

to bestowe so muche labour thereon: I woulde it had happed you to fetch the counsaile at some wyser man that could haue giuen you better. But better me may set mo thynges & better also therto. And in the meane tyme, I beseeche our Lorde by the of his holy spirite in to the readers byesse, whiche inwardely may teache hym in harte without to whom, lit-

tle anayleth all that all the mouthes of the worlde, were able to teache in mennes eares. And thus good colyn fare well, tyll God byynge vs together agayn, eyther here or in heuen. Amen. finis.

**A treatise to receiue the blessed body of our lorde, sacramentally and virtually bothe, made in the yeare of our Lorde. 1534. by sp<sup>r</sup> Thomas More knyghte, whyle he was prysoner in the towre of London, whiche he entituled thus as foloweth.**  
**To receiue the blessed body of our lorde.**  
 sacramentally and virtually bothe.



**L**hey receiue the blessed body of our lorde bothe sacramentally and virtually, whiche in dew manner and worthely, receiue the blessed sacrament. When I saie, worthily, I meane not, that any man is so good, or can be so good, that his goodnesse could make him of very ryght and reaso, worthy to receiue into his vile earthly body, that holie blessed glorious fleathe and bloude of almighty god hym selfe, with his celestall soule therein, and with the maiestie of his eternall godhed: but that he maye prepare him self, working with the grace of god, to stande in such a state as the incomparable goodnesse of god, will of his lyberall bounte, vouchesafe to take and accept for worthy, to receiue his owne inestimable pfectious bodie, into the bodye of so synple a seruaunt.

Suche is the wonderfull bounte of almighty god, that he not only doth vouchesafe, but also doeth deelyte, to be with men, if they prepare to receiue him with honest and clene soules, wherof he saith: *Delitiae mee esse cum filiis hominum*, My deelyte and pleasures are to bee with the sonnes of menne.

And howe can we doubt, that god desireth to be with the sonnes of men, when the sonne of god, & verie almighty god, hym selfe, lyked not onely to become the

son of man, that is to say, the son of Adam the first man, but ouer that, in hys innocent manhod to suffer his paynfull passion, for the redemptyon and restitucion of man.

In remembrance and memo<sup>r</sup>ial toberof, he disdaineth not to take for worthye suche men, as wilfully make not theim selfe vnworthy, to receiue the selfe same blessed body into their bodies, to the inestimable welthe of their soules. And yet of his high soueraigne patience, he refuseth not to entre bodilly into vile bodies of those, whose filthye mindes refuse to receiue him graciously into their soules. But than do such folke receiue him onely sacramentally, and not virtually: that is to witte, they receiue his very blessed body into theirs, vnder the sacramental sygne, but they receiue not the thinge of the sacrament, that is to wit, the vertue and the effecte thereof, that is to saie, the grace, by whiche they shal bee lyuely membris incorporate in Chyestes holie mysticall body: but in stede of that liuegrace, they receiue their iudgment, and their dampnation.

And some suche, by the outgator & enormite of their deably synfull purpose, in whiche they presume to receiue that blessed body, descreue to haue the deuil, (thoughe the sufferance of god) personally so to enter into their beastes, that they neuer haue the grace after to casse hym out: but like as a man with byrdell and spurte rydeth and ruleth an horse, and

**A**nd make the him goe whiche waye hee lyfse to guide him, so doeth the diuell by his inward saggestions, gouerne and guide the man, & bydel him from al god and spurre him into al euill, till he finally dypue him to al mischiefe, as he did the false traitour Judas, that sinfully receiued that holy body, whom the deuill dyd therfore first carie out about the traitorous detch of the selfe same blessed bodye of his most louyng maister, which he so late so sinfully receiued, & within a fewe houres after, vnto the desperate destruction of hym selfe.

