

# The Lord's Supper in the Prayer Books of 1604 and 1662

by W.H. Griffith Thomas

---

*The doctrine of the Church of England on the Lord's Supper was first properly formulated in 1549 and remains enshrined in our Prayer Book to this day, with no substantial or essential change in the doctrine of 1552.*

**Scripture:** John 6:53, 1 Corinthians 10:16, 1 Corinthians 11:24

**Topics:** "Eucharist Theology", "Church History"

---

## Description

W.H. Griffith Thomas delves into the historical context and doctrinal changes in the Church of England regarding the Lord's Supper, emphasizing the continuity of anti-Roman and 'Reformed' type teachings from 1549 to the present day. Despite revisions in 1552, 1562, 1604, and 1662, the core doctrine remained unchanged, focusing on the spiritual Presence of Christ in the Eucharist for the faithful. The revisions aimed to oppose Puritan innovations while maintaining doctrinal consistency with the Articles of 1563 and 1571.

---

## Transcript

The next stage in the Church of England doctrine on the Lord's Supper is the addition to the Catechism of the section on the Sacraments. It was added after the Hampton Court Conference of 1604. Nowell's Catechism never received legal sanction, and the need of a fuller Catechism than that of 1552 was keenly felt. The necessity for considering the true interpretation of this addition may be seen from the following statement. Dr. Gibson, [Dr. Gibson, On the Articles, Vol. II., p. 646 f.] speaking of the Elizabethan revision, writes: "The formularies ... were now (at the lowest estimate) patient of a Catholic interpretation. ...

Moreover they have since been supplemented by the clear teaching of the Church Catechism (1604)." We have already seen reason for believing that the doctrine of the Articles was really unchanged, and that the formularies were not even "patient of a Lutheran interpretation," to say nothing of what Dr. Gibson calls "a Catholic interpretation". Are we to suppose the Catechism then introduced some new form of doctrine on the Holy Communion? The particular part associated with this view is the answer to the question, "What is the inward part, or thing signified."

"The body and blood of Christ which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." The following historical facts should be considered in coming to a decision whether we have here any change from the former doctrinal standpoint. 1. Archbishop Whitgift and Bishop Gilson were present

at the Hampton Court Conference. They both held "Reformed" doctrine, and were against the Lutheran view. [Dimock, ut supra, p. 307.] 2. The additions were made at the request of the Puritans. 3.

Neither then nor in 1662 was the slightest objection raised to them by the Puritans, and this in spite of their microscopic examination of the Prayer Book. 4. The words contain nothing that is opposed to "Reformed" doctrine, and can be matched by quotations from Calvin and English Puritan divines, and also from the Westminster Confession. 5. The emphasis on "the faithful" shows the entire agreement with Articles XXVIII and XXIX and the whole Reformation position. 6. The very answers now used to prove "Catholic doctrine" are found in a longer form in Nowell's Catechism, which was definitely of the "Reformed" type.

Bishop Jacobson says that "the additions made at the Hampton Court Conference were evidently abridged from it." [Preface to Nowell's Catechism, pp. 35-36.] It is difficult to understand what other suitable language could be used to express the definite spiritual Presence and blessing of the "Reformed" as distinct from the Lutheran view. "This answer in the Catechism makes no declaration whatever about the body and blood of Christ being verily and indeed contained or present under the forms of bread and wine at all, i.e., in the elements apart from reception.

It does declare that the body and blood are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper; it affirms a real and true, i.e., not imaginary or fictitious, reception, but only by the faithful. It is in exact accordance with the Twenty-eighth Article, that 'to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the Sacrament, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ, and the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.' "It has been abundantly shown by Dean Goode, in his work on the Eucharist, that all the accredited expositions of the Catechism interpret this answer as an assertion that the body and blood of Christ are received in this Sacrament by the faithful only, meaning by 'the faithful,' communicants who with a true penitent heart and lively faith receive the Holy Sacrament." [Dr.

