

## **Eucharistic veneration in the Anglican Reformation in the 16th century**

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In continental Europe, the Protestant reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century wanted to change the existing religion. Regarding these so-called reformers, who were in reality revolutionaries, Bishop Philip Hughes, a great British Catholic historian of that century, writes:

"What characterised these revolutionaries – like all others, for this is as true of social and political rebels as it is of religious rebels – was their obsession with wanting all future history to begin from their own reconstruction of primitive glory as they imagined it<sup>2</sup>"

Most of the leading reformers had been priests, and it is not surprising that they felt that it was the Mass that mattered and that it was against the Mass, rather than against the Pope, that their attack should be directed.<sup>3</sup> This point is emphasised by the German historian J. Lortz: "For the Catholic Church, the most serious event of the Reformation was not the attack on the Pope, but the fact that its mysteries were emptied of their objective source of power.<sup>4</sup>"

All the reformers denied that the Mass was a sacrifice and, with the exception of Luther, they also rejected the substantial presence of Christ in the consecrated species. The highest form of Protestant belief – yet far removed from Catholic doctrine – was the theory of consubstantiation as understood by Luther. The lowest was the symbolist perspective defended by Zwingli, according to whom bread and wine merely 'represent' the body and blood of Christ. Zwingli and Calvin both taught that the body and blood of Christ are not objectively contained in the sacrament and that, consequently, they cannot be offered by the priest. For them, logically, the concept of Eucharistic oblation could only constitute what they called "bread worship", which they never ceased to denounce.<sup>5</sup>

### **1. Henry VIII, supreme head of the Church of England on earth**

King Henry VIII did not wish to change religion, he simply wanted to change wives. If the Pope had granted Henry VIII's request to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, there would

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<sup>1</sup> Lecture given at the 2<sup>nd</sup> C.I.E.L. colloquium, October 1996.

<sup>2</sup> P. Hugues: *The Reformation in England*, London 1950, vol. II, p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> F. Clark: *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation*, Oxford 1967, p. 107.

<sup>4</sup> J. Lorz: *Die Reformation in Deutschland*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1941, vol. II, p. 229. [*Luther's Reformation* - coll. "Théologie sans frontières", Cerf 1970.]

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.* note 2, pp. 111-112.

have been no Protestant Reformation in England. The dispensation granted by Julius II, which had allowed Henry to marry the widow of his brother Arthur, who had died at the age of fifteen without consummating his marriage, was perfectly valid, unassailable in canon law, and, consequently, the annulment could not be granted.

In 1531, Henry chose the compliant Thomas Cranmer as the new Archbishop of Canterbury, who would obey him without question. Not wishing to antagonise Henry VIII any more than necessary, Pope Clement VII accepted this appointment. In 1532, while in Europe on behalf of the king, Cranmer – then a staunch Protestant – secretly married the niece of Andreas Osiander, a Lutheran pastor. Henry would undoubtedly have had him executed if he had heard about this marriage or his Protestantism. For his part, Henry married his mistress, Anne Boleyn, who was pregnant at the time, on 25 January 1533. Out of deference to his royal benefactor, Cranmer declared his marriage to Catherine of Aragon invalid and validated his marriage to Anne Boleyn. On 11 July 1533, Pope Clement VII excommunicated Henry and all those who had participated in the deliberations of Cranmer's tribunal.

In November 1534, Parliament passed the *Act of Supremacy*, naming Henry "the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England, called *Anglicana Ecclesia*". Refusal to take the oath was considered treason, punishable by death. All the English bishops submitted to the king, except for Saint John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. The saint's fierce remark about his fellow bishops will never be forgotten: "The fortress is betrayed by those who were supposed to defend it." Sir Thomas More also preferred to die rather than accept this law, as did a small number of Carthusians.

Henry had broken ties with Rome, but he did not want the Church of which he was the head to break with Christian doctrine. If, between 1536 and 1539, he abolished the monasteries and seized their lands and property, it was for financial rather than religious reasons. As for the Mass, the king was particularly conservative and made no changes to it, except to abolish all prayers for the Pope and all commemorations of Saint Thomas Becket.

