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UMI
A Liturgical People:
The Role of Common Worship in the Ecclesiology of Michael Ramsey
as seen in The Gospel and the Catholic Church

by

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Introduction

"Surrounded by men and women too apathetic even to be hostile, the Christians are driven to think out where the relevance of the Church really lies."¹ Such is the situation of the Church of England in the 1920’s and 1930’s that leads Michael Ramsey to the writing of his first and most enduring work, The Gospel and the Catholic Church. The decline of the English Church during this period has been documented by historian Adrian Hastings, who notes that while in the quarter century prior to World War I over 500 000 Anglicans were baptized annually, by 1932 the number of baptisms had fallen to below 400 000.² These figures demonstrate the impact of the increasing lack of interest in Christianity of 1920’s and 1930’s England. Hastings sums up this apathetic attitude towards the Christian faith, saying,

For the learned, the serious, the chic and the beautiful, religion might on occasion be regretted like other attractions of childhood, it might be pandered to for the sake of social stability, it might still be a fascinating subject for scholarly enquiry, but for the current needs of today’s educated man, it was simply out.³

The response of many theologians to this obviously serious situation was the attempt to demonstrate the relevance of Christianity in the modern world. This was the agenda of the Modernist theology which was still prevalent in this period. In a society whose thought was dominated by rationalism and the dictates of science, Liberal-Protestant theologians tried to emphasize the reasonableness of the Christian faith. Drawing on the findings of the nineteenth century’s Quest for the Historical Jesus, they portrayed Jesus as a moral teacher or prophet, and


the true Christian faith as the attempt to follow in Jesus' footsteps. They saw it as their task to strip away from Christianity the accretions of time, so that the simple moral gospel of Jesus might be revealed. These unnecessary, and indeed disfiguring accretions included much of New Testament Christology, particularly that of the Pauline epistles, which Modernists judged to be shaped by the pagan superstitions of the cultures in which the young Church developed. Modernists stressed the need for the Church to change with the times, to evolve, if it was to retain its influence in society.

Many of these ideas found expression in the journal of the modernist movement in England, *The Modern Churchman*. A brief look through the May 1937 edition of this journal, which appeared the year following the publication of Ramsey's *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, reveals many of the key points of modernist thought. For instance, one article from this edition of the journal quotes Kenneth Ingram who defines religious liberalism as:

... that attitude of mind which seeks to discover what stumbling-blocks between religion and modern thought can be removed without the sacrifice of essential principals ... because it believes that religion should be essentially evolutionary, and that it will gain, and not lose, by attempting to think in the language of the age.4

Thinking in the language and terms of the modern, scientific age will necessarily mean relinquishing belief in miracles. One book reviewer finishes his analysis with the statement:

But with his closing sentences all Christians will agree: "After all, it will not depend upon our beliefs in reference to miracles or in reference to anything else, that we shall enter at last upon the Perfected Life of Heaven, but it will depend upon our constantly

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renewed endeavors to follow, in so far as the conditions of the present life of each one of us permits, our Lord’s most holy footsteps.\(^5\)

Equally suspect is sacramental theology which smacks of magic or superstition. One submission to the *Modern Churchman*, for instance, critiques St. Paul’s comments on the Eucharist:

Then next St. Paul writes of those who gluttonously and without spiritual feeling partake of the Christian sacramental elements as liable to incur illness and death: "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep" (i.e. have died) (1 Cor. xi, 30).

Here we have reached something in sacramental doctrine which might have come from central Africa. Can we imagine Jesus saying this?\(^6\)

Talk of miracles and mysteries must be suppressed, according to the modernists, if the Gospel is to survive in the modern world.

The Church should focus instead on the moral message of the Gospel, and put its energies towards the creation of a more just and equitable society. Another article in the May 1937 edition of the *Modern Churchman* stresses this role for the Church: "Today at any rate we all feel increasingly bound as Christians to do all in our power to realize the ideals of economic justice, social betterment, political freedom, and the League of Nations".\(^7\) Charles Raven (whose weekly New Testament class Ramsey attended while a curate in Liverpool) in his book entitled, *The Gospel and the Church: A Study of Distortion and its Remedy*, argues that the Church’s traditional concern with things supernatural has led to its ignoring and even denying the significance of creation and of society. He says,


\(^7\) "Signs of the Times: An Attempt to Liberalize Anglo-Catholicism", 65.
The Church has the opportunity and is discovering the necessity to revise its traditional attitude towards nature and history. But this attitude was, as we have seen, embodied in an ecclesiastical structure which despite the Reformation still maintains its general characteristics. So long as the Church by all its chief denominations is regarded as in effect a supernatural state whose organization follows the lines of secular politics, any radical reform is impeded if not wholly obstructed. The form of the Church prevents it from adapting itself to its modern environment: the old bottles can no longer contain the new-old wine of the gospel.  

Such was the response of the Modernists to the crisis of the Church.

Concurrent with the efforts of the Liberal-Protestants, however, another faction of the Church of England was pursuing an entirely different agenda. In the 1920’s and 1930’s the Anglo-Catholic movement, which had begun in the nineteenth century through the efforts of the Tractarians, continued to grow. During the 1920’s there was a proliferation of Anglican religious orders, and many of the bishops of the Church, including Gore, Lang, Frere and Garbett, were of Anglo-Catholic persuasion. Hastings records that when Cosmo Lang was appointed to the See of York,

... he was already publicly committed to advocating the legalization of the "Six Points" - -eucharistic vestments, the lighting of candles upon the altar, the use of wafers instead of common bread for Holy Communion, the eastward position of the celebrant, the ceremonial mixing of water with wine in the chalice, and the use of incense: the main outward symbols which in the mind of Catholic and Protestant alike distinguished the mass of the one from the communion service of the other.  

It is hardly surprising, then, that the major ecclesiastical issue of this decade was the revision of the 1662 Prayer Book, along what were perceived by many to be more Catholic lines. It is interesting to note that though the majority of English laity at the time were committed agnostics,

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their agnosticism was of a distinctly Protestant ilk, so that the efforts of the clergy to revise the Prayer Book were decisively defeated in the House of Commons.

By the 1930’s the Anglo-Catholic movement in England was increasingly influenced by the liturgical revival which was taking place within continental Roman Catholicism. This movement was concerned to recover the role of the laity in the liturgy, particularly in the eucharistic celebration, so that the Mass might be understood as "... a collective prayer in which the faithful should actively participate and which should really constitute the sacrament and focal point of Church life".10

Michael Ramsey, who grew up in a non-conformist home, was attracted to Anglo-Catholicism while studying at Cambridge in the 1920’s. He attended services at the Anglo-Catholic parish of St. Giles, and came to value the kind of worship he found there. Ramsey’s biographer, Owen Chadwick, records that Ramsey was caught up by "... the sense of mystery, and awe, and of another world at once far and near ... a sense that we were vividly in the presence of the passion of Jesus and also vividly near to heaven, to which the passion mysteriously belonged, so as to be brought from the past to the present".11 Ramsey’s interest in the later developments of the liturgical movement is much in evidence in The Gospel and the Catholic Church.

It was also at Cambridge that Ramsey came into contact with a further development in English theology, through his association with Sir Edwyn Hoskyns. Hoskyns, (who was the only Anglo-Catholic on staff in the divinity school at Cambridge) had studied in Berlin, and there

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10 ibid., 260.

been introduced to the European theology which was a reaction against Liberal-Protestantism. It was Hoskyns who introduced the writings of Karl Barth into the theological arena of England, through his translation of Barth’s commentary on Romans.

Hoskyns also contributed to the book entitled, *Essays Catholic and Critical* which appeared in 1926, and which, according to Adrian Hastings,

... gave back to the Church of England a viable theology of the supernatural, modifying the crudities of earlier Anglo-Catholic attitudes and producing a corpus of scholarship, at once creative and essentially orthodox, which could be the pride of any church and demonstrate a more than passable recovery from the theological doldrums of the preceding years.\(^{12}\)

Hoskyns’ article, entitled, "The Christ of the Synoptic Gospels" posed the questions:

What is the relation between the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of St. Paul, of St. John, and of Catholic piety? And further, what is the relation between the little groups of disciples called by Jesus from among the Galilean fishermen and the *Corpus Christi* of St. Paul or the *Civitas Dei* of St. Augustine?\(^{13}\)

Hoskyns’ answer to these questions asserted, in stark contrast to the presuppositions of the Modernists, not only that the entire New Testament could be read as a unity, but also that New Testament Christology originated not in pagan impositions upon the Gospel, but in the self-understanding of Jesus himself, and he emphasized the centrality of the Cross in the Gospel of Christ, and the legitimacy of the Church. Ramsey said of Hoskyns that, "I learned from him, more vividly than from anyone else, that the study of the New Testament is an exciting


adventure, and that while it calls for a rigorous-critical discipline, it is not made less scientific if the student brings to it his own experience of faith".\textsuperscript{14}

Ramsey, like his mentor, Hoskyns, was much influenced by the work of Karl Barth. Ramsey, like Barth, emphasises the otherness and mystery of God, and the impossibility that humankind mend the relationship with God. Moreover, Ramsey’s comments on the way in which even the brokenness and failings of the Church can be a revelation of God clearly reflect his reading of Barth, and on this point he quotes directly from Barth’s Epistle to the Romans.

Not everyone shared Ramsey’s enthusiasm for the kind of thinking exemplified by Barth, and by Hoskyns and the other contributors to Essays Catholic and Critical. Chadwick reports that Hoskyns felt isolated from his colleagues at Cambridge, one of whom once said that "Hoskyns . . . went to Berlin and they muddled his mind and when he came back he could never get it unmuddled".\textsuperscript{15} Charles Raven, in his book, The Gospel and the Church, includes a scathing critique of the new European theology which so influenced Hoskyns:

At the moment the demoralization of Europe by the Great War and its sequels has produced a wave of reactionary obscurantist theology similar to that which accompanied the barbarian invasions of the fifth century. Now as then calamity has shattered not only man’s complacency but his confidence. Pessimism and despair, for which there is no justification in Scripture or the Christian creed, produce an almost Manichean insistence upon the total depravity of the creature and the revival of a doctrine of God which by stress upon His transcendence in fact denies either that He is God or that He is the Father. In such times we may expect to find a recrudescence of superstition, of bibliolatry and demonology and irrationalism.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{15} Chadwick, Michael Ramsey: A Life, 28.

\textsuperscript{16} Raven, The Gospel and the Church, 195.
This kind of fierce reaction against Krisis theology is not really surprising, since its method provides the strongest possible critique of the Modernists' attempts to rationalize and demythologize the Gospel and the Church.

It is clear from the first pages of The Gospel and the Catholic Church that Ramsey understands and is concerned about the crisis which faces the Church in the twentieth century. It is equally clear that for Ramsey it is simply impossible to attempt to remedy this problem by paring down the Gospel and the Church to the lowest common denominator. The Gospel is not merely a great moral code, nor is the Church simply a society for the promotion of social justice. The relevance of the Church will never be discovered by pursuing the course of the Modernists. Ramsey says,

For the relevance of the Church of the Apostles consisted not in the provision of outward peace for the nations, nor in the direct removal of social distress, nor yet in any outward beauty of the Church itself, but in pointing to the death of Jesus the Messiah, and to the deeper issues of sin and judgement—sin in which the Christians had shared, judgement under which they stood with the rest of mankind. In all this the Church was scandalous and unintelligible to men, but by all this and by nothing else it was relevant to their deepest needs.17

The relevance of the Church will be rediscovered by means of the very things which Liberal-Protestant theologians sought to remove from Christian teaching. For Ramsey's ecclesiology focuses precisely on that which, from the human point of view, is most irrational—upon the Messiah who "... abandoned His useful and intelligible works in Galilee in order to bring God's kingdom by dying on the Cross".18 Ramsey asserts that before we will be able to

17 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 4.

18 ibid., 4.
convince the world of the relevance of Christianity, we must be able to explain what the Church is, and what is its relation to the paschal Gospel.

The Gospel and the Catholic Church is Ramsey's attempt to show that the Church is, before all else, the participation of people in the death and resurrection of Jesus. While it is not surprising to find Michael Ramsey, a convert to Anglo-Catholicism, arguing for the importance of the traditional structure of the Church, the form of his apology is unexpected. Ramsey argues not only that the Church is created by the death and resurrection of Christ, but also that the ancient order of the Church, with its liturgy, creeds, and episcopate, grows out of and reveals the passion of the Lord. Moreover, Ramsey asserts that without the traditional order of the Church, the truth of the Gospel is liable to dilution and corruption. In this thesis I intend to demonstrate that for Michael Ramsey common worship is definitive of the nature and activity of the Church. Although Ramsey insists in The Gospel and the Catholic Church that the paschal Gospel is revealed and upheld by the ancient order of the Church, its creeds, episcopacy, and liturgy, it nonetheless becomes clear in the study of this work that for Ramsey it is above all common worship, exemplified in the Eucharist, that defines and reveals Christian faith and living. For it is in the eucharistic assembly that Christians participate in the passion and new life of Christ, and it is by joining with Christ in his death and resurrection that we recover our destiny as worshippers of God.
Chapter I: Christ the Leitourgos

The destiny of humankind is to become the worshippers of God, our creator and our redeemer. For this reason we were created, and for this reason Israel was called to be the people of God. That this might finally be accomplished, God sent his Son, and for this he suffered death and was raised from the dead. This is the astounding claim which Ramsey makes at the beginning of The Gospel and the Catholic Church. He says,

Thus God purposes to unite mankind through a particular people, and to unite them, not in a program of philanthropic and social progress, but in worship of Himself. The end for which He has created men is that all their activities shall become an act of praise towards the perfect and eternal God.1

The unity which God desires is not an end in itself, nor is it sought after solely in order that a just and peaceful society may be created. Rather, humanity must be united first and foremost for the purpose of offering glory and praise to its creator. Disunity hinders God's people from pursuing this task for which they were created.

The nation of Israel is chosen to image God's purpose, and to make it known in the world. Ramsey says, "He chooses a nation, and delivers it from bondage, that it may be the instrument of his purpose, a worshipping people who continually praise Him for the acts whereby He has delivered them and whereby He has kept them in safety".2 In other words, God's purpose involves the creation of a relationship between himself and his people—a relationship which is characterized on God's part by his redeeming and sustaining acts, and on Israel's part by joyful thanksgiving. In its response to God, in dedicating their lives to the praise of God, Israel is to exemplify God's purpose in creation. In fact, as Ramsey puts it in a later work, "It

1 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 10.
2 ibid., 10.
is as if creation finds its voice in man, and man’s lips are unsealed in Israel to tell the praises of God who is both the maker of all things and the king of His people.\footnote{Michael Ramsey, \textit{The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ} (London: Longman, Green and Co. Ltd., 1949), 92.} Not only the voice of creation, Israel is also to be missionary to the world: "And Israel has a mission to the nations of the world, who are at last to be drawn into unity with her in the worship of the one God".\footnote{Ramsey, \textit{The Gospel and the Catholic Church}, 10.} Israel’s mission is to reveal to the rest of humanity that it is also their role and task to be worshippers of God, and that they belong in this relationship with him.

The worship of this people of God is of a specific kind. It is not the type of worship in which the worshippers engage in order to ensure the patronage of the deity, or at the very least, in order that they may avoid his enmity. Rather, God’s people worship him out of a real desire to do so--because they simply cannot help it. Their worship is the spontaneous and joyous response to the unsolicited, and even undeserved, creative and redeeming acts of God. Ramsey says, "He teaches this people, through painful struggles, to worship Him not self-interestedly as a means of securing their own prosperity, but for His own sake, for the praise of His glory, rehearsing His mighty works in creation, in nature, and in history".\footnote{ibid., 10.} Every aspect of the lives of the people of Israel is to be a celebration of the goodness of their God.

Israel is, however, unable to sustain the role of worshipper of God, and it fails in its task to be the voice of and missionary to the world. The reason for this failing is that Israel finds its sufferings incompatible with the promises of God. The problem is not simply that it is difficult to praise God in the midst of pain and suffering; the real stumbling block for Israel is
that the trials they endure seem to point to the conclusion that God has reneged on his part of the Covenant. Ramsey says,

In the midst of the promise and of the hope Israel was beset by the agony of its Passion. God is just and all ruling—and yet the innocent continually suffer. The more God discloses through His prophets the truths of His righteousness and sovereignty, the more acute does this problem of suffering become. Again and again there confronts us in the Old Testament the figure of the old man of God asking "why?".

In spite of this, Israel never gives up trusting in God, and dreams of the coming Messiah who will save them from their suffering: "The faith of Israel remains, while the passion of Israel is inescapable."

