Rite-ly Dividing the Word!...

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Cause for Concern

Many Anglicans have been left with a feeling of unease due to the failure of the latest liturgical revision to face the major doctrinal changes introduced by the 1980 *ASB*, changes which were admitted to by the Archbishop of York in the General Synod of November 1985. The 1980 revision, instead of taking the obvious course of making a modern language version of the traditional 1662 Service the model for Holy Communion, sidelined it to a place where its use involved such convoluted gymnastics with page numbers that it was unusable. Surprisingly, a radically different liturgy was introduced in the 1980 revision which brought in substantial changes in doctrine that are difficult to reconcile with historic Anglicanism. In spite of its questionable character, the latest revision has taken it for granted that the 1980 Communion Service should be the norm for the Church of England. Further cause for disquiet is the impression that post-1980 liturgical debate has concentrated almost exclusively on the words of Eucharistic Prayers with little or no attention given to the Order of Service or 'shape' of the liturgy. Yet the 'shape' of the liturgy conveys a message that can be stronger than the words which wash over many worshippers as their minds drift from engagement with the monologue. The Sacrament is about actions as well as words and it seems to be forgotten that Jesus said: 'Do this...', not 'Say this...' Further, liturgical debate seems to have become like beneficiaries arguing over a bequest without caring or considering the wishes and directives of the One whose estate is being administered. *More attention is being given to the Fathers than to the Son!*

A Missing Link

The 1980 Communion Service is an expression of the form featured in Dom Gregory Dix's *Shape of the Liturgy*. But his liturgical 'shape' includes major deviations from historical Anglican doctrine and liturgy that demand examination. He analysed the Last Supper (p 48) as a '*Seven* action scheme: (1) took bread; (2) "gave thanks" over it; (3) broke it; (4) distributed it, saying certain words; (5) took a cup; (6) gave thanks over it; (7) handed it to his disciples saying certain words.' The phrase 'certain words' refers to the declaration: 'This is my body ... This is my blood.'

However, he continues: 'With absolute unanimity the liturgical tradition reproduces these seven actions as four: (1) The offertory; bread and wine are "taken" and placed on the table together. (2) The prayer; the president gives thanks to God over bread and wine together. (3) The fraction; the bread is broken. (4) The communion; the bread and wine are distributed together.'

There is a missing link. What is the authority for making such a drastic rearrangement of the events of the Last Supper? Dix gives no explanation of the change from his 'seven action scheme' to the accepted four except to say: 'The last supper of our Lord ... is the source of the liturgical Eucharist but not its model.' Why is it not the model for our liturgy, for in the Eucharistic Prayer we claim to 'follow His example and obey His command'? With what authority is the command of Jesus, 'Do *this*...' set aside in favour of doing *that*? What *is* the model for the Eucharist? Dix seems to be 'dividing the word of truth' by Rite not Scripture, thereby opening a process of major changes to the gospel message presented.

Following Dix, the popular presentation of the shape of the liturgy is that: 'The Eucharist is based around the four actions of Christ at the Last Supper; Jesus takes, gives thanks, breaks, gives out.' According to Dom Gregory's own analysis, the 'certain words' ('This is my body ... This is my blood'), are said *after the distribution*, so that they are in fact words of administration. According to the received shape however, they are not only brought before even the breaking of the bread, but by what appears almost a sleight of hand, they are identified with the 'giving thanks', so that it is called the Eucharistic Prayer (from the Greek for 'thanksgiving'). The actual Eucharistic Prayer of the gospel records was the normal 'grace' which was said over all food, and was probably: 'Blessed art thou, O Lord, Ruler of the Universe, the One who causeth bread to spring forth from the earth', *but its content was of such little significance that it is not given.*

It needs to be shown why words of administration said *after* the distribution and separated as far as possible from the giving thanks, should be brought back to the beginning, said to be the 'thanks' the Lord offered and become words of 'consecration'. This drastic rearrangement of the Supper has drastic results in the message presented.

A Slight Change of Emphasis?

