

Signs of Grace

As Means of Grace, we have the teaching of the Word of God - on Faith and the Law; we have the privilege of Prayer, and we have those sacred and powerful actions called Sacraments, by which we are knit together in one Body in Christ and experience the mighty working of his good will in us.

Sacraments

Question. How many Sacraments hath Christ ordained in his Church?

Answer. Two only, as generally necessary to salvation; that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord.

Question. What meanest thou by this word Sacrament?

Answer. I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us; ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.

Question. How many parts are there in a Sacrament?

Answer. Two; the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace.

SIGNS OF GRACE

Where know we where grace comes from (God in Christ, by the Spirit). We know how we receive it (faith), and what its effects in us are (the good works of hope and charity, of service and generosity). But how precisely does God give it to us, and what are the means by which faith may receive it? What are the means of grace? We have already looked at one, which is Prayer. Another, is the Word of God – written in Scripture, preached in sermons, taught in Catechesis – by which faith is awakened and stirred up and instructed. But along with the Word of God, the Church and the Catechism give a special place to a the means of grace that are called Sacraments – mysterious but mighty ceremonies or actions, signs of the grace that God gives to us by them.

In its original form, the Catechism concluded with its explanation of the Lord's Prayer. Although it touched on some aspects of Baptism, there was no other treatment of the sacraments as a means of grace, perhaps to avoid the controversy that had raged over them, not only between Protestants and Roman Catholics, but also among Protestants themselves. But in the later 1500's a certain consensus had emerged among the reformed churches, including the Church of England; and in 1604, at the instigation of King James I, an appendix on the Sacraments was added, which is one of the cornerstones of Anglican doctrine on the subject.

The word "sacrament" is a Latin word meaning "oath" or "pledge". In the ancient church of the Latin speaking west, it was the term used to describe certain ceremonial actions of Christian worship, especially Baptism and the Eucharist. (In the Greek-

speaking east, the term used was "mystery", which is also used in the Prayer Book, p. 85). It was Saint Augustine who formulated the enduring definition of sacraments, as "visible signs of invisible grace", the Word of God made visible and tangible, as well as audible. As such, they are not mere symbols, but signs that effect what they signify. The Catechism follows Augustine and the medieval Latin west in its definition of a sacrament: "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given to us; ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof". In the Sacraments, the grace of Christ proclaimed audibly in the Word of God, is made visible and indeed tangible to men, in such a form as they are able to receive it. A modern Roman Catholic Thomist (Herbert McCabe) puts it this doctrine this way: 'in the Sacraments God shows us what he does, and does what he shows us'. They are indeed effectual signs, signs that effect what they signify.

EFFECTUAL SIGNS

Although there was ferocious disagreement between Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed about the *mode* of Christ's presence; from the 1540's onwards almost no Christian church denied the reality of *participation* in Christ by means of the sacraments - none, that is, except the radical, anabaptist, edge of the reformation whose present day heirs are found among many (though not all) North American evangelicals (especially Baptists). For such Christians, the sacraments (usually referred to as ordinances, because they were ordained by Christ) are *merely* symbolic, and what they symbolize is not the grace of God that is given in Christ but the faith and love of Christians (that is, the effects of grace). In contrast, the Catechism affirms that the ordinances of Christ are rightly called sacraments; that they are not only testimonies to man's faith and love (grace received) but more importantly efficacious signs of God's grace, with the preaching of the Word of God they are means ordained by Christ whereby grace is *given*. That sacraments effect grace, and are not merely testimonies to its effects, is implicit in the Scriptural witness to them. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3, 4). "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

UNION WITH CHRIST

The reformers made a stronger distinction of sign and grace than Roman Catholics did (about which more in a later chapter), but they also reduced them in number. In the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic church had settled on seven Sacraments ordained by Christ. In the plain reading of Scripture, however, the Reformers found explicit scriptural warrant for two, and it is this reformed note that is struck by the Catechism's insistence

on "two only, as generally necessary to salvation". There were other ceremonies "commonly called sacraments", for which there was some scriptural precedent - confirmation, visitation of the sick (which included particular confession and absolution), solemnization of matrimony, and ordination - but only Baptism and the Lord's Supper had the authority of Christ's own explicit institution, and their power lay in his promises. The others had value through the promises and prayers made by the Church. In this way they affirmed that the grace of God in the sacraments is nothing else than union with Jesus Christ.

Further Reading

- St. Matthew 26:26-30; St. Mark 14:22-25; St. Luke 22:19-20 - *the institution of the Lord's Supper*
- St. Matthew 28:18-20 - *the commandment to Baptize*
- St. Mark 16:15-17 - *the commission to Baptize*
- Acts 2:37-41 - *Peter urges the people to be Baptized.*
- Acts 8:26-39 - *Philip baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch*
- Articles XXV, XXVI, Prayer Book pp. 607-608 - *Of the Sacraments*

Questions for Review

- What is a sacrament?
- Who has ordained the sacraments?
- What are the two parts of a sacrament?
- What are the two sacraments ordained in scripture? How do these two differ from the other ceremonies "commonly called sacraments"?
- Are the sacraments merely symbolic?
- What is given through and received in the sacraments? Who is the giver?
- Find and read the scriptural references to these two sacraments.

