

Dom Gregory Dix and the Protestant Reformation

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Preamble

Dom Gregory Dix (1901-52) admitted that he had added Chapter XVI to his magisterial work *The Shape of the Liturgy* (The Reformation and the Anglican Liturgy) only after prolonged hesitation and in deference to the advice of others. Dix did not wish to give the impression that Cranmer's work was to be seen as some sort of climax and conclusion of Christian liturgical development. He saw the revisions as nothing more than a singular incident, and of no central interest to the subject as a whole. This essay will study his reaction to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), the principal architect of liturgical revision in the Church of England in the sixteenth century. Cranmer, a Church politician of the Reformation period, had at his disposal much of the same historical evidence that was available to Dix, heir to the Patristic revival of the Tractarian era, and yet he arrived at diametrically opposite conclusions about the theology of Eucharistic worship. Dix was certain that a liturgical study of the development of worship from Apostolic and Patristic times was far more important than the replacement of the later derived rites of Sarum, Hereford, Bangor and elsewhere. Dix added a second reason for his reticence about including this chapter. He wrote: Ever since the sixteenth century we Anglicans have been so divided over Eucharistic doctrine, and are today so conscious of our divisions, that there is scarcely any statement that could be made about either the Eucharist or our own rite which would not seem to some of one's fellow Churchmen to call for immediate contradiction on conscientious grounds.

In one of its passages of purple prose, with which *The Shape of the Liturgy* is well stocked, Dix added: It is quite understandable. These things go deep behind us. Two Archbishops of Canterbury have lost their lives and a third his see in these quarrels. One king has been beheaded and another dethroned; many lesser men have suffered all manner of penalties from martyrdom downwards on one side and another. These things have left their traces, tangling and confusing our own approach to the Master in all sorts of irrelevant ways ... to spring the word 'transubstantiation' on a company without preparation in certain circles (or the names 'Tyburn' or 'Barnes' in others) is to invite a reaction which springs much more from emotion than from reason.

Dix admitted that these feelings gathered most strongly around the person of Cranmer and the liturgical changes that he introduced and even if Cranmer did not precipitate these divisions, they are the direct result of his works. It is difficult for historians to be sure that they have the facts, without any of the prejudice with which those facts may have become associated. He asserted that the background to sixteenth century, liturgical controversies was not the meanings and understandings applied to isolated New Testament texts, nor yet the debates that surrounded the (almost unknown) practices of the primitive Church. He saw the principal cause as the static and unchanging nature of the mediaeval, Eucharistic liturgy, vis-à-vis the post-mediaeval world that had developed around it. He wrote: it is an incident in the general post-mediaeval liturgical crisis provoked in the West by what the mediaeval liturgical practice itself had come to be, or perhaps it is truer to say, had come to mean to those who worshipped by it.

In a piece of florid prose of his own, Professor Eamon Duffy, very much in the Dixian mode wrote: Within the liturgy, birth, copulation, and death, journeying and homecoming, guilt and forgiveness, the blessing of homely things and the call to pass beyond them were all located, tested, and sanctioned. In the liturgy and in the sacramental celebrations which were its central moments, medieval people found

the key to the meaning and purpose of their lives.

The Church's liturgical praxis and its attendant ceremonies offered spectacle, religious instruction and a communal context in which lives were ordered. Ecclesiastical law, vigilantly enforced by bishop, archdeacon and parish priest ensured that the laity maintained regular and sober Church attendance at Matins, Mass and Evensong each Sunday and on Feast days. Auricular confession and reception of the Blessed Sacrament at Easter was the norm. Duffy made it clear that catechetical teaching through visual media was an essential part of the Christian life. In this context he mentioned the iconography associated with, for example, seven-sacrament, baptismal fonts, many of which are still extant in East Anglian Churches.

Eucharistic theories of the Protestant Reformation

Martin Luther (1483-1546) based his conception of the Eucharist on his understanding of Holy Scripture, particularly the gospels. While often seen as polemical in his opinions on the sacraments, his Eucharistic doctrine encompassed the fundamental principles of the Protestant Reformation; viz, the sole sufficiency of grace; the primacy of the Word of God and justification solely by faith. Professor Jeffrey Bingham believed that Luther had a strong conviction about the unity between the physical and the spiritual; the corporeal and the presence of God in Christ. Luther's clear acceptance of the ecclesial interpretation of the Eucharist as exemplified by Paul and Augustine is demonstrated in this intimate relationship between sacramental signs and faith in the Word of God. In his first, extended statement of his views on the Eucharist, entitled *A treatise concerning the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ and concerning the Brotherhoods* (1519) Luther wrote: Like the sacrament of Holy Baptism, the holy sacrament of the altar, or of the holy and true body of Christ, has three parts which it is necessary for us to know. The first is the sacrament, or sign, the second is the

significance of this sacrament, the third is the faith required by both of these; the three parts which must be found in every sacrament. The sacrament must be external and visible, and have some material form; the significance must be internal and spiritual, within the spirit of man; faith must both of them together operative and useful.

