

THE DOCTRINE OF THE DOMINICAL SACRAMENTS
IN ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, JOHN CALVIN,
AND THE EARLY SCOTTISH REFORMERS.

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S U M M A R Y.S E C T I O N 1.AQUINAS'S DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS.

The key lies in his use of the word "sign". A sign conveys the unknown to us by means of the known; The material things on their own do not have power to effect the soul, they are the bearers of a spiritual reality which can only be received in faith. However, the sacraments "effect what they signify."

This is because God is the "cause" behind the effect of the sacraments. The sacraments do not merely signify that God is gracious, but they bring to men the grace of God. God uses the sacraments for this purpose.

There are two effects of the sacraments - grace and character.

THE NATURE OF SACRAMENTAL GRACE:

God does not only offer grace in the sacraments. But to men caught up in the sinful, material, world God gives special grace through the sacraments to help them in certain things which are necessary in the Christian life.

CHARACTER:

The only dominical sacrament bestowing this is baptism. Although we can lose grace, character can never be blotted out. By it we are stamped as God's, and are deputed to the special purpose of worshipping Him.

BAPTISM.

This sacrament is accomplished in the application of the water to man. This signifies that the man is inwardly justified by God; this is the reality in the sacrament. The effects of baptism:

- 1) The man is spiritually regenerated, created a new creature, and forgiven.
- 2) The man is baptised into Christ's death.
- 3) Baptism is a remedy against original sin.

- 4) All grace is erasible but character is also given, and this is indelible.
- 5) Baptism is incorporation into Christ. By faith we are incorporated only mentally, but in baptism we are incorporated corporally.

IS BAPTISM NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

Faith is essential for salvation, and all should receive baptism. If the opportunity should be lacking, the desire for baptism may substitute for the actual baptism.

IS FAITH NECESSARY?

Without faith grace may not be had, but character is given by God and for it faith is not essential. A child should be admitted early into the Christian life. The faith of the Church will profit the child.

THE EUCHARIST.

Two central emphasis: sacrifice and transubstantiation. Once transubstantiation has taken place the sacrament is completed. The consecrated matter then becomes a spiritual food. In the first part of this rite a sacrifice is offered, and in the second half the sacrament is received.

THE COMMUNION:

Christ and His Passion are the "cause" of grace. This grace is offered here as the food and drink of the spiritual life. However, all who see partake here do not necessarily receive grace. One can partake spiritually or sacramentally. Those who receive sacramentally receive unworthily and do not obtain grace. But those who receive spiritually are those who come with a "living faith"; they receive grace and are united with Christ.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION:

Aquinas has a "spiritual" doctrine of the sacraments. This presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a spiritual presence despite the use of the word "substance". This is an Aristotelian term, and implies something spiritual and not material. This is a miraculous change of the substance of the bread into the substance of Christ's body.

SACRIFICE:

This sacrament is a memorial of Christ's Passion. (Notice Aquinas's stress on the Passion). A sacrifice is offered here; It is Christ's sacrifice brought into the present. Christ is here as the Victim of the sacrifice because of the miracle of transubstantiation. This is not regarded as a mere representation of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary; "He the eternal immolation, is immolated now for us" (Masur).

SECTION TWO.CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS.

Calvin gives a very important place in the sacraments.

THE WORD AND THE SACRAMENTS:

Faith is a response to the word heard. The sacraments are also helps to our faith; the two go hand in hand. There must be a promise of God which is antecedent to the sacraments. This promise is accepted in faith. The sacraments are signs and seals of these promises. Through these material signs we are led by the hand to God. Faith is essential.

THE OPERATION OF THE SACRAMENTS:

Faith is the entire work of the Holy Spirit; It is the Holy Spirit who makes the sacraments efficacious.

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Faith is not regarded as a condition, but as a channel through which the sacraments act.

Thus to those who come without faith the sacraments are useless and empty figures. But to those who have faith the treasures of Christ are imparted.

CHRIST, THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SACRAMENTS:

However men may vary, God remains the same, and at all times Christ is offered in the sacraments. God does not hold out an empty symbol.

BAPTISM.

By baptism we are initiated into the Church. The central emphasis here is that by baptism we are ingrafted into Christ. This does not mean that the sacrament acts automatically. It is God's sovereign grace which prevails here. So that regeneration does not necessarily take place at the moment of baptism.

However here God has promised and God will effect that which He has promised. The promise may lie neglected in us for some time. However the promise of regeneration is always open to those who have been baptised.

INFANT BAPTISM:

Thus infant baptism is justifiable. Karl Barth is shown to underestimate the arguments of Calvin. For Calvin takes his stand upon the promise that God will be a God to us and to our seed. He shows that baptism replaces circumcision. Thus baptism is given to infants of Christian parents not so that they might be brought into the covenant with God, but because they are already within that covenant. The sacrament is given to infants not for a present regeneration (although we are not to say that God cannot accomplish this), but unto future repentance and faith. Thus will the promise of baptism be fulfilled in their lives later on in life.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

In this sacrament we are shown that Christ is the food of our souls. The body of Christ which is partaken of here is the source of our salvation; this is the body which was given for us. In this sacrament we are assured that we form one body with Christ so that everything His we may call our own.

Calvin stresses our union with the glorified humanity of Christ. He recognises that the atonement is not to be seen merely in the Passion, but in His "nativity, death and resurrection."

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST:

Since the promise is: "This is my body", we are assured of the bodily presence of the Lord. The eating here cannot be explained away as being merely spiritual; Here we partake of His flesh and blood. Thus we see here the fullness of St. Paul's teaching that we are men "in Christ". Our only real life is to be found in union with the flesh and blood of Christ; it is in His humanity that the fullness of Life resides.

THE HOLY SPIRIT:

The sign differs from the thing signified. Christ rose from this earth and is contained in heaven. It is through the Holy Spirit that Christ is now with us. Through the Spirit we are lifted up into heaven to partake of the flesh of Christ.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION AND CONSUBSTANTIATION:

Both of these are refuted:

- 1) "There must be nothing derogatory to the heavenly glory of Christ, but transubstantiation declares that the heavenly glory is contained in the bread.
- 2) Calvin insists on maintaining the human nature of Christ, but Luther with his notion of consubstantiation makes the humanity of Christ seem ubiquitous.

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Calvin teaches that Christ is the "res" of the sacrament without these explanations. The flesh of Christ brings life to our souls without the actual flesh of Christ entering into us. Thus Calvin can teach without any devices that although Christ is offered to all here yet He is partaken of only by those who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit and who have faith.

THE BOND OF CHARITY.

"By this participation we all become one body". Thus all have Christ in common here, and are joined in the bond of love.

THE SACRIFICE.

Calvin is strongly opposed to the Roman "sacrifice of the mass". For this takes away from the finality of Christ's one and only death upon the Cross. Calvin insists that there is a sacrifice however - that of ourselves, our praises and all that we have, to God.

In all his account of the Lord's Supper Calvin confesses that it is a great mystery that cannot be measured by words.

SECTION THREE.

THE TEACHING OF THE EARLY SCOTTISH REFORMERS.

- 1) An Historical outline.
- 2) The First Scots Confession and the Book of Discipline - 1560.

This follows Calvin very closely. The emphasis again is on the word and the sacraments together. There can be no sacrament without an antecedent promise from God. They teach that the sacraments are not naked and bare signs, but that they also effect that which they signify.

BAPTISM:

This is a devine symbol through which men are regenerated and ingrafted into Christ. They teach a doctrine of infant baptism, but baptism is not essential for salvation.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Here Christ becomes the nourishment and food of our souls. With Calvin they emphasize the fact that we are here savingly united with the glorified humanity of Christ. This is wrought by the Holy Spirit "who by true faith carries us above all things that are visible..... and makes us feed upon the body and blood of Christ..... which now is in the heavens".

