

THE REAL PRESENCE

Church Association Tract 025

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I. It is of the utmost importance that we rightly understand the meaning of the expression “the Real Presence;” as otherwise we may be contending against what is not maintained, or rejecting what ought to be embraced most firmly.

II. The Church of England nowhere uses the phrase, “The Real Presence” in reference to the Lord’s Supper. It was an expression equivalent in the minds of the Reformers to the Popish doctrine of Transubstantiation. Thus Cranmer speaks of “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.”

Still, a real presence of CHRIST not only may be, but must be maintained by every true Christian; a real presence, that is of “CHRIST and his Holy Spirit by their mighty and sanctifying power, virtue, and grace, *not in or under the form of bread and wine, but in all them that worthily receive the same.*” Nor is this real presence confined to the right use of the Lord’s Supper. It is also to be maintained in the right use of all the ordinances of CHRIST’S Church, and all the means of grace whether public or private.

III. The Ritualists, however, use the expression, if not exactly in the Popish sense as equivalent to transubstantiation yet to express substantially the same doctrine; and to deny this is a mere juggle of words without meaning. Their doctrine is this:

“That by virtue of consecration the Body and Blood of our Saviour, CHRIST, are present really and truly, but spiritually and ineffably *under the form of bread and wine.*” “This presence is conferred by the word of CHRIST, as spoken by the priest, through the operation of the HOLY GHOST, *irrespective of faith and of any personal qualification,* either in the consecrator or receiver.” (Declaration of twenty-one priests : and Mackonochie’s pastoral.)

This language is plain. It matters not whether it be called transubstantiation or consubstantiation; superlocal or supralocal; ineffable, transcendental, mysterious or spiritual. The meaning is plain, viz., that the real Body and Blood of CHRIST are really and truly present *on the table, under the form of bread and wine.*

IV. It is not necessary at present to point out that if this be so, the Adoration of the Host, and the Sacrifice of the Mass are but legitimate consequences of the doctrine; but the object of this paper is to prove that the doctrine of the Real Presence, as thus defined, is contrary to the Church of England.

1. In the Prayer of Consecration, we ask GOD to grant that “*we receiving these his creatures of bread and wine,* according to our Saviour JESUS CHRIST’S holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, *may be* partakers of his most blessed body and blood.”

This petition would be wholly needless if CHRIST were really present under the form of bread and wine; for in that case he that received the one must also receive the other. The petition therefore would be, not that we may be partakers, but that we may be *worthy* partakers.

2. In the second post communion prayer, we thank GOD for that he does “vouchsafe to feed us, *who have duly received* these holy mysteries (*i.e.* sacred emblems) with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of our Saviour, CHRIST.”

Here the reception of the Body and Blood is confined to those who “*duly receive.*” Not so, however, if the Real Presence be under the form of bread and wine, irrespective of any personal qualification on the part of the receiver.

3. In the declaration, at the end of the Communion Service, we are told that “no adoration ought to be done unto *any Corporal Presence* of CHRIST’S natural Flesh and Blood. For the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour, CHRIST, *are in Heaven, and not here;*” it being against the truth of CHRIST’S natural Body to be at one time in more places than one.

Note here—*any Corporal Presence* is denied by the Church. The word corporal means bodily, and can mean nothing else. So that the Church rejects any bodily presence of CHRIST: no matter what words are used to mystify plain people, such as supra-local, ineffable, and mysterious; to all such we reply, *the Church rejects any bodily presence whatever.*

The Ritualists try to evade the force of this by saying, that, whilst the natural Body of CHRIST is in heaven, the spiritual Body is on the table. What ridiculous absurdity, and heretical withal. Has CHRIST two bodies, a natural and a spiritual: one in heaven and the other on earth? It would be an insult to the understanding of a child to attempt to refute that, which carries its own refutation with it; just as much to assert that one and one make three.

4. In the Communion of the Sick we are told that “if the sick man do truly repent him of his sins, and steadfastly believe in the Blood of CHRIST shed for his redemption, *he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ* profitably to his soul’s health, *although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth.*”

Here we have Real Presence in the soul of the penitent believer *independent* of the Sacrament altogether.

The Catechism teaches us “that the Body and Blood of CHRIST are verily and indeed taken and received by *the faithful* in the LORD’S Supper.” This limitation of the reception to the personal qualification of the receiver, the faithful, is fatal to the idea of a real presence independent of faith. The faithful, and the faithful only, *i.e.* those, who are indeed believers in CHRIST, find a real presence; a real presence of CHRIST within their hearts, not in the elements.

