

## **“Real Presence”**

### **Four sermons**

#### **1. Background – Michael Gray. Preached on the Sunday Next Before Advent.**

The origin of these sermons is in a telephone call received by Michael Silver. Did we believe in the Real Presence? The crude answer had to be yes, for almost all Christians (except a few followers of Zwingli) do. But in what sense? The crude answer alone is useless.

Christ is present in the action of Holy Communion. He is present as sovereign. Neither priest nor congregation can compel him. We rightly trust that he is not capricious; that God's will is our salvation and therefore Christ's presence will serve that end in us, collectively and individually.

That said, what is the background? Notoriously, there is very little reflection on the Eucharist in the early church, because every Christian knew what they were doing. The earliest description of the Eucharist as a working practice in the Gentile church is found in the mid-second century Justin Martyr. Every Sunday, there is offering, thanksgiving and reception. It is taken for granted that all the faithful will offer, will assent to the thanksgiving prayer made by the bishop, and will receive the Sacrament. If any are absent, the deacons will take the Sacrament to them. A little later, we learn from Tertullian that it is a normal practice for the faithful also to take the Sacrament (presumably only in form of the Bread) home for consumption during the week. It is obvious therefore that the purpose of the Sacrament is its reception by the faithful. If we insist on asking later questions, the Presence (or Christ's self-giving) endures until reception.

If we now jump to the late medieval period, practices have radically changed. Communion (other than by the celebrant) is very rare and not usual at mass (indeed, missals after the use of Sarum do not provide for communion at mass, though the case of Marjorie Kemp suggests that it might have happened occasionally). Rather later, though the Curé d'Ars is usually depicted in the act of administering communion, he is not usually shown as wearing mass vestments, for communion was still not usually given at mass. For everybody except the celebrant, the focus at mass is on adoration of Christ present in the Elements. Naturally, then, reflection on that presence is to be expected.

The matter was complicated by other speculations. In the Ascension, it was universally accepted that Christ took his natural body into heaven. It is against the truth of a body to be in two places at once. Indeed, at the Last Supper, he declared “this is my body” concerning the bread, when his natural body was intact and clearly other than the bread (and similarly concerning the cup). Also, Aristotle had been rediscovered. Any material object could be analysed into the perceptible “accidents” and the imperceptible “substance” which underlay them and gave them coherence. This opened the way to the view that the Presence consisted in the replacement of the substance of bread by the substance of Christ's Body. There was no change in the accidents. This is “transubstantiation”. Those who disliked this intrusion of pagan philosophy into Christianity preferred to talk of the “real presence” in order to be positive but avoid transubstantiation.

This is the situation inherited by the English reformers, and many of them indeed asserted the real presence in one sense or another (there is a speculation that Cranmer was in his late years a Zwinglian). It is a useful caution that no Anglican is committed to the opinions of any reformer, English or continental, except in so far as that opinion is expressed in the “literal and grammatical sense” of the formularies (Prayer Book, Ordinal and Articles). As a generalisation, the reformers were trying to return to primitive practice, and even to some extent understood that rightly. So they wanted the Eucharist to be once again a general communion. Sadly, what they achieved was to make the Eucharist a rare event in which only a minority participated. Dix rightly commented that you do not make people do one thing by forbidding them from doing something else.

It can be said that the 1552 words at the distribution of the sacrament (only “Take and eat this in remembrance . . .” without anything to say what “this” might be) coupled with the “black rubric” do support Dix's brutal summary of Cranmer that “the bread had nothing to do with the Body”.

The “black rubric” was intruded into 1552 by the Privy Council without any ecclesiastical process, but that only puts it (probably) in the same situation as the whole prayer book! It asserts as a

defence of kneeling to receive the sacrament: "it is not meant thereby, that any adoration is done, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental bread or wine there bodily received, or unto any real and essential presence there being of Christ's natural flesh and blood. For as concerning the sacramental bread and wine, they remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored, for that were Idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians. And as concerning the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ, they are in heaven and not here. For it is against the truth of Christ's true natural body, to be in more places than in one at one time."