3) The Westminster Confession of Faith - 1647.

Once again it is taught that the sacraments stand upon the promises of God, and that the sign is not an empty one..... but is made effective by the working of the Holy Spirit, which working is grounded in the sovereign will of God. Thus the sacraments do not have a power in themselves, nor can their efficacy be tied down to any particular moment.

BAPTISM:

The promise is offered here of the covenant of grace and of ingrafting into Christ. This promise will be effected by the Holy Spirit, according to the will of God. Thus the act is entirely the work of God. Those to be baptised must either believe or be the children of believers.

Infant baptism is correct, for the promise is made to believers and their seed. Children are baptised because the promises sealed by it are already theirs. The "improvement of baptism" is the task of a lifetime.

THE LORD'S SUPPER:

This is a commemoration of the one sacrifice of

Christ, but it is not a bare memorial. Those who partake with faith do indeed spiritually receive Christ. The presence is "real", but transubstantiation is condemned. Wicked and ignorant men receive only the outward element and not the thing signified.

They react hostilely to the idea of the sacrifice of the mass. The only sacrifice present is the commemoration of Christ's one true sacrifice, and a sacrifice of all possible praise.

4) Conclusion:

The difference between the First Scots Confession and the Westminster Confession is demonstrated. The latter is true to the dry intellectualism of its age. The sovereign will of God is stressed; faith does not have the same significance as it did for Calvin and the First Scots Confession; Thus the full significance of being united to the perfect humanity of Christ is lost.

SECTION FOUR.

A CRITICISM AND SYNTHESIS IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT THOUGHT.

These theologians spoke to their own age. We must attempt to interpret them for ours. The sacraments are essential for the proclamation of the Gospel in the world, and for its expression in our lives. Why and how are the sacraments means of grace?

THE SACRAMENTS AND NATURE:

God uses nature to speak to men - these are not empty symbols but bring men into touch with God.

THE SACRAMENTS - A MEANS OF GRACE:

Grace is the personal influence of God upon men. Calvin says that here we are united with the glorified humanity of Christ. To those who have faith Christ is the ("substance" of the sacraments.

GRACE AND FAITH IN THE SACRAMENTS:

It is emphasised that all this is from God, both grace and faith. Faith is not a condition but the medium through which God works. Through the sacraments such faith is solicited from us.

BAPTISM.

IS BAPTISM A DOMINICAL SACRAMENT?

In His own baptism Christ instituted baptism. Thus He is united to us in baptism. Baptism replaces circumcision and thus offers the same things and stands as a seal for God's covenant.

THE OPERATION OF THIS SACRAMENT:

It is what God does that matters, and He is not tied to an external sign. Baptism is not merely a of cognitive value.

MAN'S RESPONSE:

If baptism is to be effective it must be followed by repentance and faith.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM:

It is significant for the individual and for the Church as a whole. It signifies dying with Christ and being raised up with Him.

INFANT BAPTISM:

Something is done for the infant - not that grace is "infused". God gives His promise to us and to our seed. Because they are already within the covenant they are given its seal in baptism. Refutation of Barth's individualism. Because community is so important infant baptism is correct.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

This is a spiritual feast, but it is the feast of the Church because here Christ gives Himself to the Church, and

so to men.

THE MEMORIAL OR SACRIFICE:

We are here lifted into the spiritual realm and should not try to completely explain this mystery. Should not emphasise the Passion exclusively in the redemptive work of Christ. It is the risen Lord with whom we are united in the eucharist. Christ's sacrifice in a sense eternal.

THE COMMUNION:

Here is realised our being in Christ. The communion is not just spiritual but is with His flesh and blood. Here we must emphasise the risen Lord.

THE PRESENCE:

Christ is the "res" of this sacrament. Transubstantiation tried to offer a spiritual explanation of this presence. Christ is here present to our faith through the sign. It is only because He is always with us that He is here present.

P R E F A C E.

The subject of the sacraments was chosen for this thesis because it was believed that the sacraments should be fully understood, and should be placed at the centre of the work and worship of the Church, if the Church is to fulfil its role as the body of Christ in the world today. From studying the work of the reformers it became obvious that the word and the sacraments do not hold the place in the reformed Churches which they were intended to by Calvin and the early Scottish Reformers.

I am most grateful to Prof. W.D. Maxwell for suggesting that the work of St. Thomas Aquinas also be studied in this thesis. For not only has this cleared away many blind prejudices, but it showed also that Calvin himself had learned much from Aquinas. The doctrine of Aquinas is clearly reasoned, and from him we learn that it is the spiritual things which are the truly "real" things, that the sacraments do really effect that which they signify.

In the first three sections I have attempted to outline the teaching of Aquinas, Calvin, and the early Scottish Reformers, as fairly as possible, without giving any assessment of their teaching. In the fourth section I have tried, very inadequately I fear, to assess this teaching and show its relevance for our time.

The study of Aquinas has been restricted entirely to the Summa, and it has not been possible to find much literature dealing with him. The section on Calvin has been based on a study of his Institutes. For this reason when reference has been made to the Summa in the first section, and to the Institutes in the second section, the names of these works have not been given, reference has been made only to the paragraph numbers in these books.

The third section dealing with the early Scottish Reformers has been restricted to the two most important confessions of that period, the First Scots Confession and the Westminster Confession.

SECTION ONE.

THE TEACHING ON THE SACRAMENTS OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.

In approaching St. Thomas' doctrine of the Sacraments it is essential that we understand what he means when he says that sacraments are signs.

We are all familiar with the saying, "A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace." But when theologians come to define precisely what they mean by the simple word "sign", we see that it can express widely differing outlooks. Canon Masure, the Roman Catholic theologian, says that the truth regarding the sacraments "lies in the theology of the sign".

(1) Sign is a key word in this discussion.

"Signs", Aquinas says, "are given to men, to whom it is proper to discover the unknown by means of the known". In our everyday speech we convey our thoughts, which are unknown to others, by means of words. In this way words are signs which we use to convey thoughts. Thus we can see that because of our human nature it is necessary that we should be "led by things corporeal and sensible to things spiritual and intelligible." It is clear that sacraments are concessions to us since we are so wrapped up in material things.

Sacraments then are signs. They are signs of things sacred. Now it is in the nature of a sign to convey the unknown by means of the known. So in a sacrament it is something sacred which is conveyed. Thus it is that St. Thomas can conclude: "Properly speaking a sacrament is defined as being the sign of a holy thing so far as it makes men holy."

What is it that makes men holy? Aquinas gives a three-fold answer. The cause of our sanctification is Christ's Passion. The form of our sanctification is grace and the virtues. The ultimate end of our sanctification is eternal

life. Thus he maintains that in this sign we are reminded of the past, i.e. the Passion of Christ; we have an indication of that which is effected in us by Christ's Passion, i.e. grace; and we have an assurance of future glory. The sacrament is therefore a sign which conveys these three things to men for their sanctification. It is only as signs of these spiritual things that the sensible elements involved in the sacraments can belong to the worship or kingdom of God.

But it is only by the use of certain words that it can be explained that it is a spiritual thing which is being dealt with here. The bare sign without any explanation cannot be called a sacrament. Here St. Thomas quotes St. Augustine. "The word is added to the element, and this becomes a sacrament." For it is only the body which is touched by the sensible element, but the soul is touched through faith in the words. Here we are reminded that grace is inseparable from faith.

Thus it is seen that Aquinas has avoided a materialistic conception of the sacraments. He does speak of the sacraments as a medicine of the soul. But it is quite clear that the material elements on their own do not have the power to effect the soul. They have power in that they are signs of that which is spiritual which alone can sanctify. The corporeal element in the sacrament is clearly shown to be a veil to the spiritual element. His quotation from Augustine bears this out: "Whence hath water so great virtue, to touch the body and wash the heart, but by the word doing it, not because it is spoken, but because it is believed."