When the Mass ceased to be a testament responded to in faith, it became a work. This is the heart of Luther's attack on the sacrifice of the Mass that he first makes in his treatise on the *New Testament and the Mass* and amplifies in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. For Luther the Mass is not a good work that we offer to God, it is a gift that we receive from God. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* Luther also attacked the Church's policy of only administering the sacrament in one kind, and its practice of offering the Mass for the souls of the departed on the presumption that this would lessen the time that those souls spent in Purgatory (especially when those Masses were privately financed). Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), like Luther, was opposed to the way that Masses could be purchased, thereby providing wealth for an already well-endowed Church and diverting money from the needs of the poor. More important for him was the fact that, in his opinion, the Church's teaching on the Blessed Sacrament imperilled the salvation of men's souls, encouraging them to trust in something other than God. Methodist theologian, the Rt Rev'd Professor W P Stephens asserted that Zwingli drew heavily on the Epistle to the Hebrews for his Eucharistic thinking. Zwingli believed that: Christ, having sacrificed himself once, is to eternity a certain and valid sacrifice for the sins of all faithful, wherefrom it follows that the Mass is not a sacrifice, but is a remembrance of the sacrifice and assurance of salvation which Christ has given us.

Using the author of Hebrews' theology of priesthood and the sacrifice of Christ he argued that the sacrament was, 'a memorial of the suffering of Christ and not a sacrifice'. He held that Christ's intention was clear in his saying, 'Do this in

remembrance of me'; Christ did not say, 'Offer this up to me'. Where Luther referred to the sacrament as a testament, Zwingli preferred the word, memorial. He suggested that remembering or memorialising is something that worshippers do, not something that God does. German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) drew one significant contrast between Luther and Zwingli. He showed that the former desired to retain everything that was not at variance with the express teaching of scripture while the latter determined to abolish everything which could not be supported by scripture. John Calvin (1509-64) was a second-generation reformer. Theologian Nathan Mitchell suggested that the Eucharistic theology and reforms of Calvin were complex. Like Luther, Calvin believed that the Eucharist was a real participation in Christ's Body and Blood. However, Calvin arrived at this conclusion from a different direction. His principal contention was the unconditional sovereignty of God; any sacramental theory that would limit God's absolute dominion must therefore be idolatrous. For this reason Calvin's outlines of Church and sacrament did not begin with a theology of Christ's Incarnation (with, for example, Christ as sacrament of God, or the Church as sacrament of Christ, or sacraments as actions of God-in-Christ acting through the efficacious ministry of the Church) but with an emphasis on God's sovereign, unconditional power of election and predestination. Calvin believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and held that reception of the Communion brought real benefits to the believer. However, he could not allow the sacraments to diminish God's freedom or to make the Holy Spirit captive or confine Christ locally within the consecrated species. In Calvin's view, Christ sat in heaven at God's right hand; he had no conception of him having any ubiquitous nature. Professor Lee Wandel believed that Calvin, unlike Luther, Zwingli and those who participated in the Fourth Lateran Council, did not try to define the physics of the Last Supper; he held it to be a secret, a mystery, the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ's flesh is the food for the soul of the faithful, his blood the drink, presented through complex symbols of bread and wine, through which Christ becomes one with the recipient. Calvin believed that those whom he called unworthy could not receive Christ in the

Supper.

Thomas Cranmer Luther had already set the scene for the introduction of liturgical change across much of Continental Europe from as early as 1517, thirty years before the death of Henry VIII. Although England had no individual, determined Reformer, directly comparable with Luther and Calvin, changes to the Church had been suggested in the writings of various Humanists, such as Erasmus (1469-1536) (*Praise of Folly*) and the devout Catholic, Thomas More (*Utopia*). The principal transformations observed in England were far more political than either liturgical or doctrinal. The development of the choir offices of Morning and Evening Prayer were, for example, very much a result of the dissolution of the monasteries and the secularisation of the Church. In this process the possessions of the monastic establishments, be they large or small, became the property of the crown. Thus the liturgy had to be adapted to a completely new set of political circumstances. Despite these changes Dix was happy to accept that these choir or Cathedral offices, as they came to be called, were still monastic in that they were amalgams of elements of the Hours. When Archbishop of Canterbury William Wareham (1450-1532) died, Henry VIII appointed Thomas Cranmer to replace him. It is likely that Cranmer's placement was highly influenced by the Boleyns, but, despite the fact that he had married Osiander's niece, Margaret, in 1532, and was living in Austria at the time, Henry was very keen not to offend Anne's father. Perhaps under the influence of his second wife, Henry began to see the need for changes in the Church, to sweep away what were seen as Papist excesses. In the year after his marriage to Anne Boleyn (1534) unprecedented restrictions were placed on all preachers. Old licences were withdrawn and new ones were issued, but only to those that the bishops knew to be reliable. Cranmer urged that these preachers: should in no wise touch or intermeddle themselves to preach ... any such thing that ... might bring in doubt ... the Catholic ... doctrine of Christ's Church, or speak on such matters as touch the Prince, his laws or succession.