According to Ramsey it is the inability to recognize that the passion of Israel is in fact not a contradiction of God's promises but the means of their fulfilment, that causes the people of Israel to fail in their task, and to fail to recognize the Messiah when he finally comes. Ramsey quotes at length from the Servant Songs of Isaiah, explaining that,

... during the exile in Babylon a prophet who taught of God's sovereignty, righteousness and universal purpose as "Saviour" of all men... taught also that in this purpose a central place is being taken or will be taken by a "Servant of the Lord" who suffers.

The suffering that the servant endures "enables men to have deliverance and peace." Ramsey notes that the theme of the sufferer is not limited to the Servant Songs, and points to Psalm 22 as another example of this image within Hebrew Scripture. This selection is of particular significance to Ramsey's thought, since within this psalm the image of the sufferer is directly

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6 ibid., 12.
7 ibid., 12.
8 ibid., 12.
9 ibid., 16.
connected with the worship of God. The result of the sufferer's trials is said to be, "... men of every nation worshipping God, whose name has been vindicated and whose sufferer has been faithful".\(^{10}\) Yet the identification of the Messiah with the one who suffers was never made, Ramsey emphasizes, by the people of Israel. He says,

Like the fourth servant-song, this Psalm depicts sufferings which issue in the praise of God by the nations, and like the song it was never drawn into the Jewish imagery of the Messiah who should come. The passion of Israel meant more for Israel and for mankind than Israel ever knew.\(^{11}\)

Humanity, in its representative, Israel, is unable to live up to its potential, to become what it was meant to be, because in the midst of its pain it simply cannot imagine that God's salvation could be worked out in such a way.

By means of the death and resurrection of Jesus, God overturns human expectations, and goes beyond the possibilities of the human imagination. Absolutely central to Ramsey's thinking is the passion of the Lord, for it is Jesus' willingness to suffer and to die which restores to humanity the relationship with God, and the ability to perform their task as his worshippers. Ramsey says, "In Christ there is both the final utterance of the Yea of divine glory, and the perfect response of the Amen of Men's glorifying of God".\(^{12}\) In Jesus the divine initiative is spoken with a new and definitive clarity, and also in Jesus, humanity is enabled to present an acceptable response to that initiative.

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\(^{10}\) ibid., 17.

\(^{11}\) ibid., 17.

In order to highlight that which is most characteristic of Ramsey's thought, it may be helpful to note at this point the similarity and difference between the christology of Ramsey and that of one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century, Karl Rahner. Ramsey's presentation of Jesus as both the self-communication of God and the response of humanity, sounds remarkably similar to Rahner's statement that,

In this objectification, namely, Jesus Christ, the God who communicates himself and the man who accepts God's self-communication become irrevocably one, and the history of revelation and salvation of the whole human race reaches its goal.\(^{13}\)

Rahner, like Ramsey, understands Jesus to be both the definitive presentation to humanity of the address of God, and the embodiment of the perfect human response. The difference between the two christologies is, however, equally striking. While Rahner focuses on the incarnation as the moment in which "... the history of revelation has its absolute climax when God's self-communication reaches its unsurpassable high point through the hypostatic union"\(^{14}\), Ramsey presents the passion of Jesus as the point at which God's revelation of himself to humanity is complete, and at which the perfect human response is rendered. According to Ramsey, both sides of this covenant relationship are made possible only by the crucifixion of the Christ. That which was the cause of humanity's failure to achieve its destiny, becomes, through Jesus, the way in which it is finally fulfilled. Therefore,

In His death the Church rejoices and worships and shares. Of all the contrasts between the old Israel and the new Israel there is none greater than this. For the one, death was

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\(^{14}\) ibid., 174.
the stumbling-block; for the other, a death is the centre of its existence, of its worship, and of the way of unity it offers to mankind.  

For Ramsey, it is the passion rather than the incarnation which is central to the understanding of the work of Christ. It is the suffering and death of the incarnate Son of God which reconstruct the relationship between God and humanity, and so recover for humanity the role of worshippers of God.

Jesus is, first of all, the definitive means of "... the Yea of God's self-utterance through Christ towards men". Ramsey asserts that in Jesus God makes himself known to humanity. This revelation of God's self takes place supremely in the passion of Jesus. His birth and his life and work among people contribute to the revelation of God, but it is above all in the submission of Jesus to death on a cross that God makes himself known. It is this act of humility and self-abandonment which demonstrates with brilliant clarity, in one moment of history, the eternal character of God.

According to Ramsey, God's address to humanity, his "self-communication" (to use Rahner's phrase) has a very particular content. It is not simply communication, but "self-utterance", or, to put it another way, self-revelation. In Jesus God communicates in order to make himself known, to show his people who he is, to reveal his nature. It is not simply the presence of the Son of God among humankind which is significant, therefore, but what he does: "He perplexed those who looked to Him as a national leader, as a reformer, a prophet, a teacher, and a healer, and even as Messiah; for He abandoned His useful and intelligible works in Galilee

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16 ibid., 96.
in order to bring God's kingdom by dying on a cross". To the confounding of human expectations Jesus understands it to be God's purpose that he abandon his teaching and healing in order to suffer and to die.

Ramsey understands the significance of the passion to be Jesus' submission of his own will. Ramsey says, "... the death of the Lord means also the laying down of the self and the abandonment of all its claims". The passion is the ultimate expression of Jesus' willingness to renounce himself, his desires, his needs, his life, for the sake of another—for the sake of humanity, and for the sake of the Father. The real significance of Jesus' death, however, lies deeper even than this, the definitive moment in salvation history. The passion of Jesus reveals to finite and historical creatures the extra-historical and infinite nature of God. Ramsey explains that, "... the self-abandonment does not belong to that earthly life alone, for it is the expression in history of the self-giving of the eternal God". This one moment in history reveals to humanity that God is the one who eternally gives of himself. Moreover, the self-giving revealed in the passion is not only that of the creator for his creatures; Jesus' willingness to submit to the will of the Father also demonstrates the relationship of self-giving love which unites God the Father and God the Son:

The Son has nothing, wills nothing, is nothing of Himself alone. The self has its centre in Another. And this attitude and action of the Son in history reveals the character of the eternal God, the mutual love of Father and Son".

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17 ibid., 4.
18 ibid., 23.
19 ibid., 24.
20 ibid., 25.
The crucifixion is thus the clearest expression of who God is, and it is the climax of God's initiative to make himself known to humanity. Ramsey says,

Thus, before the humiliations of the Messiah in His life and death upon earth, there is the divine self-emptying whereby He "came" and "was sent" . . . Only the Crucifixion is the deepest visible point of the divine self-giving which entered history at Bethlehem and which begins in heaven itself. "There was a Calvary above which was the mother of it all".21

Jesus, the crucified one, is God's self-utterance, for in his willingness to relinquish his very self out of love for the Father and for humanity, the nature of God is shown forth.

While Jesus is the "Yea" of God's self-utterance, he is also the "Amen" of humanity's response: "In Christ the praise of God, the wonder before God, the zeal for God's righteousness, which fill the pages of the Psalter, find pure and flawless expression".22 This response, like the divine initiative, is realized in the passion of Jesus. The birth, the baptism, and the work of Jesus all tend towards and foreshadow the death which is their climax. The death of Jesus is the culmination of his work, the point at which he mends the breach between God and humanity, because it is in his death that the Son of God becomes fully human.

To be fully human means not merely to take on human form, but to participate in the entirety of human experience. Ramsey proposes that the fundamental human experience is death, for death is the evidence of that which defines human existence, and the very thing which God seeks, through Jesus to overcome—that is, death is the evidence of the human state of alienation from God. Ramsey says,

21 ibid., 24.

For death is not merely a physical fact, the cessation of the organic processes of life; it has a moral meaning since it marks the sinfulness and creatureliness and fragmentariness of mankind which is gripped by sin and falls short of the glory of God. Death in the New Testament, characterizes man in the essential contrast between man and God. In his birth Jesus enters into humanity, in his baptism he identifies himself with those who need to be cleansed from sin, in the wilderness he experiences temptation. Ramsey understands all of these moments in Jesus’ life as foreshadowing the final moment when, by accepting death, Jesus becomes fully and completely human. He says,

For our Lord enters so deeply into the meaning and the pain and darkness of a race cut off from God by sin that He seems momentarily to lose the vision of the Father, and He is never more man’s brother and never more “totus in nostrus” than in the cry of dereliction.

The Son of God becomes fully human when he enters through death into the loneliness and desolation of a people separated from God.

So deeply, indeed, does Jesus identify with the alienation of the human race that he becomes in the end isolated even from his human brothers and sisters. The type of death to which Jesus submits graphically symbolizes to all who see it the sinful and alienated nature of humankind. For Jesus dies the death of a criminal; he is tried, scourged, mocked, and suffers the public humiliation of crucifixion. He is left to die between two thieves, deserted by even his dearest friends. Ramsey says, "It is indeed a paradox that the death of Jesus, an event of utter isolation from men, should be the means of fellowship between men and God, and between men and one another".

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23 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 22.
24 ibid., 22-23.
25 ibid., 21.
In all Ramsey's discussion of the significance of the passion, there is little mention of the resurrection. This is not because Ramsey considers the resurrection to be insignificant --indeed he asserts that "... all this is true only because His death is followed by His resurrection"—but because, appealing to the Gospel according to John, he understands the crucifixion as the moment when God's plan is fulfilled. Therefore, he says,

... the Cross is to him [St. John] not a defeat needing the resurrection to reverse it, but rather a victory so decisive that the resurrection follows quickly to seal it; the exalting on the Cross and the exalting in heaven hardly seem separate.

For Ramsey crucifixion and resurrection are all of a piece. It is Jesus' abandonment of self that makes God known to humanity, and it is Jesus' complete identification with humanity in the physical and moral implications of death that puts him in the position to render to God the human response which God desires. It is as if the resurrection is the Father's ratification, or vindication of these accomplishments of the passion.

What is accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus is that God's purpose, to create in humanity a people whose very existence is dedicated to his praise, is finally fulfilled, and the relationship between God and humanity is restored. The man, Jesus, is able to do what Israel could not, offering glory to God, not in spite of, but by means of, suffering and death. Ramsey says,

In the ascended Christ there exists our human nature rendering to the Father the glory which Man was created in order to render; and, whether we speak of this as the presence

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26 ibid., 25.

27 ibid., 26.
of our high-priest before the Father's face or as the glorifying of the Father by the Son who was made man and died for us, the essential meaning is the same.  

By means of the death and resurrection of Jesus, God completes his creation and the destiny of humankind is fulfilled.

The incarnate Son of God in his passion and resurrection thus accomplishes the work for which Israel was chosen. Yet Ramsey makes the point that Jesus not only performs the task allotted to Israel, he is Israel. Ramsey has defined the identity of Israel as the nation whose unity is centred in the worship of God, and whose mission is to bring the rest of the world into unity with them in this activity. Therefore, when Israel is unable to complete the task, its very identity is forfeit. Ramsey emphasizes that Jesus assumes Israel’s identity in accomplishing God’s purpose, by pointing out that many of the titles applied to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament are applied to Jesus in the New Testament:

Now Jesus Christ assumes those titles and functions which in the scriptures are linked both with the Messiah and the nation—**Χριστός** Son of God, Servant . . . the closeness between our Lord and Israel is unmistakable in His whole Messianic work.  

Jesus, in that he offers the perfect response to the Father in his obedience to the Father’s will, embodies that which Israel was to be. Jesus, by himself, is the worshipping people of God:

"The vineyard has been lost to its former husbandmen, and the **people of God** consists only of the One who, rejected by his own, is dying on the Cross, alone the place where the name and the glory and the will and the promises of God are seen".  

When Jesus, in his death and

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29 Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 20

30 ibid., 21.
resurrection, takes on the role of Israel as the one who offers glory to God, he assumes the very identity of the people of God.

It might be suggested that Ramsey’s identification of Jesus with the nation of Israel has a somewhat anti-semitic tone. He unapologetically presents Jesus as Israel’s replacement. Perhaps if Ramsey had written The Gospel and the Catholic Church later in the twentieth century, he might have attempted to mitigate or soften his language. He could not, however, have altered the underlying conviction that Jesus, by means of his passion and resurrection, becomes the embodiment of God’s purpose—a nation whose identity is as the worshippers of God—without doing irreparable damage to his ecclesiology. For the point of Ramsey’s insistence that Jesus is himself the worshipping people of God, i.e. Israel, is that the community which comes into being through his death and resurrection is not founded by Jesus, rather it is Jesus. Ramsey says,

Jesus Christ, in His solitary obedience, is the Church. Its existence does not begin with the addition of Jesus to men or of men to Jesus. The Israel of God is Jesus on the Cross; and those who will be united with Him will enter into an Israel which exists already.31

Once more, a comparison with the thought of Karl Rahner may serve to point out the distinctiveness of Ramsey’s construction. Just as Ramsey’s christology differs from Rahner’s, so also do their ecclesiologies sharply contrast. Because it is, for Rahner, in the incarnation that God’s self-communication is most clearly and tangibly offered to humanity, it is imperative that God’s offer of himself remain tangible following the ascension of Christ, if the offer is to be truly definitive and absolute. This consideration provides the basis for Rahner’s understanding of the nature and role of the Church; it is the prolongation of Christ’s bodily presence on earth,

31 ibid., 21.
without which salvation would be incomplete, for it would be merely the transcendental, interior revelation, without the benefit of an absolute and final concretization. Thus Rahner describes the Church as the "Fundamental Sacrament". The Church is,

... the one abiding symbolic presence, similar in structure to the incarnation ... in which sign and what is signified are united inseparably but without confusion, the grace of God in the "flesh" of an historical and tangible ecclesiastical embodiment ... because otherwise the grace of Christ (who always remains man), would also be something merely transitory and replaceable.32

While Rahner does not attempt to link the creation of the Church with the command or desire of Jesus, he does present the Church as an institution whose creation was necessitated by the departure of the bodily presence of Jesus among people. In other words, whether or not Jesus literally founded the Church, it came into being in order to continue his mission, in order, that is, to ensure that God's self-revelation might remain tangibly accessible to humanity. Those who are baptized are initiated into the mission of the Church to be a tangible sign of God's self-communication:

Anyone who receives grace in baptism by being incorporated into the church as the historical and social corporeality of the grace of Christ in the world necessarily receives along with the grace of the church a share in, and the mandate and capacity for participating in, this function of the church to be the historical tangibility of God’s grace in the world.33

According to Rahner, the Fundamental Sacrament, the Church, is constructed person by person through the sacrament of baptism.


What sets Ramsey’s ecclesiology apart from Rahner’s, and indeed distinguishes it from many modern ecclesiolgies, is first that it is absolutely inseparable from his christology, and second that its basis is the passion rather than the incarnation of Christ. According to Rahner the Church is like the next step in salvation history, a necessary follow-up to the incarnation. From Ramsey’s point of view, however, there is no such distinction between Christ and the Church; the one does not follow the other. Rather, Ramsey presents the crucified Jesus as the Church, that is, as the worshipping people of God. He says, “So in these two ways the death of Christ contains within itself the fact of the Church—by His baptism into our humanity, by His negation of the rights of self before God”. The passion of Christ contains the fact of the Church because it is in this historical moment that God’s purpose is realized, and the worshipping people of God created. Jesus’ submission to death manifests the relationship between God and humanity which was God’s ultimate design. Christ crucified and the Church are one, for in the passion Jesus becomes, as Israel was meant to be, the "λειτουργός", the one who offers service to God.

From Ramsey’s point of view, therefore, Jesus does not found the Church, nor is baptism the initiation of individuals into an institution or community. Rather, in baptism individuals are united with Christ through participation in his death, and the community of the Church follows as the result of the death. Since Ramsey has presented the passion as the willing sacrifice of Jesus’ self-hood, it follows naturally that sharing in Jesus’ death must involve the willingness to abandon self. Ramsey explains that the christian life,

34 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 23.
35 ibid., 108.
... begins with an act of faith and initiation which verily means "death". There comes first the response of faith in Christ crucified, when the believer recognizes his impotence and failure and lays hold upon God's act of love for him in the death of Christ. Faith means owning that one is, of oneself, nothing.36

In the renunciation of self, the individual participates in the death of Christ, and is thereby united with him, entering into "an Israel which exists already".

The abandonment of self is also the creation of the Church, the Body of Christ, in that it issues in "koinonia" or fellowship:

The fellowship and the death seem inseparable. "Fellowship" has been created since, starting with the death of Jesus, men have died to themselves as separate and sufficient "selfhoods" and have been found alive in one another and in the Spirit of Jesus.37

The renunciation of selfishness and self-centredness means that the individual is united not only with Jesus, but with the others who also belong to the Body of Christ through accepting his death. Ramsey says, "From the Church therefore the Christian never escapes; it is a part of his own existence since it is a part of Christ Himself".38 To be one with Christ means to join with him in his death, the death to self, and thus to become part of the community which is created when individuals abandon their selfhoods. Community is the natural, and indeed, automatic consequence of the death to self which alone unites people with Jesus. Louis Weil comments, "Baptism is thus the sign not only of life in Christ, but life in the Church. The two are, for

36 ibid., 31-32.
37 ibid., 30.
38 ibid., 38.
Ramsey, one reality, a life in response to the gospel". The Church is Christ crucified and those who are united with him and with one another through a death like his.

