

ANGLICAN LITURGY: SACRIFICE AND SCHIZOPHRENIA

PART 1

1. The Use of Sacrifice

In the November 1967 (edition of the “Bishopruck”, a magazine published by Durham diocese), the Bishop of Durham, at that time Ian Ramsey, gave advice, both on the use, and the justification for using the Series II communion service.¹ This letter is concerned with the sort of eucharistic theology that is permitted by the language and structure of Series II. The problematical passage in the prayer of “consecration” in Series II, is the one following the words of institution:

“Wherefore, O, Lord, with this bread and this cup, we make the memorial of his saving passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his glorious ascension into heaven, and we look for the coming of His kingdom. We pray thee to accept this our duty and service, and grant that we may so eat and drink these Holy things in the presence of thy divine majesty, that we may be filled with thy grace and heavenly blessing.”²

The Anglican Church has a tradition which purports to combine within one harmonious unity High, Low, and Broad Church. It follows that any revision of the eucharist ought in some way to comprehend both the High doctrine of the eucharist in which the claim is made that Christ, really present in the bread and wine, is offered to the Father, and the Low doctrine of the eucharist in which the bread and wine are in some sense a sign, that Christ is spiritually present to the believer, and also a lively remembrance of Christ’s full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice on calvary. Now that a general, and not a detailed assent to the Thirty Nine Articles is required of Anglican clergymen, it would seem that any sort of eucharistic theology is permitted by the Church of England. The problem is that the phrase in the canon of Series II “with this bread and this cup we make the memorial” seems at first sight to rule out the possibility of a eucharistic offering in which the really present Christ is offered to his Father.

Ramsey quotes the objections of Proctors in the Convocation from the Diocese of Exeter:

“If this formula (i.e. quoted above) be compared with the earliest known liturgical text, that of the Apostolic Tradition

which has so largely influenced the eucharistic prayer of Series II, it will be found that while it might be said to correspond with "doing the anamnesis of the passion" it stops short of the principal clause in the Hippolytan prayer, viz. 'We offer to thee the bread and cup.' Thus 'we make the memorial' cannot be understood to mean 'we offer', and hence the offering of the eucharistic sacrifice is excluded by the New Formula".³

After this terse summary of the debate, Ramsey tries to justify the use of Series II in Anglican Parish Churches no matter what their tradition of Churchmanship, on the ground that if a phrase gains its "meaning in use", then "with this bread and this cup we make the memorial" can be given a sacrificial use. Thus he writes:

"My point is really a very simple one, viz. that words and phrases do not have a fixed meaning to which they are tied as it were by a piece of ontological string. The meaning of a phrase whether in liturgy, or anywhere else depends entirely on the context in which it is set. It has in this sense a "meaning in use"."⁴

Ramsey adds two provisos to this brief but unacknowledged summary of one of the themes of the Wittgenstein's Investigations.⁵ Firstly, words and phrases have a history, and part of the use of a phrase is the history of its development. Secondly, Ramsey does admit that to say a phrase has "meaning in use" does not mean that any use, however wild, can confer on a word or sentence a meaning. He does not enlarge on his remarks that the consistent use of a word or sentence imposes on us certain constraints, but instead quotes a general example to support his main contention:

"To quote only one instance which I have given before (in, 'On being sure in Religion'): 'Copper' has no meaning tied to it like an image, and to know what we 'mean' by a word we have to know the context, whether it is that of a tube station machine, an urchin in Hackney, victorian laundry instructions, or a stock exchange report. But with a particular context comes a particular constraint."⁶

Ramsey concludes:

"The upshot of all this is that whether or not the new formula excludes the offering of the eucharistic sacrifice, depends entirely on whether the new formula can be given "sacrificial use" in some appropriate context of rite and ceremony, recognising that such a context must have some historical links and be routed, one way or another back to the life and ministry of our Lord."⁷

I wish to argue in this section that all the major claims Ramsey makes are false, and their falsity arises from his misuse

of Wittgenstein's insight that meaning is closely related to the context in which a word or phrase is used.

2. "Sacrificial use" here and now

What does Ramsey mean when he says that the Series II communion service can be given a "sacrificial use"? Taken as a whole, Series II does not, *prima facie*, seem to contain any reference to the belief that in the communion service, the body of Christ, really present, is offered to the Father.