Continuing from this he maintains that the heart is cleansed not by the water, but by grace. It is here that we get a full picture of what St. Thomas means by "sign". The sacraments he says "effect what they signify". Thus it cannot be deduced that the material element constitutes

the sign, while the word accepted in faith constitutes the spiritual element. Rather the material element plus the spiritual reality are inseparably one in the sacrament.

If the material element should be separated from the spiritual reality the sacrament could be compared with a cheque which when taken to the bank procures a certain amount of money. The sign would then represent grace. But this is just what St. Thomas says it is not. The sign is efficacious; it does not merely signify, but also "causes" grace.

Here he shows that there are two types of causes - principal and instrumental. A principal cause works in the power of its own nature, e.g. fire produces heat. In this way only God can be the cause of grace. But an instrumental cause could be illustrated by an axe which is in the hands of a woodsman. Also an artist uses a chisel to carve a statue: it is from the chisel's edge that the statue takes shape. The power of the sacrament could be compared with the power of the chisel. The sacrament is an instrumental cause in the hands of the principal cause, who is God.

In the sacraments God reaches out and touches men. The sacraments do not merely signify a God who is gracious, but they bring to men the grace of God. Thus they are said to cause grace. We cannot say that the material element touches men's bodies while the spiritual reality signified touches their hearts. It is through the material element that God makes His grace known. Thus it is that St. Augustine can say of baptism: "It touches the body and cleanses the heart."

It is in this way that St. Thomas says that the sacrament "causes" grace, while maintaining that grace comes only from God. The grace comes from God; it is not contained in the sacrament as in a vessel, "but, in a sacrament grace has a passing and incomplete mode of being." 1. The

following quotation which he gives from St. Augustine summarises his teaching on this matter: "Nor should he marvel, if we say that water, a corporeal substance, achieves the cleansing of the soul. It does indeed, penetrate every secret hiding place of the conscience. For subtle and clear as it is, the blessing of Christ makes it yet more subtle, so that it penetrates into the very principle of life, and searches the innermost recesses of the heart." (1)

THE NATURE OF SACRAMENTAL GRACE.

When St. Thomas argues for the necessity of the sacraments, his main thesis is that man in his weakness, being caught up in the material world, needs to have these props within the material world, and therefore God in His mercy has given him the sacraments. However, there seems to be more to it than that. For it would seem that Aquinas differentiates between the grace given in the sacraments and that grace which he calls "the grace of the virtues and gifts". As B. Leeming says: "St. Thomas always calls sacramental grace something over and above sanctifying grace, the virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost". (2)

It would seem that grace, being the antidote to sin, comes in the form of virtues and gifts. Coming in this way it helps man in the present and in the future; by perfecting his soul it prevents him from sinning. However, man has a sinful past to which he is tied. Sacramental grace is ordained to deal with this. "In regard to past sins, the acts of which are transitory whereas their guilt remains, man is provided with a special remedy in the sacraments" (3) He explains that the grace which is given by the sacraments is a species of sanctifying grace in general. But in the sacraments the grace is ordained to a special purpose. Thus he can say: "Now the sacraments

1. III Q. 62, A.3. (1) III Q 62 A 4. (2) Principles of Sacramental Theology, p.112 (3) III Q 62 A 2.

are ordained unto certain special effects which are necessary in the Christian life: Thus Baptism is ordained unto a certain spiritual regeneration, by which man dies to vice and becomes a member of Christ: which effect is something special in addition to the actions of the soul's powers: and the same holds true of the other sacraments. So sacraments confer..... a certain Divine assistance in obtaining the end of the sacrament. It is thus that sacramental grace confers something in addition to the grace of the virtues and gifts." (1)

"St. Thomas says that sacramental grace is indeed closely connected with the virtues and gifts, but differs from them in finding its function in care of the deficiencies arising from sin" (2). In the Summa we do not get a clear picture of what exactly is added by sacramental grace. No doubt St. Thomas errs here in being too analytical, regarding grace as something which can be objectively analysed. However, it could be agreed that the sacraments meet a deficiency caused by sin. They meet man within his own materialistic environment in which sin encloses him.

CHARACTER.

Aquinas maintains that the effect of the sacraments is twofold. The one effect was grace. Now we shall deal with the second, which is "character". This "character" is a seal or mark which is stamped upon the followers of Christ. It can be compared with circumcision in the Old Testament. Character, however, is a spiritual and not a physical mark like circumcision. The only sacraments which confer it are baptism, confirmation, and orders. By these sacraments we are "deputed to the worship of God according to the rite of the Christian religion." (3) But the peculiar thing about this character is that it merely

(1) III Q 62 A 2.
(3) III Q 63 A 3.

(2) Principles of Sacramental Theology, p.111

"deputes us to the worship of God according to the rite of the Christian religion." It does no more and no less. It does not depute us to worship worthily or well, some will do it well and some ill. But character is really a power, it puts into the hands of those who receive the sacrament the power to worship God. They can do with this power what they like. Yet in baptism this great privilege is put into the hands of men. It remains for them to make of it what they can. This seems to be true, although somewhat strangely expressed by St. Thomas. This character he states triumphantly, can never be blotted out, no matter what the apostasy of the holder of it be.

In the character given by the sacrament we see the call to live as a Christian, the power to live as a Christian, and the setting apart of the Christian.

BAPTISM.

St. Thomas' exposition of baptism is in accordance with and follows from the general principles so far explained.

Having then already explained that a sacrament effects a certain sanctification, Aquinas states that the water used in baptism cannot be called a sacrament. He therefore disagrees with St. Victor who in defining baptism says that it is water. (1) "Consequently the sacrament is not completed in the very water, but in applying the water to man - i.e. in the washing."

Thus it is shown that the water itself cannot be called a sacrament. Here Aquinas seems to avoid a semi-materialistic conception of baptism. The teaching of St. Augustine he says is true - that when the words are added the element becomes a sacrament. But the element does not become a sacrament in its own right, it becomes a

(1) III Q 66 A 3.

(2) III Q 66 A 1.

sacrament "in man, to whom the element is applied." (2)

This is in accordance with his view of the sacrament as a sign. The elements alone do not constitute a sign. For the actual sacrament takes place when the element is applied to man. Regarding this relationship of element and man as an entity in itself it can be called a sign. It would be impossible to regard a box of chocolates as a sign of love. But when the box of chocolates is the gift of one lover to another it can signify love. Thus it is that Aquinas claims that the sacrament of baptism not only signifies grace but makes it real. The sacrament "conveys what it signifies". Aquinas never ceases to affirm that this action takes place in the context of faith.

He allows that in the sacrament of baptism we may consider three things: that which is sacrament only, that which is reality and sacrament, and that which is reality only.

That which is sacrament only can be perceived through the senses, the water and its application to man. This can never be an adequate explanation of what the sacrament is.

The character which is given to the person baptised is both reality and sacrament. As was stated earlier, by character Aquinas means a call to live as a Christian, the power to live as a Christian, and a setting apart of the Christian. When this character is given to a man he is given something real; he is called, set apart, empowered. But also this very calling and setting apart is itself a sign that he is accepted of God and inwardly justified. So character is both reality and sign.

But the only reality in all this, says Aquinas, is the fact that he is accepted by God and inwardly justified. This is the reality signified in this sacrament. But when we say "signified" we must recognize that in accordance with his general principles Aquinas does not mean that the

material transaction is a bare sign. This "inward justification" is vitally connected with the "outward sign". The sign "effects what it signifies".