In the exercise of the received shape of the liturgy in the *ASB*, the 'certain words' ('This is my body ... This is my blood'), are said well before the distribution, from which they are separated by the Lord's Prayer, other prayers and a series of anthems. This isolation of the 'certain words' from

the eating and drinking conveys that praying over the bread and wine with a call upon the Holy Spirit to effect a change, in some way gives the bread and wine a status and 'nature' as the body and blood of Christ quite apart from the eating and drinking by the congregation. It seems that people are led to believe that as they receive bread and wine which have been prayed over with the 'certain words', separately and independently from eating and drinking, then Jesus ought to have 'said', then 'given', but according to the Gospels he 'gave', and then 'said'.

Because of the implied properties imparted by virtue of the 'certain words' in their rearranged context, it is assumed that it is appropriate to give special reverence to the bread and wine, even to the extent that apart from the eating and drinking, they somehow encapsulate the presence of Christ. Since the presence of Christ is assumed to be in them by virtue of the prayer with 'certain words' in isolation from the eating and drinking, the eating and drinking is but one of the optional uses that can be made of the elements that have had their status and 'nature' changed by the Prayer of Consecration. It is appropriate if this is so, to lift the bread up to be adored and to reserve the bread and wine as a focus of the special presence of Christ to be worshipped, because they are to all intents and purposes Christ himself.

All clergy, at their ordination and at every stage of their career, publicly and solemnly declare that they loyally believe about the Bible: '...that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be believed as an article of the faith...' Consequentially they also affirm: 'The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.' Again they affirm: 'The sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them.' Does God mind clergy solemnly, publicly and consciously in his presence, loyally affirming something they do not believe?

I note concerning the Anglican formularies that on 1 May 1900, the two Archbishops, after hearing learned counsel for and against Reservation, declared that it was not lawful in the Church of England to reserve the sacrament.

The 'Word of His Grace'

It seems that the Apostle Paul did not have the opportunity of reading such as Dom Gregory, for in the only explanation of the Communion that I can find in the New Testament, he did not say as he should have done: 'As oft as ye consecrate this bread...' In fact like Jesus, he placed the centre of

gravity on the eating and drinking: 'As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he comes.' (The word translated 'shew', καταγγελλετε, occurs 16 times in the New Testament and in every other place it conveys the meaning 'preach' or 'proclaim'.)

The phrase 'flesh and blood' is a metaphor of living humanity, ('more than flesh and blood can stand'); but because in a violent death there is often much blood in evidence, blood separated from the flesh is a universal metaphor of violent death. For example, Pilate said: 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person', and outside Scripture, Gray wrote: '...some Cromwell innocent of his country's blood'. In the institution of the Holy Communion the separation between eating the bread as his body, and drinking the cup as his blood, was as emphatic as possible: 'Likewise *after supper* he took the cup.' Thus eating the bread and drinking the cup in emphatic separation proclaims Christ's violent death.

It seems confusing if not contradictory to think of the bread and wine being brought together to 'reconstitute' Christ as a living person. For instance, Bicknell wrote: 'His "body and blood" primarily [*sic*] represent His perfect humanity. The living Christ bestows upon His members the strength of a perfect human life ... So in the Holy Communion by a deliberate and voluntary act we receive the life of Christ into our souls that it may become our life' (*A Theological Introduction to The Thirty Nine Articles*, p 489).

This view appears drastically to sanitize the process of salvation, making it almost amoral, for Christ's life is bestowed apart from his sin-bearing atonement. (Bicknell in fact moves any work of atonement from Christ's death at Calvary, to an alleged heavenly ministry! p 113.)

The moral and spiritual impact of the dark agony of Christ's suffering as we obey the command, 'so let a man examine himself', with the consequent conviction of sin and the demand for repentance which Calvary inspires, seem to be made unnecessary. Far from Christ's body and blood '*primarily*' representing his perfect humanity, in the Last Supper according to the New Testament, they are separated to preach his death where his humanity was made sin (2 Cor 5:21), a curse (Gal 3:13) and nailed to a cross for our salvation as he '...bore our sins in His own body on the Tree' (1 Peter 2:24).

