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Gregory Dix – The Liturgical Bequest

Colin Buchanan

2001 sees the centenary of the birth of Gregory Dix, one of the most famous Anglican authors of the twentieth century, one whose person and writings have haunted me personally, even though he died only halfway through his century, when I was still at school. Perhaps the fairly recent biography of him has increased that sense of his breathing down my neck, for page 7 records that he was born at ... Woolwich!¹ But of course he died young – at merely 50. Twelve years later, in 1964, I joined a Liturgical Commission composed largely of Dix's contemporaries, and, as I discovered, reflecting much of the anglo-catholicism of his times, and quite a few of his actual findings.

It is not necessary here to reflect at length on his character, not because it is irrelevant, but because it came in such bold colours as to be fairly available at sight – I read him as a kind of combination of Denis Skinner and Tony Benn, with the love of outraging of the former, and the unshaken confidence in his findings of the latter, and the holding to a sweepingly extreme position with the tenacity, humour and a flair for propaganda of both. His scholarship in his own field may have outstripped these worthies in theirs, and certainly he won (and keeps going today) a worldwide army of scholars and students of liturgy to wrestle with his writings. And he irresistibly reminds me of my ancient history tutor of my Oxford days, whose dictum was 'Make your sources work for you' – a strictly unethical commendation of a process of positing a conclusion first, and then organizing the evidence to lead to it. There is some of that in all of us; there was plenty of it in Dix. Stephen Neill once wrote about his scholarly methods as follows:

...let us be scrupulous in making the distinction between what is certain, what is probable, and what is merely conjectural.

Unfortunately, this is a distinction which Dom Gregory, though he recognizes it, is always inclined to forget. All his writings reveal the same tendency to mistake inference for evidence, and possibility for certainty.

1 Simon Bailey *A Tactful God: Gregory Dix, Priest, Monk and Scholar* (Gracewing 1995) p 7

Again and again in his chapter [in *The Apostolic Ministry*] we shall find the same process at work. On some rather tricky point of evidence (such as the identity of the *ellogimon andron* of Clement 44), Dom Gregory will state alternative views and come down on the side of that which he regards as the more probable. A few pages later, this probability is restated as a certainty, and some inference is built upon it. Then that inference is itself treated as certain, and something else is erected on it. The argument is very skilfully knit together; and the final conclusion has every appearance of certainty, and of depending on irrefragable evidence; it is only as the careful reader who notices the points at which possibility has been treated as certainty, and who is able to assess the balance of improbability in the conclusion of the argument.

[This applies to the idea of an apostle as a *shaliach*...]²

If you are aware of these traits of his scholarship, and you bear in mind my point above about how we nearly overlapped with each other, you will not be surprised that I once wrote about him, as one of three ‘might-have-beens’ in the compilation and production of the *ASB*:

Just suppose that Gregory Dix had lived. Suppose his mischievous, maverick, learned perversity had been charming, beguiling and bewitching the liturgical commission and all its works. How then would the course of revision have gone?³

Dix was born in 1901 of an anglo-catholic family, of whom both his father and his brother were also in due course ordained. He himself was ordained in 1924, spending a short time as a tutor at Keble College before being professed as an Anglican Benedictine (characterized by ‘OSB’ after his name) in 1926. He impacted the life of the Church of England both by his writings (which, beginning with book reviews in the 1920s, came thick and fast in the 1930s and 1940s) and his personal presence and force of character and argument, which flowered greatly in the last few years of his life. We shall return to his writings; here it is worth noting that from 1946 to 1952 he

2 Stephen Neill in ‘A General Survey’ in S C Neill *et al* *The Ministry of the Church* (London: Canterbury Press 1947) p 15

3 C O Buchanan ‘Revision in the Church of England in Retrospect’ in Kenneth Stevenson ed *The Liturgy Reshaped* (SPCK 1982) p 156

represented the diocese of Oxford in the Convocation of Canterbury (which gave him a live platform for his particular love of twitting the episcopate). For a similar period he was the chief adviser on liturgy (and much else) to Kenneth Kirk, Bishop of Oxford from 1937 to 1954, a role which gave birth to Eric Graham's verse:

How happy are the Oxford flocks!
 How free from heretics!
 Their priests securely orthodox,
 their bishop orthoDix.⁴

Kirk described him as 'my oldest and closest friend'. If one added in a plethora of distinguished anglo-catholic names, led by Arthur Couratin and Eric Mascall, there was, in effect, in the 1940s a new Oxford Movement. If, in the light of history, it appears in point of time to have come near to the end of the anglo-catholic hegemony in the Church of England, one would perhaps hardly have guessed it at the time. Going up to Oxford as an undergraduate in 1955, I was myself aware of the heavily anglo-catholic presuppositions in respect of the Church of England which were widespread, with resourcing in depth from Pusey House, St Stephen's House, the Cowley Fathers, many parish churches (not least St Mary Magdalene's), and the general run of both tutors in theology on the one hand and college chaplains on the other.