The creation of the people who are united in the worship of God is thus accomplished by Jesus not in spite of, but by means of suffering and death. In his submission to the will of the Father he reveals the nature of the God who eternally offers himself; by his complete identification with humanity through death Jesus becomes the new Israel and renders the worship that God desires of humanity; and by inviting people to share in his death, he enables them to unite with him and with each other in glorifying the Father. Ramsey says,

And all seems to be summed up in one sentence when he says, "For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us." (2 Cor. 1.20) Christ, S. Paul here tells us, is the fulfilment of God’s promises; He is also the perfect response to those promises, a response made to God’s glory in and through His people."

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40 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 93.
Chapter II: The Liturgical People

The Church is the realization of God's purpose to create a people united in his worship. This purpose is realized by means of the self-offering of Jesus, who becomes by his death and resurrection the new Israel. Through participation in Jesus' death individuals are united with him and with each other to become the worshipping people of God, the Body of Christ. This is Ramsey's theology of the Church—a theology in which the Gospel and the Church are inseparably united. Central to Ramsey's thinking about the Church is its ancient tripartite order, of episcopate, creeds and liturgy. These three aspects of the organized Church are, he argues, absolutely indispensable if the paschal Gospel and the Church that grows from it are to remain whole. These marks of the Church ensure the wholeness of the Gospel and the Church, he says, because each, by its very nature is an epiphany or revelation of the Gospel and the one Body. He says, "For every part of the Church's true order will bear witness to the one universal family of God and will point to the historic events of the Word-made-flesh".¹

The Gospel and the Catholic Church is Ramsey's apologetic for the traditional structure of the Church. He seeks to demonstrate to the Liberal Protestants (who would do away with what they see as outdated and unnecessary accretions), and to the Protestant Evangelicals (who insist that only the Word of God in the Scriptures is really important for Christianity), that to dispense with any of the three marks of the Church is to dilute and damage the Gospel itself. Moreover, he insists that not only are these marks of the Church important each in its own right as an epiphany of the Body and the Gospel, all three, episcopacy, creeds, and liturgy must be held in balance if the fullness of the Truth of Christ is to be maintained. Ramsey says,

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¹ Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 50.
Misunderstanding and misuse arise if the marks of the Church are used or treated separately, or if any one of them is appealed to in isolation as the basis of Christianity . . . deliverance comes not by discarding the gift of God which has been misused by recovering its true relation to the other gifts.\(^2\)

The structure of the Church, with all its marks intact, is essential because it constantly refers Christians beyond themselves and their personal experience of grace to the salvific work of God in history.

Yet Ramsey's defence of Church order is very far from the approach which simply insists that the Church is a divine institution. Instead, Ramsey attempts to demonstrate that each mark of the Church is a development of the Gospel it shows forth. His analysis of episcopacy, creeds, and liturgy thus finds its foundation in Scripture. Ramsey says,

> The tests of a true development are whether it bears witness to the Gospel, whether it expresses the general consciousness of the Christians, and whether it serves the Body in all its parts. These tests are summed up in the scriptures, wherein the historical Gospel and the experience of the redeemed and the nature of the one Body are described. Hence, while the Canon of Scripture is in itself a development, it has a special authority to control and to check the whole field of development in life and doctrine.\(^3\)

That Ramsey understands the Bible to be the "control and check" of the development of Church order, does not mean, however, that he seeks to discover within the New Testament "warrants" which specify how and whether this development should take place. Indeed, he says with reference to the episcopate,

> What, now, is the important question to ask about this development? Not, surely, whether our Lord and the Apostles laid down by definite commands that such and such order was to be followed, but whether the development speaks of the Gospel and the one Body . . . To burrow in the New Testament for forms of ministry and imitate them is

\(^2\) ibid., 63.

\(^3\) ibid., 64.
archaeological religion: to seek that form of ministry which the whole New Testament creates is the more evangelical way. 

Ramsey thus examines the Scriptures in order to discover the patterns or shape that ministry, doctrine, or worship take, and how these forms stem from and reveal the paschal Gospel and the Body of Christ. This, then, becomes the basis for Ramsey's evaluation of the further development of the three defining marks of the Church.

Although Ramsey asserts that all three marks of the Church are of equal importance for the wholeness of the Church and Gospel, it is clear from his discussion of the nature of liturgical worship that it does not perform exactly the same role as the other two marks of the Church. In fact, I would like to suggest that in Ramsey's construction liturgy stands apart from, and even prior to the episcopate and the creeds. For liturgy not only reflects the truth of the Gospel and the Body of Christ; it is also the occasion for people to come into direct and personal contact with the divine act in Christ, and to be incorporated into it. Liturgical worship is therefore not only epiphanic, but creative, and constitutive of the Church.

Ramsey asserts that the historic episcopate is an essential mark of the Church, for bishops perform the same necessary role which the Apostles played before them. The Apostles are the teachers and guardians of the faith. In witnessing to the truths which they personally experienced, they maintain the wholeness of the Gospel and the Body:

... its functions were (i) to link the Christians with the historical events of Jesus from whom this Apostolate has received a solemn and special commission; (ii) to represent the one society, for only in the context of the one society can a local church grow into the fullness of Christ.

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* ibid., 69.

* ibid., 73.
This dual function of the Apostles is exercised not only, or even primarily, in their teaching capacity. Ramsey proposes that the Apostles, by their place in the Body, serve as symbols which point to the connection between the paschal mystery and the fellowship which exists through the participation of individuals in it: "Apostles, not by speech alone but by their organic place in the Body, declare the facts of Jesus crucified and risen, facts before which all speaking is nothing, and all prophets and Apostles are as dead men".6 Looking at the examples of the Christian communities in Samaria and Corinth, Ramsey demonstrates that neither community really knew the truth of the Gospel until, by the presence of the Apostles among them, they came to understand the one universal fellowship, which grows from the Gospel, and of which their individual community is one fragment. He points out that the community in Samaria did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John laid hands on them. Until this point these people are acquainted with and believe in the Gospel of Christ, but they truly know it in its fullness (marked by their reception of the Spirit) only when they recognize their place in the larger fellowship. Ramsey says,

They are to know that to be Christ's is to be included in the one life of the one people of God which sprang from the historical events in Jerusalem; the Holy Spirit who shall descend upon them is the Spirit who bears witness to the historical events, and who is known in the growth of the one universal fellowship.7

Similarly, the Corinthians are taught the Gospel by means of Paul's insistence on his authority among them as an Apostle. They also must learn their place in the Body which is bigger than any one individual, and bigger even than their community, for without this recognition, their knowledge of the Gospel is incomplete. Thus Ramsey says,

6 ibid., 74.
7 ibid., 75.
It is not too much to say that "Paul the apostle to the saints in Corinth" may, in the light of the Epistle as a whole, be paraphrased, "Paul whose ministry and rule represents to the saints in Corinth their membership in and the dependence upon the one Body of Christ."

The Apostles demonstrate by their office and authority in the Body the truth of the one fellowship, which Ramsey understands to be part of the Gospel itself. The very presence of the Apostles among the Christians forces each community to look beyond their own boundaries, beyond their own concerns and problems, to the larger community, which in turn witnesses to the divine act in history by which it was created. Ramsey says, "Their place in the Body has been a parable of unity and hence of death and resurrection".

The more the Church is separated in time and space from the historic events of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the more necessary does the function performed by the Apostles become. Each individual community needs to be continuously reminded of the unity of the Body and the events which create it if they are to remain true to the Gospel they proclaim. This is the purpose of the Episcopate, as envisioned by Ramsey. Not only successors to the Apostles’ teaching ministry, they are also heirs of their symbolic role. Thus, the bishop is,

... the organ of the one Body who represents to the Christians their dependence within the body, and to the local Church its dependence within the historic family, whose worship is one act. Just as the Apostles had represented these truths, so now do Ignatius and the other Bishops.

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* ibid., 73.
* ibid., 76.
10 ibid., 80.
Because the office of Bishop, like the office of the Apostle before him, is a symbol of the unity of the Church, it is a revelation of the Gospel of the passion and of the Body of Christ. It shows forth to the Christians who and what they are called by the Gospel to become.

Yet the teaching authority of the Church, seen especially in the creeds, is also, Ramsey claims, itself an epiphany of the Gospel and the Body. Ramsey defines creeds as, "... sign-posts to the historic events and to the general experience of Christians as against speculative tendencies which would ignore both". Ramsey points out that the creeds of the Church are narrative, rather than philosophical in nature. Both the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds tell, in simple "mythological" terms, the story of God's saving acts, wrought through Jesus and in the Body, "the one holy, catholic and apostolic church", as the Nicene Creed has it. This narrative form of the Creeds is essential because it points people beyond any of the philosophical notions of which humanity can at any one time conceive, to the divine initiative. Ramsey says,

Language less "mythological" in form is less permanent. A Creed which substituted for these pictoral phrases the language of "modern thought" or of any scheme of thought would be the Creed of an ephemeral scholasticism, and not the Creed of a Gospel before which all scholasticisms must bow.

Such philosophical terms as there are in the creeds, like "homo-ousios", are inserted for the purpose of confounding philosophy, by setting limits to the academic speculations the Gospel tends to incite. Thus, Ramsey says, "Nor does the language of the 'Two Natures' commit the Church to any particular philosophy. It rather calls a halt to the speculations of the fifth century, and asserts that their possibilities have become exhausted". The straightforward narratives

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11 ibid., 61.
12 ibid., 129-130.
13 ibid., 130.
which are the creeds thus ensure that Christians remain true to the Gospel and the Body. They summarize the story of our redemption, as related in the New Testament, and remind us that the divine initiative and the fellowship which partakes of it have priority over and far surpass human conceptions and creations.

In one sense, liturgical worship is exactly parallel to the other two marks of the Church, for its focus and shape reveal and sustain the truths of the Gospel and the Body. Ramsey explains that the nature of liturgical worship is, "... first to recall the action of God, in Christ's redemption and in the one Body, and only then to utter his petitions by bringing into this action the topical needs with which he is concerned". Liturgical worship, like the episcopate and the creeds, bears witness in its very structure to the two-fold truth of the passion of Christ and the Body, and reminds the Christian that his own concerns find their place within this context.

This is so, first of all because of the pattern of liturgical prayer. After an analysis of the prayers found in the New Testament, particularly in the Pauline Epistles, Ramsey concludes that Christian prayer will always rightly begin with the remembrance and celebration of the mighty works of God, in creation, in history, and especially in the sacrifice of Jesus and the creation of the Church. Ramsey says,

The language and structure of worship will point away from the changing and the topical to the divine action in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and to the same action now present in heaven and in the whole Church. Hence the regular and ordered movement of the Liturgy is not a cumbersome addition to Christian prayer; rather does it express the New Testament fact of worship as the divine action into which all spontaneous and congregational prayer is ever merged... The centre is the High Priestly act of Jesus Christ in heaven and in history.15

14 ibid., 89.
15 ibid., 95.
That the centre of common worship is the divine initiative recalls to the worshippers the truth that their lives, their faith, and their worship are responses to the act of God on their behalf. It tells them that the Christian life is not primarily about individual needs and wants, but about the praise of the creative and redeeming God. Ramsey says, "All life, therefore, is, for a Christian, eucharistic; and the worship does not start with common needs, but with the divine action of the redeemer, and into this action it brings all common life." Liturgical worship is, like the episcopate, a "parable", for its structure reveals that the Christian lives and worships "through Christ our Lord".

If Christian worship, like the Christian life, takes place "through Christ", this means that it will also necessarily take place in the context of the Body which results from the union of individuals with Jesus in his death. This truth also is shown forth by liturgical worship, for it is, more clearly than any other type of worship, essentially an event which takes place within the community. Liturgical worship is always common worship. It consists largely of prayers said or sung in unison, and it is presented in texts which follow a particular and familiar pattern. Often, liturgical prayer is committed to writing, and so is available to any who care to read it. Moreover, the pattern of liturgical prayer, which focuses always on the celebration of the divine acts, and only then moves on to "topical and changing concerns", helps to give the worshippers the sense of the Church catholic--the same pattern is used around the world and across the ages. Liturgical worship thus demonstrates that, "The voice of the single Christian is drawn into the

\[16\] ibid., 89.
voice of the Body and represents the Body. The two or three gathered together in Christ’s name represent the Body in that place".17

Liturgical worship is the truest form of Christian worship, Ramsey argues, because it reveals and sustains the Gospel and the Body. The sacraments in particular reinforce for the worshippers the truths of the Gospel and the Body, for, in word and action, they provide "... an outward structure which points beyond men’s needs and feelings to the divine sacrifice on the Cross and in heaven, and beyond the individual and local fellowship to the continuous life of the universal Church".18 In the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Confession, Christians literally enact the story of their redemption and the fellowship of the Body. Louis Weil comments that,

Ramsey’s understanding of the liturgy and sacraments is thus a consistent expression of the fundamentally ecclesial nature of his theology: in the Church’s sacramental rites, the Christian community engages and reclaims its faith in the Gospel of Christ, and renews its identity as his body.19

Liturgical worship is thus, like the episcopate and the creeds, the revelation or epiphany of the passion of the Lord and the Body of Christ.

The description of liturgical worship as the epiphany and sustainer of Christian life does not, however, exhaust its significance for Ramsey. The liturgical worship of the Church not only defines and renews it; this common worship is the means by which the Christian life, lived through the passion of Jesus in the one Body, comes to be. In liturgical worship, the fellowship

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17 ibid., 95.
18 ibid., 96.
19 Weil, "The Place of the Liturgy" in Michael Ramsey as Theologian, 156.
which participates in the paschal mystery is not only shown forth, but also manifested or realized. Rowan Williams, in his analysis of Ramsey's ecclesiology, says that,

If what it is to be a Christian is to be "in Christ", the community of Christians is what it is only in so far as it is in Christ, united with Christ's divine action. It is itself where human beings renounce their private and protected selfhoods "in a death like his", so that their self-emptying mirror the self-emptying of God the Word in Jesus' life and death.\(^{20}\)

It is within the liturgy, and particularly within the sacraments, that this identification with Christ through the renunciation of self takes place. For Ramsey insists that in liturgical worship Christians not only celebrate the divine act which happened once in history, they also find themselves incorporated into it: "It is the sharing by men in the one action of Christ, through their dying to their own egotisms as they are joined in one Body with His death and resurrection".\(^{21}\) Ramsey understands liturgical worship to be both an external and internal event. He says, "It is not merely the act of Christians who gaze upon an action of God; it is rather the act of Christ Himself in them. Christ in His Body glorifies the Father, and His members share in what He does".\(^{22}\) In this worship the participants both celebrate and share in the divine act of God in his Son. And because to share in Christ's death is to abandon the rights of the self, it follows that liturgical worship must also be the context for the coming to be of the fellowship which is the one Body.


\(^{21}\) Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 94.

\(^{22}\) ibid., 93.
The sacraments are, above all, the occasions during which individuals come into personal contact with the divine initiative, and, becoming united with Jesus in the renunciation of self, they are initiated into his Body. Ramsey says,

Nor is the Christian's death to self only a response to the death of Christ as a past event; it is a present sharing in his dying and rising again. In Baptism the death and resurrection of Jesus become a present reality within the converts.23

Baptism is both the symbol and the reality of the individual's willingness to abandon the self in the face of the loving act of God. It manifests the individual's initial participation in Jesus' death, and his entry into the new life of the Body. Williams comments that, "Baptism inaugurates the reality of a life that can be transparent to God; but the rite that manifests all this repeatedly, publicly, corporately is the Eucharist".24

The Eucharist holds precedence for Ramsey over all other liturgical acts of the Church. While Baptism is the entry of the individual into the Body, it is in the Eucharist that the community is found in its fullness. In the Eucharist the Christian,

... looks upon Him whom he has pierced, and, as he sees the drama of what God has done in Christ, he shares in the death once died and finds his life no longer his own, but united with Christ and with the people of God.25

Weil, who has termed liturgical worship the supreme "expression" of the Christian life, also says that, "It is clear in Ramsey's discussion that the Eucharist is no mere commemoration of an event

23 ibid., 32.
24 Williams, "Theology and the Churches" in Michael Ramsey as Theologian, 15-16.
25 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 118.
long past but is the instrumental means by which Christians participate in the abiding reality of Christ’s paschal mystery". 26

Liturgical worship, especially in the outward acts of the sacraments, is clearly much more than mere epiphany to Ramsey. In liturgical worship the reality to which the marks of the Church bear witness is created and has its being. Williams says,

Yet the Church is not, in the New Testament, simply a project initiated by Jesus and struggling to achieve its destiny; it exists in its fullness, it is already the community of those who bear the identity of Christ. Thus the Church is itself precisely where it is transparent to the divine action—which means that the Church is itself in the sacraments. 27

The episcopate is the parable which holds up to the Christians the Gospel and the Body, the creeds are the sign-posts which point to the truths which lie beyond them, but in liturgical worship individuals become "transparent" to God's initiative and are formed into the one Body. The Church which is the Body of Christ the Leitourgos does not simply worship in a liturgical fashion; rather it is created and shaped by its liturgy. The Church which participates in the death and resurrection of Jesus is a liturgical people.

