ANAMNESIS

If we look at the Eucharistic liturgies we find that they have in their Institution Narratives the words 'Do this in remembrance of me' or their equivalent. Remembrance of course is a translation of *anamnesis* and we find that in the Western Christian tradition *anamnesis* is always represented by words like *memoria* and memory or remembrance. If we were to confine ourselves to liturgical tradition we would not be aware of any doubts whether Jesus gave this command to repeat or whether *anamnesis* has this meaning or not. When, however, we look at our originals in the Greek New Testament we find doubt on both points.

First, what does *anamnesis* mean? The translation 'remembrance' is perfectly defensible, but it is not the only meaning of the word, and before making up our minds about our translation we should look at the other possibilities, especially those that have been put forward in recent years.

One interpretation which has been strongly supported by G. Dix in *The Shape of Liturgy*, p. 245, is that the word means re-presentation: 'First, we have to take account of the clear understanding then general in a largely Greek-speaking church of the word *anamnesis* as meaning a "re-calling" or "re-presenting" of a thing in such a way that it is not so much regarded as being "absent", as itself *presently operative* by its effects. This is a sense which the Latin *memoria* and its cognates do not adequately translate, and which the English words "recall" and "represent" will hardly bear without explanation, still less such words as "memorial" or "remembrance".'

This interpretation has caught the fancy of a number of people, but when we try to find evidence for it we are in difficulties. There is no evidence that it is a demonstrable significance of the Greek *anamnesis*. In this connection Dix's rendering looks like the attempt to read a certain desired interpretation of the text into the word itself. We can only conclude that whatever our interpretation of the institution narrative as a whole, this particular meaning is not implied by *anamnesis*.

Another interpretation is supplied by Professor Jeremias in his book *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (pp. 196f). He maintains that *anamnesis* means something like 'help' or 'succour' and he brings forward clear philological evidence for the word having this meaning in the ancient Greek versions of the Bible. He would render the whole phrase somewhat as follows: 'Do this that God may remember me', with the implication 'that God may remember me and come to

my help'. Interesting as this suggestion is, it does have its difficulties. First, as we shall see, the passage in I Cor. 11 has a clear indication of what the apostle thought the phrase to mean and his interpretation, if we are right, is quite different. Second, Professor Jeremias has not related his interpretation to the possibility that the words are secondary and that their origin indicates a different significance. To those too we shall return later.

Let us now look at another possibility. At I Cor. 11:26 immediately after the command to repeat, the apostle continues 'for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes'. The Greek of the important clause is as follows:

τὸν θάνατον τοῦ κυρίου καταγγέλλετε ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ

and καταγγέλλειν means 'to proclaim a religious or theological message' and in this sense would be appropriate to the context. The apostle seems, by this clause, to be interpreting the command 'do this for my *anamnesis*', and to understand *anamnesis* as proclamation.

If this is so, we have the question: does *anamnesis* have the meaning 'mention' or 'proclaim'? So far I have not found any unequivocal examples that it does, but the corresponding verb ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι frequently has it in the Greek Bible; as we may see from the following examples:

Exod. 23:13, 'You shall not proclaim (ἀναμνήσεσθε) the name of other gods.'

Ps. 44:18, 'I shall proclaim (ἀναμνήσω) your name in each generation.' (A Σ Θ)

Amos 6:10, 'For it is not permitted to mention (ἀναμνῆσαι) the name of the Lord.' (A Σ, cf. Θ)

If ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι means 'proclaim', then it is fair to assume that the noun *anamnesis* has this meaning too and the apostle would understand the command as meaning 'do this to proclaim my death'.

This would fit in with subsequent Christian tradition and practice. We will explore later the idea that the proclamation is of the Saving Acts of the Lord and that among these Saving Acts was his death. In what context were they proclaimed? The evidence of Christian liturgy in the ancient Church suggests that in marked contrast to the Latin canon and most liturgies of the sixteenth and subsequent centuries this proclamation forms the core of the Eucharistic prayer.

