

SCHEMA

For discussion at Windsor, September 1971

The Eucharistic Sacrifice

1. Introductory and Historical

It is probably fair to say that on a number of occasions when Roman Catholics and Anglicans have discussed their respective views on the eucharistic sacrifice in this century, they have been largely pre-occupied with the question of the validity or non-validity of Anglican Orders; and that whereas each has found cause to express his present belief as to what he understands by the eucharistic sacrifice, a great deal of attention has been focussed on the Reformation controversy as a means to ascertaining the mind of those who composed the Edwardine Ordinal.

In our recent discussions, the notion of the eucharistic sacrifice has been debated without specific reference to the question of orders (though it is important that the past debate should not be wholly forgotten). In the light of Biblical, patristic and contemporary theology, three statements on the eucharist, including expositions of the doctrine of the eucharistic sacrifice, have been produced in recent years. These are (a) the working paper 'Church and Eucharist' (from the Venice meeting of the International Commission in 1970); (b) the Report of the Fourth Meeting of the Joint Commission on Anglican/Roman Catholic Relations in the United States of America (May 24 - 26 1967); and (c) the Report of the Meeting of the Windsor/Venice Sub-Commission on the Eucharist: April 12th - 16th 1971 at Poringland. One might also suitably bear in mind the section devoted to the eucharistic sacrifice included in the report 'Growing into Union', edited by the Bishop of Willesden and Dr. J.I. Packer.

The present schema does not propose a synthesis of the opinions represented in these documents. It is composed largely out of the discussions and correspondence of the Sub-Commission on the Eucharistic Sacrifice constituted by the Venice meeting of the International Commission in September 1970. It will attempt to raise certain problems encountered in these discussions; and at the same time its purpose will be to provide the basis for the deliberations of this coming conference.

2. The doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice

(a) The Sacrifice of Christ

Any discussion of the eucharistic sacrifice should probably be preceded by some mention of what is understood by the sacrifice of Christ. The Eucharist is after all no new sacrifice, it is neither an addition to nor a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ himself; and any sense in which the Eucharist may be said to be a sacrifice must wholly depend on our apprehension of the nature of the sacrifice of Christ.

Among Christians of different traditions there is not always the agreement that there may at first seem to be as to the nature and significance for mankind today of Christ's sacrifice. Among theologians it has been debated as to what Jesus Himself understood about his coming Passion, as compared with the interpretation of the death of Christ in the various expositions of this given in the New Testament. So too it has been asked, in what does the Sacrifice of Christ consist? Is it in his death on the Cross alone? Or is His whole life to be seen as a sacrifice? Does the sacrifice continue to be offered in the heavens by Christ the eternal High Priest? Again, what are the consequences for mankind of the sacrifice of Christ? Does Christ the Victim pay the price which man should have but was unable and unworthy to pay? Is his death the punishment that man should have borne, and does this death on the Cross appease the wrath and satisfy the justice of God? Or does the death of Christ on the Cross mark the culmination of his life of obedience, the summit of his self-identification with man, the Victory over the Last Enemy, and the release of an abundant life, symbolised in the outpouring of His blood? How indeed does the sacrifice of Christ reconcile man to God, how does it effect atonement today, how does it rescue man from his condition of alienation and restore him to unity and wholeness?

In both the Venice and Poringland documents it seems agreed that 'Christ's whole life, culminating in his death on the Cross was the one true perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world'. Again '.....Christ the Lord..offers to the Father the total self-surrender which found its supreme expression in his death....'. Thus the sacrifice of Christ begins at the Incarnation (or before?, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world?) and culminates or is fulfilled in his death on Calvary. This would seem to be a matter on which

most would agree (compare the Edinburgh Faith and Order Conference, 1937). Some might wish to assert that the sacrifice of Christ continues eternally in the heavens (e.g. Dix, Shape of the Liturgy, p. 251), for such they would suggest is the implication of the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews. As we shall see, this notion has some bearing on the relationship between the sacrifice of Christ, eternal in the heavens, and its earthly actualisation in the eucharist. Such theology is by no means universally accepted and we should be careful not to place too great an emphasis on this interpretation. Certainly Christ, our High Priest 'ever liveth to make intercession for us'; certainly we have 'an advocate with the Father' for all time. But we might more cautiously state with Aulen (Eucharist and Sacrifice) that 'the sacrifice of reconciliation, made once for all, has been taken into heaven by the Heavenly High Priest. This is something which happened in and with the exaltation of Christ, which also implies that God received the sacrifice. But this does not mean that the sacrifice belonged to the past. The most essential factor is that the sacrifice is eternally valid and that it is continually relevant..... Furthermore, it may be biblical to speak of a sacrifice of intercession which the High Priest offers continually'. This statement begs a number of questions, but it may prove more acceptable than the assertion that an eternal sacrifice is continued on an eternal and heavenly altar.

