

“EFFECTUAL SIGNS
OF GRACE”

*Aspects of the doctrine
of the Lord's Supper*

D. A. Scales



Gerlach Fliche

1545

Thomas Cranmer

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“EFFECTUAL SIGNS OF GRACE”:

ASPECTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

One brief hour is but a short time in which to survey a subject of such great importance. Beliefs about and attitudes towards the Lord’s Supper are varied and indeed contradictory, reflecting varied and contradictory doctrines of salvation. Issues which hang on the doctrine of salvation are fundamental; and in these islands in the reign of Queen Mary several hundreds of men and women, high and low, rich and poor, thought the doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ expressed in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper of such great importance that they were willing to be burned to death rather than deny it. These martyrs included five bishops – Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, John Hooper, and Robert Ferrar, the first of whom was, of course, the chief architect both of the doctrinal statements of the Church of England and of the liturgy of the Church of England.

Our aim is to consider what Holy Scripture teaches about the Lord’s Supper and what the main doctrinal statements of the Church of England, the Articles of Religion, teach of the second sacrament; and then to see how this teaching was expressed in the Book of Common Prayer. Though at times we may need briefly to examine erroneous views to distinguish matters clearly and sharpen our understanding of the truth, we shall not deal at any length with heretical views, like the Roman teaching on transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass. To establish a coherent view of the teaching of scripture, and of the teaching and liturgy of the Church of England, is the goal.

THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE

The teaching of Scripture on the Lord's Supper is set down chiefly in the four accounts of its institution, recorded by St. Matthew (26: 26–28), St. Mark (14: 22–24), St. Luke (22: 19–20), and St. Paul (1 Corinthians 11: 23–26). St. Paul also made some reference to the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 10 (16–17), when he was discussing another issue; and he added some important comments after his account of the institution, recorded in 1 Corinthians 11 (27–31). Other Biblical material is relevant to a full understanding of the sacrament – in particular, the Old Testament teaching on circumcision and the passover.

A salient point in the Biblical texts is that the movement of the sacrament is from God to man. The Lord Jesus took bread and gave it to his disciples; he took the cup and gave it to them. The significance which he ascribed to these gifts is that they symbolised his death for them. St. Paul wrote of the holding of the Lord's Supper as a proclamation or preaching of the Lord's death – proclamation and preaching is the utterance of a message from God to man. God speaks to man by his word; God speaks to man by his sacraments.

The medieval concept that the sacrament is a priest offering an unbloody sacrifice to God on behalf of man was entirely false to the scriptural picture of the character and direction of the Lord's Supper; yet there remains today a residual vagueness among many as to what the essential action and direction is. In Baptism and the Lord's Supper God speaks to man. Thus Bishop John Hooper, in discussing baptism, wrote:

Therefore God confirmed his own infallible truth and promises to Abraham by circumcision, and not Abraham's obedience: for if he had, he had confirmed the weak and uncertain infirmity of man, and not his own infallible truth.¹

¹ John Hooper, *Later Writings* (Parker Society; 1852), 89

It is the Word that gives meaning to the action of the sacrament. Without the words which the Lord Jesus spoke, the eating and drinking would have been connected with a meal, and without any special significance. His words “This is my body which is given for you”, and, later, “This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” told his disciples, and tell his faithful people in all ages, what the message and meaning of the sacrament is. There was no supernatural action on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ: the bread remained bread, and the wine remained wine, but they had a new significance and meaning in the use to which were now being put. Bishop John Jewel wrote, “We do behold in the sacrament, not what it is, but what it doth signify.”²

It is important to note that in St. Mark’s account of the distribution of the wine, the words of signification were spoken by the Lord Jesus after the disciples had all drunk of the wine. The wine was not set apart for a special use before it was used; it was set apart for a special use after it had been used. If it was the case that the bread also had been shared among the disciples before the Lord said “This is my body which is given for you”, and each element had been consumed when Jesus spoke the words of signification, many of the unhelpful and unhappy ideas of bread and wine changed by consecration would be forced to recede. Consecration, if we are to use that term – the 1552 Prayer Book did not use it, but the 1662 Prayer Book does – simply sets aside the bread and wine for a special use. Certainly what is important is not any concept of consecration, but the act of participation in obedience to the Lord’s command. Richard Hooker wrote:

The bread and cup are his body and blood because they are causes instrumental upon the receipt whereof the *participation* of his body and blood ensueth.³

The Sacrament is an adjunct of the preached Word. It is a further explication of the message which has been preached; without the preached word, the sacrament would have no meaning. Thus the Lord

² John Jewel, *A short Treatise of the Sacraments* (1583), at John Jewel, *Works* (Parker Society), ii (1847), 1117