Questions for Discussion

- Why is it important to us as human beings to have outward and visible signs of God's grace?
- What does it mean to say that we participate in Christ by means of the sacraments?
- How does Anglican doctrine on the sacraments differ from the teaching of Baptists on the one hand and Roman Catholics on the other?

Baptism

Question. What is the outward visible sign or form in Baptism?

Answer. Water; wherein the person is baptized, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Question. What is the inward and spiritual grace?

Answer. A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness: for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.

WATER AND THE HOLY GHOST

In accord with its definition of a Sacrament, the Catechism analyzes each in terms of an outward visible sign and an inward spiritual grace. In the case of the Baptism, the outward sign (a ceremony making use of material elements) is *Water; wherein the person is baptized, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

Water features prominently in the religion of the Old Testament, as an element by which God performs mighty acts of creation, judgment and new creation, redemption, and endowment (Genesis 1; 6-8; Exodus 14-15; Joshua 3); in washings and baths of ritual purification according to the Law; and (at least metaphorically) in God's promise of an inward purification of Israel proclaimed by the prophets (Ezekiel 36:25, 26). All of these, but perhaps most of all this aspiration to an inward purification by God, lie behind John's appearance at the Jordan, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord", preaching "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). Re-enacting the final stage of the Exodus, Israel's first entrance into the promised land, John's baptism looks for the definitive entrance into the promised inheritance of the Spirit. John knows the difference between his baptism and the Messiah's: "I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (1:8). It is in the Lord's baptism, not John's, that the promises of God are fulfilled. Nonetheless, it is in John's baptism that Jesus is manifested as the Spirit-anointed (i.e. Messianic) and Spirit-baptizing Son of God (Mark 1:9-11, John 1:33). So the baptism which Christ ordains is a sign of John's hope realized: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Yet the Spirit is not given until Jesus is glorified (John 7:39) and so it is only after the "baptism" of his own Death and Resurrection (Luke 12:50), the definitive revelation of his Sonship (Romans 1:4), that the Sacrament is instituted: "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the

world” (Matthew 28:19-20). It is this institution that supplies the Trinitarian formula of baptism (as well as grounds for the Creed of Nicea). Along with Christ’s ordinance there is a promise of grace: “He that believeth [the gospel] and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The word "baptism" refers to the action of immersing or dipping, and for centuries even babies were often baptized by immersion. The present practice of sprinkling or affusion was originally reserved for children who were sickly; but whether immersion or affusion the symbolism remains the same – we go “under the water”: for the washing of baptism, like the primeval Flood, symbolizes the most radical kind of cleansing there is: it is death by drowning of the "old man", the "old Adam" of our fallen nature. As the Catechism puts it, the inward grace of baptism is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness: for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace". Baptism is the sign of our union with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-11). With him, we go down into the dark flood of death, with him we rise to new life with God – we are “born again” “by the washing of regeneration”(Titus 3:5), no longer "children of wrath" but "children of grace" (Ephes. 2:1-13).

EVENT AND PROCESS

The grace of baptism is twofold: a once-for-all *event* and a continual *process*. The event it signifies is our deliverance from the *guilt* of sin: despite our sinfulness, we are accounted righteous before God, for Christ's sake, through repentance and faith. This deliverance, our justification, is perfect and complete. The process baptism signifies is our deliverance from the *power* of sin, our sanctification, which is never complete in this life. As the Edwardian Homily puts it, "the old Adam dies hard", and the Christian life is a long counter-insurgency against the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. That’s why the newly baptized person is signed with a cross, "in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil...". It is also why godparents were told: "[remember] always, that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that, as he died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from [or "unto"] sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continu-ally mortifying [i.e. putting to death] all our evil and corrupt affections and daily proceeding [i.e. "growing"] in all virtue and godliness of living." Though justified from all our sins, we remain sinners, and are released from our life-long struggle against sin only by the death of the body, and its resurrection. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2, 3). Contemporary

liturgists extol baptismal piety while deploring the Prayer Book's penitential emphasis - yet the baptized life *is* a penitential life - it is by death and resurrection that we are delivered from the guilt and power of sin unto righteousness and life.

Further Reading

- Genesis 1:1-5 - *Creation through Water and Spirit.*
- Genesis 5-8 - *Salvation through Water*
- Exodus 14 - *Salvation through Water*
- Numbers 19 - *Water for cleansing from ceremonial defilement.*
- Joshua 3:-4:end - *Passing through Jordan.*
- 2 Kings 5:1-14 - *Naaman cleansed in Jordan*
- Ezekiel 36:16-38 - *Inward defilement and divine cleansing.*
- Mark 1, Matthew 3, Luke 3 - *John preaches baptism of repentance.*
- John 3 - *Born of Water and the Spirit.*
- Romans 6 - *Baptized into Christ's death.*
- Article XXVII, Prayer Book p. 608 - *Of Baptism*
- Ministration of Holy Baptism, Prayer Book p. 273ff.