**A**nd therfore haue we gret cause, with great dyed and reuerence, to consider wel the state of oure owne soule, when wee shall go to the wynde of God, and as nere as wee can (with helpe of his specyall grace, diligently prayed for before) purge and cleanse our soules by confession, contricion, and penance, with full purpose of forsakynge from thenseforth, h̄ proude desyres of the deuyl, the greedy couetise of wyrtched wyrdly welthe, & the foule affection of the fylthy fleshe, and bee in full mynde to perseuer and continue in the wayes of God and holy clenness of spirite: lest that if wee presume so vneruerently, to receiue this p̄cious margarite, this pure perle, the blessed body of our sauoure hym selfe, contayned in the sacramentall sygne of breade, that lyke a softe of swyne, wyrtynge in the dirte, and wallowynge in the myre, we treade it vnder the fylthye feete of oure foule affections, whyle we sette moze by them than by it, entendinge to walke and wallowe in the puddell of foule fylthy synne, therwith the legion of deuyls maye gette leaue of Chryste, so to enter into vs, as they gat leaue of hym to enter into the hogges of Cenezareth: and as they ran forth with them, and neuer stined, till they drowned th̄ in h̄ sea, so ren on with vs (but if God of his gret

**M**ercy refrayne them) geue vs the grace to repente) els not sayle to d̄owne vs in the deepe sea of euerlasting sorowe.

**O**f this greate outragious perill, the blessed apostle sayuete Paule geueth vs gracious warnynge, where he sayeth in his fyrste epylle to the Cozinthies: *Quicumque manducauerit panem & biberit calicem domini indigne, reus erit corporis & sanguinis domini: Who so euer eat the bread and drinke h̄ cuppe of our lord vnworthyly, he shall be giltie of the body and bloud of our lord.*

**H**ere is (good chryssen reders) a dyed full and terryble sentence, that god here

(by the mouth of his holy apostle) geueth agaynste all them, that vnworthyly receiue this most blessed sacrament, that their parte shall be with Plate and the Jewes, and with that false traitour Judas: sith god reputerh the vnworthy receauiing & eatyng of his blessed body, for a lyke heynous offence agaynste his maister, as he accõpterh theirs that wyngfully and cruelly kylled him.

**A**nd therfore to the intent, that we may auoyde well this importable daunger, and in suche wyse receiue the bodye and blud of our lord, as god may of his goodnesse accepte vs for worthy, and therfore not only entre with his blessed fleshy and blud sacramentally and bodily into our bodies, but also with his holy spirit graciously and effectually into our soules, saint Paule, in h̄ place afore remembred, sayth: *Probet seipsum homo, & sic de pane illo edat, & de calice bibat: Let a man proue him self, and so cate of that breade, and drinke of that cuppe. But than in what wyse shall we proue our selfe: we may not go rashly to goddes boozde, but by a conuenient tyme taken before. Wee muste (as I began to saye) consider wel and examine surely, what state our soule standeth in.*

**I**n whiche thinge it will be not onely ryght harde, but also peradventure impossible, by any possible diligence of our self, to atteine vnto the very ful vndoubted surctie therof, without spectall reuelacion of god. For as the scripture saith *Nemo uiuens scit, utrum odio vel amore dignus sit, No manne liuyng knoweth, whether he bee worthy the saucor or hatred of god. And in another place: Etiam si simplex fuero, hoc ipsum ignorabit anima mea: If I be simple, that is to say, without syn, that shall not my mynde surely knowe.*

**B**ut god yet in this point is of his high godnes content, if we do the diligence h̄ we can, to se that we be not in h̄ purpose of any deadly syn. For though it may be that for al our diligence, god (whose eie percerh much moze deper into h̄ botome of our hert, then our owne doth) may see therein some suche syn as we can not see there our self, for which S. Paule saith: *Nullius mihi conscius sum, sed non in hoc iustificatus sum. In myne owne conficience I knowe no thing, but yet am I not therby iustified, yet our true diligence done in the serche, God of his high bountie so farre furth accepteth, that he imputerh not anye suche secreete lurkyng sinne, vnto oure charge for an vnworthy receiuinge of this blessed sacramente, but rather the*

strenght

Matth. 23.  
Marke. 9.  
Luce. 8.

1. Cor. 10.

1. Cor. 11.

Eccle. 31.

Job, 9.

1. Cor. 4.

Strength and vertue thereof, pourgeth and cleanseth that sinne.

