

*THE CUP OF THE LORD AND THE CUP OF
DEMONS.*

THE one subject with which St. Paul deals in 1 Corinthians viii-x. is indicated in his first words, *περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων*, or, as it is put more precisely in verse 4, *περὶ τῆς βρώσεως τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων*. Sacrifices were still offered to the pagan deities in Corinth, and the flesh of these was either consumed in the temple itself, in a sacred meal which followed the sacrifice (viii. 10), or exposed for sale in the market (x. 25 ff.). The question at issue is whether such flesh may lawfully be eaten by Christians. Plainly there was a division of opinion at Corinth, or the matter would not have been referred to the apostle ; but plainly also those who drew up the letter to him, and who presumably represented the majority in the Church, believed themselves to be in possession of the principle by which the question was to be determined. It is the principle stated in viii. 4 : "No idol is anything in the world, and there is no God but one." It is the apostle's own principle, but though he states it with sympathetic emphasis, he seems to fence with it from the first. He mocks a little at the idea of a man determining his conduct by "principles." Conduct is something which in the nature of the case affects others, and the man who does not see this, or who does not let it decide his action, is an unenlightened man, be his principles ever so fine. He knows nothing yet as he ought to know. He has the primary rule of Christianity to learn, that conduct must be guided not by abstract but by social ideas, not by knowledge, but by love.

This is the line which St. Paul pursues in chap. viii. ; the question of eating what has been sacrificed to an idol is not to be decided even by the most enlightened and liberal Christian without carefully weighing the consequences of the decision to weaker men. The first duty of the Christian is to "build up" the body of Christ; a fine upbuilding it would be—*ruinosa aedificatio*—if a backward believer were "built up" into following an enlightened example which wounded his conscience and frustrated in him the work of Christ.

In chap. ix. there seems to be, but is not, a digression. It is a Christian principle that no idol is anything in the world, though not a principle to be acted on as if the act could trammel up the consequence; it is a Christian principle also (ix. 14) that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel, and yet it is one, as the Corinthians are well aware, which St. Paul in his own case has forborne to assert. Possibly the fact that his apostleship was being attacked in Corinth made him not unwilling to take himself as an illustration of what he has been enjoining in chap. viii. ; the point to remember is that his own line of action does illustrate his teaching in that chapter. His apostleship was undoubted, ought to be indubitable to the Corinthians at all events (ix. 2 f.), and it carried with it the right to "eat and drink," that is, to claim maintenance from the Church. This was the principle; but though others acted on it without misgiving (ver. 5), St. Paul found reasons in love for renouncing his right, and supported himself in Corinth as in Thessalonica by working with his own hands. It is the thought of others—how they can be won, helped, built up—and not any abstract rule of right or liberty which prescribes his line of action. "I have not stood on my rights, or asserted my principles," he seems to say: "on the contrary, I have gone to the extreme of accommodation; I have become all things to all men that I may by all means save some." This is the line of reflexion

in chap. ix. as in chap. viii., but at the very end it takes a turn. It seems to strike the apostle suddenly that the course of renunciation, as opposed to that of "using to the full" his right in the gospel (ix. 18), is not only that which is suggested by consideration for others' interests, but that which is demanded by his own. With all its liberal and emancipating principles the Christian life is one of exacting severity; even the apostle has to recognize this and act upon it, lest after having preached to others he himself should be rejected (ix. 23-27).

It is on this line that he pursues his discussion of eating *εἰδωλόθυτα* in chap. x. Think what it means to others? Yes, and think what it means to yourselves. It is evident, from the opening paragraph of chap. x. (vers. 1-11), that the apostle has here to controvert another habit of mind which prevailed among some, at least, of the Corinthians, and made them insensible to the moral dangers of the "liberal" attitude to *εἰδωλόθυτα*. They had sacred meals of their own—they had the great sacramental feast of the Christian faith, the *κυριακὸν δεῖπνον* of xi. 20—and to these they ascribed a divine power to keep them safe. This passage (x. 2-4), in which St. Paul refers at the same time to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, is perhaps the only one in the New Testament which justifies us in treating both under the common denomination of sacraments. They were ordinances to which, in the belief of the Corinthians, some kind of sanctity attached, and in virtue of this those who had the benefit of them were supposed to be proof against moral contagion. The apostle does not dispute their sanctity, nor does he raise at this point any question as to the benefits they bestow, or the mode in which, or the conditions (if any), under which, they become effective; he confines himself to arguing that whatever be the virtue of the sacraments, it is not that which the Corinthians ascribe to them. They are not to be degraded to the

