

# THE MODERN MASS:

A  
Reversion  
to the  
Reforms of Cranmer

by

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The fort is betrayed even of them  
that should have defended it.

— *St. John Fisher to his apostate colleagues.*

A weak clergy, lacking grace  
constantly to stand to their learning.

— *St. Thomas More to his daughter.*

I

# I

## CRANMER'S OBJECTIVE

An English historian is apt, by the nature of things, to be suspicious of liturgical change. He knows that in his country it has happened before and that the consequences of it have molded his religious background. What he does not always realize is that few but specialists are interested in so circumscribed a subject and that the general condonation — so it seems — of certain actions springs not from bad faith but from ignorance.

It is my purpose here to set down quite simply the method by which the Faith was destroyed in England by measures for which the main responsibility rests on Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was all-powerful in the religious sphere from 1547 to 1553.

He was honest enough about his intentions and made no effort to hide his opinion that the power of “the great harlot, that is to say, the pestiferous see of Rome” lay in “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.”<sup>1</sup> It was this that must be destroyed. People must learn that Christ was not in the Sacrament but only in the worthy receivers of the Sacrament. “The eating and drinking of Christ’s flesh and blood is not to be taken in the common signification, with mouth and teeth to eat a thing being present, but by a lively faith, in heart and mind to digest a thing being absent.”<sup>2</sup> The new rite which Cranmer devised to embody this belief, “the administration of the Holy Supper,” must have nothing in it which could be “twisted” to resemble “the never-sufficiently-to-be-execrated Mass.” And that in

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<sup>1</sup> Cranmer: *Defence*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, III

the Mass “there is offered to God the Father a sacrifice, namely the body and blood of our Lord, truly and really, in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins and to obtain the salvation as well of the dead as of the living”<sup>3</sup> was defined as a heresy deserving the death-penalty.

So much for Cranmer’s objective. The three chief means by which he attained it were the use of the vernacular, the substitution of a Holy Table for an altar and changes made in the Canon of the Mass.

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<sup>3</sup> *Reformatio.*

## II

### THE VERNACULAR

**T**he translation of the Bible into the vernacular had existed in England since Saxon days. Long before Wyclif had made his “translation” in 1380, there had been, as St. Thomas More pointed out, English translations “by virtuous and learned men” and “by good and goodly people” before Wyclif “took it upon him of a malicious purpose to translate it anew.” And More was insistent that there was no reason “why it was not convenient to have the Bible translated into the English tongue” for “there is no treatise of Scripture so hard but that a good virtuous man, or woman either, shall somewhat find therein that shall delight and increase their devotion.” What was to be resisted was the deliberate mistranslation of the Bible “of malicious purpose” and it is this that provides the key for the insistent anti-Catholic demands for the vernacular in the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

The translation made by William Tyndale, one of Cranmer’s associates, was burnt by the Catholic authorities. When St. Thomas More was asked about it, he replied: “It is to me a great marvel that any good Christian man, having any drop of wit in his head, would anything marvel or complain of the burning of that book, if he knew the matter. Which whoso calleth [it] the New Testament calleth it by a wrong name except they call it Tyndale’s Testament or Luther’s Testament. For so had Tyndale, after Luther’s counsel, corrupted and changed it from the good and wholesome doctrine of Christ to the devilish heresies of their own, that it was a clean contrary thing.” Asked for examples, he chose three words. “One is the word Priests. The other the Church. The third Charity. For Priests he always calls seniors; the Church he calleth alway the congregation, and Charity

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<sup>4</sup> *The English Hexapla*, published in 1805, contains six vernacular versions (of 1380, 1534, 1539, 1557, 1582, and 1611), printed in parallel columns. They include Wyclif’s, Tyndale’s and Cranmer’s, and are invaluable for comparison.

he calleth love. Now do these names in our English tongue neither express the things that be meant by them, and there also appeareth, circumstances well considered, that he had a mischievous mind in the change.”<sup>5</sup>

Tyndale also provided his translation with notes, such as that the Mass was a matter of “nodding, becking, mewing, as it were, apes play.” Those who still believed the traditional faith and practice were “beasts without the seal of the Spirit of God, but sealed with the Mark of the Beast and cankered consciences.”