If the shape of the liturgy was truly based on what Christ said and did at the Last Supper, and what the Apostle taught, then it is eating and drinking to preach the death of Christ that constitutes the sacrament. The Prayer of Consecration affects only the worshippers, not the bread and wine.

Since, as the Gospels and the Corinthian passage record (and Dix actually says), the 'certain words' were in fact said *after* the distribution and whilst the bread and wine were being consumed, I find it difficult to understand how, if we 'follow His example and obey His command', a Real Presence can be deduced. It needs to be explained how what has been eaten can be lifted up to be worshipped and then reserved to be a special Presence that can be the focus of prayer. How can one elevate or reserve what has been eaten?

A Theological View

In the sixteenth century, a respected theologian 'regarded as practically the official exponent of correct Anglican teaching' wrote:

> The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament. And with this the very order of our Saviour's words agree, first 'take and eat'; then 'this is my body': first 'drink ye all of this'; then followeth 'this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins'. I see not which way it should be gathered by the words of Christ, when and where the bread is His body or the cup His blood, but only in the very heart and soul of him which receiveth them. (Hooker *Of The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* Book V xlii 6)

With what authority can the action of Jesus: 'He gave it to them and said' be considered inferior to 'He said ... and gave it to them'? Why were the words of Jesus ('Take eat, this is my body') judged theologically unsound and the reverse teaching ('This is my body, take eat') implied and in fact practised? Would Jesus, who seemed quite sure of his authority and said 'Do *this*...', mind his teaching being thus rearranged to do *that*?

I must ask, was Paul badly mistaken? Did he mishear the Lord's direct revelation? Should he not have said: 'As often as ye *consecrate* this bread and this cup...'? Surely, by saying: 'As often as ye *eat* this bread and *drink* this cup ye do shew the Lord's death', he teaches that it is not a prayer of consecration but the eating and drinking to preach the death of Christ that constitutes the sacrament. If Jesus, Paul, and Hooker are right, then can whatever is said or done over the bread and wine before eating and drinking be of any sacramental account? Do they not remain just ordinary bread and ordinary wine, not being sacramental until they are eaten and drunk to preach Christ's death?

A Liturgical Approach

In Cranmer's second Prayer Book, he took note of Stephen Gardiner's claim to find the Real Presence in the 1549 book (although in it, 'elevation or showing the sacrament to the people' was explicitly forbidden), and attempted a much closer compliance with the gospel accounts by clearing away everything between the 'certain words' and the distribution, not leaving even an 'Amen' to separate them. Going directly from the 'certain words' to eating and drinking, the 'certain words' then became as Jesus used them, words of administration, not an isolated 'magic formula'.

There is a Mine for Silver ... but Where Does Understanding Dwell?

If the Dix related understanding is correct, and the words 'He gave it to them and said...' are unsound, the correct emphasis being on the 'certain words' said in isolation from eating and drinking so that eating and drinking are but one of several optional uses, then this should be of the greatest importance.

If the 'certain words' and the invocation of the Holy Spirit do effect the bestowal of the attributes of Christ himself into the bread and wine, then the bread should be lifted up to be reverenced, treated with solemn rites and ceremonies, reserved in a special receptacle with a light to indicate that the Lord is in this place to be worshipped and prayed to, and it should be used for the benediction of the people. All the blessings available from the appropriate use and reception of the consecrated bread and wine should be clearly and strongly impressed. The presence of Christ through this Rite and the ensuing benefits are so vastly important and uniquely provided, they should constitute the very essence of the Christian message.

There is a problem! In the New Testament there are two major treatises on the Christian message: the Letter to the Romans and the Letter to the Hebrews. In the Letter to the Romans the death of Christ and its results and benefits are examined in great detail. We are shown that by repentance and faith alone in the death of Christ we are completely and eternally justified. Many times in Romans we are told that eternal life is freely given by faith only in the death of Christ. In the Letter to the Hebrews we are shown that the death of Christ is a finished work and that nothing needs to be done but to repent and believe its atoning efficacy.