³ Richard Hooker, *Works* (arranged J. Keble)³ (1845), ii, 352

Jesus taught the people in John 6 that participation in the benefits of his atoning death was essential for eternal life; the sacrament of the Lord's Supper confirms that preached Word with signs that speak and seals that confirm the same message. When Moses told the Lord that the children of Israel would not believe him nor hearken to him, he was given two miraculous signs – the rod which became a serpent when thrown on the ground; and the hand which became leprous when put into his bosom. The Lord said to Moses: “It shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign”.⁴ The signs had a voice – they uttered a message. Thus, also, the signs of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper have a voice that declares visibly the Gospel which is preached, of the Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life a ransom for many. John Jewel described this:

Thus doth God make known his secret purpose to his church: first, he declareth his mercy by his word; then he sealet it and assureth it by his sacraments. In the word we have his promises: in the sacraments we see them.⁵

The giving of the bread and the giving of the wine were separated at the Last Supper. The bread was distributed during the meal – “as they were eating” – and the cup was given after the meal – “after supper”, “when he had supped”. The separation of the bread and wine, the symbolic separation of body and blood, signifies death; it serves to remind the participant that it is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ that is remembered in the Lord's Supper. Bishop Handley Moule wrote:

every detail of [the holy Meal's] grandly simple ceremonial was a symbol of Death. The Bread was *broken*. And it was quite *apart* from the Wine, and the Wine from the Bread. So the Bread was identified with the Body *as parted from its Blood*, and the Wine was identified with the Blood *as drained from the Body*. That is to say, Death spoke from each Element – Death, not Life. ‘His Body’ was set before them as in death, a corpse.

⁴ Exodus 4: 8

⁵ Jewel, *op.cit.*, ii, 1099

‘His Blood’ was set before them as in death, the blood of mortal wounds.⁶

The Rev. Alan Stibbs made the same point:

In the institution in the upper room, there was a significant prolonged interval between Christ’s giving to His disciples, first of the bread, and later of the wine. It was not until ‘after supper’ that ‘in like manner also he took the cup’. So the bread and the wine were deliberately separated, just as the pieces of slain animals were divided in covenant making – to represent the violent death of the covenant maker.⁷

All the accounts include reference to the wine symbolising the new covenant in Christ’s blood: the blood poured out on behalf of his people marked the sealing of that new covenant. The repeated sacrifices of the old covenant were a reminder that its sacrifices were ineffectual; they pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Bishop Moule wrote:

That the *whole* Ordinance is covenantal in its character is directly suggested by its deep connection with the Passover Supper, which was essentially a Covenant rite.⁸

The Lord Jesus Christ stated that the wine given was a sign of his blood poured out in sacrifice, establishing a new covenant: salvation will, by grace, be the possession of all who, by faith, participate in that sacrifice – “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day”.⁹

St. Matthew records that the Lord Jesus stated that his blood was “shed for many for the remission of sins”. The word translated “for” in the expression “for the remission of sins” is the Greek preposition εἰς (*eis*): it is a very common word, and its commonest meaning is *into* or

⁶ H.C.G. Moule, *The Supper of the Lord* (n.d. [? 1899/1900]), 12–13

⁷ A.M. Stibbs, *Sacrament, Sacrifice and Eucharist* (1961), 41-42

⁸ Moule, *op.cit.*, 52

⁹ John 6: 54

onto. It is also used regularly, but less frequently, to mean *for, with a view to, unto*; this is a purposive sense. Thus a regular usage in Classical Greek would be in an expression such as “The soldiers were drawn up *for* battle”. The death of Christ accomplished the sacrificial work of atonement for sin; it was also purposive in regard to the application of that atonement.

The phrase “for the remission of sins” reminds us of the essential unity of the two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The baptism of John as he prepared the way for the Messiah was “for the remission of sins”;¹⁰ and on the day of Pentecost Peter told those whose hearts were pricked: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”¹¹ Exactly the same words are used in the Nicene Creed: “I believe in one baptism for the remission of sins”. The usage does not mean that baptism by its action automatically accomplishes “remission of sins”: it signifies that baptism preaches by its outward sign God’s declaration of remission of sins; baptism is “with a view to the remission of sins”, or is “unto the remission of sins”. Likewise, the Lord’s Supper speaks of the death of Christ “for the remission of sins”. Baptism speaks of regeneration, of a man’s first coming to salvation in Christ and to “remission of sins”; the Lord’s Supper speaks of our abiding in that salvation, of our being strengthened by the recollection of the sacrifice of Christ “for the remission of sins”.

In 1 Corinthians 10 St. Paul sets down some important instruction about the Lord’s Supper when he is dealing with the issue of meat sacrificed to idols. He begins his teaching by setting down a principle – that participation in the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper is outwardly a sign of participation in the benefits of Christ’s death, and inwardly, by faith, is truly such a participation. The key word is *κοινωνία* (*koinōnia*), which is translated at this point in the Authorized Version as *communion*; it can mean communion, fellowship, partaking, participation. Article XXVIII refers to this teaching of St. Paul in the words: “the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ”.