By November of 1547 real attempts were being made to transform England into a Protestant country by overthrowing the Catholic religion. Under the leadership of Protector Somerset (1506-1552) Cranmer abolished the three traditional abuses which featured in his discussions with Lutherans in 1538: viz, the denial of the chalice to the laity, clerical celibacy and private Masses. Little action was ultimately taken on the subject of private Masses because Cranmer argued that, since no one benefitted from the Sacrament of the Altar except the communicants, little was to be gained from continuing the practice where priests alone received. Cranmer's understanding on the Eucharist seems very ambiguous at this time. Crockett made it clear that Cranmer did not accept the ubiquity of Christ; the body of Christ was present in heaven and could not, therefore, be present in the Eucharistic elements. It is known that in 1550 Cranmer believed in the doctrine which he expressed in his books on the Sacrament, a policy that fell short of any extreme sacramentarian position. His policy complemented that of Zwingli but it may even have fallen short of the modified Zwinglianism of Johann Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1573), Zwingli's successor at Zurich, and John Hooper (1495-1555), sometime Bishop of Gloucester, and their followers. However, it coincided with the principles of Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562), went farther than those of Martin Bucer (1491-1551), and far beyond Lutheranism. In contrast, Nicholas Ridley (c1500-55) confirmed that the men who drafted the 1549 Rite did not believe in the Real Presence; but they used other words which indicated exactly the opposite.

Dix versus Cranmer

While accepting that there had been some differences of opinion between the realism of Ambrose and the symbolism of Augustine, Dix put the seeds of Reformation firmly in the ninth century with the theology of the Real Presence and the landmark contribution of Paschasius Radbertus (785-865) in his *de Corpore et Sanguine Domini*. Dix asked why, with the welter of controversy surrounding the

Eucharist, was there no division in the Church in earlier centuries. He speculated that it was purely the introduction of the concept of justification through faith alone (*sola fides*) that precipitated the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Dix added that the introduction of substantially altered liturgies (for example, as translated into the vernacular language) stirred up partisanship within the laity, which had more effect than mere theological disputation. He drew the important conclusion that the conflict only questioned the doctrines associated with the Real Presence; there had been no earlier discussion or debate about the sacrificial elements in celebrations of the Mass. Also, the separation of the Western and Eastern Churches had engendered significantly different attitudes to the visibility of the Eucharistic actions at the altar. In the East all was hidden from the congregation by the construction of a veil across the sanctuary, which, over time, became the reinforced screen of the iconostasis. In the West, as reception of the elements declined, the focus of the congregation was on the Elevation of the Host, an action that accreted to itself a panoply of torches, censings and the ringing of bells. By contrast, in the East, despite a parallel decline in reception, there was no demand to see the sacramental elements. In part of Chapter XVI of *The Shape of the Liturgy* Dix examined the changes that had occurred in the periods leading up to the sixteenth century. He explained the difficulties of separating these, one from the other, but listed five for his readers' consideration. First, he observed that the Eucharist had ceased to be a corporate action. In his view, the praxis had been a combined activity, where the ancient Church spoke of 'doing' the Eucharist. Earlier in his book he wrote: We all find it easy and natural to use such phrases as, of the clergy, 'saying Mass', and of the laity, 'hearing Mass'; or in other circles, 'Will you say the EIGHT?' or 'attending the early Service'. The ancients on the contrary habitually spoke of 'doing the Eucharist', 'performing the mysteries', 'making the synaxis' and 'doing the oblation'. And there is the further contrast, that while our language implies a certain difference between the functions of the clergy and the laity, as between active and passive ('taking the service' and 'attending the service'; 'saying' and 'hearing' Mass), the ancients used all their

active language about ‘doing’ the liturgy quite indifferently of laity and clergy alike. The irreplaceable function of the celebrant, his ‘special liturgy’, was to ‘make’ the prayer; just as the irreplaceable function of the deacon or the people was to do something else which the celebrant did not do. There was difference of function but no distinction in kind between the activities of the various orders in the worship of the whole Church.

Dix argued that, for example, in the post-Apostolic Church the Fraction was performed by the Deacon and Concelebrants; this activity has been transferred to the priest alone; in a sense it may be supposed that the individual priest offers the Eucharist. Secondly, Dix referred to the Intention of the Mass. In each individual offering, the priest could attach a separate efficacy, a value of its own. Dix explained that, while these values may have had an association with the sacrifice of Calvary, each offering was the celebrant’s own offering. Masses thereby accrued a worth, whereby ten Masses said for a particular intention were worth more than five. Dix argued that these changes away from the post-Apostolic understanding of the sacrament were arrived at by slow and gradual stages, but would prove of considerable importance in Reformation thinking. Thirdly, Dix turned his attention to the changes to the language of the Mass. He suggested, that, although the laity had little or no understanding of the Latin text, and were reduced to being passive viewers and listeners, yet the music, ritual and ceremonial stimulated religious emotions. Dix reminded his readers that worship conducted in languages that the worshippers did not comprehend was not a new phenomenon. In first century Palestine, synagogue and Temple worship was conducted in liturgical Hebrew, not the vernacular Aramaic of the populace. Similarly, the New Testament was not written in the language that Jesus spoke and the Jews of the Diaspora were happy to read the Septuagint, but, at key moments significant phrases, such as Christ’s last words from the cross, were included in a language that was essentially incomprehensible, viz Aramaic. By the fourth century, when Greek generally ceased to be used as a common language in the West, Latin became the lingua

