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# **THOMAS CRANMER'S 'TRUE AND CATHOLICK DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENT'<sup>1</sup>**

D. A. SCALES

As for the sacrament, I believe as I have taught in my book against the bishop of Winchester, the which my book teacheth so true a doctrine of the sacrament, that it shall stand at the last day before the judgment of God, where the papistical doctrine contrary thereto shall be ashamed to show her face.<sup>2</sup>

These final words of Thomas Cranmer's declaration of faith before he was taken out to be burned remind us that the true doctrine of the Lord's Supper was one of the key issues of the Reformation. Cranmer's mature thought on the subject was a vital influence on the progress of the English Reformation and on the doctrine and liturgy of the English Church. Though a meek man, Cranmer expressed in these words a mighty confidence in the Biblical doctrine of the Lord's Supper which he had come to embrace.

The development of Cranmer's views on the sacrament has been a matter of debate; the concern of this paper is with his final, mature teaching as expressed in his book, and in other forms, in the reign of Edward VI, so a brief survey of its antecedents will suffice. Cranmer wrote in 1537 to Joachim Vadian, a Swiss scholar and Reformer who lived at St. Gall, to thank him for the gift of his book—which sought to disprove the bodily presence of Christ in the sacrament. He made it clear that he did not agree with Vadian—'I could wish you had bestowed your study to better purpose', but revealed the breadth of his reading:

I have seen almost everything that has been written and published either by Ecolampadius or Zwinglius, and I have come to the conclusion that the writings of every man must be read with discrimination.<sup>3</sup>

Yet it appears that by 1538 he did not hold the doctrine of transubstantiation—the doctrine which has been a formal tenet of the Church of Rome since 1215 and teaches that, though the outward attributes of the bread and wine (the accidents) remain after con-

seeration, the inner being (the substance) is changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. Writing to Thomas Cromwell about a man accused of heresy, Cranmer declared: 'he confuted the opinion of the transubstantiation, and therein I think he taught but the truth.'<sup>4</sup>

It was study of the ninth-century work of the monk Ratramn (or Bertram)<sup>5</sup> which first awoke Ridley to the Biblical doctrine of the Lord's Supper:

This Bertram was the first that pulled me by the ear, and that first brought me from the common error of the Romish church, and caused me to search more diligently and exactly both the Scriptures and the writings of the old ecclesiastical fathers in this matter.<sup>6</sup>

Ridley spoke with Cranmer and was the agent of the change to Reformed thinking in Cranmer's understanding of the sacrament:

I grant that then I believed otherwise than I do now; and so I did, until my lord of London, doctor Ridley, did confer with me, and by sundry persuasions and authorities of doctors drew me quite from my opinion.<sup>7</sup>

This occurred, in the providence of God, in 1546.<sup>8</sup> At one of his examinations Cranmer was twitted by a commissioner with his change of views:

For you, master Cranmer, have taught in this high sacrament of the altar three contrary doctrines, and yet you pretended in every one *verbum Domini*.

Cranmer:—Nay, I taught but two contrary doctrines in the same.<sup>9</sup>

For Cranmer there was one great change in his belief about the Lord's Supper, which occurred in 1546.

Cranmer revealed one, consistent teaching after this date: its earliest recorded statement was in the great parliamentary debate on the Lord's Supper in the House of Lords in 1548; and it was set forth in the Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, the *Reformatio Legum*, and in his books devoted to the subject.

In 1546 Bishop Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester and the protagonist of the old religion, published a work entitled, *A Detection of the Devil's Sophistry, wherewith he robbeth the unlearned people of the true belief in the most blessed Sacrament of the Altar*. A reply to this was published early in 1547 by Anthony Gilby; and later in 1547 John Hooper, then living in Zürich and later Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester, wrote *An Answer unto my Lord of Winchester's book entitled A Detection of the Devil's Sophistry*.<sup>10</sup>

It is possible that Thomas Cranmer began his work on the Lord's Supper as early as 1548; in 1550 he published it—*A Defence of the true and catholick Doctrine of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of*

our Saviour Christ.<sup>11</sup> This masterly exposition of the Reformed doctrine called forth a response from Gardiner, who published in 1551 *An Explication and Assertion of the true catholic Faith touching the most blessed Sacrament of the Altar*. To this Cranmer replied later in 1551 in *An Answer unto a crafty and sophistical Cavillation, devised by Stephen Gardiner*;<sup>12</sup> in this large work Cranmer replied after the spacious custom of the times, setting out section by section his original text of 1550, Gardiner's comments on it, and his reply to Gardiner. Though this is a fuller work, it is for reading purposes rather disjointed. Gardiner wrote a further reply, published abroad under the pseudonym Marcus Antonius Constantius, and Cranmer a final rejoinder, unfortunately now lost, while in prison.

The main body of this paper is an analysis of Cranmer's *magnum opus—A Defence of the true and catholick Doctrine of the Sacrament*.<sup>13</sup> While, like Cranmer, we shall not eschew controversy, the primary aim is to discern Cranmer's teaching on the Lord's Supper as a coherent whole.

### **The authority of the Word of God**

The final authority for the doctrine of the sacrament as for all Christian truth was God's Word written. Thus Cranmer declared that 'the true catholic faith grounded upon God's most infallible word teacheth us . . .'<sup>14</sup> and stated that 'things spoken and done by Christ, and written by the holy Evangelists and St. Paul, ought to suffice the faith of Christian people, as touching the doctrine of the Lord's Supper'.<sup>15</sup> So, 'no man ought to be so arrogant and presumptuous to affirm for a certain truth in religion, any thing which is not spoken of in holy Scripture';<sup>16</sup> and he complains that his opponents make and unmake new articles of faith 'at their pleasure, without any Scripture at all, yea quite and clean contrary to Scripture'.<sup>17</sup> So, in a celebrated statement, he advised that, for the resolution of disagreements,

the most sure and plain way is, to cleave unto holy Scripture. Wherein whatsoever is found, must be taken for a most sure ground and an infallible truth; and whatsoever cannot be grounded upon the same (touching our faith) is man's device, changeable and uncertain.<sup>18</sup>

The word of God is a sufficient proof of Christian truth:

it is evident and plain by the words of Scripture, that after consecration remaineth bread and wine, and that the papistical doctrine of transubstantiation is directly contrary to God's word.<sup>19</sup>

False doctrines may be identified 'because they be contrary to God's word',<sup>20</sup> and it was a mark of those that are deceived 'that they sought not for their faith at the clear light of God's word'.<sup>21</sup> Reason has a place, but only in subservience to God's Word written: although

natural reason and natural operation 'prevail not against God's word, yet when they be joined with God's word, they be of great moment to confirm any truth.'<sup>22</sup>

Cranmer appealed in his work to many fathers of the church to show that they held the views which he was expounding. This appeal was not inconsistent with his doctrine of the final authority of Scripture:

let the papists show some authority for their opinion, either of Scripture, or of some ancient author. And let them not constrain all men to follow their fond devices, only because they say it is so, without any other ground or authority but their own bare words. For in such wise credit is to be given to God's word only, and not to the word of any man.<sup>23</sup>

The particular value of the appeal to the early centuries of the church was that it showed clearly whose teaching was novel:

lest the papists should say that we suck this out of our own fingers, the same shall be proved, by testimony of the old authors, to be the true and old faith of the catholic Church.<sup>24</sup>

Cranmer wanted it to be plain that Rome did not teach unchanging truth but was the opponent of the teaching of Scripture, which had for many centuries been maintained by the fathers of the church. He was demonstrating that the unreformed teaching was erroneous, not only in terms of Scripture, but even on the basis of the authority it recognized and claimed:

Whereas on the other side, that cursed synagogue of Antichrist hath defined and determined in this matter many things contrary to Christ's words, contrary to the old catholic Church and the holy martyrs and doctors of the same, and contrary to all natural reason, learning, and philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

So concerned was Cranmer to show that 'within these four or five hundred years last past . . . the Bishop of Rome . . . hath set up a new faith and belief'<sup>26</sup> that approximately half the text of his *Defence* is devoted to quotation of the fathers and discussion of their teaching. He determined to refute error and defend truth 'both by God's most certain word, and also by the most old approved authors and martyrs of Christ's Church.'<sup>27</sup>

