

utopia. The eschaton is that than which a greater need no longer be sought now that the revelation of the end is at hand. Expressed in the lordship of Christ and his crown of thorns, eschatology sees obedience unto death as the "red badge of courage" in which the mature son is the one who willingly sheds his own blood in imitation of the obedience of Christ, not asking for more. The sower sows the seed. The rest is up to the land. (Mark 4:3-9.)

You may say to me, then "You allege as Christian what any modern man can know without that faith." I do not wholly deny it. Modern man has learned to get along without God in all the important affairs of his life, assuming a fully historical existence which is an existence in which man holds himself responsible for the world. I could, of course, attempt to register as a matter of history that modern men have not, in fact, known responsibility for the world without Christian faith. The eschaton is a historical reality. Why, then, should it seem strange that its effects are manifest even where its sources are unacknowledged? But I would rather say, in a less defensive vein, that devotees of Christian faith do not deplore modern man's apparently independent courage and responsibility. For Christians are not bent upon converting men to Christ. That evangelistic drive is abandoned with the abandonment of direct Christology and with the dawn of the eschatological horizon. Christians are responsible for announcing the eschaton and thus for bringing the world to expression as creation, as responsible sonship. Therefore, when we hold out faith to men, we do not do so in the expectation of taking something from them, or even of giving something to them which they do not have. We do so to confirm and strengthen them in what they could indeed already in some sense have. So may their sonship be brought out of latency and fate into patency and history, and their joy become final by being made full.

THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST IN WORD AND SACRAMENT

Brueghel's astonishing picture of the Crucifixion might be taken at first sight for a cynical comment on its irrelevance. Hundreds of people are milling around, all occupied with their own affairs, and no single one of them so much as glances at the man who has stumbled under his cross. Only when one looks closely does he see that he is at the exact center of it all, that in him all the lines of the picture focus and cohere. History has vastly extended the frame to take in countless millions of other human beings, for the most part also unregarding, yet this immense claim stands. Here is a final, universal deed. And the work of Christ is bound up with his person. Long ago, it was the conviction sustaining Athanasius that only one who was truly God could save a world.

When the *Report on the Conversations Between the Church of England and the Methodist Church* appeared, it came under heavy fire from a group of Anglicans known as "conservative evangelicals." One of them, the Rev. R. T. Beckwith, has returned to the attack in a volume *Priesthood and Sacraments*.¹ Mr. Beckwith regards the section of the Report on the Sacraments as a sell-out by the Methodists to the Anglo-Catholics.

¹ (Appleford, Abingdon, Berkshire: The Marcham Manor Press, 1964).

He attributes the presence of the word "re-present" in that section to me. His evidence is the fact that in an essay on "Holy Communion" (1947) I rendered "anamnesis," by "re-present," and that this is the word used by Dom Gregory Dix in his famous *Shape of the Liturgy*. I must say, however, that I had nothing whatever to do with the appearance of the word in the Methodist Report. Moreover, Mr. Beckwith admits that this word "re-present" was used in this connection by the late Dr. A. W. Harrison as long ago as 1935.

I intrude this domestic affair upon this ecumenical audience because it is a peg to hang some important considerations upon, and, further, because at one point it concerns world Methodism. For Mr. Beckwith suggests that until we have purged ourselves of his suspicions, we should stop singing the sacramental hymns of Charles Wesley. Since as a world church we stopped this long ago, it is worth drawing attention to those hymns, and asking whether, in fact, John and Charles Wesley still believe and preach our doctrines.

Let us begin, then, with what the Report says about this word "re-present," that "The background of the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ, and Christ alone, on the Cross. It is that we represent and re-present and renew by our remembrance and communion."²

In his *Shape of the Liturgy* Dom Gregory Dix used the word "re-present" to distinguish the eucharistic memorial from a simple mental recollection of something past and absent. He did not use it in the sense of "offer again," but "In the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament [it has] the sense of re-calling and re-presenting before God an event in the past, so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects. . . .

² (London: Church Information Office and The Epworth Press, 1963), p. 32.

