

## THE REAL PRESENCE.

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PERSONS or things may be present. They may be present separately or together. A person differs from something material by its power of interpenetration. Matter cannot interpenetrate matter, but personality is interpenetrative. To love is to go out of oneself and dwell in another. Lover and beloved interpenetrate. We all know how the presence of a person we love has changed our whole internal state of being. And we know more intimately personality than we know the external world. Our personality is ever with us. It is ourself in the last analysis and however much we may know about it, we have to confess that its analysis baffles our intellect and we are face to face with abysmal depths that we cannot fathom, *Omnia exeunt in mysterium*, and this is true of personality as well as of everything else.

God is transcendent and immanent. He is above all things and sustains all things. He is everywhere and we cannot visualize His personality any more than we can our own. We have to avoid the danger of Deism as well as the more subtle danger of Pantheism—a conception of the Universe which ultimately identifies it with God. The progress of scientific thought on the constitution of matter makes thinkers see that matter with all its solidity and impressive vastness may or may not be centres of electricity and so “immaterial” from the ordinary point of view that it is hard to understand how it can possess the qualities we associate with it. The further our investigation proceeds the more difficult it is for the average man to grasp the ultimate character of the constituents of the atom and to dogmatize on the possibility or impossibility of even the most surprising contentions as to its character.

But when the last word is said, the contrast between Personality and Materiality is complete. As we know Personality among men it is always associated with matter, but we can very easily conceive of Personality divorced from matter. For our identity here in earth there is a necessary connection between Personality and Matter—the character of the individual depends on the interaction of Personality and its material home and environment. When we

talk of the Divine personality we are in the presence of Personality that is not limited. But His personality possesses the power of interpenetrability, and we express this when we say that God dwells in us and we in Him. The very essence of all religious experience is communion with God who deigns to dwell in our hearts, and by His grace we are enabled to dwell in Him. His Person comes in contact with our person and, what is more, becomes part of us by the indwelling Spirit, and we are united to Him by faith. Without this fundamental fact religion would be meaningless. Union with God through Christ is the very central fact of Christian experience—it is at once the starting point of the Christian life and the ideal to which we aspire. Our Lord was one with God. As He said, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." The interpenetration of the personality of the Son and the Father was perfect, and we, in our striving after holiness, endeavour to dwell in Him and to have Him dwelling in us.

Our Lord has declared, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." He has also stated, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The meaning is plain. His Person is with His people who meet in His name, and He is pledged to be with them individually and collectively unto the end of the world. His Spirit fills the Church and dwells in the individual member. The Church is His body—not a physical Body. But as our personality exists in space and is united with our body, so in the community that is beloved by Him, His Person fills the body consisting of men and women united to Him by living Faith. Life is always connotative of the Presence of Christ. "This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." It is personal life, and the man who possesses life eternal shares the life of the Eternal God. This life persists so long as union with Him is maintained. He is our life and we owe it to His Personality interpenetrating ours.

These thoughts are regulative of all Christian communion with God. They may appear abstract and difficult to grasp, but it will not be denied that the fact of our life being hid with Christ in God carries with it conceptions that involve the fundamental relation

of person with person and a mystery that words cannot describe, but experience knows to be a realized fact in our life of communion with God. As in every other department of our conscious life, we cannot get rid of mystery, why should it be extraordinary that human thought cannot probe the secrets of the deepest facts of our spiritual life? We live in the midst of mysteries, and a mystery is neither irrational nor unintelligible when it means that we cannot place experience under an analytical investigation that will make everything plain.