### **The importance of the doctrine**

The doctrine of the Lord's Supper was not unimportant in Cranmer's eyes, because that Sacrament speaks of the central doctrines of the Christian faith—of salvation through the atoning death of Christ. It was instituted, in St. Paul's words, to proclaim the Lord's death till he

come: right views of the death of Christ and right views of the sacrament will tend to go together; false views of the sacrament will tend to obscure an understanding of our salvation through the finished work of Christ. The broad implications and importance of the doctrine of the sacrament are evident in Cranmer's writing. At the opening of his Preface to the Reader, he set the sacrament in the context of the whole saving work of Christ, so that its use and purpose might be rightly understood.<sup>28</sup> In the best known words from Cranmer's work,

what availeth it to take away beads, pardons, pilgrimages, and such other like popery, so long as two chief roots remain unpulled up? whereof, so long as they remain, will spring again all former impediments of the Lord's harvest, and corruption of his flock. The rest is but branches and leaves, the cutting away whereof is but like topping and lopping of a tree, or cutting down of weeds, leaving the body standing, and the roots in the ground; but the very body of the tree, or rather the roots of the weeds, is the popish doctrine of transubstantiation, of the real presence of Christ's flesh and blood in the sacrament of the altar, (as they call it,) and of the sacrifice and oblation of Christ made by the priest for the salvation of the quick and the dead. Which roots, if they be suffered to grow in the Lord's vineyard, they will overspread all the ground again with the old errors and superstitions.<sup>29</sup>

### **The presence of Christ**

The book (section) which deals with the subject of the presence of Christ comprises nearly two-fifths of Cranmer's work. The Christian doctrine of the ascension makes it plain that Christ is no longer corporally present on earth:

the true catholic faith grounded upon God's most infallible word teacheth us, that our Saviour Christ (as concerning his man's nature and bodily presence) is gone up unto heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of his Father, and there shall he tarry until the world's end<sup>30</sup>

Yet though he is really and truly absent according to the flesh, he is spiritually present:

our Saviour Christ bodily and corporally is in heaven, sitting at the right hand of his Father, although spiritually he hath promised to be present with us upon earth unto the world's end. And whosoever two or three be gathered together in his name, he is there in the midst among them<sup>31</sup>

Cranmer clearly distinguished between the physical and spiritual presence of Christ. Furthermore he made it plain that the spiritual presence was not limited to the sacraments: 'he is indeed spiritually in

the faithful Christian people, which according to Christ's ordinance be baptized, or receive the holy communion, or unfeignedly believe in him.<sup>32</sup>

The theological implications of Christ's being physically present, as the teaching of transubstantiation claims, are profound, since this would deny the perfect manhood of Christ, attributing properties other than those a man possesses. So Cranmer summarized Augustine's teaching as follows:

the nature and property of a very body is to be in one place, and to occupy one place, and not to be every where or in many places at one time. And though the body of Christ, after his resurrection and ascension, was made immortal, yet the nature thereof was not changed; . . . he is present by his divine nature and majesty, by his providence, and by his grace; but by his human nature and very body, he is absent from this world, and present in heaven.<sup>33</sup>

The Roman doctrine therefore produces 'two very horrible heresies':

The one, that they confound his two natures, his Godhead and his manhood, attributing unto his humanity that thing which appertaineth only to his Divinity, that is to say, to be in heaven and earth and in many places at one time. The other is, that they divide and separate his human nature or his body, making of one body of Christ two bodies and two natures; one, which is in heaven, . . . and another, which they say is in earth here with us, in every bread and wine that is consecrated<sup>34</sup>

Christ, then, 'is in heaven, as concerning his manhood, and nevertheless both here, and there, and everywhere, as concerning his Godhead'.<sup>35</sup> In discussing the Lord's Supper, Cranmer distinguished between a sacramental or figurative presence and a spiritual presence. Because it is distinguished from them, it is clear that the sacramental or figurative presence is not a bodily presence and not a spiritual presence; the bread and wine are effectual signs, displaying to the faithful recipient the truths of which they speak, and hence they may properly be said to display a sacramental or figurative presence of the body and blood of Christ.

although Christ in his human nature substantially, really, corporally, naturally and sensibly, be present with his Father in heaven, yet sacramentally and spiritually he is here present. For in water, bread, and wine, he is present as in signs and sacraments, but he is indeed spiritually in the faithful Christian people, which according to Christ's ordinance be baptized, or receive the holy communion, or unfeignedly believe in him.<sup>36</sup>

The sacramental and the spiritual presence are to be carefully distinguished:

in our minds by faith we ascend up into heaven, to eat him there, although sacramentally, as in a sign and figure, he be in the bread and wine; . . . and in them that rightly receive the bread and wine, he is in a much more perfection than corporally, which should avail them nothing; but in them he is spiritually with his divine power, giving them eternal life.<sup>37</sup>

The sacramental presence is simply figurative:

figuratively he is in the bread and wine, and spiritually he is in them that worthily eat and drink the bread and wine; but really, carnally, and corporally he is only in heaven, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and dead.<sup>38</sup>

It is when these differing presences have been confused that error and heresy have entered in and the ordinance of Christ which visually proclaims salvation by his atoning death has been perverted and its great benefit lost.

The word sacrament can be used in two senses: the one, the elements of bread and wine; the other, 'the whole ministration and receiving' of the bread and wine.<sup>39</sup> Thus Cranmer was prepared to speak of Christ's presence in the sacrament, but this referred to the spiritual work in the heart of the believing recipient:

where St. Chrysostome and other authors do speak of the wonderful operation of God in his sacraments, passing all man's wit, senses and reason, they mean not of the working of God in the water, bread, and wine, but of the marvellous working of God in the hearts of them that receive the sacraments, secretly, inwardly, and spiritually transforming them, renewing, feeding, comforting, and nourishing them with his flesh and blood, through his most Holy Spirit, the same flesh and blood still remaining in heaven.<sup>40</sup>

Cranmer drew a parallel between God's working in his word and his working in his sacraments:

Christ is present in his sacraments, as . . . he is present in his word, when he worketh mightily by the same in the hearts of the hearers. . . . this speech meaneth that he worketh with his word, using the voice of the speaker, as his instrument to work by; as he useth also his sacraments, whereby he worketh, and therefore is said to be present in them.<sup>41</sup>

At no point is Cranmer's teaching with regard to the presence of Christ and its relation to the sacrament more clearly expounded than in the first of the thirteen comparisons which are set out near the beginning of the book (or section) which deals with this subject:

they teach, that Christ is in the bread and wine: but we say, according to the truth, that he is in them that worthily eat and drink the bread and wine.<sup>42</sup>

This is one of the clear distinctions between Reformed and unreformed teaching. Cranmer's teaching was thoroughly Reformed: 'he is effectually present, and effectually worketh not in the bread and wine, but in the godly receivers of them'.<sup>43</sup>

### A 'sacramental mutation'<sup>44</sup>

A vital matter in any discussion of the doctrine of the sacrament is the meaning, significance, and effect of Christ's words, 'This is my body' and 'This is my blood', both at the Last Supper and, when they are repeated, in the administration of the Lord's Supper. Cranmer considered this carefully.

the words be as plain as may be spoken; but that the sense is not so plain, it is manifest to every man that weigheth substantially the circumstances of the place. For when Christ gave bread to his disciples, and said, *This is my body*, there is no man of any discretion, that understandeth the English tongue, but he may well know by the order of the speech, that Christ spake those words of the bread, calling it his body . . . Wherefore this sentence cannot mean as the words seem and purport, but there must needs be some figure or mystery in this speech, more than appeareth in the plain words.<sup>45</sup>

Cranmer examined the Biblical narrative and drew various conclusions from this: he noted that 'Christ spake not that negative, "This is no bread," but said affirmingly, *This is my body*, . . . affirming that his body was eaten (meaning spiritually) as the bread was eaten corporally'.<sup>46</sup> He noted that Christ spoke the commands *Take eat* and *Drink you all of this* in relation to bread and wine, before he uttered the words of signification ('*This is my body* which is given for you' and '*This is my blood* of the new testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins'). It would be absurd to suggest that Christ commanded the eating of bread and drinking of wine and then made that command impossible to obey; 'it is evident and plain by the words of the Scripture, that after consecration remaineth bread and wine, and that the papistical doctrine of transubstantiation is directly contrary to God's word'.<sup>47</sup>

The words of Christ cannot be understood literally: 'these sentences of Christ, *This is my body*, *This is my blood*, be figurative speeches'.<sup>48</sup>

this manner of speaking is a figurative speech: for in plain and proper speech it is not true to say, that bread is Christ's body, or wine his blood. . . . Likewise in plain speech it is not true, that we eat Christ's body, and drink his blood.<sup>49</sup>