[This is how] the eucharist is regarded both by the New Testament and by second century writers as the anamnesis of the passion."³

Anamnesis, then, implies something more than when an English schoolboy remembers the Battle of Hastings, or when the Daughters of the American Revolution remember Valley Forge. This distinction is, however, not some Anglo-Catholic idiosyncrasy. It is supported by impressive evidence on a wide spectrum.⁴

But altogether apart from theology, the distinction between two kinds of remembering, between mental recollection and the living evocation of the past by some sight or touch or action, is a familiar human experience. Marcel Proust in his "Recherche du temps perdu" tells how a bun dipped in a cup of tea may bring back in a moment a vanished childhood, and he says:

Information about the past which deliberate memory can convey preserves nothing of its true essence . . . but in this way a whole childhood swims into consciousness, not in the form of a series of intellectual recollections emptied of all power, but solid, alive, and still charged with the emotions. In that single moment time is regained, one whole section of the past has managed to become a section of the present.⁵

³ (London: Dacre Press, 1947), p. 161.

⁴ Gerhard Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933), article by Johannes Behm, p. 351; Geoffrey Lampe, *Lexicon of Patristic Greek* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), fasc. 1, "Anamnesis"; N. A. Dahl, "Anamnesis," *Studia Theologica*, I (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1947), pp. 70-85; J. D. Benoit, *Liturgical Renewal* (London: SCM Press, 1958), p. 44; M. Thurian, *Eucharistic Memorial*, 2 vols. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963); N. Hook, *Eucharist in the New Testament*, (London: The Epworth Press, 1964). For argument on the other side see W. M. F. Scott in *Theology*, April and June, 1953.

⁵ A. Maurois, *The Quest for Marcel Proust* (Mystic, Conn.: Laurence Verry, 1950), pp. 175-76.

The Finality of Christ

And when we turn to corporate recollection, there is some interesting Old Testament study to support the distinction. Not to press Mowinckel and Pedersen,⁶ there is a luminous monograph by B. S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition of Israel*. He says:

The worshipper experiences an identification with the original events. He bridges the gap of historical time and participates in the original history. . . .

The Biblical events can never become static, lifeless beads which can be strung on a chronological chain, the redemptive events of Israel's history do not come to rest, but continue to meet, and are contemporary with each generation.⁷

This renewal of the past in the present is not only important for the primitive Eucharist. Interesting studies in baptism by Rudolf Schnackenburg⁸ and George Every⁹ make the same point about the death-resurrection event. And it is true of the apostolic preaching. Dahl quotes a saying that it is true of the proclamation not of a sacred past but of a sacred present.¹⁰ About this there is a famous passage by C. H. Dodd which is quoted by Dix and by the Methodist Report. Dodd borrows from C. C. J. Webb the idea of "corporate memory" and says, "In the eucharist the church perpetually constitutes the crisis in which the Kingdom of God came in history. . . . In the eucharist we are there—in the night in which he was betrayed,

⁶ J. P. E. Pedersen, *Israel*, I (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 256 ff.

⁷ (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1962), pp. 82-83.

⁸ *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul* (Oxford: Blackwell and Mott, 1964).

⁹ *The Baptismal Sacrifice* (London: SCM Press, 1959).

¹⁰ "Amamnesis," p. 92, n. 1.

The Finished Work of Christ in Word and Sacrament

at Golgotha, before the empty tomb, . . . and at the moment of his coming, at the Last Trump."¹¹

Mr. Beckwith scoffs at the idea of a corporate memory which includes the future. Yet is there not in this a hint of the New Testament reversal of time (Rom. 13:11-12)? Newman's profound sentences, a hundred years and more old, are curiously modern:

and hence, though time intervene between Christ's first and second coming, it is not recognized (as I may say) in the gospel scheme, but is, as it were, an accident. For so it was, that up to Christ's coming in the flesh, the course of things ran straight towards that end, nearing it by every step, but now, under the Gospel, that course has (if I may so speak) altered its direction, as regards His second coming, and runs, not towards the end, but along it, and on the brink of it; and is at all times equally near that great event, which, did it run towards it, it would at once run into. Christ, then, is ever at our doors.¹²

Thus the Methodist Report is firmly grounded in reputable contemporary theology when it says:

The sacrament is an act of remembrance by which through the renewal of the corporate memory of the Church by the Holy Spirit, the great "salvation" events culminating in the Cross are re-enacted. This act of corporate recollection embraces not only the past but the future and what lies beyond history in the consummation of the Kingdom of God.¹³

Moreover, so far from being an uncritical disciple of Dom Gregory Dix, I remember some fifteen years ago in Oxford withstanding that lovable saint to this face and saying that what

¹¹ *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper & Row, 1936), p. 256.