The Sacrament of the Death of Christ was instituted on the eve of His Death. The disciples met together for the Paschal feast. Their minds went back to the deliverance from Egypt. They were Jews and their memories were full of what God had done for their ancestors. Their fathers had been delivered from bondage through the grace of God. He who came to show them the Father and to seal their redemption by His death was to be for them the true Passover Lamb, "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The bread that He broke and distributed, for those who trusted in Him, was representative of the Passover flesh, and the wine which was drunk by all represented the Passover blood—sprinkled as it was in the past on the lintel. He was the true Passover Lamb—the fulfilment of all that was typified in Egypt. "Take eat—this is My Body; drink ye all of this cup; this is My Blood." A new covenant was made, and in remembrance of Him who made it by His blood, they were to do as He did, and as oft as the bread was eaten and the wine drunk the death of the Lord is shown forth until He come again. He who said, "This is My Body" and "This is My Blood" had in His hands the bread and the cup. His Presence was with them in the form that they had known during their intercourse with Him. There was a clear distinction between the elements He held and they consumed and His present body and blood which they knew to be the robe of His personality. After His Resurrection and Ascension they obeyed His dying command and found in obedience His Presence with them.

The Apostolic Church fed by faith upon the Christ who in bodily form was absent from them, but in the deepest experience of their Christian life was always with them, and in obedience to His command they fed upon Him by faith as they received the elements

that had been sanctified by His use and set apart solemnly in obedience to His command as a remembrance of Him. The Lord's Supper was a feeding upon Christ by Faith and a looking forward to His coming again. Of the reality of His Presence in their midst collectively and in their hearts individually there was no manner of doubt. They knew it in experience, they had His word that He would be with them. The Presence in the Supper of the Lord was part of the fulfilment of His promise to be with them, and in experience He met them as they did what He commanded in living faith that He would dwell with them as they dwelt with Him. Those who met at His Table gathered together to meet Him and He fulfilled His promise which He has never failed to do, as His children gather together to show forth His death till He come and feed on Him by faith as they receive the Bread and Wine.

The late Bishop Moule, of Durham, thus describes the character of our Lord's Presence in the Holy Communion : <sup>1</sup>

“ I believe that if our eyes, like those of Elisha's servant at Dothan, were opened to the unseen, we should indeed behold our Lord present at our Communion. There and then, assuredly, if anywhere and at any time, He remembers His promise, ‘ Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.’ Such special presence, the promised congregational presence, is perfectly mysterious in mode, but absolutely true in fact ; no creation of our imagination or emotion, but an object of our faith. I believe that our Lord, so present, not ON the Holy Table, but AT it, would be seen Himself in our presence, to bless the Bread and Wine for a holy use, and to distribute them to His disciples, saying to all and each, ‘ Take eat, this is My Body which was given for you : Drink ye all of this ; this is My Blood of the New Covenant which was shed for you for the remission of sins.’ I believe that we should worship Him thus present in the midst of us in His living grace, with unspeakable reverence, thanksgiving, joy and love. We should revere the Bread and Wine with a profound sense of their sacredness as given by Him in physical assurance of our joyful part, as believers in Him, and so as members of Him, in all the benefits of His passion. Receiving them while beholding Him, we should, through them as His equivalent signs of His once sacrificed Body and Blood, take deep into us a fresh certainty of our perfect acceptance in Him our Sacrifice, and also of our mystical union with Him as He, once dead, now lives for us and in us, thus feeding on Him in our hearts, by faith with Thanksgiving. Receiving His signs, we should look up with renewed and inexpressible confidence through Him to the Father.”

<sup>1</sup> Fulham Conference Report, pp. 72-3.

These carefully chosen words put clearly the Scriptural teaching on the Presence of our Lord in the Holy Communion. They meet all the requirements of the words of Holy Scripture, summarize the facts of experience and emphasize the fact that the Presence of our Lord in the Sacrament is a special fulfilment of His promise to be with His people. He is present in Person to the eye of faith, and His followers feed upon Him by a living Faith shown in obedience to His command.

There are many other views as to the nature of the Presence of our Lord. Bishop Gore says that the Church has believed from the first that :—

“By consecration of the portions of bread and wine which have been solemnly set apart or offered, the spiritual gift of Christ's body and blood is, in some way, attached to these elements (however the relationship is to be described) before they are eaten and drunken, and independently of such eating and drinking.” . . . “Prior to reception and independently of the faith of the individual, the body and blood of Christ are made present ‘under the forms of’ bread and wine, or in some real though undefined way identified with them.” (*The Body of Christ*. Fourth Ed., pp. 71 ff.)

