

and expand each human spirit becomes a matter of deep interest indeed, but of an interest unmixed with anxiety or perplexity. Nor should any timid desire to keep the past unique shut off the hope that these eras of revelation are part of a course of evolution; that the Water of Life shall—when and how we know not—once again become steam, and fling its dynamic influence on lives fettered within the province of the things that are seen and temporal. At that hour these outward things shall become intelligible as a language to express the unseen and eternal, the only realities of human life.

JULIA WEDGWOOD.

*THE OBJECTIVE ASPECT OF THE LORD'S
SUPPER.*

A MORE adequate conception of the sacraments is probably one of the most vital desiderata of present-day Protestantism. The ascendancy of Ritualism has compelled many people to think out their position afresh, and to recognize the value of clear and worthy ideas on the subject. Further, the controversy is one which has a great history behind it, rather more closely connected with the form the problem assumes to-day than we commonly find to be the case in doctrinal discussions. For these and other reasons the question of the Eucharist continues to be one of inexhaustible importance.

The purpose of the following pages is to consider briefly the objective aspect of this sacrament. To state the matter compendiously, what is the gift bestowed in communion, and what is the relation of this gift to the elements of bread and wine? This restriction of the issues means, in the first place, that we must leave on one side the critical questions which have recently been raised about the evan-

gical narrative of the institution. Scholars like Jülicher and Spitta are disposed to deny that the earliest tradition, represented by Matthew and Mark, exhibits any traces of a command given by Jesus to observe the sacrament perpetually; and Spitta actually goes the adventurous length of suggesting that in what took place in the upper room no reference was made, or intended, to the death of Christ at all. We cannot discuss these critical conjectures now. But it may be said that we have what seem to be overwhelming reasons for continuing to believe that St. Paul, in his statements to the Corinthian Church, was simply passing on what had come to him from authentic sources, and ultimately went back to Christ Himself. If St. Paul was really the creator of the Lord's Supper, he had even more to do with the genesis of Christianity than the Tübingen school itself believed. Such views, though infinitely ingenious, produce no conviction.

Again, we must leave on one side the history of Eucharistic doctrine. In particular I do not propose to enter upon any investigation of patristic teaching on the Eucharist. For one thing, we must never forget the famous dictum of Principal Cunningham, *à propos* of a difficult Eucharistic statement in Justin Martyr: "It holdstrue of this, as of many other passages in the writings of the fathers, which have given rise to much learned discussion in modern times, that it really has no definite meaning; and that if we could call up its author, and interrogate him on the subject, he would be utterly unable to tell us what he meant when he wrote it." Moreover you can prove almost anything out of the Fathers. An appeal to these writings invariably results in a great deal of *ex parte* quotation, in which passages unpropitious to the appellant's theory are left severely alone. For instance, Anglican writers seldom consent to face squarely the language used by the Fathers regarding the effect of consecration on the water of baptism, or to learn the

caution it suggests to the interpreter of similar patristic sayings about the bread and wine. On the Fathers' general teaching however it may be said broadly that while from the earliest times—at least from Justin onwards—there existed the form of language which was not unnaturally to give birth to sacramentarian conceptions, yet individual writers, and these the greatest, showed all along that they were occasionally conscious of being on dangerous ground, and persisted in drawing distinctions which seemed to them to protect the truth from contamination by doctrines less than Christian. Thus, in a well known passage of his Commentary on Hebrews, Chrysostom says: "We do not then offer a different sacrifice, as the high priest formerly did, but always the same; or rather *we celebrate a memorial of a sacrifice.*" Similarly, the fact that Augustine gives the mere likeness of the elements to the Body and Blood of Christ as the reason why they are *called* the Body and Blood of Christ, appears, as Dr. Dale has urged, "hardly reconcilable with the hypothesis that he believed that in any sense they actually became the Body and Blood of Christ." But as time went on the distinction between material and spiritual conceptions of the Eucharist tended to fade out of all but the profoundest minds; and we can hardly close our eyes to the rapid development and external victory of the sacrificial view, together with a tendency to take for granted that the visible rite invariably carried with it benefit to the soul. Either conception, the more physical or the more Scriptural, could be drawn out of the sacramental language according to the sympathies of the interpreter. We may apply to the *Corpus Patrum*, as a source of Eucharistic doctrine, the old distich once daringly applied to Scripture:

Hic liber est in quo quaerit sua dogmata quisque;
Invenit hic pariter dogmata quisque sua.