26 Williams, "Theology and the Churches" in Michael Ramsey as Theologian, 150.

27 ibid., 15.
Chapter III: The Liturgy

If liturgical worship is the occasion in which Christians come into contact with the divine act in Jesus and through which they are incorporated into that act, the Eucharist is "the Liturgy". Ramsey understands the Eucharist to be the situation in which the passion of the Lord becomes most clearly visible and tangible, and in which the Body is constituted, as individuals actively participate in the death of the Lord. He suggests that the paschal Gospel and the Body of Christ are revealed and manifested by means of the three major themes of the eucharistic celebration—mystery, fellowship, and sacrifice—for each theme makes present a part of the truth of the Gospel into which the Church is joined. It is the mystery of the Eucharist that Jesus is present as the crucified Lord; in the Eucharist the fellowship of the Church is created through the partaking of the mystery; and the "sacrificial" nature of the Eucharist manifests the new relationship between God and humanity which results from the elucidation of the nature of God and the nature of humanity as it was always meant to be. The celebration of the Eucharist is thus the realization of the Gospel which the Church proclaims, and in and through which it lives.

Though there have been throughout history a great many varieties and forms of the eucharistic celebration, Ramsey asserts that certain themes have figured quite consistently in the majority of the Church’s eucharistic prayers. The themes of thanksgiving, commemoration, mystery, fellowship, and sacrifice appear in prayers of the Churches of both East and West. Surrounding thanksgiving and commemoration there has never been any debate; obviously the Eucharist is a memorial in thanksgiving for what God has done for us in Christ. The latter three themes, however, as Ramsey notes, have long (or at least since the sixteenth century) been the source of controversy and contention. Yet Ramsey asserts that it is precisely the latter three
themes which reveal and impart to the participants the truths of the Gospel and the Body. It might be said that while thanksgiving and commemoration describe the outward form of the Eucharist, the themes of mystery, fellowship, and sacrifice reveal what is actually going on as the Church performs this act of thankful remembrance.

Ramsey’s presentation of the notion of mystery in the Eucharist quickly betrays his understanding of the Gospel itself. His is not an argument about how exactly Christ is present in the Eucharist (i.e. whether his presence is corporeal or spiritual); rather, Ramsey’s concern in his discussion of “mystery” is the purpose of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. He says, “In all there is the note of mystery since Christ is present to feed His people”. Ramsey’s understanding of the “mystery” of the Eucharist mirrors his presentation of the Good News. Just as the Gospel is primarily a paschal Gospel, so the Eucharist is primarily a paschal event. As the Son of God became incarnate in order that through his death humanity might gain a new life, so in the Eucharist he is present to provide his body and blood as the sustenance of that life.

While the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is indeed awesome, it is the purpose of the presence which is at the heart of the mystery. Ramsey explains that,

Mystery means that Christ by His Body and His Blood feeds His people with Himself, and that the presence of His body and His blood is not the result of the individual’s faith, but, like the Incarnation itself, a presence of Jesus which faith may receive and which unfaith may reject.

Not only does the individual receive or reject Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, he/she must accept or reject the one who is there present as the crucified Lord. For Christians do not merely gaze on Christ’s presence in the eucharistic elements, they eat them, and in so doing they assert

1 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 110.
2 ibid., 111.
that His broken body and spilt blood are the very things which nourish them, and bring forth new life in them.

Ramsey's discussion of mystery therefore has a two-fold nuance. Firstly, his insistence on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist reflects his assertion that the focus of the Gospel and of the Christian life is what God accomplishes in history. In the eucharistic celebration the participants respond (or fail to respond) to the divine initiative, to the divine self-offering. Ramsey says,

Here S. Paul reiterates in awful language that the reality of the Lord's body is there; it must be discerned, failure to discern it by faithful partaking brings judgement of a terrible kind, because the gift is there. (105)

In the Eucharist Christians come into contact with the God who offered himself once for all in history, and continues to make himself known in this the memorial of his passion. The Christ present in the Eucharist, is, however, the one who has died and risen; he is the Jesus of the Cross: "And, by the nearness of Jesus who feeds and the awfulness of Jesus who has redeemed men by his death, the liturgy sets forth the Gospel". Present in the Eucharist is not only Jesus as the God who offers himself, but also Jesus as the embodiment of the perfect human response to God. Those who eat his flesh and drink his blood are thus not only nourished by the divine self-offer, but are also sustained by being united with Jesus' response to the Father. The Eucharist sets forth the Gospel because in it we come into contact with the divine self-offering and the human response in self-abandonment, both in the person of Jesus Christ, crucified.

Of equal importance with the theme of mystery is the idea of "fellowship" in the Eucharist. The importance that Ramsey accords the theme of fellowship is highlighted by a

\[^{3}\text{ibid., 112.}\]
departure from his usual method. It is notable that throughout *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* Ramsey avoids focusing upon particular scriptural passages as the warrant for Church order, seeking rather for patterns and themes within the whole of the New Testament. In one case, however, the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Ramsey argues doggedly for the authenticity of Jesus’ saying that he sets up a new covenant in his blood (99-100). Clearly, this detour from Ramsey’s general method points to something of great significance. What Ramsey is so concerned to point out in this rare piece of textual analysis is that Jesus meant this last meal with his friends to be the means of the creation of a new people, brought to birth by communion with him through his body and blood. Ramsey points first to the significance of the word "covenant" in this context:

> The giving of a covenant implies at once the creation of a people, a new nation which looks back to the Lord’s death, as its origin and its bond of unity, just as the old Israel looks back to the deliverance from Egypt."  

This covenant marks the creation of the new Israel, and like the old Israel, God creates the nation by a mighty act of redemption, this one even more remarkable and unexpected than the parting of the Red Sea, for it is accomplished in humility and dereliction, instead of a show of power and authority.

The creation of this new nation is not, however, entirely dependant on the divine act. It involves the response of humanity to the saving act of God. This response is made possible (as is the divine act which calls it forth) by Jesus, the crucified one. While humanity is of itself incapable of sustaining an adequate response to God’s gift of salvation, by partaking of Jesus’

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4 *ibid*, 101.
great self-sacrifice to God's will, humankind can at last fulfil its part of the covenant. In the Eucharist this partaking of Christ's self-sacrifice is realized:

... by eating the bread and drinking the cup they will be brought within the death. In an unutterable way they partake of it; it is no longer only an event outside them, it becomes something to feed and nourish them.5

The internalizing, or more accurately perhaps, the digesting of the death of the Lord brings the participants into the new Israel, which is Christ crucified. In consuming the mystery of Christ crucified they become themselves a part of that mystery. Ramsey quotes St. Augustine, who says, "... the mystery of yourselves is laid upon the table of the Lord, and the mystery of yourselves you receive".6

The Church is not created, however, by the gathering together of all those who have had a similar experience of fellowship with God through Jesus. The "koinonia" of the one Body results from the participation of individuals in Jesus' death to self. This truth, also, is revealed and realized in the eucharistic celebration. Ramsey notes in his analysis of S. Paul's understanding of the Eucharist as seen in 1 Cor 10 that,

There is present also the further and inseparable thought, that to partake of Christ is to partake of the very life of the Body or fellowship, "We who are many ... are one bread, one body". The one loaf symbolizes the unity of all the Christians. (104)

The eucharistic bread, broken into many pieces is a vivid symbol of the reality of the one fellowship which is created by partaking of Christ's death. It is not, however, simply a symbol. Too much emphasis on the one loaf, divided into many pieces and shared, might lead to the erroneous idea that only those who share in that particular loaf belong are brought into fellowship

5 ibid., 101.

6 ibid., 112.
with one another, and that therefore each separate eucharistic celebration produces a distinct and unique Church. Such a notion would be contrary to all that Ramsey understands the Church to be. Indeed, he says, "For the Eucharist is never merely the act of a local community, but always the act of the great Church wherein the local community is merged". Thus Ramsey insists that the significance of the Eucharist does not end with its symbolic value. The Eucharist is, he asserts, the means by which the individual is brought into the fellowship of the universal Body of Christ. He says, "... the fellowship between Christians is not only a very close corollary of their acts of receiving the Lord's Body—it is included within every act of communion, for the eucharistic Body and the Body of the Church are utterly one." Again, Ramsey's understanding of "mystery" is of central importance in his presentation of the theme of "fellowship" in the Eucharist. If the Christ is present in the Eucharist as the crucified Lord, the one in whom God's self-offering as well as the perfect human response of self-abandonment takes place, then partaking of his Body and Blood will mean becoming united with Christ in his self-offering, and thus in the fellowship of those have learned to renounce their individual selfhoods and so to live in Christ and in one another.

The third and most controversial theme with which Ramsey deals is sacrifice. This theme is perhaps most significant of all, for as, Ramsey understands it, in "sacrifice" is contained the whole meaning of the Gospel, for in it mystery and fellowship are revealed as inseparable concepts, and the purpose of God to create a worshipping people is seen to be fulfilled. That Ramsey is well aware of the sensitive nature of this subject is at once very clear. He emphasizes

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7 ibid., 113
8 ibid., 112-113.
that sacrifice is not a notion foreign to Christianity, and that it is a perfectly legitimate and scriptural description of what happens in the Eucharist. It is not only correct to describe the Eucharist as the "sacrifice of praise", but also to describe the participants in the Eucharist as "priests", and even to refer to the sacrifice of Christ himself in the eucharistic elements. The reason that these understandings of sacrifice are acceptable in Christian thinking about the Eucharist is that they are reflections and realizations of the nature of Christ and his Church.

In his exposition of mystery in the Eucharist, Ramsey insists that Christ’s presence both in history and in the Eucharist is as the one who offers himself to God and to humanity. In this section Ramsey takes this insight even further, beyond the historical events to the eternal truths which they reveal. The truth which is revealed in the supreme moment of Jesus’ self-giving on the Cross is the very nature of God:

... this eternal self-giving or priesthood is uttered in time and history in the life and death of the Incarnate Son, and when wrought out in a world of sin and pain the life of sacrifice involves death and destruction.9

The death of Jesus is not an end in itself (an idea which projects the image of a blood thirsty God), but in order that the self-giving, sacrificial nature of God might be revealed to the people he loves. The crucifixion is the historical realization, for historical creatures, of the eternal and extra-historical self-giving love of God. It is because the manifestation of God’s nature must take place in a historical sphere marked by the evil of sin, that this self-sacrifice leads inevitably to pain and suffering. Thus it is that the crucifixion becomes the manifestation and symbol of the nature of the Son of God.

9 ibid., 144.
Of central importance also is the insight, gleaned from the epistle to the Hebrews, that Christ's priesthood, marked now and forever with the sign of the Cross, existed before the incarnation and continues after it. Jesus is, "'A priest forever after the order of Melchisedek', the Son of God who forever possesses the character of one who gives His life utterly in love". The nature of the Son of God is always that of the one who offers himself in love to the Father. The crucifixion is the supreme embodiment of the essentially sacerdotal character of God the Son. The mystery of the passion of Jesus, who creates a new relationship between God and humanity through suffering and death is thus contained within the greater theme of the eternal priesthood of Jesus. The mystery of the Eucharist, that Christ is present to feed his people with his flesh and blood, is the key to the even more awesome mystery, that the "one sacrifice, once offered" is God's costly revelation of his own eternal priestly and sacrificial nature. Ramsey says, "The Christians look back to the sacrifice of Calvary and they look up to the eternal sacrifice it reveals".

Yet sacrifice, as Ramsey points out, concerns not only the action of God in Christ, but also the Body of Christ. The people of God are concerned firstly in that the sacrifice of Christ has changed their position with God. Through Christ's sacrifice, and our participation in it, we "have free access to God in sonship", and we are able at last "to approach God aright and in His name". But sacrifice also concerns us in a more active way. If we admit the nature of Christ

\[10\] ibid.
\[11\] ibid.
\[12\] ibid.
is sacrificial and priestly, it follows that the people who are constituted by becoming one with
Christ in his sacrifice will also be priestly in character. Ramsey says,

To a biblically-minded Christian the words "priest" and "sacrifice" signify first, the fact
of Christ, and, next, the whole Body of Christ with its single life and ministry in the
midst of a world of sin."\(^{13}\)

As Ramsey so astutely points out, the controversy surrounding the notion of sacrifice in the
Eucharist also revolves around the legitimacy of our casting ourselves into the role of priest. If
we have followed his argument thus far, we cannot help being drawn into Ramsey’s conclusion
that Christians are not only entitled to the role of priest, but are thrust into it. Ramsey again
looks to St. Augustine to illustrate his point:

The whole redeemed city itself, that is the congregation and society of the saints, is
offered as a universal sacrifice to God through the High Priest, who offered himself in
suffering for us in the form of a servant, that we might be the Body of so great a Head . . . This is the sacrifice of Christians, "the many one Body in Christ", which also the
Church celebrate" in the sacrifice of the altar, familiar to the faithful, where it is shown
to her that in this thing which she offers she herself is offered. (De Civitate Dei, X.6.)\(^{14}\)

If the Body of Christ comes into existence when people partake of Jesus’ death, the self-offering
in history which reveals his sacerdotal nature, then they enter into the Body precisely by
accepting the role of priest—the one who offers sacrifice to God. The fellowship which is born
by participation in the mystery is a "royal priesthood".

With all this in mind, the introduction of the theme of sacrifice into the Eucharist seems
not only natural, but necessary, for it reveals the two-fold emphasis of the Gospel: God’s act of

\(^{13}\) ibid., 115.

\(^{14}\) ibid., 118.
self-offering in Christ, and the joyous response of humanity as it joins in the sacrifice of Christ and is thereby united with Christ, with each other, and with the Father. Louis Weil says,

In the celebration of the Eucharist, Christians encounter that reality expressed in words and signs in which they may participate and renew in their lives. It is in this sense that the Eucharist is an act of sacrifice: it is the place in which the one sacrifice of Christ is encountered, not only through a mental act but in the utterly human experience of a shared meal, a sacred meal in which faith is both signified and nourished. It is the action in which all Christians offers their lives in union with the one oblation of Christ.\(^\text{15}\)

Thus, we may truly say that the Eucharist is a "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving", since it is by means of Christ's sacrifice and our participation in it that we are enabled to finally attain the role of true worshippers of God, and to offer praise and thanksgiving to our creator and redeemer.

Even more significant than the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, however, is the idea that the sacrifice we offer in the Eucharist is the crucified Lord himself, that we sacrifice to God the Body and Blood of Christ. Ramsey is well aware that many in Protestant circles would consider this interpretation of what happens in the Eucharist far-fetched, if not blasphemous, yet he argues that this idea presents not a change in Christian teaching but the very heart of the Gospel. He reiterates that Christ is the one who eternally offers himself, as he demonstrated definitively on the Cross, and thus, when we say that Christ is present in the Eucharist, he can only be present as sacrifice. Christ is present in the eucharistic feast as the one who offers himself to God and to people, in order that by joining with him in his sacrifice, humanity may be united with God. This is the truth which Christians proclaim and in which they are included when they consume the flesh and blood of the crucified Lord. And so Ramsey concludes that,

\(^{15}\) Weil, "The Place of the Liturgy" in Michael Ramsey as Theologian, 151.
... when S. Cyprian speaks of the Body and the Blood as a sacrifice, he is only making articulate what is inherent in the Eucharist just because it is inherent in Christ Himself.  

The use of sacrificial imagery in the Eucharist does not detract from the Gospel, but illuminates it: "God in Christ offers; the Church His Body beholds the offering in all its costliness, and is drawn into it. The sacrifice is the action of God in Christ and in His Body". In the eucharistic feast the God who gives of himself is known to his people, and they, in turn, are restored to and revealed in the sacerdotal character which God intended for them.

The Eucharist is thus, for Ramsey, "the Liturgy". It is the supreme occasion, among all occasions of common worship, which reveals, sustains, and even realizes the one Body which grows out of the participation of individuals in the passion of Jesus. In the eucharistic celebration people come closest to God's initiative in Jesus' death and resurrection, and they are forged into the fellowship of the Church by making Christ's passion part of themselves. In the Eucharist the nature of God and the nature of his people is revealed, and the relationship between them is realized.

