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## 'Do this in remembrance of me' ...but what do we do?

**What do we mean when we say that we are obeying Christ's command in the eucharist? Colin Buchanan assesses the debates which have surrounded this question in the process of liturgical revision in the Church of England, and draws out their continuing theological significance. This article is a version of the second Michael Richard Vasey Memorial Lecture at St John's College Durham, delivered earlier this year.<sup>1</sup>**

I joined the Liturgical Commission thirty-six years ago next month, which means that I stand now at the same distance from that surprising invitation to me by Michael Ramsey as that date was itself distant from the 1928 parliamentary debate. In July 1964 the Church Assembly voted for the Prayer Book (Alternative and Other Services) Measure, and so I arrived at the very threshold of the new era of alternative services. The Measure duly went through Parliament in March 1965, and was to come into force on a date to be named by the two Archbishops, and they duly plumped for 1 May 1966. So on 10 May 1966 I sat in the gallery of Church House as the joint Convocations debated the first round of alternative services,

1 Michael Vasey died on 29 June 1998, and this annual lecture at St John's Durham was endowed in memory of him. The lecture I gave on 11 May 2000 has been considerably edited for publication here. But I started in Durham by asking 'What tribute can I pay to the memory of my much-beloved brother, Michael Vasey?' I had done an obituary in *News of Liturgy*; I had preached at his London Memorial Service; and I had edited the tribute to him compiled from the members of the Group of liturgists I chair, the Group for Renewal of Liturgy (GROW) – *Michael Vasey – Friend and Liturgist* (Grove Books Ltd, 1999). I last saw him alive on earth in Durham in May 1998 when a Cranmer seminar Michael convened gave me a chance to meet with some of his students. But my other abiding memory from Michael's last months is when I shared with him in writing a Grove Booklet on the new initiation services. The booklet, Worship Series no. 145, *The New Initiation*

*Services*, has been out of print, but it has an element of being a kind of mini-shrine to his memory. For, published in January 1998, and actually being the last work published over his signature, it caught Michael in something virtually unprecedented in his life, something in which I personally take a special pride. He had to engage in shared authorship – and, team man though he was in so many ways, lone hand is also what he was as an author. He was very happy in a symposium, but he was resistant to shared authorship, and he resisted the procedure for a long time (even whilst we were actually drafting separate chapters). Well, we did ultimately agree a text, but it was painful hard work for both of us. When I was asked for changes for a second edition, I confess I have been inhibited from trying to rewrite a single phrase lest I father upon Michael sentiments and conclusions which he would have disowned at sight.

and central to this was Series 2 Communion service.<sup>2</sup> I remember this very keenly because at the end of March 1966 I had dissented against the anamnesis of the eucharistic prayer, objecting centrally to the text 'we offer unto thee this bread and this cup'.<sup>3</sup> I had dissented over against the whole of the rest of the Commission. For two years before that and for thirty-four years since I have battled over the text of Anglican eucharists. But that dissent has given me my starting point for this current reflection.

So let me take you back to 1964, when I joined the Commission. I had been taught liturgy a few years earlier by one Richard Coates.<sup>4</sup> I can recall him now warning against swallowing a trio of 'Hicks, Dix and Hebert'. Coates could well differentiate between the cruder forms of mass-sacrifice which were around in the Middle Ages and have not been unknown since – statements that located Christ's own sacrifice in his death, but then relocated it, without adding numerically to its being the one sacrificial offering of Christ, in the mass itself. I need hardly spell out for you how the Reformation saw a total resistance to this idea, and how the Counter-Reformation actually anathematized those who would deny that in the mass a propitiatory sacrifice was offered to God. Well, Hicks, Dix and Hebert were trying to find another way through this impasse, so that Nugent Hicks, for instance, subtitled his book, *The Fullness of Sacrifice* (first published in 1930), 'An Essay in Reconciliation' – and he intends the treatment to be a reconciling of different theological positions. In broad terms the picture I was getting was this:

- 1) That Christ's sacrifice was not to be expounded as his work on Calvary without remainder – it is eternal in the heavens.
- 2) That Christ's death was a kind of high point of his obedience, and that he died in order to be wholly obedient and at the highest possible cost.
- 3) That the eucharist both enters into Christ's eternal sacrifice and makes it present.
- 4) That the church, herself the body of Christ, is symbolized in the eucharistic elements and offers herself by participation in Christ's sacrifice.

