

Tractarians of the Twentieth Century: The Tradition Continued

Dom Gregory Dix O.S.B.

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By

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WIT, lover of paradox, gadfly, raconteur, fashioner of devastating put-downs, monk, priest, scholar, liturgist, teacher, lecturer, administrator, ecclesiastical politician were some of the characteristics of George Eglinton Alston Dix, better known as Dom Gregory Dix. Writing about one of his political campaigns when a Proctor in Convocation, the author of the entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* described Dix as having, “skilfully exploited the inferior clergy’s traditional suspicion of the motives of their bishops,”¹ and so succinctly pinpointed Dix as a cradle and convinced Anglo-Catholic. More than most in this series Dix could be described as more an Anglo-Catholic than a Tractarian, more accurately as an Anglo-Papalist.

He was born in 1901 into comfortable circumstances. His father’s career was in education, as a teacher and then a trainer of teachers becoming the first Principal of the College of S. Mark and S. John in London. His mother, about whom little is known, was also for some time in teaching. He was a King’s Scholar at Westminster School and read History at Merton College, a period he hugely enjoyed looking back on it as “a golden time” and also his “most faithless period.”² After graduation he was appointed a Lecturer in History at Keble College. He spent three terms at Wells Theological College, a period on which he looked back with little affection. He was ordained deacon in 1924 and priest in 1925 on his Lectureship.

“He had a tremendous sense of mischief,” wrote Eric Mascall. The Principal gave some undergraduate examples of high jinks and hoaxes last week. He was “like an elf ... small and vivacious, and, with his pointed features and tightly compressed lips, made one wonder what mischief he was going to embark upon next.”³

Monk

As a schoolboy Dix had absorbed, in a romanticised way, the Benedictine history of Westminster Abbey and during his undergraduate years he had been a visitor to the Benedictine community at Pershore Abbey. He had contributed to the community’s journal *Laudate* and spent a Long Vacation there in 1925. These connections must have run deep because after only two years at Keble he left, some may have felt precipitately, and in 1926 he went to live at Pershore. Shortly thereafter the community removed to Nashdom.

¹ Benedict Green CR, *Dictionary of National Biography* (Edd H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison) Oxford, UP [2004] pp 306 – 307

² Simon Bailey, *A Tactful God: Gregory Dix Priest, Monk and Scholar* Leominster, Gracewing [1995] p. 19

³ E. L. Mascall, *Saraband* Leominster, Gracewing [1992] p. 151

Dix, taking Gregory as his name in religion, entered the novitiate of a community that had its beginnings on Caldey Island under Aelred Carlyle.⁴ The community consciously sought to establish a continuity with the pre-Reformation English Benedictines and through that continuity to go back to S. Benedict himself and “in some way overcome and heal the breaches and wounds of intervening centuries.”⁵ Of course, Dix entered the novitiate already a scholar and a lecturer and, although the evidence is scanty, it would appear that the training, both intellectual and spiritual, was haphazard and less schematic than it became later. However, he had not long launched on this phase of his monastic life when he was sent to the Gold Coast (Ghana) to contribute to the formation of a Benedictine house that had been founded there shortly before. As a priest Dix could contribute to the liturgical life of the House and the parish the monks ran and also teach in the seminary.

His work was curtailed when he was taken ill and within a fairly short time returned to Nashdom. His health was never robust thereafter and that may have made a contribution to his decision, with the agreement of the Abbot, not to re-enter the novitiate but to become an intern oblate, a singular position within the community for a singular individual. This was an odd period of instability, when the whole point of a Benedictine monastic life is one of stability. As an intern oblate Dix shared the life of the community and made what contribution he wished but he did not have the obligation of monastic vows or the disciplines of community life. There was at least one occasion when he appeared to be actively looking for a curacy but that seems to have passed and he found a niche in the community and in the manuscript room and library to pursue his studies.

As an intern oblate he continued his liturgical and patristic studies, as well as fulfilling a demanding but largely unseen ministry as a counsellor and director to several religious communities as well as many individuals and a more visible ministry engaging in ecclesiastical public and political life. He re-entered the novitiate in 1936 and was professed in 1940. In 1940 he was elected Prior of Nashdom and added an administrative dimension to his already busy life within and without the cloister. He undertook a great deal of work, involving much transatlantic travel, building up, raising money, organising and sustaining a daughter house in the United States of America.