But far more damaging than the comments were, as More had pointed out, the deliberate mistranslations which Tyndale (and Cranmer, following him, in a version issued six years later) made in order to eradicate traditional Catholic doctrine. The word meaning “idols” he rendered by “images” and thereby forged a useful tool against the cultus of the Saints and the Sacred Humanity of Christ. “Confess,” which might suggest the sacrament of penance, became “acknowledge.” The great key-words of the Gospel, “grace” and “salvation,” became “favor” and “health.” The word which should have been “priest” he rendered as “elder” and “church” as “congregation” and noted: “By a priest, then, in the New Testament understand nothing but an elder to teach the younger.” He also explained that the two sacraments which Christ ordained, Baptism and Holy Communion, were nothing but the preaching of Christ’s promises.” So, to take one example, in the Epistle of St. James, the apostolic advice: “Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord,” with its obvious reference to the sacrament of Unction, could not be allowed to stand. Even Wyclif in his earlier translation had not tampered with this and had correctly translated “priests of the church.” But in Tyndale’s version and Cranmer’s version they became “elders of the congregation.”

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<sup>5</sup> More’s controversy with Tyndale includes the *Dialogue concerning Heresies* (1529) — from which this passage is taken — and the *Confutation of Tyndale’s answer* (1532 and 1533).



The Protestants could thus appeal to the Bible in the vulgar tongue to bear witness that the New Testament contained no references to justify contemporary Catholic teaching on and practice of the doctrines in dispute; and when such tendentious mistranslations of the Bible were, quite properly, seized and suppressed by Catholic authorities, Catholics could be additionally accused of “trying to prevent the people from reading the Bible.” It was as simple as that. And the effectiveness of the double lie was so complete that its echoes still reverberate.

At the very core of a vernacular Mass lay the vernacular account of the institution of the Eucharist. It was not only that the silent Canon, which had been the rule from the eighth century,<sup>6</sup> must be abandoned, but that the English “Do this in remembrance of Me” should be “distinctly” heard.

The Greek word, *anamnesis*, which is translated as “in remembrance of,” is difficult to render accurately in English. Words like “remembrance,” “memory,” and “memorial” imply the existence of something itself absent, whereas *anamnesis* has the sense of recalling or re-presenting a past event so that it becomes actively present. This meaning is not adequately caught even by the Latin *memoria*. The English words “recall” and “represent,” even when written “re-call” and “re-present,” are insufficient without further explanation; and “remembrance,” “memory” and “memorial,” because of their conventional usage and common meaning, are actually misleading.

“The understanding of the Eucharist as ‘for the *anamnesis* of Me’ — as the ‘re-calling’ before God of the one sacrifice of Christ in all its accomplished and effectual fullness so that it is here and now operative by its effects — is,” as one theologian has put it, “clearly brought out in all traditions” of the early church. In the words of St. John Chrysostom: “We offer even now that which was then offered, which cannot be exhausted. This is done for an *anamnesis* of that

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<sup>6</sup> See *infra* p. 23.

which was then done, for ‘Do this’ said He, ‘for the *anamnesis* of me.’ We do not offer a different sacrifice like the high-priest of old, but we ever offer the same. Or rather we offer the *anamnesis* of the Sacrifice.”<sup>7</sup>

Cranmer, who wished to root out any idea of the Mass as a sacrifice and to substitute the theory of a mere memorial meal in which Christ was not present except in the hearts of the worshippers, could not have found a more potent weapon than the abandonment of the silent Canon in favor of the Institution-narrative in English, with its reiterated “Do this in remembrance of me.” In the great silence, the ordinary worshipper, instructed in the meaning of the Moment, knew, even if he could not formulate it, what was happening. But now he could hear for himself that, as far as he could understand it, it was a memorial meal. The Bible said so. He was called upon to remember something that had happened long ago in the past. And this interpretation was emphasized by the words spoken by the minister giving him his communion: “Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving.”

The imposition of the new vernacular Prayer Book on the country took place on Whitsunday, 9th June 1549. On June 10th, a body of Devonshire peasants, having sampled the new service, forced their parish priest to restore the Mass. Within ten days a people’s army, possibly six thousand strong — the figures are difficult to arrive at — had taken Crediton and were menacing Exeter. Their demands were simple and pointed and concerned solely with the Faith. They asked that the Mass should be restored “as before” and that the Blessed Sacrament should be again reserved in a prominent position. “We will not,” they said, “receive the new service because it is but like a Christmas game, but we will have our old service of Mattins, Mass, Evensong and Procession (the Litany of Our Lady) in Latin and we will have every preacher in his sermon and every priest at his Mass

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<sup>7</sup> Gregory Dix [Anglican], *The Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 243 (1944) quoting St. John Chrysostom in *Heb. hom. Xvii. 3.*

pray by name for the souls in Purgatory as our forefathers did.” Baptism should be available “as well on week-days as on holy-days.” The Blessings of simple things should be restored, palms and ashes should be distributed at the accustomed times with “all the ancient old ceremonies used heretofore by our Mother, the Holy Church” (which Cranmer had abolished as “superstitions”).<sup>8</sup>

