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G. D. Kilpatrick

Excerpt

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LECTURE I



The background

The New Testament accounts: (1) Mark xiv

(2) Matthew xxvi

A note on the text of Mark xiv.22-5 and Matthew xxvi.26-7

Differences in words and the ideas behind them separate us from the world in which the Eucharist came into being. Part of my exploration will be directed to these differences.

We must be prepared to find that words and ideas which are central for us in this connexion are alien to the Biblical world, and Biblical words and ideas prove strange to us the more we examine them.

Let us take two examples and, first, one of a word with its ideas which is now a commonplace of Christian doctrine, but was unknown in that connexion in first-century Christianity, the word 'sacrament'.

A sacrament is described as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace' in the Catechism of the English Book of Common Prayer. This or similar descriptions have been current among Western Christians for nearly 1600 years. St Augustine at the end of the fourth century A.D. seems first to have used the word with this kind of meaning. First-century Christians had neither the word 'sacrament' nor the corresponding description. I do not know of any word in the original Greek of the New Testament that can be translated in this way, nor will you find it even in the Authorised Version of the Bible, sympathetic as the makers of this version may be held to be to the idea. Sacrament and the meaning we associate with the word are foreign to the world of the Bible.

Our second example is 'sacrifice', the word and the institution. It is still current in ordinary English and in Christian theology, but I doubt whether in either it has its Biblical meaning.

Some years ago I saw in a shop window during a sale a frock at a reduced price described as a sacrifice. This would have sorely puzzled an ancient Israelite and I still cannot guess what he would have made of it, so far has the word departed from its Biblical meaning.

If we were to ask an ordinary believing Christian what the word 'sacrifice' means for him, we might find that he associated it with two notions, first, the notion of atonement through suffering and, secondly, the notion of vicarious suffering or death, to suffer or die instead of another. Such an

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answer would show how far our Christian of today is from the reality of sacrifice. In fact death can be sacrificial, but there is nothing about vicarious death that makes it sacrificial. If it is sacrificial, it is not because it is vicarious. If by contrast we look at the various sacrifices recorded in the Old Testament, we see that most of them are meaningless to us, though they were full of significance to the men of the Old Testament, who developed and maintained an elaborate system of sacrifice which could only be justified if it was concerned with things that mattered for them.

I shall later on return to these words, 'sacrament' and 'sacrifice', to treat them in more detail, but I trust that you are now alerted to the fact that we are dealing almost with two distinct religious languages. We often use them as though they were one and the same, but we shall be forced more and more to recognise their differences, that on the one side sacrament is a word foreign to the Bible, and that on the other sacrifice and the institution of sacrifice are foreign to us today.

Nor are these the only such words. Later I hope to show that the word 'holy' has quite different meanings for us and for the men of the Bible and that there are considerable differences between the main Biblical use of 'bless' and our use of the term today.

If, in moving into the Bible, we are alert to the fact that we are entering a new world with languages, ideas and institutions so strange to us and are leaving behind some of the familiar notions we have grown up with, we must not overlook that we and the men of the Bible have a great heritage in common.

It is a good thing to be made aware of these conditions of our common exploration of the Eucharist. They force us to try to think carefully and precisely about what we want to say and, if we meet differences of opinion, to state as exactly as we can what those differences are.

Let us take an example. Inevitably in my treatment of the Eucharist I shall examine the chief New Testament passages which deal with it, three in the Gospels and one in 1 Corinthians. What is our attitude in this connexion to the New Testament and the Bible as a whole? I see the Bible as the collection of the foundation documents of our religion and a principal vehicle of the Word of God.

You may say: why does he not say straightforwardly that the Bible is, or is not, the Word of God? Why all this hedging? To this I reply that I am concerned to say no more than the Bible says. The Bible claims more than once to carry the word of God, but never identifies itself with the Word of God. Indeed I have been told that the identification of the Bible as it stands with the Word of God was not made before the time of

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St Augustine. I have never checked this statement, but the identification of the Bible as a whole with the Word of God without qualification has always seemed to me an innovation.