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17 ibid., 117.
Chapter IV: The Liturgical Context

Liturgical worship, exemplified in "the Liturgy", is clearly understood by Ramsey to be more than simply the epiphany or revelation of the Gospel and the Church. It is the occasion during which individuals come into contact with and are incorporated into the divine initiative. Common worship is the setting in which the Body of Christ is realized and sustained. This is Ramsey's "... vision of a new humanity in Christ, realized in the Eucharistic assembly".\(^1\) It is therefore not surprising to discover, for all Ramsey's insistence that the three "marks of the Church" must be held in balance, that he understands common worship, especially the celebration of the Eucharist, to be the context not only for the episcopate and the creeds, but indeed for the whole of Christian thought and activity.

The episcopate, like the apostolate before it, is a necessary part of the structure of the Church because it serves as a parable for Body of its unity in the passion of the Lord. Williams explains that,

> They are there presiding in the assembly in order to show something—the unity of the Church in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Without the apostolic ministry, the problem is not a defect in "validity" in the usual Catholic sense but a defect in clarity and intelligibility in the symbolic communication of the gospel of God.\(^2\)

Because Ramsey understands the role of the Bishop to be primarily symbolic, rather than authoritarian or even didactic, it follows that the episcopate only makes sense within the context of the Body. The bishop has no significance apart from the Body of which and to which he is a symbol. His presentation of the episcopate therefore presupposes the existence of the Body

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\(^1\) Williams, "Theology and the Churches" in Michael Ramsey as Theologian, 20.

\(^2\) ibid., 16.
from which the bishop comes and of which he is the parable. Ramsey relies heavily on the thought of Cyprian in the formulation of this understanding of the episcopate. Ramsey notes, for instance, that,

To S. Cyprian the validity of orders depended upon their derivation from and their exercise within the one life of the whole Church. The first fact must be the Church’s corporate family life; then come valid orders which are an organ of that whole life.  

Ramsey contrasts this Cyprianic model of the episcopate with the model presented by St. Augustine. He points out that,

. . . while the Cyprianic view makes orders utterly dependant upon the Church and validity as part of the Church’s single life in grace, the Augustinian view leaves room for thinking of orders as valid apart from the Church’s corporate life and for the idea of succession by orders as a single and isolated channel of grace.

As the latter model developed, the bishop came to be perceived as Christ’s representative, and thus the head of the Church, who ensures its unity and its adherence to the Gospel, while in the former model it is the Church that is one with Christ, and the bishop is one among the Body, chosen by it to be the outward symbol of its inward nature. It is this symbolic model of the episcopate which Ramsey espouses as a true mark of the Church. Thus, he says,

". . . the meaning of the Episcopate is seen, not in isolation, but in close connexion with the whole Body of Christ and its presbyterial and congregational elements. To sever this connection is to corrupt the meaning of the Episcopacy".

If the bishop expresses in outward order the unity of the Body, and this unity is realized above all in the participation of individuals in Jesus’ death and resurrection by means of the

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3 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 152.
4 ibid., 154.
5 ibid., 84.
celebration of the Eucharist, then it only makes sense to assert that eucharistic worship must be the context of the episcopate. Williams says,

In such a context, the ordained ministry of the Church is simply what serves to show the full meaning of the sacramental assembly: that it is united in time to the events of Easter and that it lives always by a life that is not and could not be restricted to a local or sectional or national context. The bishop is the outward sign of what is manifested in the common worship of the Church. In other words, his office is the revelation of the fellowship which results from the participation of individuals in the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection. It is for this reason that the bishop is the appropriate presider at the celebration of the Eucharist. His presidency proclaims the truth which apprehends the worshippers in the eucharistic meal.

Thus, while the bishop is the symbolic expression of the meaning of the eucharistic assembly, the understanding of his office is to be found within common worship. Ramsey says, "Its [the episcopate’s] meaning is seen in the rites of ordination and in the ordering of the Eucharist. Every ordination and every Eucharist is the act of Christ in His one Body, and the Episcopate expresses this fact in outward order". Therefore, in order to demonstrate the relation of the bishop to the Body of Christ, Ramsey refers his readers to the rite of consecration found in the "Apostolic Tradition" attributed to Hippolytus:

The Bishop-elect is chosen by the presbyters and people, and three Bishops lay hands upon him, so that his consecration is the outward work of the Lord in His whole Church, and so that "in its Bishop every single church transcends its own limits and comes into

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6 Williams, "Theology and the Churches" in Michael Ramsey as Theologian, 16.

7 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 223.
contact with and merges into other churches, not only in the order of brotherly love and remembrance alone, but in the unity of mysterious and gracious life.

The rite specifies firstly that the bishop is chosen by the people from among their own number; he is a member of the Body, appointed by it to this particular epiphanic role. Secondly, not one, but three bishops are involved in the consecration, in order that this be clearly an act of the whole united Body (not merely one segment of it), and thus of Christ himself who is the life of the Body. Moreover, this rite, and the related rite of ordination, are to take place in the midst of the eucharistic celebration, that is, "... in the context of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ". Both the ordering of the rite of consecration, and its insertion into the eucharistic liturgy speak plainly of the meaning of the episcopate. The bishop arises from the Body which is itself constituted by its participation in the paschal mystery. The office of Bishop is the sign of the reality from whence it came. Thus while in the absence of the bishop "The liturgy becomes a performance of a choral work with one whole vocal part missing", apart from its eucharistic context, the melody of the episcopate is mere dissonance.

According to Ramsey creeds are also an essential mark of the Church because they serve as "sign-posts to the Truth". One does not, therefore, believe in the creeds, but rather in that to which the creeds bear witness. Yet the novelty in Ramsey's presentation of the creeds comes as much from his definition of the Truth to which the creeds point as his definition of the creeds themselves. Ramsey follows Karl Barth in asserting that the "Truth" is not a series of

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8 ibid., 83.
9 ibid.
10 Williams, "Theology and the Churches" in Michael Ramsey as Theologian, 16.
propositions, but, "... what God has done, will do, and is doing". Ramsey examines the use of the words "δικία" and "σοφία" in the Old and New Testaments, and concludes that the Scriptures present "truth" or "wisdom" as attributes or actions of God, which reveal his nature. He notes, for instance, that, "δικία is used in the Old Testament of God’s steadfastness in providence and in redemption"\(^{12}\), and that "Wisdom is an attribute of God himself".\(^{13}\) The Truth and Wisdom of God are known in his saving acts, the most definitive of which is, of course, the passion of Jesus. In Jesus’ death and resurrection the character of the God who offers himself is known, and by participating in Jesus’ passion, people come to know the Truth of God: "Thus Truth is uttered in God’s redemption through Christ, and men learn the Truth through repentance as well as through intellectual processes, and apprehend the Truth in their life as well as in their thinking".\(^{14}\) The Truth of God is revealed in Jesus’ sacrifice of his own selfhood, an act which, from the perspective of the world, reflects not wisdom, but madness. Ramsey says, "And wisdom is set forth in the death of Christ, in direct contrast to human wisdom and as the negation of the wisest ideas of the world".\(^{15}\) This truth cannot, therefore, be perceived merely by "intellectual processes", because on the basis of human reason alone, it makes no sense at all. Instead, this truth can only truly be learned as it is lived. By sharing in Jesus’ death to self the disciples come to perceive the passion as triumph rather than disaster, for by this means they are brought into relationship with God, and forged into the

\(^{11}\) Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 121.

\(^{12}\) ibid.

\(^{13}\) ibid., 123.

\(^{14}\) ibid., 121.

\(^{15}\) ibid., 123.
worshipping people of God. Participation in the "Truth" is thus not only the revelation of God's saving nature, but also the revelation of the true nature of humanity, through the creation of the worshipping people. Ramsey says, "... Truth centres in the redemptive death of Christ, and ... it is learned in the common life of the society created by that death". From Ramsey's perspective, God's truth is something which "apprehends" his people, and in and through which they live. Williams comments that, "Consequently, we know it in so far as we are taken into the shape and movement of that action—which means in turn that it cannot be apprehended without repentance and transfiguration".

It is clear, then, that the "Truth" to which the creeds point is very closely related to the worship of the Church, for if truth is something that apprehends people, the eucharistic assembly is the place in which they are apprehended. Ramsey says that, "The Church's perilous teaching office is inseparable from the Church's worship of the mystery whereby it exists". Ramsey has described Christian liturgical worship precisely as shaped by the divine action; in each act of liturgical worship, people focus on the divine act in Jesus, and bring their lives and concerns into this act, and into the Body which participates in the passion. In the eucharistic celebration it is contact with the mystery of God's self offer in Christ which prompts the participants to renounce their individual selfhoods and thus to be transfigured and transformed into members

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16 ibid.

17 ibid., 126.

18 Williams, "Theology and the Churches" in Michael Ramsey as Theologian, 18.

19 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 126.
of the one Body of Christ. Thus it is above all in worship that the Church learns and lives the Truth of God. Ramsey says,

Hence "orthodoxy" means not only "right opinion", but also "right worship" or "true glory"... for life and thought and worship are inseparable activities in the Body of Christ.20

The creeds are thus the expression in words of the experience of Truth which overtakes and consumes (and is consumed by) the worshipping Body of Christ.

In order, therefore, that the creeds of the Church are not misunderstood or misused (becoming themselves the object of belief instead of serving as sign-posts to the Truth) they must be used within the context of common worship, for in this setting they are related directly to the experience of Truth which they describe. The Apostles' Creed is thus the overview and proclamation of what goes on in the sacrament of Baptism. Ramsey says, "Into the name of God, Father, Son and Spirit, the convert of the child is baptized; and the Apostle's Creed describes the reality present in the act of Baptism and the destiny towards which they act is pointing".21 Similarly, the Nicene Creed is the expression of the Truth of God which apprehends the people of God in the Eucharist: "Into the same three-fold name the Church's Eucharistic praises are drawn, as Christians sing in the Liturgy the Creed which emerged from the close of the Arian conflict".22 The creeds are indeed a necessary part of the structure of the Church because they witness to the Truth which creates and sustains the Church. They are, however, limited in that what they describe cannot really be contained within the confines of

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20 ibid., 125.
21 ibid., 127.
22 ibid., 128.
human expression and concepts. To use the creeds apart from the context of worship, therefore, would be to imprison the Truth within the limited capabilities of human conception. Thus Ramsey says, "The Creeds are misused when they are interpreted apart from the Gospel which is behind them and the whole organism of worship of which they form a part". While the creeds remain within their liturgical setting the Church is constantly reminded that the Truth they preach is one over which it has no control, but through and in which it has its being.

If the worshipping assembly is the context of the creeds, which are simply the recital of the story of redemption, how much more should other attempts to express and analyze the Truth remain mindful of their connection to the worshipping Body. Ramsey’s understanding of what "Truth" is, and how it is learnt, means that theologizing must necessarily take place with reference to the eucharistic assembly if it is to remain a distinctly Christian exercise, if, that is, theology is to be the reflection on the truths which shape Christian life and experience. Williams, in the article entitled, "Theology and the Churches", says that,

The role of theology, then, is strictly unintelligible in such a context if it once ceases to be a reflection on relations that have been established by something other than an individual intellect--the relation of our words to God’s act and our acts to God’s act that is imparted in the liturgy and made possible by the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Word, and then the relation of Christian persons to one another in a community that is never simply an association of individuals with interests in common. The norms and limits of theology are thus set not by a decree of an external authority . . . but by the logic of these relations.\(^\text{24}\)

Williams argues that for Ramsey theologians who neglect their relation to the Body and ignore the context of the eucharistic assembly are not really doing theology at all, no matter how

\(^{23}\) ibid., 130-131.

\(^{24}\) Williams, "Theology and the Churches" in Michael Ramsey as Theologian, 18.
brilliant their conceptions. This is so, he says, because outside of this context study ceases to be God-centred, and tends to reflect more of the individual concerns of its author, or the ideologies of a particular group or society, than of the Truth it purports to examine. To use Ramsey's terms, without the context of the worshipping Body, there is the danger that particular scholasticisms may be substituted for the one Gospel before which all scholasticisms and philosophies must bow. Work which occurs apart from the context of the worshipping assembly may therefore be anthropology, sociology, or historiography, but it will not be theology.

Thus, while it is the responsibility of the Church to reflect on the Truth in which it lives, if it is not to become complacent or stagnate, such reflection must always take place in the context of the divine act in history and the historical society which grows out of it. Williams says,

A Church without the thinking and speaking of the underlying nature of its common life is in danger of muffling the critical energy that is in reality always at work in it; a theology without anchorage in the showing of God's life that is the Church's liturgy becomes uncritical in a different way, talkative and bold in its own sophistications.\(^25\)

Theology is the expression and analysis of the divine act, which Christians experience and in which they participate through their liturgical worship.

Not only Christian thought, but also Christian action, particularly social action, finds its context, and indeed, its impetus, in the Liturgy of the Church. While Ramsey speaks strongly against those who would reduce the Gospel to a programme of social justice, and the Church to a service club, his theology is not other-worldly or detached from the concerns of society. On the contrary, as Kenneth Leech points out in an article entitled, "The Social Theology of Michael

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\(^{25}\) ibid., 24.
Ramsey's understanding of the Gospel is inherently social, focusing as it does on the fellowship which is created through participation in the passion. Indeed, Ramsey presents a Gospel which is centred upon the creation of a new society, which is realized and imaged in the celebration of the Eucharist.

It is certainly difficult to accuse of other-worldliness the man who insists in The Gospel and the Catholic Church that the Gospel is incomplete without the outward order of the Church. The Gospel is not, as Ramsey sees it, concerned with purely personal salvation, for to become one with Christ means to become a member of the one Body, created as individuals share in Jesus' death to self. Leech notes that, "There is . . . in Ramsey's early thinking a stress on the gospel itself as social, as embodied in a visible and material social reality, and this stress was to remain with him throughout his life". 26 The individual therefore finds his place within the one fellowship, and any interpretation of the Gospel which speaks of "personal" salvation, apart from the one Body, is corrupting the truth. Leech refers to a paper presented by Ramsey in 1955 at the Anglo-Catholic Summer School of Sociology, in which Ramsey makes this position very clear:

The act of decision and conversion, instead of being related to man's place and duty in society, abstracts a man from his place in society; and society becomes the mere stage and scenery alongside which the moral decisions are made. The moral will is segregated from its context because the appeal is being made to less than the whole man as a reasoning being and a social being. So it is that fundamentalist evangelism helps to destroy the ground of a Christian sociology. 27

26 Kenneth Leech, "Glory in Trouble: The Social Theology of Michael Ramsey" in Michael Ramsey as Theologian, 104.

27 A.M. Ramsey, "Faith and Society" in Durham Essays and Addresses (SPCK, 1957) 43.
Ramsey’s understanding of the Gospel is thus unmistakeably "social", in that the creation of the fellowship of the Body is the end of the divine act.

The Gospel of Christ is not, from Ramsey’s perspective, the good news of personal salvation, but the good news that in Christ God has fulfilled his purpose, and brought to birth the new Israel, through which he will draw all people to himself. The Church is thus not meant to abstract itself from the rest of the world, protecting itself and the truth of God from corruptive influences. To do this would render both the Gospel and the Church completely ineffectual. For, as Ramsey sees it, this is a Gospel of the transformation and renovation of the world, which God is accomplishing through the people who are created through union with Christ.

This understanding of the Gospel does not mean, however, the espousal of a particular political or social platform (for this would mean that such a programme would come to take precedence over the Gospel), nor the belief that the Church was called on to recreate the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Leech notes that Ramsey’s understanding of the role of Christians in society is summed up well by Ramsey himself in his description of the social thought of F.D. Maurice, whose work greatly influenced Ramsey:

Maurice was not concerned to sketch a vision of a Christian realm, or to place a Christian political programme . . . He sought rather to discover the Christian foundations of man’s life in society; to say what this foundation is; and to do certain things without delay when his perception of the foundation demanded them. Do the will and learn more of the doctrine . . . Such is "socialism".²⁸

Leech comments that, like Maurice, "Ramsey stressed the Church as a new organism, a transforming unit within society".29 Yet, as Leech also observes, Ramsey does not discuss at any length in *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* the idea that the Church is "a transforming unit within society". In several places the book does, however, lay important groundwork for Christian social thought and action, firmly rooted in the context of Ramsey’s understanding of the eucharistic celebration.