Before examining what Aquinas says to be the effect of Baptism let us see what is signified in this sacrament. Why should water be used?. The most important reason, Aquinas says, is that this is according to Divine institution. However, the use of water is also a very apt symbol of what takes place here. Immersion in water is truly symbolical: "When we dip our heads under the water as in a kind of tomb, our old man is buried, and being submerged is hidden below, and thence he rises again renewed". (Chrysostom, quoted here by Aquinas). Some of St. Thomas's other reasons for water being used are more picturesque than convincing. He says that water has a regenerating effect, as on plants; water has a cleansing effect; water is cool and "tempers superfluous heat"; water is transparent and reflects light. All of these analogies seem to indicate to Aquinas that water is the ideal medium for baptism. (1)

Although St. Thomas does say that it might be "safest" to immerse, he claims that this is not really necessary but that sprinkling is sufficient.

The effects of baptism.

The effects of baptism, as in the sacraments in general, could be outlined as grace being imparted, and character being imprinted. There is a comprehensive answer given in the Summa where Aquinas is showing that baptism can be given only once. (2) He says that this is so because of the very nature of baptism, which is :

1) A spiritual regeneration. In it a man dies to his old life and begins to lead a new life. In baptism then a man is born again. This, he says elsewhere, is the reality

(1) 111 Q 66 A 3. (2) 111 Q 66 A 1.

present in this sacrament. (3) It is the reality underlying the sacrament, the reality which cannot be seen but which actually takes place. Here it is that a man is "inwardly justified". "Baptism is given in order that a man may, through grace, be cleansed from sin". (4) Here then we see the grace of God acting on sinful man, so that he is regenerated, created a new man, forgiven.

2). Baptism is "into Christ's death". As he has shown before, all sacraments derive their power from the Passion of Christ. No man can be saved says Aquinas unless he becomes a member of Christ. (1) Here he quotes Gal.iii 27 : "As many of you as have been baptised in Christ, have put on Christ". Thus being united to Christ in baptism, we are united with Him in His Passion.

3). We find Aquinas saying twice at least that "baptism is conferred principally as a remedy against original sin". (2) Even the children of the faithful are born with original sin. (3) In baptism the death of Christ avails, so that "as by the offence of one unto all men to condemnation, so also by the justice of one, unto all men to justification of life." All men stand in need of the forgiveness of original sin. In fact all men stand in the need of the forgiveness of sin. In baptism all past sin is forgiven. (4)

4) Another effect of baptism is character. The grace which given in baptism can be erased so that no trace of it is discernible, but the character is indelible. In baptism God puts His seal upon man, He deposes man to some definite purpose. It must be understood that this seal is not a part of the spiritual transaction of baptism. Here we are looking at the sacrament merely as an outward thing done before men.

(3) Ibid. A 1. (4) III Q 68 A 1. (1) III Q 68 A 1. (2) III Q 66 A 9, III Q 68 A 1 (3) III Q 68 A 1 (4) III Q 69 A 1.

By this demonstration of God's grace we are marked off as His. However this claim which God makes upon man by the outward sign has this power only because of the fact that in baptism man is accepted by God and inwardly justified. Thus although the three effects above might disappear from the soul so that it might never be known that they had been received in baptism, yet character remains indelible "both in the good as adding to their glory, and in the wicked as increasing their shame". (5)

5) Another very strong emphasis of Aquinas is "incorporation into Christ". In baptism man is made one with Christ in His suffering and in His victory. Thus for those who have been baptised, sin and its penalties have been overcome. Also of His fulness we all receive.¹ Those who are baptised are incorporated as members of Christ, and from their Head they derive knowledge (enlightenment) and fruitfulness.²

St. Thomas deals with the argument that incorporation in Christ is by faith: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."³ But only those who have faith should be baptised; it can be then argued that they would already be incorporated in Christ by their faith, quite apart from baptism. That is true, he says, but those who only believe are incorporated only mentally, while those who are baptised are incorporated in Him corporally. This is a direct inference from his view of the nature of faith. "To believe", he says, "is an act of the intellect, in so far as the will moves it to assent."⁴ He regards faith as an assent of the intellect, and incorporation in Christ by faith would have to be confined within these limits.

IS BAPTISM NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

Baptism is the sacrament of faith. Looking at baptism from man's side it is the sacrament in which he

(5) III Q63, A 5. 1. III Q 69 A 3. 2. John 1:14 & 16
3. Eph. 3:17. 4. II Q 2 A 2.

demonstrates his faith. Now it is by faith that man is incorporated in Christ. Faith therefore is essential. God has given the sacrament of baptism to enable man to be incorporated in Christ. This means of grace should therefore not be refused. All should receive baptism.

But if the intention had been present but the opportunity lacking, the faith which caused that desire may substitute for the actual baptism. Thus a man can be saved without baptism, but not without the desire for baptism. For God "is not tied to the visible sacraments,"⁵

IS FAITH NECESSARY?

Aquinas says that there are two things conferred in baptism, grace and character. He says quite bluntly that without faith grace cannot be had. But character is given from God. Here God lays His claim upon that life, and accepts that life as His due. Here faith is not essential. (1)

He claims that the salvation of God should be made open to children through the way of baptism. This is so that they "being reared from childhood in things pertaining to the Christian life may the more easily persevere therein. The argument then comes up that the essentials which he had named for baptism are not present in a child (i.e. intention and faith). But he answers this by saying that the intention is there on the part of those who bring the child, namely the Church. Faith too is there, the faith of the Church. "But the faith of one, indeed the whole Church, profits the child through the operation of the Holy Ghost, who unites the Church together, and communicates the goods of one member to another."

The question must then be tackled whether the children

of Jews and unbelievers should also be baptised. The only reasons against this are, first that "it would be contrary to natural justice if such children were baptised against their parents' will"; and secondly, that "they would be liable to lapse into unbelief, by reason of their natural affection for their parents." (2) Both reasons are very sensible, but do not seem to imply that faith is essential in the individual to be baptised.

However, baptism is not explained by Aquinas as acting merely *ex opere operatum*. For a man must embrace not merely baptism but its effects as well. If he does not, the effects are hindered. Thus some people receive more benefit from baptism than do others. Some coming with more devotion receive a greater share of grace. But if in due time this obstacle within the man should be removed, the grace promised at baptism will have its effect.

THE EUCHARIST.

From the earliest Christian tradition the eucharist had been associated with sacrifice. In the Western Church this tradition became embedded in two dogmas. These dogmas were that of the sacrifice of the mass and transubstantiation. Aquinas stands within the boundaries laid down by these doctrines, with this difference, his "treatment of 'transubstantiation' was an honest attempt, in the philosophical language available to him, to spiritualise the doctrine of the Presence." (1) Throughout he is hampered by his Aristotelian metaphysics and the dogmas of his Church.

Undoubtedly Aquinas finds the focal point of the eucharist in the changing of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The centrality of this colours all of his teaching on the Eucharist.

We find it continually insisted that "the sacrament of

the eucharist is completed in the very consecration of the matter." (2) "This sacrament," he says, "differs from the other sacraments in two respects. First of all, in this, that this sacrament is accomplished by the consecration of the matter, while the rest are perfected in the use of the consecrated matter." The second reason is that "in this sacrament the consecration of the matter consists in the miraculous change of the substance." It is only in this sacrament that the substance of the elements are changed into the very substance of the Godhead.

According to this teaching it must be recognised that once the elements of bread and wine have been consecrated this celebration now contains something which is "sacred absolutely, namely, Christ's own body." But baptism contains only a sanctifying power, not the bodily presence of Christ as does the eucharist. "Consequently the sacrament of the eucharist is completed in the very consecration of the matter, whereas the other sacraments are completed in the application of the matter for the sanctifying of the individual." (3)

He also says, "this sacrament is completed in the consecration of the matter while the usage of the faithful is not essential to this sacrament." 1.

