ANAMNESIS AND THE EUCHARIST

Engaging with contemporary Anglican theology of the Eucharist through the concept of anamnesis, this book seeks to enrich the Church’s understanding of transformation and mission. Eucharistic theology finds its place in the midst of much contemporary Anglican theology but little attention has been given to the interrelationship between mission and the Eucharist. Julie Gittoes engages with the work of David Ford, Rowan Williams and Catherine Pickstock who share a common concern to engage with the way in which the Eucharist shapes the life of the worshipping community as the body of Christ.

Focusing on the concept of anamnesis (remembrance or memorial), Gittoes highlights a language of connection in the way in which anamnesis describes the integration of historical, sacramental and ecclesial embodiments of Christ. The Eucharist looks back to the saving events of Christ’s life, death and resurrection; through it the Church is nourished with the body of Christ; participating in it anticipates the eschatological fulfilment of the Kingdom. This book explores the connection between the source event of the Church’s life and the transformative encounter with Christ in the Eucharist, the effects of which are seen in social/ethical/political action and the Church’s mission.
ASHGATE NEW CRITICAL THINKING IN RELIGION,
THEOLOGY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

The Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies series brings high quality research monograph publishing back into focus for authors, international libraries, and student, academic and research readers. Headed by an international editorial advisory board of acclaimed scholars spanning the breadth of religious studies, theology and biblical studies, this open-ended monograph series presents cutting-edge research from both established and new authors in the field. With specialist focus yet clear contextual presentation of contemporary research, books in the series take research into important new directions and open the field to new critical debate within the discipline, in areas of related study, and in key areas for contemporary society.

Series Editorial Board:

Jeff Astley, North of England Institute for Christian Education, Durham, UK
David Jasper, University of Glasgow, UK
James Beckford, University of Warwick, UK
Raymond Williams, Wabash College, Crawfordsville, USA
Geoffrey Samuel, University of Newcastle, Australia
Richard Hutch, University of Queensland, Australia
Paul Fiddes, Regents Park College, University of Oxford, UK
Anthony Thiselton, University of Nottingham, UK
Tim Gorringe, University of Exeter, UK
Adrian Thatcher, College of St Mark and St John, UK
Alan Torrance, University of St Andrews, UK
Judith Lieu, King’s College London, UK
Terrance Tilley, University of Dayton, USA
Miroslav Volf, Yale Divinity School, USA
Stanley Grenz, Baylor University and Truett Seminary, USA
Vincent Brummer, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands
Gerhard Sauter, University of Bonn, Germany

Other Titles in the Series:

Revelation, Scripture and Church
Theological Hermeneutic Thought of James Barr, Paul Ricoeur and Hans Frei
Richard R. Topping

Pseudo-Dionysius as Polemicist
The Development and Purpose of the Angelic Hierarchy in Sixth Century Syria
Rosemary A. Arthur
Anamnesis and the Eucharist
Contemporary Anglican Approaches

JULIE GITTOES
Vicar of All Saints, Hampton, Diocese of London, UK
In memory of Lawson Ira Gittoes
This page intentionally left blank
Contents

Acknowledgements ix

Introduction: Why Anamnesis? 1

1 The Anamnesis Debate 9

2 Memory in the Anglican Tradition 33

3 What Happens in the Eucharist? Story and Transformation 51

4 Meeting God in our Remembering of Him 73

5 On the Eucharist: Memory, Time and Transformation 101

6 Anamnesis and the Eucharist: Consequences for Mission 133

Bibliography 153
Index 163
This page intentionally left blank
Acknowledgements

This book grew out of a doctoral thesis, and I am grateful to Daniel Hardy and Denys Turner for their supervision at different stages of the project. I was fortunate to have friends who provided much encouragement while I was in Cambridge, and also for their continued interest and conversation since then. Particular thanks to Peter Waddell, Rachel Muers, Susannah Ticciati and Jon Cooley for many an extended lunch.

I have benefited from the spiritual support of sharing in the Eucharist within two parishes in the Kensington Area of the London Diocese. Thanks are due to Brian Leathard, my training incumbent and friend; to the people of St. James’, Hampton Hill and to those who share in the life and mission of the parish of All Saints’, Hampton.

My doctoral work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Board; the Scholarship Fund of St. Deiniol’s Library; the Bethune-Baker Fund and Steel Theological Scholarship of the Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge. I have also benefited from having the opportunity to present short papers at the Society for the Study of Theology’s annual conference in preparation for this book.