“It does not seem to me open to question that St. Paul takes it for granted that there was a real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the elements blessed in the Eucharist, such as should strike his converts with an awful dread of a careless approach to them.” (*The Holy Spirit in the Church*, pp. 134-5.)

In *The Body of Christ* Dr. Gore devotes very small space to the discussion of the New Testament evidence for the belief in the Real Presence identified with the elements. He dwells on St. Paul's language (1 Cor. x.) and concludes, “The New Testament at least confirms the Church's belief.” If we read St. Paul's statement we find that he sums up the meaning of the rite in the words, “This do in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do shew forth (proclaim) the Lord's death, till He come.” St. Paul in the last sentence adds to the Gospel narrative and by so doing teaches that he considers the Holy Communion to be a memorial of our Lord's death and means of proclaiming it until He come again. He saw the Corinthian observance disgraced by gross moral abuses and without understanding of what the solemn service really involved. He wished them to fix their attention upon the sacrificial death of our Lord. He came among them

determined to know nothing " save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Corinthian Christians failed to " discern " in the Supper of the Lord the broken body and blood shed for their redemption. Had they done so they would not have been guilty of the gross irreverence that called forth the Apostle's stern reproof. They were really guilty of the body and blood of the Lord when they closed their eyes to, and in fact made light of, the eternal realities that should be the very centre of their thought and devotion during the solemn service. Instead of confirming the objective Presence of our Lord with the elements, the words of St. Paul have an entirely different signification, and Dr. Gore reads into them teaching later than that of the New Testament.

The conception that our Lord is objectively attached in some form or other to the consecrated elements received its mediaeval development in the doctrine of Transubstantiation which had its foundation in the philosophical view of the nature of matter as consisting of substance and accidents. The substance was the hidden entity that made a thing—the accidents were the outward sensible accompaniments of the invisible substance. It is unnecessary to discuss this philosophical conception, for in spite of the adhesion of the Roman Church to it as truth, and the strange acceptance of it by a number of Anglo-Catholics, this view of the nature of matter is universally surrendered. But it lies at the very basis of Transubstantiation which can be understood from the words of the Council of Trent: " If anyone shall say that in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine remains together with the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall deny that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body and of the whole substance of the Wine into the Blood, the appearance only of the bread and wine remaining, which conversion indeed the Catholic Church most fittingly calls Transubstantiation, let him be anathema."

This remains the doctrine of the Roman Church and our Articles declare that " it cannot be proved by Holy Writ ; but it is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions." Dr. Gore rightly says " nothing in the New Testament suggests transubstantiation . . . St. Paul has no hesitation on calling the bread, after it

had been blessed 'this bread'—or saying 'there is one bread.'"

The late Rev. W. J. E. Bennett wrote: "Who myself adore, and teach the people to adore, the consecrated elements," but he afterwards altered the words into: "The real and actual Presence of our Lord under the form of Bread and Wine upon the altars of our Churches," and "Who myself adore, and teach the people to adore, Christ present in the Sacrament under the form of Bread and Wine, believing that under their veil is the sacred Body and Blood of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The words were the subject of prolonged judicial proceedings, which resulted in the acquittal of Mr. Bennett. Two comments on the acquittal deserve attention. The author of *The Life of Mr. Bennett* writes: "The doctrines for which Mr. Bennett was prosecuted not being so excluded" (by the barriers against Roman additions) "must therefore be the doctrines of the English Church, and one can only commend the honesty and logic of those who in consequence of the Bennett judgment, being unable to accept these doctrines, left the Church for dissent." This is a plain claim that the doctrines set forth in the above words are the doctrine of our Church and none other can be honestly held within the Church. On the other hand the Royal Commission in 1906 reported:

"The judgment of the Judicial Committee in the Bennett case laid down certain principles which may be here fitly considered. They can and must be clearly distinguished from the findings of the Court with regard to the clergyman then under prosecution. His words were held to be 'rash and ill-judged' and 'perilously near a violation of the law.' He was acquitted, because the Court, having regard to the penal character of the proceedings, and to the defendant's right to the 'benefit of any reasonable doubt,' thought his words capable of a construction which did not call for judicial condemnation. The real relation of the judgment to Mr. Bennett's teaching has been frequently misunderstood. His language has been taken in the sense which the Court held it narrowly avoided; and his acquittal has been treated as establishing the legality of doctrine which his language was held not to express."