Despite the break with Rome, the dissolution of the monasteries and other measures such as the abolition of certain public holidays, what happened in England under Henry VIII was in no way comparable to the Protestant Reformation in continental Europe. Hilaire Belloc rightly says that we should speak of a "schism" in this regard. He writes: It was not a "heretical" movement in the usual sense of the term: indeed, it did not combat any of the main doctrines that were the subject of such violent attacks on the European continent. It certainly rejected the authority of the Pope, but it not only did not deny transubstantiation,

the Mass, or the entire sacramental system, it vigorously affirmed them. To simplify matters, one could say that for the man in the street, in his daily life and weekly religious duties, things seemed to continue exactly as before.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. The accession of Edward VI

Henry VIII died in January 1547 and was succeeded by Edward VI, the son of his third wife, Jane Seymour. Edward VI, then a sickly nine-year-old child, was merely a puppet of his Council, which was dominated by Protestants. The latter, who had hidden their deep convictions during Henry's reign, now displayed them without fear, having nothing more to fear from proclaiming them. Their goal was to eliminate the Catholic faith from the country, and the main means they used to this end was to replace the immemorial Latin Mass with a Protestant communion service in the vernacular. The break with the Pope had in no way satisfied Cranmer as long as "papism" remained, and by this term he and his fellow reformers meant the Mass. It alone mattered, not only to Catholics but also to Protestants. Cranmer hated the Mass as if it were a living enemy. He attacked, as the root of papism, "the papist doctrine of transubstantiation, of the real presence of the flesh and blood of Christ in the sacrament of the altar (as they call it), and the sacrifice and oblation of Christ made by the priest for the salvation of the living and the dead"<sup>7</sup> A typical example of the Reformers' hatred of the Mass can be found in a passage by John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester:

I believe that the Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice but simply a remembrance and commemoration of the holy sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Consequently, it should not be worshipped as God, nor as Christ contained therein; Christ should only be worshipped in faith, without all corruptible elements. Similarly, I believe and confess that the papist Mass is an invention and a rite of man, a sacrifice of the Antichrist and an apostasy from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that is, from his death and passion; and that it is a stinking and defiled sepulchre which hides and covers the merit of the blood of Christ; and that consequently the Mass must be abolished and the Lord's Supper re-established and restored in its perfection.<sup>8</sup>

Despite his hatred for the Mass, Cranmer decided to proceed cautiously even though, under Edward VI, Protestants effectively controlled the political power of the kingdom. He realised that the Mass had to be phased out gradually, over several years, to avoid provoking an armed rebellion.

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<sup>6</sup> Gustave Constant: *The Reformation in England*, London 1934, p. 8. [*The Reformation in England*, vol. I, Perrin 1930.]

<sup>7</sup> T. Cranmer: *Works*, Cambridge 1844, vol. I, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> J. Hooper: *Later Writings*, Cambridge 1852, p. 32.

In the most insightful study written to date on the Eucharistic doctrines of the Protestant reformers, Father Francis Clark writes: At first, during the critical period, Cranmer and his friends saw that it was wisest to introduce the Reformation in stages, gradually preparing people's minds for the more radical measures to come. Sometimes coercion or intimidation were necessary to stifle opposition, but in general their policy was first to neutralise the conservative masses, deprive them of their Catholic leaders, and then gradually accustom them to the new religious system.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Vernacular language and audibility**

Even before the new services were imposed in 1549, certain parts of the Mass were sometimes celebrated in the vernacular, which in itself was already "a veritable revolution."<sup>10</sup> This changed the whole character of the service, and it became apparent that this was an effective means of bringing about revolutionary change: it accustomed people to the idea that it was possible to make radical changes to the way they celebrated. On 12 May 1548, a celebration entirely in English – including the consecration – took place at Westminster.<sup>11</sup> While insisting on the use of the vernacular, the reformers demanded that the entire community of the faithful be able to hear the whole ceremony, which was in stark contrast to the Latin Mass.