level of inoculations against the *virus* of idolatry. Look, he says, at the Old Testament, and at the things which are written there, "for our education, who are the heirs of all the ages." The Israelites, too, had their sacraments, and without exception they had the benefit of them. They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; they passed through the flood on foot, out of bondage into final liberty, with all their faith and hope centring on Moses as ours in our baptism on Christ. They had a sacred repast also which never failed them; they all ate the same "spiritual" food, they all drank the same "spiritual" drink—the same not only as each other, but as we; for they drank of a "spiritual" rock which followed them, and the rock was the Christ. St. Paul no doubt remembers the Jewish legend that the rock which Moses smote in the wilderness became a rolling stone which accompanied the people in their wanderings, but we do not need to believe that he adopts it. Indeed, the use of the adjective (*πνευματικῆ*, ver. 4) and the absence of the article (the Authorized Version, which has "that spiritual rock" instead of "a" spiritual rock, is peculiarly misleading) amount to a sound proof that he did not. What he asserts is that behind those manifestations of God's goodness to Israel in the wilderness lay the very same divine power which lies behind the Christian sacraments—that which is revealed to us in Christ. There is one God and Saviour through all the ages, one grace, one relation of men to it, one kind of help it gives, one kind of responsibility it involves. If it was not a spell in the desert of the Exodus, it is not a spell in the temples and streets of Corinth. If it did not shield from God's judgment those who in ancient days played with idolatry and its accompaniments at Baalpeor, neither will it shield those who under the gospel allow themselves to forget that God is a holy and jealous God. It is the faith of the Corinthians in their sacraments,

their faith in them as divine charms neutralizing whatever is unwholesome in the moral environment, that frightens the apostle. It is their very security which is their peril. To men in this mood he cries, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The circumstances of the Corinthian Christians are, no doubt, such as to involve trial; but the trial is one proportioned to human strength, and what is wanted to make them victorious in it is not this superstitious reliance on the sacraments, but a quick and wakeful faith in the living God. The moral of Israel's history is plain. It does not say to us, "Keep your minds easy. Armed in enlightened Christian principle, and inoculated with sacramental grace, you can take any liberty you please about *εἰδωλόθυστα* and about idols generally"; it says, "Flee from idolatry. Do not come into contact with it at all."

In the passage which follows (chap. x. 15-24) it is the argument drawn from the sacraments with which St. Paul is concerned. The Corinthians assumed that participation in the sacraments made it safe for them to act on liberal principles where paganism was involved; the apostle argues that participation in the sacraments is inconsistent with any positive relation to paganism whatever. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons."

It cannot be questioned that there are many Christians who are embarrassed by the sacraments. They cannot tell what to make in their minds of these apparently material things surviving in a purely spiritual religion. They are disconcerted by them, and feel them dead matter in their spiritual world, an irreducible irrational quantity in their reasonable worship. The Society of Friends dispenses with them, and has the sympathy in so doing of many in churches in which they are still celebrated. In view of their degeneration into what he calls fetish worship, the late Dr. A. B.

Bruce, in his commentary on Matthew, raises the question whether their discontinuance, at least for a time, would not be a benefit to the religion of the spirit and more in harmony with the mind of Christ than their obligatory observance. In churches, on the other hand, which claim the "catholic" character, the sacraments are, as it were, underlined. Their material or sensible side is not regarded as inconsistent with a place in a spiritual religion, but rather as giving them a unique place; they are not excluded from a spiritual Christianity, they stand there in high relief. The very heart of the matter is in them; they enshrine the whole grace and truth of the gospel. One may feel that this is true, without thinking about it; it is when thinking begins, and a doctrine of the sacraments has to be defined—of the grace which is associated with them, and of the conditions on which it is bestowed—that difficulties arise. Most Protestants are convinced that the "catholic" doctrine of the sacraments is too closely akin to the Corinthian superstitions which St. Paul here condemns. There is something in it which they cannot distinguish from magic. The Christian sacrament is reduced to a pagan mystery, in which spiritual ends are attained by means which are not spiritual; and this is a result to which no intelligent Christian can subscribe.