Ince, Letter on the Real Presence, p. 24 f.] The last stage of the Prayer Book revision was that of 1662. Omitting for a moment the consideration of one point about which much has been written, it may be said without doubt that the changes made in the Prayer Book (the Articles were untouched) with reference to the Lord's Supper were doctrinally slight and insignificant, except so far as they agreed generally with the character of the Elizabethan revision in opposing Puritan innovations.

Most assuredly no new doctrine was introduced, and even though there are indications that some at that time desired certain changes, there is no clear proof that they wished to introduce Lutheran, still less Roman, doctrine. It follows, therefore, that the Prayer Book of 1662 was doctrinally in agreement with the Prayer Book of 1552 and 1562 and with the Articles of 1563 and 1571. And as there has been no revision since 1662 the position remains unchanged to this day. But there is the one point alluded to above, the reinsertion, with a verbal change, of the Black Rubric.

The words "real and essential" were changed to "corporal" in speaking of the avoidance of adoration of Christ's flesh and blood. The question is whether this change of phraseology was intended to express any change in the doctrine of one hundred years in the Church of England. We hold that not only was no such change intended, but that the alteration in the wording of the Rubric was both wise and necessary for the sake of truth. There had come to be a change in theological terminology in the course of the century.

In the 16th century "real and essential" was applied to the Roman doctrine of the corporal Presence (see Article XXXI of 1552). But in the century preceding 1662 the term "Real Presence" was used among Protestants to signify the very doctrine which the Reformers believed. There was, therefore, a distinction

between the real Presence which they accepted and the corporal Presence which they rejected. One proof of this is found in the title of Bishop Jeremy Taylor's *Treatise on The Real Presence* published in 1654, or eight years before the revision of 1662.

The doctrine of this work is clearly that of the spiritual Presence and not the local presence in the elements. Mr. Dimock [Dimock, *Vox Liturgiae Anglicanae*, p. 70.] rightly says: "In 1662, to condemn the phrase 'Real Presence' would have been to condemn not only such men as Hooker, and Bishop Andrewes, and Cosin, and Morton, and Jeremy Taylor, and Bishop Reynolds, but also many eminent Swiss divines abroad, as well as the divines of the Westminster Confession of Faith at home."

Even as early as Cranmer's time the necessity was seen of distinguishing two possible interpretations of "real," i.e., whether as equivalent to "vere" or to "corporaliter," and Cranmer made the distinction clear by affirming his belief in the former of the two. In all this we can see a natural and intelligible reason, if not a necessity, for the change of terms, and the correctness of this view is confirmed by the reply, only twenty-five years after 1662, of Dean Aldrich to the Roman Catholic Abraham Woodhead: "He tells us in King Edward's book (the Rubric) denied a real and essential, but now denies only a corporal Presence.

To which I answer that King Edward's Rubric by real and essential means (as the Papists then used to do) a real and bodily Presence, as is plain by the Articles set forth about the same time." [Dean Aldrich, *Reply to Two Discourses*, p. 9. Oxford, 1687.] The Rubric, however, must be considered as a whole, in its general structure and dominant purpose. Does it as a whole indicate any intention of changing the doctrine? On the assumption of a change the Rubric would allow an adoration of a real and essential Presence on the Table but not of a corporal Presence there.

But does not the Rubric forbid adoration in either sense? And if adoration of any Presence in or with the elements is permitted, what is the explanation of the kneeling? And what is the force or necessity of the reference to Christ's natural body being in heaven and not there? To argue for such a distinction is surely to reflect very seriously both on the intellectual caliber and even on the moral character of the able and earnest men of 1662. Dr. Heurtley in his *Remarks on the Declaration of Kneeling*, quotes the words of the Bishops at the Savoy Conference, and then adds his own comment: "The posture of kneeling best suits at the Communion, as the most convenient, and most decent for us, when we are to receive, as it were from God's hand, the greatest of seals of the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Language strangely below the occasion, if that greatest of seals be nothing less than the Lord Himself, veiled under the form of bread and wine." [Dr. Heurtley, *Remarks on the Declaration of Kneeling*, p. 9.] Dean Goode rightly says: "To condemn kneeling to the consecrated elements because of a supposed corporal Presence of Christ in them, and at the same time to advocate kneeling to them on account of a real Presence of Christ in them, called 'supernatural,' 'essential,' and 'substantial,' is a distinction which, I trust, will be left in the hands of those who invented it." [Dean Goode, *On the Eucharist*, Vol.