During the Second World War he deputised for his brother, also a priest, who was on active service, in the parish of Beaconsfield. This was his only sustained experience of parish life which proved highly successful: “his charm and his zeal compensated for a certain lack of system.”⁶ He was able to implement several more traditional devotions not least the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified on Good Friday. He did this by maintaining that he did not wish to continue the “Peruvian Jesuit Three Hour Devotion.”⁷ His sermons, with their “wit and bite and a gripping spiritual intensity”⁸ were much appreciated as was his pastoral care and concern valued.

⁴ The Right Rev. Dom Aelred Carlyle, O.S.B., (1874-1955) founded (c.1895) the first Anglican Benedictine community of monks since the Reformation. Influenced by the Oxford Movement, he embraced a vision of monastic life full of ritual and tradition. A charismatic individual, Carlyle succeeded in having a life within the Anglican Church approved by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The community was established on Caldey Island, South Wales in 1906. When the community came into conflict with Charles Gore Bishop of Oxford in 1913 over conformity to Anglican practices, Carlyle and most of his monks became Roman Catholic and moved to Prinknash in 1928.

⁵ *Op cit* Bailey p. 32

⁶ *Op cit* Mascall p. 155

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ *Ibid*

Anglo-Papalist and Ecclesiastical Politician

Following Dix's death from cancer on 12 May 1952, aged only fifty-one, *The Times* obituary said that the bishops had "lost a salutary gadfly."⁹ The obituarist could have chosen maverick, *enfant terrible*, founder member of the awkward squad or any number of similar epithets. Dix was a combative and pugnacious controversialist, unsparing in his scorn, assiduous and meticulous in his plotting, alert and thoroughly prepared in his argument, eloquent in its presentation and in debate. He had a zest and a wit that was sharp but rarely malicious, and he had a charm that disarmed opponents so that he rarely made an implacable enemy. He relished combat, partly for the sheer fun and mischief of it, but overwhelmingly from a seriousness of purpose and conviction that Catholic Orthodoxy should prevail.

He was a keen and engaged debater at school and as an undergraduate but his biographer locates his involvement in ecclesiastical politics to his decision in around 1930 not to cross the Tiber and convert to Roman Catholicism. "He felt he must stay in the Church of England working as hard as he could for her deeper adherence to her own catholic tradition and for a closer and stronger link with Rome. He summarised his determination ... [and] his extensive involvement in Church life ... [as] working for the replacing of liberalism in the Church of England with a return to the classic tradition ... disestablishment ... the regularising of Anglican orders ... the Roman Church's acceptance of such a Church in her communion - and the Anglican Church's realisation that she needs 'Catholic communion'."¹⁰

As in his scholarly work, which substantially underpinned his public activity, Dix was fundamentally concerned with the nature of the Church: "For the next generation the nature of the Church rather than Christology is certain to be the cardinal problem before Christian thought,"¹¹ he said: a prophetic remark. Although it might have been thought that his principal target would be pan-protestantism, rather, in his sights was what he saw as the real enemy and against which he trained his weapons of scorn and passionate invective, the "woolly liberal establishment of the Church of England; not truly protestant, very far from catholic, not really anything specific at all. He referred to [it] as the National Religious Establishment."¹² It was personified in the bishops and not least after 1944 in Geoffrey Fisher, the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose creed Dix maintained was that "God is nice and in him is no nastiness at all."¹³ The erastian principle and the Elizabethan Settlement which yoked the Church of England to the State was anathema to Dix. His solution was disestablishment so that the Church, free from the fetters of the State, could recover a full catholicity. He saw a vague humanism and liberalism and moral relativism seeping into the Church and undermining its foundations.

He also had in his sights the natural concomitants of a State Church, its bureaucrats and its lawyers. Given the statutory and legal persecution of Anglo-Catholics following the Public Worship Regulation Act, Dix commented on "the unhappy operation of the theory that Christian worship was a suitable subject for organisation by the police."¹⁴ Dix was something of a "Young Turk" something of an iconoclast, the representative, more so the leader, of a younger and a coming generation. And he consciously saw himself in that role, one that was in the great