Much of the energy of Dix's political involvement in the 1940s lay in relation to the Church of South India. The union of four Anglican dioceses with the Methodists of South India and the South India United Church (itself the fruit of an earlier union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians) came about on 27 September 1947; but it came about only after years of marching and counter-marching in the Church of England and round the Anglican world as to whether it should be 'allowed' to happen at all; and, when it did come about, it was followed by further years of passionate squabbling as to the exact judgment to be passed upon the union, and the degree to which others should be discouraged from going down the same route. It is enough to note that Dix was at the very centre of this controversy, unyielding in his conviction that Anglicans in South India were guilty of heresy in accepting as

4 Eric W Kemp *The Life and Letters of Kenneth Escott Kirk, Bishop of Oxford 1937-1954* (Hodder & Stoughton 1959) p 198. To be fair, Eric Kemp speculates that Kirk's influence on Dix's opinions was as great as Dix's on his. Kemp is son-in-law to Kirk.

presbyters those who had not been ordained by bishops. In the process, of course, he contributed before the union came about a very weighty chapter entitled ‘The Ministry in the Early Church’ to Kirk’s massive polemic in defence of ‘Apostolic Succession’ over against the South India scheme.⁵ The chapter is wholly typical of Dix – for we know the conclusion before we start, and the major interest lies in seeing what evidence is laid under contribution by him in order to reach that conclusion conclusively. In the event, a bright new coin of theological currency was produced from his purse – the Jewish office of *shaliach* – one who was appointed as a bearer, holder and even guardian of a message. My impression is that scholars and reviewers have been unpersuaded, not least because, even if this shadowy role of a Jewish office does lie behind the early church bishop, the connection is unprovable and the argument is therefore no more than illustrative or inferential, and cannot compel. It would be extraordinary indeed if our basis for being Anglicans – and Anglicans with this doctrine of the non-negotiable foundational character for the church of the historic episcopate – were to be identified as Dix’s exposition of the *shaliach*. It was his methodology in this particular essay which drew from Stephen Neill the memorable assessment of its author which I have quoted above.

South India, however, was not his sole preoccupation with ordination issues. At the same time as attacking that scheme, he was busy trying to keep a fence intact behind his back, over against Rome, in relation to those same Anglican orders. His slender book on the matter, *The Question of Anglican Orders*, was reprinted three times between 1944 and 1948 before going to a new edition after his death. It is interestingly pastoral in its conception – letters written to restrain an anglo-catholic layman who is quivering on the brink of departing to Rome. The ‘Harry’ who receives these letters is a compound figure, focussing all the doubts Dix has ever had expressed to him by people in that position; and Dix’s own reasoning, wonderfully attuned to the situation, should, we conjecture, be just enough to establish a permanent lodging-place for this poor quivering figure near that brink, but safely just this side of it.⁶ The poor man has been a happy and committed high churchman, but the doubts about

5 K E Kirk ed *The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and Doctrine of Episcopacy* (Hodder & Stoughton 1946) pp 183-304

6 A delicate touch is the allowing certain limited virtues to the mythical RC priest who is supposedly enticing Harry with the unsurprising account of how Anglican orders are invalid and Anglicanism no church: the delicacy goes like this ‘Your letter said you had twice talked with Father O’Dwyer. (I know him a little – he is a pleasant person).’

Anglican orders have set in and seriously disquieted him. (A protestant commentator – and it is such, I think, that I have been commissioned to be – might well note in passing that the odds were stacked against Harry despite Dix’s efforts. A system of teaching which emphasizes the oneness of catholicism, the organic wholeness of the *una sancta*, the significance of being ‘in’ or ‘out of’ communion with the church worldwide, the teaching authority and focus of unity of the bishop, the high office (if not actual universal primacy) of the Bishop of Rome, the essentially seamless character of ‘the Western Church’ – that system of teaching, if it would leave its adherents content with their own Anglicanism, has to be taught sloppily and excerptively, and is constantly at risk of losing to Rome those who bring logical or questioning minds to the basis they are being given for being Anglican.)