Leech thus asserts that Ramsey’s theology and ecclesiology are essentially "social", and that for Ramsey the Eucharist forms the foundation of his social theology. It is interesting to note, therefore, that when Leech comes to analyze the way in which Ramsey’s understanding of the way in which the Eucharist shapes his social theology, he apparently neglects the social elements of Ramsey’s sacramental theology, as seen in *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*. Leech comments that,

... Ramsey stressed the importance of the Eucharist, laying particular emphasis on its "scandalous character" and its earthiness... This materialistic spirituality, this mingling of the concrete and the transcendent, was of central importance for Ramsey’s spirituality.30

While it is certainly true that in *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* Ramsey sees the Eucharist to be the hallowing of earthly things, (an emphasis that becomes even more pronounced in later works, such as *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*), he also focuses on the Eucharist as the manifestation of the Body which is created through participation in Jesus’ death,

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29 Leech, "Glory in Trouble" in *Michael Ramsey as Theologian*, 105.

30 ibid., 104.
and it is upon the basis of this emphasis that Ramsey founds such social theology as is to be found in The Gospel and the Catholic Church.

Ramsey's sacramentally based social theology is touched upon almost in passing in his analysis of the various historical manifestations of eucharistic doctrine. Ramsey points to the social implications of the eucharistic theology of such varied thinkers as John Chrysostom, Martin Luther, and the leaders of the liturgical movement of the Roman Church in twentieth century France. In all of these writings Ramsey traces a common thread: in all the concern for the well-being of others is linked with the fellowship of the one Body which is realized in the eucharistic celebration.

Ramsey notes, for instance, that for Chrysostom the social implications of the doctrine of the "σῶμα Χριστοῦ" become clear for the Christians in the context of the Eucharist. He quotes the following passage in which Chrysostom vividly illustrates the connection between the Body of Christ in the eucharistic elements and the Body of Christ which is the people, and the social ramifications of this identification:

This other altar is composed of the very members of Christ, and the very body of the Lord is made thine altar . . . The one altar is a stone by nature, but becometh holy since it receiveth Christ's body; but this other altar is holy because it is itself Christ's body . . . Thou honourest the one altar because it receiveth Christ's body; but him that is himself the body of Christ thou treatest with contumely, and when his is perishing thou neglectest him. This altar thou mayest see everywhere lying, both in lanes and in market-places, and mayest sacrifice upon it every hour . . . When thou seest a poor brother, reflect that thou beholdest an altar. (1 Cor. 9.10; Hom. XX.)

Chrysostom admonishes his listeners not for their failure to imitate Christ's care for the poor, but rather for their mistreatment of the Body of Christ. He reminds them of the reverence they

31 Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 145-146.
pay to the elements of bread and wine as the Body of Christ, and even to the altar which is holy simply by association with the Body of Christ, and asks them to recognize the sacrilege they perform when they dishonour that which is equally the Body of Christ—those individuals who are members of the Body they reverence and become at the Eucharist. Ramsey concludes, "Indeed, as Mersch says, 'John Chrysostom is worth to follow Ignatius, Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Hilary. They fought for the doctrine, he fought for its moral implications'". For Chrysostom, participation in the Eucharist simply precludes the neglect or mistreatment of other human beings. To ignore a person in trouble is to ignore the Christ of whose Body that person is (at least potentially) a member.

In a similar vein, Ramsey points out that Luther understands the implications of the doctrine of the one Body to be the care for others. He quotes Luther saying, "We conclude therefore that a Christian man does not live in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbour, or else he is no Christian: in Christ by faith; in his neighbour by love. (John 1.51)" Ramsey points out that Luther, like Chrysostom, understands this care for others to have its basis in the Eucharist, in which the fellowship of the Body is realized. He quotes Luther's description of the nature of the Eucharist:

Therefore it is commonly called Synaxis or Communio that is fellowship, and the Latin "communicare" means to receive this fellowship, where we speak in German of going to the sacrament. And the point is this, that Christ with all His saints is one spiritual Body, just as the people in a city are a community and a body, and every citizen is related as a member to his neighbours and to the city . . . Thus to receive the sacrament is nought

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32 ibid., 146.

33 ibid., 185.
else than to receive a sign of this fellowship, and to be incorporated into Christ with all His saints. (Werke, II, 743. Weimar edition)

The Eucharist is for Luther the sign of the fellowship, which is to be lived out in love of one's neighbour.

Finally, Ramsey points to the revival in the Roman Church of the understanding of the fellowship in the eucharistic celebration as yet another example of the connection between the Eucharist and social justice. He says,

Hence the Liturgy is being discovered, not as a mere exercise in piety, but as the basis of a Christian sociology. "The Liturgy", writes Abbot Herwegen, "was of old a formative life-force; it was the impress of the spirit, which at once inspired and gave form to the young and vigorous life of the early centuries... As the embodied expression of the Christian spirit it must again become a formative life-force for us Christians of today.

Here again, the Eucharist is understood to be, as the place in which the Body of Christ is most vividly realized, the basis of a Christian sociology which respects each human being as a member (or desired member) of the one Body. In The Gospel and the Catholic Church Ramsey thus sets forth a basis for Christian social thought and action: participation in the Eucharist, in which the Body is so vividly manifested, shapes the worldview of the Christians. They learn to perceive other people as members of Christ's Body, and are taught to bring this understanding to bear on their behaviour in the world. It is important to note, however, that Ramsey's social theology is not his primary focus. He understands social justice to be the living out of a reality which exists in its fullness in the eucharistic assembly. Christians must practice social concern so that when they come to the Liturgy they can participate honestly. He says,

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34 ibid., 187.
35 ibid., 177.
The Christian does not share in the Liturgy in order to live aright; he lives aright in order to share in the Liturgy. For the Liturgy is not an exercise in piety divorced from common life, it is rather the bringing of all common life into the sacrifice of Christ.\footnote{ibid., 119.}

The reality which is manifested in the Liturgy shapes Christian conscience and worldview. If the individual does not live this reality outside the context of the worshipping community, his participation in that worship will be a lie.

It is therefore clear that for Ramsey the Eucharist is not an isolated rite, nor simply one among the three marks of the Church. The Liturgy is the context in which the episcopate and the creeds make sense, and their relation to the liturgical worship of the Church guards against their misuse. The Liturgy is also the proper context for the entirety of Christian life. The thought and action of Christians is meant to grow out of and be a reflection of their experience of the passion and the Body in the eucharistic celebration. Ramsey says,

The Church's life is gathered around the Liturgy since it is not only the most important of a series of rites, but the divine act into which all prayers and praises are drawn . . . here also every worshipful thought and deed and word of men is gathered up and explained, since there the Christians, with all that they have and do and desire, are offered in union with the death and resurrection of Jesus and the one family of God.\footnote{ibid., 119.}
Chapter V: Destructive and Reconstructive Liturgies

Unfortunately, the Church as it has been realized in history has, more often than not, fallen far short of the ideal Ramsey presents in *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*. It has been an epiphany of the folly and cruelty of a corrupt humanity, rather than the manifestation of the self-giving nature of God, and of a new humanity, characterized as it is created, by the death to self in which it shares. In particular, Ramsey points out that throughout the history of Christianity there has been a recurring tendency to interpret the Christian life in an individualistic way, which denies the centrality of the Body of Christ, and to represent the Gospel in such a way that it becomes focused upon human needs and desires, instead of upon the wondrous act of God in Christ. These failings Ramsey traces within both the Roman and Protestant traditions, and he points out that, ironically, it has often been the misuse of those very "marks of the Church", meant to define the Body and reveal the Gospel, which have contributed to their misrepresentation, and even to their corruption. Among the three marks of the Church, the Liturgy and liturgical worship (ideally the occasion in which the divine initiative apprehends and shapes the Christians), when misunderstood and misused, becomes the prime means for the corruption of the Gospel and the Church. Powerful in moulding Christians into the Body of Christ, liturgical worship can also be powerful in mis-shaping Christians, when it ceases to reflect the Truth of Christ.

Ramsey traces the individualistic tendencies within Roman Catholicism to the eucharistic theology of the Middle Ages. Here, an extreme focus on the presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements of bread and wine leads to the exclusion of the understanding of fellowship in the context of the Mass. Ramsey says, "The phrase 'Corpus Christi' came to mean the
presence to be adored, and a Feast in honour of that presence, rather than the Body of Christ which includes both the Eucharist and the whole Church".¹ Not only is the title "Body of Christ" restricted to the eucharistic elements, the whole focus of the celebration shifts. No longer is this an act of table fellowship, a meal, in which the worshippers are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ; instead the Mass becomes the occasion for people to "adore" or worship the tangible presence of Christ among them. Not surprisingly, then, "Communion became infrequent, the note of fellowship was hardly recognized".² For such adoration is not necessarily a communal act at all, and though it takes place within the context of a gathering of the community, the people play the part of spectators, and could just as well do so individually as in a group.

The individualism fostered by the medieval Mass was further encouraged in the devotional practices of the Counter-Reformation and the first Vatican Council. Ramsey says that, "The Church is indeed the school where the training is done, and the institution wherein the soul is fed and grows, but the soul’s own acts of prayer are not regarded as part of the one liturgical action of the Corpus Christi".³ Though the Counter-Reformation responded to the criticisms of the Reformers by encouraging a new spiritual vitality among Catholics, the revival was individualistic to the core. For instance, Ramsey compares the Jesuit order, a development of the Counter-Reformation period, to the older Benedictine tradition. While the rule of Benedict stresses the centrality of common, liturgical prayer, the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola

¹ Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 168.
² ibid.
³ ibid., 173.
emphasize personal spiritual experience and growth. Similarly, in the celebration of the Eucharist, the notion of fellowship remained absent:

The Liturgy sometimes becomes regarded as the offering of a sacrifice, which the people assist not by entering into the various stages of the rite, but by private devotions of their own; communion becomes a private act often quite separated from the Liturgy; and adoration may be equally private and focused upon the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the Tabernacle.

The sense of the Body of Christ which is realized in the eucharistic celebration had all but disappeared. When people did come together at Mass, they might be involved each in their own private devotions, together only in the sense that they were in the same room, and focused upon the same object. Communion had come to mean in this context the personal reception of Christ in the eucharistic elements, without relation to anyone else. Thus, Ramsey says,

... when the true liturgical unity and centre of worship is never made articulate, then it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the Pauline and Augustinian sense of "Corpus Christi" is lost from sight. And it has thus been lost for thousands of devout Christians, for whom the term "Corpus Christi" means neither the Church the Body, nor the Eucharist as a whole, but one isolated aspect of the latter.

Because of an unbalanced presentation of the Eucharist, the theme of mystery all but obliterated the understanding of the fellowship of the Body. This corruption of the eucharistic celebrations of the Roman Church during the Middle Ages, and the periods spanned by the Council of Trent and the first Vatican Council, created a situation in which ordinary Christians no longer recognized themselves in the words "the Body of Christ".

* ibid., 173.
* ibid.
* ibid., 173-174.
Such a misunderstanding of the role of the people inevitably produces a corrupted version of the Gospel of Christ. Ramsey says,

Beneath perversions in the doctrine of the mystical Body there always lie perversions in the Gospel of God. From the beginning of Christianity the two are interdependent, and the corruption of the one means the corruption of the other.⁷

When the people of God no longer understand themselves to be, as the Body of Christ, the fulfilment of God’s purpose, the perception of the nature of the purpose itself will be altered. The doctrine of the mystical Body means that humanity’s relationship with God is restored by the self-sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus himself is the new humanity, the new Israel, in which people join through their participation in Jesus’ death to self. In the passion of Jesus God reveals his sacerdotal nature, and humanity recovers its role as the worshippers of God, who belong to a royal priesthood. Their sacrifice of themselves, and of their praise and thanksgiving, is offered in and through Jesus, and thus in and through the one Body which is united with him. In other words, it is God’s revelation of his own essentially sacerdotal and sacrificial nature which casts humankind into a sacerdotal role, a role which each individual plays only by means of their relation to the Body, and thus to Jesus himself. When, therefore, the true doctrine of the Body of Christ is lost, the role of Jesus becomes unclear. Ramsey says,

The piety of the Middle Ages knew that "if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins"; it knew that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us". It failed, however, to see these truths about propitiation and sacrifice sufficiently in the context of the loving work of God’s own initiative.⁸

⁷ ibid., 168.
⁸ ibid., 169.
Jesus is sacrificed for us, as a "propitiatory" sacrifice. Yet the purpose of this sacrifice, since it is no longer connected with the creation of the Body of Christ, is, not surprisingly, misinterpreted, and this misinterpretation is illustrated and embodied in the Medieval Mass.

The medieval emphasis on the presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements combined with this incomplete understanding of sacrifice, results in the notion that Jesus is sacrificed in the Mass in order to make humanity's peace with God. Not only does this idea contradict the "once for all" quality of Jesus' sacrifice in history, it also implies that the Eucharist is essentially a human act, human initiative. Ramsey says, "Thus the Mass came to be regarded popularly as man's method of propitiating God without due thought of God's own declaration to men of His own sacrifice in which the initiative is His." Without the understanding of the mystical Body of Christ which should be bred in the eucharistic celebration, the entire focus of the rite shifts, so that its centre becomes the human act of offering, rather than God's gracious self-sacrifice in Jesus. The purpose of the central and defining act of the Church becomes humanity's activity, what we can do to make our peace with God, instead of God's act to shape humanity by means of his incredible self-offering.

Ramsey's analysis of the implications of the imbalance in the eucharistic theology of the Middle Ages could be taken yet one step further than he actually does in The Gospel and the Catholic Church. The extreme focus on the mystery of Christ's presence in the eucharistic elements destroys the sense of the fellowship of the one Body. This individualistic interpretation of the Church results in an anthropocentric, rather than theocentric, presentation of the Gospel. It might also be argued that an anthropocentric interpretation of the Gospel as realized in the

* ibid.
medieval Eucharist perpetuates the individualistic interpretation of the Church by encouraging clericalism. Since the "sacrifice" which occurs in the Mass is limited to the elements with which the people seldom directly interact, the offering of the Church naturally becomes the exclusive province of the clergy. The priests and bishops of the Church are understood to offer the sacrifice of the body and blood on behalf of the people; the hierarchical Church is perceived as the place that individuals go to receive grace and to learn (rather than live) the Truth. Of this distorted understanding of the Body and the Gospel, Ramsey understands the authority of the Roman Pontiff to be the supreme expression. He says,

The climax of Papal supremacy marks the climax of the distortion of genuine Catholic order. For the unity of the one race there has been substituted the governmental unity of the Roman See with the unchurching of those who do not submit to it.\(^\text{10}\)

The context within which the bishop as symbol of the fellowship of the Body makes sense is thus destroyed through the corruption of the Liturgy. The authority of government, which is the source of grace and truth for individual Christians replaces the symbolic episcopate which represents the Body of which it is a part.

The individualism and anthropocentrism which have plagued the Roman Church since the Middle Ages have also been, Ramsey asserts, a problem within the modern Protestant Evangelical Churches which grew out of the Reformation. In spite of the fact that the worship practices of Protestant traditions bear little resemblance to the medieval Mass, Ramsey traces the roots of these individualistic and anthropocentric tendencies within Protestantism to its worship. Just as in the case of the Roman Church, within Protestant traditions it is worship which does

\(^\text{10}\) ibid., 172.
not truly manifest the Body of Christ that leads to a diluted or corrupted presentation of the paschal Gospel.

While the problem in the worship of the Roman Church was an imbalance of the themes within the eucharistic liturgy, in many Protestant traditions the problem is that the worship is not "liturgical" at all. Ramsey criticizes Protestant traditions whose worship is not catholic and apostolic—worship which does not take place with relation to the one Body, and which is not focused upon the divine act of the death and resurrection of Jesus. He criticizes in particular the claim of Dr. Friedrich Heiler that the non-liturgical and spontaneous prayer of the Reformed tradition is most biblical, that only prayer which "emphasizes petition and the soul's spontaneous cry to God about the needs of men"\(^{11}\) is authentically Christian. Ramsey does not mean to denigrate either petition or spontaneous prayer, but he does insist that both must take place within the context of the Body of Christ, and the historical act of God, from which the Body grows. The role of liturgical worship is not to strangle spontaneity in prayer, but to put it in the correct context. The "regular and ordered" pattern of liturgical prayer reminds the worshipper of the two central truths of the Gospel—that Christian life and worship are focused on and occur by means of the act of God in Jesus Christ, and that they take place within the Body of Christ, a community which extends beyond the individual, the local community and even beyond the present time. Ramsey says,

Thus the service in any Christian building is not the act of the local group of Christians; it is, in inward reality and outward ritual, the act of the timeless Church, and the worshippers are pointed beyond their topical needs and feelings and interests to the one sacrifice of Christ and to the universal Church of God.\(^{12}\)

\(^{11}\) ibid., 94.

\(^{12}\) ibid., 198.
It is this reference to the historic act of God and to the one Body which is, according to Ramsey, missing from Protestant worship.

