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# The Eucharistic Debate in Tudor England: Thomas Cranmer, Stephen Gardiner, and the English Reformation

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## Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

**Allen, Amanda Wrenn.**

***The Eucharistic Debate in Tudor England: Thomas Cranmer, Stephen Gardiner, and the English Reformation.***

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018. Pp. 220. ISBN 978-1-4985-5975-1 (hardcover) US\$105.

Eucharistic debates between evangelicals and traditionalists and even between evangelicals themselves during the Protestant Reformation were a regular occurrence and caused sharp divisions. The debate in Reformation England grew out of disagreement between traditionalists and evangelicals regarding the presence of Jesus Christ in the elements of the Eucharist, and directly shaped the direction of the Church of England. Amanda Wrenn Allen's important new work on Eucharistic debate during the Tudor era draws special attention to two key rivals in the heat of that argument, Thomas Cranmer and Stephen Gardiner, and examines their printed disputations in 1550–51. Allen contends that this debate between the two prominent English church leaders was the primary impetus in forging the path of Eucharistic worship and practice in England, beginning first in Edwardian England then continuing in the Elizabethan church. Her objective is to assess the precise methodologies and arguments used by both Cranmer and Gardiner in order to discover the theological and personal issues that drove these men to spar in print. To achieve her purpose, Allen unpacks and evaluates the three printed works that form the platform of the debate: *Defence*, *Explication*, and *Answer*.

Allen first establishes the larger theological, political, and social contexts of the early stages of the Henrician Reformation, delineating the careers of Cranmer and Gardiner and situating them against the backdrop of political turbulence and intrigue. Both men experienced the ups and downs of Henry VIII's seemingly capricious, vacillating religious policies. It was Cranmer who eventually emerged unscathed from both the whims of Henry and the Prebendaries' Plot to depose Cranmer of his archbishopric, orchestrated chiefly by Gardiner. With Edward VI's ascension in 1547, Cranmer's position was even more solidified, while Gardiner's fate remained tenuous. Allen notes that this drama instigated and fueled the contentious nature of the relationship between

Cranmer and Gardiner, and was in essence the prequel to the actual duel in print beginning in 1550.

While Gardiner's position on the Eucharist remained consistently traditionalist throughout his career, Cranmer's view was evolving and drew from Continental Reformers. Allen avers that while the Eucharistic beliefs of Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr Vermigli influenced Cranmer, it was the theology of Huldrych Zwingli that made an indelible mark on Cranmer's Eucharistic thought. Before 1547, Cranmer's position regarding the corporeal presence of Christ's body in the elements suggests a Lutheran influence. However, Cranmer's 1548 publication of *Order of the Communion* revealed a paradigm shift in his thinking toward the views of Zwingli and the Zurich reformers. Cranmer's rhetoric in that work stressed some already developed Zwinglian themes: the communal aspect of the Eucharist, the spiritual presence of Christ in the elements, and the importance of remembrance of Christ's passion. Thus, by the time of the publication of the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549 and especially of his *Defence* in 1550, Cranmer's Eucharistic theology was firmly fixed.

The formal debates of 1550–51 revolved primarily around the doctrine of transubstantiation, as Cranmer argued for Christ's spiritual presence in the elements while Gardiner defended the traditionalist position of corporeal presence. Allen effectively dissects each man's arguments, tracing the scriptural and patristic references each used in defense of his respective position. She concludes that each appealed to similar biblical texts to advance his position. Yet from those identical biblical texts, Cranmer arrived at a figurative interpretation of Christ's "this is my body," while Gardiner insisted on a literal hermeneutic. Both applied a similar methodology to humanist texts, claiming each church father for his own benefit and for support of his respective Eucharistic theology. Each connected his Eucharistic belief to the patristic era in order to substantiate the continuity and validity of his position and to expose the other position as being a rupture with church history. Consequently, as Allen observes, both take questionable liberties with their texts in drawing conclusions, and both accuse each other of mishandling and abusing the respective texts.

Allen concludes her work with an assessment of whether Calvin and the Genevan Reformation had a significant influence upon Eucharistic theology in England. She submits that Calvin's influence upon the English reformers has been exaggerated in scholarship and that England's Eucharistic theology in the Elizabethan church was "uniquely English" in that it was a direct continuity

with the Edwardian view of Eucharistic presence (157). She proceeds to develop her thesis by demonstrating the establishment and continuity of Eucharistic theology, from Cranmer's figurative interpretation of spiritual presence in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer to its recapitulation in the Elizabethan Settlement in 1559. From this, she concludes that the return of the English exiles from Geneva in 1559 did not contribute to the theological landscape of the Elizabethan era.

Allen's work successfully examines the three critical texts of the Eucharistic debate and properly places them in the theological and political world of Tudor England. Her most notable strength is the skill to extrapolate the arguments of Cranmer and Gardiner from the texts and to pinpoint the inconsistencies and ruptures in each of their arguments. She also successfully captures the political intrigue of Henry VIII's court and persuasively demonstrates the connection between that and the personal ambitions even of religious, spiritual men. This work is an essential addition to the library of any scholar or student of theology or church history and is especially recommended for those interested in the intersection between religion and politics in the early modern period.

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**Bate, Jonathan.**

***How the Classics Made Shakespeare.***

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv, 361. ISBN 978-0-691-16160-0 (hardcover) US\$24.95.

Shakespeare and his relation to the classics—that is, to the languages, literatures, and cultures of ancient Greece and Rome—was a question much alive in his lifetime, at the time of his death in 1616, and in the bringing out of the First Folio in 1623. It has been discussed on and off ever since. For instance, in 1592, Robert Greene seems to warn Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nashe, and George Peele, university wits, against this upstart crow—William Shakespeare. *The Parnassus Plays* (parts 1 and 2, ca. 1598–1601, part 2 published 1606), performed at the University of Cambridge, allude to Shakespeare, including Will Kemp, a player in Shakespeare's company, in part 2, preferring Shakespeare to