I still think that the dominant views in the field of liturgical revision in the 1950s and 1960s ran close to this account. They were impatient of emphasis upon the once-for-all character of Christ's death, and they were keen both to offer the sacramental elements to God and to expound the eucharistic sacrifice as our 'entering into' that here-and-now offering.

I may not have stated the position with absolute precision. It was shared by a scholarly set of people who all expounded it slightly differently; and my impressions

2 It was actually dubbed 'Second Series' at the time, but soon after that the nomenclature was altered, and we all now refer to 'Series 1', 'Series 2' and 'Series 3'.

3 The reasoning concerned is set out in the booklet I then wrote, *The New Communion Service: Reasons for Dissent* (CBRP, 1966). The text was then reproduced in *Churchman* later that year.

4 He was vicar of Christ Church, Weston-super-Mare and visiting lecturer at Tyndale Hall – but he had been a scholarly (and sensitive) controversialist before the war on the staff of the Irish Church Missions in Dublin. He went from Weston-Super-Mare to be founder resident at Latimer House, Oxford, and in later years returned to Dublin as superintendent of the Irish Church Missions.

of it arose from an opponent, though in due course I did my own reading. I have a series of criticisms I would wish to level against it if it were seriously propounded today. I have, for instance, just checked Hicks' index of scriptural references and am amused to discover that, in a book solely concerned to re-expound a biblical doctrine of sacrifice, there is no reference to Romans 3 or 4, to 2 Corinthians 5:21, to Galatians 3:13 or Ephesians 2:16.

But my original title is 'What are we to do in remembrance of Christ?' The question of what 'we do' lay behind the title of my monograph on Cranmer's eucharistic rites, *What did Cranmer think he was doing?*<sup>5</sup> For, yes, Jesus had commanded us to 'do this'. But what did Jesus intend us to do? And what is the force of 'in remembrance of me'?

Cranmer was in no doubt. His 1552 rite was based on a response to Jesus' command that simply equated 'Do this' with 'Eat the bread and drink the wine' – and his words of distribution, immediately following on the recitation of Christ's command, then naturally read 'Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you'. If I may start to look at the concept of an anamnesis, a statement that we are obeying Christ's command and how we are obeying it, then Cranmer put his cards firmly on the table – his distribution *was* his anamnesis. Now on the surface of Scripture this is a wholly understandable and fair conclusion to reach. Jesus' own words to his disciples were 'Take, eat' and 'Drink this, all of you'. There is no place where any other use of the elements is anticipated. There is no reference to offering them to God. There is no statement in Scripture that the eucharist itself should be expounded as in some sense a sacrifice.

Against the background of that blanket statement, we examine the alternative which started to attract Anglicans in the 1930s and 1940s, an alternative which I will illustrate from Gregory Dix. In 1937 Dix produced an English edition of Hippolytus. In the Cuming text, which is the text students all over the world now use, you will find a rendering of the crucial words very similar to a normal translation of St. Paul. Cuming gives us:

...when you do this, you make my remembrance.

Remembering therefore his death and resurrection...<sup>6</sup>

Cuming's text is from 1976, nearly forty years after Dix's. Go back to Gregory Dix, and we find his translation reads:

...when ye do this do my 'anamnesis'.