### **4. Communion under both kinds**

One of Cranmer's first major innovations was to impose, at the end of 1547, the practice of communion under both kinds for the laity. Both in England and in other countries, many Catholics made the mistake, in order to preserve peace, of conceding this change without opposition, on the pretext that it was a mere matter of discipline. On this subject, Cardinal Gasquet writes: "The great advantage that the innovators gained from the adoption of Communion under both kinds in England was the opportunity it gave them to break with the old missal."<sup>12</sup> Any break of this kind with Tradition diminished the impact of subsequent breaks, so that when changes were introduced that were not solely a matter of discipline, the possibility of effective resistance was considerably reduced.

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<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, note 2, p. 194.

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, note 1, p. 113.

<sup>11</sup> F. Gasquet and H. Bishop: *Edward VI and the Book of Common Prayer*, London 1890, p. 102.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

## 5. The *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549

On 21 January 1549, the *first Act of Uniformity* imposed Cranmer's first *Book of Common Prayer*, starting on Pentecost Sunday (9 June), in place of all traditional Latin liturgical books; at the same time, this Act implemented Cranmer's long-term goal of replacing the Catholic Mass with a Protestant communion service. Cranmer called his new communion service "the Lord's Supper and Holy Communion, commonly called Mass." This title is an accurate description of the new service, which was clearly intended to be a Protestant "commemoration" of the Lord's Supper, but contained nothing specifically heretical and could be interpreted as a Mass.<sup>13</sup> In the 1552 *Prayer Book*, the title of Cranmer's service no longer included the word "Mass," marking the final stage of his liturgical revolution: the imposition of a service that could only be interpreted as a Protestant commemoration.

In the 1549 *Prayer Book*, the Protestant character of the service was expressed mainly through what it rejected from the traditional Latin Mass. As Fr. Clark explains: "The liturgy of the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* has been the subject of exhaustive study, and it is generally agreed that its main difference from the Latin rite it replaced is the omission of sacrificial language."<sup>14</sup>

The congregation could hear all the words of the new service, spoken exclusively in English, and communion was given under both kinds. The *Judica me*, which refers to the priest going up "to the altar of God", and the *Confiteor* were abolished.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, the confession of sins to Our Lady, the saints and the angels, whose intercession was sought, was incompatible with the Protestant doctrine of justification. Like Luther, Cranmer completely eliminated the Offertory rite, with its multiple references to sacrifice and the Real Presence. *The Orate fratres* and the secret were also removed. While Luther abolished the canon of the Mass completely, Cranmer merely removed those prayers that specifically affirmed sacrifice and the real presence. Although the words of consecration had been codified by the Council of Florence, Cranmer did not hesitate to make changes even there.<sup>16</sup> The words "which will be delivered for you, do this in memory of me" (*quod pro vobis tradetur, hoc facite in meam commemorationem*) were added to the consecration of the

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<sup>13</sup> This ambiguity is highlighted by Father Francis Clark: "Edward VI's first *Prayer Book* could not be convicted of manifest heresy because it was skilfully crafted and contained no explicit rejection of pre-Reformation doctrine. As one specialist in Anglican matters puts it, it was 'an ingenious ambiguous composition' whose terms had been deliberately chosen so that the most conservative could interpret it in their own way and convince their consciences to use it, while the Reformers would interpret it in their own way and see it as a tool for moving on to the next stage of the religious revolution. (*Op. cit.* note 2, p. 282.)

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 183.

<sup>15</sup> E. C. Messenger: *The Reformation, the Mass and the Priesthood*, London 1936, vol. I. Chapter VII of this book presents a detailed comparison of the reforms of Luther and Cranmer.

<sup>16</sup> DZ No. 715.

bread, and in the consecration of the wine, the words *mysterium fidei* were removed. No elevation was permitted, to exclude any possibility of adoration. Abhorring the *Placeat tibi* – specifically sacrificial – preceding the final blessing, the reformers removed it.