Questions for Review

- What is the outward and visible sign of baptism?
- In whose name is the Christian baptized?
- What is the inward and spiritual grace received in baptism?
- What does the water of baptism signify?
- What does it mean to be reborn or regenerated?
- What are we being saved from in baptism?
- When is the purification or sanctification process complete?

Questions for Discussion

- Read and discuss some Old Testament references to life and/or purification by water, and discuss what they have in common with baptism.
e.g. Genesis 1: The water of creation
Genesis 6-8: The Flood
Exodus 14-15: The Crossing of the Red Sea and liberation from slavery in Egypt
Joshua 3: The crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land
- What is the distinction between the one-time event of baptism and the process of purification? Why don't we have to re-baptized every time we sin?

- How ought we, as baptized Christians, to live “unto righteousness”? What does that look like? What can help us remember to live each day as a child of Christ? What aspects of the “old Adam” do we battle?

Infants baptized

Question. What is required of persons to be baptized?

Answer. Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and Faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament.

Question. Why then are Infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?

Answer. Because they promise them both by their Sureties; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform".

BAPTISM AND FAITH

Like the other churches of the Reformation, the Church of England insisted that the grace of the Sacraments operates through the faith of the receiver. Accordingly, the Catechism raises the question, "What is required of persons to be baptized?" and answers thus: "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and Faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament". Given the necessity of personal repentance and faith on the part of the receiver, therefore, it becomes a question "Why then are Infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?" For radical Protestants, infant baptism was no baptism at all. Protestants of the magisterial Reformation (Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican), however, staunchly maintained the ancient custom of infant baptism, without abandoning the requirement of personal repentance and faith. Though incapable of them at the time of baptism, infants are baptized "because they promise them both by their Sureties [i.e. godparents]; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform".

CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM

In defending infant baptism, the reformers appealed to the Old Testament precedent of circumcision, the sign of the blessings promised to Abraham, administered by divine command to male children eight days old (Genesis 17:12 cf. Luke 2:21). Not to circumcise one's son was in effect to break the covenant (17:14). The children of the chosen people of God enjoyed the blessings promised by the covenant, even before they were capable of personal faith. In his first preaching the gospel on the feast of Pentecost, when Peter told the crowd of Jewish pilgrims that "the promise is to you and your children" (Acts 2:39), and called them to Christian baptism, he applied the same principle to the people of the new covenant. Circumcision, the sign of the blessings *yet* to come, gives way to baptism, the New Testament sign that in Christ those promised blessings *have* come. Paul is reported to have baptized entire households (Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Cor. 1:16), some of which probably included little children.

In that context, it is significant that Scripture does *not* prohibit the baptism of infants. If believing Jews needed to be told that the promised blessings did not apply to their children, surely this would have been made explicit.

SUFFER THE CHILDREN

The Biblical touchstone for infant baptism is St. Mark 10:13-16 – the account of the children brought to Jesus, who rebuked those who would have stopped them, and said: "Suffer [i.e. Allow] the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God". Here is how it was explained in the older prayer books: "Beloved, ye hear in this Gospel the words of our Saviour Christ, that he commanded the children to be brought unto him; how he blamed those that would have kept them from him.... Ye perceive how that by his outward gesture and deed he declared his good will toward them; for he embraced them in his arms, he laid his hands upon them, and blessed them. Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will likewise favourably receive this present Infant; that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy: that he will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom."

If Christ receives infants brought to him, and blesses them, then we can hardly deny them the outward and visible sign of his good will, which is baptism. Anglicans practice infant baptism, "as most agreeable with the institution of Christ" (Article 27): "For the infants of Christians belong to God and to the Church no less than did formerly the offspring of the Hebrews to whom circumcision was administered in infancy. And so, baptism should be administered to our infants because they are sharers of the same promise and divine covenant and were received by Christ with the greatest kindness" (*Reformatio legum ecclesiasticorum* 1552¹).

CHRISTIAN FAMILY AND CHRISTIAN NURTURE

The Prayer Book retains the early medieval custom of Godparents acting as Sponsors in Baptism, and making the promises on behalf of the child, and in his name; and they were also charged with ensuring that he was taught the Faith. Important as the Christian family is, it is the spiritual family of the Church, as represented by the godparents, into which the child is born again by Baptism. Nonetheless, the duty of Christian nurture falls chiefly on parents, who are the first evangelists of the Church. St. Paul exhorts, "fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Perhaps he has in mind the education of children in the meaning of Passover (Exodus 12:26.27), or the saying of Proverbs 1:8-9: "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck". It is a great privilege of Christian parents to share the Faith by their word, their prayers, backed up by their example. Too many Christian

¹ *The Reformation of the Ecclesiastical Law of England, 1552*, ed. James C. Spalding, Vol XIX, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies (1992), p. 76.

parents are tongue-tied and fail to share this greatest of all gifts with their children. Learning how to do so must be a priority for them.