Doing therefore the 'anamnesis' of his death and resurrection...<sup>7</sup>

Dix adds in a footnote that which he confirms later in *The Shape of the Liturgy*: 'The word translated "do" in Greek, Syriac and Ethiopian can just as well mean "offer".' Put his translation together with that footnote and you have his concept –

5 Grove Liturgical Study no. 7, Grove Books, 1976 (second edition 1982) – it gets good marks from Diarmid McCullough in his *Thomas Cranmer!*

6 Geoffrey Cuming (ed), *Hippolytus: a Text for Students*, Grove Liturgical Study no.8, Grove Books, 1976, p 11.

7 G.Dix (ed.), *The Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus*, Church Historical Society, 1937, p 8.

that there is an objective action (an anamnesis) in which, before God and here and now in the present, we provide an actualization of the sacrifice of Christ, and ourselves offer that to God. In that same year, 1937, he put the doctrine in very simple terms in his chapter in the famous Hebert book, *The Parish Communion*. Dix's chapter is entitled 'The "Church" in Primitive Liturgies', but the quintessential Dix is found in this early argument in the chapter:

[It is by her membership of Christ] that the Church can effectually offer the anamnesis (lit. re-calling) of the atoning and latreutic sacrifice of Christ's Passion and Resurrection by and with her Lord. And that sacrifice the Church not only offers but she is, as the Priest and victim of Calvary are one and the same. And by that sacrifice of herself to God the Church lives, as he that lost his life ever saved it.<sup>8</sup>

*The Parish Communion* was the classic work designed by its authors to popularize the parish communion, and duly did so. It caught on in a high church movement which claimed to be uniting the whole Church of England, and in dozens of ways Dix and Hebert here gave a popular understanding of eucharistic sacrifice which would never have passed muster at the Council of Trent perhaps, but which was very plausibly presented and became, partly unconsciously, a feature of the received doctrinal wisdom of the parish communion movement.

The Hicks, Dix and Hebert twist had taken one more twist before I reached the Commission in 1964. Hicks had died during the War; Hebert went to Australia, entered controversy about the nature of scripture, and died on board ship in 1963; and Dix, who was younger than several of the members of the Commission when I first joined it (for he would have been but 63 at that point), died in 1952, bringing others into the limelight as the pacesetters in the liturgical changes that were to be enabled once that Alternative Services Measure had found its way into legislation.<sup>9</sup> The key persons when I joined the Commission were Edward Ratcliff and Arthur Couratin. They were not far distant from Dix, but had developed their own scholarly notion of what the second century believed about the eucharist and said at its celebration. They had, for instance, worked up a theory that the Hippolytan prayer, properly understood, would have reached a climax with the Sanctus, which was notable by its absence from the known texts of Hippolytus.<sup>10</sup> Eric Mascall used to call these two 'patristic fundamentalists', as more interested in identifying and reproducing verbal forms from early centuries than in sustaining three-dimensional catholic doctrine (which was vitally important to him).<sup>11</sup> They

8 G. Hebert (ed.), *The Parish Communion*, SPCK, London, 1937, p 98.

9 Dix at this point becomes arguably a separate matter for study in his own right, as his impact on liturgical revision was somewhat indirect in relation to the anamnesis, though the 'four-action shape' over-shadowed all liturgical revision from the beginning of the Commission in 1955 right through to the present day. See my essay 'Gregory Dix - The Liturgical Bequest' in *Churchman* (forthcoming).

10 This theory has been accorded a new lease of life in Prayer H of the new eucharistic prayers in Common Worship.

11 As a matter of sheer fact, the texts they wanted were guaranteed to carry the catholic fold, not least because Arthur's 26 years as principal of St Stephen's House were not without impact on the hundreds of students who had gone through his hands in that time, but also because the central verb 'we offer' produced a somewhat Pavlovian reflex amongst catholic Anglicans. My quotation of Eric Mascall derives from personal conversations with him in 1969-70.

did have doctrinal views. Ratcliff's shorthand view of the eucharist was that it is a 'Pass to the Royal Enclosure' – in other words, we present it or offer it at the gate, showing whose authority it has, and pass within to pay true worth to the King.<sup>12</sup> He contrasts this with popular Protestantism which (no doubt, in his mind, stemming from Cranmer) thinks of it as a national health card bringing the bearer certain benefits, which is the sole point of it. He was absolutely genuine in my judgement, but whether these are adequate illustrations of either Catholicism or Protestantism, I leave you to judge.