Cranmer was incensed not only by the demands themselves but, even more, by the fact that ignorant peasants, “Hob, Will and Dick,” should presume to question his theology. He wrote to them: “Oh, ignorant men of Devonshire and Cornwall, as soon as ever I heard your articles I thought you were deceived by some crafty papists to make you ask you wist not what. You declare what spirit leadeth them that persuaded you that the Word of God is but like a Christmas game. It is more like a game and a foolish play to hear the priest speak aloud to the people in Latin. In the English service there is nothing but the eternal Word of God. If it be to you but a Christmas game, I think you not so much to be blamed as the papistical priests who have abused your sincerity. Had you rather be like pies or parrots that be taught to speak and yet not understand one word of what they say than be true Christians who pray to God in faith?”<sup>9</sup>

The rebels, in their simple faith, paid no heed to the learned Archbishop. Cranmer had to rely on the secular arm. Foreign mercenaries, mainly German Lutherans, were employed on English soil for the first time for three hundred years and the last stand for the Faith was defeated in battle. “The killing was indiscriminate,” in Hilaire Belloc’s memorable words: “four thousand were shot down or ridden down or hanged before the men of Devon would accept, without enthusiasm, the exquisite prose of Cranmer.”<sup>10</sup> Of the

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<sup>8</sup> The Fifteen Articles of the rebels are printed in Strype’s *Cranmer*, Appendix XI; there are other versions, though the demands here quoted are common to all, and the whole matter is chronicled in F. Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion of 1549*.

<sup>9</sup> The very long and bitter letter from which this extract is taken is printed in full in Jenkyns, *Remains of Thomas Cranmer*, Vol. II and there is a short, six-page abstract in Mason’s *Cranmer*.

<sup>10</sup> *A History of England*, vol. iv.

Italian and Spanish adventurers, who reinforced the Germans, it is recorded that, when they realized what had been at stake, they went to the Imperial Nuncio to be absolved for what they done.

When the news of the vernacular victory reached London, Cranmer “made a collation in Paul’s choir for the victory” and in a sermon before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen the Archbishop admonished his auditors that “the plague of division among ourselves, the like of which has not been heard of since the Passion of Christ, is come upon us by the instigation of the Devil, in that we have not been diligent hearers of God’s Word by His true preachers but have been led away by Popish priests”.

It was, of course, quite untrue that the people did not understand the Latin Mass. The circulation of devotional and instructional books among the population of three million may be gauged by the fact that, in the holocaust of Catholic learning and piety which was part of the Protestant policy, a quarter of a million of liturgical books alone were destroyed. The year after the enforcement of the first Prayer Book — 1550 — Cranmer sent commissioners to the universities. In Oxford, thousands of books were destroyed. Cambridge suffered a slower but even more drastic denudation which ensured that there were, at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, no more than 177 “cut and mangled” volumes left.

The result was inevitable. A Protestant preacher, in a sermon before the King in 1552, did not scruple to point out: “There is entering into England more blind ignorance, superstition and infidelity than ever was under Romish bishops. Your realm (which I am sorry to speak) shall become more barbarous than Scythia.”<sup>11</sup> Another, deploring the multiplicity of sects which were the inevitable concomitant of Cranmer’s policy, complained: “There are Arians, Marcionites, Libertines, Davists and the like monstrosities in great numbers; we have need of help against the sectaries and Epicureans

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<sup>11</sup> Sermon by Bernard Gilpin, quoted in F. O. W. Hawel’s *Sketches of the Reformation taken from the Contemporary Pulpit*.

and pseudo-evangelicals who are beginning to shake our churches with greater violence than ever.”<sup>12</sup>

One reason for the mangling of the books was the Act which Cranmer drew up because “it has been noised and bruited abroad that they should have again their old Latin service” and it was necessary to see that the people “put away all such vain expectation of having the public service and the administration of the Sacraments again in the Latin tongue.” The Act ordered the surrender of all Latin service books for the authorities to “so deface and abolish them that they never after may serve any such use as they were provided for.” There was one exception. Copies in Latin or English of the Primer of Henry VIII were allowed, provided that all mention of the saints was erased.

For Cranmer hated the saints almost as much as he hated the Mass and one of the advantages of the vernacular was that he could issue a new litany, from which all the names of the saints were omitted — as well as that of Our Lady — and the petition inserted “From the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities, good Lord deliver us,” which could be easily “understood of the people” when it was said every Wednesday and Friday.

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<sup>12</sup> *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, vol. ii, Micronius to Bullinger (May, 1550).

### III

## THE HOLY TABLE

Within a year of Cranmer's accession to full ecclesiastical power, one of the foreign Protestants in England wrote exultantly to Bullinger, who had succeeded Zwingli in Zurich: "Aræ facta sunt haræ" — the altars have been made into pigsties.<sup>13</sup> It was not at that point quite true, for in various places altars were retained by pious priests and congregations. But in the November of 1550, Cranmer, through the Privy Council, issued an edict that all altars throughout the kingdom should be destroyed. For the future, wherever the rite for the Holy Eucharist was celebrated, a wooden table was to be used.