franca. Dix reflected that all public notices, ‘from Northumberland to Casablanca, from Lisbon to the Danube’, were posted in Latin. It was quite natural for Christian rites to retain Latin as their (universal?) language. In later centuries, with the growth of new nation states and the associated cross-fertilisation of cultures, the Church stood for stability and civilisation. It could only do this from behind the defensive wall of a common language. The maintenance of the status quo in the face of the development of printing presses and improvements in standards of literacy was, Dix asserted, indefensible and by the sixteenth century the Church was showing signs of staleness and decay. Dix’s fourth contention was based on another human sense, that of seeing. In the *Ordo Romanus Primus*, the Roman Rite dating back to the mid-eighth century, the congregation was subjected to a plenitude of dramatic action, from Gospel and Offertory processions, the fermentum carried in or out by acolytes and the involvement of Deacons in the Fraction. The administration of the Communion was a corporate event for most of those present. The excitement of this form of worship had been replaced over time with the Low Mass, in which the ceremonial had been reduced to its simplest elements and in which one lone priest muttered his way through the liturgy in silence or in a low, almost unheard, voice. The only activity that attracted the attention of the laity was the only one that they could observe, the Elevation. Seeing what they had been taught was the Body of their Saviour, they worshiped and adored. Dix believed that the change of emphasis of the Consecration for the purpose of adoration was also fundamental to the cause of the Reformation. Fifthly, and finally, Dix thought that the eschatological concept of the primitive rites had disappeared from view. The Eucharistic worship, often observed by the laity through a rood screen, emphasised the links between the action and the Passion. The words of Paul that the Church should, ‘proclaim the Lord’s death’, became detached in the minds of clergy and laity from what followed, ‘till he come’. Dix wrote: It was just here that the practical confining of the redeeming action of Christ (into which the Eucharist enters) to Calvary led to serious and unnecessary difficulties. Being wholly within history and time, the passion is

wholly in the past – the only moment of redemption which is so wholly confined to the past. The Church at the Eucharist can only be conceived to enter into a wholly past action in one of two ways, either purely mentally by remembering and imagining it; or else, if the entering into it is to have any objective reality outside the mind, by way of some sort of repetition or iteration of the redeeming act of Christ. Thus the way was not so much laid open as forced upon the Church to that general late mediaeval notion of some fresh sacrifice of Christ, and his immolation again at every Eucharist. There was no other way by which the reality of the Eucharistic action could be preserved on the mediaeval understanding of it; yet the unbroken tradition of liturgy and theology alike insisted on this reality. And since the Eucharistic action was now viewed as the act of the priest alone – though the liturgy itself continued to state a different view (‘We Thy servants together with Thy holy people offer unto Thee ...’), there was no escaping the idea that the priest sacrifices Christ afresh at every Mass. However hard they tried to conciliate this view of the matter with the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews of the one oblation for sins, perfect and complete (so far as history and time are concerned) on Calvary, the mediaeval theologians, and the party of the old religion at the English Reformation, never quite got away from the necessity of defending the reality of the Eucharistic sacrifice as in some sense an iteration of the sacrifice of Christ at the hands of the priest, even though they insisted that it was not a new sacrifice.

In his proposals for a return to the liturgy of the post-Apostolic church Dix, in more or less every respect, paved the way for the principles underlying most liturgical revisions after Vatican II; the sense of the corporate nature of worship, the roles of laity and clergy, the eschatological understanding of the Eucharist, etc. Thus the Protestant Reformation can be curiously seen as blocking liturgical reform and its concomitant return to ancient principles precisely because of Luther’s individualism in his theology, and the political imperatives behind the English Reformation. The judges at Cranmer’s trial (which began on 13th

November, 1553) charged him with having had three different Eucharistic doctrines at various times: Papist, Lutheran and Zwinglian. In his lengthy analysis of Cranmer's theology, Dix explored a number of features: his doctrine concerning eating the Flesh and drinking the Blood of Christ; concerning the true use of the Last Supper; concerning Consecration; concerning the Ministry; and his esteem for the Eucharist. He concluded that, while Cranmer made use of a number of Lutheran features, and, 'clothed his negations with the comparative warmth of the Calvinist's idea of Eucharist devotion', he (Dix) was quite unable to distinguish the substance of Cranmer's doctrine from that of Zwingli. Dix quoted from a letter by John Hooper to Johann Bullinger (dated 27th December, 1549) in which he wrote: The Archbishop of Canterbury entertains right views as to the nature of Christ's presence in the supper ... He has some articles of religion to which all preachers and lecturers in divinity are required to subscribe or else a license for teaching is not granted them; and in these his sentiments respecting the Eucharist are pure and religious and similar to yours in Switzerland.

Dix asserted that in his second Prayer Book (1552) Cranmer forsook the traditional four-fold shape of the liturgy and made radical changes that drastically altered the doctrinal implications. Rearranged in this way the new rite more fully expressed Zwinglian doctrine, vindicating Cranmer's claim that this had been his real meaning all along. Dix added the rider that none of Cranmer's rites, of 1549 and 1552, or subsequently that of 1559, included a rubric for a second consecration, should either element prove insufficient for its administration. Once again this enforced his Zwinglian view of consecration. Dix saw in Cranmer an extremism (perhaps only paralleled by Ridley, Hooper and Bucer) without which the small and short-sighted Zwinglian party in England would have suffered annihilation. In subsequent centuries, certainly by the eighteenth, the Church of England had become a branch of the state. The state had, in Dix's words, 'ordered its liturgy and removed it altogether from the Church's control by freezing it rigidly down to the last comma in the form of a secular statute'. Thomas Herring (1693-1757),

sometime Archbishop of Canterbury, referred to, ‘the incomparable liturgy with which the wisdom of our legislature has endowed us’. Dix remarked that Cranmer’s liturgy, left to be self-interpreting (that is, outside the control of the Church), had its natural consequence in the neo-Zwinglian movement in Anglicanism. Louis Bouyer claimed that Dix had established irrefutably that the interpretation long given by catholicising Anglicans of the difference between Cranmer’s Eucharist of 1549 and the one he produced in 1552 was untenable. He wrote: Far from being still Catholic or, at the most, ‘Lutheranized’, the first Eucharist is only Catholic in appearance and simply disguises under a veil of ambiguities the same doctrine which is so frankly stated in the second, a doctrine which is not only ‘reformed’ but properly Zwinglian.