In these long and detailed examinations of the Christian message, baptism is mentioned in both of them, but why is it that in neither of these

major studies of the Christian message is there a single reference to the Holy Communion, *even in a passage that summarizes the basics of the Christian faith*, Hebrews 6:1-2?

There is a mine for silver, but will someone please show me where in the New Testament is there one reference to the rites and doctrines that are now deemed the logical and essential expression of what the Lord is said to have intended at the Last Supper?

The Bread that I Will Give...

It is taught by many and strongly implied in the *ASB* 'Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion', that John 6:32-58 does not refer by metaphor directly to faith in the death of Christ as verses 29 and 51 suggest, but to the Communion. Is there not a difficulty about this interpretation, because then verses 53 and 54 would tie us to the doctrine that the only way to be saved is to eat and drink the consecrated bread and wine? When the Philippian jailer asked, 'What must I do to be saved?' should not Paul have said in the light of John 6:54 referring to the Communion: 'Receive the consecrated bread and wine and you will be saved'?

If it is so that the John 6 passage refers to the Eucharist, is the world bound exclusively to the feet of validly ordained priests as the only mediators of salvation? It seems that must be the case, for they only are said to have the authority to change the bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ, the eating and drinking of which is the sole means of receiving eternal life!

Cranmer in his *Defence* pointed out that the John 6 passage refers to direct faith in the death of Christ, not to the Eucharist: '...by digesting his death in our minds, as our only redemption. And if Christ had never ordained this sacrament yet should we have eaten his flesh and drunken his blood.'

Further, there is no mention in John's account of the Last Supper of the institution of the Holy Communion to clarify and apply the chapter 6 passage. Instead there is the account of feet-washing which has the same message as the Holy Communion: 'He that is washed [ie forgiven by faith in the death of Christ] needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit', that is, to refresh his soul by considering afresh the death of Christ and its relevance to his recent walk with God. Nowhere does the Bible teach that: 'Except ye eat the consecrated bread and drink the consecrated wine ye have no life in you.' The evidence seems to indicate that the Holy

Communion weighed so little in John's mind that he did not mention it in any of his writings. This is unthinkable if it contained the supreme importance many now assert it to have.

'God Forbid that I Should Glory Save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'

According to the New Testament, the Communion is to preach the death of Christ as our spiritual food and drink. I observe that in the 160 references to the death of Christ in the New Testament, there are many practical and extremely important associated results. For example, the death of Christ demonstrates the holiness of God, the sinfulness of people, and the love of God for sinners. Through Christ's death we are offered complete and free forgiveness, eternal life, the motive for holiness, and the motive for concern for others. Christ's death makes possible his presence in our hearts, in our evangelism and in our meetings for prayer.

But if as the many references in the New Testament to the death of Christ teach, gospel blessings are offered because of the agony and darkness of Christ's lonely work on Calvary, and if as the New Testament many times explains they are bestowed by faith alone in that death of Christ, is it not a fact that to offer them through bread and wine by virtue of the Prayer of Consecration, is to steal them from the Cross and devalue the death of Christ, robbing the Cross of its supremacy, its unique standing and glory and robbing our people of 'the power of God' as offered in 1 Corinthians 1:18?

Paul said: 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The teaching that there is a change in the status and 'nature' of the elements, implies that the Cross is reduced to the means through which the real source of blessing is provided, the consecrated bread and wine. This is not only implied but explicitly taught by Dom Gregory (p 243) and also by Bicknell (*The Thirty Nine Articles* p 113).

Is it not the case that the idea is conveyed that it is not necessary to face our involvement in the terrible implications and demands of the crucifixion: the holiness of God, the sinfulness of the human race, our selfish involvement with the brutal slaying of God's son, personal conviction of sin, agonizing repentance and free eternal forgiveness? Eating a consecrated wafer is all that is necessary to 'receive the life of Christ into our souls that it might become our life'.

From the understanding of many lay people this is not an overstatement, for they are rarely taught to face Calvary as they receive the bread and

wine. Rather, they are taught to look to those inanimate elements to help them because of the properties bestowed at the consecration. I must ask, is not this an avoidance of the 'offence of the Cross' and does it not dangerously euphemize the dreadful cost of salvation?