We must next ask, what are the consequences for man of the sacrifice of Christ. We might say in the Abelaird/Hastings Rashdall tradition that such a life of obedience and self sacrifice has the effect of moving man inwardly to penitence and amendment of life, as indeed it should ^{and indeed it does.} The exemplarist theory of the atonement has much to commend it; and if the eucharistic action does in fact 'show forth' and 'bring to remembrance' the death of Christ in this sense, then the worshipper contemplating Christ, and Him crucified, may truly be moved to acts of penitence, love and commitment.

Most would probably want to say rather more than this about the benefits for man resulting from the death of Christ. There is clearly a marked tendency in the New Testament to see a connexion between the death of Christ and the Hebrew system of sacrifice. It is possible of course in this connexion to focus one's attention on Calvary and to see in the slaying of Christ on the Cross a cultive act, comparable to and fulfilling and superseding the ritual slaying of bulls and goats which formed part of the expiatory sacrifices of the Old Covenant. 'Without

shedding of blood is no remission of sins' (Hebrews) and clearly the ritual of the Day of Atonement forms the basis of the imagery used by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (see Hicks, The Fullness of Sacrifice, pp. 235ff.) There is however a tendency in some theologies (of which Anselm and Calvin are each in some way representative) to see the framework of the Jewish system of atonement as basically legal, though the process by which the transaction is performed is cultic. That is to say for crime committed (against the law, against the just judge), punishment must be awarded and blood shed in order that justice may be satisfied and anger appeased. Thus (according to Calvin) Christ 'was made a substitute and a surety in the place of transgressors, and even submitted as a criminal, to sustain and suffer all the punishment which would have been inflicted on them' (Inst. 2.16.10). Hence the Christian who has faith in Christ may be constantly assured that despite his unworthiness, God will accept him and show favour towards him through the merits of the one mediator and advocate who has obtained for all mankind the necessary remission of their sins by the shedding of his blood.

It goes without saying that if the Eucharist is spoken of as a sacrifice, propitiatory and to obtain remission of sins for living and departed, given the understanding of the atonement we have outlined above, it is only reasonable that some might assume that the Eucharist was a new sacrifice, a fresh slaying, an additional offering, adding to the offering once made on Calvary. The Reformers' denial of such a doctrine must be matched however with the assertion of later theology (notably that of the Carolines who also reveal a certain inclination towards forensic imagery for the atonement) that the eucharist is commemorative and representative of the sacrifice of Calvary, and that it is propitiatory in the sense that a prayer is propitiatory; that is to say that at the eucharist, we who contemplate the mystery of Calvary shown forth in the eucharistic action, may most suitably be thankful for the benefits won for us by Christ and pray that these benefits be applied to us, as to the whole Christian Church. The fruits of the one sacrifice are eternally available, - let us beseech God that 'we and all thy whole Church may ontail remission of our sins and all other benefits of His Passion' (B.C.P., 1552).

Looking again at the imagery of the Hebrew cultus as applied to the sacrifice of Christ, it is only fair to say that some theologians have seen in the death of Christ not so much

a price paid and justice satisfied as a victory won and life released. Dr. F.C. Hicks' examination of the Hebrew ritual and the sacrificial interpretations of the death of Christ in the New Testament are well known, and the Hebrew notion that 'the life is in the blood' has clearly some bearing on the New Testament assertion that we are saved by the blood of Christ. It is important in this connexion to remember that even though we see the whole life of Christ as a recapitulation of the life of Adam and the whole human race, even if we see every moment of this life as a sign of a life wholly surrendered in obedience to God the Father, the death of Christ is a very essential part of this process. Had Christ not undergone the curse of our human condition, imposed upon Adam at the Fall, he would not have perfected that which he originally undertook i.e. to become in all respects a full sharer in our human nature in order that he might restore and regenerate that same human nature. If we then look upon the Cross as both the Cross of shame, on which we sinners hung the King of Glory, and yet also as the Tree of Life, that final sacrifice and token of the consummation of a life of sacrifice, from which even now flows the life by which the world is redeemed,* then this too will have some bearing on our understanding of the association between the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of Christ. At the Eucharist, we encounter the victorious and risen Christ, at the Eucharist we share in His life outpoured ('Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you'- Jn. 6); but none of this would be possible, had not Christ undergone a life of sacrifice and the final sacrifice, for the victory would not have been won and the life-giving blood never shed. Therefore at the eucharist we proclaim, remember, make present the saving acts of Christ while actually partaking of these saving benefits in the sacrament of bread and wine.