Timms refuted Dix

In the year after Dix published *The Shape of the Liturgy*, the Alcuin Club produced a paper entitled ‘Dixit Cranmer’, written by the Rev’d G B Timms. Timms argued that Chapter XVI of Dix’s work would be of most interest to readers, because it dealt with relatively contemporary Anglican issues. However, he suggested that, in dealing with the liturgy of the Church of England, Dix had shown signs that he had not fully appreciated the implications of the principles worked out in his preceding chapters. The crux of Timms’s argument was that Dix’s decision that Cranmer, and the Eucharistic rites that he devised, were Zwinglian was based more on his reading of Cranmer’s work *Defence of the True and Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament* than the content of the actual rites themselves. Referring to the *Defence*, and Cranmer’s doctrine concerning eating the Flesh and drinking the Blood, Dix had written that, ‘we must understand that he means by this, ‘thinking with faith that Christ died for my sins on Calvary’, and nothing else’. On the basis of this, Timms accepted that Cranmer’s Eucharistic doctrine was pure Zwinglianism. However, Timms took his arguments further and referred to Cranmer’s *Prayer Book* and his later work *Answer unto a Crafty and Sophisticall Cavillation* devised

by Stephen Gardiner (1551), to which Dix makes only one reference, and that, more or less, in passing. Timms began his analysis by examining the Exhortations that Cranmer had carefully composed for inclusion in both Edwardine Prayer Books. In these he revealed his Eucharistic beliefs: first, that the Eucharist is a solemn and thankful remembrance of Christ's passion; and secondly, that it is a holy mystery whereby the faithful are spiritually fed with the Body and Blood of Christ, if, that is, they approach the altar with the right intention. Timms suggested that Dix had been selective in his quotations from the Exhortations. The second 1549 Exhortation contains the words: Wherefore our duetie is, to come to these holy misteries, with moste heartie thankes to bee geven to almightie GOD, for his infinite mercie and benefites geven and bestowed upon us his unworthye servauntes, for whom he hath not onely geven his body to death, and shed his bloude, but also doothe vouchesave in a Sacrament and Mistery, to geve us his sayed bodye and bloud to feede upon spiritually.

These words were not quoted by Dix but confirmed Cranmer's viewpoint. Three further passages from the 1552 Exhortations amplified Cranmer's position: he hath left in those holy Misteries, as a pledge of his love, and a continuall remembraunce of the same his owne blessed body, and precious bloud, for us to fede upon spiritually, to our endles comfort and consolacion (1st Exhortation – 1549); my duetie is to exhort you to consider the dignitie of the holy mistery, and the greate perel of the unworthy receiving thereof, and so to searche and examine your own consciences, as you should come holy and cleane to a moste Godly and heavenly feaste: so that in no wise you come but in the mariage garment, required of god in holy scripture; and so come and be received, as worthy partakers of suche a heavenly table. The way and meanes thereto is: First to examine your lives and conversacion by the rule of goddes commaundements, and whereinsoever ye shall perceive your selves to have offended, either by wil, word, or dede, there beewaile your owne sinful lives, confess your selves to almightie god with ful purpose of amendment of life. And yf ye shal perceive your offences to be such, as be not

only against god, but also againste your neighbours: then ye shal reconcile your selves unto them, ready to make restitution and satisfaccion, accordyng to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wronges done by you to any other: and likewise beeyng ready to forgeve other that have offended you; as you would have forgevenesse of your offences at gods hande: for otherwyse the receiving of the holy Communion doth nothyng els, but encrease your damnacion (2nd Exhortation – 1552); and the benefite is great, if with a truly penitent heart and lively fayth, we receive that holy Sacrament (for then we spirituallye eate the fleshe of Christ, and drynke hys bloud, then we dwel in Christ and Christ in us, we be one with Christ, and Christ with us (3rd Exhortation – 1552).

Timms opined that these Exhortations (none of which was quoted by Dix) contain extravagant language for one whom Dix claimed: by a somewhat forced use of the phrase, ‘to eat the Body and drink the Blood of Christ’... meant, ‘to remember the passion with confidence in the merits of Christ’.

He closely examined Cranmer’s precepts that: the true Body and Blood of Christ are not really, naturally, corporally or carnally under the forms of bread and wine; evil men do not eat the very Body and Blood of Christ; and Christ is not offered in the Eucharist by the priest as a sacrifice propitiatory for sin. He considered the first of these as saying, in effect, ‘that transubstantiation is false’, and, ‘there is no presence of Christ in the sacrament at all, apart from it use in administration’, therefore, ‘to worship Christ in the sacrament is idolatry’. Cranmer’s Eucharistic doctrine refused to accept that anything further was required to perfect the work of Christ in man’s redemption. The changes he made in the 1552 Rite only amplified this position; changes that Dix believed were significant in his Zwinglianism. Timms added the comment: These alterations, as is well known, follow closely the recommendations of Martin Bucer’s *Censura* or criticism of the rite of 1549, written at the invitation of Thomas Goodrich, Bishop of Ely, and finished on January 5, 1551. But it is significant that they also answer the ‘sophisticall

cavillations' of Gardiner, who claimed to find in the 1549 rite the doctrine of (a) transubstantiation, and (b) a propitiatory offering of Christ in the Mass.