6. The 28th Article declares that “the Body of CHRIST is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper *only after an heavenly and spiritual* manner. And the *mean* whereby the Body of CHRIST is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.”

This would not be true if the Body is eaten by the mouth; for this is not spiritual, but natural and carnal. Nor is it true, that *the Mean*—the *one, only*, mean of reception is Faith, if we receive it also in the hand. The doctrine of the 28th Article is therefore against the notion of the Ritualistic Real Presence, and agrees with the beautiful expression of Hooker, that “*Faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ* to justification, and *Christ the only garment* which being so put on covereth the shame of our defiled natures.”

7. The 29th Article is “of the wicked who *eat not* the Body of CHRIST in the Lord’s Supper.”

This one Article is conclusive, if even it stood alone; for it declares that “the wicked, and such as be void of a living faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the Sacrament of

the Body and Blood of CHRIST, *yet in no wise are partakers of Christ*, but rather to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing.”

Note here—those, that are destitute of a living faith, are *in no wise* partakers of CHRIST, although they do eat and drink the outward sign or Sacrament. This would not be true if there were a Real Presence irrespective of faith; for then they would *in some wise*, even if to their condemnation, receive CHRIST. But now they “in no wise” receive the Body, but only the sign of the Body.

Observe, too, the contrast between the statements in the Catechism and in this place.

The *faithful* receive the Body and Blood of CHRIST verily and indeed in the Lord’s Supper; yea, whether they receive the Lord’s Supper or not. (*Vide* Communion of Sick.)

The *faithless* are in no wise partakers of CHRIST, whether they eat the Sacrament or no. (*Art.* xxix.)

It is evident, therefore, that the doctrine of the Church is in perfect accordance with that of Holy Scripture on this subject. CHRIST is the bread of life. He that cometh to me, saith the Saviour, shall hunger; he that believeth on me shall never thirst. Therefore, to come is to eat; to believe is to drink. Again: “he that *believeth* on me hath everlasting life; and whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life.” The same result—everlasting life—is connected with believing on CHRIST, or eating his flesh and drinking his blood. These expressions then are equivalent—mean the same spiritual action; unless indeed we maintain, that we can have eternal life by eating without believing, or by believing without eating.

V. The Ritualistic Real Presence is contrary to the views of the Reformers.

Cranmer says—

“They say that CHRIST is corporally under or in the form of bread and wine, we say that CHRIST is not there, *neither corporally nor spiritually*; but in them that worthily eat and drink the bread and wine he is spiritually, and corporally in heaven. (P.S. p. 5.)

Hooker says—

“The Real Presence of CHRIST’S most blessed Body and Blood is not *therefore to be sought for in the Sacrament, but in the worthy receiver* of the Sacrament.” (Vol. ii. p. 5.)

Jeremy Taylor—

“CHRIST is present in the Sacrament to our spirits only, *i.e. not present to any other sense* but that of faith. CHRIST is present as the Spirit of GOD is present in the hearts of the faithful by blessing and grace.” (p. 522.)

Where, now, is the difference? Here by ‘spiritually,’ they mean present after the manner of a spirit; by ‘spiritually,’ we mean present to our spirits only; that is, so as Christ is not present to any other sense but that of faith, a spiritual susception.” (Real Presence, p. 15.)

Again—

“But we by the real spiritual presence of Christ do understand Christ to be present, as the Spirit of God is present in the hearts of the faithful by blessing and grace.” (Ibid.)

Lastly—to quote the Judgment of the Privy Council in the Bennett case, delivered June 8th, 1872—we read,

“Any other presence than this—ANY PRESENCE WHICH IS NOT A PRESENCE TO THE SOUL OF THE FAITHFUL RECEIVER—*the Church does not by her Articles and Formularies affirm*, or require her ministers to accept. This cannot be stated too plainly.”

Protestant Churchmen, enough has now been written, not merely to assert, but to prove that the doctrine of the Real Presence as taught by the Ritualists of our day, is unscriptural, anti-Reformational, and expressly condemned by the formularies of the Church.

Wherever this doctrine is held, it is accompanied by the blasphemous Sacrifice of the Mass and the idolatrous worship of the Host. Already, this is the case in countless churches throughout the land. If the plague be not arrested and eliminated from the National Church, it must lose its hold on public opinion and fall. Let us make an effort to prevent such a catastrophe.