

GSS 38

THE BENNETT JUDGMENT.

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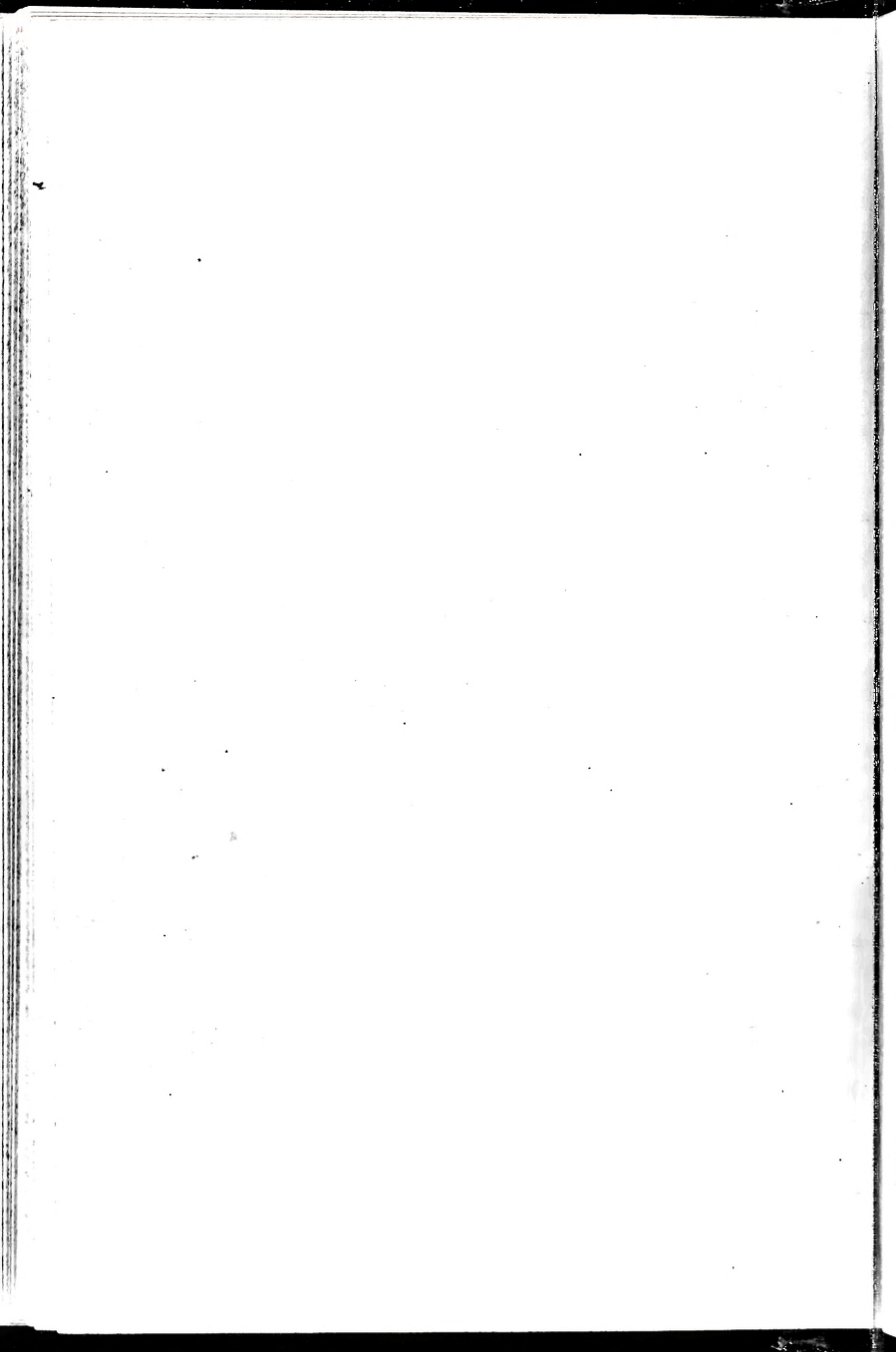
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THE BENNETT JUDGMENT.