¹² *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, VI (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1896), 240-41.

¹³ P. 32.

he meant Christianly by the Mass was what I meant by "justification by faith alone."

And I took him to task for his garbled account of the Reformation and its liturgies: the way in which, for example, when he describes events in Wittenberg in 1522 he compresses into three weeks events which took place in the whole of Germany over five years and some which never took place at all. I agreed with his perception that the Cranmer eucharist is the liturgical expression of justification "sola fide," but said that, of course, he completely misunderstands the meaning of "sola fide." For in fact Dix at this point capsizes his own argument, and he charges the reformers with intending by "anamnesis" that bare mental recollection of the absent past which he denied was what it meant in the early church.

Now I do not deny that there have been times and places in Protestant history when such a view has appeared. I remember seeing a conservative evangelical Anglican college in Australia where over the communion table were the words, "He is not here!" The sixteenth-century view of heaven made it possible for the memorial of the Lord to be like the memory of some veteran of the Old Guard, of an exiled Napoleon perched in a distant St. Helena. I grant there are sentences of Cranmer, which taken out of their context, isolated from his view of our incorporation into Christ through baptism, and his view of saving faith, could be made to sound like this.

B. S. Childs suggests that it may have been some dire historic crisis of near apostasy which turned Israel to its living remembrance of its kerygmatic past. Is not this what happened to the sixteenth-century reformers?¹⁴

¹⁴ Late mediaeval eucharistic theology in Gabriel Biel (Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963]), in Johannes Eck (E. Iserloh, *Die Eucharistie in der Darstellung des Johannes Ecks* [Munster: Aschendorff, 1950]), and in Cajetan (F.

The reformers returned to justification by "only faith" because it is a theology of the Cross and of the Word. All the reformers, of right and left, did two things. They rejected the idea of the sacrifice of the Mass, as doing Calvary again, and the idea of faith as a "fides historica." The latter is what Tynedale called a "story-book faith" which is like believing the histories of Julius Caesar. For the reformers "remembrance" in faith can never be mere intellectual recollection alone.

Here is Andrew Karlstadt, the high point of subjectivism, but even he says:

The Lord's Supper is the memorial (Gedächtnis) and preaching (Verkündigung) of the death of Christ, yet this memorial cannot be without faith and the knowledge of Christ, any more than I could remember my father unless I have known him . . . and so this remembering is bound up with our knowing and believing—the more fervent and clear is our knowledge of Christ, the more devout and clear is our memorial—if it is only hearsay faith it all becomes trivial.¹⁵

He even adds, "Remembering can justify."

When Luther trounces this a year later, it is also to stress the present objectivity of the Presence. "If I were to remember Christ with such warmth and remembrance that I sweat blood, it would all amount to nothing, for it would all be in the realm of works and commandments, and there would be no Gift, no Word of God who reaches out and gives me Christ's Body and Blood."¹⁶

Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation* [Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1960]; E. L. Mascall, *Corpus Christi* [London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1953]) may have been more respectable than is often supposed, but it is notable how much of it is now discarded by such modern Catholics as De Taille, Masure, Vonier, and Casels, and no reputable historian could today deny the flagrant abuse and malpractice which centered in the Mass.

¹⁵ *Karlstadts Schriften*, Herztsch, ed. Part 2 (1957), p. 27.

¹⁶ *Weimar Ausgabe*, XVIII, 195, 23.

Zwingli strengthens the word "Gedächtnis" to avoid this misunderstanding,

The Mass is not a sacrifice, but it is a remembering (Wiedergedächtnis) of the sacrifice offered once for all, so powerful and present to us at all times is Christ.