¹⁰ Mark 1: 4; Luke 3: 3

¹¹ Acts 2: 38

As the meat which the Gentiles sacrificed was sacrificed to devils, and not to God, St. Paul instructed the Corinthians that they must not knowingly participate in the eating of such meat: “I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils”.¹² St. Paul demonstrates, therefore, that participation in the Lord’s Supper is a solemn expression of participation in the sacrificial death of Christ. We come to the Lord’s table to participate in the benefits of our Lord’s sacrificial death, to have fellowship with our crucified Saviour.

The instruction given by the Lord Jesus Christ to repeat what was done in the Last Supper, which instituted the Lord’s Supper, was “Do this”, recorded once by St. Luke, and twice by St. Paul. In all three instances it was followed by the Lord’s words “in remembrance of me”. This phrase (“in remembrance of me”) is of great importance, as we find in it the Lord Jesus’s teaching as to the purpose, and the benefit, of this sacrament. Once again the Greek preposition εἰς (*eis*) is used. The command is to do this – take and eat the bread, with the words “This is my body, which is broken for you”, and take and share the cup, with the words “This cup is the new testament in my blood” – with a view to, for the purpose of, remembering the Lord Jesus Christ, and, by reason of the context, with a view to, and for the purpose of, remembering the Lord Jesus Christ as dying on our behalf. The focus is not on an outward act of remembrance; but rather on the consequences of following the example of Christ with the bread and wine – that this should lead to an inner remembrance of what he has done. The focus is not on a static re-enactment of the Last Supper; but rather that such a re-enactment should by its ‘visible words’ speak to our hearts and minds of the atoning death of Christ, encourage our dependence on his only righteousness, and encourage us that by his covenant he has promised to complete the good work which he has begun in us unto the day of Jesus Christ.

The only other use of the Greek word ἀνάμνησις (*anamnēsis*) – remembrance – in the New Testament is in Hebrews 10: 3. The writer is arguing that the law could “never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect”.¹³

¹² 1 Corinthians 10: 20

¹³ Hebrews 10: 1

If they had fully accomplished that task, those sacrifices would have ceased to be offered. The very repetition emphasised the imperfection: “in those *sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year*”. The repeated sacrifices were an ἀνάμνησις, a calling to mind, each year of the sins which had not been purged once for all. Though the message is entirely different, in a similar way the bread and wine call to the participant’s mind the once-for-all atonement for sin accomplished by Christ in his death at Calvary.

After he recounted the institution of the Lord’s Supper, St. Paul proceeded to some further teaching about that sacrament. He stated that “as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come”. There is no ambiguity as to what this showing is: the commonest translation of the Greek word is *preach*. Paul is saying that the Lord’s Supper preaches, or proclaims, or declares, the Lord’s death. It is important that we understand this sense clearly: we need to know as participants in the Lord’s Supper that the bread and the wine are proclaiming to us the Lord’s death for us. Some have sought to distort the truth by suggesting that in the Lord’s Supper man shows to God what Christ has done, whether in offering an unbloody sacrifice, or pleading the merits of his death: there is no scriptural basis for such false teaching.

The declaration that, ‘as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord’s death till he come’ gives definition with compelling clarity to the message of the Lord’s Supper. Its focus is wholly and solely on the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not speak to the believing participant of any other of the mighty acts of God. A review of the Biblical texts that refer to the Lord’s Supper shows that it is exclusively concerned with the Lord’s death. The reference “till he come” does not suggest that the Lord’s Supper has as one of its purposes to remind us of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; rather, it indicates that the Lord’s Supper is, as it were, a temporary provision, to encourage and sustain us with its promises while we are in a fallen world. When our Lord Jesus Christ comes again and we see him face to face, we shall not require any reminders of him or of his atoning work:

The dear tokens of his passion
Still his dazzling body bears;
Cause of endless exultation
To his ransomed worshippers:
With what rapture
Gaze we on those glorious scars!¹⁴

St. Paul's statement that in the Lord's Supper we 'proclaim the Lord's death' is also a corrective to a false emphasis that has reappeared in modern liturgies of the Church of England. The 1549 Book of Common Prayer included a section in which were the words: "having in remembrance his blessed passion, mighty resurrection, and glorious ascension", but this section was excised from the 1552 Book (and the 1662 Book). A similar section, however, appeared in the Series 2 Communion Service of 1967: "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." *Common Worship* (2000) has many options. The following from Order One, Eucharistic Prayer A, may be considered typical: "we remember his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross; we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; we look for the coming of his kingdom and with this bread and this cup we make the memorial of Christ thy Son our Lord."