⁹ *Op cit* Bailey p. 89

¹⁰ *Ibid* Bailey p. 90

¹¹ *Laudate* 1937

¹² *Op cit* Bailey p. 105

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ *Ibid* p. 106

tradition of Anglo-Catholicism. And although as an Anglo-Catholic he understood the importance of bishops, of the episcopacy for the catholic and apostolic integrity of the Church, he was unsparing in his criticism, partly because he regarded the office holders as little more than petty bureaucrats. His constant refrain was that bishops may be the *esse* of the Church but they were not the *bene esse*. More cruelly he pointed out that the sign of a bishop was a crook, the sign of an archbishop a double cross. He deployed a range of rhetorical devices and employed scornful polemic not least when he opposed an attempt by the House of Bishops in the person of the then Bishop of Portsmouth to impose a levy on mission societies to pay for the building of a new Church House. Dix opined in the course of a scathing speech that the bishops would impose a tax on sin if they believed in it.¹⁵ "Although he provoked hostility ... by both his theological opinions and his ecclesiastical politics, it was rare ... for the hostility to outlast even a brief personal contact."¹⁶ However, his approach to his political tasks was underpinned by his frequent and undisguised lack of respect for those in authority "due to a conviction that, in order to turn the Church into something simple to understand and easy to administer, well-meaning but short-sighted and intellectually lazy bureaucrats were trying to impose upon its life and its worship a structure that was ... incompatible with its true nature as the Body of Christ."¹⁷ He had no time for a bishop as an administrator, a businessman, a lawyer, a civil servant: that he should be living at this hour. His models of episcopal office holders were Walter Frere, Bishop of Truro and his great friend Kenneth Kirk, Bishop of Oxford, whose episcopal office was a few doors away from here. When you next go to the Oratory look at the houses en route and find the arms of the diocese of Oxford above one of the front doors.

Much of Dix's energy was directed to thwarting the reunion schemes with the Church of South India. This seemed to go on and on, like so many Church of England schemes, that were, and are intrinsically inimical to its Catholic nature. This was the focus of Anglo-Catholic fears that the Church was moving towards a pan-protestantism. When Dix looked at the proposals in detail he was clear that the desire of the scheme proposed was for catholic union but in the working out of the agreement it was equally clearly a template for a protestant alliance.

The difference of approach was exemplified by Dix and the Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple. The latter believed that it was right to leave an independent foreign church to work out its own form and doctrinal content and that the Church of England could enter into some reunion scheme that expected growth into fuller catholic union. Temple thought that the Anglo-Catholic opposition was allowing a concern for purity of faith to defeat charity. Anglo-Catholics responded that the Archbishop was exhibiting a charity that had escaped from the discipline of truth. The uncharacteristic lack of rigour in Temple's handling of the issue may have been that the illness that was to cause his imminent death may have taken hold.

Dix orchestrated the opposition to the scheme and based it on the fact that the terms of the proposed union gave no place to the Tradition in the life of the Church, did not require the recitation of the Catholic Creeds in public worship, and the lack of properly consecrated bishops. Underlying the detail was Dix's conviction that he could identify in the scheme a shift towards a liberal attitude to doctrine which reduced the settled teaching of the Church to a

¹⁵ *Ibid* p. 157

¹⁶ *Op cit* Mascall p. 152

¹⁷ *Ibid* p. 157

series of propositions or opinions that could be taken up or put aside at will. "What is contemplated," he said, "is a wholesale transformation of faith into opinion by all those Anglicans who enter the united Church."¹⁸ What Temple saw as a liberal generosity and open-mindedness seemed to Dix at best complacent and superficial and at worst misconceived and a betrayal of the Church and an indication that the Church was poised to cease to be a true Church.

The disagreement continued under Temple's successor, Geoffrey Fisher. If the scheme was watered down and drifted on for some years until after Dix's death, it did not alter the seriousness with Dix viewed it. So much so that it was one of the issues over which he agonised about leaving the Church: "when a point was reached at which the Church of England compromised itself that it could no longer be called catholic, what else could he do but leave?"¹⁹ It is a question which still exercises the Anglo-Catholic conscience with particular force today.