Passing from these preliminary topics, let us now inquire,

Can we lay down any limiting points of doctrine between which the truth about the Lord's Supper may, or even must, be conceived to lie? Can we enunciate any principles or criteria by which we may be guided, not only in avoiding error but in reaching truth? One or two tentative principles of this kind I should like to suggest.

First, we cannot accept *any theory which of necessity involves that the first celebration in the upper room was not a true communion.* In the New Testament the Supper, as partaken of daily or weekly, is regarded as reproducing, in all its essentials, the solemn and touching rite inaugurated on the night on which the Lord Jesus was betrayed. The Church perpetuates in her communion-feast the last supper of her Saviour. Not only would the view found in the New Testament become unintelligible if later celebrations were cut off from historical continuity with the night of institution, but this would equally be the case if the inaugural rite were somehow detached from those which followed, and placed upon a lower plane of reality. Now this latter view is an inevitable consequence of certain theories. Take, for example, the doctrine of the sacrament put forward by Bishop (then Canon) Gore, in his deeply impressive book *The Body of Christ*. There we are taught that the gift bestowed in the Eucharist is the real flesh and blood of the glorified Saviour. How then can it be denied that the body given to believers now is very different from that imparted to the Twelve in the upper room? And is not this tantamount to saying that the first celebration was not, in the full sense of the words, a true communion? It is interesting to find that the difficulty gave Bishop Gore some trouble, for he deals with it in a special note, which virtually concedes the point. "How could the Eucharist," he asks, "be instituted before the Passion? How could Christ, while yet in His mortal body, give His disciples His flesh and blood to eat? To this question

there is, I think, no answer, except by regarding the institution of the Eucharist as an anticipation of glory akin to the Transfiguration." Such a conclusion obviously reduces the first celebration to an inferior level of essential meaning. An element of anticipation in the first rite there was, beyond all question, but it was anticipation of the Cross.

Now we need only hold firmly to the conviction that in every vital respect what took place on the night of institution was a true communion, perfect and complete, to be led naturally and consistently to construe the whole transaction in genuinely spiritual terms. When we inquire what Jesus meant by the words "This is My body," and what is the sense they must have borne to the disciples' ears, it hardly seems too much to say that the physical identification of the loaf and His flesh, as He sat there in His visible manhood, could not occur to any one. We must take the copula *ἐστίν* as significant of symbolic existence; otherwise, as Meyer succinctly puts it, "the identity of subject and predicate would form a conception equally impossible to Speaker and hearers." There can be little doubt that the plausibility which sacramentarian writers have given to their literal theories is due, in no small degree, to their confining their attention, and the attention of their readers, to the Eucharist as it is celebrated now, thus refusing to allow the mind to verify its ideas by reference to the initial rite, and virtually denying that in the first celebration the grace of the sacrament was really conveyed to the hearts of the Apostles. It would seem, then, that we may usefully find here a principle by which sacramental doctrines are to be judged.

Second, we cannot accept *any theory which implies that, by participating in the Lord's Supper, unbelievers receive a spiritual gift.* The view in question is widely held and passionately defended. The complete title of Dr. Pusey's great book on the Real Presence, published in 1857, is as