It is not, however, for the battles which Dix fought in his lifetime that his memory lives on today. The impact of the man lies in his writings, and his writings cover a vast range of liturgical, sacramental and ecclesiological topics. I want here to put his teachings on both baptism and holy communion under the spotlight.

Dix never wrote a big book on baptism. The major bits of relevant evidence are two opuscula, published over a decade apart from each other. These are: *Confirmation or Laying on of Hands?* (Theology Occasional Paper no 5, SPCK 1936) and *The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism* (Dacre/Black 1946). Both are reinforced by Dix’s own edition, with translation, of Hippolytus *The Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus* (SPCK for Church Historical Society 1937). The overall thrust is to state that sacramental initiation involves two stages, water-baptism and baptism-in-the-Spirit (which, in sacramental terms, is a post-baptismal laying on of hands or anointing, a ceremony we call ‘confirmation’). Virtually all references to the coming of the Spirit in Scripture and the fathers are to be understood as presupposing this second ceremony – which might not be mentioned in various writings, but which could still be asserted to be necessarily understood. By this teaching Dix gave scholarly and passionate support to those tempted to teach such two-stage initiation (often bishops), though hindsight suggests he actually ended an era (which was far from his intention). It was an era which had begun through the teaching of Fuller⁷ and

7 Fuller *What is the Distinctive Grace of Confirmation?* (A J Mason 1890)

of A J Mason.⁸ It was virtually brought to its conclusion with Dix and so has been half-affectionately known since then as the ‘Mason-Dixline’.⁹

The two-stagers who came after him – Edward Ratcliffe, Lionel Thornton, Arthur Couratin, J D C Fisher and Cyril Pocknee – were clearly trying to halt a slow landslide away from their position and could never match the confidence and insouciance with which Dix had held it. Indeed the first major challenge came soon after Dix’s death, when Geoffrey Lampe published *The Seal of the Spirit* (Longmans 1953), demonstrating that the general run of patristic teaching associated the gift, coming or baptism of the Spirit with water-baptism, and that sacramental initiation is in principle therefore but one stage – water-baptism. Other ceremonies, while they may be powerful accessories, are not of the essence of the sacrament at all, and baptism can stand as complete without them.

Dix treats the Reformers’ insistence that sacramental initiation is complete in baptism as merely a run-on from medieval error. His mind-set apparently precludes reading the straight message of the New Testament, and his historical account has the typical Dix-style approach, where he says: ‘The fullest early account of the liturgy of Initiation is that contained in the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus.’¹⁰ In so saying, he carefully dodges the very full (but not quite so detailed) account of Justin Martyr more than half a century earlier; yet it is that account which virtually gives the lie to the whole Mason-Dix thesis.¹¹ There is no hint of a post-baptismal second ceremony with a distinguishable inner part of the baptism of the Spirit until Tertullian in the last days of the second century, and Hippolytus in the first days of the third, and it is almost impossible to read Justin’s account, which gives a blow-by-blow sequence of actions and movements, and still believe that another ceremony of enormous import existed but has been suppressed from the account.

The run-down of the Mason-Dixline reached the beginning of its end in 1970.

8 Does one have to explain the hint of pun in the ‘Mason-Dix Line’? The original Mason-Dixon Line demarcated slave-owning from non-slave-owning states in the pre-Civil War United States.

9 *The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism* p 12

10 See Justin’s *Apology* I 65

11 I made my own contribution to this when, in 1967, I wrote a note of strong preference – ‘The Rev C O Buchanan would have preferred the...

Then the first Anglican children were admitted to communion without confirmation in New Zealand; Jimmy Dunn produced the magisterial *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (SCM), overtly addressing 'charismatic' two-staging concepts, but in passing totally refuting those whom he calls 'confirmationists'; Charles Whitaker issued a second edition of his *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy* (SPCK), this time giving it an introductory chapter in which he showed that the primitive liturgies could not be called in evidence for the Mason-Dix position; and all round the Anglican Communion the walls were breaking down in relation to receiving non-Anglicans as guests at communion on the basis of their baptism. At both scholarly and practical levels the end was in sight.