Couratin on the other hand finds his most characteristic exposition of the rite in the use by Jesus of the phrase 'blood of the new covenant'. This, in Arthur's judgment, must have taken Jesus' hearers, and of course his disciples of generations later, back to Mount Sinai and Exodus 24. There Moses, according to that chapter, sprinkled the people with 'the blood of the covenant', and, having done so, was admitted with the elders into the presence of God on top of the mountain and there saw God and ate and drank in his presence. One can see how a eucharistic prayer, if modelled on Arthur's persuasion about Moses, might move from reference to the blood of the new covenant, to offering the sacrifice, and being admitted to eat and drink in the presence of God. So, yes, I think I know in what direction Arthur's drafting of Series 2 was going to take us (till it was rudely disturbed by my dissent over the oblation), though we shall never know for sure; but you may, in passing, like to notice that we have a last footprint of Arthur's design, one that runs through into Prayer A in the Common Worship provision, in the phrase 'as we eat and drink these holy gifts in the presence of your divine majesty'. That text is the elders of Exodus 24 seeing God and eating and drinking in the presence of God on the mountain top. It is Arthur Couratin drafting on the basis of his own theory which has left that footprint – actually perfectly acceptable in itself, but originally fitting a design which is now both irrecoverable, and, I judge, not actually wanted.

Part of that design was explicit in the actual drafting of the anamnesis which was provided for Series 2. You can imaginé my horror when, young, relatively innocent, and suspicious also of the whole likely tenor of liturgical revision as I was, in summer 1964 I received by post from the secretary of the Commission an early draft of the proposed rite we would be considering when I attended my first meeting. The text was very clear. It went something like this:

The Narrative of Institution ended with Jesus' command

Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.

And the response in the anamnesis text ran like this:

Wherefore, O Lord, having in remembrance his saving passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his glorious ascension into heaven, and looking for the coming of his kingdom, we offer unto thee this bread and this cup...

Now my horror had two doctrinal dimensions, one negative, one positive. Negatively, the text had eliminated all the BCP reference to 'who made there (by

<sup>12</sup> A. H. Couratin and D. H. Tripp (eds.), *E. C. Ratcliff: Liturgical Studies* (SPCK, 1976) p 104.

his one oblation once offered) a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world'. The crucifixion was not in any way singled out – it was merely characterized as 'saving' – and it was in no way viewed as a sacrifice. To me that was simply to walk away from the scriptural motifs of 1662. That was what was missing. In its place there was the present-day oblation of the bread and cup – 'we offer unto thee this bread and this cup'. I could hardly believe my eyes. While Arthur Couratin and his friends talked smoothly about getting behind the Reformation controversies and going back to the early church, they were in fact providing a text which unambiguously took sides in the Reformation disputes. Over the eighteen months from my first meeting of the Commission to the point where Series 2 was published, I found myself wrestling with this sort of paradox. Ultimately I dissented and wrote a pamphlet entitled *The New Communion Service – Reasons for Dissent*. In this I was able to set out two lines of objection.

First, I had to say that, however innocent reference to the eucharist as a sacrifice in the second century may have been, once an issue has come into very precise dispute, then the innocence of the original text cannot be regained. (One could illustrate this from pre-Nicene definitions of the Trinity – they may have been innocent in the third century – they are grossly misleading in post-Nicene contexts.) If the language of offering the elements to God represented *either* the full-blown offering of the 'pure victim' of the Sarum and Roman mass, *or* was to give expression to the doctrine of either Hicks and Dix or Ratcliff and Couratin, then that language was wrong. If there were ambiguity in the significance to be attributed to the offering terminology, then it was an ambiguity between two meanings, both of which were wrong.