Dix's Anglo-Papalism did not result in individual submission nor in corporate reunion but his involvement and animating spirit did much to further Anglo-Roman Catholic understanding and intellectual engagement and to pave the way from informal, academic discussions to official commissions and conversations and agreed reports. If he did not live to see the results and to participate in the debate, his shade may have been felt. "At the heart of his political involvement, behind all his campaigning ... was his conviction about the Church as the living body of Christ, an organism not an organisation. The incarnation continues in the Church. Christ lives on in his body in the world: the Catholic Church. For [Dix] there is a near-physical sense to that continuing life of Christ in the world, a tangible incarnation. Crucial to that body ... guaranteeing its life, are its sacraments, which ... include its ministry. None of this is incidental to the life of the body but it is all a vital part of its unity. And the unity of the body is ... a guarantee of its life ... Unity in the Catholic Church becomes a vital sign, and division, separation, schism become horrible, ugly for they are real, painful wounds in the flesh ... it becomes a Christian duty, and a primary, passionate one, to work for the healing of the wounds, the restoration of unity. This must be real unity, an organic, living connection not a mere sham of linked ... but still separate limbs."²⁰

Nashdom exemplified Anglo-Papalism and the heart of Tractarianism and Anglo-Catholicism that sought to reclaim the Church of England for Catholicism and to heal the breach of the Reformation with the reunion of the sister churches. Individual submission ignored the issue of separated churches that possessed a continuity of Catholic faith and practice. Anglo-Papalists wanted to see the Church of England brought back into communion with the Holy See. That reunion was a central part of its mission and a prime object of its prayer. But equally and oppositely, Nashdom and Dix were also keen to prevent the Church from following other paths and listening to the siren voices of pan-protestantism and nonconformity.

Scholar

Dix mixed the roles of monk, politician and scholar. He was an historian and always regarded himself as such and found himself most at home within the scholastic catholic tradition, as was Eric Mascall his friend. He was a confessional historian in that all his writing came within the sphere and activity of the Church and was under its authority. In his historical

¹⁸ *Op cit* Bailey, p. 125

¹⁹ *Op cit* Bailey, p. 130

²⁰ *Op cit* Bailey, p. 103

writing he exhibited both scholarship and advocacy, as well as, remarkable gifts of imaginative engagement. He was not unwilling to use his judgement and to argue a point of view on the evidence. Some felt that he pushed his evidence too far and allowed his imagination greater rein than the evidence warranted. Some felt that his "time devoted to ecclesiastical politics [was] to he detriment of his writing and health."²¹None denied the grace of his writing, nor his mastery of sources and breadth of learning. Nor that buttressing his scholarly activity was the vivid apprehension of one faith, of the living Church. No other concept or animating principle was more fundamental and crucial to this thought.

Once at Nashdom he began contributing reviews to *Laudate*, the Community's, often scholarly, journal and to *Theology*. He could be a merciless reviewer. One of the books published to celebrate the centenary of the Oxford Movement was *Northern Catholicism* edited by the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in this University and Canon of Christ Church, N. P. Williams. In his younger days he had been closely associated with the cause of Counter-Reformation devotion and Baroque art through the Society of S. Peter and S. Paul but became more establishment-minded on his appointment to the Professorship and his preferment to the Canonry: "he directed his talents to justifying the Anglican Church, not merely as, under the providence of God, a product of history, but as the manifestation of a specially pure and authentic type of Catholicism."²² This tapped into the *zeitgeist* of the time with the growth of the Nazi party and its philosophy of racial purity, and the movement for the use of eugenics to purify the race by weeding out those whose genetic make-up was suspect. Williams' foreword to the book which advanced his theory was an aberration from a respected and popular theologian but that did not save him from being savaged by Dix who thought Williams' thesis theologically outrageous and historically false. That Williams argued there was a special racial quality in the Nordic blood which predisposed these peoples to a religion "not unfairly described as *Lux Mundi* plus a discreet invocation of the saints,"²³ Dix regarded as fanciful ethnology and to the suggestion that the Dutch were especially designed by Providence for such a religion he commented tartly, "They would appear to be a little deaf to the call of the blood."²⁴ "Neither history nor anthropology is among his strongest subjects," said Dix of Williams.

Williams had written that "the essential religious genius of the Northern peoples ... is of a mystical and soaring quality appropriate to dwellers amidst the less genial aspects of nature and beneath 'grey and weeping skies,'" which drew from Dix this impish satire:

"It is a vivid and sympathetic picture. One can almost see these mystical and polygamous freemen at their simple devotions and catch the rustle of their golden beards as they bend forward to breathe unsuperstitious prayers into their winged casques seated on damp logs beneath the grey and weeping dome of heaven."²⁵

He said that Williams' whole theory broke down upon the facts of history: "If there is one thing certain about the first thousand years of Christendom it is that men meant just what they said by 'one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church': for that age unity meant identity of