But there remained the question of the future of the liturgical texts. Dix did not insist that baptism and confirmation should be administered together, as others of his school have pressed. But he did insist that they belonged together, and must be taught as belonging together, and as together constituting sacramental initiation. It is not fanciful to see the impact of his teaching in the production by the Liturgical Commission of the first new draft services of which *Common Worship* is a descendant. Those first draft rites were Baptism and Confirmation (SPCK 1959), and they were the first Anglican rites since the Reformation to provide for both water and the laying on of episcopal hands to come in the same rite. In particular they had a high doctrine of the coming of the Spirit in confirmation. In successive revisions – ie through Series 2 (1967-68), Series 3 (1978), *ASB* (1980) and *Common Worship* 1998) – that emphasis has been reduced.¹² But the structuring has remained, teaching that, for adults especially, the way into the life of the church is by baptism-and-confirmation (and reception of communion). This seems to go beyond the New Testament and leave a strong suspicion of a mandatory 'two-stage' process in place. It has been amended in the Anglican Church of Canada in their Book of Alternative Services (1985), so that the laying on the bishop's hands is no longer mandatory; but other Provinces do

12 I moved a following motion to the Ely debate in our General Synod in 1974, proposing (as the Ely report had done) that the requirement of confirmation for those being baptized as adults should be rescinded. This was unwelcome to the House of Bishops in particular (bishops have tended to have a Pavlovian reflex that anything which touched confirmation threatened their ministry) and was seen off rapidly. In the 1995-2000 General Synod I tabled a Private Member's Motion to the same effect, but this failed because not enough people added their names to it – a double oddity, in my prejudiced judgment, as Evangelicals frequently complain to me about this requirement of confirmation, whilst those on Synod totally failed to see their opportunity...

not yet seem to have cleared their heads or their rites.¹³ So the dead hand of the two-stagers is still upon us liturgically, even though their teaching has been largely outflanked.¹⁴

It is inevitable that any evaluation of Dix's contribution to liturgical theology and practice should centre on the Holy Communion service.¹⁵ There are in his thinking two major strands of innovation which summarize his impact most succinctly.

The first of these relates to Cranmer. Dix, in terms of his own belief, would obviously have been amongst those who burned Cranmer; and his chapter on the English Reformation and Cranmer's Prayer Books in *The Shape of the Liturgy* is sweepingly opposed to everything Cranmer stood for doctrinally, whilst greatly admiring of his ability to write brilliant liturgical prose in (as Dix sees it) a theologically bad cause. As a matter of historical judgment, this was no innovation in itself – if we go right back to Pusey and Keble, we find an acknowledgment that Cranmer's own doctrine may have been receptionist. However, the greatweight of anglo-catholic thinking for a hundred years had coupled to their reluctant concessions about Cranmer's own doctrine the following confident assertions:

a that he was in principle a conservationist, best seen in 1549;

13 Of course, some of this goes back much further – to 1662. In that year, a 'Riper Years' baptismal rite was authorized for the first time, and the (political?) requirement of confirmation for those thus baptized was added. The confirmation rite in 1662 was not adapted to this at all – it assumed all being confirmed had been through infant baptism. It is, of course, just possible to make sense of someone who has been baptized in riper years one week, then coming the following week and ratifying those vows, even though they had been made in his or her own person rather than by proxy through godparents. But it is impossible, once both rites are combined in one service, for the confirmation to involve any ratifying of the baptismal vows, for the vows are uttered but once and are taken for granted thereafter. So, if the Church of England's doctrine is in the *Book of Common Prayer*, then it has to be said we have no doctrine of confirmation that will let it follow on from baptism all within the one rite. On the other hand, I have to say, as a bishop, how joyous and liturgically helpful it is to have adults being baptized at a confirmation – but I have to add that the confirmation following is fairly pointless...

14 I shall here allow myself a liberty, which I hope will not be misunderstood, of calling the communion service the 'eucharist'. I do not believe anything doctrinal hangs on this terminology, and I shall most certainly need the adjective 'eucharistic' rather than a clumsy circumlocution...