follows: *The Real Presence of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ: the doctrine of the English Church, with a Vindication of the Reception by the Wicked, and of the Adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ truly Present*, and some of the most vehemently argued pages it contains are in support of the thesis that unbelievers also partake of Christ's flesh and blood. In his recent work Bishop Gore comes to similar conclusions. It is inevitable indeed that he should. If "the spiritual gift of Christ's Body and Blood is, in some way, attached to the elements before they are eaten or drunken, and independently of such eating and drinking," we cannot marvel that he should find no difficulty in believing that here, as in baptism, even a bad man really receives a spiritual endowment of his nature, though of course it ministers not to his growth in grace, but to his greater hurt. It is not difficult to discern, and in some measure to sympathize with, the motives which underlie such arguments. Theologians like Pusey and Gore are concerned, above all else, to ensure the objectivity of the Presence. They are resolved never to rest satisfied with anything that even in appearance depends for its reality on merely moral and spiritual conditions in the recipient. The Body and Blood of Christ must be present prior to reception, and independently of the individual's faith. So far as their interest lies in ensuring that the benefit of the sacrament shall be certain and indubitable to believers, this is a mood of mind which calls forth our earnest sympathy. It is to be found conspicuously in Luther, and led him also to contend fiercely that even admittedly unworthy participants received the flesh and blood of the Lord. It is a different matter when, as Mr. Anderson Scott remarks, "the real importance of the objectivity of the Presence is that it is necessary to the theory of a Eucharistic sacrifice." When men defend a view of the nature of the Saviour's Presence

which commits them, in Dr. Dale's strong words, to the assertion "that every tide-waiter who took the sacrament to qualify for office, and went away from the altar to celebrate his appointment with a drunken carouse, received Christ," we may be sure they have gone wrong somewhere. Either their reasoning is faulty or their premises are false. We are no longer in the world of ideas and standards created by the New Testament. We are certain by instinct that so unmoral and materialistic a view of what connexion with Christ even at its lowest must be, is no lineal descendant of Apostolic teaching. The argument which pleads for objectivity does not move us. We have all the guarantees for objectivity we require in Christ's own promise, a far surer foundation for the reality of His presence than the fallible sacramental logic of men can be. It is interesting to recall at this point Rabbi Duncan's comment on the line in Aquinas' hymn on the Eucharist, *Sumunt boni, sumunt mali*. "They do no such thing. This doctrine is my abhorrence. There is an eternal difference. The latter take only the shell, and miss the kernel."

Whenever we find then a theory of the Supper which involves that unworthy partakers receive some real Divine gift through eating the bread and drinking the wine, we may conclude without misgiving that it has fallen from the Christian level. Its authors have lost their way, and wandered into the world of magic, the only world where spiritual results occur quite unmediated by moral processes. That when the elements are placed in the hands of men, they are offered the grace of Christ our Lord, offered His grace even though wicked and unbelieving, we also affirm; for the Lord's Supper is a visible and acted sermon, a showing forth of the death of Christ for sinners. So that one could imagine conversion taking place at the communion-table purely as a result of the Gospel appeal made

to the human heart by all that the celebration symbolizes. But though God's grace in Christ is offered there, neither in the sacrament nor elsewhere can any spiritual gift be received without faith, and the theory which implies the opposite is *ipso facto* sufficiently condemned.

Third, we can accept *no theory which views the Eucharist as primarily a human performance, rather than a Divine means of grace.* In one sense indeed, though a subordinate sense, this sacrament may justly be regarded as a human performance. We come together for its celebration; in celebration we are conscious of obeying the Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of Me." Further, the soul is active during the service, active in the exercise of faith and love, active in that movement of consecration and self-surrender which on any theory forms an integral part of true communion. But what the principle stated above really affirms in no way excludes this. It only asserts that whenever the sacrament is conceived as supremely and predominantly a human performance, it is essentially misconceived. To use the older language of Waterland, a sacrament is rather an application of God to man than of man to God. It is indeed a transaction between persons, and therefore so far mutual. But the initiative is with God; only the response is with man. God takes the first step in the sacrament, as He has already borne all the cost of its institution. And this puts inexorably in the wrong every theory of the Supper which represents it chiefly as a human operation in which we give or declare something, rather than as a gracious ordinance of God in which we receive.