This may be said to confine Presence to reception. It is wrong to condemn Anglicanism by 1552 with or without the black rubric; what was newly established under Elisabeth in 1559 restored the 1549 words of administration (beginning "The body of Christ") and did not include the "black rubric" (a very different wording, only rejecting a "corporal presence" was by due ecclesiastical process added in 1662). So the Anglicanism which we inherit does associate the bread and the Body at least in the act of faithful reception and arguably implies more than this.

Two more formularies deserve review. Article 28 rejects transubstantiation, because it "overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament" by making the sign identical with the thing signified. It sanely declares that "The Body of Christ is given, taken and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner." (I have produced commentary on the Articles elsewhere.) In 1604 this view became part of the Prayer Book teaching programme in the additions then made to the Catechism. These additions are attributed to Overall, who based them on longer catechisms drawn up by Nowell. In any Sacrament, we distinguish the "outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace". In the case of the Lord's Supper, the "inward part, or thing signified" in the Sacrament is "The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." The bread and wine have the natural effect of refreshing our bodies.

Attempts were made to ensure that non-communicants would not be present at the Sacrament, and certainly could not see and adore anything (it is a quirk of history that 1662 prescribed a new set of ritual gestures and that low church piety came to insist of seeing them).

Some will think that Anglicanism as I have documented it is unduly negative, but nobody should doubt that the basic point of the Sacrament is communion and the benefits we receive thereby.

But the early twentieth century saw major changes. In England, we talk of the "Parish Communion" movement. There was also a "liturgical movement" in the Church of Rome long before Vatican 2. In both cases, a general communion of the faithful as part of the Eucharist was advocated. And the Eucharist was to be the main Sunday service, not an early morning exercise for the devout. So we are back (except in Orthodoxy) to something much more like primitive practice. Not completely; offertory processions have not generally been restored, and the innovation of "Acclamations", which break up the unity of the Eucharistic Prayer and tend to suggest a "moment of consecration" and so a Presence achieved by the Institution Narrative, is a modern distortion.

These developments have not put an end to non-communicating attendance and what meaning is to be attached to it. Many of us, particularly on holiday, will find ourselves rightly wishing to be present at Sunday worship, but not entitled by the rules of the body concerned to receive. Inevitably we will respond with adoration, and it is a doctrine of the "real presence" which justifies this.

## Notes

The Catechism and the Articles will be found in the Prayer Book of 1662 (and even 1928) as customarily published. One might also consider the Books of Homilies, but though these are given authorisation in the Articles, the practical meaning of that authorisation is that they can safely be preached in default of sermons, not that every last idea in them is an accurate expression of doctrine.

The Books of Common Prayer of 1549 and 1552 have been reprinted, but 1559 is not easy to find. This is because the changes from 1552 were very few – though not for that reason trivial. It is not necessary in this context to discuss whether 1549 and 1552 have a different eucharistic doctrine.

There is a useful analysis of Real Presence in “Doctrine in the Church of England” (the 1938 report of a committee mostly chaired by William Temple) pages 165-83.

Linguistic philosophy detected that “real” (generally, not specifically in a theological context) was a peculiar concept; one had to understand what the contrast was, in other words what other idea “wore the trousers”.

Here is an excerpt from an early translation of Nowell's Middle Catechism (mandated for use in the 1604 Canons, so having clear ecclesiastical authority). I have not included the scriptural references. The way Overall summarised it for the 1604 Prayer Book is obvious.

- Master Which are the parts of this Sacrament?
- Scholar The parts hereof, even as of baptism, are of two sorts ; the one is earthly and sensible : the other is heavenly, and removed from all outward senses.
- Master What is the earthly and sensible part?
- Scholar Bread and Wine, both which matters the Lord hath expressly commanded all to receive.
- Master What is the heavenly part and matter removed from outward senses?
- Scholar The body and blood of Christ, which are given, taken, eaten, and drunken of the faithful, in the Lord's Supper ; only after a heavenly and spiritual manner, but yet verily, and indeed. In so much, that as the bread nourisheth our bodies, so Christ's body hath most singular force spiritually by faith to feed our souls. And as with Wine men's hearts are cheered, and their strengths confirmed, so with his blood our souls are relieved and refreshed through faith : which is the mean whereby the body and blood of Christ are received in the Supper. For Christ as surely maketh them that believe in him, partakers of his body and blood, as they surely know that they have received the bread and wine with their mouths and stomachs. And it is also a gauge of our Immortality, and a pledge of our Resurrection.
- Master Is then the bread and wine changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ?
- Scholar No ; For that were to destroy the nature of a Sacrament, which must consist both of heavenly and earthly matter : and to make a doubt of the truth of Christ's body : and to give occasion of grudging unto ye minds of the receivers.
- Master Was this Supper ordained of Christ to be offered as a sacrifice to God the Father, for remission of sins?
- Scholar No : For when Christ died upon the Cross, he once fully made that only everlasting Sacrifice for our salvation for ever ; and hath left nothing for us to do, but thankfully to take the use and benefit of that eternal Sacrifice, which we chiefly do in the Lord's Supper.