One problem that results from the lack of liturgical prayer is that the primary focus upon the act of God in history tends to be overshadowed in favour of the needs and concerns of the worshippers. Ramsey says that in Protestant worship,

The congregation expresses "its own worship", the "reality" of which is often tested by its correspondence with the feelings of the worshippers. Thus, for all the power of the Gospel in its midst and for all the true supernaturalism of the austere Calvinist tradition of worship, Protestant worship has seldom protected itself from the perils of the man-centred and the sentimental.¹³

Ramsey has pointed out in his analysis of prayer in the New Testament that Christian prayer always rightly begins with doxology; that is, it centres upon the mighty works of God in creation, in history, and particularly in the redeeming death of Christ. The purpose of liturgical prayer is to ensure that this is, in fact, the focus of worship. When this structure is missing, the natural human tendency to focus on oneself will automatically come to the fore, and worship will be characterized more by petition than by praise. Thus, "It is man with his need for salvation, not God and His glory, His revelation, that occupies the centre of the picture. Thus God becomes one who satisfies the needs of man".¹⁴ Protestant worship which lacks a liturgical pattern thus fosters a faith which is ultimately centred upon humanity.

Ramsey seems particularly concerned with what he calls the "sentimental" character of much of Protestant worship. Because the Christian faith is built upon an act of God in history, it rightly depends not so much upon the personal experience of grace, as it does upon belief in,

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¹³ ibid., 198.

¹⁴ ibid., 199.
and incorporation into the historic death and resurrection of Jesus. Ramsey argues that non-liturgical and spontaneous prayer encourages instead the tendency to focus upon the immediate and personal experience of grace. He says,

Warm feelings are often made the test of reality in prayer and worship: Holy Communion comes to be regarded as the supreme moment when the Christian feels the Lord’s presence, rather than an act of God’s grace to be received by faith as a movement of the will, without any concern about warm feelings.¹⁵

While it might be argued that in an effort to emphasize the centrality of the historical reference and context of Christianity, Ramsey overlooks the legitimate place of personal experience in Christian faith and worship, his point remains clear. The Christian life and faith take place in and through the crucified Jesus, and Christian worship should reveal and embody this truth. Protestant worship, says Ramsey, emphasizes precisely the opposite, focusing primarily on the needs and feelings of the worshippers, rather than on the glory of God.

It might be said, then, that the non-liturgical worship of many Protestant traditions lacks a clear sense of the mystery of the Gospel. While in the Roman Church too much focus upon the mystery resulted in the loss of the fellowship of the Body, in the Protestant Churches the neglect of mystery has created an understanding of fellowship which neither grows out of nor truly reflects the paschal Gospel. Ramsey argues that the non-liturgical and predominantly petitionary worship of Protestant Churches leads to the focus upon the personal experience of salvation, instead of upon the historical death and resurrection of Jesus. This being the case, the unity of the Church results from the gathering together of those who have had the same experience, rather than from the participation of individuals in Jesus’ death to self. It is a unity

¹⁵ ibid., 199-200.
of choice, instead of a unity of race; a community of individuals, rather than the community created by the sacrifice of individual self-hoods. And as Ramsey has pointed out with respect to Roman Catholicism, defect in the Church leads to defect in the Truth. In a community of individuals, in which the basis of faith and unity is personal experience, it is hardly surprising if the Truth should be presented as subjective. Ramsey says, for instance, that,

Ritschl certainly drew out the corporate character of Christian life in an inspiring way; but he so diluted the Gospel, upon which the Church rests, and the idea of worship, which is the centre of the Church’s life, that his teaching is full of the most subtle dangers.  

Without the reference to the one Body whose existence and structure are created by and witness to the Truth of Christ, there will always be the danger that the Gospel may be diluted or corrupted by subjective and humanistic philosophies.

Thus in both Roman and Protestant traditions the misunderstanding and misuse of worship has led to the corruption of the fellowship of the Body and the Truth of the Gospel. In both traditions individualistic and anthropocentric tendencies can be traced to worship practices which inaccurately reflect the Truth of Christ. Yet in spite of the fact that Ramsey understands these similar problems to have a similar cause, the remedies he proposes are different. On the one hand, Ramsey demonstrates that within the Roman Church the understanding of the relationship between the paschal Gospel and the fellowship of the Body is being recovered by means of a revitalized liturgical worship. In the liturgy the people are being taught once more their role as the royal priesthood, whose right and responsibility it is to offer praise to God through Jesus Christ. On the other hand, Ramsey argues that though corrupt patterns of worship have led to

16 ibid., 202.
the Protestant tradition's dilution of the Gospel, the individualistic and anthropocentric tendencies of Protestantism will only be overcome through the recovery of the historic episcopate. Though the Protestant churches do need, like the Romans, to rediscover a truly liturgical theology, "It is hard to see how Christians can recover the meaning of worship in this liturgical and Catholic and yet utterly Evangelical sense except in the atmosphere of the historic Church order".\(^ {17}\)

As the corruption of the understanding of the mystical Body and the paschal Gospel in the Roman Church result from the exclusion of the worshippers from active and corporate participation in the eucharistic celebration, so the reversal of the individualistic and anthropocentric tendencies within Roman Catholicism begins with the recovery of a truly inclusive Liturgy. Ramsey looks to the continental liturgical movement, which was gathering momentum at the time The Gospel and the Catholic Church was written, in order to demonstrate the way in which liturgical worship, and particularly a balanced eucharistic theology, aids in the recovery of the fellowship of the Body, and thus of a truer presentation of the Gospel. He notes that this liturgical movement, centred at the abbeys of Mt.-César in Louvain and Maria Laach in the Rhineland,

... is looking behind the individualism of medieval and post-reformation piety to the corporate meaning of worship, which was more in evidence at an earlier stage of liturgical history, and which the Liturgy still proclaims to those who have ears to hear.\(^ {18}\)

By helping the worshippers to recover the sense that the participation of the community in the eucharistic celebration is absolutely integral, the advocates of this movement sought to replace

\(^{17}\) ibid., 198.

\(^{18}\) ibid., 176.
the individualism and anthropocentrism of the Middle Ages with an understanding of the mystical Body which grows out of and shows forth the good news of God's redeeming act in Christ.

This renewed understanding of the Body and the Gospel is achieved, Ramsey says, by means of changes in the practice of common worship. In comparison with the radical revisions promulgated in the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" of the Second Vatican Council, the liturgical revisions which Ramsey cites here seem somewhat undramatic. The very fact, however, that these revisions are on a rather small scale only serves the better to demonstrate Ramsey's point about the centrality of liturgy for Christian faith and life. Ramsey draws attention to reforms which include encouraging congregational participation by following the service in the missal, and singing or saying the responses, emphasizing the offertory by "appropriate ceremonial" in order to point out its significance as the people's offering to God, and the institution of the Parish Mass as the central act of worship.

Ramsey understands these straightforward and even simple changes to be of great significance in the recovery of the fellowship of the Body and a true presentation of the Gospel of Christ. For instance, the active and corporate participation of the people through their responses and by means of the offertory procession restores the sense that this is the worship of the whole people of God. It is a truly communal act, in that the people do it in union with one another. Moreover, the dialogue with the celebrant which the responses create, and the understanding that the elements of bread and wine are offerings which represent the common life of the people, reveals that the eucharistic liturgy is truly the act of the Body of Christ, and not a rite performed by the clergy on behalf of the people. The active participation of the people
in worship recovers both the fellowship of the Body, and the rightful role of the people as the royal priesthood.

Of central importance to Ramsey is the Parish Mass, because in it "all of the elements of sacrifice and worship and communion are set forth in one, and . . . the Body of Christ, as S. Paul and S. Augustine spoke of it, is the centre of Church life". In the Parish Mass the full understanding of the sacrifice of Christ is restored, and the relation of people to that sacrifice is again made clear. For the Parish Mass, with its emphasis on the reception of communion, once again places the sacrifice of the Eucharist in the context of a meal. The Mass is then understood to be the occasion during which Christians are nourished and sustained, and through which they are united with God and with one another, by sharing in the sacrifice of the Son of God. Table fellowship replaces adoration as the purpose of the rite. No longer is the Mass perceived as the human act of propitiating God, but as God's act, in which humanity is incorporated and by which it is recreated. Thus, "... the Liturgy itself is teaching the unity wherein Christians are one, and the Gospel which is in their midst". The reversal of the individualism and anthropocentrism of the Roman Church is thus largely to be accomplished by the revision of the worship of the Church.

Here Ramsey's examination of the liturgical reforms of the Roman Church ends. Perhaps because the second half of The Gospel and the Catholic Church is meant to be an analysis of historical developments, Ramsey does not feel justified in speculating about the future effects of the liturgical movement. I would like to suggest, however, that one of the most significant

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19 ibid., 177.
20 ibid., 178.
implications of the liturgical reforms described by Ramsey might be the re-evaluation of the nature of the episcopate with relation to the Body of Christ. As long as the phrase "Body of Christ" was understood without reference to the people of God, the model of the Church remained hierarchical, with the bishops, and above all, the Pope, functioning as the government of the Church, "in persona Christi". With the recovery, through changes in liturgical theology and practice, of the truth that the Body of Christ is the people who are united with Christ and with each other through participation in his passion, the stage is set for a revised understanding of the function of the episcopate. In their worship the people are being taught that it is they who are "in persona Christi". This change in outlook provides a perfect opportunity for, indeed, demands a change in the model of the episcopacy. In this new (or ancient) understanding of the Church only the parabolic or symbolic model for the episcopate makes sense. Whether the Roman Church (and, for that matter, the Anglican communion) will accept this challenge which is issued by a revised liturgical theology, remains to be seen.

The reversal of the individualistic and anthropocentric tendencies in the Roman Church, which corrupt the Body and the Gospel, thus begins with the revision of worship, yet the solution to similar problems within the Protestant traditions, Ramsey locates not in the recovery of liturgical patterns of prayer but in the restoration of the historic episcopate. Though he has attributed the individualism and anthropocentrism of the Protestant traditions to worship practices which lack a liturgical structure, Ramsey claims that the reason the Protestant traditions are without the benefit of liturgical worship is that they lack the historic episcopate. He says, "With the lack of the historical structure, the sense of worship as the act of the one historic society has
been lost".  Without the episcopate to serve as the symbol of the Body united in the death of Christ, it is impossible, Ramsey says, for people to recover an understanding of worship that has reference to the historic society and to the act of God in history. The loss of the historic episcopate therefore marks the beginning of a slippery slope, that leads through the corruption of worship, to the disintegration of the Gospel itself. Thus, Ramsey says, "... Protestantism must ask whether, after all, the historic Church order has not something to do with the Gospel of God".

While it is to be expected that Ramsey will understand the Protestant return to the Gospel to be incomplete without the episcopate (he has, after all, argued convincingly of its importance as one of the three marks of the Church), it does seem somewhat surprising to find him insisting that only the recovery of the episcopate will facilitate the restoration of liturgical worship to a Church tradition in need of it. In fact, this assertion seems to contradict his interpretation of the episcopate itself. He has said that the bishop is a parable to the Body of its unity, a unity which arises out of the participation of individuals in the death of Jesus. He has demonstrated, with reference to the "Apostolic Tradition" how the bishop is chosen from and consecrated within the Body of which he is to be a symbol. And he has shown that this Body is constituted and sustained in the liturgical and eucharistic worship of the Church, for it is particularly in this setting that individuals come into contact with and participate in the death and new life of the Lord. Outside of this liturgical context, then, the role of the bishop makes no sense.

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21 ibid., 197-198.
22 ibid., 201.
It hardly seems possible, therefore, that the restoration of the episcopate will enable the recovery of liturgical worship. On the contrary, without a liturgical context, there will be no way that an understanding of the bishop as parable can be achieved. Ramsey says that in the absence of the historic episcopate the eucharistic celebration is maimed, since the visible and tangible symbol of the Body that is there manifested is missing. Without the bishop, therefore, the Eucharist is constantly in peril of being interpreted in a congregationalist manner, such that the particular community does not recognize its relation to the Body as a whole. Yet apart from the liturgical context, and a eucharistic theology complete with all the ancient eucharistic themes which set forth the Body and the Gospel, the symbolic episcopate is simply unimaginable. It would seem more reasonable, on the basis of Ramsey’s own theology and ecclesiology, to suggest that a recovery of the doctrine of the mystical Body and the paschal Gospel should begin with renewed liturgical theology and practice, and once this is established, the significance of the episcopate may at last be recognized.

Ramsey notes in the course of an analysis of the reforms of Luther that it would be wrong to criticize him for failing to recognize the importance of the historic episcopate since, “If he looked around him he could see Church order only in distorted and perverted forms; nowhere could he see the Episcopate as the organ of the one Body, deriving its character from the Body’s one life”. Luther could imagine no role for the episcopate in a reformed Church because the episcopate with which he was familiar was a sign of the corruption of the Church, rather than a parable of the life of the Body. This remains a problem to the present day. The realization of the episcopate often bears very little resemblance to Ramsey’s ideal. Thus his insistence that

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23 ibid., 191.
the episcopate must be restored, not only in order that the Protestant traditions may know the Gospel in its fullness, but also in order to facilitate the reunion of the Church as a whole, has met with scepticism. James Griffiss, in an evaluation of Ramsey’s work, notes, for instance, that,

...as we can see after fifty years of ecumenical dialogue and more historical investigation of Christian origins, the problem of the episcopate remains a major stumbling block, and the Augustinian view of validity still prevails for many Anglicans and Roman Catholics.  

The prevailing model continues to present the episcopate as the context within which the Church operates, rather than the other way around.

While this model holds sway it is highly unlikely that churches of the Protestant tradition will ever seriously consider accepting the episcopate. Therefore, rather than asserting as Ramsey does at the close of The Gospel and the Catholic Church that, "... all Christians need the restoration of the one Episcopate. It must be restored to its due place in the lives of all Christian people, that all may share in one Eucharist which is, both inwardly and outwardly, the act of the one Church of God" 25, it might have been more constructive to emphasize the role of the liturgical worship in helping to restore the truth of the Body and the Gospel. By means of a restored Liturgy the Church of Rome has created the context within which to consider the revision of its model of episcopacy, so that the episcopate might one day fulfil the symbolic role imaged by the Apostles. By means of a more liturgical form of worship the Protestant Churches could come to a fuller understanding of the Body of Christ and its relation to the Gospel, so that

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they might recognize and accept the significance of the symbolic episcopate, should such a model be presented. Ramsey says, after all, that, "The unification of outward order can never move faster than the recovery of inward life". And as Ramsey clearly demonstrates, it is above all by means of the common worship of the Church that this inward life can be either fostered or corrupted. He says,

Both Catholic and Protestant, however, returning to their roots in the Liturgy and in the Word, are proclaiming a supernatural faith in the face of modern paganism. And theologians of both traditions have been finding new ways of contact with one another, through being driven back to the divine facts which underlie both the Mass and the preaching of the Word.  

Ramsey’s analysis of the historical developments of the Church makes it abundantly clear that it does not do to glorify the worship of the Church to such an extent that it becomes an end in itself; it is, after all, a human activity, and therefore susceptible to corruption. Yet if the Church strives to ensure that its worship takes place always in and through Christ the Leitourgos, that is, in the context of the Body of Christ that is created and sustained by the incorporation of individuals into the passion of the Lord, the common worship of the Church may become the occasion during which the Church most faithfully lives and reveals the Gospel of Christ.

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26 ibid., 222.
27 ibid., 203.
Conclusion

"... the relevance of the Church can never be any easier than was the relevance of the Messiah."¹ This is Michael Ramsey's response to those who question whether the ancient Church order has any place in a modern, scientific society. In defiance of those theologians who would seek to make the Gospel more palatable by stressing the moral message of Jesus, Ramsey presents the paradox of the Cross. He asserts that the significance of Jesus is not primarily his good works, his teachings, or even the astounding fact of the incarnation itself; it is above all else the passion of the Lord which defines his relevance, and which creates and is reflected in the Church. Jesus' significance is the way in which he turns expectations upside-down, and the Church is brought to birth by participation in this upset.

The emphasis on the paschal character of both Jesus and his Church is perhaps the greatest strength of The Gospel and the Catholic Church. It distinguishes Ramsey's work from many other modern ecclesologies in that for Ramsey the significance of Jesus is not merely that his advent restores the relationship between God and humanity, but that this relationship is restored, and the Church created, by means of his suffering and death. This focus on the passion provides the foundation of Ramsey's argument that the Church is an integral part of the Gospel, and it ensures that this ecclesiology does not slip into triumphalism. It is the basis of his defence of the ancient tripartite order of the Church, and it paves the way for the healing of the brokenness of the Church.

