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BAPTISTS AND THE TRACTARIAN EUCHARIST: A STUDY IN OPPOSITES

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The rise of the Tractarians and Ritualists in the Church of England and the revival of English Roman Catholicism during the 19th century, inevitably focussed the attention of all Christians on the Lord's table and what took place there. Through the eyes of 19th century baptists, a view shared by most of their evangelical contemporaries, the precious ground gained by the protestant reformation was in danger of being lost to the advancing cause of catholic Christianity. Amongst evangelicals as a whole there was, as Geoffrey Best reminds us, a widespread repugnance against Roman doctrine and influence:

> . . . feelings about Rome, ranging from cultivated distaste to deep and genuine horror, were shared by most of the Protestant public, and the Church of England Evangelicals . . .[1]

Apart from this universal distaste, fuelled no doubt by tribal memories and polemical distortion, the doctrinal priorities of the evangelicals, stressing as they did conversion, the ascendancy of the Word over sacraments and the centrality of faith, were at variance with those of catholicism.[2] The baptists' reaction to the catholic revival was not, then, a single example of an exclusive and aggressive protestantism. Their feelings on many issues were shared by evangelicals of all denominational persuasions. Apart from events at home, developments in Rome itself served to heighten their fears. The publication of the *Syllabus of Errors* by Pius IX in 1864 and the definition of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council did not provide a climate conducive to the interment of old quarrels or a dispassionate appraisal of dissenting beliefs in response to the undoubtedly renewing influence of the Tractarian movement. Rather, evangelicals felt it essential to widen the already yawning gulf between their own beliefs and what was coming out of Rome and, consequently, to distance themselves from what they saw as Roman influence in the teaching of the Tractarians.

Central to the catholic revival was a renewal of emphasis on the centrality of the Christian eucharist. At the opening of the 19th century, baptists had taken a predominantly Calvinist view of the sacrament, or "ordinance" as they more often referred to it. By the end of the century, largely in reaction to the catholic revival, their opinions ranged from an attenuated Zwinglianism to a radical suspicion of sacramentalism in any form. Three areas of debate in particular reveal their own position. First, the nature of Christ's presence in the sacrament; secondly, in what sense the Lord's Supper was to be understood as a "means of grace"; thirdly, the distinction between two poles in religion which they designated as the "ceremonial" and the "spiritual".

I

The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. On the fourth Sunday after Easter in 1843, E. B. Pusey, Regius Professor of Hebrew and canon in the University of Oxford, preached his notable sermon in the university Church of Christ on the subject "The Holy Eucharist, a Comfort to the Penitent". The sermon, whilst not representing the full flowering Pusey's thought, set down a marker in eucharistic theology and attracted a good deal of attention, not least from amongst evangelicals. Amongst those who wrote pamphlets setting out to refute Pusey's arguments, was the minister of the New Road Baptist Church in Oxford, the Revd. B. Godwin, D.D.

The structure of his pamphlet *An Examination of the Principles and Tendencies of Dr. Pusey's Sermon on the Eucharist* was largely determined by the shape of Pusey's sermon. The themes dealt with were to be themes over which debate was to continue and to which other baptist writers were to give their attention during the coming decades. For all its length and erudition, Pusey's sermon was intended to serve the pastoral purpose of enabling Christians to find forgiveness for their sins in the holy eucharist. Like earlier Caroline divines, notably amongst them Lancelot Andrewes, Pusey based his doctrine of Christ's presence in the eucharist on the model of Christ's earthly incarnation. Through his descent into human life, Christ had indissolubly united his human flesh with his divine life. It is both this "flesh" and the divine life that are present in the bread and wine of the eucharist:

> . . . such is undoubted Catholic teaching and the most literal import of Holy Scripture, and the mystery of the Sacrament, that the Eternal Word, Who is God, having taken to him our flesh and joined it indissolubly with Himself, and so, where His flesh is, there He is, and we receiving it, receive Him, and receiving Him are joined on to Him through His flesh to the Father, and He dwelling in us, dwell in Him, and with Him in God.[3]

Because Christ was inseparable from the flesh and blood he had taken into heaven, then, his presence in the eucharist could not be merely figurative. To receive bread and wine after consecration was to receive the body and blood of him who was present in the sacrament. Christ was "truly and really present".