It will be seen then that our understanding of the sacrifice of Christ has considerable bearing on how we talk about the eucharist as a sacrifice. In short though on the one hand the sacrifice of Christ clearly makes peace and secures forgiveness, though it equally clearly inspires confidence and demands penitence, thankfulness and commitment, there is a tradition which suggests that the sacrifice brings

* See F.W. Dillistone, The Christian Understanding of Atonement, Chapter 2, The Eternal Sacrifice.

life and invites a sharing in this life in order that the sinner, once forgiven, may be transformed from glory to glory.

(b) The Eucharist and the Sacrifice

It has been said: the eucharist is no new sacrifice, it neither adds to nor repeats the one Sacrifice of Christ Himself. In what sense therefore is it possible to speak of the Eucharist as a sacrifice.

It is certainly true that in the New Testament, the Eucharist is nowhere directly spoken of as a sacrifice. There is however a certain vocabulary, suggestive of the sacrificial processes of Israel, which is encountered both in the Synoptic and Pauline references to the Last Supper and the Christian Eucharist. With regard to the Last Supper, Joachim Jeremias (The Eucharistic Words of Jesus) notes that 'Jesus speaks of Himself as a sacrifice'. In saying 'This is my body... this is my blood', he means (suggests Jeremias) 'the two component parts of the body, especially of a sacrificial victim which are separated when it is killed'. The body is broken and the cup of red wine poured out; the body thus is a parable of the fate of His body, the blood of the grapes a parable of His outpoured blood. '"I must die a victim's death" is the meaning of this last parable of Jesus.'

Jesus too believes that his death is redemptive. Jeremias observes that the Passover sacrifices were not expiatory according to later Jewish theology; but the original slaying of the lambs in Egypt did have a redemptive effect, it liberated the people of God from slavery and 'made God's covenant with Abraham operative'. So too Jesus gives his life for many (the whole world) in order that the many may be redeemed.

Jesus also gives his disciples a share in his atoning work through the gifts of bread and wine. Again Jeremias tells us that the oriental mind was well accustomed to the idea of the receiving of divine gifts through the action of eating and drinking; to eat and drink with the Saviour then was to share in the redeeming power of his death (p. 159).

Jesus too, (according to the Pauline and Lucan tradition) gives the command that his actions are to be repeated. 'Do this in remembrance of me'. Jeremias notes that it is the rite which is to be repeated (touto poieite) and not simply the words of interpretation which are to be recited. The words 'in remembrance of me' (eis ten emen anamnesin), he suggests, are to be interpreted 'that God may remember me'.

Hence when the rite is performed 'in remembrance' of the Messiah, it is done not so much that the Church may remember Him, but that God may remember Him and bring the consummation of the Messiah's kingdom to pass. This would seem to be in full accordance with the idea of remembrance surrounding the Passover celebrations. God's mighty action in bringing Israel out of Egypt is recalled in a ceremony, not simply that the present Israel may remember God's work with gratitude, but that God may even now be merciful to them. It is for this reason that at the Eucharist, according to St. Paul we 'proclaim the Lord's death till he come' (katangelein, not kerussein). It is proclaimed, Jeremias suggests, as an 'eschatological event' i.e. as the beginning of the New Covenant; and by the proclamation God, it would seem, is asked to hasten the fulfillment of his promises in the Parousia which is inevitably to come.

Against the background of this theology, it is possible (as the Venice document agrees) to see in our Eucharistic celebrations today the 'memorial (i.e. the making effective in the present) ... of Christ's historical self-offering in the continuing life of the Christian Church'. At Poringland too it was noted that 'a recourse to the notion of memorial as understood in the Passover celebration at the time of Christ (i.e. the making effective in the present of an event in the past) opens the way to a fresh understanding of this relationship (sc. between the sacrifice of Christ and the Eucharist)'. At Uppsala too in 1968, it was agreed (as stated in the Bristol Document) that 'The Lord's Supper, a gift to His Church.... is a means whereby the sacrifice of the Cross which we proclaim is operative within the Church'. Indeed to see our celebrations of the Eucharist today as commemorative (in the technical sense of that word) of the saving work of Christ in the same way as the Passover celebrations of later Judaism were commemorative of God's mighty act of deliverance from Egypt is common ground perhaps for a greater degree of cohesion and mutual understanding in the matter of the Eucharist and its relationship to the sacrifice of Christ. But one or two points still remain to be explained.