## 2. Michael Silver. Preached on Advent Sunday

This subject's danger is to become so swamped with technicalities - and there are many - that we forget the Person of Christ Himself. It would be negligent, to the point of delinquency, to lose sight of Jesus, He is not the uninvited guest. So, between the Scriptural records and those of Justin Martyr, we find the burning intensity of Ignatius of Antioch, writing of "the Passion of my God" and describing the 'breaking of bread' as "the medicine of immortality" [Eph. 20]

The interest of Ignatius (and Polycarp<sup>i</sup>) is that theirs is a *response* to the Eucharist. The Gospels, 1 Cor. 11: 20-32, less clearly the Didache, and Justin are all relating a state of affairs. Ignatius gives us the earliest known personal, or subjective, reaction to the sacred Liturgy, most strongly when writing to the Romans: "I am fain for the bread of God, even the flesh of Jesus Christ...I crave that Blood of His which is love imperishable. [Rom. 7] but the letters are mostly laced with Eucharistic references. Some "will not admit that the Eucharist is the self-same body of our Saviour Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins, and which the Father... afterwards raised." [Smyr. 7] One could wish that his Trinitarian allusions were as plentiful! [Mag. 13]

The communicant's act (so-to-speak) receives no separate attention in the ancient Church, there is no "feed on Him in your heart with thanksgiving" style sentiment. The subjectivity of Ignatius and Polycarp is light-years away from that of the Reformers. For Ignatius, the risen-sacrificed Lord is in the midst of the assembly, dispensing the antidote to sin, death and suffering by giving Himself: and that divine Self-giving culminates in our union with His Body and Blood. Possibly, we have to wait until St. John Chrysostom before we find anything approaching Ignatius' dynamics, as when Chrysostom likens the communicants to "lions breathing fire"?

So, this Presence is personal, it is effectual, readiness is required from the worshippers, it signifies self-abandonment because, at any moment, we might be called to imitate our Lord by surrendering our lives in professing His Lordship. Whilst "Real Presence" is not primitive, Ignatius' language is fiercely *realistic*. "Real" has serviceability, not exclusivity; so *specific presence* (contrasted to Christ's, presumed, omnipresence) *sacrificial presence*, or *proximate presence* are all viable. The fixed, and covenantal, word is "Presence." The primitive emphasis, no less, was upon the priestliness of the Lamb's Army and their liturgizing. [Rev. e.g. 7:15, 15:3]

This, more profitably, can be *our* starting point. Christ is present because He is offering Himself at the hands of His people. The Eucharistic Sacrifice has been seen as a consequence of His Presence, but the opposite may be truer? Christ concedes a *located presence*. We need to tread warily here; in conveying the Sacrament to the communicants, Christ is not moved around, any more than He suffers again (or still) by being offered in the Eucharist. Nevertheless, this Presence is not diffuse, it is wholly identifiable and attainable. It is not amorphous but certain. Yet the Sacrifice and Presence are, necessarily, *non-natural*. Clearly, each time the Eucharist is offered there is not an earthquake; tombs are not opened and the Temple does not reappear to display its rending vail. Likewise, as the Lord discloses Himself, we cannot feel His flesh, we cannot taste His Blood. The Sacramental Sacrifice and Presence appear 'in translation,' they come to the faithful from an order of existence beyond nature, yet enlisting natural elements.

Furthermore, we have to distinguish between sacraments as things, and this Sacrament as Person. St. Ignatius would not have spoken of Baptism in the terms that he reserved for the Eucharist. The sanctification of the waters (which, in any case, appears later) does not accomplish what the sanctification of the bread and wine brings about. We do not say that the Baptismal waters are *personal*, despite their holiness and supernatural consequences.