Godwin, in reply, argued that the "emblems are emblems", they were "outward and visible signs", adapted to bring before the mind important truths. Where they were received by believers "the blessings resulting from the Saviour's death" were enjoyed.[4] Pusey, he claimed, had argued for something immensely different from this:

> . . . the elements on being consecrated have undergone a stupendous change, and are now literally, though without losing their natural substance, the very body and blood of Christ.[5]

As Godwin rightly saw, Pusey had argued for something other than transubstantiation, his view approximating more closely to the Caroline use of the Chalcedoian model. Far from destroying the substance of bread and wine, the body and blood of the divine Lord are joined to them in a mystery as profound as the incarnation itself. Against this, Godwin voiced a similar Calvinist objection:

> . . . the literal sense supposes the body of Christ at once in heaven and on earth, at thousands of miles distance, and in thousands of places, at the same moment of time.[6]

Godwin here resorted to a conception of the body of Christ that was to dog the baptist response to catholic sacramental teaching. A heaven which can be located in terms of linear distance from the earth, or a body that can be in one place but not another cannot be described as spiritual realities. They are locked in spatio-temporal locations from which they derive their identity. Calvin had argued against Luther's concept of ubiquity on the grounds that the humanity of the ascended Lord was seated at the right hand of God and so could not be in countless other places at the same time. Luther, it can be claimed, had anticipated the objection by deploying the Christological doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*. The humanity of Christ is universally present in the sacrament because his humanity shares in his divinity. The humanity is omnipresent because the divinity is, by definition, omnipresent. However, it is the nature of the glorified humanity of Jesus, not its ubiquity, that stalks the various attempts to relate the humanity of Jesus to his presence in the sacrament. For Lutherans or tractarians there was a pressing need for an exact definition of the humanity which Jesus took with him into heaven. Pusey made the incarnation central, laying a scent that Godwin and others followed hungrily. If Christ has taken into heaven the body, blood and bones which were seen and handled in Galilee then indeed sacramental theology must face an insuperable problem. If, however, the *terminus ad quem* of the incarnation is placed at the ascension of Christ then it can be argued that a change had occurred in Christ's body. It belonged to that order described by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, the order of incorruption, imperishability, glory and strength raised out of corruption, perishability, dishonour and weakness. The post-resurrection body of Jesus was substantial but dispensable, his own but recognized by others only with difficulty. It is *this* incarnate body, now risen and glorified, that is at the heart of the eucharistic mystery.

If the real presence of Christ in the sacrament is understood in terms of the risen and glorified body of the Lord then a key is provided to the eucharistic dialectic between substantial and spiritual. Pusey and other catholics insisted on a "real Presence" in order to signify that what was given in the Lord's Supper was neither simply a projection of the communicant's faith nor a consequence of the exercise of a devout imagination. Christ's presence was centred in the bread and wine, not in the pious disposition of the believing communicant. At the same time, this substantial presence is spiritual, in the sense that the risen and glorified body of Jesus is both substantial and spiritual. However, it belongs to an order of reality that can related to the physical world only by analogy, as in the Pauline distinction between material entities that have bodies compatible with the order of which they are a part and the resurrection body which belongs to the new order of the kingdom of God. The resurrection body of Jesus was really and substantially present in the Upper Room, occupying space and perceived in time; the same Risen Christ who met Paul on the road to Damascus was real and substantial, i.e. he spoke, he was perceived in that moment of time and yet, it would seem, he did not occupy space. It is that risen and glorified body, clearly identifiable with the Incarnate Lord, that provides the model for our understanding of the Lord's presence in the eucharist.

It was the "localized" presence of Christ, implicit in the belief in his substantial presence in the sacrament, that was a stumbling block for Godwin and those who followed him. If the flesh and blood of Christ were given in the eucharist then Christ's body was on the altar, in the priest's hand, in the communicant's mouth and divided between the chalice and the plate.[7]

Godwin was not prepared to be reconciled to the notion of the real presence by recourse to its essential mystery. All catholic theologians would have claimed that their eucharistic doctrines provided not factual descriptions of what happened at the altar but attempts at unfolding a mystery as profound as the incarnation and resurrection. Godwin discounted the appeal to mystery as nothing more than an excuse to jettison reason:

> Almighty power is never exercised but under the direction of infinite wisdom, that to suppose it capable of doing that which is contradictory or absurd is to impute imperfection to a Being infintely perfect.[8]