If the Holy Sacrament is not a sacrifice, yet it is a remembrance (Wiedergedächtnis) and a renewal (Erneuerung) of what happened once for all and is eternally mighty and precious.¹⁷

Werner Krusche gives a whole series of passages where Calvin speaks of the blood of Christ as made present by the work of the Holy Spirit. "Jesus Christ was offered once for all . . . but the power of that oblation lasts for ever. It is permanent. And so the blood of Jesus Christ is freshly given for us. . . . It does not cease to flow, it does not dry up, but it washes our souls daily through the power of the Holy Spirit."¹⁸

Behind Calvin here are the fathers, as alongside Zwingli stood Oecolampadius with his love of the Greek fathers, and Melancthon beside Luther with his appeal to the Testimonia Patrum.¹⁹

Professor Oreibal of the Sorbonne has drawn attention to the ecumenical movement which went on in the late seventeenth century in which Protestants and Catholics, Jansenists, and non-Jurors shared a common circle of devotional ideas. Part of this was the patristic learning of the generation of Samuel Wesley, and it is this which gives significance to the three eucharistic writings which John Wesley took with him to

¹⁷ "Exposition and Ground of the 67 Articles," in *Auswahl seiner Schriften*, Künzli, ed. (1962), p. 100.

¹⁸ *Das Wirken des heiligen Geistes nach Calvin* (1957), p. 158.

¹⁹ P. Fraenkel, *Testimonia Patrum* (Geneva: 1961). See also P. Polman, *L'Élément Historique dans la Controverse Religieuse du XVI Siècle* (Gembloux: J. Ducúlot, 1932).

Georgia: his father's *Pious Communicant*, John Johnson's *Unbloody Sacrifice*, and Daniel Brevint's *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*.

Brevint, himself a high churchman and friend of the non-jurors but trained and exercised in the French Reformed ministry consciously set out to write of the sacrament in a way which cut across traditional boundaries. "Here," he says, "I take no more notice of either Papists or sectaries, no, nor Protestants." Some of Charles Wesley's sacramental hymns are simply versification of Brevint. Others have no relation to Brevint at all. From my own recent collation of John's abridgment with the original tract I can say that Charles Wesley's hymns are based on the original Brevint and not John Wesley's abridgment and alterations.

Brevint's view of "memorial" is exactly what we have been expounding. It is "not the bare Remembrance of his passion; but over and above, to invite us to his Sacrifice, not as done and gone many Years since, but, as to Grace and Mercy still lasting, still new, still the same as when it was first offered for us."²⁰ Here are just a few samples of this view in the hymns:

But Jesu's death is ever new,
He whom in ages past they slew
Doth still as slain appear.

The blood doth now as freely flow,
As when his side received the blow
That show'd him newly dead

Thy offering still continues new,
Thy vesture keeps its bloody hue.

We saw that Calvin at this point brings in the Holy Spirit. And here Charles Wesley brings in an important theme which

²⁰ *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, Section II, No. 7.

The Finality of Christ

has no counterpart in Brevint. This "anamnesis" is no mere human recollection, because, in fact, it takes place only by the Holy Spirit. And he takes two traditional English words, the thought of a Recorder, and a Remembrancer, and he brings them together:

Come, Thou everlasting Spirit,
Bring to every thankful mind
All the Saviour's dying merit,
All His sufferings for mankind:

True Recorder of His passion
Now the living faith impart,
Now reveal His great salvation,
Preach His gospel to our heart.

Come, Thou Witness of His dying;
Come, Remembrancer divine,
Let us feel Thy power, applying
Christ to every soul, and mine.

Some of us got our Catholicity, not from high Anglicans but from a Congregationalist, Bernard Manning. Manning once described

the pitiful ruin of Bardney Abbey, left as Henry VIII and his followers left it. . . . You may see . . . unharmed . . . the altar of the five wounds of Christ, . . . one in each corner and one in the centre. Who thought of this or the five wounds in eighteenth-century England? . . . Within a stone's-throw of the altar of the five wounds, the Methodists were singing: . . .