The theory that the repetition of the Words of Institution by a duly ordained Priest and by no one else at the Holy Communion brings the Presence of Christ to the Elements locally is now widely held in the Church of England. Most of those who teach the doctrine assert their disbelief in the Roman explanation of the mystery, but some are bold enough to claim that the Roman view

is that of the Catholic Church, and therefore must be held by the Church of England as part of the Church of the West. This carries with it the repugnant doctrine that after the bread has been received the process of digestion causes the presence of Christ to be withdrawn in quarter of an hour. This involves the desire to have the Presence more permanent and leads to Reservation with Adoration in the Roman Church.

Dr. Darwell Stone in *Congress Book No. 28*, writes :

“ There is a further consequence of the truth that the reserved Sacrament is the body of Christ. Wherever the Lord manifests His presence He makes a demand. The soul of the Christian can at all times and in all places worship the incarnate Lord in his heavenly glory on the throne of God, just as at all times and in all places there can be worship of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. But the sacramental presence is a special manifestation of the Lord, and calls for a special response. Such a response is to be made by the worshippers at the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice ; it is to be made also by any who draw near to the reserved Sacrament.”

“ When it is acknowledged that the Sacrament is not only a symbol but also the living presence of the Lord himself, then there is a special claim on the soul's allegiance and a special gift to the soul's life. Prayer to the Lord in the reserved Sacrament has its own meaning for the servant of God.”

Accordingly we have services arranged for the adoration of the Sacrament and the Benediction of the people practised by the priest holding the monstrance containing the Sacrament.

Whatever view of a permanent presence localized in the elements be held, it is impossible to avoid the adoration of the Sacrament and the superstitious uses to which it has been put by the Church of Rome. Man is always prone to localize the Deity either in a shrine or in matter. The whole history of religion bears testimony to this tendency of human nature. What may from one point of approach be considered a means to an end becomes in time an end in itself and the worship of the Presence in the elements cannot sharply, or even broadly, in the minds of the majority of worshippers be distinguished from worship of the Elements themselves. The Roman view developed slowly, but when once it became the accepted view of the Western Church the practice of Reservation and Adoration rapidly spread. Its influence on our own communion is manifest. There has been no Eucharistic excess in the matter of Adoration that has not found its way into our Church, and has not been defended

as a legitimate extension of principles involved in the doctrine of the localized Presence. The words of Cardinal Newman are frequently quoted in justification of the localized Presence.

“The visible species change their position, but He does not move. He is in the Holy Eucharist after the manner of a spirit, we do not know how; we have no parallel to the ‘how’ in our experience. We can only say that He is present, not according to the manner of bodies but *sacramentally*. His presence is substantial, spirit wise, sacramental; an absolute mystery, not against reason but against imagination and must be received by faith.”

These words when analysed are in direct contrast to the practices associated with the adoration of the Presence in the Elements. They are in contrast with the Benediction by the Elements in the monstrance. If our Lord be equally present everywhere and His presence is not determined by the movement of the Sacrament, how then can communication with the Reserved Sacrament be otherwise than a removal in space that is brought to the mouth of the recipient? It is impossible to reconcile the higher sacramental Presence, as expressed in these words of Newman and approved by many in our Church, with the practices that spring from them. “God is Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth,” but human nature sees in the consecrated Elements when reserved the localized Presence associated with the Elements, and it is impossible if the teaching be true to abstain from adoration and the consequent superstitions. History proves this and contemporary practice in our own Church proves that the danger is one that must be avoided.