Some words and phrases are admittedly given a use in ordinary language, which the first use they had did not imply. For example the word "pious" has now a use which is almost the exact opposite of its original sense. "Pious" originally meant something like "Holy", "showing respect to God", "religious" etc. Now such a statement as "Oh, him, he's pious, he prays too much." Contains a derogatory use of "pious". The word in this context means something like, "he takes himself too seriously", or "he's rather self-righteous". Again the phrase, "You're joking" has become extended to include a sarcastic use. "You're joking" originally was used to mean, "You're telling a joke". Now the phrase is almost exclusively used to mean "You're making an under-statement". For example, "We don't want him in our side at doubles, he's a poor tennis player." . . . "You're joking, he can't even hit a ball".

Has the word "memorial" changed in use to such a degree that the phrase "with this bread and this cup we make the memorial" can be interpreted to mean "with this bread and this cup we offer Christ"? The phrase memorial in current English usage seems to have little connection with anything being made present; the emphasis is wholly on the past. We speak of a memorial service in which a person who had recently died is remembered. We speak of "remembrance Sunday", when those who died for this country in two world wars are remembered. We buy memorial stones for our relations when they are buried, so that we will be able to trace where they have been buried. The use of the word memorial in present English usage seems to be tied to a remembrance of something or someone no longer with us in the present.

Can Series II be given a "sacrificial use" by the addition of further words, or various liturgical actions? Sentences of various sorts can be interpolated into Series II to give the rite a sacrificial look. Suppose that the rite is started up by the inclusion of the offertory prayers and the Secret for the day. For example the Offertory prayer for Easter Sunday runs:

"Receive, we beseech thee, O Lord, the prayers of thy people

together with the offering of these sacrifices; that what we have begun in these paschal mysteries may, by thine operation be profitable for our healing in eternity.”⁸

Would the inclusion of such a prayer give this service a sacrificial use? I think not. Firstly, the added prayers are obviously an appendage to Series II, and were not part of its structure. Secondly, if, as I shall argue later, Series II not only omits, but excludes by implication the belief that the body of Christ is being offered to the Father, then the inclusion in the service of any prayers which assert this belief produce a communion in which the spoken words commit a formal contradiction. This addition does not give Series II a sacrificial use: it just adds a prayer to what Series II means, whatever it does mean; but the meaning of the communion prayer in this rite is the question at issue.

A communion service is not, however, merely a set of words spoken by a priest or minister. In saying the Mass the celebrant is not describing the institution narrative. To take over the late J. L. Austin's terminology, the communion is a performative utterance. In offering someone a birthday present I do not describe the present, or define what a birthday is. Rather, when I say, “Many happy returns of the day; I hope you have a happy birthday”, and hand someone a parcel, I am performing the act of giving someone a birthday present. To describe what happens when John gives Jean a birthday present, is not itself the giving of a birthday present. Likewise, in the eucharist, the celebrant in repeating Christ's words of institution and the related communion prayers, performs the action of consecrating the bread and wine.

In saying the communion service the celebrant is thus not uttering a set of descriptive sentences in the way that Fortescue is when he writes:

“He (the Priest) now bows over the altar, leaning the forearms on it. Holding the bread before him he says “secretly, distinctly and attentively’ the words of consecration, HOC EST ENIM CORPUS MEUM. He should say these words in a secret voice, but so that he can hear them.”⁹

Performative uses of language are often associated with many different sorts of physical actions. For example the performative utterance of offering someone a present is closely associated with the breaking of a bottle of liquor on the new ship's side. Similarly the mass is more than a set of words uttered by a minister, it also involves physical actions on the part of the celebrant and his assistants. For example in the Roman and the

High Church Anglican tradition, the bread and the cup are elevated at the words of institution.

Can Series II be given a "sacrificial use" by the introduction of any manual or bodily action by the celebrant? The problem is that there is no permanent connection between manual actions and eucharistic belief. The greater elevation, at the words of institution, were introduced in the 13th and 14th centuries so that the people could see the host and the cup. The lesser elevation at the end of the Canon is much earlier, but its doctrinal significance is hard to trace.