THE condition to which the Established Church is gradually tending, necessarily awakens deep anxieties in those who are interested in upholding it. The safeguards provided to maintain its integrity, as successively proved, are found absolutely wanting in cohesion and strength. The great desideratum for mankind is to bring the soul into conscious contact with its maker, to realise the sense of his presence and action on the mind and spirit, for the governing ourselves in the paths of rectitude and holiness. The Church recognises a change to be wrought in man from nature to grace, which is ecclesiastically termed regeneration. The question of how this was to be effected was in a manner tried in the Gorham case, and the issue was that it is quite uncertain whether the regeneration can be produced by applying water, in baptism, to an infant, or has to be wrought out otherwise by influencing the conscience at some later period. Then, being brought to God, it had to be judged what guidance he might have provided to give man an insight into his mind and will, whereby man might direct his ways in conformity to the divine purposes. The Bible was offered as the all-sufficient medium. But upon investigation, in the instance of the Essayists and Reviewers, the judgment was, that it should be left to each to decide for himself how much of the book came from God and was indubitably true, and how much came from man and was questionable. Furthermore

Christ being apprehended to be the medium between God and man, it had to be ascertained in what manner the communion between Christ and man is to be kept up. A special service is appointed for that end, the true import of which had to be declared. In some sense Christ was held to be fed upon by the believer when partaking of the bread and wine in the Eucharistic rite. The point raised was, whether he is only presented to him on the occasion spiritually, or, as Mr Bennett holds, is actually incorporated in the elements taken into his system by the recipient. The judicial result arrived at, not so much in words as in fact, is, that however much Mr Bennett's doctrine is to be discountenanced, in point of actuality, he, or any likeminded to him, is at liberty to promulgate it in terms such as he has employed in explaining himself.

At every turn, then, of the inquiry what the views of the Church of England really may be on any material subject, so far as depends upon judicial guidance, the end to which we are brought is confusion. And the reason of this is self-evident. In coming out of Rome, she carried with her so much that belonged to Rome, that those whose sympathies are in this direction have little difficulty in fastening the doctrines of Rome upon her.

The Evangelical body, with folded hands and half-closed eyes, endeavour complacently to flatter themselves that there is no such unsoundness at the core of their beloved institution. The *Record*, an organ of this party, has teemed with editorial notices and clerical correspondence on the matter of the Bennett Judgment, but in no one instance has the essential link between Rome and the Church, in the constitution of the Eucharistic service, been touched upon. Mr Bennett's views are loudly denounced and repudiated, but without an attempt to dislocate them from those foundations with which the Church herself has obviously provided him.

I hazarded a letter on this subject to the *Record*, in the hope that possibly it might find admission, and

bring before its readers the difficulties with which the administration of the Eucharist, as appointed in the Church of England, is assuredly environed. This I now give as describing the features of the service which I desire to bring under consideration.

To the Editor of the Record.

“SIR,—The Bennett judgment has naturally attracted much attention from yourself and your clerical correspondents. Mr Bennett had committed himself in his discourses, to the full measure of the Popish doctrine of the divine presence in the sacramental elements, from the moment of their consecration. The object of his prosecution was to disconnect the Church of England from such doctrine. The issue, however, leaves Mr Bennett at liberty to continue enunciating it. You and your correspondents are dissatisfied with such a result, and consider it perilous to the interests of the Church. Mr Ryle’s letter, in your issue of the 28th instant, is particularly candid on this head. I do not however see, in the efforts made through your columns to free the Church of England of the imputed obnoxious doctrine, that the question of what the Church’s design in the sacramental service really may be, is fairly approached. Permit me, therefore, to put a few propositions in your paper, in order to elicit such explanation of this abstruse matter as it may be considered susceptible of.