I owe a great debt to my parents, Lawson and June, and to my sister Vivienne. Their patience and ongoing reassurance has been invaluable.
This page intentionally left blank
Introduction

Why Anamnesis?

He explained to them in the whole of scripture the things that referred to himself ... he broke the bread, and offered it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him ... Without a moment’s delay they set out and returned to Jerusalem.¹

In a fundamental sense worship is a corporate activity; it is social in structure within which people are embedded into a particular kind of society. The opening words of the liturgy gather those present in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is a corporate confession; the Gospel is proclaimed; the creed is recited; the congregation is led in an act of incorporating intercessions; the community shares in the Eucharist and is sent out in love and peace. Participation forms a corporate identity grounded in the remembrance of a particular story. To engage with the concept of anamnesis is to understand more fully the nature of the relationship between the Church’s worship and its life and witness as the body of Christ in and for the world. It is the Eucharist that lies at the heart of the Church’s mission.

The Church is a community that gathers for anamnesis, and is in a profound sense formed and shaped by it. The sacraments form a focal point for this ongoing process: initiating new members into the Church and sustaining, challenging and nourishing them within it. This is perhaps most evident in the Eucharist, and most fully developed in the sense of remembrance and anticipation at its heart. The quoted verses from Luke 24 illuminate the complex dynamics of this activity. The climax of the story of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus occurs when the risen Christ breaks bread with them. This text gives us an insight into the Eucharist. Just as in the liturgy, the disciples hear scriptures explained to them; then they share a meal during which the risen Christ is recognised in the breaking of bread. There is continuity with the Last Supper and there is a moment of transformative encounter, which moves the disciples to return to Jerusalem where the Church is coming into being, and they begin to engage in mission.

Individually and corporately we need to remember and anticipate in order to make sense of our own identities and purpose in the world. The Church is dependent on its act of anamnesis: her life and witness over two thousand years has been punctuated by obedience to the command ‘Do this in remembrance of me’. It is a practice that is both retrospective and anticipatory. In the Eucharist we remember God’s acts in salvation history, culminating in Christ’s life, death and resurrection and focusing on the Last Supper. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus we encounter Christ in the present to be nourished and transformed. The Church is called into being. The process of anamnesis has effects in the present as the Church is sent out in

service and mission as his Church, anticipating the future Kingdom. To share in broken bread and out poured wine is to participate in the body of Christ. Thereby, the Church is formed as the body of Christ in and for the world. The Church celebrates the Eucharist and is formed by participating in it.

This eucharistic anamnesis is not a mere spectacle; nor is it a mysterious phenomenon to be wondered at. It is participatory. However, discussion of the Eucharist has been, and continues to be, a focus of controversy with regard to both theology and practice, becoming a sign of pain and division. Indeed, the Churches’ understanding of anamnesis has not been unproblematic, with interpretations ranging from notions of re-immolation to bare memorialism, in which different kinds of objective and subjective realities have been prioritised. These extreme views are neither adequate nor accurate. It is against this background that I wish to contend that a renewed engagement with the concept of anamnesis has the potential to make a constructive contribution to eucharistic theology, which underpins mission. Jesus’ words of institution are the starting point for the Eucharist, but its potential is broader than that, as Kasper notes:

the anamnesis of Christ provides the inward unity of its different aspects. Through this memorial, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are made sacramentally present in the feast in the form of bread and wine, the Lord who is present is extolled, and his final coming implored; and thus the fellowship (communion) with the Lord is communicated.2

It is an important concept for the discussion of the dynamics of the Eucharist. The sacramental act of anamnesis draws the Church into a transformative encounter with the risen Christ in the present. This occurs within the context of retrospection and anticipation. On the one hand, successive Eucharists connect the Church to Christ’s life, death and resurrection, the culmination of God’s saving acts in history focused on the Last Supper. On the other hand, through participation in the Eucharist the Church is called into the mission of God – building his Kingdom – which comes to fulfilment at the eschaton. Anamnesis has the capacity to facilitate the reintegration and reinvigoration of our conception of the relationship between the historical, sacramental and ecclesial embodiments of Christ, and to do justice to the past, present and future dimensions of the Eucharist.