With the order was sent Cranmer's explanation, which, as Philip Hughes in his definitive work on *The Reformatton in England* (p. 121) has said "leaves no doubt that one religion was being substituted for another." The "certain considerations"<sup>14</sup> pointed out: "The form of a table shall move the simple from the superstitious opinion of the Popish Mass unto the right use of the Lord's Supper. For the use of an altar is to make sacrifice upon it: the use of a table is to serve men to eat upon. If we come to feed upon Him, spiritually to eat his body and spiritually to drink his blood, which is the true use of the Lord's Supper, then no man can deny that the form of a table is more meet for the Lord's board than the form of an altar."

Cranmer went on to explain that, where he had retained the word "altar" in his new Prayer Book, it meant "the table where Holy Communion is distributed" and that it then could be called an altar because there was offered there "our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving."

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<sup>13</sup> John ab Ulmis to Bullinger, in *Original Letters II*.

<sup>14</sup> *Reasons why the Lord's Board should rather be after the form of a Table than of an Altar*: printed in full in Parker Society, *Cranmer II*.

The edict was enforced rigidly. When one of the bishops<sup>15</sup> declined to remove the altars in his diocese, he was imprisoned and deprived of his see. In London, the alterations were immediate and sweeping. The bishop, who had been one of Cranmer's chaplains, determined to make the new table as far as possible inaccessible to non-communicants. A contemporary chronicle<sup>16</sup> records that, in St. Paul's Cathedral, "he removed the table into the middle of the upper choir and set the ends east and west and after the Creed caused a veil to be drawn that no person should see but those that received; and he closed the iron gratings of the choir on the north and south side with brick and plaster, that none might remain in at the choir."

Since there was no Real Presence and no Sacrifice, it was logical enough to attempt to get rid of non-communicating attendance at the Eucharist and Cranmer laid down that "there shall be no celebration of the Lord's Supper, except there be a good number to communicate with the priest at his discretion; and if there be not above twenty persons in the parish of discretion, there shall be no Communion, except four, or three at the least, communicate with the priest. And to take away the superstition which any person hath, or might have, in the bread and wine, it shall suffice that the bread be such as is usual to be eaten at table with other meats, but the best and purest wheat bread that conveniently may be gotten. And if any of the bread and wine remain, the curate shall have it to his own use."<sup>17</sup>

"The last stone to be piled on the cairn below which lay the ancient belief in the Holy Eucharist" — the phrase is Philip Hughes's — was the attack on kneeling to receive communion. What was this but idolatry? A rubric was rapidly inserted in the new Prayer Book explaining that "it is not meant thereby that any adoration is done or ought to be done either unto the sacramental

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<sup>15</sup> George Day of Chichester.

<sup>16</sup> Wriothesley's.

<sup>17</sup> Rubrics at end of 1552 Prayer Book Communion Service.

bread or wine there bodily received or to any real or essential presence there being of Christ's natural flesh and blood.”<sup>18</sup>

The table, as time went on, became more of a table and was moved about for utilitarian purposes. Explicit instructions were issued that “the holy table in every church is to be set in the place where the altar stood, saving when the communion of the sacrament is to be distributed; at which time the same shall be so placed in good sort within the chancel, as whereby the minister may be more conveniently heard of the communicants in his prayer and ministration and the communicants also more conveniently and in more number communicate with the said minister. And after the communion done the same holy table is to be placed where it stood before.”

It was left to the Puritans in the following century to carry Cranmer's work to its logical conclusion and not only to receive communion sitting but to use the table as a convenient place on which to put their hats.

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<sup>18</sup> The so-called “Black Rubric” in the 1552 *Prayer Book*.



## IV

### THE CANON OF THE MASS

The vernacular and the Holy Table were the practical means by which Cranmer accustomed the ordinary people of England to the new doctrines. They could now, by their corporate action, understand that a simple meal was not a Sacrifice — *the* Sacrifice — and that it involved eating nothing but ordinary bread and wine; and they could hear that it was merely in memory of something done long ago. It was because such usage was more potent for the theologically unlearned than any doctrinal teaching that, in the short five-year reign of Mary the Catholic, when England returned for the last time to the Faith, Cardinal Pole insisted on restoring not only the altars and the Mass but simple ceremonies which Cranmer had abolished — holy water, ashes and palms — “in the observation of which beginneth the very education of the children of God” and the abolition of which the heretics “make a first point” in their attempt to destroy the Church.<sup>19</sup>

But the core of Cranmer’s work, of course, was the theological statement of the new beliefs in liturgical form. His final version of what had once been the Mass was, as Gregory Dix has insisted, “*not* a disordered attempt at a Catholic rite, but the only effective attempt ever made to give liturgical expression to the doctrine of ‘justification by faith alone’ ”<sup>20</sup> And, thus considered, it is a masterpiece.