But what is the true view of the Presence? The teaching of the Church of England is set forth in the Articles of Religion, and we are convinced that in this respect her doctrine is that of the primitive Church and of the New Testament. It must be remembered that the men who drafted the Articles were experts in the Roman position. They knew what Rome taught and the doctrine that needed Reform. And it is a great advantage that the passages referring to the Presence are positive and not negative. They show the mind of the Church as to the manner of Presence in the Holy Communion that commended itself to the Reformers. “Inasmuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same (the Supper of the Lord) the bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is

a partaking of the Blood of Christ." "The Body of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith." Article XXIX declares that the wicked and such as be void of lively faith, although they receive the Sacrament, are in nowise partakers of Christ. Emphasis is placed on Faith. This means that the man who receives Christ in the Sacrament receives Him through personal communion with Him by Faith. The relation is intensely personal. What God gives He gives through the believing faith of the communicant. Once more we return to the fact that all Christianity depends for its reality on the interpenetration of the Divine and human personalities. This is conditioned by Faith—by Trust in the Redeemer, and the recipient of the Lord's Supper owes the blessing he receives to his personal communion. Christ gives Himself to him who receives, faith is strengthened and grace is bestowed.

Bishop Gore says : <sup>1</sup>

"It appears to be certain that Hooker would still be justified, as far as Anglican standards taken by themselves are concerned—even since the revision of the Prayer Book in 1662—in seeking to shelve the question of any presence in the Elements apart from the act of receiving ; and that Waterland in going further and denying any such presence, was not transgressing the limits of allowed opinion; but no one, on the other hand, is justified in denying to others the right to hold and teach what is the accepted doctrine of the ancient Church as to an objective presence, prior to the act of reception and independent of it."

We have seen that the New Testament offers no evidence for this objective presence. The end of the Sacrament is communion with Christ, and it is essential that the Elements be received. The silence of the New Testament on any other purpose of the Sacrament is not an ordinary silence. The character of the Sacrament is laid down, and we have not the slightest proof of any blessing attending any use of the Sacrament, than that instituted by our Lord and practised by the Apostolic Church which knew nothing of the Supper of the Lord apart from the participation of the Elements.

Bishop Moule rightly says that in the sacred procedure of administering the Communion is not involved any "special attach-

<sup>1</sup> *The Body of Christ*, p. 233.

ment of His Presence to the sacred Signs, albeit called the Body and Blood by reason of their equivalence as Divine tokens." The Scriptures know nothing of this attachment, and it is in no way strange that the blessing of the Sacramental Presence should be confined to the eating and drinking the Elements, faith is quickened by obedience, the person of the recipient is brought into communion with the Person of Christ, and there is the interpenetration of Personality.

The sacramental Presence is in the Service and the Reception—not in the Elements. It is contrary to the whole genius of Holy Scripture, and the nature of the communion of spirit with Spirit that a material Element should be made the seat of the Presence. To do this involves a conception of the relation of man to God which finds no place in the New Testament, and is opposed to the whole of the teaching of the spiritual character of God, and His dealings with human spirits. The Elements are signs and tokens. We cannot define the relation of the spiritual blessing we receive to the consecrated elements. The service is one—consecration and reception by living faith. As we enter into the spirit of the Upper Room, and share the thoughts of Him who presided at the first Eucharist, we see an absence of all the theories that find expression in the practices associated with the doctrine of a localized Presence of the Redeemer, who Himself blessed the Elements which He distributed. There is no magic of any kind in the service, which is entirely on a spiritual level, and has to do with the personal relations of recipients and the Giver of the gift. We receive as our faith warrants our receiving, and as we receive Him, not in the Elements but in communion with Himself, we obey His command as He ordained, and our Faith is strengthened for we receive Him who is "the Lord of our Life and God of our salvation." Our reception is spiritual and the mean by which we receive is faith. The Master is really outside us and within us, for we dwell in Him and He in us. Here is mystery indeed that God should deign to dwell in the hearts of men, and we thank Him for the unspeakable Gift of the Christ that dwells in us as we take and drink what He commanded us to receive, for with the reception He comes to us and draws us closer to Himself.