I take as my starting point ecumenical discussions of the Eucharist. However, my main focus will be on the work of three contemporary Anglican writers, chosen because each of them takes seriously the sacramental dimensions of anamnesis. It is hoped that through close engagement with their contributions to eucharistic theology, set against an awareness of the breadth of their Anglican heritage, it will be possible to discern the wider potential of anamnesis and draw out the link between source event, encounter and effects. Such effects reflect the breadth of the Church’s mission and calling to be the body of Christ building God’s Kingdom.

My aim is to explore the way in which the concept of anamnesis helps us to understand the dynamics of retrospection and anticipation in the Church’s life, and the effects of encounter with the risen Christ in the present. The act of anamnesis looks back to a source event of the Church; through its present performance of that

command the Church is formed in anticipation of the Lord’s coming again. Hence, I will explore *anamnesis* as a language of connection. I choose this phrase because it describes the integration of the historical, sacramental and ecclesial embodiments of Christ. The Eucharist points backwards to the saving events of Christ’s life, death and resurrection, nourishes the Church now with the body of Christ, and anticipates the eschatological fulfillment of the Kingdom. In particular, the practice of eucharistic *anamnesis* enables the Church to encounter the transformative fullness of the risen Christ with the result that that fullness is expressed in action and service.

The term ‘source event’ will be used throughout as a summary expression, which needs to be fully understood as referring to Christ’s life, death and resurrection as the culmination of God’s saving acts in history. For the Church, this finds its focus in the Last Supper, which is continually recalled in the Eucharist. At the Last Supper, The Church stands at the moment of betrayal before the sacrifice, in the light of the resurrection, and is called to ‘Do this in remembrance’. Therefore, the Eucharist is retrospective, and also has an anticipatory dimension. It looks backward to this Last Supper and forward to the eschaton, and is concerned with the transformation and building of the Kingdom of God in the present. Thus, *anamnesis* is a word designating the connection between past and future in the present: a present *anamnesis* in which the Church receives the sacramental body of Christ in order to become the ecclesial body of Christ. This is transformative, and the effects of such transformative encounter are discerned in terms of mission, service and engagement with the social political issues of the world.

At this point it is also necessary to state some limitations of this project. The breadth and depth of the Anglican tradition is such that a single chapter can serve only as a summary and contextual statement for the contemporary writers under consideration, rather than a comprehensive treatment. David Ford, Catherine Pickstock and Rowan Williams were chosen as representatives of contemporary Anglican eucharistic theology because their contributions highlight in different ways the dimensions of *anamnesis* that are central to this discussion. Their own work also takes seriously the contributions of the others. For the purposes of this thesis it has been necessary to focus on areas of their work which illuminate and take forward the discussion of *anamnesis*, and therefore I have had to be selective. It is not the intention to give a complete profile of each writer. The nature of their theology has also influenced the form of this discussion. They do not approach the Eucharist within the framework of historical or systematic theology (relating it to Christology or to the role of the Holy Spirit, for example). Consequently this thesis is located within the liturgical dimension.

Liturgically and theologically there is an important connection to be made between *anamnesis* and *epiclesis*: the remembrance of the source event is made possible by the action of the Holy Spirit. However, the decision to focus upon the concept of *anamnesis* means that it is neither possible to enter into an exploration of *epiclesis* nor to explain in detail their connection. The writers with whom I am primarily concerned do not address the nature of priesthood in relation to their own

---

work on eucharistic theology. Therefore although the Eucharist is bound up with this ministry, it is not possible to devote space to discussion about priesthood here.

Exploring the potential of memory in relation to the Eucharist and transformation also raises particular psychological questions about the use of memory. Although it is not my concern to address that strand of work, it will be necessary to attempt to identify the distinctive nature of the way in which memories can be healed (for example, in the work of Rowan Williams). Finally, it is not my intention to set out an explicit ecclesiology, but the nature of the discussion cannot avoid these concerns. Engagement with the writers mentioned on the question of eucharistic anamnesis and transformation demands that the implications for the Church are noted.

There are five main chapters in this book, which will be outlined below. In order to engage fruitfully with contemporary Anglican approaches to the Eucharist and the concept of anamnesis it is necessary to include a discussion of the debate about that term. Therefore in Chapter 1, I briefly outline some of the issues about definition and interpretation. Ecumenical discussion will form a prominent part of this chapter, as well as looking at the work of two contemporary writers whose understanding of anamnesis is creative, but heavily weighted to a proclamatory, rather than sacramental, viewpoint. Given that my main focus is upon the contribution from Anglican theology, the second chapter will be devoted to a survey of writing about the Eucharist from within that particular tradition. The aim will be to draw out resources or approaches which will be insightful to current contributions. Against the background of the general debate and more specific tradition, I will devote three chapters to the work of the theologians under particular consideration. The concluding chapter will draw together their insights and contributions to the subject under discussion, and explore the implications for understanding the Eucharist and mission.