In conclusion, Timms accepted that the real point of controversy between Dix and Cranmer (as discussed in Chapter XVI of *The Shape of the Liturgy*) was: is the spiritual gift which is received in Holy Communion essentially different from that which is received in spiritual communion? Cranmer thought that it was not, while Dix understood that it was. Timms stated that Cranmer had the better arguments and believed that, given a place for debate, Dix would have fared no better than Gardiner. Timms's ultimate point was to observe that, while Dix understood that the Son of God did say, 'Take, eat, this is my Body', he steered well clear of a serious discussion on transubstantiation. Throughout *The Shape of the Liturgy*, Dix had relegated it to footnotes, as necessary. Timms ended his thesis with a piece of prose, which, if not exactly purple, was a deep shade of mauve: But if we try to find the significance of the Eucharist in 'what is given in the feeding' we get hopelessly bogged, as the Cranmer versus Gardiner disputation clearly shows: both Protestant and Catholic raise a great amount of dust, and appear to reach diametrically opposed conclusions, but on analysis, so I believe, we find that they are both saying the same thing, though saying it differently and quarrelling violently in the process. It is a great merit in Dom Gregory's book that for the greater part of it he refuses to be drawn into the bog – until he comes to Cranmer. Then he arrives so near home that those emotions which he has for the most part kept admirably under control surge up within him, and in spite of himself he is drawn into the vain and endless argument: Dom Gregory is the catholic knight-errant, Cranmer the protestant dragon, the Church of England the maiden victim, and her liturgy her chains.

Dix had argued that Cranmer's Eucharistic thought was indistinguishable in substance from that of Zwingli and it can be argued that Cranmer framed an Anglican Eucharistic rite that few in the Church of England have ever held. Timms

suggested that Cranmer's use of key terms and phrases separated him from Zwingli and linked him with Bucer, Calvin and other 'dynamic receptionists'. This disagreement is unlikely to end since ambiguities undeniably appear in Cranmer's Holy Communion rites, even though he believed that their wording was simple enough for a child to understand.

Dix's response to Timms

In 1948 Dix responded to Timms's criticism in a paper entitled, *Dixit Cranmer et Non Timuit*, which may be translated as, 'Cranmer said, and feared not'. Dix observed that while both he and Timms, despite starting from different ecclesiastical standpoints and purposes, reached identical conclusions on some essential questions. With typical tongue-in-cheek effrontery, Dix commented that the circulation of Timms's pamphlet among members of the Alcuin Club (for whom it was written) could not help but overcome their prejudices and prepare them to recognise the truth about the Prayer Book. Timms had commented that Cranmer had, in the heat of argument, taken a more extreme standpoint than he, in fact, actually held. Dix alleged that Cranmer had uttered his statements in passion and cold-blood. They were issued in his capacity of Archbishop of Canterbury after months of careful preparation and he explained them ably and lucidly in a series of statements of his Eucharistic doctrine, which eventually cost him his life. To Timms's suggestion that Cranmer, 'as a theologian was competent but unimpressive', Dix reminded his readers of the occasion when, on the day after he had been convicted of heresy, Cranmer attended the doctoral awarding congregation at Oxford, in which his suppleness and argument shone out, and in which he single-handedly demolished the Eucharistic arguments of England's leading, professional theologians. Dix examined many of the passages from *A Defence*, cited by Timms, and added several of his own from other sixteenth century writers. The crux of the matter lay between Cranmer's Zwinglianism and his Receptionism. Dix concluded: There is not much doubt about the meaning of

such statements as these. It would appear, therefore, that Cranmer was not the only contemporary author who could set side by side in the same work about the Eucharist what Mr Timms calls ‘passages which have a strong Zwinglian flavour’ and others which might at first sight appear to be patient of a ‘Receptionist’ interpretation. But that it would be tedious, it would be easy to show that this is true not only of Cranmer, Hooper, Bullinger and Zwingli, but also of Oecolampadius, Vadianus, Pellican, Megander, Gualter, à Lasco and others, about whose doctrinal allegiance no one pretends there is any ambiguity. It cannot in all these cases be set down to the effects of inadvertence, controversial hastiness or self-misrepresentation, or even theological incompetence, unless we are to postulate these things almost on an epidemic scale among theologians who played a notable part in European controversy for a whole generation.

Dix argued that it was impossible to understand Cranmer and the Anglican formularies in their original sense unless they are compared in detail with contemporary writers and set against the passionate, Eucharistic controversies among Protestants of those days. He drew the conclusion that Cranmer was a Zwinglian, not of the left wing, like Caspar Megander (1484-1545), or of the right, like Calvin, but of the centre, like Bullinger (who succeeded Zwingli in Zurich in 1531). Dix wrote: Timms had misunderstood what Cranmer meant by the word ‘spiritually’. He pointed out quite rightly that Cranmer took ‘real’ as the equivalent of ‘physical’ or ‘material’. But he omitted to note that Cranmer occasionally equated ‘spiritual’ with ‘figurative’. He meant by ‘spiritual’ that which is ‘abstract’ or ‘only to be grasped by the mind’.