In thys prouinge and examinacon of oure selfe, which Saynt Paule spea keth of, one very speciall poynt must be, to proue and examine our selfe, and see that we be in the right sayth and beltefe concerning that holpe blessed sacramēt it selfe: that is to wytte, that we verelye belleue, that it is, as in dede it is, vnder the fourme and likenesse of bzeadde, the very blessed bodye, fleshe and bloude of our holy sauour Christe himselfe, the verpe selfe same body, and the verpe selfe same bloude, that dyed and was shedde vppon the crosse for oure synne, and the thirde daye glorioulye did arise agayn to life, and with the soules of holy sain tes sette oute of hell, ascended and flyed vp wonderfullpe into heauen, and there sitteth on the ryghte hande of the father, and shall visibly descend in gret glozy to iudge the quicke and the dead, and rewarde all menne after their woꝝ kes.

We must (I saye) see, that we syme ly belleue, that this blessed sacramente is not a bare sygne, or a figure, or a to ken of that holpe bodye of Christe: but that it is in perpetuall remembraunce of his bitter passion, that he suffered for vs, the selfsame precious bodye of Christ that suffered it by his owne almightye power and vnspokeable godnesse, con secrated and geuen vnto vs.

And this poynt of beltefe, is in the re ceining of this blessed sacrament of such necessitie and such weighte, with them that haue yeres & discrecion, that with out it, they receiue it playnely to theyꝝ damnacion. And that poynte belieued verpe full and fastlye, must nedes bee a great occasion, to moue any man in all other poyntes to receiue it wel. For note well the woꝝdes of Saynt Paule ther in: *Qui manducat de hoc pane, & bibit de calice indig ne, iudicium sibi inducat & bibit, non diuilians cor pus domini.* He that eateth of this bzeadde, and drinketh of this cuppe vnwoꝝthily, eateth and drinketh iudgemente vppon hymselfe, in that he discerneth not the the bodye of our lord.

Loe here this blessed apoffle well de clareth, that he, which in any wyse vn woꝝthily receiueth this most excellent sacramente, receiueth it vnto his owne damnacyon, in that he well declareth by his euill demenour toward it, in his vnwoꝝthly receiuing of it, that he discer neth it not, nor iudgeth it, nor taketh it

for the very bodye of our lord, as in dede it is.

And verely it is harde, but that thys poynt diepely rooted in our bzeif, should sette all our hearte in a feruour of deuoc ion, toward the woꝝthpe receiuing of that blessed bodye.

But surely there can be no doubt on the tother syde, but that if anye man be lieue, that it is Christes very body, and yet is not enflamed to receiue hym deuoutely thereby, that man were liklye to receiue this blessed sacrament verpe coldely, and farre from all deuocion, if he belieued that it wer not his body, but onely a bare token of him in stede of hys bodye.

But now hauing the full saythe of this poynt fastly grounded in our hert, of the thing which we receiue is the very blessed bodye of Christ, I trust there shall not greatly nedes anye greete infirmacion farther to teache vs, or anye greatte exhortacion farther to stirre and excite vs, with a humble maner and reuerent behaueour to receiue hym.

For if we will but consider, if there were a great woꝝldly pꝛince, which for speciall fauour that he bare vs, woulde come visite vs in our owne house, what a businesse we woulde then make, and what a woꝝke it woulde be for vs, to see that our house were tcinmed vp in euery poynt, to the best of our possible pow er, and euery thing so prouided and or dered, that he should be by his honoura ble receiuing, perceiue what affection we beare him, and in what high estima tion we haue hym: we shoulde sone by the comparing of that woꝝldly pꝛince, and this heauenly pꝛince together (be twene which twayne is farre lesse com parison, then is betwene a man and a mouse) enfourme and teache oure selfe with howe lowely mynde, howe tender louing hert, howe reuerēt humble maner we should endeuour our selfe to receiue this gloriouus heauenly kyng, the kyng of all kinges, almightye God hymselfe, that so louinglye darthe vouchsafe to en tre, not onely into our house (to whiche the noble man Centurio, knowledged hymselfe vnwoꝝthpe) but hys precious bodie into oure vyle wretched carkas, and his holpe spirite into our poꝝe sim ple soule.