He insisted that Pusey had invested the eucharist with "awful mystery" which could only be maintained if some "change" was being argued for. No such mystery existed if it was accepted that

> . . . the only change in the elements is their separation from an ordinary to a religious use, that the only sense in which they are the body and blood of Christ is figurative, that the only "real presence" is "in the heart and soul of the communicant, and that the only participation is a reception by faith of the benefits of that death and passion which are set forth.[9]

Godwin believed that it was his interpretation, not Pusey's, that carried the authority of the English reformers. When they

> . . . speak of a real participation in the body and blood of the Lord, of a real presence, of the body and blood of Christ being "verily taken and received", strong as the terms are, they mean only a spiritual reception of Christ, by faith, as our Saviour, and a participation in consequence, of the benefits of his death.[10]

He quoted the Communion Service, averring that it taught there is "literally no presence of the actual body of Christ in the sacrament", and further supported his argument with quotations from Cranmer, Hooker ("The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood, is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament") and Jeremy Taylor.[11]

Although his central purpose was to repudiate Pusey's concept of the body of Christ present in the sacrament, Godwin does not himself emerge as a thorough-going memorialist. Given the unresolved problem of the

difference between Christ's incarnate humanity prior to the resurrection and his glorified body after it, with the corollary problem of the exact nature of a "substantial" presence, Godwin affirmed that what was perceived, given and received in the eucharist was "spiritual". This, however, did not lessen his conviction that *something* was given. A Christ who was "spiritually" present was no less "truly and really" present, to the eye of faith and contemplation, than was a Christ who was "substantially" present. Faith was crucial to our knowledge of God, as much at the Holy Table as in the secular paths of daily discipleship. Godwin avoided turning the sacrament into an *aide-memoire* in which the believer's psychological experience was central. Christ was present in the heart. Participation in the sacrament was a participation in the death and passion of the Lord. When he later came to deal with the eucharistic teaching of 1 Corinthians 10, Godwin declared that, by partaking of the outward sign

> . . . we participate in the benefits and blessings of (Christ's) death: and, as far as our faith is brought into exercise, this institution becomes the means of enjoying these benefits, and having actual communion with Christ.[12]

With the passing of the century, the baptist shift from the Calvinism of people like Robert Hall and Godwin, to a Zwinglian or radical understanding of the sacraments made it increasingly difficult for them both to attempt to refute the eucharistic views of the Tractarians and Ritualists and, at the same time, hold on to as much as Godwin had done. Theological debate was too easily overwhelmed by polemical enthusiasm and the desire to deny any "real" presence of Christ in the sacrament could slide into a denial of any presence at all. The tension is later seen in John Clifford, for instance, who highly valued the Lord's Supper but was constantly driven to qualify any statement that seemed to lend it objective validity.

The question of the "real presence" arose again in a series of articles that the *Baptist Magazine* devoted to the study of the Tracts in 1867. Under the general title "What is Anglican Ritualism?" they came from the pen of J. H. Hinton, who had recently retired from the pastorate of the Devonshire Square Baptist Church in London, a post he had combined with that of joint secretary of the Baptist Union.

The first article dealt with the act of consecration in the eucharist. The belief that, at the words of consecration, Christ became actually present in the bread and wine, Hinton described as "the root from which the whole tree of Ritualism grows".[13] The description "the Real Presence" was appropriate only to the Roman rite of transubstantiation, the ritualists believing that the body and blood of Christ were "mystically and spiritually" present in the elements. The following month, Hinton returned to the subject of the real presence, quoting a definition by the Revd. Mr. Mackonochie, the incumbent of St. Alban's in Holborn:

> I believe that in the Holy Communion the Body and Blood of Christ are present "really and spiritually" . . . not after a material, or corporeal, or earthly mode of existence; but after a fashion supra-local, supernatural, heavenly, and spiritual.[14]

Mackonochie's careful avoidance of material categories in describing the real Presence should have helped to clarify the discussion that followed. In fact, that was not the case. It was dogged by the same difficulty of defining exactly what was implied in a belief in Christ's glorified body.

Hinton began by arguing that the Body and Blood of Christ must be a material substance:

> If the Body and Blood of Christ be in the Eucharist, it is as material substances they must be there; if that which is there is spirit, not matter, then it is clearly no longer the Body and Blood of Christ.[15]

Having set up what he believed was the inescapable conclusion that the Body and Blood of Christ *must* be material, he argued that such a presence could not be "supra-local":

> . . . it is an established maxim of physical philosophy that no substance can exist in more than one place at one time . . . To deprive a substance of its essential property of occupying space cannot be less than to destroy the substance itself.