In a brief but telling survey, Cranmer showed how frequently figurative speech was used in Scripture—'although the Scripture be full of schemes, tropes, and figures, yet specially it useth them when it

speaketh of sacraments.<sup>50</sup> He listed some of the many examples of Christ himself speaking in similitudes, parables, and figures, and noted the use of figurative speech in connexion with baptism, the paschal lamb, and the Lord's Supper.<sup>51</sup> Cranmer also demonstrated at length that the ancient writers regarded the words of signification as figurative speech. In his reply to Gardiner he pointed out the appropriateness of the figure:

as Christ in the scripture is called a lamb for his innocency and meekness, a lion for his might and power, a door and way, whereby we enter into his Father's house, wheat and corn for the property of dying before they rise up and bring increase; so is he called bread, and bread is called his body, and wine his blood, for the property of feeding and nourishing.<sup>52</sup>

Cranmer noted on a number of occasions that to call a sign by the name of the thing which it signified was not a rare or strange idiom, but a usual and common form of speech.

a figure hath the name of the thing that is signified thereby. As a man's image is called a man, a lion's image a lion, a bird's image a bird, and an image of a tree and herb is called a tree or herb. So were we wont to say, our lady of Walsingham, our lady of Ipswich, our lady of Grace, . . . not meaning the things themselves, but calling their images by the name of the things by them represented.<sup>53</sup>

It was therefore to be expected that the bread and wine 'be called by the names of the body and blood of Christ, as the sign, token, and figure is called by the name of the very thing which it sheweth and signifieth'.<sup>54</sup>

In the Lord's Supper the signs do not change their nature but their use; the utterance of the words which Christ spoke at the Last Supper gives to the bread and wine a new significance and purpose, though they remain in every way bread and wine.

although the names of bread and wine were changed after sanctification, yet nevertheless the things themselves remained the self-same that they were before the sanctification, that is to say, the same bread and wine in nature, substance, form, and fashion.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, when we speak of consecration, we are referring to a change of use: 'Consecration is the separation of any thing from a profane and worldly use unto a spiritual and godly use.'<sup>56</sup> This does not entail any change in the actual nature of the bread and wine:

Not that the bread and wine have or can have any holiness in them, but that they be used to an holy work, and represent holy and godly things.<sup>57</sup>

The change wrought by the words of signification is termed by Cranmer a sacramental or spiritual mutation—the term spiritual being used not because there was an actual spiritual change in the elements but because of the change to a spiritual significance for the believing recipient.

even so doth the substance of bread and wine remain in the Lord's Supper, and be naturally received and digested into the body, notwithstanding the sacramental mutation of the same into the body and blood of Christ. Which sacramental mutation declareth the supernatural, spiritual, and inexplicable eating and drinking, feeding and digesting, of the same body and blood of Christ, in all them that godly and according to their duty, do receive the said sacramental bread and wine.<sup>58</sup>

Cranmer demonstrated that the doctrine of the Church of Rome, made binding at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, of the transubstantiation of the bread and wine—the change of their inner substance into the actual body and blood of Christ, while their outward attributes or accidents remain the same—was contrary to God's Word, contrary to reason, contrary to all our senses, contrary to the belief of the early church fathers, and led to many absurdities:

And the final end of all this Antichrist's doctrine is none other, but by subtlety and craft to bring Christian people from the true honouring of Christ, unto the greatest idolatry that ever was in this world devised<sup>59</sup>

The truth is simple, and is far from the doctrine of transubstantiation: 'notwithstanding this wonderful sacramental and spiritual changing of the bread into the body of Christ, yet the substance of the bread remaineth the same that it was before.'<sup>60</sup>

### **'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you'**<sup>61</sup>

A right understanding of the teaching of Christ in John 6 was central to Cranmer's teaching, and he refers to this important passage of Scripture on a number of occasions in his work on the sacrament. Cranmer taught that this eating of Christ's flesh was altogether different in its character and its effects from ordinary eating; and that it was of the first importance, since to participate in this eating and drinking was to have eternal life.<sup>62</sup>

When Christ spoke in John 6 of himself as 'the living bread which came down from heaven' (v. 51), and taught that 'Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life' (v. 54), he was referring to a spiritual eating, and, because his hearers did not realize this, he pointed this out to them explicitly:

Christ perceiving their murmuring hearts, (because they knew none other eating of his flesh, but by chawing and swallowing,) to declare

that they should not eat his body after that sort, nor that he meant of any such carnal eating, he said thus unto them, *What if you see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that giveth life, the flesh availeth nothing. The words which I spake unto you, be spirit and life.*

These words our Saviour Christ spake, to lift up their minds from earth to heaven, and from carnal to spiritual eating, that they should not phantasy that they should with their teeth eat him present here in earth, for his flesh so eaten, saith he, should nothing profit them. And yet so they should not eat him, for he would take his body away from them, and ascend with it into heaven; and there by faith and not with teeth, they should spiritually eat him, sitting at right hand of his Father.<sup>63</sup>

Cranmer taught emphatically that John 6 does not refer to the sacrament. It points to the sacrificial death of Christ (just as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper points to that same atoning work of Christ) and refers to a spiritual participation in the benefits of that death; such a participation was available to believers before the incarnation of Christ, and before the institution of the Lord's Supper, as well as since his death.

Christ in that place of John spake not of the material and sacramental bread, nor of the sacramental eating, (for that was spoken two or three years before the sacrament was first ordained,) but he spake of spiritual bread, . . . and of spiritual eating by faith, after which sort he was at the same present time eaten of as many as believed on him, although the sacrament was not at that time made and instituted. . . . Therefore this place of St. John can in no wise be understand of the sacramental bread, which neither came from heaven, neither giveth life to all that eat it.<sup>64</sup>

The significance of John 6 was contested by Bishop Gardiner in his *Explication and Assertion*; so Cranmer dealt fully with the matter in his *Answer*:

The spiritual eating of his flesh, and drinking of his blood by faith, by digesting his death in our minds, as our only price, ransom, and redemption from eternal damnation, is the cause wherefore Christ said: 'That if we eat not his flesh, and drink not his blood, we have not life in us; and if we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have everlasting life.' And if Christ had never ordained the sacrament, yet should we have eaten his flesh, and drunken his blood, and have had thereby everlasting life; as all the faithful did before the sacrament was ordained, and do daily when they receive not the sacrament.<sup>65</sup>

These are only some of the many references that Cranmer made to Christ's teaching in John 6; he also quoted and discussed the views of Origen,<sup>66</sup> Chrysostom,<sup>67</sup> Cyril,<sup>68</sup> Theophylact,<sup>69</sup> and Augustine<sup>70</sup> on this passage of Scripture.

Cranmer taught that those who feed spiritually by faith on Christ do so both in and out of the sacrament:

They say, that good men eat the body of Christ and drink his blood, only at that time when they receive the sacrament: we say, that they eat, drink, and feed of Christ continually, so long as they be members of his body.<sup>71</sup>

All those who are saved participate in this feeding:

we shall spiritually and ghostly with our faith eat him, being carnally absent from us in heaven; and in such wise as Abraham and other holy fathers did eat him, many years before he was incarnated and born.<sup>72</sup>

As the words of Christ, This is my body, and This is my blood, were figurative, so the words of eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood were figurative.

it is a figurative speech spiritually to be understand, that we must deeply print and fruitfully believe in our hearts, that his flesh was crucified and his blood shed, for our redemption. And this our belief in him, is to eat his flesh and to drink his blood, although they be not present here with us, but be ascended into heaven.<sup>73</sup>

It is the spiritual participation by faith in the benefits of Christ's death which is signified by eating Christ's body and drinking his blood; and the Lord's Supper is an effectual means, appointed by Christ, to this end: 'like as with their mouths carnally they eat the bread and drink the wine, so by their faith spiritually they eat Christ's very flesh, and drink his very blood.'<sup>74</sup> The eating of the bread and drinking of the wine are not beneficial in themselves; their purpose is to lead us to that spiritual eating and drinking, that participation in the death of Christ which is essential for eternal life, as Jesus taught in John 6.<sup>75</sup> It is not the body or the blood of itself which furnish the benefit, but the death of the body, symbolized by the separated bread and wine, because it was from the death of Christ that salvation came.