The logical consequences of the basic Protestant doctrine of “faith alone” were — and are — the abolition of the sacraments. External actions obviously cannot be accepted as *causes* in the realm of grace. Luther, of course, had seen this from the beginning and had abolished the five “lesser” sacraments at the same time as he had attacked communion in one kind, transubstantiation, and the

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<sup>19</sup> Pole’s great sermon on St. Andrew’s Day, 1557, is admirably summarized in Philip Hughes: *The Reformation in England*, vol. 2, pp. 246-253.

<sup>20</sup> Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 672.

doctrine of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, as the first stages of devaluing what — since both baptism and holy communion are indubitably commanded in the New Testament — he could not deny. As it was impossible to rid Christianity of these external acts of baptism and the Eucharist, it was essential to empty them of any intelligible meaning. On this all the Protestant sects were at one, the Zwinglians and the Calvinists no less than the Lutherans.

Craumer agreed, as he was bound to, with Zwingli's logic that "the doctrine, *Sola fides justificat*, is a foundation and principle to deny the presence of Christ's body really in the Sacrament"<sup>21</sup> and, as we have seen, he therefore attacked the Mass as vehemently as had Luther in his famous: "I declare that all the brothels (though God has reproved them severely), all manslaughters, murders, thefts and adulteries have wrought less evil than the abomination of the popish mass."<sup>22</sup>

Cranmer's alternative to the Mass is included in the two Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552. Like later engineers of change, he thought it best to bring it about gradually so as not immediately to arouse opposition,<sup>23</sup> but there is no doubt that the 1552 version was in his mind from the beginning; and as "1552 still supplies the whole structure of the present [Anglican] liturgy and some ninety-five per cent of its wording"<sup>24</sup> it is the 1552 rite alone that will be considered here.

The Canon was divided into three parts and became the "Prayer for the Church Militant," the "Prayer of Consecration" and the so-called "Prayer of Oblation." Roughly speaking, the first of these corresponds to the *Te Igitur*, *Memento Domine*, and

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Gardiner, the Catholic Bishop of Winchester, who was imprisoned by Cramner for his defense of the Eucharist, quotes Zwingli's admission in the course of his controversy with Cranmer. See *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 277.

<sup>22</sup> *Werke* (ed. Weimar 1888) xv. p. 773.

<sup>23</sup> cf. Cardinal Heenan's *Pastoral Letter* of October 12th, 1969. "Why does the Mass keep changing? Here is the answer. It would have been foolhardy to introduce all the changes at once. It was obviously wiser to change gradually and gently. If all the changes had been introduced together, you would have been shocked."

<sup>24</sup> Dix, *op. cit.* p. 669.

*Communicantes*: the second to *Hanc Igitur, Quam Oblationem* and *Qui Pridie*; and the third to *Unde et memores, Supra quae* and *Supplices te rogamus*. (There is no parallel to the *Memento Etiam* the *Nobis quoque peccatoribus* or the *Per Quem*).

To see exactly what Cranmer did, these three sections must be considered in detail.

## V

### (a) THE PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT

**T**he “Prayer for the Church Militant” runs: “Almighty and everliving God, which by the holy apostle has taught us to make prayers and supplications, and to give thanks for all men; we humbly beseech thee most mercifully to accept our alms and to receive these our prayers which we offer unto thy divine Majesty, beseeching thee to inspire continually the universal church with the spirit of truth, unity and concord. And grant that all they that do confess thy holy name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word and live in unity and godly love. We beseech thee also to save and defend all Christian Kings, Princes and Governors, and specially thy servant Edward our King, that under him we may be godly and quietly governed; and grant unto his whole council and to all that be put in authority under him that they may truly and indifferently administer justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice and to the maintenance of God’s true religion and virtue. Grant grace (O heavenly father) to all Bishops, Pastors and Curates that they may both by their life and doctrine set forth thy true and lively Word and rightly and duly administer thy holy sacraments: and to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and especially to this congregation here present, that with meek heart and due reverence they may hear and receive thy Holy Word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. And we most humbly beseech thee of thy goodness (O Lord) to comfort and succor all them which in this transitory life be in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity. Grant this, O father, for Jesus Christ’s sake, our only mediator and advocate. Amen.”

The change is sufficiently dramatic. Apart from the omissions of the Pope and the saints, which were only to be expected, what has disappeared is any mention of the oblations *haec dona, haec munera*,

*haec sancta sacrificia illibata* which are so essential a part of the *Te Igitur*.