Hinton had used the term "substance" as interchangeable currency between "physical philosophy" and theology, investing it with a material connotation implicit in the usage of the former but not necessarily of the latter. This prevented him from developing the nascent solution to the problem of substance which he himself provided. Quoting 1 Corinthians 15.50 he contended that flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God, therefore the body of the Risen Christ was a spiritual body. Instead of exploring further the nature of that Risen Body and its implications for eucharistic theology, he used it as a counter to any claim that Christ was "substantially" present in the sacrament. The Risen Body of Jesus was not a material body therefore there could be no substantial presence of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the eucharist.

The same confusion hung unacknowledged in the air when Hinton, in the following edition, went on to deal with "The Miracle of the Altar". Any miracle, he claimed, must be "*as a fact*, obvious to the senses of mankind". This was not so in the eucharist:

> Not only does no apparent change take place in the bread and wine, but the closest examination demonstrates that, according to the evidence of the senses, no change of any kind or degree has taken place. The elements are, by all physical tests, as simply bread and wine after the thaumaturgic words as they were before.[16]

The underlying assumption again was that the glorified body of Jesus was subject to the same conditions as the body of his incarnation, in other words it occupied space. Hinton took no cognizance of the Thomist distinction, satisfactory or not as it may be, between substance and accidents. Standing four-square on "physical philosophy" he could not escape the conclusion that

substance had accidents. The spatial stumbling-block got under his feet again when he related the body of Christ in the sacrament to the body of Christ in heaven, raising the Calvinist objection that Godwin had used before him:

> The body and blood of Christ . . . (which, if existent anywhere, are in Heaven, and may be assured to be so for the purpose of this argument), are alleged to be also in the bread and wine, and thus the same thing is affirmed to be in two places at the same time – and not in two only, indeed, but perhaps in 2,000, if in every Eucharist – which is in the nature of things impossible.[17]

His article ended:

> . . . here are the body and blood of Christ, held to be in heaven in their natural condition, and affirmed to be in the Eucharist in a spiritual condition; so that the same things are affirmed to be at the same time in two opposite conditions, which is in the nature of things impossible.[18]

The crucial questions went unasked. Given their view of the sacraments it was unlikely that the baptists, any more than other evangelicals, would have wrestled with the problem of the nature of the divine presence in the Lord's Supper. Godwin and Hinton were about the business of refuting incipient catholicism in the Church of England, not framing a eucharistic theology. Anti-catholic abhorrence was inspired by the doctrine of transubstantiation more than any other feature of catholic teaching. It became increasingly important to distance oneself from anything that in any way resembled it.

II

The Lord's Supper as Means of Grace. Apart from the efficacy of Christ's presence in the sacrament, Pusey had emphasised its role as a means of conveying forgiveness to the penitent. Godwin challenged this and the concept of *gradual forgiveness* that flowed from it. Forgiveness was through faith in Christ, said Godwin:

> All who believe in Him . . . are forgiven, whether they have received the Eucharist or not; none who have not believed in Him are pardoned, however often they may receive it.[19]

Pusey, concerned to make the sacrament central to the nurture and growth of the Christian life had applied a similar principle of gradualness to the forgiveness of sins. It is easy to see how understanding broke down between Pusey and the evangelicals. His portrayal of the central experience of forgiveness as a gradual release from the burden of sin, with the attendent agonies of doubts, uncertainties, unstilled conscience and guilty memories was in stark contrast to that experience of mercy that lay at the heart of the protestant encounter with God. In evangelical theology, whatever failure there may have been to take full account of the sacramental nourishment by which the soul was brought to maturity in Christ, the central experience of forgiveness was beyond doubt. Forgiveness was not part of a process, slowly realized, it was a *fait accompli*, an irreversible gesture of merciful acceptance on the part of a loving and just God. To an evangelical there was something almost obsessional in Pusey's notion of cleansing by slow degrees:

> . . . as the loving kindness of God admits (the penitent) again and again to that Body and Blood, the stains which his soul had contracted, are more and more effaced, the guilt more and more purged, the wounds more and more healed, the atoning Blood more and more interposed between him and his sins.[20]