Thus we see how the theory of transubstantiation dominates his teaching here. Yet at the same time he is fully aware that this sacrament "is ordained for spiritual refreshment." 2. He also says that the sacrament of the eucharist is "spiritual food". 3. When Aquinas is discussing what words should be used in the performing of this sacrament he says that "This is my body" and "This is the chalice of my blood" should complete the consecration.

(2) III Q 78 A.1 : Q.73 A. 1. (3) III Q.73 A. 1
1. III Q. 74 A.6. 2. III Q. 73. A. 2. 3.III Q.73. A.1.

However, he also brings in the words "Take ye and eat". For although he says that these words are not necessary for the sacrament "nevertheless, because the use of the consecrated matter belongs to a certain perfection of the sacrament, in the same way as operation is not the first but the second perfection of a thing, consequently, the whole perfection of this sacrament is expressed by all these words." 4.

Let us examine the religious significance of the eucharist, or what Aquinas calls the effects of this sacrament. The eucharist can be regarded from three points of view. First, it is significant for the past: It is "commemorative of our Lord's Passion". Thus it is called a sacrifice. Secondly, it is significant in the present: in the eating of the body of Christ men are united to Christ and to one another. Communion is therefore an appropriate name. The third significance is for the future: "the grace of God is life everlasting" 5. In this way it is called eucharist (good grade). 6. These three aspects of this sacrament cover its religious significance for all Christians of every age and cannot be improved on.

The first two divisions just mentioned (sacrifice and communion) constitute the two main actions of this rite. During the first part of the rite a sacrifice of praise is offered. In this way Aquinas says this rite is a sacrifice. In the second part of the rite the sacred gift is received. This section of the rite Aquinas calls the sacrament. Thus he says: "This sacrament is both a sacrifice and a sacrament: it has the nature of a sacrifice inasmuch as it is offered up; and it has the nature of a sacrament inasmuch as it is received." (1)

4. III Q.78. A. 1. 5. Rom. 6:23 6. III Q. 73. A. 4.

(1) III Q. 79. A. 5.

THE COMMUNION.

First, we shall consider the sacrament of communion. The communion of Christ's body is effective because here Christ's body is partaken of and here His death is represented. (2) As Aquinas expresses it, Christ and His Passion are the "cause" of grace. "Grace and truth come by Jesus Christ" (3), "This is my blood which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins." (4) Thus the effect of this sacrament to those who partake is grace. Here then is the food and the drink (and also the medicine) of the spiritual life - nourishing those who partake of it with grace. We notice that for Aquinas grace is not a "Gracious personal relationship" (Oman) but a God-given food or medicine, comparable with the manna which fell down from heaven.

What then of the sinfulness of those who receive this sacrament? Aquinas answers that awareness of sin unforgiven can be an obstacle in receiving this sacrament. On the other hand the sacrament can effect contribution, thus leading to forgiveness. Also he says that like a medicine this sacrament kindles charity, and from the fervour of charity man obtains forgiveness. Thus, despite past venial sins, a man may devoutly approach the eucharist and fully secure its effect. (5)

However, the effect of this sacrament does not follow as a matter of course from the partaking of it. The mere fact that a man receives this sacrament does not mean that he is united to Christ, or that he receives grace. This is unlike baptism where even if the person baptised should approach without any spiritual insight yet there is a gift of character implanted on that person. Aquinas says that the eucharist can be partaken of either sacramentally

(2) The significance of these two phrases will be explained later. (3) Jhn.1:17. (4) Matt.26:28 (5) III 279 A. 5.

or spiritually. The man who partakes only sacramentally is the one who "eateth and drinketh unworthily" (1 Cor. 11:29). He who receives sacramentally does not receive the effect. In spiritual eating "one receives the effect of this sacrament, whereby a man is spiritually united with Christ through faith and charity." (1) When we partake of this sacrament we are expressing that we are "made one with Christ, and incorporated in his members." Aquinas says that this is done by "living faith". He who is in a state of mortal sin or who has no faith, is abusing and profaning the sacrament if he partakes of it. Thus the sacrament should be refused to open sinners, and hidden sinners should be warned to repent before eating.

Here we see that Aquinas has a "spiritual" doctrine of the eucharist. For while he says that both just and unjust can eat Christ's body yet it is received spiritually or effectively, only by those who approach in faith. The sinner sins in partaking, not because in some way he has taken Christ's body into him, and thus, as it were, cast it into the mud. He sins because his whole action is a lie, comparable with the kiss of Judas.

Consistent with this is St. Thomas' teaching that it is not essential for salvation to receive this sacrament. The eucharist is not even as necessary as baptism. For, as we have just seen, Christ is effectively received in this sacrament because He is spiritually received by faith. He can be spiritually received without the aid of this sacrament, and men can be nourished by a spiritual and unsacramental union with Christ through faith.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

Aquinas refutes those who say that here Christ's body is only symbolised, and that He is not really present

(1) III Q. 80 A. 1.

bodily. "This is My body which shall be delivered up for you," (1) said Christ, and the truth of this is not to be doubted. Christ is here corporally present.

However, this is also described as a spiritual presence. In other words, Christ's body and blood in this sacrament cannot be detected by sense, nor understanding, but by faith alone, which rests upon divine authority." (2) Augustine is quoted as saying, "It is a mystery that I put before you; in its spiritual sense it will quicken you." Aquinas comments, "He intends not that body of Christ is in this sacrament merely according to mystical signification, but spiritually, that is invisibly, and by the power of the spirit." (3) Yet it can be said that Christ is here "bodily" present, and that He unites men with Himself in this sacrament.

It is when Aquinas begins to explain in what way Christ is present that his teaching becomes controversial. The meaning here is also obscure to the modern mind because of the scholastic argument and categories which he uses.

It becomes obvious that when Aquinas talks of Christ being "present in this sacrament", he is meaning not that Christ is present in the sense that where two or three are gathered together, there is He in their midst, but that He is present "invisibly under the species of this sacrament". In fact he often speaks of the species of bread and wine as being the sacrament. So whenever he refers to Christ's body being in this sacrament we can take it that he is referring to Christ's body being under the species of the bread.

However, when it is claimed that Christ is present in a particular place, viz. under the species of the sacrament, the question is then raised, but is Christ's body not in heaven? Christ's body is in heaven, says Aquinas, and it does not move from there to come upon the altar where this sacrament is being celebrated. For Christ's body is not

(1) Mk. 12:19. (2) III Q.75 A. 1. (3) Ibid.

in this sacrament in the same way as a body is in a place; but in a special manner which is proper to this sacrament."

1. This might seem rather obscure, but we must recognise that the doctrine of Christ's bodily presence in this sacrament is a difficult one to express. Obviously to the believer Christ is there. But in what way? "Sacramentally," answers Aquinas, "invisibly, by the power of the spirit."

He then goes further. If Christ does not move here from heaven, how is it that He is here? Aquinas says that the substance of the bread is converted into His body. After the consecration of the elements the substance of the bread and wine are so changed that in substance they are no longer bread and wine, but are in fact the body and blood of Christ. When it is said "This is my body", it is obvious says Aquinas, that it is meant not that it is bread that is here, or else it would be said "Here is my body".

Yet, says Aquinas, as it is obvious to all that can see, the "accidents" of the bread and wine remain. To the senses the bread still seems to be bread. The presence of Christ is discernible only to those who partake in faith.