For as meat and drink do comfort the hungry body, so doth the death of Christ's body, and the shedding of his blood, comfort the soul, when she is after her sort hungry. . . . For there is no kind of meat that is comfortable to the soul, but only the death of Christ's blessed body; nor no kind of drink that can quench her thirst, but only the blood-shedding of our Saviour Christ, which was shed for her offences.<sup>76</sup>

Throughout his work Cranmer repeated that the feeding on the body and blood of Christ which took place in the sacrament was a spiritual feeding.<sup>77</sup> This spiritual feeding does not require any corporal presence of Christ: 'our union with Christ in his holy Supper is spiritual, and therefore requireth no real and corporal presence.'<sup>78</sup>

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is an effectual means to this spiritual participation in the benefits of the death of Christ, which is

an inward, spiritual, and pure eating with heart and mind; which is to believe in our hearts, that his flesh was rent and torn for us upon the cross, and his blood shed for our redemption, and that the same flesh and blood now sitteth at the right hand of the Father, making continual intercession for us; and to imprint and digest this in our minds, putting our whole affiance and trust in him, as touching our salvation, and offering ourselves clearly unto him, to love and serve him all the days of our life. This is truly, sincerely, and spiritually to eat his flesh and to drink his blood.<sup>79</sup>

### **By faith**

Cranmer's teaching on the sacrament was a coherent whole, each part fitting with the others in his exposition of Biblical truth. One aspect which is a natural concomitant of a spiritual presence in the believer, and of a spiritual eating, is that of the necessity of faith to a true participation in the Supper. A man may eat the bread and drink the wine without discerning their message, 'not discerning the Lord's body' as St. Paul says,<sup>80</sup> and not participate in the great spiritual benefit of the sacrament, feeding on the death of Christ. The means by which men spiritually partake is faith. One of the set of comparisons regarding the presence of Christ makes the necessity and rôle of faith plain:

They say, that Christ is received in the mouth, and entereth in with the bread and wine: we say, that he is received in the heart, and entereth in by faith.<sup>81</sup>

Without belief in him there is no participation in his flesh and blood, in the benefits of his atoning death:

whosoever with a lively faith doth eat that bread and drink that wine, doth spiritually eat, drink, and feed upon Christ, sitting in heaven with his Father.<sup>82</sup>

the true eating and drinking of the said body and blood of Christ, is with a constant and lively faith to believe, that Christ gave his body and shed his blood upon the cross for us<sup>83</sup>

### **Whether evil men do eat and drink Christ<sup>84</sup>**

Do the benefits of the sacrament come to all who participate in the bread and wine? Cranmer's teaching was again part of a coherent Biblical doctrine; he was at pains to show throughout his work that, though evil men might eat the bread and wine, they do not participate in the spiritual feeding on the death of Christ.<sup>85</sup> As the eating is a

spiritual eating of things spiritually discerned, and as there is no physical or spiritual presence of Christ linked to the bread and wine, it follows that only those who partake of the sacrament with faith participate in the spiritual benefits. Of others it may be said that 'they eat the sacramental bread and drink the sacramental wine, but they do not spiritually eat Christ's flesh nor drink his blood, but they eat and drink their own damnation.'<sup>86</sup> The seventh comparison of Cranmer's thirteen comparisons relating to the presence of Christ states:

They say, that every man, good and evil, eateth the body of Christ: we say, that both do eat the sacramental bread and drink the wine, but none do eat the very body of Christ and drink his blood, but only they that be lively members of his body.<sup>87</sup>

This was, of course, no new teaching. Cranmer summarized a survey of Augustine's comments on this subject:

such as live ungodly, although they may seem to eat Christ's body, because they eat the sacrament of his body, yet in deed they neither be members of his body, nor do eat his body.<sup>88</sup>

The consequences of such unworthy participation are serious; such a man does not simply fail to share in the benefits of the Supper, but, in St. Paul's words, he 'eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.'<sup>89</sup> Such men 'do not duly consider Christ's very flesh and blood, which be offered there spiritually to be eaten and drunken, but despising Christ's most holy Supper, do come thereto . . . without regard of the Lord's body, which is the spiritual meat of that table.'<sup>90</sup>

There is then a need for worthy reception.<sup>91</sup> To come worthily is not to come trusting in any righteousness or worth of our own; it is to come in a right frame of heart, having examined ourselves (as St. Paul teaches) and repented of our sins, and discerning the Lord's body, that is discerning the proclamation of salvation by the sacrificial death of Christ which the bread and wine make.

the bread in itself is not his flesh, and the wine his blood, but unto them that worthily eat and drink the bread and wine, to them the bread and wine be his flesh and blood; . . . the sacramental bread and wine be not bare and naked figures, but so pithy and effectuous, that whosoever worthily eateth them, eateth spiritually Christ's flesh and blood, and hath by them everlasting life.<sup>92</sup>

The mere performance of the rite (for which the Latin phrase *ex opere operato* is often used) will not benefit the participant;<sup>93</sup> but there is great benefit to the believing recipient, and this benefit is much greater than if Christ were physically received (as the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation teaches):

we should come to this mystical bread and wine with faith, reverence, purity, and fear, as we would do, if we should come to see and receive Christ himself sensibly present. For unto the faithful, Christ is at his own holy table present with his mighty Spirit and grace, and is of them more fruitfully received, than if corporally they should receive him bodily present.<sup>94</sup>

**'Christ's sacrifice, once offered, was sufficient for evermore'**<sup>95</sup>

Christ himself in his own person made a sacrifice for our sins upon the cross, by whose wounds all our diseases were healed, and our sins pardoned; and so did never no priest, man, nor creature but he, nor he did the same never more than once.<sup>96</sup>

Cranmer's use of the double negative stressed the uniqueness and completeness of the sacrifice of Christ: that sacrifice was once made, once offered, and once accepted—'It is finished'.<sup>97</sup> The offering has been made, and there is no other remedy for sin but the death of Christ. There is, therefore, no offering for sin made in the Lord's Supper; the movement of the Supper is not one of offering from man to God, but one of grace in which the benefits of the atoning death of Christ are effectually displayed by God to man. Thus the twelfth of thirteen comparisons regarding the presence of Christ stated:

They say, that the mass is a sacrifice satisfactory for sin, by the devotion of the priest that offereth, and not by the thing that is offered: but we say, that their saying is a most heinous lie and detestable error against the glory of Christ. . . . the only host and satisfaction for all the sins of the world is the death of Christ, and the oblation of his body upon the cross, that is to say, the oblation that Christ himself offered once upon the cross, and never but once, nor never none but he.<sup>98</sup>

The Roman doctrine, which sought to make an offering of this commemorative feast, was and is false; it seriously detracts from the glory of Christ.

The place of the minister, therefore, is not that of a sacerdotal priest, representing man to God, and offering sacrifice to God on man's behalf; it is that of a messenger proclaiming God's Word to man, a servant waiting at the Lord's table, serving his guests.

For if only the death of Christ be the oblation, sacrifice, and price, wherefore our sins be pardoned, then the act or ministration of the priest cannot have the same office.<sup>99</sup>

The minister's part in the sacrament is simply one of function; he participates in the sacrament itself in the same way as any other.

the difference that is between the priest and the layman in this matter is only in the ministration; that the priest, as a common minister of the Church, doth minister and distribute the Lord's Supper unto other, and other receive it at his hands. . . . the priests and ministers prepare the Lord's Supper, read the Gospel, and rehearse Christ's words; but all the people say thereto, Amen; all remember Christ's death, all give thanks to God, all repent and offer themselves an oblation to Christ, all take him for their Lord and Saviour, and spiritually feed upon him; and in token thereof, they eat the bread and drink the wine in his mystical Supper.<sup>100</sup>

Cranmer states that all the people 'offer themselves an oblation to Christ'. This responsive sacrifice is to be clearly distinguished from the sacrifice of Christ.

there is but one . . . sacrifice whereby our sins be pardoned and God's mercy and favour obtained, which is the death of the Son of God our Lord Jesu Christ; nor never was any other sacrifice propitiatory at any time, nor never shall be. . . .

Another kind of sacrifice there is, which doth not reconcile us to God, but is made of them that be reconciled by Christ, to testify our duties unto God, and to show ourselves thankful unto him; and therefore they be called sacrifices of laud, praise, and thanksgiving.

The first kind of sacrifice Christ offered to God for us; the second kind we ourselves offer to God by Christ.<sup>101</sup>

In the Lord's Supper itself (the ordinance instituted by Christ) there is no sacrifice; as our response to the fresh and effectual remembrance of Christ's atoning death, it is appropriate that we offer our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving.