In the ancient liturgy of the Church, great honor had always been paid to the offerings of the bread and the wine. They are the *immaculatam hostiam*, the *calicem salutaris* of the offertory prayers, as well as the assertion of excellence in the *Te Igitur*, to be presented to God, with the request to make them *in omnibus benedictam, adscriptam, ratam, rationabilem, acceptabilemque*, for the coming miracle of transubstantiation. And “always,” as Jungmann has shown, “it is the thought of their imminent transubstantiation that has conditioned the insistence on their sanctity.”<sup>25</sup> This alone was anathema to Cranmer. “Like Luther he believed that any form of offertory ‘stank of oblation.’”<sup>26</sup> He therefore abolished all the offertory prayers, even what many might consider the most beautiful of them, *Deus, qui humanae*, and all mention of the “oblation” of bread and wine.

Cranmer’s difficulty was that the placing of the bread and wine upon the altar *looked*, as far as the people were concerned, as the offertory always had. If the congregation was to be taught an entirely new idea, something more was required. This Cranmer found in arranging for the church-wardens at this point to make a collection of money and by referring only to “alms” in the prayer. As the alms had not been offered or even handled by the minister, there could be no danger of their being thought of as an “oblation” in the old sense. As an ingenious piece of liturgical workmanship, it does indeed, as Gregory Dix has said, deserve admiration.

And, of course, the reference to “alms” only was heard and understood by the congregation. For it was of the essence of the “reform” that the silent Canon, which had been in use since the

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<sup>25</sup> Jungmann: *Missa Sollemnia* iii, p. 62, n. 19.

<sup>26</sup> Dix, *op. cit.* p. 661.

eighth century,<sup>27</sup> was abolished so that the new vernacular should have its due effect on the people.

To the changes effected by omission, Cranmer added one important one by the inclusion of the name of the sovereign in place of the Pope.

Sixteen years previously King Henry VIII had ordered Bidding Prayers in the vernacular by which, in the form of carefully-phrased petitions, people's thoughts should be directed in correct political and theological channels. Pre-eminently men were to be made to realize that the King was the supreme head of the Church in England. The Pope, if mentioned at all, was to be mentioned with contumely. The Bidding Prayers were a useful device for commenting on various aspects of contemporary life, but the reason for their introduction and the essence of their utility was in their emphasis on the sovereign.

Cranmer, though abolishing the actual prayers, kept and emphasized that point, by putting the prayer for the King and the State (of which the church is merely a part) in place of the *Te Igitur* prayer for the Pope and the Church.<sup>28</sup>

So the "Prayer for the Church Militant," with its omission of any reference to the oblations, of Our Lady and the Saints, of the Pope and the world-wide Catholic Church and its inclusion of the Erastian head of State and Church, prepared the way for the consecration of the elements.

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<sup>27</sup> It was ordered that "pontifex *tacite* intrat in canonem," though *à voix basse* was not necessarily interpreted everywhere as "*d'une voix absolument imperceptible*": Jungmann, *op. cit* p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to notice that the recent inclusion of Bidding Prayers in the Mass can — at least in England — have the same effect. Thus the first petition may be a prayer for the Queen and the Royal Family which, by the place in the Mass, therefore take, in time, precedence of the Pope.

## VI

### (b) THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

**I**n the 1549 Book, Cranmer had prefaced the Words of Institution with: “Hear us, O merciful Father, we beseech thee; and with thy Holy Spirit and Word, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify 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.”

This formula was attacked on the grounds that it was capable of being construed as effecting transubstantiation. To this Cranmer replied indignantly: “We do not pray absolutely that the bread and wine may be made the body and blood of Christ, but that *unto us* in that holy mystery they may be made so; that is to say, that we may so worthily receive the same that we may be partakers of Christ’s body and blood, and that therefore in spirit and in truth we may be spiritually nourished.”<sup>29</sup>

Yet though this formula expressed with exactitude the Zwinglian meaning of the rite — that is, the continual mental “remembering” of Christ’s passion and death, which constitutes “eating the flesh and drinking the blood,” and the offering of *our* souls and bodies to Christ, which constitutes the only “sacrifice” — Cranmer decided in the Second Book to remove any possibility of misunderstanding.

But before proceeding to this, it is necessary to make a digression into the present.