In the second part of his thesis Dix examined Cranmer’s alliances; alliances that placed him on the Zwinglian faction of Protestantism, as opposed to (say) Lutheranism and Receptionism. Dix concentrated particularly on Cranmer’s supposed friendship with Bucer who had been a resident at Lambeth Palace for half of 1549. Timms had quoted from a letter from Hooper to Bullinger that,

‘Bucer is with the Archbishop of Canterbury like another Scipio and an inseparable companion’. Dix believed that Timms was right to make this reference but suggested that he should have looked much more closely at the remainder of Hooper’s correspondence. In the next eighteen months, up to Bucer’s death, his only communication with Cranmer concerned the Vestment Controversy. It has been accepted in some quarters that Bucer’s work entitled *Censura*, to which Timms had referred, had greatly influenced Cranmer’s mind in his revision of the first Prayer Book, making its successor Receptionist in character and form. Dix tore these arguments to shreds through a careful examination of eight of its chapters (chaps ii to ix); a study that occupies five pages of his paper. Bucer’s life-long witness against Zwinglianism was failing and, in the ensuing storm, he was advised by his friend from Strasbourg, Vallérard Poullain (1509-57), ‘not to raise any controversy in the matter of the Eucharist’. Bucer remained silent but wrote *Confessio de Eucharistia* in his dying months; this was only published post-mortem. In one final act, aimed at getting a Receptionist interpretation into the Prayer Book revision, Bucer side-lined Cranmer and wrote directly to the King and the Council. Dix commented, ‘The phrases which he had so strenuously defended in the interests of Receptionism were all deleted from the Anglican liturgy in 1552, and have never since been reinserted’. The Black Rubric, which John Knox insisted that Cranmer should include in the 1552 Prayer Book revision, contained all that needed to be said. It included the words: *Leste yet the same kneelyng myght be thought or taken otherwyse, we dooe declare that it is not ment thereby, that any adoracion is doone, or oughte to bee doone, eyther unto the Sacramentall bread or wyne there bodily receyved, or unto anye reall and essencial presence there beeyng of Christ's naturall fleshe and bloude. For as concernynge the Sacramentall bread and wyne, they remayne styll in theyr verye naturall substaunces, and therefore may not be adored, for that were Idolatrye to be abhorred of all faythfull Christians. And as concernynge the naturall body and blood of our saviour Christ, they are in heaven and not here. For it is agaynst the trueth of Christes true natural bodye, to be in more places them in one, at one tyme.*

Dix admitted that the Black Rubric was not of Cranmer's devising, but that he (Cranmer) had accepted its inclusion when pressed by King and Council. Dix argued that, in what he called, 'its lawyer-drawn theology', the 1552 Rite retained one loophole from being declared entirely Zwinglian and that was closed by the wording of Article XXIX of the XLII Articles of 1553. This said: Forasmuch as the truth of man's nature requireth that the body of one and the self-same man cannot be at one time in divers places but must needs be in some one certain place: therefore the body of Christ cannot be present at one time in many and divers places. And because (as Holy Scripture doth teach) Christ was taken up into heaven and shall there continue unto the end of the world: faithful man ought not to believe or openly to confess the real and bodily presence (as they term it) of Christ's flesh and blood in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Dix commented that only Cranmer could have penned such stately English – the perfect summary of the 'Zwinglian belief in the Real Absence'. Not only did the Eucharist now exclude any sacramental presence of Christ in the bread and wine, it denied any such presence in those to whom the sacrament was administered. The Son of God was now segregated in 'one certain place', detached from all contact with the communicants, whether by the sacrament or its celebration. In typically florid style, Dix added that, 'The full Zwinglian denial had at length been officially proclaimed as the only teaching of the English Church'.

Richardson entered the debate

In 1949 American Episcopalian, Patristics scholar Cyril Richardson wrote a work subtitled, *Dixit Cranmer et Contradixit*, in which he analysed the earlier commentaries of Timms and Dix. He performed this important work, not as might be expected, by comparing and contrasting the writings of the two protagonists, but by returning to Cranmerian source material. In fact, both Dix and Timms were only

mentioned in this work (which ran to nearly 20,000 words) a handful of times. Richardson began by accepting that Cranmer's thoughts were not always consistent and, it could be argued, the Exhortations in the 1549 Rite contained some ambiguities. He contended that Cranmer, 'esteemed the Lord's Supper more highly than did Zwingli'. But, it was also clear that the major part of Cranmer's explanation of the Last Supper was heavily dependent on themes derived from the Swiss reformer. Richardson somewhat muddied the waters by quoting from the Rev'd Alexander Barclay, who suggested that Zwingli was not a Zwinglian, but admitted that his writings had singular clarity, which left no reason for failing to grasp exactly what he meant. Richardson reasoned that Dix had not fully grasped Zwingli's thoughts. He wrote: In seeking to disentangle it, Dom Gregory seems to have gone to exaggerated limits, presenting a view that Zwingli himself was at pains to rebut. Indeed, Dom Gregory's understanding of Zwingli is perhaps at times as unjust as the construction that Cranmer, in the Answer, puts upon many of Gardiner's words. Where Cranmer can only understand a crass and 'Capernaical' doctrine in the orthodox view of the substance of the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, Dom Gregory can only see a 'purely mental and psychological' attitude in Zwingli's conception of faith.