There is another qualification which we must notice. We live in an age of printing, though it is not clear how long we shall continue to do so. I have in front of me a copy of the New Testament in the second edition of 1970 of the New English Bible. All copies of this issue of the New Testament will have the same text. Indeed we can generalise this and say that all copies of the same issue of the same book have the same text unless they are damaged. We are so used to this state of affairs that we do not readily imagine a time when it was different.

Yet there was such a time. Before the age of printing, books were copied word for word by hand, and we can say at once that no two copies of the same book had the same text throughout, and for two reasons.

First, if you start copying a text from a book by hand you will notice that after a time you begin to make mistakes and, if you go on copying, you make more mistakes. You will not be the first to do so. Even professional copyists made mistakes, some more than others, but none were faultless.

Secondly, scribes made deliberate changes. Stated baldly this may sound more shocking than the making of mistakes, but it was a process which affected books copied by hand, and the surprising thing would have been if it had failed to happen, especially if the book were at all popular.

Some forty years ago I wrote a paper on certain aspects of the Gospels and sent it to be typed. In the paper I referred to the theory of the composition of Luke known as Proto-Luke. The typist apparently had never heard of Proto-Luke; she decided it was a mistake and looked round for an expression that seemed to make sense and decided that Protestant Luke was what was wanted, and so, when I read through the typescript, Protestant Luke was what I found.

Let me give another example. Just now I mentioned the New English Bible. I was a member of its panel for the New Testament and was involved in at least one other translation. This led me to study the making and revision of Biblical translations. I noticed that one kind of revision consisted in the modernisation of language.

Here is an example. In the original text of the Authorised Version of 1611 you will find a number of times the word 'moe', but 'moe' later went out of use and the word 'more' was substituted for it. We find 'more' in the eighteenth-century and later printings. In the Authorised Version of today I shall be surprised if you will find any examples of 'moe' left.

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This is a trivial instance and many of the changes that scribes made in the text of the Bible were trivial too, but now and then alterations of greater significance were made. Some of them we shall have to consider later on.

One further point we should consider. I have mentioned the variations of our manuscripts. Can it be that among their variations at some points in our Bible the original form of our text has been lost and can be recovered only by guesswork? In principle this is possible, but in practice I find it very unlikely in the New Testament. As far as the New Testament is concerned, it seems that we can rely on finding the original form of the text at each point in some or other of our witnesses despite their variations.

If we have to allow for the accidents that may happen to a book over centuries of copying by hand, we have also to allow for another handicap in dealing with our texts, the fact that they are written in another language. Many people in North America, for example, grow up without encountering any language other than English and find it hard to imagine the reality of another language. Often in their efforts to do so they imagine the other language as just being English in another form, thanks to the perversity of foreigners.

In this way they assume that the other language will be unambiguous where English is unambiguous and will share its ambiguities. For instance the English sentence 'Drink ye all of it' (Mt. xxvi.27) is ambiguous. Does it mean 'All of you, drink of it' or 'Drink the whole of it'? We can debate this endlessly as long as we confine ourselves to the English version but, as soon as we look at the Greek, ambiguity is at an end. Thanks to certain features in the structure of New Testament Greek which are not shared by modern English, the Greek sentence can only mean: 'All of you drink of it.'

Sometimes words have a narrower range of meaning in one language than in the other. We discover, for example, that the Greek words for 'poor', 'rich' have a wider connotation in the Greek New Testament than their accepted English equivalents.

Earlier I mentioned the four passages in the New Testament reporting the institution of the Eucharist (Mt. xxvi.26-9, Mk. xiv.22-5, L. xxii.15-19, 1C. xi.23-5). I shall have in this and the next two lectures to discuss these accounts against a background of assumptions about the tradition about Jesus as a whole.

What are these assumptions? In attempting to answer this question I shall consider, first, characteristics which are not peculiar to the tradition and, secondly, characteristics which are.

Let me illustrate the first characteristics. When I was an undergraduate

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in Oxford in the 1930s, the Group Movement was active there. I attended a number of its meetings, where it was customary for members of the Group to speak. Part of what they said consisted of stories. Each member had his story of how he was brought into the Groups, how he was 'changed'. He had also a number of stories illustrating the Groups and their leading members.