It is, of course, quite true that the word “nobis” exists in the *Quam Oblationem* of the Roman Canon — “be pleased to make this same offering wholly blessed, to consecrate it and approve it, making it reasonable and acceptable, so that it may become for us the Body and Blood.” But here the sense is unequivocal, for the transubstantiation has been prepared for by the magnificent *Te Igitur, Memento Domine* and *Hanc Igitur* where the “holy, unblemished sacrificial

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<sup>29</sup> Cranmer, *Works*, ed. Jenkyns iii, 146, and Parker Society i. 79.

gifts” are described in terms proper to the coming change into the Body and Blood, of which we are the unworthy beneficiaries. It is Cranmer’s omission of these references to and elaborations on the oblations which justifies his defense of himself that his formula could not be confused with transubstantiation. It was merely “for us” in our minds, not objectively.

The alternative Canon, Anaphora II, now imposed on the Church, follows Cranmer with exactitude. For the consecration there is no preparation whatever. After the Benedictus, the celebrant merely says: “You are truly holy, Lord, the fount of all holiness” and then immediately prays that “these gifts may be made *for us* the Body and Blood.” In the Roman Canon it is impossible to understand “nobis” in the Cranmerian sense; in Anaphora II it is almost impossible to understand it any other way. What makes it worse is that the instruction of the Consilium was that this Canon, Anaphora II, should be the one in ordinary use and, further, be utilized for catechetical instruction of the young in the nature of the Eucharistic Prayer.<sup>30</sup>

But to return to Cranmer and his removal of any possible misinterpretation or ambiguity in the prayer. In the 1552 version, it ran: “Hear us, O merciful Father, we beseech Thee; and grant that we, receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine, according to Thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ’s holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood.”

By the omission of “with Thy Holy Spirit and Word to bless and sanctify 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

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<sup>30</sup> In the July of 1968, knowing that many who knew Cranmer’s work were seriously disturbed at the possibility of Anaphora II being phrased and used for the purpose of a spurious unity with Protestants — for it can clearly be used to deny transubstantiation — I wrote in the *Catholic Herald* an appeal to the English Hierarchy (who know the whole story of Cranmer as well as I do) to ask the Consilium, as evidence of good faith, to delete the *nobis*. Nothing happened and one was forced to remember that the English Reformation was brought about by the apostasy of all the English bishops except one — St. John Fisher.



Christ,” Cranmer destroys any implication that the gift of the Body and Blood is connected with the bread and wine and that “sanctify” betokens, in some sense, holiness.

The 1552 Prayer of Consecration begins “Almighty God, our heavenly father, which of thy tender mercy didst give thine only son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, 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 did institute and in his holy gospel command us to continue a perpetual memory of that his precious death until his coming again.”

Here Gregory Dix has drawn attention to “the unmistakable emphasis on ‘His one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,’ long ago — on Calvary — and its relegation of the Eucharist to a ‘perpetual *memory*’ — a cleverly chosen word — ‘of that His precious death until his coming again,’ where ‘again’ — not in St. Paul — emphasizes that as the Passion is in the past, so the ‘coming’ is in the future, not in the Eucharist.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Dix, *op. cit* p. 664.

## VII

### (c) THE PRAYER OF OBLATION

THE Prayer of Oblation which is said immediately after the Communion of the people runs: “O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving: most humbly beseeching thee to grant that by the merits and death of thy son, Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all thy whole church may obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of his passion. And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee that all we which be partakers of this holy Communion, may be fulfilled with thy grace and heavenly benediction. And although we be unworthy through our manifold sins to offer unto Thee any Sacrifice; yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom and with whom in the unity of the holy ghost, all honor and glory be unto thee, O father almighty, world without end. Amen.”

Here, it will be noticed, Cranmer puts beyond doubt his new interpretation of the rite and by the three-fold use of the word “Sacrifice” confuses the issue for the simple who listen to the vernacular and are therefore ready to assume that the new Mass has some kind of continuity with the old.

The Catholic concept was that Christ offers His perfect oblation of Himself to the Father and that the earthly church as his Body enters into the eternal priestly act by the Eucharist. Cranmer deliberately substitutes for this the idea that we offer to God “*ourselves*, our souls and bodies.”

Again the “by whom and with whom in the unity of the holy ghost, all honor and glory be unto thee, O father almighty, world without end. Amen” is intended to give the impression of, but to be totally

different from, the doxology — the greatest in liturgy — of the *Per Ipsum*: “Per ipsum et cum ipso et in ipso, est tibi, Deo Patri omnipotenti, in unitate Spiritus Sancti, omnia honor et gloria, per omnia saecula saeculorum.” Here, the five-fold sign of the Cross followed by the elevation of the Host and Chalice together in a gesture of offering (a remnant of the ancient ceremony in which the celebrant lifted up the consecrated Bread and the deacon the great two-handed Chalice and touched one with the other) was the outward and visible sign of the offering of the Acceptable Sacrifice to God. The actual elevation, coinciding with the words *omnis honor et gloria*, saw the symbolism of language and action fused into one and become a liturgical lesson in the meaning of the Mass.

