

That comes from Waugh's biography of Ronald Knox (p. 211). Hinsley also appreciated Knox, suggested he became President of St Edmund's, Ware, quite understood why Knox felt he must refuse the post, and set him to translate the Bible, defending him against Amigo and all and sundry. He also restored *The Tablet* to genuine lay control. Maloney observes that the Roman Catholic Community in England and Wales 'had been locked in a time-warp since 1850' (p. 241). That it broke out of this time-warp was due in large measure to Arthur Hinsley, who brought it for good or ill into the mainstream of British life.

- 1 Thomas Moloney, *Westminster, Whitehall and the Vatican. The Role of Cardinal Hinsley 1935—43*. Burns & Oates, London, 1985, pp. 263. £9.95. All otherwise unidentified page references are to this work.
- 2 For this see Giuseppe Alberigo and others, *La Chrétienté en débat. Histoire, formes et problèmes actuels*. Cerf, Paris, 1984.
- 3 *Harold Nicholson*, Volume II, by James Lees-Milne. Chatto & Windus, 1981, p. 118.
- 4 See Michael Walsh, 'Ecumenism in War-time Britain, the Sword of the Spirit and Religion and Life', in *The Heythrop Journal*, 1982. Vol. XXIII, Nos. 2 & 4.

## Response

### Real Presence for beginners<sup>1</sup>

In his 'Transubstantiation for beginners' (*New Blackfriars*, December 1986), Gareth Moore has done an excellent job in presenting in simple form the 'transignification' theory of transubstantiation that appeared on the scene in the sixties. He does not present it as an explanation of transignification, but I believe his views fit into that category. A five pound note is what it is because of the significance attached to it, due to the circumstances outlined by Fr. Moore.

What is said in the article is fair enough as far as it goes, though I believe that the metaphysical issues cannot be skirted that easily (the change wrought in a piece of paper by a decree of monetary authority is not on the same level as the change wrought in any creature when brought into a different relationship with its creator—as bread is brought in the eucharist). However, the real nub of the problematic character of transubstantiation was not touched on: that of real presence. We do not relate to a five pound note as though whatever it represented were really present in it. As scholars such as Schillebeeckx pointed out some time ago, the doctrine (as distinct from the philosophico-theological theory) of transubstantiation was simply an emphatic way of asserting the real presence. I would therefore like to follow up Moore's article with one on

the real presence for beginners (do they really read *New Blackfriars?*). Moreover, I would like to point out the connection between the real presence of Christ and that of his sacrifice. The two are intimately connected and cannot be separated without damage to either.

To understand Christ's presence in the eucharist it is necessary to remind ourselves of his presence in the church. People have argued about whether or not Christ was 'really' present in the eucharist as if that was the only real presence of Christ in the church. However, Christ is really present in the church even when the eucharist is not actually being celebrated. The only alternative would be a real absence.

The next step is to remind ourselves of an important but often overlooked fact: there is only one presence of Christ in the church. There are not several presences: e.g., one in preaching, one wherever two or three are gathered in his name, one in the other sacraments, and one—viewed as the most real of all!—in the eucharist. No, there is only one, and that a very real, presence of Christ in the church. Christ's real presence in the eucharist is simply the visible embodiment, the visible surfacing in symbolic form, of his real presence in the church. Christ is really present in the eucharist because he is really present in us.

Ridding oneself of the idea that there are several presences of Christ, only one of which is real, is crucial to understanding the real presence. For diversity enters the picture not on the level of presence but on the level of the *signs* thereof. There is but one real presence of Christ in the Church. But there is a variety of signs of that presence. Preaching, baptism, eucharist, the gathering of two or three in his name, etc., are various expressions, various signs of the one, real presence of Christ in our midst.

Of those signs, the eucharist is unique. It is unique because alone in the eucharist something is designated symbolically to be Christ himself. The priest states that the bread and wine are Christ's body and blood—symbols for Christ himself, the Christ who died on the cross for us. All other signs are signs of Christ's activity—his preaching, healing, sanctifying activity. In the eucharist alone do we make use of realities that symbolise Christ himself.

Now what this means is that we can and must relate to the symbol of Christ's presence in the eucharist in a different way from how we relate to his presence in baptism or preaching (for example). In the latter case we focus on an action and acknowledge Christ to be its ultimate source. The action is a transient thing. It is what is done that is important. We do not therefore direct our worship or attention to the action as though it were a person present in our midst. In the case of the eucharist, however, the matter is different. Precisely because it is constructed out of entities symbolising Christ himself and not simply his activity, we can relate to the symbol as we do to Christ himself. We can see in the symbol a unique, visible expression of Christ's presence in our midst, not simply Christ's

activity. Hence, we bend the knee in worship before the blessed sacrament, but not before the action of baptising someone.