Godwin accepted that the sacrament was a means of grace in which we continue to grow, but

> . . . this removal of guilt by slow gradations, this pardon by degrees, this forgiveness by instalments, is a doctrine altogether foreign to the scriptures.[21]

Godwin argued that faith was central and it was in the context of faith that "this ordinance (has) its value as a means of grace".[22] In the discussion that followed, there was further evidence of the failure of the theological worlds of Pusey and Godwin to meet. By making the eucharist the means of forgiveness, and gradual forgiveness at that, Pusey had supplanted the liberating truth at the heart of evangelical theology. Acceptance through faith, with the forgiveness of all our sins, was the starting point of the evangelicals' pilgrimage, the heart of their experience of God. So, in reply, Godwin emphasised the centrality of the Word in that experience. It was the Word that declared the sinner forgiven. What followed was a less clear appreciation of the sacrament as a means of Christian nurture. Godwin disagreed with Pusey's assertion that the eucharist was "the means by which spiritual life is imparted and maintained in the soul, and the work of sanctification carried on."[22] On the contrary,

> . . . the great chosen instrument by which the Divine Spirit works in renovating and sanctifying the human soul, is, according to the sacred scriptures, THE TRUTH OF GOD, as revealed in the gospel, and received by faith.[24]

The "ordinances of religion, duly administered" may be employed with other means "accessory and subordinate", but it was the gospel itself which was basic. It was the gospel that called and the gospel that sustained the spiritual life:

> The Lord's Supper may, as a means of grace, greatly aid in this spiritual process, but it is not by any mysterious or invisible virtue, contained in the bread and wine, or connected with them, but as the institution serves, under God's blessing, to bring the truth vividly before our minds, and in an affecting manner home to our hearts, so that we feel and enjoy the saving benefits of the redeeming work of Christ.[25]

The sacrament was subordinate to the word. It was the word of the gospel that effected the saving experience by which men were forgiven in Christ. The sacrament served to remind believers of that central experience, it held it ever before their minds, but it was not itself a channel of saving grace.

Earlier, Godwin had testified to the nurturing benefits of the Lord's Supper. Pressed, however, to define the sense in which it was a "means of grace", he fell back on a partially Zwinglian view of its role. The sacrament brought the truth "vividly before our minds". The Lord's Supper was didactic and commemorative. This definition was filled out some years later in an article by the Revd. J. T. Gale of Putney in the *Baptist Magazine*.[26] He described the present significance of the supper in the experience of Christian believers. At the Last Supper Jesus gave provision for two needs that would be encountered by his disciples. The first was that their communion with him and their sense of his presence should be sustained, the second that they should be constantly reminded that they belonged also to one another. To serve these twin purposes he left them the ordinance, a sign at once of their union with him and of their unity in Christian fellowship. Of the first, he wrote:

> By eating the bread as the symbol of the body, by drinking the wine as the symbol of the blood of Christ, we understand simply the believer's appropriation of the atoning work of Christ.[27]

It was through this appropriation that the Christian was bound as one to his Lord. "There is a union of the believer's spirit to his Lord – they *are* one – the Christian is *in* Christ . . ." The relationship of the sacrament to this experience was that of "outward and visible sign":

> As often, then, as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we not only show the Lord's death till He come – we proclaim also to ourselves and to one another the great truth of our present living union with Christ. We show forth that which is secret and invisible. We embody in an act of greatest simplicity a reality of inexpressible grandeur and worth. The deed is only the *clothing* of the holiest and most blessed convictions our souls possess. The sacrament itself is but the outward and visible sign of inward, invisible and inexpressible spiritual consciousness.[28]

Further, the "one loaf" used in communion was a sign of the unity of all Christians. It was

> . . . in the truest sense, a communion of the body and blood of Christ – a joint participation of the merits and virtues of His sacrifice and spirit . . . The act of a joint participation in one symbol is designed to keep in clearest possible distinctness the *fact* of *oneness* in Christ.[29]

Gale offered an undiluted Zwinglianism in describing the benefits of the sacrament to those who received it. He linked it, in a living way, with the two most personal of Christian experiences, the union of the believer with Christ and with his fellow believers. Here was more than didacticism or a prod to the memory. In Gale's language, the sacrament did more than *teach* the communicants what Christ had done for them. It was itself part of their experience of him and of one another. Gale echoed the Augustinian definition of a sacrament, an outward and visible sign of "inward, invisible and inexpressible spiritual consciousness", the outward "clothing of the inner experience".

