

## THE ORIGINS OF THE ANGLICAN MINISTRY

THE distinctive position of the Anglican communion consists in its claim to be at once Catholic while non-Roman, Reformed while non-Protestant. For the maintenance of this claim nothing is more crucial than the vindication of the reality of its Orders and Sacraments. The more the importance of the idea of the *Church* is re-discovered and re-appreciated, the more important is seen to be the reality of the Eucharist and the Liturgy. Hence Anglicans have come to realize that if their Orders and Eucharist are open to question, their very existence as a Church becomes equally problematical.

The intervention of Pope Leo XIII in this question of the validity of Anglican Orders and the decision of his Bull *Apostolicae Curae* are familiar to all. Equally familiar is the fact that there are some who hold that neither the intervention nor the decision were final, either because they maintain that, in view of what some Catholic theologians themselves have said regarding the relative and practical character of the Bull, the judgment was not irreversible, or because they dispute the accuracy of the matters of fact on which the unfavourable judgment was based. In this way the majority of Anglican ecclesiastics and scholars are accustomed to contest the historical argument on which Catholics rely.

In order to throw light on these disputed questions of historical fact, Dr. E. C. Messenger has undertaken a series of studies which, after a preliminary brochure published in 1934, consists of two large volumes of which the first appeared in April.<sup>1</sup>

Since the motive for the rejection of Anglican Orders is the changes introduced into the Ordinal under Edward VI, these must form the principal object of any study of the question. Moreover, since an Ordinal is an expression of the faith and doctrine of those who compiled it, the doctrinal

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<sup>1</sup> *The Reformation, the Mass and the Priesthood, A Documented History with special reference to Anglican Orders*, by Ernest C. Messenger, Ph.D. (Longmans; 18/-.)

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implications of this Ordinal call for particular attention. Dr. Messenger's study is divided into four main parts: (1) an historical inquiry into the doctrines of the Real Presence, of the sacrificial character of the Mass and of the sacrificing priesthood as taught in the New Testament and in early and mediæval Christian tradition; (2) the rejection of these doctrines by the Continental Reformers; (3) the beginnings of the English Reformation and of distinctive Anglican rites and theology under Henry VIII; (4) the decisive formative influence of the Continental Reformation upon Anglicanism under Edward VI and the substitution of Protestant for Catholic teaching which find expression in the rites of the Eucharist and Holy Orders in the first and Second Prayer Books. Dr. Messenger's general conclusion is that, under the influence of the Continental Reformers generally, and especially of Bucer, Anglicanism then substituted for the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence by Transubstantiation some idea of a "spiritual" presence in the Sacrament; for the sacrificial doctrine of the Mass a mere "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving"; for the sacrificing priesthood a bare "ministry of God's word and sacraments."

This conclusion is reached by way of a chronologically-ordered examination of historical facts and documents. We can here recall only the main stages of this progressive infiltration of Continental Protestantism into English Christianity. As a result of the first contacts with Lutheranism, traces of it were already to be found (*pace* the Abbé Constant) in the Ten Articles of 1536, wherein Bucer's characteristic term "exhibited" occurs in the Article concerning the Eucharist. The *King's Book* of 1543, superficially so orthodox as to have deceived many, is by no means orthodox in the eyes of Dr. Messenger. Thus, it speaks of "offering" the Body and Blood, but it does not specify *to whom* the offering is made: the context suggests that it is solely to the communicants. And indeed, in spite of what Mr. Belloc and the Abbé Constant have asserted to the contrary, it seems impossible to maintain that the Anglican Church under Henry VIII was merely schismatical, and that it was not also heretical in what regards the Eucharist and Holy Orders.

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Under Edward VI the Protestantization of the Church of England progressed rapidly. The *Communion Book* reflects the idea of Cranmer regarding the Mass as a mere commemoration of the Cross and a Communion Service. The *First Prayer Book*, although it retained a truncated form of the Canon of the Mass, admits only a "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" together with a self-offering of the worshippers, and a "spiritual presence" in the manner of Calvin and Bucer. It introduces a new Ordinal which has cast out everything which emphasizes the sacrificial function of the priesthood. Finally, the *Second Prayer Book* and the XLII Articles entirely eliminate the idea of the Real Presence.