It is a straightforward matter of obedience, and therefore of the first importance, that we follow the teaching of Scripture, which records that the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper so that we should remember him dying for the remission of our sins; St. Paul gives the same teaching, when he states that 'as often as ye eat his bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come'. We may note also that the order of the Greek words, placing "the Lord's death" before "you proclaim" gives special emphasis to the phrase "the Lord's death". Whatever the reasons for the pressure to make the communion service a remembrance of all the mighty acts of God, we must maintain that the Supper proclaims his death. It is not for man to question the wisdom of God.

¹⁴ Charles Wesley

The title *eucharist*, derived from the Greek word for thanksgiving, is sometimes used for the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion. At root this is an inappropriate title, though it has long been used.

Thanksgiving was a *preliminary* to the giving of the bread and the giving of the cup, but it was not one of the significant elements which the Lord Jesus Christ commanded to be done in remembrance of him. Thanksgiving is an appropriate *response* from those who have participated in the Lord's Supper and have been reminded of the love of Christ in dying for them; but, again, it is not one of the elements of what Christ ordained. The word *eucharist* refers to an action directed towards God, and it could have the unhappy effect of confusing participants as to the true direction of the Supper, a sacrament in which God speaks to man. Though the word is used in the Biblical narrative of the Last Supper, it is not a Biblical title for the Lord's Supper.

The final, and not the least important, point which we derive from the Biblical texts, in the latter section of 1 Corinthians 11, is the need for worthy participation. The Lord's Supper is not a service from which a participant will automatically gain benefit. This is a principle which it is vital that we understand, as we live in an ecclesiastical world which sees the Lord's Supper as the most appropriate service in almost every circumstance; but any usage that might encourage men and women to participate without proper self-examination is damaging; anything which encourages a subconscious idea that to attend a communion service is to do one's duty, and that when the attendance is done, the duty is done, is seriously misleading. Indeed, to participate without truly discerning of what the service speaks, the body and blood of the Lord Jesus sacrificed for sin at Calvary, is to bring judgement upon oneself. Thus St. Paul gives the solemn instruction: "let a man examine himself".

The Reformers emphasised and illustrated this teaching. Heinrich Bullinger of Zürich, whose *Decades* were compulsory reading for English clergy in the later part of Elizabeth's reign, wrote:

That sacraments without faith profit not, it is easily proved. For it is said, that sacraments are seals of the preaching of the gospel, and things appertaining to the same. [But] if the preaching of the gospel be heard without faith, it doth not only

profit nothing unto life, but it turneth rather unto judgment, (to him that heareth),¹⁵

John Jewel likens a participant without faith to a man who cannot read:

When one that is unlearned, and cannot read, looketh upon a book, be the book never so true, never so well written, yet, because he knoweth not the letters, and cannot read, he looketh upon it in vain.¹⁶

Jewel declared:

Our doctrine is, that the sacraments of Christ unto the godly are the instruments of the Holy Ghost, and unto the wicked are increase of further judgment.¹⁷

¹⁵ Henry Bullinger, *Decades* (Parker Society), iv (1852), 340

¹⁶ Jewel, *op.cit.*, ii, 1101

¹⁷ John Jewel, *Works* (Parker Society), i (1845), 193

THE TEACHING OF THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION

The Articles of Religion contain teaching on the Sacraments generally, as well as on Baptism and the Lord's Supper specifically. As a preliminary to examining the teaching of the Articles, it will be useful to note a pattern in the structure of the Articles. This pattern can be discerned in four of the Articles (XIX, XXV, XXVII, and XXVIII). In each case the Article begins with an important truth, but one which is subordinate to, or derivative from, the main teaching, which follows. This is clearly marked out by the language used: in every instance the first item is preceded by the words *not only*, and the subsequent foundation truth is preceded either by *but also* or by *but rather*. Thus in Article XIX it is declared that the Church of Rome hath erred, *not only* in their living and manner of Ceremonies, *but also* in matters of Faith. The assertion that the Church of Rome hath erred in their living and manner of Ceremonies is an important statement; but it is subordinate to, and indeed derivative from the main, though second, assertion, that it hath erred in matters of Faith.

Thus we shall see that the primary statement about the sacraments is that "they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us ..."; the primary statement about Baptism is that "it is ... a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church"; and the primary statement about the Lord's Supper is 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 partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

The teaching of Article XXV relates to both sacraments. The first assertion is that they are sure witnesses, reliable and trustworthy witnesses, of what they declare – that as the outward symbol of water washes the body, so God covenants to cleanse the soul through the atoning death of Christ, bringing new life to one who is dead in

trespasses and sins; and proclaiming by the broken bread and poured out wine that the covenantal death of Christ at Calvary will sustain the Christian throughout mortal life. Secondly, the sacraments are called effectual signs of God's grace and God's good will towards us. We note again that the movement of the sacraments is wholly from God to man: it is God who is signifying his grace and good will toward us, and assuring us of it.