What diligence can here suffise vs: What solicitude can we thynke here y nough: agaynste the cummyng of thys almightye king, cummyng for so speci all

**A**ll gracious fauoure, not to putte vs to cost, not to spende of oures, but to enryche vs of hys, & that after so manifold deaddely dyspleasures done him so kindly by vs, agaynst so manye of his incomparable benefites befoze done vnto vs. Howe woulde we now labour & fozele, that the house of our soule (which god were cummyng to reste in) shoulde neyther haue anye poysoned spyder oz cobwebbe of deaddelye spynne hangyng in the roufe, nor so much as a strawe oz a feather of any lyghte lewde thoughte, that we myght spee in the stowe, but we would swepe it awaye.

**B**ut for as muche (good chrysten readers) as wee neither can atteyne thys greate poynte of fayth, nor anye other vertue, but by the speciall grace of God, of whose high godnes euerye good thing cummeth. (For as Saynt James sayth: *Omne datum optimum, & omne donum perfectum, de sursum est descendens a patre luminum.* Euery good gyfte, and euerye perfitt gyfte, is from a boue descending from the father of lightes) let vs therfoze praye for hys gracious helpe in the atteyning of hys fayth, and for his helpe in the clenstyng of oure soule agaynst hys cummyng, that he maye make vs worthy to receiue hym worthyly. And euer lette vs of our own parte, feare our vntowrthynesse, and on his parte trust boldelye vppon hys godnesse, if we forlowe not to worke with him for our owne parte. For if we wplynglye vppon the truste and counferte of hys godnesse, leane oure owne endeour vndowne, than is our hope no hope, but a very soule presumpcion.

**T**hen when we come vnto hys holpe boarde, into the presence of hys blessed boode, lette vs consider his high glorious maiestye, whiche hys high godnes there hydeth from vs, & the proper forme of his holy flesh couereth vnder þe forme of bzeadde, both to kepe vs from abasement, suche as we coulde not peraduenture abide, if we (such as we yet be) shoulde see and receiue him in hys own fourme such as he is, and also for the increase of the merite of our fayth in the obedientie beliefe of that thing at his commaundement, wherof our eyen and our reason seme to thewe vs the contrary.

And yet for as much as although we belieue it, yet is therin many of vs, that belieue verpe faynte and farre fro the poynte of suche vigour and strength, as woulde God it hadde, lette vs saye vnto him with the father that had the dume

sonne: *Credo dominum, adiua. adiuera. dultatem meam.* I believe Lozde, but helpe thou my lack of belief: and with hys blessed Apostles, *Domine, adauge nobis fidem.* Lord increase fayth in vs. Lette vs also with the poze Publicane, in knowledg of oure owne vntowrthynesse, saye with all mekenesse of hearte, *Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori.* Lozde God bee mercifull to me synner that I am. And with the Centurio, *Domine non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum.* Lozde I am not worthy, that thou shouldest come into my house.

And yet with al this remembraunce of our own vntowrthynesse, and therfoze the gret reuerence, feare and dreawe for our owne part, lette vs not forgeatte on the tother syde to consider his ineffimable godnesse, whiche disceigneth not for all our vntowrthynesse, to come vnto vs, and to be receiued of vs.

But likewyse as at the sight oz receiuyng of thys excellent memoziell of his death (for in the remembraunce therof, dothe he thus consecrate and gene hys owne blessed flesh and bloude vnto vs) we must with tender compassion, remember and call to mynde the bitter paynes of hys mosse peynfull passyon. And yet therewithall reioyce and be gladd in the consideracion of hys incōparable kindnesse, whiche in hys so suffering for vs, to oure ineffimable benefite he thewed and declared towarde vs. So must we be both soze afeard of our owne vntowrthynesse, and yet therewith bee ryghte gladd and in great hope at the consideracion of his vnmearurable godnesse.