Further Reading

- Genesis 17 - *Circumcision commanded eight days after birth.*
- Mark 10:13-16 - *Suffer the little children to come unto me.*
- 1 Samuel 3:1-10 - *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.*
- Psalm 78:1-8 - *he commanded our forefathers to teach their children*
- Proverbs 4 - *Get Wisdom, Get Understanding: forget it not*
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17 - *From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures*
- Vows of Godparents on behalf of an infant, and Promises of Christian nurture, Prayer Book, pp. 276-277.

Questions for Review

- What two things are required of the person to be baptized?
- What is the effect of repentance?
- What is the effect of faith in baptism?
- What is the Old Testament precedent for infant baptism?
- Where in the New Testament does Jesus embrace and bless children? How can we understand this in relation to baptism?
- Does scripture anywhere forbid infant baptism?
- What is the role of godparents or sponsors?

Questions for Discussion

- How would you explain to a Baptist why Anglicans believe that infants should be baptized? What scriptural passages would you refer to?
- Discuss further how the practice of infant baptism does not necessarily negate the necessity of personal repentance and faith.
- Discuss the importance of parents' evangelizing and teaching their children the faith, and how they might do so most effectively.

The Lord's Supper

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.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SACRAMENT

What does it mean to belong to Christ? To answer that question, the Prayer Book Catechism begins with the Covenant to which we are admitted by Baptism, and within that covenantal structure of *belonging* to Christ it briefly and simply outlines the traditional three pillars of the catechesis - the Rule of *believing* (the Creed), the Rule of *behaving* (the Ten Commandments), and the Rule of *praying* (the Lord's Prayer). In an appendix on the Sacraments added in 1604, it revisits Baptism and addresses the Lord's Supper - what most Episcopalians now call the Holy Communion or Holy Eucharist. As we shall see, this provides a very fitting conclusion to the themes of the Covenant of Baptism which the Catechism has explored.

In its opening questions, the Catechism addressed the benefits, obligations, and the purpose of Baptism (as a "calling to the state of salvation"); and in the appendix it addressed its outward sign and inward grace. The same questions are asked of the Lord's Supper, but with a rather more explicit treatment of its purpose: "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". Its basis is undoubtedly biblical. Jesus told his disciples, "Do this in *remembrance* of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25), and at the center of this remembrance is his death: as St. Paul says, "as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's *death* till he come" (11:26). In his death, as the New Testament constantly reminds us, Christ offered himself in *sacrifice* for sin, to reconcile us to the Father (e.g. Heb. 9, 10; 1 John 2:2), an act of atonement whose *benefits*, the remission of sins, and eternal life, *we receive* by means of the Sacrament.

REMEMBERED NOT REPEATED

The prominence of the theme of "remembrance" or "memory" in the Catechism and Prayer Book doubtless owes much to the sixteenth century Reformers' struggle against the idea of the Eucharist as a repetition or re-enactment of the once-for-all sacrifice of the cross. To speak of the Sacrament as an act of remembrance of Christ's

death locates that redeeming sacrifice in the past, as a fully accomplished act. The final shape of man's relation to God has been attained by the cross, and there is no other grace available to mankind than this "once for all" sacrifice. It does not need to be done again: to speak of the Sacrament as a repetition of Calvary is to suggest that his triumph should be undone, that he should again fall into the hands of wicked men, to be scourged and mocked and crucified once more. Nor does it need to be built upon, improved, or supplemented by others or ourselves: it is "a full, perfect, and sufficient, sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction", in which we may put our unreserved trust. To remember it is to testify to its all-sufficiency.

Precisely as a "once for all" redemption, completed in the past, it is not locked in the past. It is not like D-Day, or Waterloo, an event whose power fades with every passing year, as ripples diminish as they spread from the point of impact. What he accomplished in the past is present in power to redeem all men from all sins, in all places and all times, "until he comes again", and made present to the faithful, by means of the Sacrament.

MEMORY AND TRADITION

Yet the theme of memory and remembrance goes back long before the 16th century Reformers, and may be seen in somewhat broader perspective, as Robert Crouse does in his Augustinian treatment of the subject of tradition and memory. First he defines tradition in its primary sense. It is not "the Church's creation", nor "absolutely the Church's possession: the Church is rather witness to, and the guardian of, a tradition divinely given, upon which the Church is totally dependent for any genuine spiritual authority it may possess, and by which the Church is judged".

The essential tradition is the descent and return of God's Word and Spirit, within which the Church lives, and the Church's life is a continual recollecting, a recalling, an *anamnesis*, of that tradition. The Church's traditions – tradition in the secondary sense – have spiritual authority insofar as they recollect and explicate, although imperfectly, that primary Tradition....

On that basis of Tradition as the divine-self giving recollected in the Church's life, draws a parallel between tradition and memory.