Within recent years the application of which is called the "religio-historical" method to the study of the New Testament has directed attention anew to this subject. The general idea of this method is that Christianity, even as it appears in the New Testament, is an example of religious syncretism. The river of the water of life no sooner began to flow through history than tributary streams flowed into it from all sides and from the most various sources. Essentially, it is assumed, Christianity should be a religion without cultus, a worship in spirit and in truth; but though this is a com-

paratively easy idea for men like us, who reduce religion to theology and morals, it was impossibly hard for ancient minds to whom *cultus*, and religion were one. Christianity, however, from the first had two customs, that of baptizing its adherents when they professed their faith, and that of a common meal, on which the craving for a *cultus* at once took hold. It attached itself to these ordinances and transformed them ; it regarded them, in fact, as analogous ordinances in the pagan mysteries were regarded, as charged with magical supernatural powers ; baptism *ipso facto* ensured cleansing ; it was a kind of spiritual disinfecting, by which sin was neutralized ; participation in the Lord's Supper in the same way guaranteed immortality. We see from the tenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, it is argued, how rapidly this process was accomplished ; a " catholic " doctrine of the sacraments is found in the New Testament, within the first generation, in the lifetime of Paul himself ; the Corinthians evidently thought of baptism and the Lord's Supper, in spite of their profanation of the latter, just as a modern Catholic does.

Much of this is probably true. Religions with " mysteries " were the only potent religions in the first century, and it was only natural that people who passed from such religions to Christianity should bring their mental habitudes along with them, and read the ordinances of the new religion in the light of ideas borrowed from the old. It is not possible to exaggerate the crudity of these ideas, nor to trace them to an origin too low. There were pagan rites in which the worshipper was believed literally to eat his god, and so to become participant in divine life. The fish, Professor Cumont tells us,¹ was sacred to Atargatis, and in ordinary circumstances was *tabu*. " But in certain mystical repasts the priests and the initiated ate this forbidden food, and believed that in so doing they took into themselves the

¹ *Les Religions Orientales dans le Paganisme Romain*, p. 142.

flesh of the divinity herself." There was no philosophy or theology of this, no doctrine of transubstantiation or other doctrine to explain it. In point of fact it is a survival of ideas belonging to the most primitive stage of human intelligence. "It is a belief," as the same great scholar reminds us, "widely diffused among savage peoples, that in drinking or bathing in the blood, or in devouring some inward part of an enemy who has fallen in battle or of an animal which has been killed in the chase, one transfers to himself the qualities of the dead man or beast."¹ It is to roots like these that the superstition of the Corinthians goes back; and while it is not incredible that superstition should have gathered round the sacraments in a community to which religion and mystery-rites were synonymous, it is more than astonishing to find scholars arguing that superstitions with roots like these were the sacramental doctrine of St. Paul himself. One illustration may be given for many. "What we know most accurately," says Dieterich,² "is the sacramental meal of the ancient Christian Church. Whatever the Lord's Supper may have signified originally, and in whatever sense it may have been instituted, there can be no doubt as to how it was apprehended by Paul. When, in the passage which speaks of the holy supper, he forbids to believers all participation in an idol supper, in order that they may not come into the fellowship of demons (*οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι*, 1 Cor. x. 20), we recognize at once that a magical communion through sacrifice is what he believes in." Dieterich then quotes 1 Corinthians x. 16 f. and goes on: "Such sentences can no longer be misunderstood by us. Christ is eaten and drunk by believers and through that eating and drinking (*dadurch*) is in them. This, too, is the only thing which makes in-

¹ Ibid. p. 83.