Now this is a principle which cuts two ways. It excludes, first of all, the view which we may broadly call Socinian, though it is to be found in quarters where Socinianism is abhorred. Take for example the Independent description of the Eucharistic service, as set forth in the

1833 Declaration of their faith, order and discipline.¹ Here it is declared that the rite is to be celebrated "as a token of faith in the Saviour, and of brotherly love." The poverty and barrenness of the doctrine underlying this statement is obvious. It directs our thoughts to the disposition of man, not to the disposition of God. It implicitly represents the Supper as being rooted in the love of believers to Christ, rather than in the love of Christ to believers. The sacrament is designed to show forth, not the sacrifice of Christ in His death, but the faith of man; not to seal the benefits of Christ's death to all who trust Him, but to draw closer the bonds of charity which unite Christian people. The fact that, as has been said, sacraments are acts originating with God, not with man, is hardly glanced at. They are described as though they had been called into being by the Church to nourish and stimulate its own life, instead of being Christ's deliberate legacy and keepsake to His people. We cannot be surprised that those to whom the sacraments appear in this light are frequently at a loss to comprehend the reason for their existence, and have even been led to speak of abolishing them altogether. On such terms the sacraments have only an artificial and external connexion with the Christian religion. There might, without serious spiritual loss, be no sacraments at all; there might conceivably be sacraments to any number.

But here, as so often, extremes meet. Rome is at one with the Socinians in teaching that the Eucharist is mainly the act of man; and not merely Rome, but the extremer Anglo-Catholics. We observe that the term *Lord's Supper* is rarely employed by adherents of this school, who prefer some designation which lays a less open emphasis on the fact that the Supper is the Lord's, and not man's. Wherever the rite is viewed as a *sacrifice*, in

¹ Cf. R. W. Dale, *Essays and Addresses*, p. 376.

which the Elements, assumed into union with our Lord's Body and Blood, are offered to God with propitiatory, or quasi-propitiatory effect, what has come to be uppermost in the theory is not the part God has in the transaction, but the part played by man. We are presenting to God what, according to the New Testament, He is in fact presenting or representing to us.

The principle that we are primarily receivers in the sacrament is fatal to all sacrificial conceptions of the matter. This decisive truth was urged with great force by Calvin. "While the Supper itself," he says, "is a gift of God which is to be received with thanksgiving, the sacrifice of the Mass pretends to pay a price to God to be received as satisfaction. Sacrifice differs from the sacrament of the Supper as widely as giving from receiving. But herein appears the wretched ingratitude of man, that when he ought to have recognized the liberality of the divine goodness, he makes God to be his debtor." Or, as Bishop Cooper put it with unanswerable force and brevity: "A sacrifice is a thing given to God: this sacrament was a thing given to us. Nothing therefore can be of nature more contrary than your sacrifice and Christ's sacrament." It was indeed a fatal and ominous day for the Church when early in the centuries men began to pass from the simpler conception of the Supper as a sacrifice in the sense that the elements used in the service are offered for the purpose by members of the congregation, to the novel and sinister notion that it is sacrificial in the sense of purifying the conscience and atoning for sin. The Church was brought into being by the one perfect sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross, and it is inconceivable that in any sense she should be able to repeat the act by which she herself was called into existence. Spiritual offerings are indeed presented to God in the Eucharist, offerings of faith, penitence, and self-surrender, but neither would *they* be acceptable save only for the

offering of Christ which the sacrament not reproduces, but commemorates. The position of the Reformed Church on this subject could not be better expressed than in the masculine verses of Tennyson, quoted by him from one of his own poems when partaking of the sacrament just before his death :

It is but a Communion, not a Mass,
No sacrifice, but a life-giving feast.

The import of the principle upon which we have been dwelling, viz. that the sacrament moves from God to man, rather than from man to God, might perhaps be formulated differently by saying that wherever the duality essential to the very idea of a sacrament has been destroyed, some serious error has crept in. A sacrament consists of two parts, the outward sign and the spiritual grace, and if either be obliterated or absorbed in the other, the result is confusion and loss. The figurative view, in which the elements are no more than naked and bare signs, completely ignores the truth that through participation Divine grace is conveyed to the faithful soul. Were the sacrament merely symbolical and didactic, could we adequately describe it as but a picture of Christ's death, the visible breaking of the bread and pouring out of the wine would suffice, without distribution and without participation, for the *picture* of Christ's death would be complete in the breaking and pouring forth. No better instance than the figurative view, indeed, could be found to prove how much harm has been done to sacramental thought by the notion that the sacraments are meant to shadow forth certain doctrinal truths, rather than to unite us to Christ Himself. On the other hand, transubstantiation is guilty of the converse error of obliterating the visible sign. If spiritual grace is to be symbolized, the symbol must exist as such. The visible has its rights, and we tamper with them at our peril.