The purpose of Chapter 1 is to set the discussion of anamnesis in a broader context. This raises questions about the diversity of interpretations of the term and its use in the context of the Eucharist. The diversity in understanding anamnesis reveals denominational positions, but does not make the discussion any less worthwhile, for, as Gregory Dix points out the meaning drawn from the anamnetic command by successive generations of Christians has been enriched and deepened in a variety of ways.  

Following on from this preliminary discussion, consideration is given to the way in which anamnesis has been reflected upon within the ecumenical context. Particular attention is devoted to the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) Faith and Order Paper, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM). The results of these conversations take seriously those issues surrounding the Eucharist. ARCIC draws particular attention to the interrelationship between the Eucharist and Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. BEM explores the nature of anamnesis as both retrospective and anticipatory. These issues are important in any consideration of anamnesis, emphasising the connection between source event and the effects for the Church in its own formation.

---

Why Anamnesis?

and action. Anglican (Church of England) responses to these contributions are also considered.

At the end of Chapter 1, I examine the work of two theologians whose perspective on the Eucharist and anamnesis has been shaped by cultural memory and musical repetition. This adds breadth to the discussion and shows some of the potential and disadvantages within a predominantly proclamatory understanding of anamnesis. I include the work of M. Welker, who uses theories derived from cultural memory to discuss the ways in which memory can both stabilise a community and become the driving force behind development. From the perspective of narrative theology, Loughlin explores the way in which the remembrance of the Christian story within the Eucharist leads to incorporation into the eucharistic lifestyle of gift and response. In addition, Begbie’s engagement with memory in relation to the Eucharist through the lens of musical repetition provides an interesting insight into the dynamics of non-identical repetition.

As I am primarily concerned with Anglican approaches to eucharistic theology it is necessary to reflect on that theological tradition. There emerges from the discussion in Chapter 2, a concern to understand the Eucharist as a source of spiritual nourishment and future hope which renews the Church’s commitment to mission and service. Any summary of the heritage of Anglicanism will be limited in its scope, but the aim has been to explore important categories, such as sacrifice and presence. Whether as liturgists, theologians or social reformers, there is a certain reticence in the face of the sacramental mystery and a creative use of language. Whilst Anglicanism has resisted rigid doctrinal definitions, the richness of material within its traditions sheds light on the place of the eucharistic anamnesis in relation to past, present action and future hope. This will provide some background to the work of the three contemporary Anglican theologians, whose work is the focus of this thesis.

These theologians share a conviction that the Eucharist is central to the philosophical and theological task and to Christian life. In their treatment of the Eucharist, there are overlapping themes: non-identical repetition, transformation and gift, to name a few. Although they hold much in common in terms of their inheritance and concerns, it remains to be seen how they differ in their treatment of, and emphasis on, memory, and in their understanding of the outworking of their eucharistic theology. This can be seen in the ways in which they talk about the source event, the nature of the effects of anamnesis and the degree to which their use of memory does justice to its potential as a language of connection. I will spend some time exploring their work individually before drawing together some concluding reflections on the role of anamnesis in their theologies, highlighting the particular strengths and weaknesses of the concept in relation to eucharistic theology.

The third chapter explores the contribution made by David Ford to eucharistic theology. He writes as a lay theologian in Cambridge, where he is Regius Professor of Divinity. He is concerned about the responsibilities of those in the academy to Church and society. His work has been influenced by Levinas, Jüngel and Ricoeur, resulting in a concern for ethical responsibility in relation to the other. He takes history and scripture seriously and is developing a wisdom based theology. In Self and Salvation he writes about the connection between participation in the Eucharist
Anamnesis and the Eucharist

and Christian living, emphasizing the importance of grounding encounter with Christ in the command to ‘do this in remembrance of me’.\(^5\) By drawing on John’s Gospel, Ford asserts the radical nature of the Eucharist as improvisation on the command to ‘do this’. In this framework the resurrection is not a simple reversal of all that went before. Such transformation is reliant on the dangerous memory of Jesus, which has social and political implications.\(^6\)

Therefore, it is also significant to engage with the way in which Ford’s theology of the Eucharist relates to the issues arising in the church’s ministry in particular contexts, for example in Urban Priority Areas. For Ford, the emphasis is substantially placed on the effects of the Eucharist, understood in essentially interpersonal terms. Mission is based on the enactment of obedient service, grounded in Johannine improvisation upon Christ’s words of institution. His discussion of the source event itself is more nebulous, and the means by which the transformation is brought about and the formation of connections through *anamnesis* are not the focus of attention.