Some of the early fathers called the sacrament a sacrifice, and this was brought forward by Cranmer's opponents.

all those authors be answered unto in this one sentence, that they called it not a sacrifice for sin, because that it taketh away our sin, which was taken away only by the death of Christ, but because it was ordained of Christ to put us in remembrance of the sacrifice made by him upon the cross.<sup>102</sup>

This is, however, a free use of terms—'in very deed, to speak properly, we make no sacrifice of him, but only a commemoration and remembrance of that sacrifice'<sup>103</sup>—or alternatively it is a reference to the responsive sacrifice of thanksgiving.<sup>104</sup>

### **'To our great and endless comfort'**

A right understanding of the true and catholic doctrine of the sacrament is of great value to the Christian: 'For the more clearly it is understood, the more sweetness, fruit, comfort, and edification it bringeth to the godly receivers thereof.'<sup>105</sup> The theme of remembrance

is a frequent one in Scripture; Christ instituted the sacrament to keep his sacrificial death in our remembrance:

lest by our great unkindness we should peradventure be forgetful of the great benefit of Christ, therefore at his last supper . . . he did make a new will and testament, wherein he bequeathed unto us clean remission of all our sins, and the everlasting inheritance of heaven. . . . that whosoever we do eat the bread in his holy Supper, and drink of that cup, we should remember how much Christ hath done for us, and how he died for our sakes.<sup>106</sup>

It is an encouragement to the faithful recipient that the Lord's Supper is an effectual sign: 'the sacramental bread and wine be not bare and naked figures, but so pithy and effectuous, that whosoever worthily eateth them, eateth spiritually Christ's flesh and blood, and hath by them everlasting life.'<sup>107</sup> Cranmer rejected his opponent's distortion of his teaching:

they be no vain or bare tokens, as you would persuade, (for a bare token is that which betokeneth only and giveth nothing, as a painted fire, which giveth neither light nor heat;) but in the due ministration of the sacraments God is present, working with his word and sacraments.<sup>108</sup>

The sacrament is not like a painted fire. Christ, though corporally absent, works spiritually in the hearts of the regenerate, and may therefore be compared to the sun:

as the sun corporally is ever in heaven, and no where else; and yet by his operation and virtue the sun is here in earth, . . . so likewise our Saviour Christ bodily and corporally is in heaven, . . . although spiritually he hath promised to be present with us upon earth unto the world's end . . . by whose supernal grace all godly men . . . increase and grow to their spiritual perfection in God, spiritually by faith eating his flesh and drinking his blood<sup>109</sup>

The godly man who with faith worthily receives the sacrament may have confidence that God is at work in him:

although the sacramental tokens be only significations and figures, yet doth Almighty God effectually work, in them that duly receive his sacraments, those divine and celestial operations which he hath promised, and by the sacraments be signified. For else they were unfruitful sacraments, . . . but I teach that it is a spiritual refreshing, wherein our souls be fed and nourished with Christ's very flesh and blood to eternal life.<sup>110</sup>

Our understanding of the purpose and benefits of the Supper will lead us to want to be participants in it: 'Surely no man that well understandeth and diligently weigheth these things, can be without a great desire

to come to this holy Supper.<sup>111</sup> We cannot adequately express the excellence of the benefits of this ordinance of Christ: 'yet neither they, nor no man else, can extol and commend the same sufficiently, according to the dignity thereof, if it be godly used as it ought to be.'<sup>112</sup>

in this sacrament (if it be rightly received with a true faith) we be assured that our sins be forgiven, and the league of peace, and the testament of God, is confirmed between him and us, so that whosoever by a true faith doth eat Christ's flesh and drink his blood, hath everlasting life by him.<sup>113</sup>

Thus in the last section of his great work, Cranmer exhorts every contrite believer,

often to come to the holy Supper, which our Lord and Saviour Christ hath prepared; and as he there corporally eateth the very bread, and drinketh the very wine; so spiritually he may feed of the very flesh and blood of Jesu Christ his Saviour and Redeemer, remembering his death, thanking him for his benefits, and . . . only trusting to his sacrifice, which being both the High Priest, and also the Lamb of God prepared from the beginning to take away the sins of the world, offered up himself once for ever in a sacrifice of sweet smell unto his Father, and by the same paid the ransom for the sins of the whole world<sup>114</sup>

### **The harmony of his other writings**

Cranmer's other writings on the Lord's Supper in the reign of King Edward VI are entirely in harmony with the full statement of his thought in the *Defence of the true and catholick Doctrine of the Sacrament*. At most of these we glance only briefly, simply to note that harmony.

The great debate in the House of Lords on three December days in 1548 was the first occasion which has come down to us when Cranmer explicitly expounded his Reformed views. Two brief quotations from Cranmer's contributions to this 'notable disputation of the Sacrament in the Parliament House' will make his stance plain, and reveal many of the doctrinal themes which he set out in full in the *Defence*:

They be twoo things to eate the Sacrament and to eate the bodie of Christ.

The eating of the bodie is to dwell in Christ, and this may be thoo a man never taste the Sacrament.

All men eate not the body in the Sacrament. . . .

He that maketh a will beaquiethes certayne Legaces, and this is our Legacy, Remission of synnes, which those onelie receave that are members of his body.

And the Sacrament is the remembraunce of this deathe which made the wyll goode.

And secondly:

I beleave that Christ is eaten with harte.  
The eating with our mouth cannot gyve us lief.  
Ffor then shulde a synner have lief.  
But eating of his body gyveth lief.  
Onely goode men can eate Christ's body. When the evill eateth the  
Sacrament, Bread and wyne, he neither hath Christ's body nor eateth it.<sup>115</sup>

The Articles of Religion of 1553,<sup>116</sup> which had Cranmer as their chief author and were the forerunners of our thirty-nine Articles of Religion (1571), taught the same doctrine. Article XXVI (now XXV) *Of the Sacraments* declared them to be

sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us; and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen, and confirm our faith in him.<sup>117</sup>

Article XXIX (now XXVIII) *Of the Lord's Supper* stated that

it is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a communion of the body of Christ: likewise the Cup of blessing is a Communion of the blood of Christ.

Though the present Article XXIX *Of the Wicked which eat not the Body of Christ in the use of the Lord's Supper* is entirely in harmony with Cranmer's teaching,<sup>118</sup> it was not written till after his death. Article XXX (now XXXI) *Of the perfect Oblation of Christ made upon the Cross* began:

The offering of Christ, made once for ever, is the perfect redemption, the pacifying of God's displeasure and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual: and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone.

### **'The true and catholick doctrine' expressed in liturgy**

In the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549 Cranmer made a noble beginning to the work of Reform; but when it proved to be inadequate, he worked to produce a book 'made fully perfect', the *Book of Common Prayer* 1552. It will be useful briefly to highlight some examples of changes which Cranmer made in the order of 1552 and note that the doctrinal significance of the changes accorded with his teaching in the *Defence*—and incidentally the unanimous turning from his teaching in modern liturgies.

The first matter is the change of the prayer of consecration from a prayer for the elements to a prayer for the recipient. The Sarum Missal had prayed that the elements 'may become to us the body and blood of

*'Grant that we may be partakers'*

*Sarum Missal*

Which oblation do thou, we beseech thee, God almighty, in all things, vouchsafe to make bles~~T~~ sed, design~~T~~ nated, val~~T~~ id, reasonable, and acceptable, that it may become to us the bo~~T~~ dy and blo~~T~~ od of thy most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

*1549*

Heare us (o merciful father) we beseech thee: and with thy holy spirite & worde, vouchsafe to bl~~T~~ esse and sanc~~T~~ tifie these thy gyftes, and creatures of bread and wyne, that they maie be unto us the bodye and bloude of thy mooste derely beloued sonne Jesus Christe.

*1552 1662*

Hear us, O merciful Father, we [1662: most humbly] beseech thee, and grant that we receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine, according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood:

*Series 2*

Hear us, O Father, through Christ thy Son our Lord; through him accept our sacrifice of praise; and grant that these gifts of bread and wine may be unto us his Body and Blood;

*ASB, Rite A, I*

Accept our praises, heavenly Father, through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; and as we follow his example and obey his command, grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit these gifts of bread and wine may be to us his body and his blood;

thy most beloved Son'; and the 1549 Book prayed that the bread and wine 'may be unto us the body and blood of thy most dearly beloved son Jesus Christ'; but the 1552 (and 1662) Book prayed that 'we receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine . . . *may be partakers* of his most blessed body and blood'. The 1928 book, Series 1, 2, and 3, and the four eucharistic prayers of Rite A with one of the eucharistic prayers of Rite B of the *Alternative Service Book*, all reverted to the 1549 pattern: 'grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit these gifts of bread and wine may be to us his body and his blood'.