There was much contention about the character of the signs at the time of the Reformation. The Roman Church had taught for several hundred years the doctrine of transubstantiation, which declared that Christ in his humanity was truly present within the bread and wine; that the inner character of the bread and wine had been changed into Christ, even though the outward characteristics, the 'accidents', remained those of bread and wine. This strange and incredible doctrine was based on a most stubborn insistence that Christ's words "This is my body" could only be taken literally, despite the clear indication from the context of the Biblical accounts that the words mean "This represents my body".¹⁸ Transubstantiation overturned the nature of a sacrament, by making the sign identical with the thing signified. Moreover, it was, and is, heretical, by denying the true manhood of Christ: if Christ truly became man, he cannot in his manhood be in many places at once.

Though Luther was freed from the Roman doctrine of salvation, he never fully freed himself from the Roman doctrine of the sacraments. He taught the doctrine of consubstantiation, in which the body of Christ is said to be inseparably, though indefinably, linked with the bread and wine of the sacrament. This too overthrew the nature of the sacrament, as it inseparably linked the sign and the thing signified. Rome and Luther located a presence of Christ in or with the bread and wine.

Rome and Luther sought to attack and belittle the position of the Reformed churches by declaring that they taught that the signs were bare – *nuda signa* – and ineffectual. It is unlikely that any Reformed leader taught that the sacraments were bare signs. Certainly, many of

¹⁸ Cf. Christ's teaching in the parable of the sower "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8: 11), and in the parable of the tares "The field is the world" (Matthew 13: 38); and the seven great "I am"s of St. John's Gospel.

them vigorously rejected this position, when they were accused of it. The Reformed churches, of which the Church of England was one, taught that there was no presence of Christ in the bread and wine; but rather that the presence of Christ should be sought for in the believer. The signs, ordained by Christ, had a purpose, and were effectual – they produced their intended effect; thus they would assist the faithful partaker in remembering the sacrifice of Christ – they were powerful in effect and fulfilled their function.

So the teaching of the Church of England was, and is, that the signs in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper are not the same as, nor to be confused with, what they represent; nor are they a bare and ineffective memorial (whatever that may be); but they are effectual signs, which will serve the purpose for which they were instituted. These signs, these visible words, when rightly received, will strengthen and confirm our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his atoning death on our behalf. The reason why the sacraments are effectual is stated in Article XXVI, the Article in which it is discussed whether an unworthy minister hinders the effect of the sacrament: the sacraments are “effectual, because of Christ’s institution and promise”.

The primary Article on the Lord’s Supper, Article XXVIII, states that it is “a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ’s death”. It is also “a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another”. Our sharing of one loaf and one cup indicates that we are partakers together of the benefits of the death of Christ, and that all Christians have fellowship with one another through that death: “we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”¹⁹

The main teaching of Article XXVIII continues:

to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 10: 17

Partaking of the body and blood of Christ, that is of the benefits of his atoning death, is the intended effect of participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; by eating the bread and drinking the wine we are reminded of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. The benefit of the sacrament is only derived by those who "rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same". A recipient must receive the sacrament worthily – discerning the message it preaches, realising that it speaks of participation in the atoning death of Christ, and having examined himself, weighing seriously the burden of his sins and the price which Christ paid for the remissions of those sins.

The character of the participation, and the role of faith, are dealt with more fully later in the Article:

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.

To make it clear what happens when a believer participates in the supper; and to exclude any misunderstandings which might result from the common practice of calling the sign by the name of the thing signified; the Article sets out plainly that the Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. John Jewel wrote:

we say this meat is spiritual, and therefore it must be eaten by faith, and not with the mouth of our body.²⁰

In the Supper a believer participates in the spiritual truths and realities which the bread and wine signify, in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which his body was broken and his blood shed. This can only be done by faith. The believer sees the signs and hears the message of the visible words; such understanding is available, and only available, to one who has faith in Christ. John Hooper wrote:

²⁰ Jewel, *op.cit.*, ii, 1110

none is admitted unto the sacraments, but such as be God's friends first by faith;²¹

and, again,

all sacraments appertaineth unto none but unto such as first receive the promise of God, to say, remission of his sin in Christ's blood: of the which promise these sacraments be testimonies, witnesses.²²

Article XXIX states clearly that a man who lacks true faith does not participate in the spiritual benefits of the Lord's Supper, but eats and drinks unworthily to his condemnation, as St. Paul teaches. It asserts plainly the great dangers of unworthy participation; and it excludes any doctrine which connects a presence of Christ with the elements of bread and wine. At some point in the process of giving approval to the Articles in 1563, Article XXIX was struck out; the reason is not known. That excellent and patient man, Matthew Parker, presented the Articles (including Article XXIX) again in 1571 and on that occasion they were all approved. Transubstantiation had been explicitly rejected in Article XXVIII, but the Lutheran belief in consubstantiation had not till then been rejected explicitly. Article XXIX entirely rules out consubstantiation, and allows only the Reformed teaching. The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, may eat the sacrament, the bread and the wine, but they are not partakers of Christ, whose death is represented by the signs: the Article is emphatic – in no wise (*nullo modo*). To eat unworthily is to incur condemnation, as the recipient fails to discern the Lord's body as he eats the sign of so great a thing.