Second, I appealed not to heresy, but to logic. The issue here is not only how the Church phrases its doctrinal formulations, nor even whether the second and third centuries had hit upon legitimate developments in doctrine, but simply upon whether in logic 'we offer unto thee this bread and this cup' actually is obeying Christ's command. Dix might have his assertion that there existed an actualizing, objective, sacrifice, a process which he called 'doing the anamnesis', a process of contemporary recalling to God the works and merits of his Son Jesus, but, when the chips were down, do the scriptural accounts require this understanding – and, if they do not, but instead the command 'do this in remembrance of me' means something more like 'keep this feast in remembrance of me', then what is the logic by which we can follow Hippolytus' text and say that we are obeying Christ's command when we offer the bread and cup to God? The NT is devoid of any suggestion that the eucharist of itself constitutes a current sacrifice here and now in this present time (whatever its mystical or metaphysical connection with events in past time may be).<sup>13</sup>

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13 In passing, I put on record how little I can delight as president of the eucharist when I am expected to lead a congregation praying 'The Lord receive the sacrifice at your hands'.

I am sometimes asked whether I would still dissent if pushed into the same corner today. I think I would be slightly better informed as to where, as they say, others were coming from – but on quiet further reflection I am clear that I would still want to resist any such drafting. It takes us right outside scripture and into various perils.

If Dix has set Anglicans problems with respect to the meaning of anamnesis, he has also broken open the issue of 'shape' very thoroughly, and in the process has pointed to the solution of problems. I confess I buy totally the notion that in principle what we are to 'do' is to follow the shape of a meal in a fourfold action. If we work backwards through these four, we can but welcome the growing pressure to receive communion (not least for young children), the fourth action, and cannot but be glad at the kind of status the breaking of bread has gained, the third action. Incidentally, although you have heard me standing up for the relationship of the supper to the crucifixion, you will not find I relate the ceremonial breaking of the bread to the bodily suffering of Christ on Calvary – that has no textual support in scripture, but is evangelical romanticism. You will find it has invaded Prayer E in Order One. When we come to the second action, that of giving thanks, it has been a very helpful emphasis within it that it is basically a giving of thanks rather than a petitioning for consecration. It has enabled rite after rite to work on the basis that consecration is effected by thanksgiving, it has changed the name of the prayer to the 'eucharistic' prayer, and it has correspondingly emphasized the unity of the whole prayer and the inappropriateness of turning the narrative of institution into a ceremonially high point.

However, Dix bequeathed us all a problem in the first of his four actions. He said that the dominical 'taking' of the bread and cup corresponded to our 'offertory', and he presented us with a plethora of patristic quotations and even more Dixian exposition, to show that the people's contribution to the liturgy – indeed he called it 'their' liturgy – was the bringing up of bread and wine. This made enormous popular headway in the parish communion movement, though Michael Ramsey dubbed it 'shallow and romantic pelagianism'. My own problems are twofold – firstly, that it does not seem to me that preparing the eucharistic table is any sense the working out of the first dominical action – that is, that our Lord 'took' bread and wine. Preparation of the table is more like the disciples going on ahead to get the room and the table ready – and is not a dominical act. In terms of the rubrics, you will find that Series 2, having started in Couratin's hands with a kind of Dixian outlook, led on to a Series 3 and then a Rite A in which it became clear that laying up is a preliminary, and the action of 'taking' is separate from it, subsequent to it, and in principle ushers in the eucharistic prayer. Order One has not strayed far from that distinction in its rubrics. You will also find that the word 'offertory' is not used; and I would still want to contend that this is a term which in 1662 clearly means 'alms and other monetary donations', and that the Church of England has never had either doctrine or terminology for running a procession in order to bring the bread and wine from the back of the church to the front (one has to recognize that credence tables when they reappeared around 1860 were the subject of court cases – the mind boggles at what would have been thought then about lay