Turn to Jesus crucified,
Fly to those dear wounds of His.
.
Five bleeding wounds He bears,

The Finished Work of Christ in Word and Sacrament

Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They freshly plead for me."²¹

But at this point the Methodists join word and sacrament. Turn to two of John Wesley's most famous sermons, on justification by faith (V) and the righteousness of faith (VI) and observe how at the climax he sets forth the Cross as present: "Thus look to Jesus. There is the Lamb of God, who taketh away thy sins."²² "Look unto Jesus. Behold, how He loveth thee! . . . O Lamb of God, . . . was ever love like thine?"²³ It is all there in the classic definition of Methodist preaching: "To invite, to convince, to offer Christ . . . to preach him in all his offices . . . [to] set forth Christ as evidently crucified before their eyes, . . . justifying us by his blood, and sanctifying us by his spirit."²⁴

Word and sacrament: sacramental and evangelical. Here is how one of these very hymns played its part in the conversion of one of the preachers, Thomas Tennant.

However, at last, as a poor, weary, heavy-laden sinner, who had nothing to plead, but "God be merciful to me for Christ's sake," I ventured to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. Just before I came up to the table, these words were deeply impressed upon my mind,—

"Covered with Thy blood we are:
Find a part that does not arm,
And strike the sinner there."

²¹ *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts* (London: The Epworth Press, 1942), pp. 132-33.

²² *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, Edward H. Sugden, ed., 1 (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1935), 130.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

²⁴ *From Minutes of Several Conversations between John Wesley and the Preachers in connexion with him, 1797*. Answer to question 19.

. . . I rose from the table with a glad heart, greatly rejoicing in God my Saviour.²⁵

Sacrifice is one of the great images of the work of Christ. We must be careful not to allegorize the parable, which is what we do when we make an elaborate analysis of what is entailed in sacrifice and then apply it to the Cross and to the eucharist. This is what the fathers of the Council of Trent seem to have done, and is what was done by F. C. N. Hicks in a luminous book, *The Fullness of Sacrifice*.²⁶ Mr. Beckwith treats the studies of Vincent Taylor²⁷ with horror, as the one who may have prepared Methodists for their capitulation to Gregory Dix. But my generation is not ashamed to confess to have learned from the integrity and careful scholarship of a great Methodist, as I have also valued C. H. Dodd's studies in "ilaskesthai" and "orge" though they were perhaps a little too good to be true.²⁸ And then I am a devotee of Alexander Nairne's *Epistle of Priesthood*,²⁹ so that if I could only take one epistle on a desert island it would be the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Though there is not in it all the range of New Testament truth about the death of Christ, and it does not mention "dikaion" or dwell on the overruling love and grace of God, yet to its profound awareness of the inseparability of the finality of person and work in Christ we most fruitfully turn.

The Report asserts the finished work of Christ and denies "that we can add to it by anything we do, or that it needs to be done again. . . . The background . . . is the sacrifice of Christ, and

²⁵ *The Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*, Thomas Jackson, ed., VI (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1873), 237.

²⁶ (London: The Macmillan Company, 1930).

²⁷ *Jesus and His Sacrifice* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1937).

²⁸ *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1934).

²⁹ (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913).

Christ alone, on the Cross. It is that we represent and re-present and renew by our remembrance and communion."³⁰

There can be no going back on Cranmer's mighty line: "He made there by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, satisfaction and oblation for the sins of the whole world." But can we not also sing with Charles Wesley in his greatest eucharistic hymn:

With solemn faith we offer up,
And spread before Thy glorious eyes,
That only ground of all our hope,
That precious, bleeding sacrifice,
Which brings Thy grace on sinners down,
And perfects all our souls in one.

There is a problem here, which is posed by another great hymn:

Entered the holy place above,
Covered with meritorious scars,
The tokens of his Dying love
Our great High-priest in glory bears;
He pleads His passion on the tree,
He shows Himself to God for me.

Is this thought of Christ eternally pleading for us really scriptural? Well, if we are to stop singing Charles Wesley, we must drop Isaac Watts, too, for the same thought comes in one of his greatest verses.