After the publication of the 1549 Book there was debate as to the significance of the phrase 'may be unto us',<sup>119</sup> but apart from that discussion, we may look more radically at these words and state that their focus is wrong. They concentrate attention on the elements and are praying for some change related to the bread and wine; but the significance of the Lord's Supper is spiritual, and the centre of activity, if we may use such a phrase, is the heart of the believer. So prayer is only appropriate for the believing recipients that they may truly partake of the spiritual benefits which the Supper proclaims: 'he is effectually present, and effectually worketh not in the bread and wine, but in the godly receivers of them'.<sup>120</sup>

It is impossible to over-emphasize the significance and importance of this change. The sacrament does not depend on any alteration in the bread and wine and is not of benefit to recipients merely by its being performed (*ex opere operato*); there is a spiritual presence of Christ in the believer, and a spiritual feeding on the death of Christ in his heart. Cranmer's Reformed liturgy prays not for the external signs, but for the inward feeding of the worthy recipient.

Cranmer made the death of Christ the sole theme of his Reformed liturgy. This was proclaimed in the words which he first wrote in 1549:

who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world

and in the statement of the purpose of the sacrament (which also first appeared in 1549):

and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death, until his coming again:

In 1549 in the section called the *anamnesis*, following the Latin mass, Cranmer had also the words 'having in remembrance his blessed passion, mighty resurrection, and glorious ascension', but they were excised in 1552. Scripture speaks of the Lord's Supper as a remembrance of the death of Christ only; Cranmer's exposition of the sacrament revealed that the centre of the sacrament is a spiritual

*'A perpetual memory of that his precious death'*

*Sarum Missal*

Wherefore also, O Lord, we Thy servants, but also Thy holy people, having in remembrance the so blessed passion of the same Thy Son Christ our Lord God, as also His resurrection from the dead and moreover His glorious ascension into the heavens, do offer unto Thy excellent Majesty of Thy gifts and bounties a pure  $\ddagger$  offering, a holy  $\ddagger$  offering, an undefiled  $\ddagger$  offering, the holy  $\ddagger$  bread of eternal life and the cup  $\ddagger$  of everlasting salvation:

*1549*

Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of thy dearly beloved Son, our Saviour Jesu Christ, we thy humble servants do celebrate and make here before thy divine Majesty, with these thy holy gifts the memorial which thy Son hath willed us to make, having in remembrance his blessed passion, mighty resurrection, and glorious ascension,

*1552 1662*

[*Eating of the bread  
and  
drinking of the wine*]

*Series 2*

Wherefore, O Lord, with this bread and this cup we make the memorial of his saving passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his glorious ascension into heaven, and we look for the coming of his kingdom.

*ASB, Rite A, 1*

Therefore, heavenly Father, we remember his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, and proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension. As we look for his coming in glory, we celebrate with this bread and this cup his one perfect sacrifice.

feeding on the fruits of that sacrifice. The reference to the resurrection and the ascension is inappropriate; the bread and wine are not, for instance, symbols of the resurrection. Cranmer's Reformed liturgy alone maintains the exclusive Biblical emphasis; it is a reflection of the serious departure from the Biblical teaching of Cranmer that the 1928 book, Series 1, 2, and 3, and the four eucharistic prayers of Rite A with the two eucharistic prayers of Rite B of the *Alternative Service Book* all draw in these other truths, which, though vital in their proper place, are not part of the purpose of the Lord's Supper: 'we remember his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, and proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension'. What God hath put asunder let no man join together.

Cranmer perceived that obedience to the Lord's command to do this in remembrance of him was fulfilled by eating the bread and drinking the wine. Cranmer, therefore, radically altered the service structure in the 1552 Order so that eating and drinking immediately followed the recital of Christ's institution. The Roman Canon and the 1549 Order had a large interval between the recital and the participation, the first feature of which was the section called the *anamnesis* or memorial, in which there was mention of sacrifice and offering to God. All Godward movement, all mention of sacrifice on the part of the participants is utterly inappropriate at this point: for the sacrament proclaims the Lord's death to us, it speaks of God's grace to us, and its purpose is to encourage us to participate in the benefits of Christ's death for us. Again, the 1928 book, Series 1, 2, and 3, and the four eucharistic prayers of Rite A together with the two eucharistic prayers of Rite B of the *Alternative Service Book* all revert to the unreformed shape, and introduce an interval between the recital of Christ's words at the Last Supper and the partaking of the bread and wine; and all introduce words of Godward movement and offering—'Accept through him, our great high priest, this our sacrifice of thanks and praise'.<sup>121</sup> All such words Cranmer moved in 1552 to a position after the administration of the sacrament, where alone they might be appropriate as an expression of the responsive sacrifice of praise.

In the Communion of the Sick in the 1549 Prayer Book there first occurred a rubric which is entirely in harmony with Cranmer's mature doctrine of the Lord's Supper:

But if a man, either by reason of the extremity of sickness, . . . or by any other just impediment, do not receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood: the Curate shall instruct him that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and stedfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the Cross for him, and shed his Blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefore; he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth.

1549

If the same day there  
be a celebration of the  
holy communion in  
the church, then shall  
the priest reserve (at  
the open communion)  
so much of the sacra-  
ment of the body and  
blood, as shall serve  
the sick person, and so  
many as shall commu-  
nicate with him (if  
there be any.)  
*[The Communion of  
the Sick]*

1552

If any of the bread or  
wine remain, the Cu-  
rate shall have it to his  
own use.

1662

If any of the Bread  
and Wine remain un-  
consecrated, the Cu-  
rate shall have it to his  
own use; but if any  
remain of that which  
was consecrated, it  
shall not be carried  
out of the Church, but  
the Priest, and such  
other of the Communi-  
cants as he shall then  
call unto him, shall,  
immediately after the  
Blessing, reverently  
eat and drink the  
same.

Series 2

ASB (*Rites A & B*)

What remains of the  
consecrated bread and  
wine which is not re-  
quired for purposes of  
Communion shall be  
consumed immedi-  
ately after all have  
communicated, either  
by the Priest, or by  
one of the other Min-  
isters while the Priest  
continues the service;  
or it shall be left upon  
the Holy Table until  
the end of the service,  
and then consumed.

Here it is made abundantly plain that the essential benefit is spiritual participation in Christ's death, spiritual eating and drinking of the Saviour's body and blood; and that the sacrament, though an effectual instrument to this participation ordained by Christ, is not essential to it. We may feed on Christ in and out of the sacrament. The Lord's Supper, which proclaims the Lord's death, and the Lord's teaching in John 6, both point to that which is essential for salvation: participation in the benefits of the death of Christ. Cranmer's rubric does not deny the value of the sacrament, which he expounds fully elsewhere; but it shows clearly that the benefits which derive from it are not inextricably linked to it—there is no local presence, there is no corporal eating.

There was, however, some provision in the 1549 Book for reservation of the sacrament for communion of the sick; but this was withdrawn in 1552, and Article XXIX of 1553 made it plain that 'The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not commanded, by Christ's ordinance, to be kept'. It is difficult to envisage a situation when such provision for reservation as the 1549 Book made might have been of use—when neither the service for the communion of the sick nor the instruction of the Curate were feasible.

Reservation presumes an elongated concept of consecration; but Cranmer did not see consecration as an enduring act. When bread and wine are set apart for a special use, that is within the context of a service. Indeed, in the 1552 Order the word 'consecration' is not used, and the Curate might have spare bread and wine to his own use.

Reservation has also been sought by those who believe in transubstantiation, to allow the worship of Christ supposedly present in the bread (or wafer). Such an idea was utterly foreign to Cranmer, who taught that there was no corporal presence and that any spiritual presence was in the heart of the believer. Provision has carefully been made in all twentieth-century liturgies to reintroduce reservation, contrary to Cranmer's clear Biblical teaching about the character of the Lord's Supper.

## Conclusion

Many in the Church of England today readily accept unreformed alternative liturgies which have forsaken Cranmer's clear teaching and the liturgical principles which expressed it: this is a mark of the great ignorance and neglect of his doctrine. The Church of England today needs to recover his teaching; to hear clear preaching on the Lord's Supper from the pulpit; to study and use the Prayer Book service of Holy Communion.

Ignorance breeds confusion. Men and women in our parishes, and perhaps our clergy, are not certain where the boundary lies between truth and error and what the distinctions are. So, they may perhaps ask, Was it not rather a nice idea to make modern liturgies speak of the resurrection and ascension? And in an age which is often guided more

by sensual impression than revealed truth, the Biblical teaching on the sacrament, expounded by Cranmer, lies neglected.