The first is how (if we may be permitted to ask such a question) - how is it that an event in the past, under any circumstances and of whatever kind, has an effect in the present? Here it must be quite clear that we are talking of a unique event, and equally that our terms of reference are those of theology

and not necessarily those of any other discipline. When the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews asserts that Christ offered Himself in sacrifice 'once' (i.e. once for all - ephhapax - by contrast with the repeated sacrifices of the Old Covenant; Heb. 7.27), he no doubt meant on the one hand that Christ performed his saving work 'once - at a moment in history'; but the term ephhapax is patient also of being understood in an eschatological sense; so that when it is asserted that Christ's sacrifice was offered 'once' it could also mean that Christ's saving work was performed once 'decisively' for 'the salvation of all men at all times' (see Cullman Christ and Time p. 123). Hence, though, the Christ-event occurred once at a definite moment in history, on the other hand, while it is in no sense extra-temporal, it stands at the midpoint of all time, and gives meaning to all that has gone before as it interprets all that is yet to come until the Parousia. To put the matter simply; Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and for ever; and the Christ, crucified, victorious and glorified, the redeeming Christ whom the apostles knew and whose redeeming work they experienced is the same Christ whom we encounter now who redeems us now and who will eventually judge us in the Last Day. To which we might add that it is probably more satisfactory to speak in terms of eschatology and time than in the language of metaphysics (which has sometimes been applied to the Epistle to the Hebrews). Christ's sacrifice is not necessarily an event, caught up out of the realm of space and time into the eternal whose benefits may be grasped at by those who still live in the revolutions of the temporal. Rather it is to be seen as a condition of life between His First and Second Coming; and any who enter into this dimension cannot fail to know and experience the fruits of his redeeming work, performed 'once...for all men at all times'.

If Christ then redeems us now, if his redemption may be apprehended by all men at any time, is this action of his purely invisible (like the movement of the wind which 'bloweth where it listeth') or are there visible signs of Him and His redeeming activity which may be grasped and seen by those who have faith and who experience the efficacy of these signs of redemption. The notion that God acts through visible and efficacious signs is one which is rooted in Scripture and has commended itself in a variety of theologies (both Catholic and Protestant) ever since. In the New Testament, the writers (such as St. Paul) can speak of the 'mystery of God' which is first hidden and then revealed in Christ (cf. Co. 1. 25-28);

and St. John can say that the Logos of God is with the Father from the beginning, and then made manifest in the Incarnation. If the 'mystery' of God is in fact what we would call today 'the economy of salvation', then this mystery is made manifest as the 'sign' of God's activity in history and supremely of course in the life, passion and Resurrection of Christ.

In this sense, it would seem perfectly reasonable to speak of Christ Himself as the 'sign' or 'sacrament' of God. To many in Palestine during His Incarnate life, He was simply the son of Joseph and Mary; to others, he was the sign of God's promised redemption, the Messiah, the Son of the living God; and through knowing Him and through faith in Him they found Him to be the effective sign of God's redemption, for it was through Him that they experienced salvation. In the same sense, the Church may be said to be a 'sign' or 'sacrament' of Christ. Most of the images of the Church found in the New Testament may equally be applied to Christ (e.g. temple, vine, body, Israel). It is from the Church that we first hear the gospel of Christ, for she speaks with His mouth; and it is through incorporation into the Church and through life in the Church that we experience the redeeming activity of Christ. (We should note here that in the anxiety of modern theology to distinguish between the Kingdom and the Church, i.e. to assert that the Church is not the Kingdom, it is on the other hand observed that the church may legitimately be spoken of as the 'sign' of the Kingdom. ((cf. Ladd, The Church and the Kingdom)) i.e. the Church, like Christ, is a sign that we are living in the dimension of the eschaton.)

It is in this same sense again that the Eucharist may be said to be a 'sign' or 'sacrament' of Christ and the church. The many, as St. Paul says, who are one body, partake of the one bread; and that bread which they break is the communion of the body of Christ. As through the encounter with Christ, as through life in the church, so through sharing in the eucharist, we find this to be an effective sign of God's redeeming activity. The Christ who presides at each Eucharist, manifested through the community performing the Eucharistic action is the crucified, victorious and risen Christ, manifesting his redemptive activity through the sign which he commanded to be repeated on the night before He suffered, the sign which typified His victory through his sacrifice, and the sign which even now effects our victory and unites us with Him in His resurrection.