As it would be wrong to forget the centrality of the Person of Jesus, it would be no less erroneous to forget the Person of the Holy Ghost. By noting that Christ's Presence here is non-natural (but not *unnatural*) we can identify the "spiritualizer" Himself [1 Cor.11:20-32]. The author of supernatural actions in the Church is the conquering Paraclete. He is present throughout the natural order, intent upon fulfilling its ultimate purpose. We may not know what this is, but some impression is gained from the sacraments themselves, they constitute the Spirit's sphere of operation. We have always lived in some measure of conflict with createdness<sup>ii</sup>. Tradition proposes to us *a*) un-fallen creation,

b) corrupted creation, c) fulfilled creation. Doubtless, this sounds artificial to modern sensibilities, yet it would seem rash to discount it.

The Eternal Word and Eternal Spirit have agency in creation and, therefore, inevitably within re-creation. This world should be transparent to the glory of God, and the Church Fathers discern materiality's revelatory capacity (cf. St. Maximos the Confessor); as do our own Keble and Pusey. Conrad Noel<sup>iii</sup> was repeatedly accused of pantheism! God reclaims His world. The Holy Ghost (so-to-speak) takes the lead here. It is by His personal agency that the Incarnation of the Eternal Word was effected (so St. Luke's Gospel and the Creed) and it is by His operation that Christ's Personal Presence is extended to our altars. It is by the Spirit's agency (as well as that of the 'Angel' i.e. Angel-Christology) that our material elements of bread and wine are *exchanged* for Christ's Body and Blood (cf. *Supplices Te*). The bread and wine do not take on holiness (as the anointing oils become holy). The elemental *exchange* is unique to the mass. Whatever the number of sacraments may be, there is but one sacramental-sacrifice, the "higher gift than grace" (but Newman had the Incarnation in mind); an impersonal presence is impossible.

We are not after technicalities: an 'economical Trinity,' 'valid' sacraments, nor warm feelings. The object is to further God's redemption, and to be re-formed as a priestly people (as fully exemplified in martyrdom). Faith naturally seeks understanding, but this is not synonymous with definition. Attempts to define Christ's Eucharistic Presence have proved especially contentious. For me, Aquinas' greatest contribution is his simplest: *Se dat suis manibus* ("gave Himself with His own hand"). Few things are more inimical to the Liturgy than to propose a 'real absence' until a priest confects the *sacramental Presence*. Christ's Presence must stand first [Mt. 18:20]. He presides both beyond and within His sacrificing priests.

After Aquinas, however, a law of diminishing doctrinal returns sets in. Anglican formularies are an avoidance of definition rather than a profession. For seventeenth century texts, the (almost) unreadable Herbert Thorndike<sup>iv</sup> proves most trustworthy, whereas Hooker is more energetic when defending the wedding ring.<sup>v</sup> Thereafter, Eucharistic affirmation is found in the Wesleys' hymns. Anglicans - roughly from Keble to E. L. Mascall - are more expository than defining (and none the worse for that, but limited). Tractarian sermons rectified earlier neglect (cf. Pusey's *The Eucharist a Comfort to the Penitent*. Its *condemnation* implies sensationalism, but the only shock value is in its break with rationalism!<sup>vi</sup>). Anglican hymn translations (and original work) gave chiaroscuro:

"Within the pure oblation,/Beneath the outward sign,  
By that His operation -The Holy Ghost divine -  
Lies hid the precious Body,/ Lies hid the precious Blood,  
Once slain, now ever glorious,/ Of Christ our Lord and God."<sup>vii</sup>