## 6. A cultural catastrophe

The transition from a liturgy conducted entirely in Latin to one conducted entirely in the vernacular caused a cultural catastrophe with incalculable consequences: the Catholic people found themselves completely cut off from the entire heritage of liturgical music of Western Christianity, which was entirely in Latin. Parliament passed a law – reinforced by a royal proclamation – ordering the collection and destruction of all the old "superstitious" missals that the recalcitrants continued to use; Reformist bishops diligently sought out elements of papist 'superstition' that might have survived in the liturgy: priestly vestments disappeared from churches and texts directed against the Real Presence and the Mass were painted on the walls.<sup>17</sup>

Professor J. J. Scarisbrick gave an eloquent assessment of the devastation wrought by the Reformation on the cultural heritage of the people of England and Wales:

Between 1536 and 1553, there was a wave of demolition and pillaging of beautiful and sacred things, irreplaceable things, such as there probably never was before or since... In the end, thousands of altars had been removed, countless stained glass windows, statues and murals had disappeared, and many choirs and libraries had been dispersed. Thousands of chalices, ciboria, crosses and other such objects had been sold or "mutilated"... and countless precious liturgical vestments had been stripped or seized.<sup>18</sup>

## 7. Altars replaced by tables

The replacement of altars with tables was a further step in line with the liturgical policy of the continental reformers. Calvin taught that, since Christ had accomplished his sacrifice once and for all, God "has therefore given us a table to eat on, not an altar to sacrifice on. He did not consecrate priests to sacrifice hosts, but instituted ministers to distribute sacred food to the people.<sup>19</sup>

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After 1549, all the stone altars on which the sacrifice of the Mass had been offered for centuries were destroyed and replaced by wooden tables covered with linen cloth and placed in the

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<sup>17</sup> J. J. Scarisbrick: *The Reformation and the English people*, Oxford 1984, pp. 85 & 87.

<sup>18</sup> J. Calvin: *Institution de la religion chrétienne*, Book IV, XVIII, n. 12, p. 411, Labor et Fides, Geneva.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.* note 1, pp. 120-121.

choir. On 24 November 1550, the King's Council sent a letter to Ridley, Bishop of London, explaining:

Firstly, the shape of the table will encourage the simple-minded to abandon the superstitious opinions of the papist Mass and lead them to the proper use of the Lord's Supper. Indeed, an altar is intended for sacrifice; a table is intended for men to eat their meals.<sup>20</sup>

The altars consecrated for Christian sacrifice were removed and destroyed throughout the country. It is no exaggeration to speak of a "hatred of the Mass" on the part of the apostate priests and bishops who carried out this sacrilegious destruction.<sup>21</sup> In many ancient churches and cathedrals in England, the altar table was used as paving, or even as a step over which the faithful passed as they entered the church to attend the new service in the vernacular. In the county of Cambridge alone, there are still more than thirty altar stones placed in this way for people to walk on.<sup>22</sup>

## **8. The *Book of Common Prayer* of 1552**

In 1552, Cranmer imposed his second *Prayer Book*, in which a number of ambiguities contained in the 1549 rite had been removed, retaining only what it was clearly intended to be: a Protestant communion service. Cranmer invited a number of the most extreme continental Protestants to England and asked for their advice. The most influential was a former German Dominican, Martin Bucer. He rejected any Eucharistic presence of Christ in or under the forms of bread and wine. He railed against the sacrifice of the Mass, "filled with abominations that we cannot detest enough: the worship of bread (*artolatrea*), thus laden with infinite insult to God, in

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<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.* note 6, vol. II, Cambridge 1846, pp. 524-525.

<sup>21</sup> A typical example of their attitude can be found in the instructions given in 1571 – during the reign of Elizabeth I – by Edmund Grindal, Bishop of York, to his churchwardens. Not only did he insist that any object that might evoke memories of the Mass be destroyed or mutilated and that all altars restored during the reign of Mary Tudor be removed, but he also ordered that all traces of their very existence be erased: "The churchwardens shall see to it that in their churches and chapels all altars are completely destroyed and their remains removed, down to the very foundations, and that the place where they were sealed be paved, and that the wall against which they stood be whitewashed and made uniform with the rest, so that no breach or break may appear. The altar stones shall be broken and mutilated, and assigned to some profane use. The churchwardens and ministers shall also ensure that the antiphonaries, missals, grilles, portals, processions, manuals, legends and all other books that formerly belonged to their churches or chapels, which were used for the superstitious Latin service, are completely mutilated, torn up and destroyed. And that all ornaments, albs, tunics, stoles, fanons, maniple, ciboria, patens, bells, bells, censers, chrismatories, candlesticks, holy water fonts and other vessels containing holy water, images and other relics and monuments of superstition shall be completely mutilated, broken and destroyed. Twice a year, they shall communicate to the ordinary (the bishop) the names of all persons favourable to Roman and foreign power, who hear or say Masses or any other Latin service, who receive vagrant papist priests or any other person notoriously disapproving of the true religion. (*In*: T.E. Bridgett: *A History of the Eucharist in Great Britain*, London, 1908, p. 63.)

