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WHICH COMMUNION SERVICE?

By Arnold R. Whately, D.D.

THIS article, as the title indicates, leaves open the question, "Ought the alternative to be granted?" It is quite possible to hold that a new doctrinal position is implied in the new office, and to reject this position, and yet to accept the situation on the ground maintained by the late Bishop of Chelmsford in his general attitude towards the widely differing standpoints, that not mere toleration, but frank and full inclusion, is the true call of present facts. This question is not here before us.

But when the Bishops assure us that no doctrinal change is intended, we are still free to hold our own opinions as to whether the effect of their work does or does not keep within the limits of this intention. This article is written under the pressure of a very strong feeling that we who will not be able to use the new Consecration Prayer must define clearly to ourselves and to others our reasons for this refusal. It is time that some demur were made to the over-emphasis of liturgiological considerations. The claim of the ordinary Christian and that of the theological thinker alike need to be firmly asserted. The modern prejudice against "Systematic Theology" is not, I think, merely a commendable suspicion of the rigid and artificial in religious thought, but an unwillingness to *think out* any question of doctrinal logic at all. There has been a disposition among certain churchmen to treat contemptuously the attitude of those who are unable to reconcile the new features of the Consecration Prayer with the Evangelical standpoint, and a strange failure to understand how there can be any field of serious argument at all. One cannot but venture to suggest that, if they themselves would think a little more adequately on the question, they might—though still adhering to their own views—suffer a salutary disillusionment as to its simplicity.

The great danger—and I do not hesitate to call it such—is that the old Communion Service will practically drop out altogether for lack of clear definition and thoroughgoing defence. For we need not be afraid to admit that prejudice may be a strong ally even on the right side. The question is not whether all who, for themselves, decline the change are truly independent thinkers, but whether, behind and beside all prejudice, there may not be intuitions and reasons that ought to be encouraged to come into the open in their own defence.

It is with this feeling that I wish to offer a little contribution to the definition of an attitude that is commonly too loosely and perfunctorily defined. Those who are unfavourable to the legalization of the alternative and those who would allow but could not use it will probably soon be united, the difference irrevocably decided and the bond alone remaining. What we shall need then is to draw a sharp line round the service that we hold to, a line

across which we cannot *drift*, and that neither fashion nor expediency nor the morbid fear of being "labelled" shall be able to bias our judgment. The advocates of the new service are welcome to do their best to convince the prejudiced—and even, for that matter, the unprejudiced. We need not be keen to take advantage of mere *vis inertiae* against the change. But it would be a grievous pity to lose what some of us hold to be the greater and unalloyed treasure just because we are not competent to express and maintain the intuitions that respond to it.

We shall strengthen, not weaken, our position, by frankly recognizing that differences of opinion are rooted in differences of vision. Not only the value but even the truth of our religious ideas depends partly upon the degree and manner in which they stimulate and enrich our sense of spiritual realities, not entirely upon the test of intellectual criticism. For the very meaning of these ideas lies not *entirely* in the region accessible to controversy, but in a transcendent sphere of spiritual knowledge. This is the substance of Otto's doctrine of "ideograms," and I believe it to be of far-reaching importance. In this light is to be viewed the undoubted spiritual value, for some people, of ideas that others cannot accept as "conceptually true," or even as true to their own experience. It is the charter of our right to differ even from doctrines that "make saints," but also the true guide to the spirit in which we should differ.

The scope of this article will be confined to the two crucial new features of the Consecration Prayer, the Memorial before God and the Epiclesis—the latter only in so far as it is an invocation upon the elements.

The former passage runs as follows: "Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants, having in remembrance the precious death and passion of thy dear Son, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, according to his holy institution do celebrate and set forth before thy divine Majesty the memorial which he hath willed us to make, rendering unto thee most hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits which he hath procured unto us."

The first comment that suggests itself is this. If it cannot be actually maintained that this passage *necessarily* alludes to the narratives of the institution (a large concession), it is surely very difficult and awkward to take it otherwise. And yet how can it be shown that a memorial to the Father is there directed, without placing upon the two words ἀναμνῆσις and καταγγέλλετε a meaning which—to say the least—is strongly contested? Is it well that this solemn and central act of devotion should even seem to incorporate disputable exegesis?