As memory is in personality, so is tradition in the Church's life. Tradition is the Church's memory. Without that recollection, the Church suffers crippling amnesia: its judgments become arbitrary and capricious; it becomes – strictly speaking – idiotic. All this is clearly illustrated in the Scriptures, both in the Old Testament and the New. Israel is faithful *when*, and *only when*, Israel remembers. "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee"

[Deuteronomy 15:15]. “Thou shalt remember”. The very heart of religious life under the Old Covenant consists in recollection: “Thou shalt remember”. Passover recalls Israel’s deliverance from bondage, and that commemoration of the past defines both Israel’s relation to God in the present, and Israel’s messianic expectation. And the New Israel also remembers, for we too celebrate a Passover, to remember, to commemorate God’s saving work in Jesus Christ, and to anticipate the fullness of his kingdom. Anamnesis is the technical term: the presence of the past in all its virtue, the historical past as present reality for present understanding and adoration.

EUCCHARISTIC MEMORIAL

Finally, Crouse illustrates the role of anamnesis in the New Testament, with a quotation from Archbishop Cranmer’s treatment of the theme in his writings on the Lord’s Supper:

The priest should declare the death and passion of Christ, and all the people should look upon the cross in the Mount of Calvary, and see Christ there hanging, and the blood flowing out of his side into their wounds to heal all their sores; and the priest and people all together should laud and thank instantly the surgeon and physician of their souls.²

Crouse concludes:

That anamnesis, that looking upon Calvary, that holy recollection, that tradition, must be the ground of our discernment in the present and our expectation of the future; for thus the Holy Spirit works to bring to remembrance all that Christ has taught us, to show us things to come, and thus to lead us into all truth³.

The Eucharist as memorial of the once-for-all sacrifice and as sign of Christ’s presence are drawn together in William Bright’s Communion hymn (#189):

And now, O Father, mindful of the love
That bought us, once for all, on Calvary’s tree,
And having with us him that pleads above,
We here present, we here spread forth to thee,
That only offering perfect in thine eyes,
The one true, pure, immortal sacrifice.

² *Writings and Disputations of Thomas Cranmer*, Parker Society, Vol. 1, p. 359

³ From Robert Crouse, “Tradition and Renewal” pp. 90-98 in *Tradition: Received and Handed On*, St. Peter Publications, Charlottetown PEI (1994). Used by permission of The Elliott House of Studies, Savannah, Georgia.

Look, Father, look on his anointed face,
And only look on us as found in him;
Look not on our misusings of thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim;
For lo! between our sins and their reward,
We set the passion of thy Son our Lord.

Further Reading

- Deuteronomy 6-8 - thou shalt remember
- Hebrews 9-10 - once for all
- Article XXXI, Prayer book p. 609, *Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross*

Questions for Review

- What is a sacrament?
- What is meant by the Lord's Supper? What are other names for the Lord's Supper? Why is it called the Lord's Supper?
- What is being called to remembrance in the Lord's Supper?
- Where does the New Testament call us to remember Christ's sacrificial death? Read through each of those passages.
- Why is Christ's death important to us over 2000 year later?

Questions for Discussion

- Why do we call the Lord's Supper a remembrance and not a re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice? Discuss the importance of this distinction and why it mattered so much to Cranmer and other Reformers.
- What does it mean to say that Christ's sacrifice once offered on the cross is:
 - "full"?
 - "perfect"?
 - "sufficient"?
- Think about the relation between memory and identity.
 - Imagine yourself with total amnesia. In what sense are you still yourself if you have no memory of your past – if you do not know your name, your family, your home, your past experiences or thoughts or ideas?
 - Discuss how shared memory defines and unites a community – a family, a village or town, a country, a fraternal organization, an institution, a class, and so on.
 - Then think about the Church and the relation between tradition and memory. Why is faith tied to memory? What must we remember to be God's people? Who calls us to remember? What happens if we forget?

- Why is the remembrance of Christ's death the Tradition upon which the other traditions of the Church depend?

Body and Blood

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 spiritually 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.

PRESENT BUT HOW?

No Christian thinking clearly doubts that Christ is present in the Eucharist. Is he is not present and active in it, what is the point? Mere words and symbols cannot save us, but only communion with Christ himself. As Flannery O'Connor said to someone who was gushing about the "rich symbolism" of the Mass, "if it's only a symbol, then I say to hell with it!" But the Scripture affirms a real partaking in his Body and Blood by means of the Sacrament: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16).

The question that has divided Christians, is *how* he is present. The official Roman answer to this question, the doctrine of transubstantiation, says that the *substance* of bread and wine is changed by the power of God into the *substance* of Christ's body and blood. After the consecration, all that remains of the bread and wine are their outward characteristics (the 'accidents').

If the word "substance" is taken to mean, "matter", the stuff something is made of (as it often is by many though not all interpreters), then one adopts a materialistic understanding of Christ's presence. This view the 16th century English Reformers vigorously repudiated, affirming instead a "true and spiritual" presence of Christ in the Eucharist. "Characteristic of [their teaching] is the insistence that the natural element, the outward and visible sign, retains always its natural integrity, while it becomes the instrument of a supernatural presence; thus exemplifying the basic Augustinian and Thomistic theological principle, that grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it" (R.