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 65.

which bread was taken for Christ himself and worshipped, while his species remained intact...<sup>23</sup> Cranmer invited him to compile a critique of the 1549 *Prayer Book*. This was written in Latin and is known as the *Censura*. The 1552 *Prayer Book* incorporated at least two-thirds of his criticisms, a dramatic confirmation of Martin Bucer's influence on Cranmer.<sup>24</sup>

Bucer censured several aspects of the communion rite, which he feared could be interpreted in a Catholic sense. In particular, he insisted that the bread should not be placed on the communicant's tongue, but in his hand: "I have no doubt that the practice of not placing these sacraments in the hands of the faithful was introduced because of a double superstition: first, the false honour that one wished to show to this sacrament, and second, the perverse arrogance of priests who claimed greater holiness than that of the people of Christ by virtue of the oil of consecration. There is no doubt that the Lord gave these sacred symbols into the hands of the apostles, and one cannot read the accounts of the ancients without being absolutely convinced that this was the practice observed by the Churches until the advent of the tyranny of the Roman Antichrist.

Consequently, and considering that we must detest all superstition of the Roman Antichrist, and that we must remember the simplicity of Christ, the apostles and the early Churches, I desire that pastors of the people and those who instruct them be commanded to teach faithfully to those under their care that it is superstitious and perverse to think that the hands of those who truly believe in Christ are less pure than their mouths, or that the hands of ministers are holier than those of lay people, so that it would be perverse, or less appropriate – as the common people mistakenly believed – for lay people to receive these sacraments in their hands; just as it is superstitious and perverse to think that ministers are allowed to handle the sacraments but lay people are not, and that therefore the sacrament should be placed in their mouths, which is not only foreign to what was instituted by Christ but also offends human reason... Although it may be conceded, for a time and for those whose faith is weak, that they may be given the sacrament in the mouth when they desire it, provided that they receive appropriate instruction, they will soon conform to the rest of the Church and take the sacrament in the hand.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> E. C. Whitaker: *Martin Bucer and the Book of Common Prayer*, London 1974, p. 58. This work contains the complete text of the *Censura* in Latin and English.

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.* note 2, p. 123.

<sup>25</sup> *Op. cit.* note 23, pp. 34-36.

We can see, then, that Bucer's objection to the traditional way of giving communion is twofold: in his view, it perpetuates the belief that there is some essential difference between a priest and a lay person, and between the bread and wine used in communion and ordinary bread and wine. His solution is to make communion in the hand optional at first, but this option is accompanied by a propaganda campaign designed to quickly convince the faithful.

## **9. Signs of the cross**

The reformers believed that signs of the cross could only lead to superstition, and they removed them from the liturgy. The Sarum Canon and other English and Welsh missals prior to the Reformation contained twenty-six signs of the cross. In the 1549 communion service, Cranmer retained only two. Even this concession to tradition provoked the ire of Martin Bucer, who, in his *Censura*, expressed the hope "that the little black crosses which are printed in the book in this place would be removed." In his 1552 *Prayer Book*, Cranmer removed them.

## **10. Communion on bended knee**

Although he incorporated most of Bucer's censures into his 1552 *Prayer Book*, Cranmer was the target of a particularly virulent attack by the reformer John Knox because he had retained the tradition of kneeling for communion. Cranmer settled the matter with a compromise typical of his approach: communicants would continue to kneel, but the famous *black rubric* was added to the 1552 communion service<sup>26</sup>. It reads as follows:

In order that the said kneeling may not be regarded or esteemed otherwise, we formally declare that it is not to be understood as a sign of worship which is or ought to be given to the sacramental bread and wine received bodily at that time, or to any real and substantial presence as the natural flesh and blood of Christ. Indeed, as far as the sacramental bread and wine are concerned, they remain in their entirely natural substances and cannot therefore be worshipped, for that would be idolatry, which all faithful Christians must abhor. As for the natural body and blood of our Saviour, Christ, they are in heaven and not here. For it is contrary to the truth of Christ's true natural body to be in more than one place at the same time.