But the objection goes deeper still than this. Even though it be granted that the words need only express that Divine intention that must be assumed to lie behind all that the sacrament means, there still remains the vital question whether or no we can accept

this memorializing of the infinite Being as part of that meaning. An attempt has been made to turn the edge of this objection by interpreting the memorial clause to mean simply that the memorial, like all acts of worship, is made in God's presence and as before Him, not that He is the direct object of the memorializing act. This, at least, seems the clearest and most favourable way of stating the distinction. In that case the word " before " will refer not to the act of commemoration as such, but simply to the act of worship as such. I am not quite sure how much is intended to be conveyed by this interpretation as regards the Godward character of the act ; but if the reply is at all relevant to the essential objection, it gives a very thin, and surely not very convincing, meaning to the words. Can we possibly exclude the idea of memorializing God when we speak of celebrating a memorial before God ? And would those who most value this element in the service be content consistently to regard it in this light ? And in fact all that belongs to the essence of the rite as actually instituted is not worship at all, but is incorporated in worship. The Memorial cannot be regarded as Godward on the strength of its character as worship, for in itself it has no such character. The Memorial as such is simply acted speech. The question is not about its utterance in the presence of God, but whether it is addressed to God. That is what a Godward memorial means. The sacrifice of ourselves, which we make on the basis of Christ's Sacrifice, is of course Godward. But this does not make the celebration of the latter Godward.

That view has received expression in a formula due mainly to the late Rev. N. Dimock, and accepted at the Fulham Conference of 1900 :

" That, as one aspect of the ordinance, there may be truly said to be a submitting to the Divine view of the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, in representation, not *re*-presentation, not as making, but as having made once for all the perfect propitiation for the sins of the world."

This, it would appear, was accepted unanimously by the Conference, except that there was some difference of opinion on the clause " representation, not *re*-presentation." (This, we may remark in passing, is rather strange in view of what one, if not two, of the members had said in the previous discussion.) Such statements mean much or little according to the particular setting which they occupy in the mind of the individual. But in any case they mean something, and those who differ from them may say that where they are most innocuous they are least consistent. They call, too, for further scrutiny, for it may well appear that the distinctions made in this pronouncement are not as clear below the surface as they are upon it ; and this objection might be maintained both by those who would disallow the idea of the Godward memorial and by those who would carry it further.

The main challenge—to show the inherent intelligibility of the idea in view of all that we believe about God—ought, I think, to be faced before we urge the apparently parallel case of prayer.

Then we may go on to consider the question: Do we not hold before God the fact of Christ's Death when we pray "in the Name of Jesus Christ"? I do not think that this plea is valid, and that for two reasons.

In the first place, I cannot believe that in prayer—even in pleading the Atonement—we really set any fact before God. Or, if we do, it is as a sort of *argumentum ad hominem* addressed to ourselves. Rather, we set the fact before our own minds, even though in words addressed to God. A comparison with other forms of address to the Almighty will help to make this clear. We often—as in the case of most of the collects—affirm some attribute of God. In certain cases, particularly, it is difficult to think that we are holding them up as facts before God. When we say, "O God, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive," and still more obviously when we address Him as "always more ready to hear than we to pray," we are surely not so doing. Our approach is of quite the opposite character. Now of course it does not follow that because God is not memorialized in such passages as these, He is not memorialized when we plead the merits of Christ. But that is not the point. These clauses show that when we plead we do not therefore present. They thus throw the burden of proof upon those who assert that we do so when we plead the Death or merits of Christ. In fact, we cannot argue, baldly and directly, from our use of language as addressed to men to its implications when addressed to God. Speech is an instrument formed on the lower plane and adapted to the higher. And Religious devotion, when it uses it, has to make the best of its resources and avoid its pitfalls.

The distinction may seem a fine one. Let us illustrate it by reference to a well-known hymn that has been made prominent in the recent controversy—"And now, O Father, mindful of the love." The distinction would rule out one couplet, but not any other passage, of the hymn. It would not rule out

> "For lo! between our sins and their reward
> We set the passion of thy Son our Lord,"

nor

> "By this prevailing presence we appeal,"

but only the (very ugly) line that introduces the main clause of the first stanza,

> "We here present, we here spread forth to thee
> That one true offering perfect in thine eyes." . . .

But fine distinctions sometimes indicate broad differences. And an idea so pronounced and emphasized as the Memorial in the new Consecration Prayer asks for definite acceptance or definite rejection.

To plead, then, is not to present. It is to cast ourselves upon. But secondly, it is worth asking whether the case of prayer is really parallel with that of sacramental communion. In the former we plead; in the latter we receive. And these, again, are two quite opposite directions of the mind, and cannot be combined. It is true that receiving, in or outside the sacrament, is very closely asso-

ciated with prayer, and that prayer, and therefore pleading, is the very setting of our acts of communion. But the actual sacrament itself, being the one, cannot be the other. *A fortiori* it is not presentation.