All this seems to us undeniable and conclusive. A multitude of texts, quoted *in extenso* or translated, is marshalled in this book. Their cumulative force is overwhelming, and can hardly leave any doubt as to the influx of an immense mass of purely Protestant doctrine into the Church of England. It is distressing to see with what insouciance such men as Melancthon, Bucer, and Cranmer could manufacture brand-new Eucharistic doctrine without any regard for the faith and consent of the *Una Catholica*; they give us here an example of that academic, donnish, abstract attitude of mind with which the leaders of the Reformation commonly spurned the faith of the Church at large and totally disregarded the revealed depositum. We are well aware that multitudes of contemporary Anglicans are far from sharing this contemptuous disregard for the Catholic inheritance, but we fear that they are too often inclined to read the Anglicanism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into the Anglicanism of the sixteenth. In Canon Moreton's *La réforme anglicane au XVIIe siècle*, published in French in 1930, we are given an example of this disregard for historical perspective. The beliefs of the Anglo-Catholic of to-day are too often presented as the constant teaching of the Church of England. But, as Aristotle said, "what has been *has been*": the tragic past is a heritage which cannot *not* have been. The priestly succession has been broken and with it has gone the daily sacrifice foretold by Malachy. While we may sometimes regret Dr. Messenger's rather polemical and unsympa-

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thetic manner and his seeming indifference to the tragedy of the events he records, we think there can be no doubt that he has proved that up to the hilt.

But, it may be asked, if Anglicanism has broken with the Catholic tradition, has the Catholic tradition itself remained faithful to its origins? Is the mediæval doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass, of the priesthood, of the Real Presence, even substantially identical with that of primitive Christianity? The first part of Dr. Messenger's book sets out to give a rapid reply to this question. It reproduces briefly the testimonies of Scripture and of some early Christian writers.<sup>2</sup> The summary is doubtless fair so far as it goes, but is necessarily inadequate. As in all apologetic efforts of this character, the real difficulties are rapidly glossed over, and it must be confessed that the discussion of such texts as that of the indult granted to the Abbot of St. Osith (page 77) or such citations as that from Clement of Rome (page 22) are not at all satisfactory.

A remark of general relevance seems called for. Scientific research and criticism can, in such matters as these, do much to reassure and vindicate our faith, but they cannot be permitted to become an ultimate criterion of the Church's beliefs. Neither the evidence, nor even the certitude, afforded by critical research can be the motive of my belief in the Real Presence or in the sacrificial powers of the priesthood. To assert otherwise is sheer rationalism, "free-thought" or Socinianism. That so great a mind as St. Cyprian's fell in some measure into this attitude does not justify it. But it was precisely this attitude which was that of the Reformers, and is still found to be in the last analysis that of Anglicans generally and of every Catholicizing tendency which stops short of integration within the One Catholic Church. Each aims, at least implicitly and in practice, at a return to authentic primitive Christianity as revealed to us by historical research; each would seem to regard this as the ultimate criterion of faith.

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<sup>2</sup> There are several misquotations, e.g. on page 19, footnote 2, read I Cor. x, 18-21; and on page 22, footnote 1, read *Didache*, xiv.

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For ourselves, we can acknowledge no faith but that which is given us, not by academic comparative study of the documents of bygone ages, but by the *living* Church: the *Una Catholica* which is animated by the indwelling Spirit and is in living continuity with Jesus Christ. To depart from this Church is to depart from the womb wherein the Holy Spirit begets us to Christ in faith.

M.-J. CONGAR, O.P.

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### ART FOR ART'S SAKE

*To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS*

SIR,—If I may reply to Mr. Ivan Brook's letter, I should like to point out that it is possible for a Catholic sacred art to develop without putting aside all work that has been done since the Reformation. It is the Catholic's fault, not the non-Catholic's, that sacred art has been allowed to go down the hill, whilst art in the sphere of the purely natural and human has advanced.

The Cubist picture placed against a Giotto can truly be similarly "organized." The difference lies in the fact that the Cubist is *only* interested in "organization"—a thing permissible in a purely abstract painting—whilst Giotto was using intuitively the same abstract principle of "organization" to express another thought and that his chief end. If the modern painter believes that Giotto never had any other end in view than that of "organization," taking the subject only as an excuse, the modern painter is wrong and must be corrected on that point, but it is ridiculous to wipe out all art since 1400.

I would suggest that very often criticism against art of the Reformation is due to a tendency to manicheism (art of the Reformation was rarely sacred, though often good profane art) rather than accuse Cubists of this. The Cubist does not consider matter evil, but he wants to talk about purely intellectual ideas. Of course sacred art can never be an abstract art, though it may use the principles discovered or made clear by abstract art. I desire "handiwork" to be considered more highly, but not by diminishing the value of the more purely intellectual side of art: action should arise out of contemplation. I am, etc.,

J. MORRIS, S.P.