Saynte Elizabeth, at the visitacion and salutation of our blessed ladye, hauyng by reuelacion the sure inwarde knowledge, that our ladye was conceiued with our Lozde, albeit that she was her selfe suche, as elles for the diuersitic betwene their ages, she well myghte and woulde haue thought it but conuenient and metely, that her young cousin should come visite her, yet now becaufe she was mother to our Lozde, she was soze ameruayled of her visitacion, and thoughte her selfe farre vntowrthy thereto: and therfoze sayde vnto her, *Vnda hoc, ut veniat mater domini mei ad me?* Whereof is this, that the mother of our lord shoulde come to me? But yet for all the abasement of her own vntowrthynesse she conceiued throughtlye such a gladd blessed counferte, that her holpe chyld saynt John the Baptyste hopped in her bellye for ioye: Whereof she sayde, *Vt*

Laba. 1.

*Facta est vox salutationis tue in auribus meis, exultauit gaudio infans in utero meo.* Allowe as the voice of thy salutation was in myne eares, the infante in my woumbe leyt for ioye.

Now like as saynt Elizabeth, by the spirite of god had those holy affections, both of reuerent considering her owne vnwozthines in the uisitation of h mo- ther of god, & yet for all that so great in- ward gladnes therin, let vs at this gret high uisitaciō, in which not the mother of god, as came to S. Elizabeth, but one incōparably moze excellēg the mother of god, then the mother of god passed S.

**B** Elizabeth, doth so vouchesafe to come & uisite eche of vs w hys most blessed pre- sence, that he cometh not into our houle but into our selfe, let vs I say call for the help of the same holy spirit, that than in- spired her: & pray him at this high & holy uisitacion so to inspyze vs, that we may both be abashed with the reuerent dze- de of our own vnwozthines & yet therewith conceiue a ioyful consolacion & comfort in the consideraciō of gods inestimable goodnes. And that eche of vs, like as we may wel say with gret reuerent dze- de &

**C** admiration, *Vnde hoc, ut ueniat dominus meus ad me:* Whereof is this, that my lord holde come vnto me: & not onley vnto me, but also into me, so we may with glad heart truly say at h sight of his blessed presēt, *Exultauit gaudio infans in utero meo,* the chyld in my belly, that is to wit, the soule in my body (that should be than such a chyld in innocēcie, as was that innocēt infant S. John) leapeth, god lord for ioy.

Now when we haue recued our lord & haue him in our bodye, let vs not than let him alone, and geat vs furth aboute other thinges, & loke no moze vnto him, (for little god could he, h so would serue any geast) but let all our businesse be about him. Let vs by deuout prayer talke to him, by deuout meditaciō talke with him. Let vs say with the prophete: *Audiam quid loquatur in me dominus,* I will heare what our lord will speake with in me.

Psalm. 54.

For surely if we set asyde all other thin- ges, & attend vnto him, he will not fayle with god inspiracions, to speake suche thinges to vs within vs, as shal serue to the great spiritual comfort & profite of our soule. And therfore let vs with Mar- tha prouide, h al our outward businesse maye be percepting to hym, in makyng chere to him, & to his companye for hys sake: h is to wit, to poze folke, of whiche he taketh every one, not only for his dis- ciple, but also as for himselfe. For hym

self sayth: *Quamdiu fecistis mi de hiis fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.* That that you haue

done to one of the leaste of these my bre- thren, you haue done it to my self. And let us with Mary also sit in deuout me- ditacion, and hearken wel what our sa- uioz, beyng now our geast, wil inward- ly say vnto vs. Nowe haue we a spectall time of prayer, whyle he that hath made vs, he that hath bought vs, he whom we haue offended, he that shall iudgc vs, he that shall either dāne vs or saue vs, is of hys gret goodnes become our geast, and is personallye present within vs, & that for none other purpose, but to be seued vnto for pardon, & so thereby to saue vs.