“Some presence in the elements, beyond what belongs to them naturally, is apparently expressed. The Catechism declares that the partaking thereof, at ‘the supper of the Lord,’ is ‘generally necessary to salvation,’ which amounts to saying, that, in some way or other, the act ministers to the ‘salvation’ of the recipient; and the explanation provided is, that it affords a ‘means whereby’ ‘an inward and spiritual grace’ is ‘given,’ ‘the body and blood of Christ’ being, it is said, ‘verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful’ through this channel. Mr Horace Noel, in your said issue of the 28th, insists that as the body and blood are received ‘by a bare act of faith,’ which is ‘an act, not of the body, but the soul,’ there can be no question of any such divine presence as Mr Bennett alleges in the bodily nourishing materials. But in disallowing the possible effect of faith as altering the conditions of matter, is Mr Noel true to the scriptural account of the power of faith?

We hear that 'the prayer of faith shall save the sick,' that Elias, by earnest prayer, stayed the rain, 'so that it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months,' and that if there be 'faith as a grain of mustard seed,' one may 'remove' a 'mountain' 'hence to yonder place.' In all these instances faith acts upon matter, affecting the physical circumstances of the sick man, arresting the rain clouds, and transposing the mountain. And why may it not take effect upon the bread and wine, as when bread was multiplied out of nothing, and water changed to wine?

"The services of the Church of England seem to lead up to such an idea. The 'Priest' has 'to lay his hand upon all the bread,' and, 'upon every vessel, (be it chalice or flagon,) in which there is any wine to be consecrated;' 'if the consecrated Bread or Wine be all spent before all have communicated, the Priest is to consecrate more;' 'when all have communicated,' he has to 'reverently place upon the Lord's table what remaineth of the consecrated elements, covering the same with a fair linen cloth;' and, 'if any of the Bread and Wine remain unconsecrated, the curate shall have it in his own use; but if any remain of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the church, but the Priest and such other of the communicants as he shall then call unto him, shall, immediately after the blessing, reverently eat and drink the same.' There is evidently here some work seen to have been wrought upon the elements, making them to differ from what is unconsecrated. The question is in what the difference consists, if not in the association of the body and blood of Christ therewith.

"It is at what is called an 'altar,' or 'the Lord's table,' that the bread and wine are to be taken, and not elsewhere; they must be dispensed by the 'priest' or 'minister' alone; and his hand must first have carefully been passed over them; and when received, it must be in the posture of 'all meekly kneeling.' There is a disclaimer at the close of the service introduced by you in your issue under notice, in which it is disavowed that this kneeling involves an adoration of the elements. But why the appointed altar, the intervention of the priest, and the meek kneeling are all enjoined, together with the 'reverent' replacing of the residue, and the 'reverent' consumption thereof, on the spot, by the communicants only, after the service is over, has in some way to be explained, if there is no special significance of a change wrought divinely at the time in these elements.

“I have noticed the efficacy attaching to the reception of the bread and wine in the Catechism. The same appears in the Communion Service itself. It is therein declared that the communicants ‘*then* spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood;’ that ‘*then*’ they ‘dwell in Christ, and Christ in them;’ and, contrary to Mr Noel’s theory, it is expressly asked that their ‘sinful bodies may be made clean by his body,’ and their ‘souls washed through his most precious blood.’ It is evident that the ‘*then*’ attaches to the act some participation at the time of Christ, secured to the recipient, such as does not belong to the Christian ordinarily, and at all times; and that his ‘body,’ through the material ingredient introduced into it, as well as his soul, undergoes some actual beneficial operation. How are the elements thus effectual if not by an incorporation of Christ therein; and if the Eucharistic act is simply one of commemoration, why is the process, more than once, described as involving a ‘holy mystery’?—I am, Sir, yours obediently,

T. L. STRANGE.

GREAT MALVERN, June 1872.”

The Editor has not lent himself to the sifting of the question by himself or readers, which it has been my object to promote. A feeling for truth in the abstract can scarcely consist with the sense of truth apprehended only in some cherished system. My investigation must therefore be conducted independently from my own point of view.