Jesus, my great High-priest,
Offered his blood and died;
My guilty conscience seeks

³⁰ P. 32.

The Finality of Christ

No sacrifice beside;
His powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the throne.

Against this there is the authority of a famous passage by Westcott in his *Commentary on Hebrews 8:3*. "The modern conception of Christ pleading in heaven his passion, offering his blood on behalf of men has no foundation in the Epistle. His glorified humanity is the eternal pledge of the absolute efficacy of his accomplished work. He pleads, as older writers truly expressed the thought, by his presence upon the Father's throne."³¹

It would be interesting to know what Westcott meant by "modern," for passages could be quoted from Luther and from Calvin to support Wesley and Watts. But Westcott's valid point is supported also by a well-known passage from H. B. Swete:

Jesus is not to be thought of as an "orante" standing ever before the Father with outstretched arms like the figures in the mosaics of the catacombs and with strong tears and crying pleading our cause in the presence of a reluctant God, but as a throned Priest-King asking what he will from a Father who always hears and grants his requests: Our Lord's life in heaven is his prayer.³²

But how then shall we interpret "he ever liveth to make intercession for us? What is "Our Lord's life in heaven"? How are we to think of the even greater mystery—"What goes on in God?" What is a true image of the Blessed Trinity which can reckon with the intercession of the Son, and also of the Holy Ghost?

I am sure we must not ask the writer to the Hebrews ques-

³¹ (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1950), p. 235.

³² *The Catholicity of Protestantism*, Flew & Davies, eds. (1950), p. 113.

The Finished Work of Christ in Word and Sacrament

tions he did not raise and would not have understood. What he says in *Hebrews 8:3* is splendidly coherent with his argument in the previous chapter, with the contrast of the availing, once-for-all offering of our High Priest with the incessant and ineffectual offerings of a Levitical priesthood. Jesus has taken his throne once for all and for ever.

Nevertheless the image is one of a continuing priesthood as well as kingship. My colleague, F. F. Bruce, who follows Swete here, thinks we find the clue to our Lord's heavenly intercession in the Gospels, in the action of Jesus when he prayed for Peter, "If it be asked what form his heavenly intercession takes what better answer can be given than that he still does for his people at the right hand of God what he did for Peter on earth."³³

But why only what he did for Peter? Why not what he did for us all? Why only his word, and not his greatest deed? I find a deeper truth in James Moffatt's comment on the same verse—"His intercession . . . has red blood in it."³⁴ And I find some help in the great saying of Léon Bloy: "Suffering, that passes: to have suffered, that never passes."

And perhaps *Hebrews* does not take us all the way. Perhaps we who live in continuing time find a new problem which did not exist for his eschatological framework. We have to add to *Hebrews*, *Romans 8:34*, and more especially *I John 2:1*. And then there is *Revelation*. Whatever we do with *Revelation 5:6* and *13:8*, it still remains that the great emblem of our Savior is the Lamb, glorified as Lord and Leader, but still surely not only Eternal Priest, but Eternal Victim? It is always rather rash to accuse Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts of being un-

³³ *Commentary on Hebrews, New International Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), p. 155.

³⁴ *Commentary on Hebrews, International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), p. 100.

scriptural. I think we may agree with Bernard Manning that in this verse there is profound and vigorous orthodoxy:

Victim divine, Thy grace we claim,
While thus Thy precious death we show:
Once offered up, a spotless Lamb,
In Thy great temple here below,
Thou didst for all mankind atone,
And standest now before the throne.

Thou standest in the holy place,
As now for guilty sinners slain:
The blood of sprinkling speaks, and prays,
All prevalent for helpless man;
Thy blood is still our ransom found,
And speaks salvation all around.

Finally, the Report on Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church speaks of an offering of ourselves and adds that "the reality of the offering of ourselves . . . will be determined by the degree to which we become united to Christ in his death."³⁵

Mr. Beckwith says this confuses Christ's work with ours. Indeed, he complains, "It is common today to find not only Anglo-Catholics but Presbyterians, Baptists, and Congregationalists asserting that our self-oblation is identical with Christ's."³⁶

This is the place to dig one's toes in and to stand firmly by T. W. Manson when he said:

It will not do to create artificial distinctions between the self sacrifice of Christ and the self sacrifice of Christians. For obedience

³⁵ P. 32.