- i. As worthy of quotation, but marginally less illustrative of our main concern under these time constraints.
- ii. The so-called Gnostics certainly had a big problem with createdness.
- iii. He is a local(ish), almost hero. The bishop of Exeter refused to ordain him because of this alleged pantheism, but, of course, finally he was ordained.
- iv. An even more local hero. After the Restoration, he became the parson of Barley, near Royston.
- v. Despite the presumption of my private judgement, it seems to me that the Anglican definitions (or non-definitions) that I have *seen* (I have not seen them all) are useless, and the Latin definitions only fractionally better. I do not think that Christ's Sacramental Presence has been well served doctrinally as such.
- vi. This sermon is both long and unremarkable (it took over an hour, 20 minutes to deliver). It seems extraordinary that it scandalized. I have read, and re-read it, supposing that I had missed something. What I missed could only have been the historical context. Fundamentally, a) no mixed 1840s Anglican congregation would have wanted a sermon on the Eucharist in the first place, b) grudgingly they could have accepted it had it explained away the Eucharist, in the approved rationalistic fashion, c) they would not have appreciated the inclusion of passages from the Church Fathers. There is little, however, that would excite us about it now.
- vii. V. S. S. Coles (English Hymnal 334).

### 3. Michael Gray. Preached on the Second Sunday in Advent

It might seem that there is little to say after last Sunday's sermon. In a sense this is true; our salvation does not depend on technicalities. But it is better that our Christian living be with reason (and Tertullian, who is most quoted for the contrary view, certainly does use the tools of reason).

It is right that we should start from the Institution Narrative, as it is our warrant for the Sacrament. This act of Christ is recorded earlier and more widely than any other except the Crucifixion and Resurrection. For fundamentalists, the matter is simple: "This is my body" (whether they give authority to a particular translation or to the original Greek). But every scholar knows that there is no word for "is" in either Hebrew or Aramaic, and it is natural to assume that the Last Supper was conducted in one of those languages, not in Greek. (There are forms for "was", "will be" and some other forms of the verb, but no way to express "is".) This is true; but it does not follow that the translation into Greek must introduce an idea not in the original. The way Paul quotes the institution narrative implies that it had separate existence (he had received it). He, who did know the relevant languages, saw no problem with the Greek. So less than twenty years after the Resurrection, with several of the original band of disciples still around, the translation was accepted. In fact, it is not a unique usage. Constructions involving "this" and the implied "is" are found in the languages. For example: "This <is> now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." (Genesis 2.23) So "This <is> my body" can be said and so can be rightly translated into Greek and our own language.

But what is the implied "is" doing? Christ makes the gesture and speaks the word, being in his intact human body and concerning an (obviously separate) piece of bread (and similarly with the cup). The disciples eat the bread and drink the cup. Of course cannibalism is excluded. The word cannot be a mere (and in a natural sense false) statement of identity. It must be stipulative or performative. In the example I just gave from Genesis, we may say that the "is" has a literal force in terms of the myth, but the point is that a relationship is being acknowledged (or created) which is to be a paradigm for ordinary marriage. Saying makes it so. Hebrews 9.20 has Moses saying: "This is the blood of the covenant that God has ordained for you." This is a slight distortion of Exodus 24.8 where the wording is "Behold the blood of the covenant.", but the stipulative effect is the same. Compare 1 Kings 12.28 where Jerobam says of his golden calves: "Behold thy gods, O Israel which brought thee out of the land of Egypt". The assertion is false, but the force of the sentence is a stipulation: I say it, it is so, you are to worship accordingly.

I think this understanding of Christ's words as effective can be found in the well-known doggerel attributed to Elizabeth 1, and more recently in Austin Farrer. He who is the truth has by declaring brought a truth into being for the disciples and for us.

Incidentally, if the Last Supper were connected with Passover in the disciples' minds, then the duty to "do this" would probably have led to an annual event. Oddly, it was a widespread development in Christianity that the reception of Holy Communion did become confined to Easter. This was true in both East and West, and largely in post-reformation Anglicanism as well, since "three times a year" was not easy to enforce. Obviously the disciples thought that the distinctive features of the Supper were simply connected with the assembling together of the brotherhood (not with a special passover observance), and so would happen whenever they assembled.

The temptation in the study of liturgy (or that problematic practice of composing new liturgy) is to make the Institution Narrative into the essential formula, so that the rest of the liturgy is more or less decorative. This in turn rather drifts into magic; that the reciting of the formula achieves the effect. (This error was what the reformers parodied as "hocus pocus", and yet is the probable interpretation of 1662!) And if so, then the priest has power over Christ. It will not do. Christ, with the Holy Ghost, is the operator, not man. Neither the correct words and gestures, nor the explicit invocation of the Holy Ghost upon the elements, have power to compel. Tinkering with liturgy in an effort to improve it by introducing such features is not very rewarding.