15 'This was what it all came to in the end – the bread had nothing to do with the Body – That was what he was dying for -' (*The Shape of the Liturgy* p 674)

- b that 1552 may have had other hands pushing him beyond where he himself wanted to go;
- c that even so, whatever his personal views, his writing of the 1552 liturgy retained the necessary minimum of catholic doctrinal orthodoxy;
- d that in any case 1552 was itself re-catholicized in 1559 and 1662; and
- e that we receive the 1662 Prayer Book as indicative of the Church of England's continuing catholicism without our having any duties thereby towards Cranmer or his more Protestant writings.

Each assertion here is actually insecure, and Dix blew it all sky-high, and was as pityingly scathing about anglo-catholics who could so kid themselves, as he was about Protestants who claimed to believe what Cranmer believed. Indeed, he spent much less time on the latter group (presumably the readers of *Churchman*), largely, I think, because they were not half so visible above ground as the usual run of anglo-catholics, and the tussle in which he saw himself as chiefly engaged was with the leadership of the Church of England of his time. And this leadership, insofar as it included any persons inclined towards Protestantism, had no one matching the catholics for scholarship or influence.

So what was the Dix thesis about Cranmer and the Reformation? It went as follows:

- a the key to everything at the Reformation is the Reformers' doctrine of justification;
- b this doctrine is: that Christ died for our sins on the cross, that we are forgiven when we remember that, and that we are thus justified by an essentially mental action relating to past time;
- c the doctrine is so strongly subjectivist as to make all sacraments in their traditional understanding as objective means of grace strictly redundant, and the case for them, where is a command of Christ, has to be re-created simply as prompting the memory about the cross;
- d the Lord's Supper therefore, whilst it includes language about eating the

flesh of Christ, only means thereby that we receive the bread and remember thankfully that Christ died for us;

e the bread of the sacrament therefore is in no defensible sense the body of Christ;¹⁶

f we have no eucharistic sacrifice to offer, though we can offer ourselves in response to Christ's love for us;¹⁷

g this Protestant doctrine was the controlling principle of 1549 as well as of 1552, and there is no mileage in trying to drive a wedge between them – indeed 1549 is itself 'Zwinglian'.

It is an interesting question for latter-day Evangelicals how far Dix's portrayal of the reformers' doctrine of justification is actually a caricature of the biblical account (let alone a caricature of how we ourselves preach justification). It is clear that to Dix (who, let us remember, was always capable of making a consistent Aunt Sally out of partial evidence for his own purposes) the disjunction of this central doctrine of the Reformation from the catholic faith was total – there was, as they say nowadays, clear blue water between the two. Nor is there any doubt as to which of the two alternatives was right in his eyes!

What has always been clear to me is that Evangelicals – yea, even my own beloved mentor, Jim Packer – have been far too quick to pick up as a compliment Dix's judgment on Cranmer's eucharistic liturgy that 'it is the only effective attempt ever made to give liturgical expression to the doctrine of "justification by faith"'.¹⁸ A closer inspection of his caricature of the doctrine of justification (as set out in outline above) shows that it is no compliment at all for Cranmer's rite to be characterized as giving liturgical expression to it.

But, of course, if Evangelicals tended to hug themselves rather too quickly at

16 'We can see here the effect of Luther's perpetual primary assumption about the end of religion, that it is not the worship of God, but the comfort of man' (*The Shape of the Liturgy* p 635)

17 See *The Shape of the Liturgy* p 672 – quoted by Jim Packer in xxx

18 C W Dugmore *The Mass and the English Reformers* (MacMillan 1958). It is instructive to notice that Dix figures nowhere in Dugmore's index.

Dix's distinguishing that the Reformation was about real issues, it was catholics who saw the ground disappearing from under their feet. Indeed it might be put more strongly – the whole basis of their claim to be Anglican at all was vanishing before their eyes. Certainly their dependence upon the conventional wisdom about the Reformation was. If not only Cranmer himself was Zwinglian, but his rites (including 1549) were also, then was it possible either to sustain a belief in minimal catholic continuity through the Reformation, or to resist the Pope's condemnation of Anglican orders on the grounds of the inadequacy of the eucharistic rites of the Reformation period? I have not traced closely how the anglo-catholic constituency at large responded, but history records particularly the critique of George Timms in *Dixit Cranmer* – to which Dix replied crushingly in *Dixit Cranmer et non Timuit*. That does not mean that all anglo-catholic apologies for a 'catholic' Thomas Cranmer ceased; indeed a fuller, if less specifically targeted, restatement of their received view of the Reformation came, for instance, from C W. Dugmore.¹⁹