It is necessary to understand that the metaphysics of Aquinas is Aristotelian. When they talk of substance they have not in mind the same material concept as we have today. Substance, strictly speaking, does not exist in space at all. According to the Aristotelian metaphysic the spatial properties belong to the accidents, not the substance. Substance is the thing in itself which comes into being when the raw material, called matter, is given some particular form of existence. Along these lines it is quite possible to explain that the "thing" or "substance", which is Christ's

body, could replace the substance of the bread without there being any physical change (as the modern scientist thinks of physical change). St. Thomas is trying to show that what happens here is spiritual, and not something that can be explained with crude and materialistic conceptions. 2.

Thus it is that this change is called "transubstantiation", for this is the "substance" that changes. This change is a miraculous one and could only be done by God. Aquinas compares it with the miracle of the Virgin birth. He also says that this change has something in common with creation. For here is a complete creation. It is not as though the matter of the bread were given the form of Christ's body. Thus it cannot properly be said that the body of Christ is made out of bread. On Aquinas' account it would seem rather that in an instant the bread ceased to exist and the body of Christ took its place, only the accidents of the bread remaining.

SACRIFICE.

This sacrament is a memorial of our Lord's Passion, says Aquinas (1). In fact here is represented Christ's Passion (2). However, Aquinas does not simply mean that the passion is portrayed or depicted before men. He means rather that the Passion is offered once more, is re-presented. Thus he says that this sacrament has the nature of a sacrifice. "It has the nature of a sacrifice inasmuch as in this sacrament Christ's passion is represented, whereby Christ offered Himself a Victim to God (Eph.5:2)"(3) Thus he says that the sacrament is beneficent not only to those who receive it, but to others present during the

2. cf. D.M. Baillie: The Theology of the Sacraments, p.100.

(1) III Q.74 A.1 : Q.76.A.2 (2) III Q.79 A.1.

(3) III Q. 76 A.6.

celebration. "It is beneficial by way of sacrifice, inasmuch as it is offered for their salvation." He goes to the Canon of the Mass here where it says "Be mindful, O Lord, of thy servants, men and women,..... for whom we offer up to Thee, this sacrifice of praise for themselves and all their own, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their safety and salvation." (4)

With this point firmly made he goes on to speak of "this sacrifice, which is the memorial of our Lord's Passion." It is clear that he sees present in this sacrament the offering up of a sacrifice. This "sacrifice of praise" does not mean merely the offering up of thanksgiving and gifts to God, it means the offering up of that which has redemptive value, viz. the Passion of Christ.

It should be explained at this point that in St. Thomas' eyes the most important aspect of the atonement of Christ is the sacrificial aspect. The redemptive worth of the atonement comes "from the degree of charity in virtue of which Christ suffered; from the dignity of human life which he offered in satisfaction, which was the very life of the Incarnate Word; from the immensity lastly of His passion and His sufferings." (1) Masure sums this up in these words, "He who had no obligation to die did in fact die." Christ's life is thus offered for men, and by being identified with this Victim of the sacrifice they obtain redemption. In the Passion of Christ alone is redemption to be found.

"By His Passion He inaugurated the rites of the Christian Religion by offering Himself - an oblation and a sacrifice to God." (2)

Once it has been admitted that in this sacrament the Passion of Christ is remembered or is brought especially

(4) Ibid. (1) III Q.48 A.2 (2) III Q.62 A. 5.
 (3) Masure: The Christian Sacrifice , p.216.

into the present, the question is, In what way is this done? Canon Masure rejects what he calls an infantile Protestant idea, that that which was accomplished far in the past is now made available to men.

The explanation of St. Thomas and the Council of Trent is the one he favours. Their style of reply is the "sacramental and realist style: the sign of the Saviour's Passion instituted by Jesus Himself, applies to us every day, thanks to the Victim's presence, that Passion's fruits, and thus prolongs His sacrifice and even His immolation to our own time." (3)

Masure quotes a collect of Aquinas', the collect of Corpus Christi: "O God,

- 1) who hast left us under a wonderful sacramental sign the memorial of thy passion;
- 2) grant us, we beseech thee, so to venerate the mystery of Thy body and blood;
- 3) that we may always taste the fruit of Thy redemption."

One can understand why Masure calls this the "sacramental and realist" theory.

It is sacramental because it is through a sacrament that it shows that the Passion of Christ is made available to men through the ages. Aquinas quotes Ambrose as saying: "In Christ was offered up a sacrifice capable of giving eternal salvation; what then do we do? Do we not offer it up every day in memory of His death?" Yes indeed! says Aquinas, that is what we do, "that we may always taste the fruit of Thy redemption." (1)

It is realist too. Aquinas says: "Whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is enacted." (2) To Aquinas it seems that he must say that here the work of our redemption is enacted, for here "we are made partakers of the fruit of our Lord's Passion." It seems quite logical to him to say

(3) Masure: The Christian Sacrifice, p.216. (1) Aquinas' Collect (2) (Sunday Secrets-9th after Pentecost) III 83, A.1

that if we receive the fruits of the Passion here, then here too the Passion must be enacted. Thus in the Eucharist men do not draw on the fruits of a Christ sacrificed long ago, but of a Christ sacrificed in a particular celebration of the eucharist. He says too "that Christ was sacrificed, even in the figures of the Old Testament: hence it is stated in the Apocalypse (xiii.8): Whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb, which was slain from the beginning of the world." (3)

According to this "sacramental and realist" theory of Aquinas the Sacrifice of the eucharist is not merely a symbol of sacrifice, but a real sacrifice of Christ re-presented. Masure (4) brings this out clearly dealing with Aquinas' question: "How and why can we say that Christ is immolated in the eucharist?" (5) Masure says "He answers (first) because the celebration of the eucharist is the representative image of Christ's Passion, and (secondly), because it produces in us all the Passions' fruits. And just as the immolation of a lamb meant first and foremost to immolate oneself, conforming with the sign in mental attitude, do, or rather conversely, to possess the body of Christ as victim of our sacrifice, and to participate straightway in all his immolation's fruits, is in fact to immolate Him."

This teaching has as a basic presupposition the theory of Transubstantiation. Notice how Masure spoke of us possessing the Body of Christ as victim of our sacrifice. This has to be understood in conjunction with Aquinas' explanation of the sacraments as signs. Masure says that the true doctrine of the eucharist "lies in the theology of the sign." He goes on to say: "The bread and wine

(3) III Q.83 A.1 (4) p.264 The Christian Sacrifice
 (5) III Q. 83 A.1.

which were at the beginning of the offertory only the insufficient signs of our imperfect religion become by the transubstantiation consecration the sign or the species of the victim immolated on calvary; and from this moment the sacrament contains within it all the fruits of Christ's historic immolation.

In virtue of the theology of the efficacious sign which allows us to use the same word for what is visible and what is invisible in our mysteries..... we may and must say what we immolate Christ on the altar, since we become participants in His own immolation. He who is always the victim and the sacrifice of His Father, and forever accepted by Him, becomes at this moment our victim and our sacrifice. He, the eternal immolation, is immolated now for us." (1)

Thus Aquinas' teaching stands together as a logical whole: the sacraments are signs, transubstantiation takes place, the sacrifice is offered. In this way we see what is implied when Aquinas says that the signs instituted by Christ contain and make real what they represent. In the words of Masare : "Thus the Eucharist contains and makes real the sacrifice of the Cross."

(1) Masare The Christian Sacrifice, p. 265.

SECTION TWO.CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS.

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of the position which Calvin gives to the sacraments. His intention as a reformer was not only to restore the word of God to a central position but to put the sacraments alongside the Word as the marks of the true Church. The marks of the Church are:

- 1) the faithful preaching of the pure Word
- 2) the right administration of the sacraments. While ministers are termed ministers of the word and sacraments.