I recall drawing attention to Faustus' remark to Mephistopheles: "Did not my conjuring speeches raise thee? Speak!" and the humiliating answer: "That was the cause, but yet per accidens." (In other words, only in as much as they revealed an opportunity.) Man cannot even compel the devil.

Christ might give a similar answer to a priest who asks: “Did not my words of blessing bring thee here?” That was the cause, but only because Christ delights to fulfil his purpose among us, to give himself to us. And the unworthiness of the minister hindereth not the effect of the sacrament. Neither, I suggest, does the perfection of the liturgy if it were achievable do much to further the effect of the sacrament (except by aesthetic response in a minority who would appreciate it).

We should not be surprised that Christ chooses to use bread and wine, natural substances but the work of human hands (and they do not cease to be such just because modern Romanism mentions the fact). He does not give us a purely spiritual religion, but sacraments in which there is an outward and visible sign as well as an inward and spiritual grace. Communion is not a purely intellectual event (of course there is nothing wrong with spiritual communion when appropriate), and William Temple was perceptive in his remark that Christianity is the most materialistic of the world's religions.

This is the context in which it may be useful to return to talk of real presence. It is not wrong to argue some form of local presence of Christ in the elements, for he has dignified them as the means of conveying himself to us. It is not essential to decide from what moment (in each of the various reliable ancient or modern forms of liturgy) that local presence comes to be, and because liturgies vary in their approach there is no general solution. Unlike the medieval West, I do not think we need fear greatly being too early in our acknowledging such a presence (our local use of “Let all mortal flesh keep silence” at the Offertory might imply a proleptic presence, much as the Great Entrance in Orthodoxy). I think the Anglican requirement for reverent (kneeling) reception is an appropriate response to an achieved presence, though standing is more ancient and as a practical matter we have to accommodate those who cannot kneel.

In conclusion, a brief analysis of the treatment in the topic in the Doctrine Commission report of 1938, which is the last well-considered official Anglican study. It starts from Christ as the agent in the Sacrament, uniting us with himself. “The life of Christ is now really given to be the spiritual food of Christians.” It warns against fussing too much about the meaning of “is” and indeed notes that “This is my Body” must be seen not in its immediate context at the Last Supper, but in the completed context which a hymn conveniently summarises as “Risen, ascended, glorified”. It considers that talk of “real presence” might mean any combination of three approaches. Firstly, that the elements become Body and Blood, though this is in a spiritual manner as Aquinas made clear and transubstantiation is precluded. Second, “receptionism”: that the Body and Blood are received by the faithful communicant. Third, “virtualism”: that the elements become in power, virtue and effect the Body and Blood. In practice it is noted that most teachers, ancient or modern, use a mixture of these approaches. If one wishes to say that receptionism and virtualism are inadequate, they do not cease to be true so far as they go.

Two approaches are rejected. One is mere memorialism, that there is no other action in the Eucharist than our subjective calling the passion to mind. This is firmly dismissed. Less openly rejected but clearly incompatible with the Commission's approach is that we feed on the dead Christ. Gore had refuted this error (found in some Roman and Low Church circles) in “The Body of Christ”, and it is clear that the Doctrine Commission built on his work.

In response to the original question, “real presence” is not a useful shibboleth. It excludes very little until one goes into technicalities. If it is used to imply transubstantiation, few of us understand let alone believe Aristotle on substance and accidents; I doubt that (for instance) the current Roman catechism means the same by the word as Trent, let alone Aquinas, did. That too is less of a sure test than some think it.

How to conclude? “What his word doth make it, that I believe and take it”.

Note:

The reference to Austin Farrer is to the essay “The Body of Christ” in “The Crown of the Year”.

#### 4. Michael Silver. Preached on fourth Sunday in Advent

*Why* might our Blessed Lord give Himself (as a real, or specific, presence) in the Holy Communion? The remembrance (memorial or re-presentation) is cited as a principle purpose. The insightful Congregationalist Peter Forsythe saw something hidden in plain sight, namely that a memorial for one who is still alive is unusual, in fact unique. Whilst the glorified saints are also alive, exceedingly few are (presently) alive in their bodies. Christ is risen.