²¹ John Hooper, *Early Writings* (Parker Society; 1843) , 134

²² Hooper, *Early Writings*, 136

THE TEACHING OF THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

We turn now to the teaching of the Book of Common Prayer. Some introductory remarks are required. First, the Book of Common Prayer is a liturgy, not a statement of doctrine. For an understanding of the doctrine of the Church of England our primary source is the Articles of Religion. If we were to find teaching implied in the services of the Book of Common Prayer which seemed at variance with the teaching of the Articles, the Book of Common Prayer is to be interpreted in the light of the Articles and not *vice versa*.

Secondly, a liturgy expresses doctrine: it cannot fail to express doctrine, and we should wish to know what it teaches, and whether that is agreeable to Scripture and to the Articles. A liturgy must express doctrine: if it were not to do so, it would be vacuous and meaningless, no fit vehicle for the worship of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ or for the edification of his children. It is, therefore, shameful that in the various liturgies that have been produced in the Church of England in the last fifty years there has been resort to ambiguity, in an attempt to hold together disparate, and often contradictory, teaching. This is dishonouring to a God who is Spirit: “and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth”.²³ No such equivocation existed in the minds of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and the other compilers of the Book of Common Prayer: we shall look at that book to see what doctrine it teaches.

Thirdly, we must consider the main division of the order for the administration of the Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion, in the Book of Common Prayer. The first section of that service, as far as the end of the Prayer for the Church Militant, comprised the Ministry of the Word. There was no mention of the sacrament in what was said in that part. It was designed to be used each Sunday morning, whether or not an administration of the Lord’s Supper was to follow. If there was to be a communion service, the Priest was instructed, before the Prayer for the Church Militant, to “place upon the Table so much Bread and Wine, as he shall think sufficient.”

²³ John 4: 24

Fourthly, the Lord's Supper proper began with an Exhortation. Three exhortations are printed in the Prayer Book; because they do not have titles, many call them the first, second, and third exhortations. One can discern how this usage has come about, but it savours too much of convenience in the theological college lecture room, and reveals too little understanding of the character of the service. I shall call the third of these texts, which begins "Dearly beloved in the Lord, ye that mind to come to the holy Communion",²⁴ simply the Exhortation. This Exhortation is to be used invariably as the first item in the sacramental section of the service, coming after the end of the Prayer for the Church Militant, and before the invitation to Confession ("Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins").

The two other texts I shall term the 'Exhortation giving warning',²⁵ and its special alternative the 'Exhortation to the negligent'.²⁶ One or other of these exhortations was to be read immediately after the Sermon (and therefore before the Offertory) on the Sunday or some holy day immediately preceding the day on which the Lord's Supper was to be administered. At the administration of the sacrament, neither of these was to be read, but only the Exhortation, "Dearly beloved in the Lord, ye that mind to come to the holy Communion".

It is one of the great spiritual losses, and one of the scandals, of the Church of England that the Exhortation has almost entirely ceased to be used. It is a most important part of the service. It warns those intending to participate about unworthy reception, and is the necessary background to the invitation "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins". It gives clear teaching as to the significance and purpose of the Lord's Supper, and is the only part of the service dedicated to that. Much can be deduced from the Prayer of Consecration of the significance and purpose of the Supper, and we shall examine it; but it is not the primary purpose of that prayer to teach. I have not yet discovered when this omission began: for the sake of saving three minutes, much damage is done.

²⁴ *Book of Common Prayer* (Cambridge University Press, standard edition), 249–250

²⁵ *BCP*, 245–247

²⁶ *BCP*, 247–249

Beginning now our consideration of the teaching of the Book of Common Prayer, we see its *theology of the Cross* fully set out in the first section of the Prayer of Consecration: “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”.²⁷ These words have all been chosen with great care to state the completeness and finality of the saving work accomplished at Calvary. First, we are told that Christ made the offering, that it was himself he offered, and that the offering was made once for all. The words that follow are not synonyms: each contributes to the careful description. Thus, of the adjectives: *full* refers to the extent of the sacrifice – it comprehended all that was required; *perfect* refers to its completion – it was finished and did not need continuance or repetition; and *sufficient* refers to its meeting the need for which it was offered. The nouns each refer to a stage in the process of a sacrificial offering: the *sacrifice* itself is the slaughter of the victim; the *oblation* is the offering of that sacrifice; and the *satisfaction* is the fulfilment of the atonement, the payment of the debt. This statement is, therefore, a thorough exposition for those who are about to approach the Lord’s table of the work accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross.