Calvin begins his doctrine of the Church with observation that God has "appointed pastors and teachers, by whose lips he might edify his people..... In particular he has instituted sacraments which we feel by experience to be most useful helps in fostering and confirming our faith." (1) Later on he says that, "akin to the preaching of the Gospel, we have another help to our faith in the sacraments." (2) So important are the sacraments that "we ought always to provide that no meeting of the Church is held without, the word, prayer, the dispensation of the supper, and alms." (3) This, he claims, was the practice of the Apostolic Church.

THE WORD AND THE SACRAMENTS.

It is Calvin's repeated message that faith is a response to the message of salvation as contained in the Bible. In Romans 10:17 it is written; "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." In accordance with this Calvin says: "Take away the word, then, and there will be no faith left." (4)

Just as important as the word however, are the sacraments. For in them we find "another help to our faith." These

(1) IV.1.1. (2) IV.14.1. (3) IV.17.44. (4) IV.2.6.

two helps must be seen to go hand in hand. First comes God's promise of salvation in the word, this promise is then confirmed in the sacrament. In fact there ~~are~~ never is a sacrament without an antecedant promise from God. Sacraments can be called signs and seals to make real the promises of God. In this way the rainbow was a seal of God's promise to Noah.

The sacraments can be called the "visible word" (as they had previously been called by St. Augustine.)

Calvin adopts Augustine's definition that a sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace. Thus they are a help to man in his infirmity. In the word "God provides first for our ignorance and sluggishness", and secondly in the sacraments "for our infirmity." (1) It is not that the word of God needs any testimony or seal, but our faith is so slender and weak that it must be propped up on every side, and supported by every kind of means (2) Truly man's faith is in need of such an aid. For if faith is to reconcile us to God it must not be merely an assent to certain propositions." The only way in which faith reconciles us to God is by uniting us with Christ" (3). It is in this respect that the sacraments help, for they do not merely confirm the promises of the word, they establish us in the faith of the word (4).

Elsewhere Calvin shows that the sacraments do more than merely set forth the word in a more authoritative way.

"The believer, when the sacraments are presented to his eyes, does not stop at the carnal spectacle, but ... rises with pious consideration to the sublime mysteries which lie hidden in the sacrament." (5)

The sacraments are "exhibited under carnal objects; " in this way God accommodates himself to our sluggish

(1) 4.14.3. (2) Ibid. (3) 3.2.30 (4) 4.14.3.

(5) 4.14.5.

capacity, just as nurses lead children by the hand." Yet we can be assured that through the sacraments we are led by the hand into the very presence of God. For in them "God manifests himself to us as far as our dullness can enable us to recognise him, and testifies his love and kindness to us more expressly than by word." (6)

Through these material elements God actually "leads us to himself" (7)

But Calvin is quick to explain that there is nothing inherent in the nature of the sacraments which should lead us to God, but God himself gives them a special significance. In other words Calvin sees no "natural sacramental principle" running through the world of nature. It is only the word or the promise of God which gives spiritual significance to these material things.

Calvin quotes the words of Augustine: "Whence can there be so much virtue in water as to touch the body and cleanse the heart?" But "let the word be added to the element and it will become a sacrament." For whenever God offered any sign to the patriarchs he explained to them what it was meant to teach them, otherwise the object would have had no meaning whatsoever. When the word is given which explains the sacrament, men can understand what it means, and can respond with faith. Calvin comments on St. Augustine and says, "You see how he requires preaching to the production of faith." (1)

Here it is necessary to digress upon the question of faith. For it might sound strange that Calvin should say on the one hand: "The Lord offers us mercy, and a pledge of His grace, both in the word and in the sacraments; but it is not apprehended save by those who receive the word

(6) 4.14.6 (7) 4.M.5. (1) 4.14.8.

and the sacraments with firm faith:" (2) and on the other hand that the word and the sacraments are helps to our faith. Some might believe with Zwingli that faith does not receive anything through the sacraments. For instance "Zwingli thinks the Lord's Supper has merely the significance of enabling the believing congregation through use of the signs to remember vividly the saving work of God, to confess its faith thereby, and vow to pursue a Christian manner of life". (3) But Calvin refused to entertain this notion. He says of those with such opinions; "It had been better for them to pray, with the apostles, 'Lord increase our faith' (Luke 17:5), than confidently to maintain a perfection of faith which none of the sons of men ever attained, ever shall attain, in this life." Indeed the sacraments do "sustain, nourish, confirm and increase our faith" - of which we have much need.

Nevertheless the sacraments are only efficacious to those who believe "with the whole heart". This does not mean that a perfect faith is insisted upon. It is not "to believe perfectly, but only to embrace Him sincerely with heart and soul; not to be filled with Him, but with ardent affection to hunger and thirst, and sigh after Him". (1)

THE OPERATIONS OF THE SACRAMENTS.

Immediately Calvin must explain that faith is "the proper and entire work of the Holy Spirit." Without the illumination of the Holy Spirit men would be blind to all spiritual truths. For there is nothing inherent in sinful man which recognizes God and the treasures of His grace. It is the Holy Spirit who "opens up an entrance into our hearts for His word and sacraments, which would otherwise only strike our ears, and fall upon our sight, but by no means affect us inwardly." (2)

(2) 4.14.9 (3) W. Niesel The Theology of Calvin p215
 (1) 4.14.8 (2) Ibid

(See previous page)

Although the sacraments are intended to increase our faith "there is no secret efficacy perpetually inherent in them, by which they can of themselves promote or strengthen faith. "The sacraments only touch the soul of men and quicken their faith when the Holy Spirit works through them. For it is the Holy Spirit alone who "penetrates the heart, stirs up the affections, and procures access for the sacraments into the soul." (3)

Calvin places no confidence whatsoever in man's ability to take to himself the things of God. It is the natural ability of the eye to see, and of the ear to hear; but our hearts and minds do not naturally perceive spiritual things. @ "The sacraments do not avail one iota without the energy of the Holy Spirit."

The treasures of Christ are imparted in the sacraments. These can never be obtained in a mechanical way through a mere participation in the sacraments. Calvin attacks those who superstitiously "ascribe to the sacraments a secret virtus". For in this theory Calvin sees the dangerous idea that righteousness can be had without faith. (We have seen that when Calvin talks of faith the work of the Holy Spirit is implied.) Also Calvin sees that such an attitude would be fatal, for man is only too eager to find a promise of righteousness without any vital contact with the living God. That which is treasured up in Christ and none other than that, is offered up in the word and the sacraments; however this grace may be had outside the sacraments as well. The invisible sanctification which is offered in the sacraments through a visible sign, may be found, as Augustine says, without the aid of the

(3) 4.14.9.

visible sign of the sacrament. Thus it is that we must differentiate between the sign, and that which the sign represents. Or as Augustine says "there is a distinction between the sacrament and the matter of the sacrament."

To make this clear Calvin argues that the Lord's Supper is "partaken by some unto life, by others unto destruction." Now why is it that some should partake of the sacrament and receive salvation, while others should partake and receive no benefit? Is not that which is partaken of the very life of Christ? As Augustine says, "The thing itself, of which there is a sacrament, is life to all, and destruction to none that partake of it." Quite obviously then "a sacrament is so separated from the reality by the unworthiness of the partaker, that nothing remains but an empty and useless figure." (1) But if the sign is not to be empty and useless, if we are to receive "the thing with the sign", we must apprehend in faith that which is here promised.

Faith however must not be thought of as the condition to be fulfilled by man before the sacraments take effect. Rather, faith is the channel through which the sacraments act. For faith is inextricably bound up with the work of the Holy Spirit. In the words of W. Niesel: "Neither our soul nor our physical lips are capable of receiving the Lord who died and rose again for us. Christ Himself must by His Spirit open our hearts to His coming. This accessibility to Himself which He creates is called faith." 1.

CHRIST, THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SACRAMENTS.

However men may vary, says Calvin, whether they approach the sacraments with faith or without, God Himself

(1) 4.14.5.