The doctrine of the Lord's Supper on its objective side, to which we are brought by this process of elimination, may be stated broadly as follows. In receiving with faith the symbols of Christ's flesh and blood we receive Christ Himself. The whole is a spiritual transaction between persons, a spiritual conveyance of Christ to the soul of the believer. We feed upon Him spiritually in so intimate and real a fashion that He could describe it as eating His body. When the bread and wine are put into our hands, and we partake of them worthily, we have received in and through an emblematic action all that Christ's death won for us. And if we be asked—how do you know that this is true? we reply, *first*, because we have Christ's own promise for it, and *second*, because it is vouched for by Christian experience. No other grounds of religious belief will bear being tested by the test of time and human life than these two—Divine authority, which fulfils and realizes itself in the experiences of the pious soul. We can be assured of spiritual things in no other way, but in this way we can be assured of them.

In exposition and defence of this view, which I believe to be the Reformed doctrine in its simplest terms, much might be said. I may point out, for example, that it possesses this signal merit above some theories which have appeared in the course of the doctrinal evolution, that it keeps the entire discussion on the *personal* plane. It exhibits the sacrament as a real communion, a direct dealing between one spirit and another. And this is the real complaint, in the last resort, which we must press against Ritualistic and Romish theories: they attempt to explain the whole matter in terms that apply to things rather than to persons, or, in the technical language of philosophy, they operate with sub-personal categories. It is for this reason that they are so much in love with the mysterious, as distinct from the mystical, aspect of the sacrament. The Eucharist is to them a mystery, or it is nothing. And the mystery is

essentially of the kind that leans towards magic, i.e. it is mediated by the action of matter upon spirit rather than by moral motives and forces. Beyond all question for us also the Supper is a mystery, and this element we reverently acknowledge. I do not say we shall ever be able to solve the mystery of it, but we may understand in what the mystery consists; and this is what many theories are deficient in. The mystery must be looked for in the fitting place. The sacrament is mysterious in precisely the same sense as conversion or prayer is mysterious; i.e. in every case of contact and interaction between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man there remains a gracious supernatural element beyond our power to analyze or subsume under purely intellectual conceptions. But this form of mystery, as it is found in the sacrament, we can connect with the teaching of Jesus, and with our own religious experience. It is spiritual, not external or physical. It lifts up the soul with the presentiment of a higher and diviner world than that in which we ordinarily move and have our being. Above all, it does not meet us with the blank unintelligible fact of portent and prodigy, of miraculous changes in the bread and wine which have no thinkable relation to the effects they are supposed to produce on spiritual life and moral character.

This tendency to depersonalize the sacramental transaction is illustrated very clearly when, as so often, the presence of Christ is placed in the elements rather than in the hearts of the receivers. The real and objective presence of Christ is confused with His local presence. There is a kind of materialism in this. Those who plead for it are not content till they can point to something visible, tangible, edible, which shall guarantee the reality of a supernatural gift. It has been said that the Atonement is a miracle for ethics, as rising far above the ethical plane; but this is a miracle for ethics as sinking beneath it. We

cannot consent to give the mere elements the importance this view assigns them. As mere elements they are nothing. They must be taken up organically and instrumentally into a personal operation ere they become significant. They draw their meaning and efficacy from one Person, and they can convey it only to another person, spiritually made ready for its reception. Abstract, hypostatize, deify the elements apart from Christ's actual and gracious use of them in feeding the soul, and of course it is vain to ask wherein their spiritual power can lie. Abstract the elements from the persons for whom they are designed, treat the presence or absence of communicants as a matter of no moment, and again the bread and wine cease to have a meaning. We are once more in the region of unethical mystery.