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<sup>26</sup> The expression "*black heading*" dates only from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the practice of printing the headings of *the Book of Common Prayer* in red was introduced; this statement was printed in black to emphasise that it was not a heading in the strict sense of the word. In modern two-colour editions of *the Book of Common Prayer*, it is printed in red.

It is interesting to note the correspondence between this heading and the doctrines anathematised in two canons of the thirteenth session of the Council of Trent the previous year, in 1551. There is no doubt that the terms used in this *black heading* constituted an explicit rejection of canons 1 and 6 of that session.<sup>27</sup>

At that time, Cranmer was taking careful note of the teachings of the Council of Trent, and in March 1552 he wrote to Calvin:

"Our adversaries are now holding their councils at Trent to establish their errors... As far as I know, they are making decrees concerning the worship of the host; therefore we must neglect nothing, not only to preserve others from this idolatry, but also to reach agreement among ourselves on the doctrine of this sacrament.<sup>28</sup>"

Cranmer's response to the Council of Trent can be found in the *Forty-two Articles* of 1553, which are essentially his work.<sup>29</sup> A passage from Article XXIX is revealing, both in terms of the *black heading* and the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the Council of Trent. The paragraph in question reads as follows:

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, cannot be proven by Holy Scripture; on the contrary, it is incompatible with what Scripture clearly states, and has given rise to many superstitions. Whereas the truth of human nature requires that the body of one and the same man cannot be in several places at the same time, but must necessarily be in one specific place, consequently, the body of Christ cannot, at any given moment, be in several different places. And since, as Scripture teaches, Christ was raised to heaven and will remain there until the end of the world, a believer should neither believe nor openly confess the real and bodily presence (as they call it) of the flesh and blood of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Christ did not prescribe that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper should be kept, carried, lifted up, or worshipped.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Canon 1: "If anyone says that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist are not contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ, but says that they are there only as in a sign or figure or virtually: let him be anathema. Canon 6: "If anyone says that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist Christ, the Son of God, is not to be worshipped with latria, even externally, and that, consequently, he should not be venerated with special festive celebration, nor solemnly carried in procession according to the praiseworthy and universal rite and custom of the Holy Church, nor publicly offered for the adoration of the people, those who adore him being idolaters: let him be anathema. *History of the Council of Trent*, Migne collection, Vol. I, p. 53.

<sup>28</sup> *Op. cit.*, note 20, pp. 432-433.

<sup>29</sup> E. C. Gibson: *The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, London 1898, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

Thus, the 1552 *Prayer Book* set out very clearly the question of the veneration of the Eucharist in Anglican liturgy: it was considered an abomination and was totally forbidden. The bread and wine distributed in Holy Communion were considered to be no different from the bread and wine used in ordinary meals. The Lord's Supper was itself a meal, nothing more than a meal, and in any case not a sacrifice – which is why sacrificial altars were destroyed and replaced by tables for the Supper.

## 11. The restoration of the Mass

The common faithful felt such bitter resentment towards Cranmer's liturgical revolution that, in most cases, only the threat of punishment could induce them to attend the new services.<sup>31</sup> The profound Catholicism of the English people was evident when, upon the death of Edward VI in 1553, Mary, the very Catholic daughter of Catherine of Aragon, ascended the throne, determined to restore the Catholic faith at any cost. Professor Bindoff, a Protestant, notes that shortly after her accession to the throne, "Mass was celebrated in the churches of London, not by order, but in response to popular devotion, and from all corners of the country it was reported that it was being re-established without opposition"<sup>32</sup>. Statues, crucifixes, altars, liturgical vestments and sacred vessels were brought out of hiding and, amid jubilation, returned to the churches that had been the pride of the faithful since time immemorial.