Granted there are periods in the history of Christianity when particular liturgical actions have been associated with definite doctrinal beliefs. For example, during the 19th Century some Anglo-Catholics were persecuted for using vestments, candles and the greater elevation, largely because the evangelicals regarded such "innovations" as a symbol of the Papish doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass. Father Mackonochie, first vicar of St Alban's, Holborn, was brought before the ecclesiastical courts by the Church Association on the ground that he elevated the host and cup, and genuflected before it.¹⁰

The popular view in the Church of England today does not associate the use of vestments or the introduction of the elevations as indicative of the holding of the full doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice. The popular view is that the High Church is high because it uses vestments, does the elevations, and not because these actions are the symbol of doctrinal beliefs. The lack of any permanent connection between the Priestly actions and eucharistic belief is shown by the Parliamentary measure legalising the use of vestments in Anglican Churches. This measure states that the use of the eucharistic vestments is considered to be of no doctrinal significance. Thus the belief that in the eucharist Christ is offered to the Father cannot be given a place in Series II by the addition of Priestly action or dress.

We are still left with the question, what does Ramsey mean when he says that the revised Anglican liturgy has a meaning in use which is in some sense sacrificial? Ramsey is correct in stating that words are not related to their meanings by simple denotation. All words are not of the same logical status as logically proper names. Ramsey goes on to affirm that to say a word has meaning in a form of life is not to say that words can be used to mean anything we like. The conventional use of a word, restricts, at least to some extent, the way we can use a word. The way words have been used in the past, the common "use history" of words and statements will give some indication

as to what the meaning of a phrase is. Does an investigation of the development of Anglican Liturgy from the first revision of Cranmer to the Series I rite give any indication that the latest Anglican rite can be given a sacrificial use?

3. 1549, and all that.

The use of a word or sentence is anchored to some degree to its use in past forms of life. The meaning of the word or statement in question can be modified by a new twist being put on its usage. As Wittgenstein puts it:

"Ask yourself whether our language is complete . . . whether it was so before the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of infinitesimal calculus were incorporated into it; for these are, so to speak, suburbs of our language. (And how many houses or streets does it take before our town begins to be a new town?) Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares of old and new houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses."¹¹

The communion liturgy even within the Anglican Church has a history. Is it possible that Series II has a sacrificial use in that its liturgical ancestry contained implicitly or explicitly a notion of eucharistic sacrifice which has been transmitted into the Series II rite? What has been the use of the word "sacrifice" in the Anglican liturgies since the break from the Roman rite?

The English Church broke its allegiance to the see of Rome in 1533. Whilst Henry VIII was alive there were practically no liturgical changes. The Roman Rite continued to be used. The *Antididagma* or a Defence of the Christian and Catholic Religion of 1544 points out the Roman Rite uses the word "sacrifice" in four senses.¹²

The first offering is of the bread and wine mingled with the water. Thus the Offertory Prayer:

"*Suscipe sancte Pater, omnipotens aeterne Deus, hanc immaculatam hostiam, quam ego indignus famulus tuus offero tibi deo meo vivo et vero*" . . . "*Offerimus tibi, Domine, calicem salutaris, tuam deprecantes clementiam*".¹³

The second offering is a common sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving:

"*Memento Domine, famulorum famularumque tuarum N. et N. et omnia circumstantium, quorum tibi fides cognita est et nota devotio, pro quibus tibi offerimus: vel qui tibi offerunt hoc sacrificium laudis*".¹⁴

The third offering is that of Christ himself:

"*Offerimus praeclarae majestati tuae de tuis donis ac datis,*

hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam, Panem sanctum vitae aeternae, et calicem salutis perpetuae."¹⁵

The fourth offering is that of the Church and of the whole community. Thus the commemoration of the departed is followed by:

"Nobis quoque peccatoribus famulis tuis, de multitudine miserationum tuarum sperantibus, partem aliquam et societatem donare digneris, cum tuis sanctis, Apostolis et Martyribus".¹⁶

How was the notion of sacrifice used in the first Anglican revision of the Liturgy in 1549? This rite has a similar look to the Roman Rite. The first half of the service is the traditional Roman order of Introit, Kyrie, Gloria, Collect, Epistle, Gospel, Creed, Sermon. The radical changes come in the second half. The offertory sentences remain, but they are disconnected from the liturgical season. They have become nothing but a medley of Bible texts, referring to the offering of alms. When the communicants are in the choir the celebrant is to take the bread and wine mingled with water and set them on the altar. There are none of the medieval offertory prayers. There is no secret prayer. All that is left of the offertory is the placing of the bread and wine on the altar. The rubric forbids the elevation of the host and chalice. The remainder of the rite follows fairly closely the traditional pattern. The Lord's Prayer is said without the Libera Nos. Then the Pax, and the verse, "Christ our paschal lamb" which is intended to stress the restriction of the sacrificial work of Christ to the Crucifixion.¹⁷