But, apart from this question of prayer, it is held by some that the High Priestly work of Christ involves His own presenting of His Sacrifice before the Father, and that this is the basis of ours. I cannot see that this is so at all. In the first place it must be noted that the conception of the High Priesthood is not like one drawn from an indefinite field of possible analogies, that strikes the eye because of its special appropriateness. Christ is the High Priest because His work *superseded* the office of the High Priest, the Mediator because He absorbed all finite mediation. Of course this implies at least a minimum of resemblance. But it is the relation rather than the resemblance that gives the key to the understanding of His sacerdotal office. The mental picture of the ascended Lord standing and pleading for us before the Father *may* be a help to understanding of His work for us, but it must not dominate our thoughts. We know, apart from this, what we mean when we say that our prayers go up to God through Him. This is vivid in our experience whatever difficulties we may have in formulating the doctrine. And specially real to us is this when we think of the prayers of the Church as focussed and effective in the Person of its Redeemer and Head. This idea is complete without any further elements drawn from the analogy of the Jewish Priesthood.

Now if, on the other hand, we begin by constructing a picture of Christ before the Father, and *then* apply it to His relation to the Church, we are not only trying to think the unthinkable, but we are positively running counter to what we believe about God. If this were needed to supply a link, we might perhaps plead that the apparently irrational doctrine of Christ presenting the fact of His Death before the Father covered some mysterious truth. But is this so? And we who find it hard to give a rational explanation of *our* presenting it will hardly find the other idea any easier. Rather we should feel that it explains *ignotum per ignotius*.

It may well be that the Epistle to the Hebrews does include the entrance of Christ into Heaven with His Death in one broad conception of His Sacrifice; but to pass *per saltum* from this to a *continual* presentation of it is surely to introduce a new element altogether. We must, however, carefully avoid committing ourselves to wider considerations than the scope of this article absolutely demands. Let it suffice to urge that we who, rightly or wrongly, regard the presentation of Christ's Sacrifice as consummated in His entrance into the heavenly places can certainly not argue from any supposed presentation, or even pleading, of it, on His part, throughout the ages.

These considerations should determine our thought when we come to set the Memorial clause by the side of the earlier clause, contained in both Consecration Prayers, which has always meant so much to Anglican Protestants, the reference to the "full, perfect,

and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." It is equally vain to treat the one as a direct and obvious contradiction of the other and to reconcile them by any facile formula. All depends on just how much we include in the definition of the one perfected Sacrifice. If it is to be so understood as to leave room for any subsequent setting of it before the attention of God—or for anything that that expression might remotely and haltingly convey—then there is no inconsistency. But that it does not leave room even for this is a position that at least challenges serious argument. The Evangelical *claims* at least that the idea of the "finished work" holds a pivotal place in his theology, and is carried through with more logical thoroughness than in other systems: and if, from this standpoint, he holds that the earlier clause preoccupies the ground demanded by the Memorial clause, he is surely no mere child in the faith whose blunders must be simply corrected.

There is no space to consider the quasi-metaphysical attempts to spread the Sacrifice of Christ through subsequent time. I believe that they are philosophically unsound; and at any rate they must follow, not lead, those purely religious conceptions upon which we are so divided. My aim is simply to show, first, that there is a clear issue at the start, and secondly, that when we do proceed to thresh it out, far-reaching considerations present themselves. Those who do not belong to the Evangelical school have sometimes been a little too glib in telling those who do what they (the latter) from *their* standpoint ought to accept. Not that this is fundamentally and always unallowable, but it ought to be done with caution and reserve. *Ceteris paribus* we severally understand our own type of religion best. "The heart has reasons that reason does not know."

But at this point we reach the experiential side of doctrinal differences. It has been necessary to make some allusion to this at the beginning of the article. A word may be said touching its application to the Memorial. On one side of my mind I can feel some real sympathy with those who welcome it as "enrichment," and am distinctly conscious of something left behind when I reject it. But this does not in the least imply that my rejection is in any way hesitating or half-hearted. Something that eludes analysis has been lost, but the deeper and more central intuition is strengthened and vitalized by the rejection. The author of a valuable and very thoughtful work on the Holy Communion from the point of view of experience and devotion frankly admits his inability to give a rational meaning to this appeal to the Almighty, but accepts it because it is so real in his experience. This is an attitude of mind that we can understand and respect, though it is not, I think, often consciously adopted. It is significant and instructive to all who study religious experience. But it can only be adopted where the idea thus accepted appears irrational only *in itself*, not by those in whose reason and intuition it impinges upon something more vital.