The account of the last supper in the synoptic gospels certainly does not place the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine in any higher light than that of a commemorative act. Neither was the distribution associated with any ceremonial. The injunction to the disciples to use these elements in memory of their master’s death was given in the course of conversation relating to various disconnected matters which both preceded and followed it. The bread which stood for the body given for them, and the wine which stood for the blood shed for them, could have so stood in the way of representation merely, and not of actuality, at a time when, as yet, the body had not been given, and

the blood had not been shed. The bread appears to have been given to the disciples collectively, and not to each separately and formally, as obtaining at the dispensation of the Eucharist. That the wine was given thus informally is evident from Luke's phrase—"Take this and divide it among yourselves." There was no exhibition of a priest dealing severally with each participant, as if there was virtue in the reception of the elements direct from his hand. The reprobate Judas was present on the occasion, and there is no note that he was excepted at this distribution. If, after the action was over, he could dip his hand in the dish with Jesus, as is plainly said to have been the case, his part in the then passing sociabilities had, it is clear, not been disturbed. There was then no mysterious dispensation enacted from which the transgressors were to be carefully excluded. It is evident that the type of the ceremonial in use in the Church of England is not to be found in the representations of the synoptics. It is equally evident that the model followed is that supplied by Rome. In adopting this model, has the church avoided the significancy attaching to the forms as employed by Rome? Has she adjusted them to a mere commemorative observance? If so, she has been guilty of empty mummeries for which no other object can be conceived than a delusive one.

Rome is not without warrant for the meaning she has attached to the observance. The teaching of John affords her ample support in the declaration that Christ had to be fed upon for the sustenance of the life of his people. "I am the bread of life," he makes him declare. "Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have *no* life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." And Paul completes the instruction. According to him, it was an essential

constituent that "the Lord's body" should be "discerned" on the occasion, failing which the "unworthy" recipient became "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord;" here calling up, as does Rome, the association of a continually-recurring sacrifice in the rite; and, as a consequence, the guilty one became liable at once to sickness, and even death. Putting these matters together, we have the awe-striking dispensation in all the purport and power attributed to it by Rome, whose meaning ritual is unmeaningly followed by the Anglican community.

The warranty of Rome becomes significantly strengthened when we trace back the idea upon which she works to its true parent germ. The Christian faith, professing to be exercised on "things not seen," is truly, in all its essentials, materialistic. There is the necessity that "God" should have been made "manifest in the flesh;" that the genius of evil should have an outward form, which at one time is to be bound in chains and at another cast into the flames of hell; and that physical blood should be provided to wash out spiritual sin. Then the eating and drinking the flesh and the blood of Jesus readily present themselves as absolute realities.

The feature here associated with the sacrifice of Jesus has ever belonged to the practice of sacrifices. In those of the Jews a portion was burnt on the altar and went up as "a sweet savour unto the Lord," and the residue was consumed by the priests, who represented the people. God and man partook of the same material feast. "The Hindu gods," says Professor Monier Williams, "are represented as *living on the sacrifices* offered to them by human beings, and at every sacrificial ceremonial assemble in troops eager for their shares. In fact, sacrifice with the Hindus is not merely expiatory or placatory; it is necessary for the *actual support* of the gods" (Indian Epic Poetry, 52, note). At the Bacchanalian rites, in old times, Mr Baring-Gould informs us, they killed a man and partook of his flesh. This was put an end to by the

Senate in B.C. 186. In sacrifice, he adds, the victim is held to be united with God. Hence sacramental eating almost invariably accompanies the act (*Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, I. 407, 411). Positive virtue is considered to be inherent in what is thus received into the system, as when in India tiger's flesh is eaten to obtain the courage of the tiger, and in New Zealand the body of an adversary, in the belief that all his martial valour may be thus secured to him who eats him. John's idea of participation in Christ by eating his flesh and drinking his blood carries out this superstition most completely.

