we are "taken up in his self-offering" (paragraph 5, Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine, Windsor 1971), and because we accept the sacrificial nature of the eucharist, we affirm the priesthood of the celebrating minister; for the priesthood of the minister is related analogously to the priesthood of Christ as the sacrifice of the eucharist is related to the sacrifice of Christ.

2. The ministry of the word and sacraments

A → The Reformers of the 16th century claimed to have recovered a balance which they believed the medieval church had lost.

B We believe that there is no antithesis between word and sacrament and the two are necessarily integrated. For example, the administration of the eucharist, in the midst of the people of God, is the supreme proclamation of the Gospel.

[The Christian minister is committed ^{to} to proclaim the word and to administer the sacraments.

3. The cure of souls and the power of the keys

Until recent times the manner in which sacramental absolution was given and practised in the Roman Catholic church appeared very different from the practice of Anglicanism. Our differences certainly have theological implications, but do not penetrate to the deepest levels of doctrine. Both the Pontifical and the Ordinal explicitly confer the power of absolution upon the presbyterate.

4. The priesthood of bishops and presbyters

A The priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ is unique, so that there is but one priest to whom we can ascribe an office which is, in an unqualified way, redemptive and mediatorial. Through ordination the priesthood of Jesus Christ is represented to us in the person of those who are his ministers and whom we call priests. It is through this sacramental act that the commission of Christ is passed on.

B Roman Catholics and Anglicans agree that, when a bishop ordains, he does not act as a representative of the church, if by that is meant the whole body of contemporary christians. The authority by which he acts is that of Christ himself, entrusted to his apostles and those to whom they committed it. This authority is received neither from the church nor apart from the church, but from Christ in the church.

5. The ordained ministry within the church

A We affirm together the divine institution of the christian ministry. We recognise the fact of its development from the age of the apostles in divers forms, three of which are upheld within both our traditions, those of bishop, presbyter and deacon.

B The ministers of the church are themselves subordinate to the church, and no man may take such office of ministry upon himself. We observe within both our communions the principle of episcopal ordination, and there are no ministers of either church who have not been made such by a bishop. We affirm episcopacy as an effective sign of continuity and unity in the church of Christ, even though from the earliest period of Anglicanism there has been debate regarding the relationship of episcopacy to the nature of the church itself.

C We recognise that in conferring the sacrament of orders, the prime actor is God, and that this sacrament must be celebrated and fulfilled only within the community of the church.