It may even be said, I think, that some of the best Reformed divines are not guiltless of depersonalizing the sacramental process, in so far as they lay a false emphasis upon the flesh and blood of Christ, in contrast to Christ Himself. Dr. Dale's noble restatement of the full Protestant doctrine was in this respect a timely service to the Church. How much fruitless debate as to whether that which is received is the natural body or the glorified, the humanity of Christ or His Divinity, might have been avoided had men clearly kept in view that what flesh and blood signify is simply the person of our Incarnate Lord! But the Reformed writers of whom I speak seem to be haunted at times by the fear that it is not enough to know that in the sacrament the soul feeds upon Christ by faith and love; they must get behind that, as they suppose, and grasp some spiritual and heavenly *substance*, by assimilating which celestial benefits become ours. Notions of this kind are to be found even in Calvin, elements which we are tempted to declare the lineal posterity of the physical idea of redemption prevalent in Greek theology. This is especially the case

in one or two passages, where Calvin alludes to the bearing of the sacrament on immortality. We may suitably bring this paper to a close by glancing briefly at some aspects of the great Reformer's doctrine of the Supper. It has often been praised, and with justice; but now and then the eulogy has been marked by a somewhat ignorant enthusiasm. The truth seems to be that in the higher reaches of his theory Calvin put forward certain speculations which have very little real meaning, and which he himself must have been at a loss to understand.

He lays extraordinary emphasis on the fact that we really partake of the actual flesh and blood of Christ. Let us take the following from the *Institutes*: "We say that Christ descends to us, both by the external symbol and by His Spirit, that He may truly quicken our souls by the substance of His flesh and blood." Or this from His tract on the Supper: "We all confess with one mouth that on receiving the sacrament in faith we are truly made partakers of *the proper substance* of the body and blood of Jesus Christ."¹ This was a modification of his attitude in the first edition of the *Institutes*, where it is stated that the very substance of Christ's body is *not* given. In all this there is, indeed, nothing to object to were it made clear simultaneously, as I do not think Calvin makes it clear, that after all what "flesh and blood" mean is not any undefinable substance, but simply Christ Himself, as a person, Incarnate and Crucified, and clothed in the gospel of His death. It is a fact worthy of remark that in the 6th chapter of St. John, after speaking in pictorial wise of our eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man, Christ appears to have desired to prevent the possibility of His words being understood in a realistic and unspiritual sense, for He deliberately chooses another form of language to end with, and says by way of explanation: "He that

¹ These illustrative passages could easily be multiplied.

eateth *Me*, even he shall live by *Me*." No doubt in emphasizing, in what seems an unfortunate manner, the presence of Christ's actual flesh and blood in the sacrament, Calvin was strongly influenced by custom, by the exigencies of his polemic, and by a natural desire to preserve the very words of Scripture. But the only interest we have in affirming our participation in Christ's *flesh and blood* is to make it clear that the Saviour whom we receive, and with whom we have real communion, is an Incarnate Saviour, Who died for our sins. The phrases "eat and drink" and "flesh and blood" are in strictness *both* symbolical, the former of spiritual assimilation, the latter of an Incarnate Redeemer and our interest in His death.

But what is the least satisfactory element in Calvin's theory and the surest proof that he still held in some degree to the realistic view, has now to be stated. He repeatedly enunciates what we can only call the strange conception that the soul of the believer partakes of the substance of Christ *by ascending to heaven*, and feeding upon His body there. This is made quite plain in the Catechism which he drew up for the Church of Geneva, in 1545. There, after asserting with wonderful lucidity and power that we have in the Supper not only a figure of Christ's benefits, but an application of them in their reality, he proceeds: "Q. But how can this be, when the body of Christ is in heaven, and we are still pilgrims on the earth? A. This He accomplishes by the secret and miraculous agency of His Spirit, to whom it is not difficult to unite things otherwise disjointed by a distant space. Q. You do not imagine, then, either that the body is enclosed in the bread, or the blood in the wine? A. Neither is enclosed. My understanding rather is, that in order to obtain the reality of the signs, our minds must be raised to heaven, where Christ is, and that it is improper and vain to seek Him in these earthly elements." The influence of this conception may be faintly