processions from the back).<sup>14</sup> I have to add that there may have been no reliable theology behind the procession, it may well have emerged that it was not the first of the dominical actions, and it may in the 1950s and 1960s have been based on only an echo of Dix on the one hand and a shallow and romantic pelagianism on the other – but the procession has persisted.<sup>15</sup> It has since had an ever-flourishing adjunct in the Roman Catholic ‘offertory prayers’. These we declined to put into the rite in 1979, for a variety of reasons, but particularly because the Evangelicals declined to say that God had provided them with bread and wine to offer to him, and Catholics declined to consider other translations or renderings. You perhaps know how the Rite A rubric turned out. It was a response without a versicle – a liturgical monstrosity. When in Synod Catholics wanted to introduce the full Roman texts (‘...we have this bread to offer’ etc.) and evangelicals wanted to eliminate the whole section, I then saw both lots off by comparing the vestigial response (‘Blessed be God for ever’) to the smile of the Cheshire Cat – one lot of persons passing by, persons persuaded of the impropriety of Cheshire Cats, would see nothing except slightly disturbed atmospherics, and would themselves pass by unperturbed; whilst another lot, addicted to Cheshire Cats, would quickly conclude that only a Cheshire Cat would fit behind the easily recognizable smile in the atmosphere, and would pass on their way much comforted because there was a Cheshire Cat there. This argument saw off both sets of would-be amenders, and the deliberately perverse text stood.<sup>16</sup>

When work began on the Common Worship texts Michael Vasey left his footprints again. He persuaded the Commission to propose a version of the Roman prayers which says ‘through your goodness we have this bread to set before you’. I argued with him about this. The Revision Committee on Eucharistic Prayers knocked out ‘set before’ from the anamnesis of Prayer E, and it now reads ‘bringing before you [the bread and cup]’ a text pioneered in the Third Eucharistic Prayer of Rite A. But it was impossible to disturb the occurrence of ‘set before’ in those Prayers at the Preparation of the Table, though I confess that I doubt if texts for those prayers currently in actual use will change, and that Michael Vasey’s typically tough (but to my mind incomprehensible) advocacy of ‘set before’ will actually have achieved anything. It is an interesting question as to whether ‘set before’ is different from ‘offer’ in its import – though you might also press me as to why I do not like ‘set before’ although I had coped in 1978-79 with ‘bring before’. The Roman Prayers – or the Vasey variant – are obscure in what they are saying – are they here and now currently, and before we even start the sacramental action, offering simple bread and wine to God? Or are they stating that, having now furnished bread and wine at the table, we shall be in position shortly to offer it, once consecrated, as a

14 The crucial study on ‘alms and oblations’ was in G. Dowden, *Further Studies in the Prayer Book*, Methuen, 1908, pp 176-223.

15 I endeavoured to see off these lines of development 22 years ago in *The End of the Offertory* (Grove Liturgical Study no. 14, Grove Books, 1978).

16 See the *Report of Proceedings* for February 1979. *The English Churchman* (which obviously had an ear for trouble) said I had compared the presence of Christ in the eucharist to the smile on a Cheshire cat. The last stage in my own life was when I got a note from the Lewis Carroll Society saying they understood I had made a learned reference to his works in the General Synod.



highly symbolic sacrificial offering to God? Or is it even somewhere between these two – that it is in offering elements to God that they are consecrated? It is worth noting that the form and content of these Roman prayers might well be represented as mini-eucharistic prayers – is it then possible that, if the 'offertory prayers' are used, the consecration is already complete before the main eucharistic prayer begins?

I look back on my forty years of engagement with liturgical revision, and see that Dix's four-action shape, duly re-touched by hard dialogue with it by later authors and commissioners, remains a strong bequest he has given to successive generations. On the other hand I suspect we have gently set aside his doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice, though I confess I am astonished at how lax and unbothered we have become about the meaning, and indeed the wording, of the anamnesis. Synod's vigilantes have all gone after one line of the Nicene Creed these last twelve months. So I suggest a round-up as to where the anamnesis texts have reached.

In Prayer A the very happy Rite A formula 'we celebrate his one perfect sacrifice' has been bowdlerized back to the 1549 text used as a stopgap in 1967 'we make the memorial'. As I give a memorial lecture, I can say with some emphasis that I judge 'memorial' to be just the wrong word here – whilst Dix would say it is still Zwinglian, despite all sorts of catholic yearnings towards it.