Crouse). The outward sign is, as the Catechism says, “Bread and Wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received”⁴. To abolish their substance abolishes the outward sign, so that there is no Sacrament. The inward grace is “the Body and Blood of Christ, which are *spiritually* taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper”. If Christ were materially present in the Sacrament, then he must suffer still at the hands of wicked men; but the ascended Lord gives himself by the Spirit to faith alone, not to unbelief.

CREATION AND INCARNATION

Though it is sometimes alleged that the Prayer Book is deficient in the doctrine of Creation, Morning Prayer devotes no less than three canticles to the praise of God as Creator; and though the Lord's Supper is indeed narrowly focused on the Cross, yet precisely in that context, the Prayer Book's reference to “these *thy gifts and creatures* of bread and wine” is telling. It is as gifts and creatures, in the integrity of their nature, that they are made effectual signs and instruments of Christ's presence. The same idea underlies the Catechism's account of the benefits of the Lord's Supper: “The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the Bread and Wine.” This language echoes Scripture's thanks to the Creator for the bread that strengthens the hungry and the wine that refreshes the thirsty (Psalm 104:15, Ps. 78:66). Their natural efficacy as creatures is the key to understanding the spiritual efficacy that is added to them by the Word and Spirit of the Creator. This supernatural efficacy is set forth in saying of Jesus: “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35); and, more shockingly, “For my flesh is meat [i.e. food] indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” (6:55). The Eucharist is not a church supper - it is the feast that follows sacrifice, in which we share in its benefits.

The Catechism's teaching about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is based on an analogy with the doctrine of the Incarnation. As Christ is truly both God and Man, in unity of person and distinction of nature, so the true presence of the body and blood of Christ does not abolish the true presence of bread and wine. In the sacrament the *substance* of Christ's body and blood is mystically conjoined to the *substance* of bread and wine. A *sacramental* conversion does take place, as by the Word and Spirit the natural elements acquire a supernatural efficacy: by them the faithful are made partakers of the body and blood of Christ and receive with them “remission of sin and all other benefits of his passion”. But, as Richard Hooker says, the true transubstantiation is the one that the Sacrament effects not in the elements but “*in us*”, “a true change both of soul

⁴ R. D. Crouse,

and body, an alteration from death to life”⁵; “a real transmutation of our souls and bodies from sin to righteousness, from death and corruption to immortality and life”⁶.

For Further Reading

- John 6:22-71 - *Christ speaks of his body and blood, the inward grace of the Sacrament.*
- Articles XXVIII-XXX, Prayer Book pp 608-609 - *Of the Lord's Supper*

Questions for Review

- What is a sacrament?
- What are other names that we commonly give to the Lord's Supper?
- What are the outward signs of the Lord's Supper?
- Why are bread and wine the outward signs of the Lord's Supper?
- What is the inward part of the Lord's Supper?
- How are the Body and Blood received?
- What are the benefits of the Lord's Supper?

Questions for Discussion

- Read the Prayer of Consecration to begin a discussion of the Anglican doctrine of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Here are some questions to facilitate discussion.
 - Is the presence of Christ a merely symbolic presence?
 - What is the difference between a sign and a symbol?
 - Do the bread and wine cease to be bread and wine once they are consecrated?
 - Compare this to the Incarnation. What is the significance of maintaining the integrity of both natural and supernatural elements, as we do both human and divine natures in Christ?
- Discuss the elements of bread and wine.
 - What is the natural efficacy of bread and wine?
 - What is the spiritual efficacy of the Body and the Blood?
 - Why do you suppose God chose bread and wine (rather than, say, mushrooms and water)?
 - Could we substitute grape juice and cookies?
 - Consider the implications of a sacrament that is ingested. Again, is this merely symbolic?

⁵ Richard Hooker *Laws* V.lxvii.11, Keble Vol. 2, p. 358.

⁶ Richard Hooker, *Laws*, V.lxvii.7, Keble Vol. 2 p. 355.

- Look carefully at the answer to the question, *What is the inward part, or thing signified?* What does it mean that the Body and Blood are *spiritually* taken and received? What does it mean that they are spiritually taken and received *by the faithful*?

Examine yourselves

Question. What is required of those 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.

RECEPTIVITY

The form of delivery of the Sacrament in the historic Prayer Book speaks of its benefits to the whole nature: “The Body” and “the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life”. The benefits to the soul are immediate, in the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit; the benefits to the body are not realized until the resurrection, and then only in the body conjoined to the soul that has received Christ. Precisely because it is the *soul* that receives Christ, we do not “automatically” receive Christ the same way our bodies digest food and drink. The mind and the will must be engaged, and attuned to receive the gift that is being given. To receive the outward sign while despising the inward grace, is to invite judgment.

