

Priest or Prophet? What is Anglican Ordination?

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Priest (sacerdotal / mediatorial) or Prophet (pastoral / proclamatory)?

Terminology

Anglican Ordinal

- deacon – διακονος
- priest – πρεσβυτερος (OE: *prest*)
- bishop – επισκοπος (OE: *biscop*)

English Bibles

- priest – כהן (Hebrew), ιερευς (Greek), *sacerdos* (Latin)

William Fulke, *Defence of the Sincere and True Translations* (1583):

you corruptly translate sacerdos and presbyter always, as though they were all one, a priest, as though the Holy Ghost had made that distinction in vain, or that there were no difference between the priesthood of the New Testament and the Old. The name of priest, according to the original derivation from presbyter, we do not refuse: but according to the common acception for a sacrificer, we cannot take it, when it is spoken of the ministry of the New Testament. And although many of the ancient fathers have abusively confounded the terms sacerdos and presbyter, yet that is no warrant for us to translate the scripture, and to confound that which we see manifestly the Spirit of God has distinguished.

John Whitgift, *Defence of the Answer to the Admonition* (1574):

the very word itself, as it is used in our English tongue, soundeth the word presbyter. As heretofore use hath made it to be taken for a sacrifice, so will use now alter that signification, and make it to be taken for a minister of the gospel. But it is mere vanity to contend for the name when we agree of the thing: the name may be used, and not used, without any great offence.

Richard Hooker. *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* (book 5, chapter 78.2-3):

in truth the word Presbyter doth seem more fit, and in propriety of speech more agreeable than Priest with the drift of the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . The Holy Ghost throughout the body of the New Testament making so much mention of them doth not any where call them Priests.

Pope Leo XIII, *Apostolicae Curae* (1896): “absolutely null and utterly void”

Case Study 1: Confession and Absolution

Exhortation before Holy Communion, 1549 Prayer Book:

And if there be any of you whose conscience is troubled and grieved in anything, lacking comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned priest taught in the law of God, and confess and open his sin and grief secretly, that he may receive such ghostly counsel, advice, and comfort, that his conscience may be relieved, and that of us (as of the ministers of God and of the church) he may receive comfort and absolution, to the satisfaction of his mind and the avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness. Requiring such as shall be satisfied with a general confession, not to be offended with them that do use, to their further satisfying, the auricular and secret confession to the priest. Nor those also which think needful or convenient for the quietness of their own consciences particularly to open their sins to the priest, to be offended with them that are satisfied with their humble confession to God and the general confession to the church. But in all things to follow and keep the rule of charity, and every man to be satisfied with his own conscience, not judging other men's minds or consciences; whereas he hath no warrant of God's word to the same.

Exhortation before Holy Communion, 1662 Prayer Book (similar 1552):

And because it is requisite, that no man should come to the holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you, who by this means [self-examination, confession to God, reconciliation with neighbours] cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.

J. C. Ryle, *Knots Untied* (1874):

Once more I repeat my warning. No priest but Christ! No confessor but Christ! No absolver but Christ! No habitual private submission or bowing down in religion to anyone but Christ! No spiritual director but Christ! No putting of our conscience in the power of anyone but Christ!

Where is the sense or reason of going to an earthly confessor, so long as we can have the best of all priests – the commissioned and appointed Priest, the perfect mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus! When His ear is deaf, and His heart is cold; when His hand is feeble, and His power to heal is exhausted; when the treasure-house of His sympathy is empty, and His love and goodwill have become cold – then, and not till then, it will be time to turn to earthly priests and earthly confessionals. Thank God, that time is not yet come!

Case Study 2: Holy Communion

J. C. Ryle, *Why Were Our Reformers Burned?* (1867):

1. You spoil the blessed doctrine of **Christ's finished work** when he died on the cross. A sacrifice that needs to be repeated is not a perfect and complete thing.
2. You spoil the **priestly office** of Christ. If there are priests that can offer an acceptable sacrifice to God besides him, the great High Priest is robbed of his glory.
3. You spoil the scriptural doctrine of the **Christian ministry**. You exalt sinful men into the position of mediators between God and man.

Popular terminology:

- host – *hostia*, sacrificial victim
- oblation – *oblatio*, offering
- anaphora – ἀναφορά, to offer up a sacrifice

Roman Missal (new English translation 2011), Eucharistic Prayer I:

accept and bless these gifts, these offerings, these holy and unblemished sacrifices, which we offer you ...

we, your servants and your holy people, offer to your glorious majesty, from the gifts that you have given us, this pure victim, this holy victim, this spotless victim, the holy Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of everlasting salvation. Be pleased to look upon these offerings with a serene and kindly countenance, and to accept them ...

Reformation symbolism

- Tables not altars
- No eucharistic vestments
- No ritual ablutions
- No sacrificial orientation

Nicholas Ridley, 1550:

For the use of an altar is to make sacrifice upon it; the use of a table is to serve for men to eat upon. Now, when we come unto the Lord's board, what do we come for? To sacrifice Christ again, and to crucify him again, or to feed upon him that was once only crucified and offered up for us? If we come to feed upon him, spiritually to eat his body, and spiritually to drink his blood (which is the true use of the Lord's Supper), then no man can deny but the form of a table is more meet for the Lord's board, than the form of an altar.

Case Study 3: The Ordinal

Bible Metaphors

- Messengers
- Watchmen
- Stewards
- Shepherds

The Porrection (*porrectio instrumentorum*): Chalice and Paten, or Bible?

‘No Priest But Jesus!’

I want no priest but Jesus!
He has atonement made
For all my foul transgressions:
Each sin was on Him laid.

To lift me when I stumble,
To warn me when I stray;
To comfort when I sorrow;
To counsel all the way.

I want no priest but Jesus
To probe the deadly sore;
Of my sick soul’s diseases,
And all my heart explore.

And when, the journey over,
Death’s valley I draw near,
To pray beside my pillow,
My weary soul to cheer.

He searcheth, but to heal me,
His blood bedews my soul;
He speaks – my burden falleth,
He smiles – and I am whole.

And, with the soothing music
Of God’s own word of love,
To point my spirit upwards,
To *that* High Priest above.

I prize a Christian Pastor,
A teacher sent of God,
To walk with me and guide me
Along the heav’nly road.

No priest, no priest but Jesus!
For me on earth He died;
For me in heaven He pleadeth,
I’ll own no priest beside!

Source: *Church Association Monthly Intelligencer* (October 1879, abridged)

Further Reading

Andrew Atherstone, *The Anglican Ordinal: Gospel Priorities for Church of England Ministry* (Latimer Trust, 2020)

Andrew Atherstone, *Scarf or Stole at Ordination? A Plea for the Evangelical Conscience* (London: Latimer Trust, 2012)

T. W. Drury, *Confession and Absolution: The Teaching of the Church of England, as Interpreted and Illustrated by the Writings of the Reformers of the Sixteenth Century* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1903)

Alan Stibbs, *Sacrament, Sacrifice and Eucharist: The Meaning, Function and Use of the Lord’s Supper* (Tyndale Press, 1961)

John Stott, *Confess Your Sins: The Way of Reconciliation* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1964)