To sum up: Christ's redeeming work, once performed in history and never to be repeated, was nevertheless performed once, for all men and at all times. Because of the eschatological nature of this event, and because we live between the First and the Second comings of Our Lord, Christ's redemption is a condition of life in the 'eschaton' and none who enter into this dimension can fail to experience it. As God makes the mystery of his saving work manifest through visible and efficacious signs, as Christ is the sign of God and the Church the sign of God's kingly rule over us, so too the Eucharist is a sign of Christ. If the Eucharist is a sign of Christ, then it is the sign of the redeeming Christ (for such is the Christ of the eschaton). That the Eucharist is the sign of the redeeming Christ is borne out by the fact that his great act of redemption is proclaimed in the eucharistic action. The Lamb once slain calls all men to His feast; there they share in the benefits of His redemption, there they taste the gift of salvation. In this sense, the Eucharist is truly a sign of the sacrifice of Christ.

(c) Offering the Sacrifice

One last question remains to be answered. In what sense may the Church be said to 'offer' the eucharistic sacrifice? Considerable offence has been caused in the past by the suggestion that Christ, once made present (by the process of transubstantiation) is then offered in sacrifice (the separate consecration of bread and cup and the fraction, or breaking of the host being seen as symbolic of this act of offering). Objection to this alleged view led to the assertion that on the one hand, man has nothing of his own which he may offer to God and that the Eucharist is in no sense a 'work'; and to the claim on the other hand that all that is offered in the Eucharist is the sacrifice of prayer and praise together with the selves, souls and bodies of the worshippers.

Modern Roman Catholic theology has been anxious to correct any misapprehensions that may have arisen over the symbolism of offering in the Mass. The 'moment' of sacrifice (if we may speak in these terms) is seen as the same as the 'moment' of consecration. Through the consecration there becomes present to the congregation 'the Lamb once slain of old and now living and meanwhile persisting as a Theophyte' (de la Taille, The Mystery of Faith, II. 222). Thus the separate consecrations of bread and cup, and the fraction of

the bread is symbolic of the one, yet ever present sacrifice, rather than a visible action to be interpreted as a kind of immolation (cf. Mediator Dei, 1947, no. 74).

What however is our part in this action. Can we still be said 'to offer' 'the holy sacrifice', to 'offer Mass for' etc.? Such language is open again to misinterpretation and is again offensive to some. If our part in the eucharistic action is made clear to begin with, then such language as this may fall into perspective.

Clearly in all his activity among us, God invites us to share in his work of redemption (as he asks us to share in his work of creativity). Our Lord gave the command 'Do this in remembrance of me'; and in general, God's signs or sacraments require the involvement and co-operation of man (though God is their author and takes the initiative in all things). By the grace of God, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Christians today assemble and enact what the Lord commanded them to do. At His command they bring bread and wine and in an action commemorate the Lord's own action; so in Justin Martyr's words, 'we make (poein) the memorial (anamnesin)....' Christians therefore have a part to play in the sacramental activity of God in the universe. That in doing this they encounter the ever present Christ in His redeeming activity has perhaps led to the notion that the priest 'has power' to change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, or the 'power' to offer His sacrifice. All that this means is that the priest as the duly appointed member of the community assembles the community in the performance of the action God has commanded them to perform and through this action, Christ manifests Himself as victim and victor imparting his life to the believer through the sacraments of His body and blood. We neither bring Christ down nor offer Him up. We discover Christ actualised among us by His own action; and we are lifted up in Him as He enters into us.

X Perhaps then phrases such as 'to offer Mass for' belong more properly to the language of intercession than to the language of the Eucharist. The prayer of the faithful is indeed a part of the liturgy but if intercession is understood as a special request to God for a particular person, it should perhaps be made clear that 'intentions' at the Eucharist are in fact 'special intercessions made at the public assembly of the Church' at the moment of its especial commemoration of

and entering into the redeeming activity of Christ.

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Certainly, the Eucharistic action calls forth from the Christian his own act of self offering as he unites himself to Christ in the act of communion. Certainly too at the Eucharist, we are enabled by God to offer Him our prayer and praise. Certainly too we pray at the Eucharist that we, though unworthy, may receive all the benefits of Christ's passion and saving work and pray that God may be propitious to us through the merits of Christ. Such devotion is but the natural response of the Christian who in the eucharistic action comes face to face with the redeeming Christ and makes his return of love for the love shown to him by his Redeemer.

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