I have spoken about Christ's presence in the eucharist without referring to transubstantiation. Quite frankly, the old debate about the sense in which bread and wine are changed is, to my mind, irrelevant. A changed relationship, such as bread and wine would have in becoming the embodiment of Christ's presence, implies a changed reality. But the change, though very real, is not on the physical but the metaphysical level—the level of the relationship between creatures and their creator.

I would like to say rather more about the presence of Christ's sacrifice in the eucharist, since Christ's presence and that of his sacrifice go hand in hand.

As we know the risen Lord transcends the limitations of space and time experienced by us. Because of this belief, many people have no spatio-temporal difficulties about affirming his presence in eucharists of all times and places. I have not met any Catholics who puzzle over how Christ can be present in London, New York, and Johannesburg at the same time. However, some do seem to have experienced problems about the assertion of the presence of Christ's sacrifice in the eucharist. How can an event that occurred two thousand years ago be said to become present today?

The answer is to be found in the distinction we must make between the time-bound and timeless elements of that distant event.

Time-bound and unrepeatable are things like the following: the fact that Jesus actually died, that it was about three o'clock on a Friday afternoon, that on that afternoon he uttered certain words while hanging on a cross, and so on.

However, embedded in that event was something timeless: viz., Christ himself, together with his loving and obedient self-offering to his Father as well as the power and value of that offering. Christ lives forever. So too does his attitude of love and obedience that led him to Calvary. So too, therefore, does the gift he made of himself. And so too do the power and value of that offering.

In short, the heart of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, that which made it the infinitely valuable thing it was, endures forever.

Wherever Christ goes, there too go his self-offering and its power and value. One must say, therefore, that Calvary is present not simply in the eucharist but in Baptism, in preaching, etc. Just as there is but one presence of Christ in the eucharist, so too is there but one presence of Calvary there (and both are real presences!).

However, just as the eucharist is a unique sign of Christ's presence, so too is it a unique sign of his sacrifice. The symbols that embody Christ's presence embody the presence of the sacrificed Christ. The separate consecrations of bread and wine symbolise the separation of Christ's body and blood, the shedding of his blood on Calvary. Since in the eucharist we

have a ceremony structured to symbolise a sacrifice really present (in the sense explained), we can relate to the symbol as if to the sacrifice itself.

In short, in the eucharist the timeless heart of Christ's sacrifice receives again and again a new time-bound embodiment. When one realises this, it should be clear that there is no need to be nervous about calling the eucharist a 'sacrifice'. In calling it such we are not affirming that it is a new sacrifice, an addition to Calvary that makes up for any deficiencies Calvary may erroneously be supposed to have had. The symbolic sacrifice—the separation of bread (body) and wine (blood)—is not an empty symbol but filled with the timeless reality it symbolises.

**Professor Brian Gaybba**

Department of Systematic Theology  
University of South Africa  
P.O. 392  
0001 Pretoria  
Republic of South Africa.

### **Class and Church after ghetto Catholicism : the whereabouts of the holy**

Your February Special Issue *Class and Church after Ghetto Catholicism* is rewarding and stimulating; rewarding in its relevance and stimulating in that the central issue was never more than implied. Namely and to wit: apprehension of the holy has moved.

No more is it isolated in the eucharistic elements and, perhaps, ministers. In the process it is very likely also to have declined. Over here, so I am told, awareness of this has penetrated even unto clerical and the better seminary circles. For the laity, we monks included, the real presence is no longer confined as formerly.

The holy has moved before, from buildings, men, places, relics and even enclosed communities. *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* by Peter Brown is very much about that.

Now, Christianity is a religion about sin and salvation. The holy is indispensable. It is the transcendent which has declined and the immanent advanced. This may be the first time in history the holy has appeared in this way. I do not know. Anyhow, there are special problems about it, and for us they are new.

Here is the primary dimension for discussions at the Laity Synod and also, perhaps, a theme for *New Blackfriars* to explore in a forthcoming issue or two.

**Brother Alfred McCartney OCSO**  
Abbey of Gethsemani  
Trappist, Kentucky 40051, U.S.A.