The tree of life, in the garden of Eden, capable of imparting life, represents the same sentiment that spiritual advantages can be materialistically conveyed. The belief is traceable to the Egyptians, who pourtray the goddess Neith in the branches of this tree, pouring out the water of life into the mouths of departed souls (*Sharpe's Egypt. Myth.* 66; *Barlow on Symbols*, 59). The real source of the idea is the Soma of the Hindus, becoming the Haoma of the Persians. This was the juice of a plant producing, when drunk, an exhilarating effect. The gods drank this beverage. It was "the water of life, giving health and immortality, and preparing the way to heaven." The Persians say that the "Haoma is the first of trees, planted by Ahura Mazda in the fountain of life. He who drinks of its juice never dies!" It "imparts life at the resurrection" (*Muir's Sanskrit Texts II.*, 471, citing Dr Windischmann). The plant *haoma* is "the symbol of the Deity in the Zoroastrian creed." "It is spoken of in the *Zend-Avesta* as the Word of Life, the Tree of Life, and the source of the living water of life." "When consecrated, it is regarded as the mythical body of God; and when partaken of as a sacrament, is received as the veritable food of eternal life. . . . The *Hom* (*haoma*), when consecrated to God, was regarded as God himself, and was supposed to give life, being the person of God eaten by man" (*Barlow on Symbols*, 115-117.) The

Haoma-drink was the sacrament of the Zoroastrian religion; nay, more, it was the medium through which the Deity manifested itself. It gave health and imparted life in the resurrection. Men received the white sap and became immortal (Dollinger's *Jew and Gentile*, I, 401, 411). The intoxicating Soma juice is an early Aryan divinity. It was the beverage of the gods, and made men like them immortal (Muir's *Sansk. Texts*, V. 258, 262). Soma is addressed as the god giving future felicity. "Place me, O purified god, in that everlasting and imperishable world where there is eternal light and glory. . . . make me immortal in the world where king Vaivasvata (Yama, the king of death, the son of Vivasvat) lives, when in the innermost sphere of the sky" (Muir in *Journal of As. Soc. New Ser.* I. 138). Soma, says Dr Muir, was the Indian Bacchus (idem, I. 135). Its worship may be identified with that of the Greek god Dionysus (Bacchus), who discovered and introduced to mankind the juice of the grape for the alleviation of their sorrows (Muir's *Sansk. Texts*, V. 259, 260).

In the remarkable incident of Melchizedek meeting Abraham and bringing him bread and wine, we have the sacramental elements associated together. This has the appearance of legendary matter, derived probably from a Phœnician source, and it is introduced with no very apparent purpose. The personage in question comes from we know not where, and reappears no more. He is seemingly the Sydyk of Sanchoniatho. The name signifies "the just man," the adjunct Melik meaning king. Accordingly in Hebrews, Melchizedek is declared to be, "by interpretation," the "king of righteousness." Noah, it is said, "was a just man," whence Faber identifies him with Sydyk (*Mysteries of the Cabiri*, 55). Noah's planting a vineyard, and drinking of the wine thereof, has possibly a mythological purport. Wine figures at the outset of the ministerial career of Jesus, his miracle in producing it being, according to John, the manner in which he first "manifested his glory;" and it is emblematical of his final glory. "I will not

drink henceforth," he said at his last supper, "of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." The blood is the life of the animal. The wine, therefore, would appropriately represent his blood, and it is an animating or life giving substance. The follower of Christ, as we have seen, has "no life in him" unless he drink it. We appear to have in all these figures and practices the re-embodiment of Soma, and by consequence of Bacchus. It is singular, moreover, that the monogram of Bacchus, which is $\Upsilon\text{H}\Sigma$ or IHS, should have been adopted for Christ (Higgin's Celtic Druids, 128).