The story of how he was changed had a clearly defined structure. First, it gave a picture of the member before he was changed. Naturally this picture was in sombre colours. Then the incident when he came into contact with the Groups and was 'changed' was reported. Finally he told, as far as modesty would allow, how much happier and how much better he was since he had joined the Groups. Invariably each member's story of how he was 'changed' tended to conform to this pattern.

Besides his own story each member had the stories which he acquired through his membership of the Groups. He was encouraged to learn such stories off by heart so that he could relate them spontaneously at Group meetings for interested outsiders.

He was also encouraged to write down these stories in his notebook, the first stage in the written, as distinct from the oral, tradition of such material. These stories began to constitute small collections which themselves grew in size and sometimes were systematically arranged. Some of them formed the core of chapters in books. In this way in the course of a few years this body of material made the passage from the single story told orally to the printed book.

The tradition about Jesus experienced in many ways a comparable development. We can still detect the single story, the collection of stories or other material, and finally the written work.

There are, however, characteristics that are peculiar: the tradition about Jesus underwent two migrations. To start with, the tradition about Jesus seems to have existed in oral form in Aramaic. It seems at a relatively early stage to have made the migration from Aramaic to Greek. The suggestion that the earliest form of the tradition in Aramaic was oral need not surprise us. There are many examples of oral tradition in Judaism. For instance, most of the Talmud was handed down in oral form before it was written.

When the tradition migrated into Greek, conditions were different. Oral tradition was not unknown in the Greek world, but normally, when a Greek wished to put forward an idea or a philosophy, or other teaching, sooner or later he wrote a book. Indeed philosophers were among the first writers of books in Ancient Greece. As soon as the tradition about Jesus entered into the Greek world, there seems to have been pressure to

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put it into writing, first of all in collections of increasing size and then in books, our empirical Gospels.

This order of migration corresponds with the lack of clear traces of Aramaic documents, as distinct from Aramaic oral forms, in the tradition about Jesus. Had the two migrations taken place in the reverse order, the migration from oral to written before the migration from Aramaic to Greek, we would have expected to find traces of Aramaic documents.

Though it does not come into my discussion, let me here mention the document Q, hypothetical as it is. I regard this hypothesis, despite recent arguments to the contrary, as being the best explanation of certain features of the tradition. Before the composition of Q, the migration from Aramaic to Greek had already been made. Its Greek seems to have been on a higher level of style than that of Mark and John. Fortunately Q, as we shall see, affects my investigation little.

Earlier I mentioned the three chief passages about the Eucharist in the Gospels. I must now report my view of the relationship between Matthew, Mark and Luke. Mark, on this view, is the oldest, and was used as the source for much of their material by Matthew and Luke, who are independent of each other. Though they both seem to have used other sources in other parts of their Gospels, I shall argue that in their accounts of the Institution of the Last Supper they used only Mark.

This should cause little difficulty where Matthew is concerned. I shall notice two significant differences from Mark in Matthew's account, but otherwise Matthew contributes nothing distinctive and important.

When I contend that Luke had only Mark as his source for the Institution Narrative, I enter much more controversial country. One of my tasks will be to explain and defend this conclusion. If I am right, we shall find Luke more instructive about the Eucharist in the early Church, if less informative about origins.

For full measure let me confess that John seems to me to have known and used Mark. Scholars in recent years have put forward hypotheses of varying complexity which avoid this conclusion. I sometimes wonder whether some of them were designed to this end. The issue will prove of some relevance when we discuss J. vi.

These statements of opinion about the Gospels imply that there are two primary accounts of the Institution at the Last Supper, Mark's account and that in 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians is the older but Mark, unlike 1 Corinthians, is presented to us as a solid piece of tradition and for that reason will be considered first.

What do we know about Mark? Various dates have been proposed for Mark but about A.D. 65, a few years before the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70,

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seems to me most likely. The raw material of his Greek is on a lower level than that of Matthew and Luke, and implies a man who had little education as that was understood in the Graeco-Roman world of his time. He could read and write, but had no training as a writer. On the same level stand John, Revelation and, surprisingly, the Pastoral Epistles.

Socially and economically the conditions implied by the Gospel would agree with this. Much of Palestine was a poor and backward part of the Roman Empire. The largest sum of money mentioned in Mark is 300 denarii, as much as a farm worker might earn in a year, when farm workers were paid a subsistence wage. Social contacts mentioned in the Gospel would agree with this. Mark is in complete contrast in all these features with Luke, who shows pretensions to literary education and many of whose characters belong to a higher and wealthier level of society.