²¹ *Op cit* DNB

²² *Ibid* p. 158

²³ *Laudate* xi No 43 September 1933. 152

²⁴ *Ibid* p. 153

²⁵ *Ibid* p. 157

doctrine which was naturally expressed by intercommunion at the altar. With schism about practice and personalities the Church was even then unhappily familiar. But provided such differences did not touch doctrine the sundered parties might still be viewed as in some sense within the Church; reunion in the strict sense was a possibility. Once schism degenerated into heresy there was no hope of accommodation ... To put the matter with indecorous bluntness: the liberal catholic compromise as presented by Dr Williams teaches a doctrine of the Church's authority unknown to antiquity, never taught theretofore by Catholic, Byzantine, Papalist, Gallican or protestant, and held by no organised Christian body today. Dr Williams has taken the precaution of inventing something which will teach it - the Holy Nordic Catholic Church."²⁶ Williams never spoke to him again.

Dix published a series of articles in *Laudate* on Episcopal jurisdiction which are being given a fresh relevance in current circumstances and which have reached a wider contemporary audience through the admiration of Father Hunwicke for Dom Gregory. His scholarly output was relatively small, in what was a short life, and his first book was his most straightforwardly scholarly work *The Apostolic Tradition*.²⁷ Here are outlined themes, ideas and emphases that inform his later work. It was a study of a 3rd century text by St Hippolytus that described practices of the Christian community in the Early Church. For example, he laid great emphasis on the *anamnesis* in the Eucharistic Prayer. There is no entirely suitable English translation but it is the re-presentation, the bringing of a past event into the present, in the Eucharist of the entire sacrificial activity of Christ, the whole of the Paschal Mystery, the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The Eucharist thereby marked the coming alive in the Church of its root cause and the origin of its life, purpose and witness. He was less enamoured of the *epiklesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, in the Eucharistic Prayer. It was, he maintained, a later addition and was not to be found in early consecratory prayers where the Roman Canon had but an implied *epiklesis*.

For Dix the Church was a living organism, a divine creation and society, the Body of Christ in the world: it was not an institution or an organisation, and not merely a meeting or convenient gathering of like-minded people. In the Incarnation God renewed and restored that community and fashioned it to be the continuation of his presence in creation.

His view expanded into several ancillary fields; the ministry of the Church, authority, the Papacy, initiation into the Church through Baptism and Confirmation, and, magisterially, in the liturgy of the Eucharist. Some of these themes were worked out in *The Apostolic Ministry*. The continuing life of Christ in the world is expressed through its sacramental structure initiated by Christ's own command. This was not something arbitrary but a deliberate provision for humankind so that all could enter into the fullest consummation and communion with God in Christ Jesus in his sacramental presence. The Apostolic Ministry did not merely administer the sacraments but was itself a visible and an organic part of the sacramental system. "It was a guarantee of genuine catholicity as well as useful and creative and attractive in itself."²⁸ Dix saw the Apostolic Ministry as a vital part of the catholicity of the Church he was defending and one that was threatened by pan-protestantism. He finessed the concept of bishops being successors of the Apostles by arguing that the unique gift of the Holy Spirit in the consecration of a bishop emphasised the Apostolic Succession as an addition to the number of the apostles rather than a

²⁶ *Ibid* p. 221 p. 227

²⁷ *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus of Rome*

²⁸ *Op cit* Bailey p. 163

succession to them, "less a mechanical contagion derived from the other consecrating bishops" than "a direct charismatic gift from God with which the bishop succeeds to the inheritance of his predecessors in the see." This has a certain congruity with the view often expressed by Father Arthur Couratin that episcopal authority derived less from the laying-on of hands than bums on thrones. Or as Dix put it a tad more elegantly: "Only a possessor of the Apostolic Spirit, directly bestowed in consecration could occupy the bishop's throne [but] only acquired authority as bishop by election of the community."²⁹ He drew a distinction between leadership and juridical authority and jurisdiction. These are themes with immediate currency.

Dix also tackled the vexed question of Anglican Orders as determined by the Papal Bull *Apostolicae Curae* of 1896. After a period of uncertainty he was securely of the view that Anglican orders were within the penumbra of the Apostolic Succession and if it ever became necessary to leave the Church of England he would not consider it possible to deny the validity of the orders he had received. As we saw with Eric Abbott and Michael Ramsey earlier in this series, Dix was also involved in the production of the report *Catholicity*. Although the introduction indicated that Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher had commissioned the Report, it was more likely inspired by Dix and driven by him. It certainly bore the imprint of his personality and may explain the cool approbation given to the report by Fisher. It was the most schematic and systematic articulation of the Catholic nature of the Church of England and argued that the recovery of the authentic Christian tradition was to be sought in Western Catholicism and it set forth a perennial Dix argument of the Church as the Body of Christ, the *plebs sancta Dei*, the holy people of God. He also wrote a delightful and sparkingly erudite book *A Detection of Aumbries* about the development of the Reserved Sacrament and its use as an object of devotion. It is well worth searching out and reading.