³⁶ *Priesthood and Sacraments*, p. 86.

is one and indivisible. . . . We conserve the uniqueness of the high-priesthood of Christ, not by shutting it away in splendid isolation, but by declaring and demonstrating its power to create and comprehend in itself a true priesthood of believers, whose priestly service is taken up into and made part of his supreme sacrifice."³⁷

I do not find this far from Thomas Cranmer's prayer that without respect of persons God would accept the sacrifice of every man—priest and lay person, English, French, Scot, Greek, Latin, Jew, and Gentile—according to his faithful and obedient heart.

And I can go on with William Temple: "The eucharist is a sacrifice, but we do not offer it: Christ offers it, and we responding to his act take our parts or shares in His one sacrifice as members of His body: Christ in us presents us with Himself to the Father: we in Him yield ourselves to be so presented."³⁸

I am sorry for the Church of England, that at its two extremes there are two theologies of the cross, an evangelical one of the word believed and preached, the other of the sacraments. I am humbly proud that in our Methodist tradition the two are one.

But this is, finally, a problem before us all. At no point is the Christian tradition further removed from the world of modern man than in its speech about atonement, justification, and the eucharist. The problem before the church, as it was in the second and in the fourth and fifth centuries, is how to translate truth without slipping into a fatal Gnosticism, a capitulation to the prevailing world view. Meanwhile it is essential to the mission of the church that it keep the polarity

³⁷ *Ministry and Priesthood: Christ's and Ours* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), p. 63. See also C. F. D. Moule, *The Sacrifice of Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 45-57.

³⁸ *Christus Veritas* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1926), p. 243.

between the word and faith, between the "once-for-all" and the "now" of its gospel.

As the pilgrim church moves through history each moment is for it the "now" in which all salvation is concentrated, and all that has to be saved is centered. There are the new sins, the new crimes, not only of individuals but of cities and nations, and not only of nations, but of the people of God: from the sack of Rome to the Nuremberg war crimes, the Sicilian vespers to the massacre of Polish soldiers at Katyn, the Crusades to Hiroshima, and added to all these, the vast tale of unrecorded wrongs, unknown to men but all marked down by God from the blood of Abel to the last cry of the poor man, the widow, and the fatherless. And this is how it will go on, tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, till the last syllable of recorded time. And against each moment of it, what is there but the little phrase—the scandalon—*per Jesum Christum Dominum Nostrum*, which yet is the fulcrum of the universe, for it is not divine power, or even divine authority, but divine love which moves the sun and the other stars, infinite and boundless compassion. And we men of the church, this Ship of Fools, this Noah's Ark? Our only virtue is that we know where to go, we know where to turn, we know what we have to say. And whether we sing it, as it is indeed worthy to be sung, by Bach and Beethoven or the atheist Janicek—or say it with our own poor, lisping, stammering tongues, this is the heart of it all, this the availing prayer.

"O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us."

9

CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY

The reader has the right to ask a concluding question. It is the same question many people have voiced with regard to the Institute at which these papers were read and discussed. That question is: Did you come to any conclusions? Is there any agreement as to what is the Christian claim regarding the finality of Jesus Christ?

One would hardly expect total consensus from a group of working theologians. Generally, they are persons characterized by probing, creative minds. Most of them are teachers accustomed to the responsibility of exposing the student to many sides of every problem. Therefore, a tight agreement on any doctrine of the church among such a group would not only be a surprise, it would deserve to be suspect.

The problem of stating the claims regarding Christ is not, however, to be explained by the variant characteristics of theological professors. The whole history of doctrine is evidence enough of the inherent difficulties involved in defining and stating the nature of the claims for Christ.

There is, however, one statement of consensus which can be made with confidence. *Christ is crucial for Christianity*. However differently the definitions are made and debated, parties involved do agree that Christianity must take its definition from the nature of Christ himself. For this religion Christ is