On the other hand we must not undervalue Mark. If our evangelist is lacking in education in Greek terms he came from a province which had its own Biblical and Jewish culture, of which he shows an awareness. He has natural gifts as a writer and uses Greek with clarity, sensitiveness and strength. He does not often present us with the awkwardness of thought and language that we meet in Luke.

The impress of Semitic idiom is strong on his Greek. Whether he depended immediately on written or oral sources, the stage when the tradition about Jesus was in Aramaic lies not far behind our evangelist. He still has some expressions in Aramaic.

The account of the Institution of the Eucharist in Mk. xiv.22-5 reads as follows:

And while they were eating he took bread, said a blessing and broke it and was giving it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them and they all drank of it. And he said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many. Verily I say to you that I shall not again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

This differs very little in substance from the translation you know. At one or two places I have translated a Greek text a little different from the text commonly printed, but you have now been warned that this might happen.

'Bless' is one of the words that need explanation. We use it freely, but do we know what it means? In origin it seems to be a pagan English word and clearly meant 'mark or smear with blood' or the like. At the conversion of the English it was christianised and is now used as we know.

We do not know the original meaning of the Semitic *barak*, which is

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current both in Hebrew and Aramaic, but it appears to signify 'give power, vigour, strength' to someone or something.

This 'someone or something' raises an important point. We are used to maintaining a clear distinction between God and man, between people and things, but in primitive times it was not so. The difference between God and man is blurred and, more surprising, that between God and things seems to fade away.

You remember the story of Jacob's dream at Bethel on his way to stay with Laban in Mesopotamia (Genesis xxviii). He put a stone for a pillow under his head, went to sleep on it, dreamed his dream, and in the morning took the stone which he had put under his head and set it up for a *massebah* and poured oil on the top of it and said: 'This stone which I have set up for a *massebah* shall be God's house.' All very well, but why does he pour oil on it? Oil is used to convey life and strength. He does not want to give these just to a stone but as an offering to his God, but in practice he does not distinguish.

In the course of the Old Testament this distinction is made rigorous. 'Bless' is confirmed more and more to God and men in its application and in the New Testament is rigorously so restricted. The few apparent exceptions that we find prove on examination to be only apparent.

The same is true in Rabbinic Judaism. The tractate *Berakoth* ('Blessings') in the *Mishnah* contains material from the first two Christian centuries and not later. In it we have a number of blessings in their actual wording. Unlike many Christian blessings they have an exclusive Godward direction. We say: 'Bless, O Lord, these thy gifts.' Rabbinic Judaism said and says over bread: 'Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth', and over wine: 'Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who createst the fruit of the vine.'

Early Christianity was in line with Jewish practice in this matter. For example, Judaism has a grace after meals, the *Birkath ha-Mazon*, of which the first two paragraphs now run as follows:

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who feedest the whole world with thy goodness, with grace, with loving kindness and tender mercy; thou givest food to all flesh, for thy lovingkindness endureth for ever. Through thy great goodness food hath never failed us: O may it not fail us for ever and ever for thy great name's sake, since thou nourishest and sustainest all beings, and doest good unto all, and providest food for all thy creatures whom thou hast created. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who givest food unto all.

We thank thee, O Lord our God, because thou didst give as an heritage unto our fathers a desirable, good and ample land, and because thou didst bring us

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forth, O Lord our God, from the land of Egypt, and didst deliver us from the house of bondage; as well as for thy covenant which thou hast sealed in our flesh, thy Law which thou hast taught us, thy statutes which thou hast made known unto us, the life, grace and lovingkindness which thou hast bestowed upon us, and for the food wherewith thou dost constantly feed and sustain us on every day, in every season, at every hour.