² *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, p. 106.

telligible that notable saying, ὥστε ὁς ἂν ἐσθίῃ τὸν ἄρτον τοῦτον ἢ πίνη τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ Κυρίου ἀναξίως ἔνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος καὶ αἵματος τοῦ Κυρίου (1 Cor. xi. 27). He has been guilty of an impiety upon the real body and blood of the Lord, because in any case he has in point of fact (auf jeden Fall *faktisch*) eaten body and blood. No more words are needed."

This is more emphatic than convincing, and most readers will remain of opinion that more words are needed. Dieterich may do justice to the Corinthians, but it is another question whether he does justice to St. Paul. No doubt in arguing with the Corinthians the apostle argues *ex concessis*; he has common ground on which to meet them. But he is controverting their opinion as to what the sacraments can do for them, and it is probable rather than otherwise that this implies a difference of opinion not only about what they effect but about how they effect it. To speak about a "magical" communion through sacrifice is simply to beg the question, and to do so in the sense which is most at variance with St. Paul's purpose here, and with what we know of his mind otherwise. What the apostle says in chap. x. 16 is that the cup of blessing which we bless is a joint participation in the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break a joint participation in His body. *Koinonia* includes a reference to the relation of Christians to one another as well as to their relation to Christ. As Canon Evans puts it, it is "the fellowship of persons with persons in one and the same object"; and we must remember that consideration for others and for the unity of the Church are motives to which St. Paul recurs again and again in chaps. viii.-xi. But the main point here is undoubtedly participation in the body and blood of Christ. In spite of verse 17 I cannot think of any reference to the mystical body, the Church; the body and the blood must be determined by each other, and by the

words of institution. But what is meant by participation in them ? And how is it mediated ?

In spite of the embarrassments to which reference has been made, surely no Christian will question that there is a real presence of the Lord in the celebration of the supper. It is the table of *the Lord* at which he sits, it is the cup of *the Lord* from which he drinks. He may be quite incapable of believing in a real presence of the Lord in the material elements. What is sometimes called "the sacramental union" of the symbol and the thing signified may be to his mind nothing but a superstition as unintelligent and degrading as the savage ideas which are its lineal ancestry ; but if he is a Christian at all, he must hold (and experience) that Christ is present in the supper in the sense of the elements and of the use to which we put them. He must believe (and experience) that the Lord is with us to all the intents and purposes signified by the elements and the actions. He is with us, that is to say, in the virtue of His broken body and His shed blood ; He is with us as the Lord who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and made one sacrifice for them for ever ; He is with us that the unsearchable power of His atoning love may enter into us, condemning, subduing, annihilating, regenerating ; He is with us to impart Himself to us as the meat and drink of our souls. We *have* this real presence, a presence which the supper enables us to realize in all its wonderful grace. We have this divine, this truly supernatural thing, at the heart of our Christian life ; it does not rest on the wisdom of man, but on the presence and power of the Redeemer, with whom we have communion at His table. But there is no magic in this, and nothing superstitious. It raises no questions about the bread and the wine, except the one question what they signify. It is literally senseless to ask what they become, or what is the relation to them after "conse-

cration"—an idea quite unknown to the New Testament—of the body and blood of Christ. We may quite fairly call them symbols of Christ's body and blood, remembering, however, as we do so that the use of a symbol is not, as the analytic modern mind is apt to think, to come between us and the reality, but rather to enable us more sensibly to apprehend the reality. If we were to say that they were "merely" symbols, probably something in an earnest Christian spirit would betray resentment or dissatisfaction. But that something would not be intellectual. It would not be a metaphysical instinct which was being overlooked and which craved for a more precise and positive definition of the connexion between the bread and wine and the Lord's body and blood; it would be the element of spiritual emotion in which the supper is celebrated and communion with Christ realized; this emotional element in Christian experience would protest against the "merely" as emphasizing a distinction which in the vivid experience of celebrating the supper does not come into consciousness at all. But, on the other hand, it must be insisted that it is only in that vivid experience that the distinction of symbol and thing signified disappears. It does not disappear on the plane of logic or of physical or metaphysical science; it disappears only in the element of spiritual emotion which belongs to the celebration of the supper. The magical ideas surviving from prehistoric times and filtering into the catholic doctrine of the sacraments through the revival of the mystery-cults in the early centuries, and the medieval metaphysics of transubstantiation are equally without relation to the fact to be explained. They are answers to questions, and the final objection to them is, not that the answers are wrong, but that the questions have no meaning. The one thing that is entirely deplorable in the celebration of the supper—the one thing that is entirely irrational and unprofitable in theologiz-