We to whom the affirmation of the perfect Sacrifice is the heart and centre of the whole service, and of much more, should guard

our treasure with watchful eye. "Enrichment" is not the only —or chief—thing that we need in our devotion. The vigour and concentration of its central purport may be a still higher ideal. Direct contradiction is not the only danger that we have to fear. If we *cannot* make a memorial to God of His memorial to us: if we cannot turn the stimuli that our own souls need toward Him whose knowledge and grace can never fail: if we even suppress our promptings to do so: we are not defenders of a mere negation. We are asking for free play for a form of faith that has for us a greater power and reality—yes, and a richer content—than any loose eclecticism could ever give in exchange.

The second addition that I wish to discuss is the Epiclesis, or Invocation of the Holy Spirit, upon the elements. "Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly beseech thee, and with thy Holy and Life-giving Spirit vouchsafe to bless and sanctify both us and these thy gifts of Bread and Wine, that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, to the end that, receiving the same, we may be strengthened and refreshed both in body and soul."

Of the Epiclesis the Bishop of Gloucester says: "When we find an Epiclesis in all the Eastern forms, in the earliest Roman form and in the early Gallican forms, the right, and, I think, the necessary, deduction is that it is one of the most primitive features of the Consecration Prayer." The degree of force that such considerations have for us will depend on the various presuppositions in our several minds. Only a one-sided form of Protestantism will be disposed merely to brush them aside. But we are taking the point of view of those for whom even the most venerable forms of worship can but appeal on their own merits to the spiritual sense and emancipated thought of the individual.

It has been specially urged in favour of this addition that it saves us from one undesirable feature of the Roman Canon, the suggestion, at least, of consecration by a magic formula. It is difficult to attach much weight to this plea. The recital of the narrative of the Institution is so natural a feature of even the most Protestant office that without the predisposition to believe in an explicit, definite, and instantaneous transformation of the elements we could hardly regard it in that light. And, on the other hand, if we have this predisposition, the focus would easily present itself. And, further, even we who do not take this view will most of us probably agree so far with the Roman Church as to hold that Christ, not the Holy Spirit, is the true Consecrator. This, as will be seen, is closely connected with the crucial question that we shall raise respecting the Epiclesis.

But there is one consideration that it is desirable to notice before we deal with the main point. Sometimes the new Epiclesis is attacked on the ground that the Holy Spirit does not act upon dead matter, and defended by maintaining that He does. Now the conceptions of spirit and matter are highly abstruse, and it is surely

better, in these popular controversies, to leave such purely philosophical questions alone. The writer of this article would be the last to underrate the importance of the Philosophy of Religion; but little is gained in Theology by the importation of cheap *ad hoc* metaphysics. Evangelicals are not wise when they obscure the obvious objection that comes to view from their standpoint by a consideration which bears upon it, though really, yet not clearly and directly. The other side, if they think that all Protestant opposition worth noticing vanishes with the dismissal of this metaphysical objection, are strangely mistaken.

The main point is this: does the Invocation imply a change in the elements as physical objects, or does it not carry this as a necessary implication? (The importance of this question lies not in its isolation, but in its connection with two rival contexts of thought.) It is pointed out that the change in the elements is only relative, only "unto us." This may be an alleviation, but it does not touch the primary objection. Christ's institution, I submit, has made them once for all what they are "for us." If the actual effect of their use upon us depends on any virtue imparted to them as physical objects, it does not make much difference if we assert that this change is relative to us, for it must still be a change *in* the elements. Any substantial relief that this qualification gives us would be given, as it seems to me, at the cost of consistency. But a fuller—though concise—statement of the Protestant doctrine,—barring "Zwinglian" negations,—will be desirable.

Such doctrine is essentially positive, and the Presence it postulates is essentially a real and objective Presence. A tendency to waver in some presentations of it must not blind us to this. Here, of course, it will be outside our purpose to defend it, or to dwell upon its full significance, except so far as exposition is itself defence. Its truth or otherwise does not come within the range of our discussion, only its consistency with the new Consecration Prayer.

The Presence of Christ is, we believe, objective, because that of which we partake is necessarily as such outside us till it has been received within us. Real participation involves a real Presence. Also a unique participation—distinguished from other means of grace—implies a corresponding uniqueness of the Presence. But this Presence is in the symbols as such, not in the material objects as such. They are no ordinary symbols, for they are the symbols of no ordinary reality. They could not be the symbols of the nearness and direct self-offering of the Gift without actually focussing and presenting it. To suppose that they could might be shown, I think, to be inconsistent even with the general idea of the presence of Christ. But we hold that, even as the living God acts through the use of material symbols, so it is the living soul of the communicant that acts through the hand and the mouth. As there is God behind the one, so there is the live soul—acting with purpose and faith—behind the other. Otherwise the *res sacramenti* does not pass. There can be no unfruitful reception of *it*, only of the elements. It is focussed to faith, and the mean by which it is received is faith.