Undoubtedly, however, his *magnum opus* is *The Shape of the Liturgy*, researched over fourteen years and written in fourteen months and still in print and still influential. His biographer in the *Dictionary of National Biography* gives it silken approbation with a slash of feline claws with the assertion that the book was "written with verve and imagination and often mischievous humour, and in places with real eloquence, this is an outstanding piece of *haute vulgarisation*."³⁰ It is in large measure a detailed and sustained academic study which showed him a master of his subject with important and lasting insights and one which altered the course of liturgical reform in the Church of England and beyond its bounds. If current academic liturgical study has refined some of his conclusions and dissented from others, it is still accorded a high degree of respect. There can only be a brief comment here and I will quote its most famous passage at the end of the paper but it is a book worth looking into even if you are not a devoted and determined liturgist.

The central and dominating theme is "the existence of the Christian as crucified with Christ and risen with him into his Body the Church, as that existence is embodied in the Sacrament in which the Christian nature is proclaimed and its life maintained throughout the centuries ... [with a] clear understanding of the nature of the rite for which they were assembled round the altar and of the tremendous wonder of the part which it played in the life of the redeemed human race."³¹ The book refuted the views of liberal scholars who had purported to

²⁹ *Op cit* Bailey p. 166

³⁰ *Op cit* DNB

³¹ *Op cit* Mascall p. 159 p. 160

trace the origins of the Eucharist to sources other than the institution of Christ at the Last Supper on the night before he was betrayed. With some panache he exposed a seam of historical ignorance which had resulted in the rites of 16th century protestantism. He reanimated the traditional rites of Catholic Christendom, the rites he used at the altar. With a mischievous glint in his eye he showed up the bumbling amateurishness of those Anglican bishops who had tried to suppress or to dilute Catholic devotion, rites and ceremonies that had emerged in the wake of the Oxford Movement in its ritualist phase and subsequently and, not least, he showed up the abysmal dullness of most theological books and liturgical treatises. The liveliness of his writing may have been a major contribution to the revival of liturgical studies that we witness today. If that is so, he has a great deal to answer for. His book was characterised by writing that was by turns lucid, sparkling, amusing, ironical as well as evidencing detailed analysis and academic rigour.

EXTRACT A:

For the Primitive Church the doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass was of primary importance. Today Church-people make the Sacrifice depend on the Sacrament. The Primitive Church made the Sacrament to depend on the Sacrifice. I am speaking of something that is the essence of all religion – the attempt of the creature to achieve union with the creator, to leap the chasm between God and man; to ascend above its derived creaturely being to the self-existent being of God himself. It must contain two things: the attempt to leave behind the status of being a creature; and, the attempt to ascend from its own natural being to God.

Here we meet with tragedy. Man, being a sinner, cannot make that leap. That supreme act of religion is for him impossible. Death is the penalty which God has imposed on sinners. The acceptance of death is the supremely moral act of human existence. We have sinned but accepted the consequence of our sin. That is one half – the negative side of the act of religion. But, obviously, if there is to be sacrifice, it cannot be done by sinful people as an act of suicide.

It is here that we have the New Testament doctrine of our Saviour as the Second Adam. He is very Man – He accepted death, sinless though he was, as the penalty of sin. His death is the representative act of death of all mankind, as the Head of the human race. As S. Paul said: "To recapitulate in Christ all things." His death is His entrance into the glory of God. So that His death has the full character of Sacrifice; and it is a representative act on behalf of all mankind. It is the Sacrifice, *par excellence*.