Baptist attitudes swung like a pendulum from radical rejection of any sacramental efficacy to brave attempts to put into words exactly how the sacrament was a "means of grace" without selling the pass to the catholics. If, on the one hand, Godwin could find no role for the sacrament in the central evangelical experience of forgiveness, Gale placed it as central to the believer's continuing experience of union with Christ and his church. Nearer the end of the century, Edward Alden could speak in similar terms in his article on "Baptism and the Lord's Supper".[30] The Lord's Supper

> . . . sets forth . . . the Saviour's Body given and His Blood shed, not only . . . for the remission of sins and the gift of new and eternal life, but for the *perpetual sustenance* of that life.[31]

On the human side, the Lord's Supper

> . . . exhibits the . . . perpetual need of the soul – the need of sustenance in the New Life – a need only supplied by the continued feeding of our faith on the Bread of Life.[32]

The sacrament was still "an object lesson", but powerful in its reminder that Christ was the continuous source of sustenance in the Christian life and the need of the believer to turn constantly to him, the Bread of Life.

Baptists were torn between the difficulties of theological definition and adequately describing the experience that was actually theirs at their communion tables. There was no clear agreement amongst them. The *Baptist Magazine* in 1896 reported a conference of baptist ministers held in New York at which the Revd. J. M. Whiton had read a paper on "The Meaning of Communion". He had argued that "the view of Zwingli was not adequate. The ordinance was a memorial, but it was more." A discussion followed in which some disagreement amongst the listeners became apparent. The reporter was right in his conclusion:

> The subject needs discussion in England also. Even Baptists are not entirely of one mind about it.[33]

Like Whiton himself, there were clearly those, even at the end of the century, who held "the ordinance was a memorial, but it was more".

III

The conflict between "spiritual" and "ceremonial" religion. At the conclusion of his pamphlet, Godwin levelled a charge at Pusey that Robert Hall had already used earlier in the century against those of his fellow baptists who had claimed that the Lord's table should be closed to all but those who had been baptized according to the baptist understanding of the rite. It was to remain part of the baptist armoury in their disputes with catholics. It was that a religion that set too great store by the observance of sacraments or "ceremonies", of which the tractarians were, to baptist eyes, a prime example, devalued true "spiritual" religion. The distinction was one which took baptists further from their Calvinist roots into a more radical direction. Rites and ceremonies, it was claimed, had their roots in the old

covenant that had been swept away by Christ who called for obedience from the heart, an inner and "spiritual" response of faith. It was as if the very elements of the sacraments, the earthly bread and wine and the significance that was attached to them, rooted man's religious experience in the earthy and the "carnal". It turned what belonged to man's soul and the inner perception of faith in the direction of things that could be seen, handled, tasted: substances that, by due performance of certain rites, became the means of God's presence. The move away from this into a more "spiritual" religion was shared by members of Free Churches other than the baptists. J. W. Grant believes that the later decades of the 19th century were marked by an increasing "spiritualization" on the part of Free Churchmen; there was "an inclination to depreciate form and institution, to contrast the spiritual with the material and formal".[34] What Pusey taught, claimed Godwin, "militates against the simplicity and spirituality of the gospel".[35] As a result of his emphasis upon the eucharist,

> . . . everything ceremonial has risen in importance, and there seems great reason to fear the spiritual nature of Christianity will be lost sight of, and its evangelical and saving truths be superseded by a religion of outward forms and delusive hopes.[36]

In part, the baptist emphasis reflected the increasing importance that was being attached to the personal character of religious experience during the 19th century, an emphasis that was intrinsic to the evangelical view of man's relationship with God. Rites and sacraments were helpful, but if elevated too much in their importance they acted as a barrier rather than a bridge between God and man. What was true of the sacraments was also true of the church. The church could not proffer faith on behalf of its members, it could not stand proxy for the commitment of the individual, or his own experience of death and resurrection in Christ. The assent of the individual to Christ, in faith and commitment, was central and crucial to the evangelical understanding of the Christian experience.