But the question here is not whether Dix disturbed the received traditions of catholics about the *Book of Common Prayer*, but whether Evangelicals can take him at face-value. Leaving aside for the moment his description of justification through faith, we can ask the question as to whether Evangelicals can truly applaud Dix's account of Cranmer and his rites. The difficulty lies in part within Cranmer himself, in that before the Reformation everyone knew what to 'eat the body of Christ' meant; however, once the Reformation was in full flood, no one could use the phrase without adding a lengthy explanation as to what he meant by it. Cranmer's explanations are particularly lengthy (he wrote five volumes of his work against Gardner), but, of course, there is little comparable scope to incorporate such explanations within a liturgical rite. The text therefore has to stand as carrying its meaning transparently within itself and, even if it includes some warnings (a step the Reformers were ready to take), it must generally be read positively and with all the riches of scriptural promise which are in principle inherent in the rite for penitent believers. So Cranmer is ready to affirm that in the Lord's Supper the faithful do indeed eat the body of Christ and drink his blood, and is ready to write texts which state this – and this in turn always gave anglo-catholics opportunity to greet the *BCP* communion rite as containing the catholic truth (they have been much unhappier with Article XXIX!), whereas Dix is saying

19 *The Shape of the Liturgy* p 161

that, in Cranmer's drafting, 'eat the body of Christ' means no more than 'believe earnestly that Jesus died for us', and that the 'action' is therefore wholly internal or subjective, and the eating of the bread (which is mere bread) is coincidental with, but strictly unconnected with, that true action.

Whereas Timms took on an unpromising task in trying to recreate an anglo-catholic view of the Reformation, it may be slightly easier to restore the understanding taken by Ryle, Dimock, Drury, Griffiths Thomas, Albert Mitchell and a host of evangelical writers since (though, it should be noted, those prior to Dix were not having to orientate themselves over against him, whilst those since him have been somewhat too ready to say he got the Reformation right). For my money, the point where Dix misrepresents Evangelicals is that he discounts the faith-union with the living Christ which is the true key to justification, and sets out a doctrine which is confined to casting one's mind back to the cross. There is a true warning for Evangelicals in this – we are not saved 'by the cross' unless it is the cross of a Christ who lives for us, with us and in us today; and we are not to preach a past event except as belonging to a present Christ who saves today. In my judgment there is enough of the true present faith-union in Cranmer's liturgy for the Dix cartoon to be evaded, but it must be recognized that the sheer emphasis upon the cross as a single past event, and the sheer lack of reference to the Resurrection (outside of Easter), do give Dix some handle for turning out this caricature. Furthermore Evangelicals are always in need of a convincing statement of what the communicants do receive in the eucharist, though they are traditionally better at defining what they do not. To be receptionist opens a question as to how to define what is received.

However, Dix's comments on Cranmer in his penultimate chapter are little more than a brushing aside of what is, from the point of his grand theme, a distraction from his handling of the history and development of the eucharist in East and West through all the ages. And here also he reads as innovative, perhaps most obviously in his doctrine of *anamnesis*. In broad terms his connecting of the eucharist and today's church with the past mighty acts of God is not simply effected by exercise of memory, an exercise which would locate the efficacy of Christ's saving work in the past event and would leave it there – and would leave us very close, in his view, to the inadequacies of the Reformers' doctrine of justification. Instead he is producing the doctrine that an '*anamnesis*' is an objective act, an act performed in obedience to Christ's

command to ‘do this for my *anamnesis*’, an act which makes present in contemporary time that which was accomplished in the past. This in turn really locates the redemption in today’s act, for all that the past act is, obviously, a *sine qua non* without which the present act could not occur and could not have any value. A typical Dix explanation is this:

It is not quite easy to represent accurately in English, words like ‘remembrance’ or ‘memorial’ having for us a connotation of something itself absent, which is only mentally recollected. But in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, *anamnesis* and the cognate verb have a sense of ‘re-calling’ or ‘re-presenting’ before God an event in the past, so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects.²⁰