This faith is expressed in visible action, even as the *res* is indicated by visible objects, and conveyed by visible action.

Perhaps one disadvantage in a statement even as full as this is that the simplicity of the issue should be obscured. But, after all, it can easily be seen that that does not depend on any special feature of the statement, as distinguished from the form in which the same general belief might be put by others. Now I would venture to ask those who are so confidently asserting the comprehensive appeal and free adaptability of the Epiclesis, first whether they are prepared to maintain that the Divine blessing can be asked upon physical things without implying a possible effect to be wrought upon them as physical things, and secondly whether or no they consider that such a change can mean anything at all except that they shall be made actual bearers of the spiritual reality that they signify, or indeed be identified with it. I think that many Anglo-Catholics would answer these questions in the negative, as I should.

Undoubtedly they have an actual physical function to perform. They are used in the sacred rite: they are displayed and handled as physical things are. But this is irrelevant. Their *physical* function is simple and mechanical only. When it is pleaded that we ask a blessing on our ordinary food, there is no true parallel. This is done because the salutary effect of the food is a matter of at least conceivable doubt, if not as to fact, at least as to degree. A nearer parallel to the elements would be the knife and fork. As symbols, the blessing that the elements contain is absolute, admitting of no uncertainty and of no degree. All finitude and failure are on the side of the reception. If it were not for this, we might of course say that the Holy Spirit could be asked to bless the elements, because, though they are physical, they are also symbols. But such a benediction would be unintelligible. Given their appointment, they are "effective signs" inherently. Thus, from the "Receptionist" standpoint, no endowment of them with virtue, at each celebration, is thinkable, whether we regard them as things or as symbols. And to admit words that imply such endowment is therefore, so far forth, a surrender of that standpoint. Whether *of* or *to* a higher standpoint, is of course a different question. To the writer of this article, and to those for whom primarily it is written, the view we are seeking to guard is not only defensive of other truths, but is a positive and constructive truth about the sacrament itself.

At this point it may be well to take note of the fact that in the Baptismal Service we pray God to "sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin." Personally I can use this petition without any feeling of unreality, though its omission would cause me no sense of serious loss. A wide difference may be seen between the two cases. There is little real correspondence between the baptismal water and the bread and wine. The latter stand for spiritual entities, whether by transformation or by symbolization. The water merely qualifies the act. Its character is sanctified by its use: the use of the bread and wine is sanctified by their character. Any

objection to these words in the Baptismal Service would at best be of minor import, and would seem overstrained.

In conclusion, I would repeat my contention that the old Consecration Prayer, whatever its limitations, makes its own special appeal to those who adhere to the Evangelical tradition in the Church. (I use this term in no invidious and in no narrowly party sense.) The appeal is made on the ground of purity and concentration. The old prayer jealously excludes elements which, by rough tests of sentiment and emotion, might be acceptable, but cannot, as we believe, be harmonized with more central convictions and more vital experience. We will do well, in view of the difficult situations in front of us, to state our position in terms of the positive undiluted value of the old prayer and not merely of the shortcomings of the new. But, beneath any mere comparisons, there lies, for us, the simple *non possumus*. This alone, if it does not solve the difficulties, ought at least to exclude all bitterness and strife.

A Call to Prayer.

To the Editor of THE CHURCHMAN.

SIR,—

The days we are living in are solemn in the extreme—we might say beyond comparison. The decisions of this coming Autumn, to be made by our Members of Parliament, are so grave, and are to have such far reaching effects, that, as Chairman of the Committee for the Maintenance of Truth and Faith, I have been asked to write and invite all who have the matter at heart, and they can be numbered in their tens of thousands, to join with us at the Throne of Grace in seeking most earnestly and continuously that Divine Wisdom and Guidance may be given to each and all. Daniel and his three friends met together, simply, earnestly, and unitedly, at a time of crisis, and prayer brought about great results. They were definite, whole-hearted, and united; and if prayer could then bring about so much, surely we may now expect great things from our God, if we approach Him in the same spirit.

We have the words ringing in our ears:—"Ask, and ye shall receive"; "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven."

It has been suggested that it might be helpful if all would make a rule to pray about this matter for say five minutes between 9.30 and 10 o'clock each evening. This may be found a convenient time for most. But anyhow, let us pray.

Yours very truly,
H. W. HINDE.

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