The mind and will must be *receptive*, and for this we prepare ourselves by (habitual and ongoing) self-examination. In his first Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul has occasion to rebuke the Christians of Corinth for their misuse of the Sacrament, and chiefly in displays of factiousness and greed ⁷. Because the Eucharist is the *Lord's* Supper, not our own, instituted by him on the same night he was betrayed, as a memorial of his death and sacrifice, “as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come” (11:26). “Wherefore”, he concludes, “whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”. No one is “worthy” of receiving the Sacrament (That's why we pray, “we do not presume to come to this thy table, trusting in our own righteousness”); but we are required to receive the sacrament “worthily”, that is, in a fashion or manner worthy of it. Those who receive it must receive for the purposes for which Christ intended it, and in his Spirit.

JUDGE YOURSELVES

His remedy against unworthy and dangerous reception? “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and

⁷ 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (11:27-29). And, he adds, "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (11:31). In self-examination, we "judge ourselves" that we be not judged and condemned, by the Lord: we put ourselves on trial, and put ourselves under scrutiny. We must remember Christ's sacrifice, in true faith; we must discern the Lord's Body, the body of believers, with loving charity; and where we have failed in faith and charity, and refused or misused his grace, we must repent.

REPENTANCE - THREE WAYS

These are the three heads of examination set forth in the Prayer Book Catechism. First, "whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life". As Austin Farrer puts it⁸, "it is hard to prepare for Communion, because it is hard to face the truth. But it is not at all complicated or puzzling. You have merely to accept what you know God demands of you, and to renounce what you know he forbids you, and to be sorry." There must be a genuine forsaking of sins, and a genuine intention to "lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways".

As we sin in thought, word, and deed, so our repentance must be thought, word, and deed. We repent in word, when we confess and "acknowledge ... our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us". We repent in thought by true contrition, or sorrow for sin, when we not acknowledge but also "bewail" our sins: "We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable". (Intolerable means "unbearable", and it is an allusion to Psalm 38:4, "my wickednesses are gone over my head, and are like a sore burden, *too heavy for me to bear*"). The burden we cannot bear, Christ bears for us, 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world'). Third, we repent in deed, when we make "satisfaction" – restitution or recompence - for the damage our sins have done.

And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbours; then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them; being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other; and being likewise ready to forgive others who have offended you, as ye would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand: for otherwise the receiving of the holy Communion doth nothing else but increase your condemnation. Therefore, if any of you be a blasphemers of God, an hinderer or slanderer of his Word, an adulterer, or be in malice, or envy, or in any

⁸ Austin Farrer, "Fish Out of Water", in *Said or Sung* (1960), pp. 123-124.

other grievous crime; repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy Table. (Prayer Book, p. 87).

A true conversion of heart and life is to be sought.

FAITH

The second point of examination is “whether they have a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death”. If repentance is facing the truth about ourselves before God, and acknowledging our need of his mercy, faith is facing the truth about God toward ourselves, in the terms set forth so powerfully in the Prayer of Consecration:

ALL glory be to thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that thou, 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....

The truth we must believe is the revelation of his mercy at work at the cross to rescue us from sin and self-righteousness, and to reconcile us to himself. In this faith the believer leaves behind all feeble efforts at self-justification to rely and rest only upon the rock of Christ and his redemption. We find in him a stability, a security, that we cannot find in ourselves, a sure foundation for a life lived under God's blessing.

CHARITY

Third, since by “lively” faith is meant "faith working by love" (what St. James means when he says that “faith without works is dead”); it is no surprise that the third point on which communicants are to examine themselves is “whether they are in charity with all men”. To harbor ill-will, to refuse to forgive or to be forgiven, to harden the heart against need, these are the chief practical failures of charity. Though the following rubric is now a dead letter so far as church discipline, the principle remains:

The same order [of church discipline] shall the Minister use with those, betwixt whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign; not suffering them to be partakers of the Lord’s Table, until he know them to be reconciled. And if one of the parties, so at variance, be content to forgive from the bottom of his heart all that the other hath trespassed against him, and to make amends for that wherein he himself hath offended; and the other party will not be persuaded to a godly unity, but remain still in his forwardness and malice; the Minister in that case ought to admit the penitent person to the Holy Communion, and not him that is obstinate. (Prayer Book, p. 85)

We are to come to the Lord's Supper as one Body in him (cf. Ephesians 4:1-4).

The required points of this preparation are those which structure the Prayer Book Order of Holy Communion: repentance, faith, and charity; so if we are participating attentively in the service – and a Sermon of the right sort is a big help in this process - we are indeed being prepared. By a neat symmetry, they also correspond to the three promises of Baptism. Thus the Eucharist is the culmination of the process that begins in Baptism and progresses in Catechism and Confirmation, by which we are initiated into Christ, that we may possess him as he possesses us. "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

Further Reading

- 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 - *How to receive the Lord's Supper*
- Article XXIX, Prayer Book p. 609 - *Of the Wicked, which eat not the Body of Christ*
- Prayer of Humble Access, Prayer Book p. 82

Questions for Review

- What are the benefits we receive in the Holy Communion?
- Why is self-examination necessary in preparation for receiving Holy Communion?
- What are the three aspects of self-examination?
- Why must we repent? How does this relate to living a "new life"?
- Of what do we repent? How do we sin in thought? in word? in deed?
- What are the three aspects of repentance, and how do they relate to "thought, word, and deed"?
- What must we believe about God's mercy?
- How does this relate to remembrance?
- What are some of the particular ways that we regularly fail in charity?
- What can we do to seek reconciliation with others?