In Prayer B, you have much of the language that apparently gave the right vibes to Anglican Catholics over the last twenty years – 'celebrate the memorial', 'offer this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving' and 'bring before'. Each of these, on inspection, can be used in good conscience by all.

In Prayer C you have the wholly Cranmerian rite with the Interim Rite juggling of the end of the prayer. Gregory Dix told us you cannot change Cranmer's theology by such juggling. The difficulty is that it says too little about how we respond to 'do this' – not too much.

In Prayer D we pick up the language of the First Prayer in Rite A. 'Therefore, we celebrate the cross on which he died'. It continues an intriguing use of 'celebrate' which is multi-layered in its significance.

In Prayer E there are four verbs: 'we remember all that Jesus did' and 'in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice' and 'bringing before you' and 'we proclaim' – it all looks a bit tortuous, but is doctrinally OK.

In Prayer F there are four verbs 'we proclaim' and 'we celebrate' and 'we rejoice' and 'we long for his coming'. There is also the ambiguous 'we recall the one perfect sacrifice'.

In Prayer G there are 'we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross' and 'we remember' and 'we rejoice'.

In Prayer H, there is the simplest possible 'we do this in remembrance of him' an echo by the people of the president's recitation of Jesus' command. Simply to say 'we do this' was the answer reached in the Church of South India, the first to write a eucharistic text in the wake of Dix, over fifty years ago.

What stage have we then reached in what was clearly a polarization between two schools of thought thirty-four years ago?

First, we now have secured the impropriety of asserting that the dutiful obedience to Jesus' command is to offer our bread and cup to the Father. That kind of text does not appear as a live candidate for inclusion today. Its school of thought was already past its zenith in Anglicanism when Series 2 was in preparation, though I did not know it. That is ground securely gained. If at intervals we say that we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or less clearly the duty and service that we owe, yet it is impossible fairly to expound them as the offering of a sacrifice which is centred in the use of the sacramental elements. What became clear in the days when David Silk and I were doing some of the most sensitive drafting in relation to Rite A was that just as references to 'once for all' made evangelicals feel affirmed as having a rite which expressed their doctrine, so catholics liked at intervals to hear the word 'offer' (just as they also liked to hear the word 'saints!'). We did a deal in which the party overtly giving ground gave no ground, but the party receiving it got some good liturgical vibes.

Second, I have asked myself, as I have asked you, whether there is any distinction possible between 'set before' and 'bring before', in that I – and, for all I know, perhaps I alone, have found 'bring before' just acceptable, whilst 'set before' I have found unacceptable. I suspect that 'bring before' means *au fond* that we are coming into the presence of God there to share in his presence the feast that Jesus commanded – in other words, in the last analysis we are saying that we have brought the bread and wine that, in the words of Prayer A, 'we may eat and drink these holy gifts in the presence of your divine majesty'. 'Set before', however, takes us across a watershed – it was used by the two Archbishops in 1897 as their (perhaps?) authoritative exposition of the meaning of the 1662 rite – for all that such terminology did not appear in the rite. Their text is still at intervals quoted today. But their exposition was meeting Leo XIII on his own ground in respect of the charge brought in *Apostolicae Curae* that the eucharistic rite of the Church of England had no eucharistic sacrifice (and thus its ordinations had no true purpose or intent to create sacrificing priests). 'No', say the Archbishops, 'you can see we do offer the eucharistic sacrifice, for we set the elements before God.' So, yes, I begin to be suspicious – and I suggest to you that *au fond* 'set before' means 'present them to you as a way of at least honouring you and perhaps impetrating you'. You will see that I am not here discussing whether it is consecrated or unconsecrated bread and wine we are thus setting before God – I simply assert that it is a muted form of offering which is inappropriate and unhelpful in either case – and the combative part of me could wish for Michael Vasey to be here to defend his typically unyielding insistence on what to me was indefensible.