CBS Newsletter 3 June 1947

EXTRACT B:

Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, in every conceivable human circumstance, for every conceivable human need from infancy and before it to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacles of earthly greatness to the refuge of fugitives in caves and dens of the earth. Men have found no better thing than this to do for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold; for armies in triumph or for a bride and bridegroom in a little country church; for the proclamation of a dogma or for a good crop of wheat; for the wisdom of the Parliament of a mighty nation or for a sick old woman afraid to die; for a schoolboy sitting an examination or for Columbus setting out to discover America; for the famine of whole provinces or for the soul of a dead lover; in thankfulness because my father did not die of pneumonia; for a village headman much tempted to return to fetch because the yams had failed; because the Turk was at the gates of Vienna; for the repentance of Margaret; for the settlement of a strike; for a son for a barren woman; for Captain so-an-so, wounded and prisoner of war; while lions roared in the nearby amphitheatre; on the beach at Dunkirk; while the hiss of scythes in the thick June grass came faintly through the windows of the church; tremulously, by an old monk on the fiftieth anniversary of his vows; furtively by an exiled bishop who had hewn timber all day in the prison camp near Murmansk; gorgeously, for the canonisation of S. Joan of Arc – one could fill many pages with the reasons why men have done this, and not tell a hundredth part of them. And best of all, week by week and month by month, on a hundred thousand successive Sundays faithfully, unfailingly, across all

the parishes of Christendom, the pastors have done this just to make the *plebs sancta Dei* – the holy common people of God ...

It is because it became embedded deep down in the life of the Christian peoples, colouring all the *via vitae* of the ordinary man and woman, marking its personal turning-points, marriage, sickness, death and the rest, running through it year by year with feasts and fasts and the rhythm of the Sundays, that the Eucharistic action became inextricably woven into the public history of the Western world. The thought of it is inseparable from its great turning-points also. Pope Leo doing this in the morning before he went out to daunt Attila, on the day that saw the continuity of Europe saved; and another Leo doing this three and a half centuries later when he crowned Charlemagne Roman Emperor, on the day that saw that continuity fulfilled. Or again, Alfred wandering defeated by the Danes staying his soul on this, while medieval England struggled to be born; and Charles I also, on that morning of his execution when medieval England came to its final end. Such things 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. At Constantinople they “do this” yet with the identical words and gestures that they used while the silver trumpets of the Basileus³² still called across the Bosphorus, in what seems to us now the strange fairy-tale land of the Byzantine empire. In this twentieth century Charles de Foucauld³³ in his hermitage in the Sahara “did this” with the same rite as Cuthbert twelve centuries before in his hermitage on Lindisfarne in the Northern seas. 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...

It is not strange that the Eucharist should have this power of laying hold of human life, of grasping it not only in the abstract but in the particular concrete realities of it, of reaching to anything in it, great impersonal things that rock whole nations and little tender human things of one man's or one woman's living and dying – laying hold of them and translating them into something beyond time. This was its new meaning from the beginning.

EXTRACT C:

The Eucharist is the representative act of a fully redeemed human life. This perfected society is not an end in itself, but is consciously and wholly directed to the only end which can give meaning and dignity to human life – the eternal God and the loving and conscious obedience of man in time to His known will. There the eternal and absolute value of each individual is affirmed by setting him in the most direct of all earthly relations with the eternal and absolute Being of God; though it is thus affirmed and established only through his

³² Archon Basileus (Greek: Ἄρχων Βασιλεύς) was a Greek title, meaning 'king magistrate': the term is derived the words archon "magistrate" and basileus "king" or "sovereign"

³³ Charles Eugène de Foucauld (Strasbourg, 15 September 1858 – Tamanrasset, 1 December 1916) was a Catholic religious and priest living among the Tuareg in the Sahara in Algeria. He was assassinated in 1916 outside the door of the fort he built for protection of the Tuareg and is considered by the Church to be a martyr. His inspiration and writings led to the founding of the Little Brothers of Jesus among other religious congregations. He was beatified on 13 November 2005 by Pope Benedict XVI.

membership of the perfect society. There the only means to that end is proclaimed and accepted and employed – man’s redemption through the personal sacrifice of Jesus Christ at a particular time and place through the church which is the fulfilment of Him. That is the Eucharist. Over against the dissatisfied “acquisitive man” and his no less avid successor the dehumanised “mass man” of our economically focussed societies insecurely organised for time, Christianity sets the type of “Eucharistic Man” – man giving thanks with the product of his labours upon the gifts of God, and daily rejoicing with his fellows in the worshipping society which is grounded in eternity. This is man to whom it was promised on the night before Calvary that he should henceforth eat and drink at the table of God and be a king. That is not only a more joyful and more humane ideal. It is the divine and only authentic conception of the meaning of all human life, and its realisation in the Eucharist.