If this is the meaning of *anamnesis* we have still to try to answer the question whether Jesus actually gave the command to repeat or not. Here the evidence of Mark 14 is important. Mark, in his Institution Narrative (14:22-25), has no command to repeat. Matthew, of course, follows Mark in this respect and the shorter text of Luke (22:19a) is in agreement. Has the command to repeat the Last

Supper been omitted from the tradition that Mark gives us or is it as we find it in Paul a development subsequent to Jesus' institution? New Testament scholars have argued on both sides; liturgiologists have usually ignored the problem. If the command to repeat is original, how did Mark come to omit it? No really satisfactory answer seems to have been given to this question. This implies that Mark did not omit it and that it came into the tradition in the early Church.

This leads us to the other question. If the command to repeat is not original, how did it come to be part of the Institution Narrative? S. H. Hooke, in the introductory essay in *Myth and Ritual*, advanced the thesis that in ancient religion in the Middle East there were observances which consisted of two parts: a myth or story and a ritual or enactment of the story. Not all his examples have stood up to subsequent examination. He suggested that the creation epic *Enuma Elish* was the myth for the New Year ritual at Babylon. We are not today so sure of this particular instance but he has certainly put his finger on a widespread liturgical pattern. It occurred in the ancient world and also among primitive peoples today. Anthropologists are acquainted with it, though they often use the expression 'charter story' instead of myth, and perhaps this is a more satisfactory term to use. In these observances the story serves a three-fold purpose: first of all it gives the origin of the observances, secondly it gives the pattern that the observances are to follow, and thirdly, it contains the command to repeat.

This pattern is also to be detected in first century Judaism. We have a close parallel in the Passover Hagada. Here, at the beginning of Passover, in answer to various questions, the head of the house utters a long narrative, the core of which consists of an interpretation of the distinctive features of Passover and an exposition of Deut. 26:5-11, 'A wandering Aramaean was my father' etc. (Mishnah Pesach, x. 4). This does not give the actual Passover story but in the explanation does imply part of the Passover pattern and certainly contains the command to repeat.

A much closer parallel is provided by the liturgy for the Day of Atonement in the Temple. While the animals are burning on the altar the High Priest stands where he can be seen and reads or recites from memory three important passages for the Day of Atonement from the Pentateuch. These passages meet the pattern precisely. They give the origin, they give the pattern that the observances are to follow, and they contain the command to repeat. This is clear evidence that the pattern of charter story and ritual was known and used in the early part of the first century in Judaism.

Though scholars have observed this pattern in various parts of the world it is surprising that no one has used this as an analysis of the

Eucharist. Most remarkable was the silence in a book by the late Professor E. O. James entitled *Christian Myth and Ritual.* While Dr. James produced many interesting points in connection with Christian liturgy, he had nothing to say about the presence of our pattern in the Eucharist at all. None the less the pattern is there. The Institution Narrative gives the origin of the observances. It constitutes the pattern that the observance is to follow and in the Pauline form it contains the command to repeat. We may then regard the presence of this command as an adjustment of the Narrative to this pattern in the Pauline tradition. If this is so, then the Marcan account without the command to repeat will be original.

We may notice at this point the probability that though the command to repeat is secondary, it does correctly interpret Jesus' intention. It has been suggested that the Last Supper was an incident which in Jesus' intention had no further reference outside the occasion on which it took place, and that the early Church turned it into a recurrent practice. If we look at the narrative itself it has such a reference. We cannot believe that the Covenant is made with the twelve alone. It includes subsequent Christian believers and in both the Marcan and the Pauline forms it implies particular benefit for them all. Hence it seems that those who added the command to repeat rightly understood Jesus' intention.