We are confronted, therefore, with decidedly non-natural propositions before we have so much as begun to explore this subject. St. Paul introduces the memorial: “Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord’s death until His coming,” [1 Cor. 11:26] and this despite having encountered the risen Christ. St. Mark, however, has no memorial motif: “This is my Blood, the Blood of the Covenant, outpoured for many.” There it is the *sacrificial* reference that is strong, the retrospective element, at most, is implied. St. Matthew adds “for the forgiveness of sins.” St. Luke’s account presents technical difficulties with two cups<sup>1</sup> (with contrasting expressions, only one of which includes the “memorial”). St. John disengages the institution from the Supper, giving an “I am,” rather than a “this is” saying. Technicalities, as ever, distract us from our purpose - “We would see Jesus.” [Jn. 12:20]

For us, the Eucharist’s ‘setting in life’ is not so much the supper as the *season* (Pesach). For the ancient liturgies, however, both had receded in relevance. So the Roman Canon sets the scene by saying “the day before he suffered.” Its brief words over the bread contrast with the far longer passage for the Cup: “This is the Cup of my Blood of the New and Everlasting Covenant, [the] mystery of faith; poured out for you and for many, for the remission of sins.” *Apostolic Tradition* is an extracted text, with versions differing from scholar to scholar, but its short formula over the Cup *may* be trustworthy? “Whenever you do this, do it [in] memory of me.” Serapion omits the ‘memorial’ but stresses sin’s remission, and so on... These early rites were not tied to Scriptural quotation. Regarding the memorial aspect, how might converts from *non-Jewish* backgrounds have understood it?

It is regrettable that theologians overlook folkloric studies [I lay no claim to expertise, but, at least, I realise that theology is only incidentally related to texts – theology is about living, not writing]. Those from pagan cultures were familiar with the combination of feeding and memorial, indeed it even appears in Jewish sources. One variant in Tobit has: “Pour out your wine and offer your bread on the tombs of the righteous...” very classical! [Tobit 4:17] Possibly pagan converts were puzzled that the Lord’s memorial came so frequently. After the ninth day, the pagan Refrigerium/ἀνάψυξις was restricted to yearly anniversaries. Christians retained this domestic practice, not only for family but for the martyrs, right up to SS. Peter & Paul. *Koliva* (wheat grains) is still used in Orthodox rites for the departed. Despite the Reformation, sin-eaters were employed in seventeenth century Herefordshire! The requiem mass (and Vespers), eventually, displaced funeral feasts in Rome. The early continuance of the Refrigerium [as in the *Passio of SS. Felicity & Perpetua*, in Tertullian and Catacomb inscriptions] is instructive precisely because it reveals that the Eucharist was not a ‘family meal,’ but far more. Likewise, attaching the *Agape* to every Eucharist reinforces that distinction. This is not eating with Jesus but more a matter of Jesus consuming us.

Expounding the Eucharist in terms of collective memory is mistaken, whilst magnifying the meal aspect proves most mistaken of all. Whilst most allusions to the Messianic Banquet [Mt. 8:11, Lk. 14:15, Rev. 19:9] are tangential; there is one that is significant: “...until I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” [Mk.14:25/Mt. 26:29] The Lord anticipates exaltation and vindication. Otherwise, what emerges most clearly from these sources (Biblical and beyond) is the Hebrew belief of life in the blood, particularly in the words over the Cup. In most rites these are more elaborate than those applied to the bread. This Covenantal Blood effects remission. Pernickety as it seems, St. Matthew’s meaning may be an identification, i.e. >the Blood in the Cup is the same as that which secures remission of sins< not that our reception of the Cup removes sins? The distinction acquires relevance when set besides St. Paul’s austere words<sup>2</sup>. [1 Cor. 11:27-30] The remission, therefore, is not automatic, nor does St. Paul necessarily exclude it. The *shewing* [of] *the Lord’s death* must impart grace? Ancient liturgies assert that reception *is* remissory. Likewise, the

words “omni benedictione caelesti et gratia replemur,” cannot exclude pardon.