traced in one sentence towards the close of John Knox's well known *Fencing of the Table*, where we read: "The only way to dispose our souls to receive nourishment, relief, and quickening of His substance, is to lift up our minds by faith above all things wordly and sensible, and thereby to enter into heaven, that we may find and receive Christ, where He dwelleth undoubtedly very God and very man." Would it be too much to say that the view thus stated by Calvin is intended as an amicable rejoinder to Luther's doctrine of the ubiquity? The earlier Reformer had taught that the body of Christ is consubstantiated with the elements, and can enter into this relation in virtue of its superiority, as glorified, to the conditions of space; the later Reformer, to secure the same interest, reverses the situation, and instead of thus bringing the body of Christ down to us from heaven, raises us up to where it dwells. But it is impossible to deny that they are both speaking of the same body, or that both are inspired by the sentiment that more is needed than a spiritually real communication of grace. They are not content with personal forms of thought. It is not enough that in the sacrament we have Christ Himself; we must, besides, have His flesh and blood in some substantial and quasi-material sense. This may be thought unjust to Calvin; but that it is not so, is made at least probable by the vigorous words of Principal Cunningham, surely no unfriendly judge: "We have no fault," he says, "to find with the substance of Calvin's statements in regard to the sacraments in general, and with respect to baptism; but we cannot deny that he made an effort to bring out something like a real influence exerted by Christ's human nature upon the souls of believers, in connexion with the dispensation of the Lord's Supper—an effort which, of course, was altogether unsuccessful, and resulted only in what was about as unintelligible as Luther's consubstantiation." The real merit of Calvin's work lay in his

magnificent refutation of the doctrine of the Mass, coupled with his strenuous assertion of the objective reality of Christ's presence in the sacrament. But it will not do to lay much stress on his specific language. When he goes beyond the objective reality of the presence of Christ to affirm the presence of Christ's flesh and blood as something more and more precious—a *materia coelestis* in short—we detect the traces of his age.

In conclusion, the question may be raised whether any theory can hope to express all that the Eucharist means. Could even Christ have put into human speech all that it signifies? Surely the very fact that He went further than speech, and embodied what was at His heart in a visible act, apprizes us that something is here which no doctrine can exhaustively set forth. Wherever the human soul enters into close and personal dealings with God there will be mysteries, of love and grace and compassion on the one side, of faith and humility on the other. But they are spiritual mysteries, unutterable not because they cannot be experienced, but because they cannot be explained. So when Christ is given and received in and with the elements, and deep calleth unto deep, the line of human interpretation will find abysses of grace and blessing which its line can never sound.

This is one truth which we Protestants need to accentuate, but there is another. The Eucharist is in line with the gospel, therefore what it declares has a reality apart from human deficiencies in the administrator, nay in a certain sense apart from the faith of the receiver. In other words, as we have to do in the gospel with the finished work of Christ—with something complete and perfect in itself which empowers men to preach full salvation *now*—so in the Supper we are face to face with an offer, a gift of Christ whose reality is not conditioned by our receiving it. The blessing of the sacrament is dependent on faith,

but the reality of the grace with which Christ is filling it is not so dependent. The worth and content of this symbolical act of Christ as Host at His table *are there* irrespective of the faith of man; for salvation is of God alone. The sacramental gift is not created by the response of human trust; rather, we rest upon Christ as given, for He is the author of the rite and the soul of its present meaning.

H. R. MACKINTOSH.

THE VIRGIN-BIRTH.

THE *Nineteenth Century and After* for January contains an article, the name of the writer of which recalls "battles long ago." *Supernatural Religion* was published in 1874-1877, and is now chiefly remembered on account of the opportunity it afforded to Lightfoot of reassuring, by his massive learning and strong common sense, the righteous who were fearing that the foundations were being cast down.

"Lightfoot showed," says Dr. Salmon (*Introd. N.T.* p. 8), "that this supposed Bishop Thirlwall [to whom the book had been attributed] did not possess even a schoolboy acquaintance with Greek and Latin, and that his references were in some cases borrowed wholesale, in others did not prove the things for which they were cited, and very often appealed to writers whose opinion is of no value."

Dr. Salmon notices the work as illustrating the fundamental principle of the school of Strauss and Renan.

"The author starts with the denial of the supernatural as his fixed principle. . . . This explains their seeming want of candour: . . . why they meet with evasions proofs that seem to be demonstrative. It is because, to their minds, any solution of a difficulty is more probable than one which would concede that a miracle had really occurred."

In the present case Mr. W. R. Cassells does not bring before the public any theory of his own, but merely seeks to point the moral of what he calls "The Ripon Episode."