The restoration of the Catholic faith under Mary Tudor, who had re-established union with the Pope, and the reinstatement of the traditional Latin Mass were welcomed with enthusiasm by at least 99% of the population of England and Wales. Protestantism, imposed from above, had won over less than 1% of the population.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Bishop Philip Hughes writes: "The new law of 1552 began by lamenting that, notwithstanding 'the most divine order formulated by the authority of Parliament for common prayer in the mother tongue' and 'most advantageous to all good people' who desire to live a Christian life, 'a great number of people, in various parts of this kingdom... refuse to attend their parish church and other places where common prayer... is used.'" From then on, failure to attend services on Sundays and feast days, "to remain there in order and dignity during the time of common prayer," became an offence... In addition, another offence was instituted: any person convicted of attending prayer services, "administration of sacraments, ordination of ministers in churches" or any other rite whatsoever, performed otherwise than as provided in the *Prayer Book*, shall be sentenced to imprisonment for six months for the first offence, one year for the second, and life imprisonment for the third. These were the first penalties imposed in England for this new crime of attending Mass or receiving the sacraments as they had been received since St Augustine came to convert the English nearly a millennium earlier. (Op. cit., note 1, p. 126.)

<sup>32</sup> S. T. Bindoff: *Tudor England*, London 1952, p. 168.

<sup>33</sup> Owen Chadwick, a Protestant historian, writes: "The Reformation in England had attracted the genuine support of only a few learned theologians and a few merchants and other members of the middle class who were somewhat educated, particularly in London, and it was supported, for less than honest reasons, by powerful members of the nobility." (In: Owen Chadwick: *The Reformation*, London 1973, pp. 122-123.)

## 12. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*

Queen Mary died on 17 November 1558, while Mass was being celebrated in her chamber. Throughout her adult life, she had heard it daily. Elizabeth was crowned as a Catholic and promised to reign as such; yet she broke her word almost immediately and returned to Protestantism, which allowed her to add religious control over her subjects to her political power.

The new liturgy destroyed the old faith when it was reimposed during Elizabeth's reign, with such severe penalties that, despite its clearly non-Catholic nature, only a handful of the most fervent Catholics refused to attend the new service. The six years during which Protestantism had been imposed during the reign of Edward VI had hardly affected the faith of the English people; on the other hand, during Elizabeth's reign, they were forced to attend Protestant services for several decades in a row (Elizabeth reigned until 1603). The official Protestant communion service was celebrated on a table facing north rather than east, entirely in the vernacular, with all prayers audible to the congregation; communion was given in both kinds and, in the form of bread, in the hand. This service did not include a single word, gesture or rubric that might suggest that the bread and wine received in communion were in any way different from the bread and wine consumed at an ordinary meal; that what was being offered was a sacrifice and not simply a prayer of praise and thanksgiving; nor that the man presiding over the service possessed powers that the rest of the community did not have. At first, most of the faithful attended the new English service only reluctantly, but as the years passed, the axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi* eventually prevailed, as it always does in the long run: form determines substance. People were forced to pray like Protestants, and they became Protestants.

Mgr Hugues rightly points out:

Even today, Catholics find it very difficult to understand that these theories and rites were, at least to a very large extent, the work of men who were priests, who had not only received the Catholic sacraments but had celebrated Mass, and who were now content with this situation without any sign of regret for the previous one.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, he explicitly states that Catholicism in England was destroyed by Thomas Cranmer's liturgical reform, which was reimposed during Elizabeth's reign.

Once these new sacramental rites, for example, had become customary among the English people, the substance of the doctrinal reform, now victorious in Northern Europe, was bound to transform England in turn. Almost imperceptibly, as the years passed, the beliefs

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<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, note 1, vol. III, p. 89.

embedded in the ancient rites – now fallen into disuse – and kept alive in the minds and affections of men by those rites, would disappear without the need for a systematic missionary campaign to preach their abandonment.<sup>35</sup>

Yet some Catholics remained faithful, refusing to compromise. In particular, those who preserved the faith in Great Britain were the young men who went to study in the seminaries of Europe. They returned to give Mass to the people and, all too often, to give their lives for the Mass, the traditional Latin Mass found in the Missal of St. Pius V. The victors had taken possession of the churches in which the immemorial Mass had been celebrated for centuries, but the faithful Catholics possessed the Mass, and it was the Mass that mattered.

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<sup>35</sup> *Op. cit.*, note 20, p. 111.