This does not mean the end of the enquiry for us, because the idea of *anamnesis* in this command to repeat had already considerable significance in the early Church. We have seen that the apostle in I Cor. 11 gives the content of *anamnesis* as the death of Jesus. It is this which we proclaim, but his remark need not mean that this is the only item in the proclamation. If we look at the Eucharistic Prayer of Hippolytus some 150 years later we find a list of the Saving Acts beginning with the Incarnation and the Ministry, going on to the Passion and the Institution Narrative, and then to the Death and Resurrection. This constitutes the call of his prayer and is to be found in the ancient Eucharistic prayers of Christian liturgy, usually with the addition of a reference to the Ascension. We may suppose that this is much older than Hippolytus and may be already implied in the Pauline interpretation and even behind that in the first introduction of the command, perhaps in the Church in Antioch.

There is one point about the relevant part of Eucharistic Prayer in Hippolytus. The *anamnesis* there is frequently understood as referring to the death and resurrection only and this is encouraged by the practice of ending a paragraph at the end of the Institution Narrative and at the beginning of a fresh paragraph introducing the term *anamnesis*. If we disregard this paragraphing, it becomes clear that the term *anamnesis* here refers to the whole preceding narrative from the Incarnation onwards. This mistake has had serious consequences for

recent liturgical revision. Even more important is the relation of *anamnesis* to the Eucharistic Prayer as a whole. On Dix's view in *The Shape of the Liturgy* the Eucharistic Prayer takes up the theme of blessing or thanksgiving in the Institution Narrative, and, if this is so, *anamnesis* or proclamation is merely an alternative description of the core of this prayer, and it makes the point that the blessing consisted mainly of a thanksgiving for the Saving Acts which are rehearsed in the Prayer itself. This underlines two points.

First the idea of blessing or thanksgiving in this Prayer has a Godward direction and is not in any sense a blessing or consecration of the elements. Secondly, the proclamation of the saving acts had a credal character and as long as the Eucharistic Prayer had this content there was very little cause for the use of a creed in addition in the Eucharist. As soon as we had, however, a Eucharistic Prayer like the Latin canon, this credal element largely disappeared and this laid the way open for the insertion of the creed at another place in the liturgy.

We have a further question here which may be briefly noticed. This analysis of the Eucharistic Prayer implies that the Institution Narrative is present in the Prayer as one of the Saving Acts. There are here two questions: First, why is it present at all, and secondly, why is it present in this place? As we have seen, S. H. Hooke's theory of myth or charter story and ritual gives a reason why the Institution Narrative is present at all in the liturgy, but our understanding of the Eucharistic Prayer suggests a reason why it is present in that Prayer in the sequence of Saving Acts. If this interpretation is right, then the Institution Narrative has nothing to do with consecration, whatever our understanding of this. This is a complete break with the later theological tradition of Western Christianity. Whatever Christians in the West thought happened at the Eucharist, they have everywhere tended to associate that happening with the recital of the words of institution.

At this point we might go further and ask how the holiness of the Eucharist comes about if we cannot associate it with this narrative. It is a very proper question but would take us far afield from our consideration of *anamnesis*. It involves issues of sacrifice and sacrament which are ripe for reconsideration.[1]

We may now notice a negative consequence of our argument. There have been frequent attempts to explain the Eucharist in part or whole as memorial or remembrance. If our suggestion is right, this interpretation has no roots in the institution by Jesus and rests on a misinterpretation of Paul. We are forced to look elsewhere for our principle of interpretation.

Let us summarise our conclusions. First, the command to repeat containing the word *anamnesis* is not original in the tradition of the

Institution, but rightly expresses Jesus' intention that the observance should be repeated. Secondly, in this connection, *anamnesis* means not so much memory or memorial, but proclamation and so gives us our earliest hint about the contact of the blessing or thanksgiving in the Eucharistic prayer.

NOTE

1. See my paper entitled 'Eucharist as Sacrifice and Sacrament in the New Testament' in the Festschrift for Professor R. Schnackenburg, *Neues Testament und Kirche* (ed. J. Gnilka), 429-33.

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