There is a growing sacramentalism. Some professed evangelicals speak as though the sacraments of themselves effect what they signify, and seem to underplay their spiritual character and the need for worthy reception. The Holy Communion is often used with great frequency and on every sort of occasion, and the offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, and often, in practice, preaching, are neglected; some churches have nothing but communion services—when is it appropriate for someone who is not a believer to attend? Children are present (indeed, in many churches family services are communion services) and are invited to come to the rail to receive a 'blessing', even in 'evangelical' churches—what has this to do with worthy reception and a right understanding of the presence of Christ? Let us faithfully use this ordinance, which a gracious God has commanded us to use as a means of blessing; but let us use the sacrament rightly and duly, according to the teaching of Scripture.

Ecumenism is a strong force, and its pressure to find a common element in opposing doctrines contributes to the confusion. The A.R.C.I.C. agreed statements have set out to find agreement where there is no agreement, and have therefore introduced obscurity, distortion, imbalance, and error. By the use of the bridge term *memorial* the Agreed Statement on the 'Eucharist' has sought to fuse Biblical and Roman teaching. But in the light of the teaching of Cranmer, the utter impossibility of such a fusion is obvious: Cranmer's work reveals that there are two separate systems of sacramental theology and that his Biblical teaching fits together to make a unified whole.

In the ignorance, confusion, sacramentalism, and ecumenical pressure which abound today, we need to recover the Biblical doctrine of the Lord's Supper, so lucidly expounded by Cranmer. We need a right understanding of the finished work of Christ at Calvary, and of the sacrament which speaks of it.

It is a commonplace to declare that Thomas Cranmer was not a great theologian. If such a designation is to be restricted to those who have produced large works of systematic theology, it might be fair to exclude him. What must be said is that after patient study Cranmer grasped with great clarity the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper; that his full statement of this in his *Defence of the true and catholick Doctrine of the Sacrament* is a masterpiece of theological exposition, which has no equal on its subject in the English language; and that his application of the doctrine in liturgical writing showed a deep perception of it.

Our survey of Cranmer's *Defence of the true and catholick Doctrine of the Sacrament* encourages us to join him in his great confidence in the Biblical doctrine of the Lord's Supper there expounded:

my book teacheth so true a doctrine of the sacrament, that it shall stand at the last day before the judgment of God, where the papistical doctrine contrary thereto shall be ashamed to show her face.

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### NOTES

- 1 This paper was read on 31 August 1989 at the Autumn Conference of the Protestant Reformation Society at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Egham: 'The Challenge of Cranmer's Heritage'.
- 2 John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1843–49 edition), VIII, p. 88.
- 3 Hastings Robinson (Ed.), *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation* (Parker Society; 1846), p. 13.
- 4 J.E. Cox (Ed.), *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer* (Parker Society; 1846) [cited as P.S., II], p. 375.
- 5 Ratramn, *Liber de corpore et sanguine Domini*.
- 6 Henry Christmas (Ed.), *Works of Nicholas Ridley* (Parker Society; 1843), p. 206.
- 7 P.S. II, p. 218.
- 8 J.E. Cox (Ed.), *Writings and Disputations of Thomas Cranmer relative to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* (Parker Society; 1844) [cited as P.S., I], ii, p. 6.
- 9 P.S., II, pp. 217–218.
- 10 Anthony Gilby, *An Answer to the devilish detection of S. Gardiner* (1547); Samuel Carr (Ed.), *Early Writings of John Hooper* (Parker Society; 1843), pp. 97–248.
- 11 The edition first published in 1907 (reprinted 1987), edited by C.H.H. Wright, is followed. Copies of the 1987 printing are available at £5.50 from The Harrison Trust, P.O. Box 47, Ramsgate, Kent, CT11 9XB.  
*N.B. The first edition of 1907 does not have pages xiia–xiid. The second impression of 1928 numbers pages xiia–xiid as xiii–xvi, and xiii–xxvii as xvii–xxx; users of the 1928 impression must, therefore, adjust references to those pages in these notes.*
- 12 P.S., I, pp. 1–367.
- 13 References will be given both to the *Defence* (1907/1987 edition, but cf. note 11) and to the *Answer* (P.S., I).
- 14 *Defence*, p. 31 (P.S., I, p. 46). Cranmer used the word catholic here, as in the title of the *Defence*, to mean universal—that which pertains to the universal church in its purity (and, in particular, contrasts with the Church of Rome in its distinctive errors). Cf. note 24.
- 15 *Defence*, p. 10 (P.S., I, p. 30).
- 16 *Defence*, p. 154 (P.S., I, p. 131).
- 17 *Defence*, p. 155 (P.S., I, p. 132).
- 18 *Defence*, p. 3 (P.S., I, pp. 23–24).
- 19 *Defence*, p. 40 [*corrected*] (P.S., I, p. 244).
- 20 *Defence*, p. 10 (P.S., I, p. 30).
- 21 *Defence*, p. 30 (P.S., I, p. 46).
- 22 *Defence*, p. 40 (P.S., I, p. 250).
- 23 *Defence*, p. 127 (P.S., I, p. 105).
- 24 *Defence*, p. 122 (P.S., I, p. 103).
- 25 *Defence*, p. 95 (P.S., I, p. 332). On several occasions in the *Defence* Cranmer referred to the pope as antichrist. His fullest statement on the papacy is in a letter to Queen Mary of September 1555 (P.S., II, 447–454), in which he wrote of the pope:  
he sitteth in the temple of God, as if he were a God, and nameth himself God's vicar, and yet he dispensemeth against God. If this be not to play antichrist's part, I cannot tell what is antichrist, which is no more to say but Christ's enemy and

adversary, who shall sit in the temple of God, advancing himself above all other, yet by hypocrisy and feigned religion shall subvert the true religion of Christ, and under pretence and colour of christian religion shall work against Christ, and therefore hath the name of antichrist. [P.S., II, p. 452].

Cranmer declared that he spoke 'against the power and authority of the pope' and not 'for any malice I owe to the pope's person'.

Cranmer had previously identified the papacy as fulfilling 2 Thessalonians 2: *Defence*, p. xxiii (P.S., I, p. 5). 'I know how Antichrist hath obscured the glory of God and the true knowledge of his word' (*Defence*, p. xxv; P.S., I, p. 6); 'the Romish Antichrist . . . could not have been very Antichrist indeed, except he had been so repugnant unto Christ, whose doctrine is clean contrary to this doctrine of Antichrist' (*Defence*, p. 30; P.S., I, p. 46); transubstantiation is a 'phantastical imagination' which 'giveth an occasion utterly to subvert our whole faith in Christ', a sophistry 'so much injurious to Christ, that it could not come from any other person but only from the Devil himself, and from his special minister Antichrist' (*Defence*, p. 24; P.S., I, p. 43); 'he that taketh upon him to supply that thing, which he pretendeth to be unperfect in Christ, must needs make himself above Christ, and so very Antichrist' (*Defence*, p. xxiii; P.S., I, p. 5); 'the nature and condition of the see of Rome, which is of all other most contrary to Christ, and therefore most worthy to be called the see of Antichrist' (*Defence*, p. 120; P.S., I, p. 103).

References to antichrist in the *Defence*: pp. xxii–xxiii (P.S., I, p. 5), p. xxv (P.S., I, p. 6), p. 24 (P.S., I, p. 43), pp. 29–30 (P.S., I, pp. 45–46), p. 68 (P.S., I, p. 303), p. 95 (P.S., I, pp. 332–333), p. 101 (P.S., I, p. 81), p. 120 (P.S., I, p. 103), p. 224 (P.S., I, p. 228), p. 229 (P.S., I, p. 238), p. 241 (P.S., I, p. 348), and p. 255 (P.S., I, p. 353); cf. p. xxvi (P.S., I, p. 7) and p. 66 (P.S., I, p. 302); cf. P.S., II, p. 46, pp. 62–63.

26 *Defence*, p. 97 (P.S., I, p. 52).

27 *Defence*, p. 34 (P.S., I, p. 241).

28 *Defence*, p. xxii (P.S., I, p. 5); cf. pp. 12–15 (P.S., I, pp. 38–9) and p. 257 (P.S., I, p. 354).

29 *Defence*, p. xxiv (P.S., I, p. 6).

30 *Defence*, p. 31 (P.S., I, p. 46); cf. p. 32 (P.S., I, p. 47).

31 *Defence*, p. 101 (P.S., I, p. 89); cf. p. 69 (P.S., I, pp. 303–304).

32 *Defence*, p. 32 (P.S., I, p. 47).

33 *Defence*, pp. 108–109 (P.S., I, pp. 95–6).

34 *Defence*, p. 119 (P.S., I, p. 100).

35 *Defence*, p. 111 (P.S., I, p. 97).