Questions for Discussion

- Discuss what St. Paul means by receiving the body and blood "unworthily" (1 Cor. 11). How is this different from saying "we are not worthy"? (Prayer of Humble Access, p. 82).
- What is the soul? What are the functions of the mind and will? How does our human wholeness require that our whole souls – mind, will and heart – be actively involved in our transformation? How can we be thoughtfully and consciously careful about the good of our souls, so that we come to the Lord's Supper in a fashion worthy of it?
- Discuss the implications of what it means to be "one Body", and to be "in love and charity with your neighbor"?

Catechism and Confirmation

CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Baptism is the first and decisive step in the initiation of Christians. It is the sacrament by which we are made members of Christ and his Church and are counted the children of God and heirs of everlasting life. In it, moreover, we are pledged to renounce allegiance to the world, the flesh, and the devil (the three foes of God and man), to believe and profess the Christian Faith, and to keep God's holy Will and Commandments. Yet in the developed tradition of the western Church, the Confirmation of the Baptized normally follows, and this usually at years of the age at which one is capable of rational discernment, and after thorough instruction in the Church's catechism. Moreover, admission to Communion is normally reserved to those who have been confirmed or are "ready and desirous to be confirmed". This is the step-by-step pattern of Christian initiation retained in the historic Prayer Books, although in recent decades there has been variation from the historic norm.

CONFIRMATION - TWO WAYS

This Confirmation has two elements, to confirm and to be confirmed. There is first a solemn renewal of baptismal vows, which the candidates "ratify and confirm". The second takes place through the bishop's laying on of hands with prayer for the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit, by which they are "confirmed", "strengthened", and "defended" for the Christian life. The first of these answers the need for a self-conscious faith promised and required for the baptized (Mark 16:16) – especially when they received baptism as infants. The second answers the need for strength, defense, and increase of grace as the baptized grow to spiritual maturity. As the 16th century Prayer Books explained, in terms that go back to late antiquity and to Scripture itself, "forasmuch as confirmation is administered to them that be baptized, that ... they may receive strength and defense against all temptations to sin, and the assaults of the world, and the devil: it is most meet to be administered when children come to that age, that partly by the frailty of their own flesh, partly by the assaults of the world and the devil, they begin to be in danger to fall into sin".

ARMED FOR THE BATTLE.

Not just for adolescents, but for adults too, the Christian life is an embattled life. In our baptism we are enrolled as soldiers of Christ, "manfully to fight under his banner

against sin, the world, and the devil"; in confirmation we are armed with the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit - "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly [i.e. spiritual] strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and ... the spirit of thy holy fear" (Prayer Book p. 297). "Satan will assault us" writes Dean Comber, "the world will allure us, and the flesh will entice us to break this vow [of Baptism], but the holy man prays we may ever be defended by the Spirit of grace, so that we may never fall [away]". If in Baptism we begin the Christian life, it is in Confirmation that we are armed for spiritual strife, that we may come to maturity in Christ.

Some Christians today have advocated paedocommunion as well as paedobaptism - admission of all the baptized to communion from infancy onwards; and unsurprisingly, they have little use for confirmation; and catechizing (if any) is isolated from the process of Christian initiation. What is being lost to sight here is the organic way that the pattern of initiation developed in the western Church (both Catholic and Protestant) and how it honours both the objective side of grace and the subjective side of faith and good works. The central role of Catechism and Confirmation after Baptism and before Holy Communion gives expression to the importance of an instructed and personal faith in our initiation into Christ.

Further Reading

- Isaiah 11:1-5 - *The sevenfold gift of the Spirit of Christ.*
- Ephesians 4:11-16 - *No more children, we may grow up into him in all things*
- Ephesians 6:10-end - *Put on the whole armour of God*
- The Order of Confirmation, Prayer Book p. 296ff

Questions for Review

- What happens in Baptism?
- What is the difference between Baptism and Confirmation?
- What is the connection between Baptism and Confirmation?
- When does Confirmation traditionally occur in the western church?
- How is Confirmation a preparation for the reception of communion?
- What are the two elements in Confirmation?
- What is required of the one being confirmed? Why is this necessary?
- What is conferred in the laying on of hands by a Bishop in Confirmation? Why is this performed by a Bishop?

Questions for Discussion

- Why is instruction in doctrine an important aspect of our Christian life?

- There is not one single process of Christian initiation in the church now or through the history of the church. Discuss the reasons for and strengths of the Anglican pattern of infant Baptism, followed by Confirmation and then Communion. It is helpful to think of this in terms of the relation and balance between the objectivity of divine grace and subjective response of the Christian to that grace.