The other element, the bread, also bears its part in the older mythologies. Cakes are among the offerings made to the Hindu gods from the earliest Vedic times (Talbo's Wheeler's Hist. of India from the Earliest Times, I. 11). Rice cakes are also used at the sráddhas, or funeral ceremonies, of the Hindus (Monier Williams' Epic Poetry, 38, note). The mourners offer it to the dead and eat thereof themselves. "Offering cakes and water," says the legislator of the Hindus, is "the sacrament of the Manes" (Institutes of Manu, iii. 70). The partaking of the bread and wine were connected with the death of Jesus, which was thus to be shown forth till he comes. In this there is some approximation to the sráddhas. The Bráhmaṇ has to present cakes of bread to the progenitors of mankind (Manu i. 94). After making his offerings to the household gods, the offerer may eat what remains untouched (Manu iii. 117). Just so the Christian priest and the communicants are to consume the residue of the consecrated eucharistic elements. The efficacy of the heavenly bread in generating life, or creating immortal souls, is instanced in the Rámáyṇa, one of the great Indian epic poems. Rája Dasaratha performed a sacrifice to obtain a son. On this the *páyasa*, or food of the gods, was divinely conferred upon his three wives, who, on partaking thereof, conceived and bore four god-born sons, one of whom was the illustrious incarnation Ráma (Talbo's

Wheeler II. 20, 21 ; Monier Williams, 64). The early Greeks, from so far back as the times of Cecrops, had consecrated loaves and cakes which were sold at the entrance of the temples and offered to the gods (Bryant's Ancient Mythology, I. 371-373). Jeremiah (vii. 18 ; xlv. 19), tells of cakes and drink offerings presented to the queen of heaven. The Homeric gods had their food as well as their liquor—their ambrosia and their nectar. So the Israelites in the wilderness were fed with "the corn of heaven," constituting "angels' food" (Ps. lxxviii. 24, 25).

The doctrine of Rome, maintained in the eucharistic service, belongs thus to an ancient and very wide-spread mythology. It has the authority of India, Persia, Egypt, Phœnicia, and Greece. It is based upon materialism—the sense that spirit can be built up with that which nourishes the body. It is founded also upon belief in the visible manifestation of the Deity. If clothed upon with flesh, why not also with bread and wine ? The Evangelicals, such as the *Record* represents, cling to the one form of the manifestation, and revolt at the other. They ape the ceremonials of the eucharist, while disallowing what the ceremonials can alone signify. In the conflict between truth and error they belong to neither side. They bear a testimony against the error, and yet foster it. With very remarkable prescience, and much descriptive power, Dr Newman, thirty-three years ago, has pointed to the forces between whom the great issue has to be decided, whether reason is to govern the human race, or superstition ; in which struggle the Evangelicals, unfortunately, are nowhere. "Of Evangelical religion," he said,—

"we have no dread at all. . . . It does not stand on entrenched ground, or make any pretence to a position ; it does but occupy the space between contending powers, Catholic Truth and Rationalism. Then, indeed, will be the stern encounter, when two real and living principles, simple, entire, and consistent, one in the Church, the other out of it, at length rush upon each other, contending not for names and

words or half views, but for elementary notions and distinctive moral characters. . . . In the present day mistiness is the mother of wisdom. A man who can set down half-a-dozen propositions, which escape from destroying one another only by being diluted into truisms, who can hold the balance between opposites so skilfully as to do without fulcrum or beam, who never enunciates a truth without guarding himself against being supposed to exclude the contradictory,—who holds that Scripture is the only authority, yet that the Church is to be deferred to, that faith only justifies, yet that it does not justify without works, that grace does not depend on sacraments, yet is not given without them, that bishops are a divine ordinance, yet those who have them not are in the same religious condition as those who have,—this is your safe man, and the hope of the Church; this is what the Church is said to want, not party men, but sensible, temperate, sober, well-judging persons to guide it through the channel of no-meaning, between the Scylla and Charybdis of Aye and No (*The Manchester Friend*, 33, 34).”

From the day that this was written to the present time, the progress of the two opposed bodies has been very manifest. On the one side Romanism has become rampant, introduced into the Church of England through the many channels which her hollow unguarded system allows of. On the other, the advocates of free thought have been advancing rapidly in knowledge, in courage, and in numbers. Their tread is now firmly on the ground, never to be disturbed; and in the process of time, we may hope and believe, the human race will be released from the bondage of error in which dark days, rooted in Paganism, have involved them, to recognise in simplicity, in fulness, and in truth, the Being who has made them, as revealed to them daily in all his undisputed works and ways.

GREAT MALVERN,
July, 1872.