In the Roman Rite the *Supplices rogamus*¹⁸ assumes that everyone who receives communion receives the body and blood of Christ, whether they receive worthily or not. 1549 is again ambiguous:

"Humbly beseeching thee that whosoever shall be partakers of thy Holy Communion, may worthily receive the most precious body and blood of thy son Jesus Christ."¹⁹

This may mean that every communicant receives the outward sign of bread and wine, but that the worthy communicant only receives the reality of Christ's body and blood.

The real presence of Christ has thus been eliminated from the mass: it is hardly surprising that the offering of Christ to the Father goes with it. This offering took place in the Roman Rite after the words of Institution.²⁰ It is replaced in 1549 by:

"Wherefore O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of thy dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ, we thy humble servants do celebrate and make here before thy divine majesty, with these Holy gifts, the memorial which thy son willed us to make"²¹

Thus the offering of Christ to the Father has been transformed into the making of a memorial. The eucharistic theology of the 1549 prayer book is that the communion service is a recollection of Christ's atoning death, which happened once for all on Calvary. All that there is for the communicants to do is to eat the bread and drink the cup in memory of Christ's death — all that is left to be offered is ourselves, our souls and bodies.

Can 1549 be given a sacrificial use? Bishop Gardiner thought that it could. But in the dispute between Gardiner and Cranmer, Cranmer always interpreted the 1549 rite in terms of the 1552 rite, which he was preparing for the press, rather than in terms of the Roman rite. Cranmer's intention is made clear in his *Treatise on the supper*. The preface to the edition of 1550 asserts:

"But what availeth it to take away beads, pardons, pilgrimages and such other like popery, so long as the two chief roots remain unpulled up? . . . The rest is but branches and leaves . . . but the very body of the trees, or rather the roots of the weeds, is the Popish doctrine of transubstantiation, of the real presence of Christ's flesh and blood in the sacrament of the altar (as they call it) and of the sacrifice and oblation of Christ made by the Priest for the salvation of the quick and the dead."²²

The 1552 rite is a radical Protestant revision of the 1549 service. The 1552 communion service, after the creed is little more than a set of communion devotions. Two exhortations are followed by the confession, absolution and comfortable words. The preface and sanctus, without the benedictus come between the comfortable words and the prayer of Humble Access. A further prayer for the communicants which quotes the institution narrative is placed between "We do not presume", and the administration. The words of administration are:

"Take, eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart, by faith, with thanksgiving."²³

The service concludes with two alternative prayers of self-oblation and the blessing.

1552 is a communion service by the skin of its teeth, but it hardly bears any family resemblance to its predecessor, the Roman Rite. There is no offertory act, not even the symbolic placing of the bread and wine on the Holy Table. There is no consecration: the purpose of the prayer preceding the institution narrative is a prayer for the communicants alone. The fraction is omitted.

The eucharistic beliefs permitted by the language of the 1552 order, do not include the doctrine of the real presence, and the

sacrificial offering of Christ to the Father. The opening paragraph of the communion prayer is designed to limit the sacrifice of Christ to his death on the cross, and the eucharist to a remembrance of his death. Professor F. C. Burkitt seems to be right in his claim that 1552 contains a theory of sacrifice.²⁴ In the Roman Rite the material of the sacrifice which is the bread and wine are prepared at the offertory. In 1552, the sacrifice is that of the souls and bodies of those who communicate, and the preparation in this case is a series of communion devotions. The sacrificial sequence in the two rites is parallel; but a different victim is offered in each. Cranmer claimed:

“When the old Fathers called the Mass or the supper of the Lord a sacrifice, they meant that it was a sacrifice of Lauds and thanksgiving, and so as well the people as the Priest do sacrifice; or else it was a remembrance of the very true sacrifice propitiatory of Christ, but they meant in no wise that it was a true sacrifice, applicable by the Priest to the quick and the dead.”²⁵