ing about it—is to have any questions whatever, or any answers to questions, about the bread and the wine. As we use them in the supper we enter into a true union and communion with the Lord whose death we proclaim ; our hearts are satisfied with nothing short of calling them His body and blood—His very self in all the reality of His incarnation and passion ; but the emotion and experience which are not satisfied with a more restrained expression are not interpreted or vindicated, they are degraded and misconstrued, alike in Corinthian superstition and in what is usually put forward as sacramental or Catholic theology.

That this is the true direction in which to follow the apostle's thought is shown by the analogies to which he appeals, often as these are cited in another sense. " Look, he says, " at Israel after the flesh : have not they who eat the sacrifices communion with the altar ? " It is unreasonable to speak of the eating of the sacrifices as if it could be insulated, or as if in such insulation it magically united the worshipper to Jehovah. The eating of the sacrifice is the culmination of the Israelite's worship. He does not eat his God ; he rather shares in the food of which his God in ancient times was believed to partake (Lev. xxi. 6) ; he sits at His table, under His benediction ; he realizes the truth that he has a place in the great society in which God and man have a common life and common ends ; but there is no meaning in asking what the relation is between the flesh which he eats and his assurance of partaking in the life of God. Isolate the flesh thus, and there is no relation at all. But his experience is strictly similar to that which we have described as the Christian experience in the celebration of the supper. There is nothing magical, nothing superstitious ; but there is a revived sense of union with God under conditions which, when viewed as a whole, are thoroughly intelligible.

It is the same with the sacrificial worship of paganism. St. Paul has admitted already that no idol is anything in the world ; and it might plausibly be argued that in this case there could be no possibility of coming into real communion with anything ; but he declines the inference. Although the idol is nothing, the vast system of paganism has spiritual powers behind it ; it is sustained by beings hostile to Christ ; “ The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God ; and I would not that ye should have communion with demons.” The apostle believed that the demons existed, undoubtedly, and that those who took part in pagan worship entered into communion with them ; but it is grotesque as well as gratuitous to maintain that the material act of eating the sacrificial flesh essentially and magically mediated this communion. Such eating, as in the case of Israel after the flesh, was the culmination of worship, and the apostle thought of it as he knew it, not as a magical device, but in its whole conditions and circumstances. He could see in his mind’s eye a company of worshippers go up to the temple of Aphrodite or Apollo. He could see them sprinkled with lustral water, and standing by in sacred silence while the victim was slain ; he could see them join in the songs and dances which filled up the time between the sacrifice itself and the preparation of the sacramental meal, and reflected the religious mood of the festival, whatever it might be ; he could see them at last give themselves up to the joy of the meal which crowned the festal day in honour of the god.¹ We know sufficiently what this meal was. It is revealed in Aristotle’s derivation of *μεθύειν*, to be drunk, from *μετὰ τὸ θύειν*, after the sacrifice. It was a scene of revelling and excess. This, and not some abstract conception about supernatural beings to whom men are magically united [by participating in a mystical rite, is what St. Paul

¹ See Heinrici, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, ad loc.