Dix works this through fairly consistently, seizing on authors whose writings help the case, and, in his translation of Hippolytus and elsewhere, translating Jesus’ command as ‘Do my *anamnesis*’ and our response in the following paragraph as ‘Doing therefore the *anamnesis* of his death and resurrection, we offer to thee the bread and cup...’.²¹ It is worth giving the bones of a response thus:

a It is not at all clear that *anamnesis* means this objective ‘re-calling before God’; and some further work on the biblical texts Dix cites has other authors coming up with other answers. I suggest that there is a greater case today for locating the ‘action’ of *anamnesis* in my (or your) mind.²² Certainly the old Roman rite always started its Latin *anamnesis* ‘*Unde et memores*’, picking up the Vulgate of 1 Cor 11 24-5, and the post-Vatican II English texts in the Roman Catholic Church use phrases like ‘Calling to mind’. In other words, even the most explicit texts about eucharistic

20 See *The Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus of Rome* pp 8-9.

21 I should emphasize that this is not locating the instituted full eucharistic action in anyone’s mind; it is only insisting that *anamnesis* and its cognates are about mental recollection.

22 ‘Such things [the great turning points of history where the Roman mass has marked the occasion] strike the mind with their suggestions of a certain timelessness about the eucharistic action and an independence of its setting, in keeping with the stability in an ever-changing world of the forms of the liturgy themselves... This very morning I did this with a set of texts which has not changed by more than a few syllables since Augustine used those very words at Canterbury on the third Sunday of Easter in the summer after he landed’ [Italics mine – COB] (*The Shape of the Liturgy* p 745). Dix might well make suggestions about future new liturgical texts, but his own instincts – and his practice – slip through into view in this passage.

sacrifice in the Roman Catholic corpus never located it within the concept of *anamnesis*, but rather as an action validated by tradition and conciliar decree in its own right, and done accompanying the remembering of Christ's death and resurrection. And Dix himself would have been highly critical of that English translation, 'Calling to mind' – though he might have been fairly thrown to find Roman Catholic liturgy in English anyway, let alone with new texts!²³

- b As has been my own thesis ever since I dissented overdraft Series 2 communion in March 1966, there is a problem in logic – that, even if it were a godly and proper action to offer the bread and cup to God, it would still not be appropriate as a response to 'Do this'. Dix urges that *poieite touto* can itself mean 'Offer this'.²⁴ But that is surely unsustainable, and even in Dix it sounds a bit like the cartoon process described by Stephen Neill in the longish quotation on p xx above.

Interestingly, there has been another side to *The Shape of the Liturgy* which has found far more widespread acceptance – and rightly so in my judgment. I refer to the 'four-action shape' of the eucharist. His central thrust is to emphasize that the eucharist becomes what it is from the 'shape' of its celebration. Our Lord had four actions with the bread, three later with the cup. When these are assimilated to each other, then there emerges: (1) taking; (2) thanksgiving; (3) breaking the bread; and (4) distribution. This pattern is very clear in, say, Justin Martyr in the mid-second century. And in some ways it has a greater authenticity than the Prayer Book rite – for, whilst 1662 says that we 'take' at the point where Jesus 'took', and 'break' at the point where Jesus 'broke', the result is to run the whole action in 30 seconds, to omit a true thanksgiving (for we cannot stop and 'give thanks' at the point where we say he 'gave thanks') and to deliver ourselves to the concept of a 'prayer of consecration' rather than a 'great thanksgiving'.²⁵ Dix gave us great problems in identifying the laying of the table with the first of his four 'dominical acts', and thus invented or at least popularized a great raft of 'offertory theology'.

23 *The Shape of the Liturgy* p xx

24 Some of these features are, of course, strictly 1662, and not native to Cranmer's rite which had a tighter logic with a 'one-action shape'! (See my *What did Cranmer think he was Doing?* (Grove Liturgical Study no 7 1976))

25 On this too I would refer to a Study of my own – *The End of the Offertory* (Grove Liturgical Study no 14 1978) where I trust the argument against Dix will stand.

In the Church of England, we have managed to bring this to the point where there is a real distinction between the (wholly preliminary) preparing of the table and a distinct 'taking' of the bread and wine before the thanksgiving starts.

Paradoxically, it was an evangelical set of liturgists (ignorant though they reckoned themselves to be) who were the first to do revision on the basis of Dix's outline. The result was the 1950 Liturgy of the Church of South India. It requires another separate study to show the impact of that rite on Anglican liturgy of the last half-century. But the result would show that, when the way-out notions have been filtered out, the rest of us today are greatly indebted to the work of Gregory Dix.

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