But if 1552 cannot be given a “sacrificial use” surely the Caroline Divines who jazzed up the rite when they revised it in 1662, ensured that it did not exclude the possibility of a fully sacrificial interpretation? The view that 1662 is patient of a traditionalist sacrificial interpretation, may have been good enough for Pious Tractarians, but it does not stand up to critical scrutiny. It is true that the rubrics introduced in 1662 change the shape and intention of Cranmer’s service. The offertory is replaced by the rubric that the bread and wine are to be placed on the table after the sermon, and the collection of money before the prayer for the Church Militant. Further the prayer for the communicants in 1552 is changed into a prayer of consecration which gives support to the Elizabethan reintroduction of the words of administration in the 1549 book. There is also a rubric requiring a token fraction. Thus the rite of 1662 adds to its predecessor the offertory, the consecration, and the fraction. But although the pattern of the older Roman order is reintroduced, the spoken text is still virtually that of 1552. Francis Clarke seems to have the evidence in his favour when he writes:

“The statutory Liturgy of the Church of England today, despite some significant changes of detail in 1559 and 1662 remains substantially the same as that of the second prayer book of Edward VI.”²⁶

The first Anglican revision need not detain us long. The basic structure of Series I is that of 1552. The only major alteration is a prayer after the words of institution. The use of this is

optional. This prayer seems to be nothing but a series of Cranmerian phrases jumbled together. The prayer begins by calling to remembrance Christ's saving acts — but the offering is not "the holy bread of life, and chalice of everlasting salvation", but the Cranmerian "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving".²⁷ The prayer goes on to offer "ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice".²⁸

Again, this is evasive language; it is not an objective sacrifice to the Father. The conclusion is equally ambiguous: "Although we be unworthy through our manifold sins to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service".²⁹ Series I is typically Anglican: it allows the use of any ceremony whatever, provided nothing is said which contradicts a narrowly Cranmerian eucharistic theology. The celebrant can offer anything he likes: provided that he doesn't explicitly or implicitly offer Christ to the Father.

The Anglican rites so far discussed do in a sense have a sacrificial use. The sort of sacrifice that can be offered is however restricted to (a) Christ's complete and perfect oblation on calvary; (b) a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; (c) the sacrifice of ourselves, our souls and bodies. These aspects of eucharistic sacrifice do not necessarily exclude the offering of the bread and wine, and the offering of Christ to the Father — the various types of sacrifice are not, by themselves, logically incompatible one with the other. It is rather that the Anglican rites are artificially constructed language games from which all reference to the objective offering of Christ to the Father has been systematically eliminated.

(to be concluded.)

NOTES — Part 1

1. The Bishoprick. Nov. 1967.
2. Series II. Communion Service. p. 9.
3. The Bishoprick. Nov. 1967. p. 3.
4. Op. cit. p. 4.
5. The fact that Ramsey had Wittgenstein in mind is shown by the reference in his book, which he here quotes from. cf. *On being Sure in Religion*. p. 62.
6. Op. cit. p. 5.
7. Ibid.
8. English Missal 3rd Ed. W. Knott. 1958. p. 339.
9. Fortescue, Adrian. Amended by O'Connell, J. B. *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite described*. Burns and Oates. 1958. p. 68.
10. Cf. Reynolds, Michael, *Martyr of Ritualism*.
11. Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Blackwell. 3rd ed. 1967. Sect. 18, p. 8e.
12. Stone, Darwell, *A History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*. Vol. II. Longmans Green and Co. 1909. pp. 76-88.
13. English Missal. Op. cit. pp. 286-87.
14. Op. cit. p. 310.

15. Op. cit. p. 318.
16. Op. cit. p. 320.
17. First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI. Dent and Dutton. 1949. pp. 212 ff.
18. English Missal. Op. cit. p. 318.
19. Op. cit. p. 223.
20. Op. cit. p. 318.
21. First and Second Prayer Books. Op. cit. p. 223.
22. Cranmer, Thomas. On the Supper. Parker Society ed. p. 6.
23. First and Second Prayer Books. Op. cit. p. 389.
24. Ibid.
25. Cranmer, T. Defence. Ed. Jenkyns. Vol. II. p. 461.
26. Clarke, Francis. Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation. p. 200.
27. Series I. Holy Communion.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.

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