Third, have we then gone away from thinking that there is a sacramental action which in some way makes the past sacrifice of Christ actual in the present, or that makes some eternal heavenly self-offering of Christ actual in narrow compass here on earth? I want to say to you that I believe we have. I hope I will not be thought over-Western or over-scholastic if I say to you that a sacrifice which is located firmly and once for all in the death of Christ on earth within a linear time-sequence, so that it is actually over when he is dead, and is thus perfect and availing for all time, cannot, *qua* once-for-all sacrifice, recur on earth, and cannot be located in the eternity of heaven. It is not difficult to demonstrate this from the Epistle to the

Hebrews but it also fits the whole of the rest of the NT. It does, of course, in passing make it clear that it is priests who offer such sacrifices and the appointment as priest belongs to Christ alone and is untransferable. So I want to affirm that Cranmer was right in the rigid disjunction he drew, that there was one sacrifice of Christ once – and it was 'there' in space and time – and there are responses of ours which may, if costly and truly God-directed, be metaphorically termed 'sacrifices' and are recurrent and are offered 'here', such as 'our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice'. This does mean that anamnesis, commemoration, memorial, remembrance and any other rendering of the same stem all mean that we in one place do, as far as that function is concerned, cast our minds back from the here and now to the there and then. It may even be that the simple 'unde et memores' of the Roman rite, innocently translated in post-Vatican days as the one thing Dix would have opposed mightily 'Calling to mind therefore...', – that this has helped us into a more natural understanding of 'remembering', an understanding surely true to Scripture, an understanding much helped by the simple translation of Hippolytus by Cuming replacing the more tortuous and forced one of Dix. It is not in the word 'remember' that we are centrally to locate the present relationship to God or the action of the sacrament, although it is of course a vital background, for our faith in the living Christ depends upon our remembrance of what he has done. It is the holding that feast which is identifiably the one he commanded which constitutes the action of the sacrament, and, while we lift our hearts in thanksgiving over the gifts to inaugurate the Supper, and as a matter of discernment and appointment locate consecration of the gifts in that thanksgiving, it is believing people feeding outwardly and inwardly and together with each other on the living Christ, as he imparts the strength and grace that derive from his historical saving acts, who are absolutely fundamental to its being a Supper responding to his command 'do this'.

I venture to suggest that this is not unlike the passover, which was itself the context in which the 'do this' command was given. The two poles of the passover in time were: first, the once-for-all deliverance from Egypt – an historical backdrop of redemption which governed all that was said and done at the supper; and, second, the annually repeated supper. The supper admittedly needed a slain lamb, but the supper itself, a rejoicing in the present in the benefits of redemption in the past, was not a sacrifice in any recognizable sense of the word. If there is any phasing together of past and present, it is with a great sense that 'we' of today were 'there', delivered from Egypt, rather than the other way round. So it is that the NT is ready to say that we were 'there' – 'crucified with Christ', 'justified by his blood', or whatever – but it does not say that his sacrifice is here. If we followed that up we would find that the loneliest and most desolated death in history, that of our Lord Jesus, was also a death in which we were contained, our federal head justifying us corporately by carrying us within himself on the cross. Yes, in this mystical sense, we were 'there'. The day of atonement ritual in the Epistle to the Hebrews, while not visibly concerned about the celebration of the Supper, gives exactly the same context to the church's life of faith in her living Lord, on the basis of his past acts.

Fourth, if I am right that the revision of the eucharistic liturgy for the Common Worship that lies ahead has been singularly free of trouble in the anamnesis area, then I think we should be glad. It has freed us to open up other issues in eucharistic prayers which were inevitably suppressed when the agenda were so top-heavy with anamnesis. If by any chance we have now broadly got it right, we may also find we have at last got it in more balanced perspective.

Finally, therefore, I return to my friend Gregory Dix. In that purple passage he revels in that the people of God, all down history, have 'done it'. I suppose I share some of that sense of history, of entering into an unbroken chain of rhythmic celebration. I have not here touched on the nature or the meaning of 'this is my body', 'this is my blood'. I hope I have taken you a fraction nearer to identifying what we are to do. But best of all will be that you should do it.

**The Rt Revd Colin Buchanan** is the Bishop of Woolwich

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