This teaching is entirely in harmony with the teaching of Article XXXI, *Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross*. The Article states:

The Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, 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 purpose of the Lord’s Supper is stated twice in the Prayer Book Service. In the Exhortation, we hear, more fully:

to the end that we should alway remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by his precious blood-shedding he hath obtained to us; he hath instituted and ordained

²⁷ BCP, 255

holy mysteries, as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death²⁸

The bread and wine are pledges of Christ's love, and particularly of his love in the context of his death. A pledge is a sign, but a sign with a promise attached – a token, or earnest, or proof. In the Lord's Supper we receive the bread and wine as pledges, pledges of the love of Christ in dying for us, pledges to stir up both a continual remembrance of his death, and a remembrance of all the benefits that he hath obtained for us. What clarity! What profundity! More briefly, we hear in the first part of the Prayer of Consecration (the Declaration), that the Lord Jesus

did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death, until his coming again.²⁹

The prayer called the Prayer of Consecration is *a prayer for the communicants*, a prayer that, as they partake of the outward signs of bread and wine, they may partake of what those elements signify – the saving passion of Christ. The central section of the prayer contains the petition:

Hear us, O merciful Father, we 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:³⁰

This prayer is fully in harmony with the teaching of Scripture – that the recipients of the bread and wine should be partakers of what they signify; and that they should receive the bread and wine in remembrance of Christ's death and passion.

The clarity of this exposition of Biblical truth, first used by Cranmer in the 1552 Book, is more fully discerned when it is contrasted with

²⁸ *BCP*, 250

²⁹ *BCP*, 255

³⁰ *BCP*, 256

what it replaced. The 1552 Book had replaced the 1549 Book of Common Prayer: Cranmer had soon come to realise that, despite the progress made in moving towards Biblical and Reformed doctrine in that Book, there was much in it that could be considered ambiguous or otherwise less than fully satisfactory. In the 1549 Book the Prayer of Consecration prayed for the elements:

with thy Holy Spirit and word vouchsafe to bl~~l~~ess and sanc~~t~~ify these thy gifts, and creatures of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the body and blood of thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ.

The change from prayer for the elements to prayer for the recipients marked a signal and final transference from medieval to Biblical theology, and a final casting off of the vestiges of Rome.

A second comparison will serve to bring out the full significance of another characteristic of the 1552 and 1662 Order: what happened in the service in response to the recital of the institution of the Lord's Supper. In 1549 (as in the Roman Mass) there was prayer that the Holy Spirit would make the bread and wine be to the recipients the body and blood of Christ; the making of a memorial before God, a vestige of the offering of Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass; a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; the Lord's prayer; the invitation to confession, the confession, the absolution, and the comfortable words; the prayer of humble access; and, finally, the distribution of the bread and wine. In 1552, however, the practice was transformed. Having prayed that, as they received the bread and wine, they might be partakers of Christ's Body and Blood – might spiritually be partakers in the benefits of his death – and having heard the recital of the institution, the communicants immediately proceeded to receive that bread and wine.

The need for worthy reception is a matter to which emphasis is given in the Prayer Book. The Exhortation, the first element in the liturgy of the Lord's Supper, begins with this subject, and slightly over half the Exhortation deals with it. This first part of the Exhortation refers to St. Paul's command to all to examine themselves before participating, emphasising that, as the benefit is great if the sacrament is received

worthily, so the danger is great if it is received unworthily. After further reference to 1 Corinthians 11, the people are exhorted:

Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord; repent you truly for your sins past; have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men; so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy mysteries.³¹

The fact that the Exhortation giving warning is provided for a Sunday or Holy Day previous to the administration of the Holy Communion indicates that the Reformers deemed preparation to receive the Sacrament and worthy reception to be of the first importance. Furthermore, the Exhortation giving warning gives significant attention to this matter:

Which being so divine and comfortable a thing to them who receive it worthily, and so dangerous to them who will presume to receive it unworthily; my duty is to exhort you in the mean season to consider the dignity of that holy mystery, and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof; and so to search and examine your own consciences, and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God;³²

The exhortation gives guidance on self-examination, and warns any who are in any serious sin: “repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy Table”.³³

There is one other important statement in the Prayer Book, from which we may derive *a correct evaluation of the distinction between the value of the sign and the value of the thing signified*. This statement is one of the rubrics at the end of The Communion of the Sick:

But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, ... or by any other just impediment, do not receive the Sacrament of

³¹ BCP, 250

³² BCP, 246

³³ BCP, 247

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.³⁴

This rubric makes it clear that eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ, that is participating in the benefits of his atoning death, is the one thing needful. The Reverend Alec Motyer, in discussing the practice of reservation, commented on this rubric:

our Church replies that in cases where the ministry of the sacrament is utterly impossible, the answer to be given is that it is not in terms of sacramental ministry that the church either primarily or ultimately cares for the sheep of its flock, and that neither a Christian's salvation nor his comfort in extremity depends on a sacramental appropriation of Christ.³⁵

The Lord Jesus Christ has graciously instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper so that we may remember him and his atoning death for us; and that sacrament, having been instituted by Christ, is an effectual sign of his grace and of God's good will towards us. The one thing needful, however, is the thing signified, not the sign.