Chapter 4 considers the work of Catherine Pickstock who is most notably associated with Radical Orthodoxy, a theological movement which emerged during her time as a postgraduate student and then lecturer in the Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge. Her concern is to respond to the culture of postmodernism, and the dichotomies of life and death; presence and absence. In *After Writing* she writes of the need to unify the historical, sacramental and ecclesial embodiments of Christ, aiming to reverse a fundamental shift in understanding which took place in the medieval period.\(^7\) The concept of *anamnesis* plays a significant role in this and in understanding the dynamics of their interrelationship. It is to Pickstock that Ford is indebted in his use of the phrase ‘non-identical repetition’, which she uses to contrast with the limitation of the eucharistic action to a miracle to be observed, cut off from the drama of salvation. It is an event within the Church’s ‘narrative action’. Pickstock examines the way in which anticipation and remembrance are drawn together within the Eucharist, and argues that in liturgy God is met in our remembering of Him.\(^8\)

Pickstock utilises the concept of memory in relation both to time and to the encounter with Christ in the Eucharist, working from a philosophical perspective. She stresses the necessity of the ecclesial and relational context of the Eucharist, in particular in overcoming the dichotomy between presence and absence. Recollection and repetition are situated within the community. Its narrative and liturgy are shaped by memory and hope. She claims that participation in the Eucharist is an encounter with Christ that should enable us to live it ‘again differently in our own lives’.\(^9\) However, she does not develop the implications of this in as explicitly a social or political way as Ford and (as we shall see below) Williams do; nor does she

---


\(^6\) D. Ford, *Self and Salvation*, pp. 204, 208.


\(^8\) C. Pickstock, *After Writing*, p. 233.

engage with scripture, or the complexity of history. There may be reasons for this, such as her primary commitment to the academy in challenging post-modernity’s assumptions. For Pickstock the source event itself is multifaceted, and she stresses the transformative encounter with Christ. However, she risks privatising or foreclosing the significance and impact of this by neglecting the missiological, social, political effects of mediating the fullness of Christ’s body to Church.

In Chapter 5, I consider the work of Rowan Williams. He has held academic posts in Cambridge and Oxford before accepting episcopal appointments in Wales, and becoming Archbishop of Canterbury. His theological work spans a range of interests in history, literature and social critique, within which he considers the nature and function of memory. He explores its relation to human and divine time, its creative and critical dynamics and its capacity to transform and challenge, which finds its focus in the Eucharist, which is itself socially disturbing. He shares with Pickstock a concern for understanding the nature of sign-making and the importance of the language of gift in relation to the sacrament. However, he develops more fully the social and ecclesial implications of participation in the Eucharist.

The Church, claims Williams, should be a place of challenge as well as a place where voices are heard. His consideration of memory and the Eucharist illustrates the way in which this can take place. Williams is quite clear that the creative dynamic of memory is not just a reaffirmation of collective memory or mere mental recall. By virtue of the resurrection there is the potential for memories of defeat and failure to be restored through encounter with the risen Christ. Thus remembering has a future dynamic that enables transformation; it is a recapitulation rather than a reversal. However, he develops more fully the social and ecclesial implications of participation in the Eucharist.

The concluding chapter draws together what has been learnt about anamnesis and develops the ways in which it enriches our understanding of the way the Church moves from the past to the future. A key dimension of this is the Church’s mission under God. Contributions to this area of discussion from the perspective of sacramental theology are particular relevant in the wake of mission-shaped church. Mission is a key topic of discussion at every level of the Church. It is debated at General Synod and finds a place on the agenda of most Parochial Church Councils. A renewed focus on mission is shaping the way in which clergy are trained and has encouraged the development of fresh expression of church.

The importance and potential of the concept of anamnesis have been obscured by disagreements over how it has been defined and interpreted. However, the work of those involved in ecumenical dialogue and other theologians has done much to recover anamnesis as a fruitful term and taking the discussion forward in helpful and insightful ways. The assessment of the approaches of Ford, Pickstock and Williams reveals that anamnesis is a rich concept for understanding the way in which the Church

---