This contrast of the individual against the corporate, as well as of the "spiritual" against the "material" was illustrated in a leader on "The Individual and Personal Nature of Religion" in the *Freeman* of 19th October, 1881. The article was concerned with the sacrament of baptism and argued that it was not to be administered with the sponsorship or by the authority of the church, but purely as a personal and individual declaration of faith, an astonishing departure from earlier baptist views of the sacrament, apart from its incompatibility with main-line Christian teaching:

> Baptism ought to be so observed that it shall be clearly understood to be an individual and personal act and not an act administered in the name, or by the authority, of any church whatever.

In a later letter, written by an anonymous layman, this same detachment of the church and sacrament was applied to the Lord's Supper itself. Writing to the *Freeman* of 12th June, 1886 he drew on his "oriental experience" to recount how there the breaking of bread was a daily occurrence and that it bound those who shared it in a covenant relationship. He then, strangely, drew a conclusion from the first observation that seemed to cut clean across the second. It should be possible, he said, to celebrate communion often, even daily, and that it was not therefore to be tied to the church. He argued that the *Acts* provided evidence that the ordinance was observed "independently of the church".[37]

This exalted sense of the individual's responsibility in the matter of his religion was underlined in a paper on the subject of "Ritualism", read by the Revd. C. Room to the Baptist Board, a London fraternal of baptist ministers, in 1867.[38] The noncomformist churches, he claimed, placed their emphasis upon the "personal character of New Testament religion". His definition of what he meant by this suggested that the role of the church and its rites was secondary in matters of faith:

> By the personal character of New Testament religion we mean the performance of all religious exercises and acts by each individual himself, and the impossibility of any one of them being performed for him consistently within the Christian system.[39]

The setting of this claim was Room's vivid description of the Passiontide and Easter liturgy of which he had been a witness at the Anglo-Catholic church of St. Alban's in Holborn. What was evident in those services, as far as Room was concerned, was a retrograde step, a retreat from the spiritual responsibilities of the individual into a less worthy and "material" form of the Christian faith:

> What then; are we mistaken in the progressive character of religion – in its advancement from a lower to a higher standard – from the material to a spiritual form; is the Church to retrograde from its majority to its nonage, from its manhood of intelligence and insight to its childhood of symbol, picture and type; are we, for example, to learn the two natures of the Saviour, not from the lips of the preacher, but from the candles on either side of the communion table; are we to become acquainted with the crucifixion and the atonement, not from the scripture lesson and doctrine, but from the material crucifix or cross?[40]

The growing use of sign and symbol by the ritualists was clearly far removed from the more cerebral modes of apprehension favoured by the radical nonconformists. Room's rhetorical questions ricocheted about the heads of his no doubt appreciative listeners, but they displayed an acute failure to understand his adversaries and, indeed, the ways in which humankind comes to the knowledge of God. All entrances to the human heart, sight, touch, smell, all, save the ears, were blocked and discounted. Victorian individualism combined with a quite worldly view of the power of man's intellect to betroth faith to rationalism, religion to the upward evolutionary march of man. The judgment of J. H. Newman carried a great deal of truth:

> A system of Christian doctrine has risen up during the last three centuries in which faith or spritual mindedness is contemplated and rested on as the end of religion, instead of Christ . . . Stress is laid on the believing rather than on the Object of belief, on the

comfort and persuasiveness of the doctrine rather than on the doctrine itself.[41]

The emphasis on the "subjective" nature of faith returned in an article by J. H. Hinton in which he examined a paper by the Revd. Wm. Humphrey of St. Mary Magdalen, Dundee.[42] "What was the nature of true religion?" he asked.

> Two divergent and quite dissimilar views are held. The one that religion is in its nature *subjective*, consisting wholly and exclusively in affections of the mind, with (of course) such practical results as flow from them; the other, that religion is in its nature *sacramental*, essentially requiring the use of sacraments, and effectually generated and perfected by the employment of them. The former view is, I may presume, that held by ourselves; the latter appears to be held by the Ritualists . . .[43]

Throughout his article, Humphrey had stressed the ontological nature of salvation: Christ had transformed the human situation by uniting his divinity with our humanity. The sacraments were objective acts that incorporated men and women into that new humanity, salvation was a being and a becoming more than simply a believing. Hinton stressed the response as against the deed, the inner, "subjective" state of the believer as against the objective reality of that in which he believed. This led Hinton to the conclusion

> . . . that Religion is subjective – wholly and exclusively subjective, in strict accordance with man's position under the moral government of God . . . Pure and undefiled religion is neither less nor more than a change of man's heart from enmity towards God to friendship, and from the love of sin to the love of holiness.[44]