Did Dix misunderstand Zwingli's Eucharistic theology? Dix had written: His [Zwingli's] doctrine of the sacraments ... leaves them no force or efficacy of their own whatsoever. They are bare signs or ceremonies by which a man assures other people rather than himself of his saving faith in Christ's redemption. In the eucharist there is but plain bread and wine, a reminder of the salvation achieved long ago at Calvary (Dix's emphasis).

Zwingli had argued that the bread and wine possess no inherent spiritual meaning, but the religious significance of the elements is determined by those elements being placed within the community of the Christian faith. It would seem that Dix did not exaggerate Zwingli's Eucharistic theology. Of Timms, Richardson wrote:

Mr Timms is far from bringing the needed clarity into this vexed issue of Cranmer's opinions. He is not rigorous enough in treatment of the leading ideas; and, in consequence, Dom Gregory's rebuttal is at times most telling, though I believe it is misguided on one central issue. By showing that Cranmer did not believe the Lord's Supper to be a 'mere mental remembrance', Mr Timms shows something that, pace Dom Gregory, is really obvious. But he proceeds from this to defend something that is really impossible, viz that Cranmer was a 'dynamic receptionist'. Mr Timms might have been better advised to state Zwingli's opinions and then compare them with Cranmer's.

After reading hundreds of pages of Cranmer's and Zwingli's words, Richardson accepted that there was a difference of temper between them. Cranmer held the Eucharist in higher esteem than did Zwingli, but Richardson was conscious of other differences between the two authors. He saw in Cranmer's writings a major contradiction of thought and found a particular emphasis on God's operation within the sacrament. William Tighe suggested that Richardson awarded the victory to Dix. However, he thought that all Anglican scholars, save for those on the highest and lowest extremities of Anglican Churchmanship, continued to resist Dix's characterisation of Cranmer's views, for decades after his death. In recent years they have effectively, if tacitly, received the support of the one-time liberal, Anglican, Evangelical and now post-Christian, Reformation historian Diarmaid MacCulloch. In a review of Richardson's paper, E R Hardy, of Berkeley Divinity School, wrote that he had not only enquired into what each writer had said, but gave consideration to their presuppositions. He concluded that Richardson had made an important contribution to the study of this topic, which should help to raise it, out of the controversies with which Anglicans cannot help associating it, into its proper place in the history of Reformation thought and of Eucharistic faith and practice generally.

Commentary

In a less antagonistic vein, Dix wrote of Cranmer's Rite that: As a piece of liturgical craftsmanship it is in the first rank – once its intention is understood. It is not a disordered attempt at a catholic rite, but the only effective attempt ever made to give liturgical expression to the doctrine of 'justification by faith alone'. If in the end the attempt does not succeed – if we are left with a sense of the total disconnection of token communion in bread and wine with that mental 'eating and drinking of Christ's Flesh and Blood', ie remembering of the passion, which is for Cranmer the essential Eucharistic action – that must be set down to the impossible nature of the task, not to the manner of its performance. Cranmer was in the end baffled like all the Reformers by the impossibility of reconciling the external rite of the Eucharist and the scriptural evidence of the Last Supper with the idea that 'we spiritually and ghostly with our faith eat Christ, being carnally absent from us in heavens in such wise as Abraham and other holy fathers did eat him many years before he was incarnated and born' (Dix's emphases).

The whole debate about the nature of the Eucharist and its liturgy seems to depend on establishing answers to the following questions: ? What is meant by faith to a Christian? ? Is the Eucharist a sacrament? ? Is the Eucharist a sacrifice? If it is a sacrifice, is it a continuation of Calvary or entirely separate? ? Are the Eucharistic elements materially changed through the words and actions of an ordained priest? ? Is it necessary to include the Institution Narrative and/or an epiclesis within the Anaphora? ? Does the phrase 'Body of Christ' imply the Eucharistic species or the corpus fidelium or both? ? Is reception of the elements a sacramental or a physical action?

It is unlikely that Anglicans will ever agree on their answers to any of these questions. Unless and until the Anglican Communion establishes some sort of monarchical archiepiscopacy with a willingness to rule absolutely (which would almost certainly destroy it!), then these contentious issues will remain unresolved.

It should be added that, even within the Roman Catholic Church there are fundamental differences of opinion on these and many other matters. Perhaps this wide diversity of Eucharistic opinion is one of the gems of Anglicanism. In a history of the Benedictine Community at Pershore, Nashdom and (later) Elmore, Petà Dunstan suggested that the most famous contribution to the scholarship that emerged was undoubtedly *The Shape of the Liturgy*. She wrote: Written with style and lucidity it captured not only the attention of the academic community but also many clergy and laity in the Church. Subsequent critiques of aspects of the book's thesis cannot detract from observation that for more than a generation this book came to dominate liturgical debate and reform.

After Dix's untimely death in 1952 Bishop Kenneth Kirk described him as, 'my closest and oldest friend, and the most brilliant man in the Church of England'. There is little doubt that he was a celebrated and distinguished theologian. Cranmer was also a renowned and eminent theologian. It is a great pity that the passing of the generations did not allow these two outspoken liturgical protagonists to meet in the debating chamber, or, better still, in the working sessions of the Liturgical Commission – what fireworks there would have been!!

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