³⁴ *BCP*, 325

³⁵ J.A. Motyer and J.I. Packer, *Reservation* (1960), 11

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

The indwelling presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the heart of the believer through the operation of the Holy Spirit is a scriptural truth. Thus the Lord Jesus taught: “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”³⁶ St. Paul prayed for the Ephesians “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith”,³⁷ and he wrote to the Romans that

ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.³⁸

Christ taught his disciples:

If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.³⁹

The Lord Jesus Christ also taught that he was present where his servants were gathered in his name: “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”⁴⁰

Thomas Cranmer wrote:

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 until the world’s end.⁴¹

³⁶ John 6: 56

³⁷ Ephesians 3: 17

³⁸ Romans 8: 9

³⁹ John 14: 23

⁴⁰ Matthew 18: 20

⁴¹ Thomas Cranmer, *On the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper* (Parker Society; 1844), 89; *Defence of the True and Catholick Doctrine* (1907/1987), 101

Bishop Moule commented:

The Holy Supper is not designed to effect a Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ peculiar in kind. It is a special and most holy occasion for His promised congregational Presence. He, most assuredly, meeting His believing people, is present with them there *for special blessing*. But He is not (so far as His words and acts can reveal it) present there *in a special way*. ... the Lord's Presence differs in purpose at an assembly for Prayer only, and at an assembly for Communion. Yet it is the same in mode; to wit, the Presence promised where His people meet in His Name.⁴²

Our study of the Scriptures and our study of the doctrine and liturgy of the Church of England have revealed no teaching of a presence of our Lord Jesus Christ specially connected with the Lord's Supper, whether that presence be in or under the bread and wine (as in the Roman heresy of transubstantiation), or with the bread and wine (as in the Lutheran error of consubstantiation), or in any other way. No doubt the believer, as he remembers the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ for him and rejoices in it, may be more conscious that the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in his heart by faith; and no doubt the fellowship of believers, as they are all partakers of one bread, is conscious of that presence of the Lord Jesus in the midst of those who are gathered in his name. There is no teaching, however, of a special presence of Christ in connection with the Lord's Supper.

The Roman error of transubstantiation, being the position which the Reformers rejected in the sixteenth century, has too often, and too much, set the agenda for doctrinal discussion. It has perhaps led to a situation in which at least some, in rejecting transubstantiation, have tended to seek out an alternative doctrine of a special presence of Christ at the Lord's Supper: whereas it is clear that there is no promise of a special presence of Christ at the sacrament, outside the promises of Christ's presence at all times. Richard Hooker wrote:

⁴² Moule, *op.cit.*, 47-48

The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament.⁴³

Similarly, Thomas Cranmer wrote:

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.⁴⁴

This section ends with two quotations from the classic work on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper from the pen of Thomas Cranmer:

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 the dead.⁴⁵

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.⁴⁶

⁴³ Hooker, *op.cit.*, ii, 352

⁴⁴ Cranmer, *On the Sacrament ...*, 52; *Defence*, 98

⁴⁵ Cranmer, *On the Sacrament ...*, 139; *Defence*, 163

⁴⁶ Cranmer, *On the Sacrament ...*, 11. For an extended consideration of Cranmer's teaching, see: D.A. Scales, "Thomas Cranmer's *True and Catholick Doctrine of the Sacrament*", in *Churchman*, CIV (1990), 102 – 131.

CONCLUSION

Our study has revealed that partaking, not presence, is the key concept in considering the benefits of the Lord's Supper. This is the teaching of Holy Scripture – that we should eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus and his atoning death for us, and participate spiritually in the benefits he has purchased for us; that we should examine ourselves, before we partake; and that, as often as we do this, we proclaim the Lord's death. The doctrine and historic liturgy of the Church of England are, as we have seen, in perfect harmony with this. The position may be summarised in the concluding questions of the Catechism:

Question: Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?

Answer: For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.

Question: What is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper?

Answer: Bread and Wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received.

Question: What is the inward part, or thing signified?

Answer: The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.

Question: What are the benefits whereof we are partakers thereby?

Answer: The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the Bread and Wine.

Question: What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?

Answer: To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ BCP, 295–296