By good fortune we have from the fourth century A.D. three Christian cousins of this prayer. The first comes from a handbook of Christian practice of the second half of the fourth century (the *Apostolic Constitutions* VII.xlix) which begins: 'Blessed art thou, Lord.' The second form is found in Ps.-Athanasius, *De Virginitate* xii which also seems to belong to the fourth century and has nearly the same text as the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

The third form, which is quoted in Chrysostom's commentary on Matthew a few years later, is fuller (PG lviii.561):

Blessed art thou, God, who dost feed us from our youth and dost give food to all flesh; fill our hearts with joy and gladness that we always have enough of everything and may abound to every good work in Christ Jesus our Lord, with whom glory and honour and might be to thee with the Holy Spirit for ever, Amen. Glory be to thee, Lord, glory to thee, holy one, glory to thee, O king, because thou hast given us food for rejoicing. Fill us with the Holy Spirit that we may be found well-pleasing before thee and may not be put to shame when thou requitest each man according to his works.

The earlier part of this prayer down to 'Amen' is used as the grace at dinner at Oriel College, Oxford.

Earlier I mentioned apparent exceptions in the New Testament. 1C. x.16, for instance, is rendered 'the cup of blessing which we bless'. An examination of New Testament usage suggests that the rendering should be 'the cup of blessing as to which we say the blessing', the blessing being not the blessing of the cup but the blessing of God said over the cup.

Similar is the use of the word for 'thanksgiving' (*eucharistia*). In the New Testament it is used for giving thanks to God. Later in the ancient Church it is transferred to the elements and writers describe them as being 'Eucharistised'. How does this come about?

We may find something of an answer to this question when we look at the history of the words for 'bless' in the ancient Church. εὐλογεῖν, the Greek word for 'bless', meant 'to speak well of, to praise'. Only when it is used to translate the Hebrew *barak* does it come to mean 'bless'. In the Greek Bible it shares in the increasing limitation of this word to God and mankind. In the ancient Church its use widens to include the blessings of things and we find it used in Origen and the liturgies from the fourth

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century for blessing the Eucharistic elements. The Latin *benedicere* has a parallel history in pagan usage, meaning ‘to speak well of, to praise’. Next it shares the limitation of εὐλογεῖν and Hebrew *barak*, expanding its meaning in the Latin Church to include things. In the fourth century and subsequent liturgical texts it is used of blessing the Eucharistic elements. A valuable piece of research would be the exploration of this widening of the meaning of Greek εὐλογεῖν and Latin *benedicere* in Christian use until they reach the sense of ‘bless’ or ‘consecrate’.

‘Covenant’ requires comment but this had best be deferred until I treat of sacrifice. Unlike the use of the word now, when its associations are principally legal, covenant in the Bible is in terms of sacrifice.

After Mark we can treat Matthew’s account very briefly. Earlier I discussed the relation of Matthew’s account to that of Mark. If I may repeat, Matthew takes over Mark with only two significant changes. First Mark has ‘And he took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them and they all drank of it.’ Matthew changes the last clause to direct speech ‘and gave it to them saying: “All of you drink of it.”’ This change brings the text on the cup into line with that on the bread, ‘Take, eat’, and is an instance of the tendency to conform the two parts of the narrative into line with each other.

The second change will prove later on to be more significant. After the words over the cup ‘shed for many’ Matthew adds ‘for the forgiveness of sins’. We may regard this as a perfectly legitimate expansion of the story, but, as we shall see later, it may have an interesting bearing on the early history of the Eucharist.

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The following changes are proposed in the text of the BFBS edition of 1958 (= Nestle Aland²⁵). The reading of 1958 is put first and then, preceded by a square bracket, the proposed reading.

Mk. xiv.22 λαβόν] + τόν Μ Σ 69-983-1689 22 348 713 *al.* The article is often used in the New Testament in a way recalling Hebrew idiom, cf. M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*³ (The Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 93ff. Jeremiah’s protest, quoted by Black on p. 93, seems justified; cf. Mk. i.13 οἱ ἄγγελοι, L. xviii.2 *v.l.* ἐν τῇ πόλει, and my article ‘Jesus, his Family and his Disciples’ in the *Journal of New Testament Studies*, xv (1982), 3-19. The same interpretation would apply to verse 23 τὸ ποτήριον ‘the cup’ in this incident.

εὐλογήσασ] εὐλόγησεν καὶ D 50 *L a d.* Parataxis is frequently changed to hypotaxis, a participle and a main verb instead of two main verbs joined by καί, as a matter of style, cf. H. J. Cadbury, *The Style and*