has before his mind. He no more thinks the demons are eaten in the sacrificial flesh which had touched a pagan altar than he thinks the God of Israel is eaten in the flesh which has touched His altar. He has the enlightened and liberal Christians of Corinth in his eye, and he dreads that their very enlightenment and liberality may lead them into danger in their dealings with paganism. No matter how sure a man's hold may be of the Christian principle that an idol is nothing in the world, and therefore can do no harm to any enlightened person ; no matter how thoroughly he may have made himself, as he thinks, infection-proof, by eating and drinking at the Lord's table ; if he takes part in such a transaction as has been described, then its atmosphere, its circumstances, its spirit will prevail against him ; in spite of his enlightenment and of his superstition he will be sucked into the great communion of heathen life again. The life that is in him in that environment will not be that of Christ ; it will be that of those powers hostile to Christ by which the degrading system of paganism is sustained. Nothing was commoner in paganism than for a man to be initiated in succession into many mysteries, but the Christian lived under another rule. The jealousy of God is the fundamental law of the true religion ; and for any one who understands what they mean it is impossible to drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. No enlightenment can make it anything but a wanton provocation of God.

The lesson of this passage does not depend on our acceptance or rejection of the apostle's explanation of heathenism. It is easy to say that we do not believe in demons—as easy as to say that an idol is nothing in the world. It is easy to say that there are no such persons as Bacchus and Aphrodite. The real question, as one of our most brilliant Greek scholars puts it, is, Are there no such things ? Are there no powers in the world in which we live radically and finally

hostile to Christ? Or is it as true now as when St. Paul wrote, that our conflict is not with flesh and blood—not with other human creatures like ourselves, whom we could fight, so to speak, with our hands—but with invisible influences which are far more subtle, potent and omnipresent than that of a human will—with a whole world or system of spiritual forces which is essentially antichristian? Whatever the speculative answer may be, the experimental one agrees with the apostle's. The cup of demons is still offered to us as well as the cup of the Lord, and it is still drunk as of old under the sign of liberty. Even a Christian man will sometimes argue to himself that everything in human life as it has actually shaped itself in God's providence must have a legitimacy of its own. We ought to cultivate breadth, appreciation, geniality, and to shun a censorious and puritanic temper. The world that is good enough for God should be good enough for us, and we should not be too good to take it as it is. It is argued even that the severity of this chapter is an idiosyncrasy of St. Paul, and that the more appreciative and tolerant view can appeal against the disciple to his Lord. But surely even in the New Testament Jesus is the great preacher of separation, of renunciation, of the Cross. Above all others His is the voice which proclaims Either . . . or. The one thing which alarms him and calls forth from his love the most passionate warnings is the disposition in men to believe that "all things are lawful"—that nature is entitled to take the world as it stands, and to assert itself without reserve through the impulses that God has implanted in it. If a man is so confident in this principle that he will never sacrifice hand or foot or eye—never do violence to his nature, or curtail or maim it on any side; if he is so confident in it that he will go wherever his two feet can carry him, and handle whatever his two hands itch to touch, and gloat on all that his two eyes crave to see, our Lord tells us what the end will be. It

is not that the enlightened and liberal man gets an ampler and richer character, it is that he forfeits character altogether. It is not an abundant entrance into life which is the issue, but the sinking of an exhausted nature into hell. For creatures such as we are, in a world such as this, these, according to Jesus, are the alternatives. And they are alternatives. This is the philosophy of Puritanism, when enlightenment has said its last word : Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons ; ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. As surely as we would have Christ and the Atonement, the judgment and the mercy of God, the spirit of holiness and the hope of heaven remain real to us, so surely must we renounce the things which cast upon them all the shadow of unreality and neutralize in our life their redeeming power. There are such things. We have all known them. We have all loved them. We have all feared them. It is our Lord who says to us, Cut them off, for your life.

JAMES DENNEY.

FOLKLORE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE services of Dr. Frazer to Anthropology and Comparative Religion are so very remarkable that his contribution to the volume dedicated to Dr. Tylor¹ is likely to attract very general attention among Biblical students. The subject is not indeed a new one : owing to the Bible being more read than any other book, those who have studied the ways of primitive peoples have in general been ready to perceive parallels between its records and the practices with which they have become acquainted in the course of their investigations ; and, indeed, Dr. Orr complained in

¹ *Anthropological Essays* dedicated to E. B. Tylor, Oxford, 1907, pp. 100-176, "Folklore in the Old Testament," by J. G. Frazer.