The Apostle wrote: '...it pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe', not by receiving Christ's life through consecrated bread. Since Scripture says that the Holy Communion '*preaches*' then surely it only has spiritual effect as it preaches, conveying information to the mind, information concerning not its own merits by virtue of the Prayer of Consecration but of the Lord's death 2000 years ago.

Demonstration

When Paul said that he 'determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified', he immediately said that this subject preached was 'in *demonstration* of the Spirit and power'. He expected God's love effectively to be conveyed and for things actually to happen in people's lives when Christ crucified was proclaimed.

When the death of Christ is proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, there should be a 'demonstration' in the people who hear. This was seen at Peter's proclamation on the day of Pentecost, his sermon to Cornelius and Paul's preaching to the Jews. On each occasion it was the death of Christ and the forgiveness that Calvary atonement made possible that impressed and changed the hearers, and that without any mention of the Eucharist.

Through the ages, proclaiming the death of Christ in the power of the Spirit, and the experience of 'being justified from all things', has resulted in a 'demonstration' of changed lives. When at a quarter to nine on 24 May 1738, an ordained Anglican clergyman who had received the Holy Communion countless times without experiencing any work of God in his life, at last exercised faith only in the death of Christ, he recorded: 'I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death' (his italics). John Wesley was somewhat different from that day on!

'It is [not quite] Finished!'

If the rearrangement of the Last Supper is valid, and through the Eucharist the Real Presence of Christ is manifested with a range of benefits and blessings bestowed, not through direct faith alone in the death of Christ,

but through eating and drinking the consecrated elements, were not the words, 'It is finished' misplaced? Christ's death on Calvary's Cross was not then the climax of his work, (denying the message of the Letter to the Hebrews), but simply the means through which the real source of blessing is made available, that is the Holy Communion, as explicitly taught by Dix (p 243), and Bicknell (p 113).

There are about 160 references in the New Testament to the death of Christ explaining the results and benefits of his death, apart from the narratives in the four Gospels. Apart from the accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper, I can find only two references to the benefits of the Holy Communion; one is that it preaches Christ's death, (1 Cor 11:26) and the other that it is a fellowship constituted by the death of Christ, (1 Cor 10:16-17).

If Dix and Bicknell are right and the Real Presence with gospel blessings and benefits are given through the consecrated bread and wine, should not the Lord have said: 'The son of man came ... to give his life to provide the Eucharist'? Did Paul miss the whole point of the Christian message when he said: 'I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified'? Would he not have been more theologically sound if he had said: 'I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him present in the Eucharist'?

The Gospel we Preached unto you

As a focus of the exclusive preoccupation of the New Testament with the death of Christ, a clear and precise definition of the Christian gospel is provided: 'I declare unto you the gospel ... wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved ... that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Cor 15:1-3).

Why is it that there is not a word here about the Holy Communion even as a factor of the gospel? This poses the weightiest question of all; is the doctrine of a change in the status and 'nature' of the bread and wine effected by the Prayer of Consecration resulting in a Real Presence with its blessings and benefits, 'another gospel' in the sense of Galatians 1:8-9?

According to Old Testament prophecy, notably Isaiah 53 and Jeremiah 31:31f, and also the great weight of New Testament teaching, substantiated by dozens of clear, unambiguous references, the only way to be forgiven and to receive eternal life is through the experience of Holy Spirit conviction of sin and repentance, followed by faith in the work of Christ:

'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, nailing it to his cross.' If church people are diverted from an encounter with Calvary because it is devalued and attention is directed instead to the bread and wine, how can they experience forgiveness and receive eternal life? Many lifelong Anglicans I have directly questioned have no assurance of eternal life but are vaguely 'doing their best' with no experience that their best is as 'filthy rags'.

Given the Lord's blazing anger against careless teachers and the warnings that teachers will receive severer judgment, can I ask whether the admonition in Leviticus 26:22 that those who 'do not hearken unto me ... and who despise my statutes ... will make few in number' has anything to do with the catastrophic fall in Anglican church membership?

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