Cranmer forbade the Crosses and the Elevation but kept an approximation to the words, which now meant something quite different, to give the illusion of continuity.

Thus the new rite was shaped to embody the belief in Justification by faith alone — a belief in which the sacraments, in the sense they had always been understood, could have no place.

## VIII

### THE QUESTION OF JUSTIFICATION AND THE TRIDENTINE MASS

It was the question of Justification which lay behind all the other matters with which the Council of Trent was called to deal — and it is too often forgotten that the Council was summoned to reconcile the differences between Catholic and Protestant but, after the most intensive debate lasting in all for eighteen years, recognized that those differences were unbridgeable. Between the Scriptural Catholic doctrine, based on James ii. 24, 26: “Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only? Faith without works is dead” and Luther’s doctrine of the sole necessity of faith there could be no compromise.

At Trent the definition was promulgated in 1547: “If any man shall say that the wicked man is justified by faith alone, meaning that no other thing is required to co-operate for obtaining the grace of justification, and that it is not necessary for him to be prepared and disposed by the movement of his will, let him be anathema.”

At the end of Trent, during which the Protestants everywhere made, like Cranmer, new rites embodying the heresy, “the great Catholic need had become that of unity and the closing of the ranks against the new negations. For this the old liturgy, in the same language everywhere, was too valuable an instrument to lose. The result was the reformed Roman Missal of Pius V, imposed on the whole Roman obedience by *an unprecedented legislative act of the central authority.*”<sup>32</sup>

This Tridentine Mass was enacted by St. Pius by his *Quo Primum* on July 19, 1570. He ruled that “by this our decree, to be valid in perpetuity, we determine and order that never shall anything be

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<sup>32</sup> Dix, *op. cit* 619. I have quoted this from an Anglican source, because it emphasizes the point, which is a commonplace to theologians and historians, that Trent has a unique status and is not, as too many casual readers assume, just another Ecumenical Council. The italics are mine.

added to, omitted from or changed in this Missal.” To bind posterity, he affirmed that “at no time in the future can a priest, whether secular or religious ever be forced to use any other way of saying Mass. And so as to preclude once for all any scruple of conscience and fear of ecclesiastical penalties and censures, we herewith declare that it is in virtue of our Apostolic Authority that we decree and determine that this our present order and decree is to last in perpetuity and can never be legally revoked or amended at a future date.”

As this was delivered three centuries before the definition of Infallibility, it is perhaps pointless to argue how far it is binding, though the “in virtue of our Apostolic Authority” suggests a reasonable rigidity. And certainly St. Pius’s own estimation of its importance can be gauged from his “and if anyone would nevertheless dare to attempt any action contrary to this Order of ours, given for all times, let him know that he has incurred the wrath of Almighty God and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.”

It is these prohibitions and censures of St. Pius which the present Pope has set aside in his Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* of April 3, 1969, decreeing the new forms of Mass: “We wish these our decrees and prescriptions may be firm and effective now and in the future notwithstanding, to the extent necessary, the apostolic constitutions and ordinances issued by our predecessors.”

The Tridentine Mass, forged as an everlasting weapon against heresy, is to be abandoned to a new form which is only too compatible with the heresies of Cranmer and his associates.

Some of us wonder why.

London.

The Feast of S.S. Peter and Paul 1969.

## SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

For the general history of the time R. W. Dixon's six-volume *History of the Church of England* from 1529 to 1570, especially vol. iv, is invaluable. More recently, Philip Hughes's three-volume *The Reformation in England*, especially vol. ii, should be read.

For Cranmer himself there is a wealth of material. The Parker Society has issued — I: *Writings and Disputations of Thomas Cranmer . . . relative to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* and II: *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer*. There is also Strype's *Memorials of Cranmer* and Jenkyns's *Remains of Thomas Cranmer*. These, with Gairdner's edition of *Bishop Cranmer's Recantacyons* provide a most complete index to Cranmer's theological mind. A modern exposition of Cranmer's intentions by an Anglican theologian is Gregory Dix's *The Shape of the Liturgy*.

A useful edition of Cranmer's two Prayer Books is the Everyman edition of *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI* with an introduction by Bishop Gibson.

In the footnotes I have shortened to Defence, Cranmer's *The Defence of the True Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament* (1550) and to *Reformatio* his new ecclesiastical code of 1553 *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*.

The rapid development of modern media, digital technologies and the Global Internet, the pervasive impact of the press, films, radio and television, the industrial-commercial type of production and distribution of standardized spiritual goods are decisive factors in the spread of mass culture. Active participants and creators of mass information flows are the media. Mass information is actualized in information flows due to its availability to the masses, form simplicity, convenient consumption and transparency.