Can forgiveness and guilt coexist? The Church (in the person of the bishop) once ruled upon who was to be admitted, or otherwise. Length of excommunication varied but its purpose was the penitents’ restoration. As private penance developed, however, each soul was given the invidious task of ‘marking its own homework,’ disclosing its findings to the priest. My satirical language is no disparagement of private confession. This, now, is the closest to a ‘deep clean,’ and it should be regular. The contradiction stems from expansions and contractions in Church order, not from a conflict between SS. Paul and Matthew. Once (but not much mentioned now) a “state of grace” was deemed necessary for the right use of the sacraments. Cranmer allowed a generalized repentance in his new orders of 1549 and 1552 - including the admirable sentiment: “that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee *in newness of life*...” Having granted newness, God will grant Himself.

The Eucharist’s core meaning is both sacrifice and what lies *beyond sacrifice*, the personal Presence of the Holy Ghost. This Sacrament, of course, cannot become the Holy Ghost’s body because He was never incarnate, never embodied. Taking the Sacrifice first (as consequence of enfleshment), Scripture’s *details* can be critical: “...because it is the price of blood.” [Mt. 27:6] The life and power of blood extended beyond its physicality! Even today we research into the diseases and personality types to which blood-groups *might* incline people. Sacrifice had been of incense or grain (materiality was essential) but the most potent offering was blood. The New Testament telescopes a bewildering variety of Hebrew sacrifice into two basic ritual precedents, so that the *context* of Christ’s Sacrifice is Pesach, its *meaning* is that of Yom Kippur. [e.g. Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:12] This same Blood-Sacrifice is offered, not just remembered, at every mass.

The life-blood of each soul, of the Church, and (if one can say) of the recompensed honour of the Godhead, is the Blood which the Incarnate Word assumed in the Eternal Spirit. The specific (or real) Eucharistic Sacrifice is a separate study (mostly because of an outgrowth of contradictory misconceptions). Much the same applies to the doctrine that lies beyond it, *theosis*. The end, nevertheless, is our re-adoption as God’s children to grow into God Himself. [Jn. 1:13, Heb. 12:10, 2 Pet. 1:4] Looking towards Christmass, Wesley’s nativity hymn<sup>3</sup> might be cited: “Wildest extremes to join,/to bring our vileness near/and *make us all Divine*...And man shall all be lost in God.” Christmass is the season, par excellence, for this contemplation: “Mankind’s Creator...becoming man without man’s seed, bestowed upon us His Godhead” (Circumcision Vespers antiphon). R. M. Benson: “As we drink the Blood of Christ, the blessed Spirit gives Himself to us in increasing measure, for ‘the life is in the blood’ [Lev. 17:11]...As we receive our communion, the blessed Spirit gives us our resurrection body, and He gives us fresh impulses of His own personal presence.” The Holy Ghost ensures the sameness of the Sacrifice by changing it; and He ensures our personal continuity by changing us.

Notes:

1. In versions *known to us*, the Pesach Haggadah has a blessing over four successive cups. Luke might refer to the Lord’s modifications of two of the four existing blessings? New Testament scholars insist that Luke had two sources before him, or that an interpolator inserted another account. Some ancient manuscripts do not include v.20 and the N.E.B version simply relegates it to a footnote (not uncommon in N.E.B. if verses are omitted in some ancient sources).

2. Commentators usually insist that the words “not discerning the Lord’s Body” cannot refer to the Sacrament itself (as anachronistic) but to the Church as the Body. Whilst this is quite possible, it seems the more strained interpretation (especially when we compare 1 Cor. with Ignatius’ insistence on the flesh of Christ).

3.The entire hymn is worth studying. It is not in the usual Anglican hymn books:

Let earth and heaven combine  
Angels and men agree  
To praise in songs divine  
Th'incarnate Deity;  
Our God contracted to a span  
Incomprehensibly made man.

He laid his glory by  
He wrapped him in our clay  
Unmarked by human eye  
The latent Godhead lay;  
Infant of days He here became  
And bore the mild Immanuel's name.

Unsearchable the love  
That hath the Saviour brought  
The grace is far above  
Or man or angel's thought;  
Suffice for us that God, we know,  
Our God, is manifest below.

He deigns in flesh to appear  
Widest extremes to join  
To bring our vileness near  
And make us all divine;  
And we the life of God shall know  
For God is manifest below.

Made perfect then in love  
And sanctified by grace  
We shall from earth remove  
And see his glorious face;  
Then shall his love be fully showed  
And man shall then be lost in God.

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