The language that Hinton used did less than justice to what he intended. Protestant orthodoxy had always strongly emphasised the objective reality of saving grace in the experience of those who, in repentance and faith, threw themselves upon the mercy of God. Salvation rested upon the divine initiative that had acted in Christ and was proclaimed in the Word. The danger of distortion threatened both sides. Only in the worst catholic theology can the sacraments be separated from the consenting faith of those who receive them, just as only in the worst protestant theology can the inner consent of the convert be sundered from the prior acts of God in saving grace. There was failure to understand on both sides. Dr. Peter Toon has argued that, although the controversy with the tractarians had the effect, on the one side, of confirming Anglican evangelicals in the position they held before the contest began, on the other the "Tractarians virtually denied the Evangelical emphases by their sacramental theology".[45] He claims:

> . . . in terms of their differing systems what mattered was that for Evangelicals the individual sinner approached God through Jesus Christ the Mediator, in faith and prayer, while for the Tractarians this direct route through Jesus Christ involved a detour through the visible Church with her apostolic ministry and efficacious sacraments.[46]

In fact, what both sides held as exclusive emphases rightly belonged together. The individual sinner needed the church and sacraments and the recipient of the sacraments needed the inner consent of faith. When sundered from each other the role of the individual was made too self-sufficient and the role of the sacraments too mechanical. Baptists were tempted to lean too far in the direction of the individual and his subjective experience. Hinton, Room and the thunderer of the *Freeman* internalized saving grace to the extent of isolating the individual from the church and sacraments and making him the master of his fate and the captain of his soul. In doing so they struck a responsive chord amongst their Victorian contemporaries whose innate individualism contributed so much to the strengths and weaknesses of the age. All disputes are locked into the times in which they take place. In spite of the undoubted spiritual stature of the leading tractarians, 19th century Catholicism in general did little to allay the justifiable fears of the Protestants. Sadly, in their reaction to it, the majority of Baptists abandoned a view of the eucharist that had been shaped by their Calvinist inheritance in favour of one that owed more to Zwingli and, beyond him, to the radical Anabaptists. Thus the tentative efforts of individual Baptists to go beyond didacticism or memorialism were frustrated by their overwhelming need to distance themselves from a resurgent Catholicism.

NOTES

1. Geoffrey Best "Evangelicalism and the Victorians" in Anthony Symondson (Ed.) *The Victorian Crisis of Faith* (London 1970) 47.
2. *Ibid* 38.
3. E. B. Pusey *The Holy Eucharist a Comfort to the Penitent* (Oxford 1843) 14.
4. B. Godwin *An Examination of the Principles and Tendencies of Dr. Pusey's Sermon* (Oxford 1843) 9.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid* 11.
7. *Ibid* 12.
8. *Ibid* 14.
9. *Ibid* 58.
10. *Ibid* 50.
11. *Ibid.* 50f.
12. *Ibid.* 55.
13. *Baptist Magazine* Vol. 59 1867 (86).
14. *Ibid* (153).
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid* (216).
17. *Ibid* (217).
18. *Ibid.*
19. Godwin *op cit* 68.
20. Pusey *op cit* 68.
21. Godwin *op cit* 69.
22. *Ibid* 70.
23. *Ibid* 71.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid* 73.
26. J. T. Gale "The Lord's Supper" *Baptist Magazine* Vol. 56 1864 (600).
27. *Ibid* (600).
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid* (601).
30. *Baptist Magazine* Vol. 83 1891.
31. *Ibid* (398).
32. *Ibid* (399).
33. *Baptist Magazine* Vol. 88 1896 (286).
34. J. W. Grant *Fre Churchmanship in England 1870-1940* (London n.d.) 74.
35. Godwin *op cit* 74.
36. *Ibid* 77.
37. *Freeman* 12th June, 1886 (474).
38. *Baptist Magazine* Vol. 59 1867 (273-283).
39. *Ibid* (281).
40. *Ibid* (280).
41. J. H. Newman *Letters on Justification* (324-5) quoted by Horton Davies *Worship and Theology in England 1690-1850* (London 1961) 263.
42. *Baptist Magazine* Vol. 60 1868 (143-149).
43. *Ibid* (143).
44. *Ibid* (149).
45. Peter Toon *Evangelical Theology 1833-1856* (London 1979) 206.