II., p. 625.] Of the revision as a whole it may be said that though there were many minor changes, yet none of them was of such a character as to reveal any essential doctrinal difference from the earlier book. This can be seen from the words of our present Preface, which is by Bishop Sanderson, one of the revisers of 1662, and the continuity of doctrine is all the more significant in view of the anti-Puritan feelings of the time. The revision left the Prayer Book of 1552 and 1562 doctrinally unaltered in character.

There was no corporal Presence, no invocation of the Holy Spirit on the elements, no reference in the Consecration Prayer which could possibly be construed to mean inherent change in the elements, no

sacrificial language such as would satisfy Roman teaching, and no adoration as needed by the doctrine of a Presence in the elements. The Puritan Baxter, with all his minute criticisms of the book, found nothing doctrinally objectionable in the teaching of the Lord's Supper, and, what is of great interest in this connection, he himself used sacrificial language connected with the Lord's Supper which if found in our Prayer Book might easily be construed to mean the plainest Roman doctrine. [Hall, *Reliquiae Liturgicae* IV, p. 61.]

Reviewing these stages of the history of the Prayer Book we believe the truth of the case to be expressed in the following statements: 1. The doctrine of the Church of England on the Lord's Supper was first properly formulated in 1549. 2. This underwent distinct revision and alteration in 1552. 3. The revision of 1562, the Articles of 1571, the additions of 1604, and the revision of 1662 made no substantial or essential change in the doctrine of 1552. 4. This doctrine was anti-Roman; and in relation to Protestant differences, it was not Lutheran, but akin to the "Reformed" type of teaching. 5.

This doctrine remains enshrined in our Prayer Book to this day. These conclusions as to an essentially uniform doctrine of the Lord's Supper from 1552 to the present time are capable of proof from the writings of the leading divines of the Church of England. "It is the fashion of a certain class of writers to say that the first English Reformers were men of violent and extreme views, too much influenced by their contact with the advanced foreign Reformers; and that we ought, therefore, to appeal to the Prayer Book and Articles as finally revised in 1662, to ascertain the real settlement of the English Reformation.

It may, however, be proved that the teaching of the Caroline divines who lived immediately before and after the period of the last revision of the English formularies, on the subject of the real Presence, in no way differed from that of the earlier Reformers." [Dr. Ince, *Letter on the Doctrine of the Real Presence*, p. 21.] Out of very many names that might be quoted the following are perhaps the most important as being the most typical and representative of varying shades of thought amid essential agreement on the fundamental position.

In the 16th century we may cite Cranmer, Ridley, Jewel, and Hooker; in the 17th, Laud, Andrewes, Jeremy Taylor, and Cosin; in the 18th, Beveridge and Waterland; and in the 19th, Goode, Goulburn, and Vogan. Quotations from these and others may be seen in extenso in Goode's *Doctrine of the Eucharist* [Goode, *Doctrine of the Eucharist*, Vol. II., pp. 765-972.]; Vogan's *True Doctrine of the Eucharist* [Vogan, *True Doctrine of the Eucharist*, pp. 162-228.]; Dimock's *Papers on the Eucharist Presence*. [Dimock, *Papers on the Eucharistic Presence*, pp. 5-103.]

Reference may also be made to the singularly clear and valuable letters of the Bishop of Edinburgh (Dr. Dowden) in the *Guardian* for July, August, and September, 1900, than which nothing could be more convincing as to the Eucharistic doctrine of some of the leading English divines of the 16th and 17th centuries. We conclude, therefore, that a careful study of the Prayer Book as it stands, a due consideration of its history, and a comparison of the teaching of the great theologians of the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries will reveal very distinctly the uniform doctrine, at once Scriptural, Catholic, and Protestant, of the Church of England.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/wh-griffith-thomas/the-lords-supper-in-the-prayer-books-of-1604-and-1662/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**