Let vs not lese this tyme therfore, suffer not this occasion to slip, whiche we can little tell whether euer we shall geat it agayn or neuer. Let vs endeuoze our self to kepe him still, & let vs say with hys .ij. disciples that wer going to the castel of Cmaus: *Mane nobiscum domine,* Tarpe with vs god lord, & then shall we be sure, that

Mark. 24.

he wil not go from vs, but if we vnkind- ly put him from vs. Let vs not play like the people of Genesareth, which prayed hym to depart out of their quarters, be- cause they lost their hogges by him, whē in stede of the hogges he saued the man, out of whom he cast the legion of devils that after destroyed the hogges. Let not vs likewise rather putte god from vs by vnlawfull loue of worldly winning, or soule fyltby lust, rather then for the pro- fit of our soule to forbear it. For sure may we be, that whē we ware such, god will not tarpe with vs, but we put hym vnkyn- dly from vs. For let vs not do as dyd the people of Hierusalem, which on

**P** Palm Sunday receiued Christ royally & ful deuoutly with processiō: and on the fryday after put him to a shameful pas- sion. On the sunday cryed, *Benedictus qui uenit in nomine domini,* Blessed be he that cum- meth in the name of our lord, and on the fryday cryed out, *Non hunc, sed Barrabam,* We will not haue hym but Barrabas: On the sūday cryed, *Osanna in excelsis,* on the fry- day, *Tolle, tolle, crucifige eū.* Sure if we receue hym neuer so wel, noz neuer so deuout-

Math. 21.

Mark. 11.

Luke. 19.

John. 12.

ly at Easter: yet whensoever we fall as- ter to such wretched sinneful liayng, as casteth our lord in such wise out of our soules, as his grace tarieth not with vs, we shewe our self to haue receued hym in such maner as those Jewes dyd. For we dwe as much as in vs is, to crucifye Christe agayn: *Iterum* (sayeth S. Paule) *crucifigentes filium Dei.*

Heb. 6.

Let

**Luke. 19.**  
**¶** Let vs (god chryſten readers) receiue  
 him in ſuch wyſe, as did the god Publi-  
 cane Zacheus, whiche when he longed  
 to ſee Chryſte, & becauſe he was but low  
 of ſtature, did clymbe by into a tree: our  
 Lozde ſeeing hys deuocion; called vnto  
 hym and ſayde: Zachee, come of and  
 come downe: for thys day muſt I dwell  
 with thee. And he made haſte and came  
 downe, and very gladdely receiued hym  
 into his houſe. But not onely receiued  
 him with a ioy of a light & ſome ſpyding  
**¶** affection, but that it might wel appeare  
 that he receiued him with a ſure earneſt  
 verteous mynd, he proued it by hys bet-  
 teous woꝝkes. For he furthwith was  
 contented to make recõpence to all men  
 that he had wronged, and that in a large  
 maner, for euery peny a grote: and yet  
 offered to geue oute alſo furthwith, the  
 tone halfe of all his ſubſtance vnto the  
 poꝝe menne, and that furthwith alſo, by  
 and by, without any longer delaye. And  
**¶** therfoze he ſayde not: Thou ſhalte here  
 that I ſhal geue it: but he ſayde: *Ecce dimi-  
 dium bonorum meorum do pauperibus.* No, loke  
 god loꝝd, the tone halfe of my goodes I  
 doe geue vnto poꝝe men.

With ſuch alacritie, with ſuch quick-  
 nes of ſpिरite, with ſuch gladdeness, and  
 ſuch ſpiritnall reioyſing, as thys man  
 receiued our Lozde into hys houſe, our  
 loꝝd geue vs the grace to receue his bleſ-  
 ſed body and blond, his holye ſoule, and

his almighty godhed both, into our bo-  
 dyes and into our ſoules, that the fruite  
 of our god woꝝkes may beare witneſſe  
 vnto our conſcience, that we receue him  
 woꝝthely, and in ſuch a ful fayth, and  
 ſuch a ſtable purpoſe of god liuing, as  
 we be bounden to doe. And then ſhal god  
 geue a gracious ſentence and ſape vpon  
 our ſoule, as he ſayd vpon Zacheus: *Ho-  
 die ſalus facta eſt huic domui.* Thys day is helth **Luke. 19.**

and ſaluacion come vnto thys houſe:  
 whiche that holye bleſſed perſone of  
 Chryſte, whiche we verely in the  
 bleſſed ſacramente receiue,  
 through the merite of hys  
 bytter paſſion (where-  
 of he hath ordeined  
 hys owne bleſ-  
 ſed body, in  
 that bleſ-  
 ſed ſa-  
 cra-

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