36 *Defence*, p. 32 (P.S., I, p. 47).

37 *Defence*, pp. 185–186 (P.S., I, p. 183).

38 *Defence*, p. 163 (P.S., I, p. 139); cf. pp. 230–231 (P.S., I, p. 238).

39 P.S., I, p. 3 (*Defence*, p. xiib).

40 *Defence*, p. 187 (P.S., I, p. 183).

41 P.S., I, p. 11. The sacrament is an adjunct of the Word: 'this faith God worketh inwardly in our hearts by his Holy Spirit, and confirmeth the same outwardly to our ears by hearing of his word, and to our other senses by eating and drinking of the sacramental bread and wine in his holy Supper.' (*Defence*, p. 25 [P.S., I, p. 43]; cf. p. 19 [P.S., I, p. 41] and pp. 193–194 [P.S., I, p. 198]). The sacrament may be said to preach to us (*Defence*, p. 20 [P.S., I, p. 41]) and to admonish us: *Defence*, p. 30 (P.S., I, p. 46), p. 194 (P.S., I, p. 198), and p. 238 (P.S., I, p. 347).

42 *Defence*, p. 98 (P.S., I, p. 52).

43 P.S., I, pp. 34–35.

44 *Defence*, p. 90 (P.S., I, p. 319).

45 *Defence*, p. 121 (P.S., I, p. 103).

46 *Defence*, p. 35 (P.S., I, p. 242).

47 *Defence*, p. 40 (P.S., I, p. 244).

48 *Defence*, p. 122 (P.S., I, p. 103).

- 49 *Defence*, p. 128 (P.S., I, p. 110).  
50 *Defence*, p. 156 (P.S., I, p. 135).  
51 *Defence*, pp. 156–160 (P.S., I, pp. 135–136).  
52 P.S., I, p. 182.  
53 *Defence*, pp. 221–222 (P.S., I, pp. 225–226).  
54 *Defence*, p. 182 (P.S., I, p. 178); cf. p. 139 (P.S., I, p. 123).  
55 *Defence*, p. 153 (P.S., I, p. 131).  
56 *Defence*, p. 181 (P.S., I, p. 177).  
57 *Defence*, p. 182 (P.S., I, p. 177).  
58 *Defence*, p. 90 (P.S., I, p. 319).  
59 *Defence*, p. 95 (P.S., I, pp. 332–333).  
60 *Defence*, p. 91 (P.S., I, p. 320); cf. p. 51 (P.S., I, p. 269).  
61 John 6: 53.  
62 *Defence*, p. 4 (P.S., I, p. 26).  
63 *Defence*, pp. 129–130 (P.S., I, p. 111).  
64 *Defence*, pp. 72–73 (P.S., I, p. 307); cf. p. 199 (P.S., I, p. 207).  
65 P.S., I, p. 25 (*Defence*, pp. 259–260).  
66 *Defence*, pp. 131–132 (P.S., I, p. 113).  
67 *Defence*, p. 132 (P.S., I, p. 114).  
68 *Defence*, p. 177 (P.S., I, p. 166).  
69 *Defence*, p. 188 (P.S., I, p. 187).  
70 *Defence*, pp. 133–134 (P.S., I, p. 115), pp. 211–212 (P.S., I, p. 212), p. 228 (P.S., I, pp. 230–231).  
71 *Defence*, pp. 99–100 (P.S., I, p. 70); cf. p. xxvi (P.S., I, p. 7).  
72 *Defence*, p. 130 (P.S., I, p. 111); cf. p. 131 (P.S., I, p. 111), and pp. 135–136 (P.S., I, p. 116).  
73 *Defence*, p. 135 (P.S., I, p. 115–116).  
74 *Defence*, p. 170 (P.S., I, pp. 158–159).  
75 *Defence*, p. 223 (P.S., I, p. 226).  
76 *Defence*, pp. 15–16 (P.S., I, p. 40).  
77 *Defence*, p. 194 (P.S., I, p. 198), and p. 202 (P.S., I, p. 208).  
78 *Defence*, p. 173 (P.S., I, p. 161); cf. pp. 168–169 (P.S., I, p. 155).  
79 *Defence*, pp. 169–170 (P.S., I, p. 158); cf. p. 25 (P.S., I, p. 43).  
80 1 Corinthians 11: 29.  
81 *Defence*, p. 98 (P.S., I, p. 57); cf. p. 20 (P.S., I, p. 41) and pp. 135–136 (P.S., I, pp. 115–116).  
82 *Defence*, p. 186 (P.S., I, p. 183); cf. p. 194 (P.S., I, p. 198) and p. 55 (P.S., I, p. 277).  
83 *Defence*, p. 25 (P.S., I, p. 43).  
84 *Defence*, p. 199 (P.S., I, p. 207).  
85 *Defence*, p. 9 (P.S., I, p. 29).  
86 *Defence*, p. 33 (P.S., I, p. 47); cf. p. 200 (P.S., I, p. 207).  
87 *Defence*, p. 99 (P.S., I, p. 68).  
88 *Defence*, p. 210 (P.S., I, p. 211); cf. p. 213 (P.S., I, p. 213).  
89 1 Corinthians 11: 29.  
90 *Defence*, p. 219 (P.S., I, p. 219).  
91 *Defence*, p. 165 (P.S., I, p. 142).  
92 *Defence*, p. 195 (P.S., I, p. 198).  
93 *Defence*, p. 221 (P.S., I, p. 221).  
94 *Defence*, p. 218 (P.S., I, p. 219).  
95 *Defence*, p. 234 (P.S., I, p. 346).  
96 *Defence*, p. 33 (P.S., I, p. 47).  
97 *Defence*, pp. 236–237 (P.S., I, pp. 346–347).  
98 *Defence*, p. 100 (P.S., I, p. 81).  
99 *Defence*, pp. 239–240 (P.S., I, p. 348).  
100 *Defence*, p. 246 (P.S., I, p. 350).  
101 *Defence*, p. 235 (P.S., I, p. 346).

- 102 *Defence*, p. 249 [*corrected*] (P.S., I, p. 351).  
103 *Defence*, p. 251 (P.S., I, p. 352).  
104 *Defence*, p. 254 (P.S., I, p. 353); cf. p. 244 (P.S., I, pp. 349–350).  
105 *Defence*, p. 12 (P.S., I, p. 38).  
106 *Defence*, pp. 158–159 (P.S., I, p. 136).  
107 *Defence*, p. 195 (P.S., I, p. 198); cf. p. 179 (P.S., I, p. 166).  
108 P.S., I, p. 11.  
109 *Defence*, p. 101 (P.S., I, p. 89).  
110 P.S., I, p. 148; cf. pp. 34–35.  
111 *Defence*, p. 26 (P.S., I, p. 44).  
112 *Defence*, p. 166 (P.S., I, p. 148).  
113 *Defence*, p. 27 (P.S., I, p. 44).  
114 *Defence*, pp. 257–258 (P.S., I, p. 354).  
115 J.T. Tomlinson (Ed.), *The Great Parliamentary Debate in 1548 on the Lord's Supper* (n.d.), pp. 27, 39.  
116 These are printed at: Joseph Ketley (Ed.), *The Two Liturgies . . . with other documents . . . set forth . . . in the reign of King Edward VI* (Parker Society; 1844), pp. 526–537; Edward Cardwell, *Synodalia* (1842), I, pp. 18–33.  
117 Cf. W.H. Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology* (1930), pp. 349–351.  
118 Cf. *Defence*, p. 211 (P.S., I, p. 212), where the same passage of Augustine which is quoted in the Article is used in support of the same argument.  
119 Gardiner's statement: P.S., I, p. 79 (cf. p. 83); Cranmer's response, *op. cit.*, p. 79 (cf. 271). Cf. M. Bucer, *Scripta Anglicana* (1577), p. 468 [Censura, ch. IX].  
120 P.S., I, pp. 34–35.  
121 Dr. J.I. Packer wrote of the draft forms of Series 1 and Series 2:  
it is a different matter when both prayers offer to God the Church's sacrifice of praise . . . as a preliminary to communion. This makes God's sacramental gift to us proceed on the basis of our gift to Him, and the fundamental movement of the Eucharist becomes man's movement Godward instead of God's movement manward. . . . this treatment of the Supper, however it be interpreted theologically, effectively obscures its biblical character as 'a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death', and of the grace of the new covenant . . . This is so basic a distortion of the biblical meaning of the Supper as to make both rites unacceptable. [J.I. Packer, 'Gain and Loss', in R.T. Beckwith (Ed.), *Towards a Modern Prayer Book* (1966), pp. 88–89.]