Ramsey's apologetic of the Church begins with his understanding of the purpose of God and the place of Jesus in its fulfilment. Ramsey understands God's purpose in creation and in

¹ Ramsey, The Gospel and the Catholic Church, 4.
salvation history to be the forging of a covenant relationship between himself and humanity. The creative and redemptive acts of God are to be met by the praise and thanksgiving of a people united in his worship. This covenant relationship is realized in the most unexpected of ways--by means of the death and resurrection of the Son of God. Through his willingness to abandon himself in death, Jesus manifests the eternally self-giving nature of God, and in his complete identification with humanity in the acceptance of death, he offers the perfect human response to God’s advances. In the moment of his death, Jesus thus becomes the worshipping people of God, the new Israel, the Church; and through his death humanity is enabled to recover its destiny. By sharing in Jesus’ death, in the renunciation of the rights of self, humankind is united with him, with the Father, and with each other.

From Ramsey’s perspective, then, the separation of the Gospel and the Church makes no sense at all, for the creation of the Church, the people united in God’s worship, is the point of the Gospel, and the significance of the passion and resurrection of Jesus. To deny the importance of the Body of Christ is to ignore the identity of Jesus, who through his passion is the head and life of that Body. Ramsey says,

Rabbi—He had spoken with authority; prophet—the great one was amongst us; philanthropist—He went about doing good; but all this wealth of activity He laid aside, and of every conceivable human possibility He stripped Himself, when of His own will He went forth to die. And as He went to die, He embodied in his own flesh the whole meaning of the Church of God; for its Baptism, its Eucharist, its order, the truth which it teaches to men, the unity which it offers to them, all these mean simply—"ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God".²

The relevance of the Gospel is not primarily the good example set by Jesus, nor his teachings, nor even that he manifested the presence of God to humanity, but that he was willing to renounce

² ibid., 224.
all these functions in order that through his death the worshipping people of God might be brought to birth.

One of the most important implications of the paschal foundation of Ramsey’s ecclesiology is that this focus enables him to avoid the sense of triumphalism that sometimes plagues more incarnational models of Church. From Ramsey’s perspective the Church is not a society instituted for the spread of Christ’s message, nor is it Christ’s representative on earth, or the conduit of God’s grace; rather, the Church is first and foremost Jesus Christ himself, in the moment of his great self-sacrifice. Through his passion the Son of God restores completely, by himself, the covenant relationship between God and humanity. God’s purpose is fulfilled by Jesus alone. By participation in Jesus’ death, through the abandonment of self, individuals join a Church which exists before and beyond them, over which they have no control. Humanity recovers its destiny, becomes all its was meant to be, through being united with Christ crucified, the Israel of God.

The significance for Ramsey’s ecclesiology of this focus upon the paschal mystery may be more clearly seen in contrast with the ecclesiology of Karl Rahner. Rahner’s understanding of the nature of the Church, like Ramsey’s, depends upon his presentation of the role of Christ. According to Rahner the significance of Christ is primarily his presence, as the historical and tangible, and therefore definitive presentation of God’s self-offer to humanity. The institution of the Church necessarily follows the ascension of Christ, because the historical nature of humanity requires that the grace offered in Jesus remain accessible in a tangible way, if this offer is to be truly definitive and irreversible. Rahner thus defines the Church as "the historical
continuation of Christ" and as "the continuance of Christ's presence in the world". This definition, with its focus on the presence of Christ, results in an understanding of the Church as the fulfilment or completion of the work of Christ. Ramsey's paschal ecclesiology, on the other hand, presents Christ crucified, the new Israel, as the completion of humanity. Consequently, the individual does not join the Church in order to experience the fullness of God's grace, rather he/she is united with Christ, and thus becomes a member of the one Body.

Yet it is not merely this focus on the divine initiative in the passion of Christ which prevents Ramsey's ecclesiology from falling into triumphalism. An exclusive emphasis upon its divine foundation could easily cause the Church to become very self-satisfied. However, because Ramsey asserts that it is not simply union with Christ which creates the Church, but participation in his death, the Church which he envisions is characterized by humility, rather than triumphalism. Ramsey says, "... while it is true that the Church is founded on the Word-made-flesh, it is true only because the Word was identified with men right down to the point of death, and enabled men to find unity through a veritable death to self". Since Christ becomes the Church, the worshipping people of God, through his death, in which he abandons himself to the will of the Father, unification with him will mean accepting that same abandonment of self. In other words, humanity becomes one with Christ and part of his Body by acknowledging its own insufficiency, and by renouncing the rights of self. The Church is made up those who

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are united with Christ and with each other by their willingness to humble themselves before God and before people.

In fact, in Ramsey’s paschal ecclesiology the brokenness and failings of the Church are as significant as its successful representation of the Truth. He says,

Both divisions and unity remind us of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Division severs His body: but unity means the one Body, in which every member and every local community dies to self in its utter dependence upon the whole, the structure of the Body thereby setting forth the dying and rising of Christ.6

Ramsey understands even the disunity of the Church to be a sign-post to the paschal Gospel, because the recognition of the failing of the Church presupposes an understanding of the one Body of Christ whose structure manifests the death and resurrection of Jesus. The divisions of the Church are, for Ramsey, a sort of "negative proof" for the Gospel. In this perspective, Ramsey comes close to the idea of Karl Barth, to which he refers at one point on this very issue:

... the Barthians have forced upon their readers and listeners the issue of the Church's function. It exists, they have said, to be a witness to the Gospel through its emptiness of any significance or beauty in its own right. Thus witnessing, it is full of tribulation since, whether it be faithful or faithless, it is always the meeting-place between sinful man and the love and judgement of God.7

Far from being triumphalistic, Ramsey’s presentation of a Church which is characterized as it is created by participation in Jesus’ death to self, takes into account the reality of the failures of the Church, and perceives in them the challenge to more faithfully reveal the Truth of Christ.

The paschal mystery is also the foundation of Ramsey’s defence of the ancient order of the Church, with its episcopate, creeds, and liturgy. The Church he envisions is not only created

6 ibid., 7.
7 ibid., 202.
by the passion of the Lord, but shaped by it, so that its structure, doctrine, and worship are reflections, or more accurately, revelations of the Gospel which creates them. Ramsey says,

From Christian origins the lesson is clear that the visible Church and its order is an integral part of man’s knowledge of Christ crucified. From history the lesson is clear that institutionalism fails unless it is mindful of the Gospel which gives it meaning; and that the faith of the Gospel can wither and fade, unless it is mindful of the one historic Church. But the digging discloses not only lessons but the fact of the divine foundation; for as the debris of old controversies and one-sided systems is cleared away, there appears the pattern of a structure whose maker and builder is God.⁴

The ancient tripartite order of the Church shows forth the Truth of Christ, and to it Ramsey traces both the faithful and faithless representations of the Gospel throughout history.

Ramsey is most successful in demonstrating the way in which passion forms and is revealed in the marks of the Church in his analysis of common worship, and particularly of the celebration of the Eucharist. He argues on the basis of his study of prayer in the New Testament that Christian worship is most authentic when it focuses upon the historic act of God in Christ, within the fellowship of the one Body. In other words, Christian worship directs the worshippers to the Church apostolic and catholic. Christian prayer is "liturgical", that is, it takes place in and through Jesus, the "λέγουμεν "s. It reveals to Christians the truth that their lives and personal concerns are taken up into the one historic act of God, and it vividly demonstrates the truth that to be in Christ is to be a member of the one Body.

Yet liturgical worship does not merely follow the pattern set out by the passion of the Lord. It is also the occasion during which Christians come into contact with the paschal event, and by means of their incorporation into it they are forged into and sustained as the Body of Christ. This function of liturgical worship is exemplified in the eucharistic celebration, for

⁴ ibid., 222.
which reason Ramsey terms it "the Liturgy". The Eucharist is the supreme moment in which individuals encounter and are transformed by the passion of Jesus. In the celebration of the Eucharist Christ is present as the crucified one, and people are given the opportunity to share in his death and new life. Because participation in Jesus' death involves the willingness to renounce the rights of self, the Eucharist is also the occasion in which the fellowship of the Body is realized and sustained. The Eucharist is thus the revelation of the sacrificial and sacerdotal nature of Christ, and also the constitution and revelation of the priestly nature of the people who are one with him in this act of self-offering.

The liturgical and eucharistic worship of the Church is therefore the context of the whole life of the Body, for it is in their common worship that Christians are apprehended and shaped by the paschal Gospel. The common worship of the Church is really more, for Ramsey, than simply a revelation of the Gospel, on a par with the other two marks of the Church. Liturgical worship is not only an outward expression of the Truth of Christ, but the source of the inward experience of its reality.

Ramsey also presents the credal statements as one of the indispensable marks of the Church. While, unlike common worship, creeds do not mediate the Truth of Christ, they do bear witness to it. In a straightforward, narrative rendering, the creeds recall Christians to the acts of God in history, culminating in the supreme act of self-offering in the death and resurrection of Jesus. These statements of faith set limits to human speculations and innovations about the Truth of God, as they constantly remind Christians of the Gospel and the one Body, through and in which they have their being.
The context of credal statements is the worship of the Church, for in this setting the creeds are directly related to the paschal event to which they point. In this context it is most clear that creeds are descriptions of the experience which apprehends people in the Liturgy. Thus, though the creeds are an integral part of the structure of the Church, since they protect the Truth of the Gospel and the Body, Ramsey envisions a time when they will be needed no longer: "The time may yet come when Creeds may be discarded, but it will be a time when the Gospel is so rooted in men’s life and worship that the words to describe it will be superfluous".\(^9\) Human beings are fallible, and their worship is not always a true reflection of the Gospel, and thus the Church still requires these statements of faith.

The episcopate is the third mark of the Church which Ramsey insists is necessary if the Church is to remain faithful to the Gospel. Like the creeds, the episcopate is not a direct manifestation of the paschal mystery, but a revelation of it, which ensures that the Church remains mindful of the catholicity of the Church, and therefore of the historicity of the Gospel. Ramsey’s defence of the historic episcopate is based on his understanding of the function of the Apostles, a function which is not limited to the early days of the Church, but which rather increases in importance as the paschal event recedes further into history. The Apostles and the bishops who are their successors, function as symbols or parables of the unity of the one Body, and consequently of the paschal Gospel which creates the fellowship. Like the creeds, the episcopate bears witness to a reality that exists before it, and also, like the creeds, the context of the episcopate is the liturgical worship of the Church which manifests that reality.

\(^9\) ibid., 134.
Thus, while Ramsey does successfully demonstrate the importance of each of these three marks of the Church in the full and complete revelation and maintenance of the paschal Gospel, it is also clear that common worship does not function in exactly the same way as do the episcopate and the creeds. All three marks are indeed outward signs of the inward reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus, but the liturgical worship of the Church is also the means to the inward experience of the paschal mystery. The creeds are sign-posts to the Truth, and will one day pass away when people have learned to live completely in the Truth. The episcopate is a parable to the Body of its unity, and because the unity of the Church is created by participation in the paschal mystery, the person who witnesses to the unity is also a witness to that which creates and sustains it. In the liturgical worship of the Church, especially the celebration of the Eucharist, the paschal mystery of which the creeds tell, and to which the episcopate bears witness, apprehends and forms the people of God. In the recovery within all the Churches, therefore, of the fullness of the paschal Gospel, it would seem that though all the marks of the Church are important, and should ideally balance and check each other, the restoration or renewal of liturgical and truly eucharistic worship will precede a renewed understanding of the roles of the creeds and episcopacy, for it is in the context of the common worship of the Church that the experience of the passion of Christ apprehends and transforms Christians.

It seems therefore rather strange that at the close of The Gospel and the Catholic Church Ramsey presses very hard for the importance of the restoration of the episcopate in all Churches. His insistence upon its centrality at the last tends to overshadow everything else, and certainly seems to contradict his own assertion that all three marks must be held in balance. Perhaps Ramsey felt that the episcopate was particularly under attack by those who sought to revise the
nature of the Church. Nonetheless, this extreme emphasis on the restoration of the episcopate is a weakness in Ramsey's work. While he has demonstrated successfully that the episcopate is an important symbol of the unity of the Church, he has also pointed out that the office of bishop has no significance apart from the one Body to which it bears witness. It is hardly reasonable, then, to insist that the episcopate be restored to churches (or renewed within churches), which still lack an understanding of the Body of Christ.

In spite of this inconsistency at the close of The Gospel and the Catholic Church, Ramsey's work is a very significant addition to Christian thinking about the nature of the Church, and about the Gospel the Church proclaims. Not only is Ramsey able to securely found the Church, with its tripartite order, upon the Gospel of the one who died and rose, his construction points a way forward in the reunification of the Church. Ramsey says, "Hence the movement towards reunion . . . consists . . . in the growth within every part of the Church of the truths of the Body and the passion, no less than of the outward marks which express these truths".\textsuperscript{10} The reunion of the churches begins, in other words, with the recognition by churches of all traditions of the nature of the Body of Christ as an integral part of the paschal Gospel. Such an understanding entails the realization that the present state of the Church, with its many separate and independent units, is not merely an inefficient way of spreading the Gospel, but a truly scandalous and impossible situation. A true understanding of the passion of the Lord forces Christians to recognize that in the present reality the Body of Christ exists only in a maimed and incomplete form, and that as a result each separate part of the Body shows forth a maimed and corrupted version of the Gospel.

\textsuperscript{10} ibid., 222.
Ramsey insists that the solution to this brokenness is not compromise, for reunification on that basis would bear witness only to human flexibility, and not to the paschal mystery. Thus Ramsey criticizes those in the Anglican Church who hold up the "via media" as the source of unity:

But there is a true and a false way of thinking about the comprehensiveness of the Anglican Church. It can never be rightly expressed in terms of Victorian latitudinarianism or broad-mindedness, or by saying "Here are two very different conceptions and theologies, but with a broad common-sense humanism we combine them both".\footnote{ibid., 209.}

Rather, the reunion of the churches begins with the renewal in all traditions of the Truth of the paschal Gospel and the Body of Christ. It begins with the realization by all of the unity which is created by participation in the self-offering of the Lord, and it continues and is driven by the succeeding realization of how far short of this Truth we all come. The experience within all churches of the passion of Jesus means at the same time the experience of the hurt which the recognition of our brokenness will bring. It means the renunciation of a consumeristic perception of Christianity, which preaches that different people need different types of churches, and it means the willingness to suffer as the result of admitting our failure to live the Truth.

Ramsey does not provide an outline for how this experience of the passion within all churches should take place, although his focus at the last upon the recovery of the episcopate seems to suggest that Ramsey perceives this to be the starting point. In my opinion, however, the book as a whole points another way. If the rediscovery by Christians of their identity as members of the one Body depends upon the experience of the passion, then this understanding must be tied to the liturgical, and especially to the eucharistic worship of the Church, within
which the paschal mystery overtakes and transforms Christians. This is not to suggest that Ramsey would propose intercommunion as the solution to the Church’s brokenness. On the contrary, Ramsey understood intercommunion to be an example of "ecumenical fog," of the way in which Christians seek to base their reunion on a warm feeling of fellowship, instead of upon the passion of Jesus. Indeed, intercommunion prior to reunification reveals a complete misunderstanding of the meaning of the eucharistic celebration as it is presented by Ramsey. However, the renewal within individual churches of a liturgical form of worship, in which the celebration of the Eucharist is the central and defining act, would provide the opportunity for Christians to experience the paschal mystery, and to understand how that mystery shapes the fellowship of the church, and restores to humanity its destiny of royal priesthood. The renewal and rediscovery of truly liturgical worship (according to Ramsey’s definition of "liturgical"), is the occasion for the experience of the passion, and thus the basis for the understanding of the Body which is part of it. When, by means of common worship which truly manifests the paschal mystery, the knowledge of the Body is achieved, the recognition of the brokenness of the body cannot be far behind. While the Liturgy itself will always be incomplete until the Church is finally whole, it can be, nonetheless, a revelation of the unity, and thus also of the brokenness of the Church. The recovery and renewal of liturgical and eucharistic worship in all church traditions will result not in warm feelings of fellowship, but rather in the presentation of a challenge to all Christians—the challenge to realize in outward order the Truth which is manifested in the Liturgy.

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Ramsey says that, "... the first need of Christians, the face of the apathy and the bewilderment about the Church, is to know and to be able to say plainly what the Church really is". In this Ramsey certainly succeeds. *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* is a brilliant articulation of the nature of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ, whose structure points to the Truth of Christ crucified, who is its life. Yet *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* is not merely a defence against a theological movement of the 1920's and 1930's. For Ramsey's paschal ecclesiology presents a response not only to the apathy of those who stand outside the Church and question its relevance, but also to the apathy and frustration of Christians with respect to the disunity of the Church. When Ramsey published *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* the ecumenical movement had barely begun. Now, sixty years and many ecumenical dialogues later, Ramsey's insights are more significant than ever.

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