1. Niesel "The Theology of Calvin", p. 227

does not vary. "That which God instituted continues firm, and retains its nature, however men may vary." (2) At all times Christ is offered to men in the sacraments. "I say that Christ is the matter..... or the substance of all the sacraments." (3) The sacrament itself is not made void by the ingratitude and faithlessness of those who receive it. Here Augustine is quoted: "If you receive carnally it ceases not to be spiritual, but it is not spiritual to you". Before Calvin distinguished between the sign and the thing signified; now he claims paradoxically that that which is signified is given by the sign. He says boldly that "the office of the sacraments differs not from the word of God; and this is to hold forth and offer Christ to us, and, in Him, the treasures of heavenly grace." (4)

We can be sure that by means of the sacraments we are brought unto the very presence of Christ our mediator. There can be no doubt about this, for "unless we charge God with deceit, we will never presume to say that He holds forth an empty symbol." (5)

In this way we see that Calvin maintains an objective view of the sacraments on which Luther set so much store. Here are no bare signs or remembrances such as the Zwinglians taught. Here "God truly performs whatever He promises and figures by signs; nor are the signs without effect, for they prove that He is their true and faithful author." (6) But Calvin distinguishes the sacraments from the objectivity of a thing, conferring "the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon us, in the same way in which wine is drunk out of a cup." (7)

Thus Calvin strives to attain a doctrine of the sacraments in which: their dignity is highly extolled, their use plainly shown, their utility sufficiently proclaimed, and moderation in all things duly maintained, so

(3) Ibid. (4) 4.14.7 (5) 4.17.10 (6) 4.14.17

(7) Ibid

that nothing is attributed to them which ought not to be attributed, and nothing denied them which they ought to possess." (1)

BAPTISM.

For Calvin baptism is the initiatory sign by which we are admitted into the fellowship of the Church. To be a member of the Church means that we are ingrafted into Christ and are accounted children of God. The purpose of baptism is twofold, to strengthen our faith in Christ, and to be a witness and confession before men.

R.S. Wallace says: "Baptism could be best summed up by calling baptism the sign of ingrafting into Christ. This certainly makes the best starting point for a study of Calvin's views of the matter." (2) This is true, for "all the divine gifts held forth in baptism are found in Christ alone". (3) In baptism our faith is strengthened in three ways: we are assured of the forgiveness of sins, of our dying and rising again with Christ, and of our communion with the Lord Himself; but the first two of these depends wholly upon the third. (4) This is in accordance with what Calvin says of the sacraments in general. For he maintains that: "Christ is the matter or life blood of all the sacraments." (5) More specifically, Christ is "the proper object of baptism". (6) Thus it is not strange that the apostles should have baptised only in the name of Christ; for if we are assured that in baptism we are "so united to Christ Himself as to be partakers of all His blessings" (7) what more can we ask?

Calvin continually speaks of baptism as a sign and seal, and as such it is intended to strengthen our faith.

(1) 4.14.17 (2) "Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments", p.175 (3) 4.16.6. (4) Wieser "The Theology of Calvin", p.220 (5) 4.14.16. (6) 4.15.6 (7) Ibid.

He does not say that baptism itself, deletes our sin. Rather he says that "baptism is a sealed instrument by which He assures us that all our sins are deleted" 1. Also he says that baptism "shows us our mortification in Christ," 2 and again, baptism assures us that we are united with Christ. 3 Our salvation is not perfected in water, he says, "nor does the water possess in itself the virtue of purifying, regenerating, and renewing". The washing with water is not the cause of our receiving these gifts, but in this sacrament "the knowledge and certainty of such gifts is perceived". 4 By this He does not intend that baptism does no more than exercise our faith; but that the true object of baptism is Christ, and that God alone regenerates and gives salvation.

Thus although it is true to say that Christ is the object of this sacrament, yet the grace offered us in Him is not "included and bound up in the sacrament, so as to be conferred by its efficacy." The sacrament is a seal to which we can clutch, and by it "the Lord declares to us that He is pleased to bestow all these things upon us". Here we have a tangible promise from God, and "we are to receive it as from the hand of its author". And since it is God Himself "who speaks to us by means of the sign", we can be sure that He does not merely "feed our eyes with bare show; He leads us to the actual object, and effectually performs what He figures". (5) For faith would not be strengthened by looking to an empty symbol. Thus Calvin can write: "we ought to consider that at whatever time we are baptised, we are washed and purified once for the whole of our life. Wherefore, as oft as we fall, we must recall the remembrance of our baptism, and thus fortify our minds, so as to feel certain

(1) 4.15.1 (2) 4.15.5 (3) 4.15.6 (4) 4.15.2 (5) 4.15.14

and secure of the remission of sins." (6)

We begin to see now that in salvation it is God's sovereign grace which prevails. Salvation is entirely the work of God, and baptism is not necessary for salvation. "For when the opinion prevails that all are lost who happen not to be dipped in water, our condition becomes worse than that of God's ancient people, as if His grace were more restrained than under the law". (7)

It is God he saves us, "but in baptism the Lord declares to us that He is pleased to bestow all these things on us". Of the children of Christian parents "before they are born God declares that He adopts for His own when He promises that He will be a God to us, and to our seed after us". (1) "The sacrament is afterwards added as a seal, not to give efficacy to the promise, as if in itself invalid, but merely to confirm it to us". (2) It is clear then that with both adults and children baptism is not essential to salvation, but is most necessary in the strengthening of their faith. On this ground Calvin denounces the administration of baptism to a child in danger of death by a midwife as a desecration of the sacrament and a concession to superstition.

Calvin admits that at the time in which we were baptised it might have profited us nothing. Thus regeneration can not be said to be effected in the same moment as baptism is administered. As Niesel says: "When the sacramental rite is completed, at that moment the sacramental gift is imparted as certainly as God is true to His word and sign do not lie. But the connection of sign and thing signified is grounded solely in the Holy Ghost. The expression 'at the moment', as far as this connection is concerned, implies a divine reality. The divine moment

(6) 4.15.3 (7) 4.15.20 (1) 4.15.20 (2) 4.15.22

in which the Holy Ghost fulfils His action of rendering effectual to us the ministry of the signs is not interchangeable with the earthly moment of the completion of the sacramental rite. The divine moment can - humanly speaking - be situated before or after the celebration of the sacrament." (3)

Whenever the 'divine moment' should be, we can always look to our baptism for strengthening of faith. For here the Lord has promised. Thus, says Calvin, Cornelius the centurion was baptised after he had already received the grace of the Holy Ghost. He was "not seeking the fuller forgiveness from baptism, but a sure exercise of faith; nay, an argument for assurance from pledge". (1)

Unless this promise is accepted in faith we gain nothing from baptism. However, it could be that in us the promise lay neglected for many years. We do not believe then that the promise becomes of no effect. That promise can be embraced with faith at a later time. Calvin illustrates this from the history of the Jews. "For how much soever the covenant might have been violated by them, the symbol of the covenant (circumcision) always remained, according to the appointment of the Lord, firm and inviolable."

One can therefore understand why A. Dakin, president of the Bristol Baptist College, should conclude his article on Calvin's Doctrine of baptism with these words: "Calvin thus stands on the side of those who deny the doctrine of baptismal regeneration". (2) For Calvin does not say that a present regeneration is required in baptism. (3) He does say that "no man, until renewed by living waters, that is, by the Spirit, can enter the Kingdom of God." But he "plainly explodes the fiction of those who consign all the unbaptised to eternal death." (4) Calvin quite

(3) The Theology of Calvin, p.225 (1) 4.15.15

(2) Calvinism p.119 (3) 4.16.25 (4) 4.16.26

clearly will not equate regeneration with the institution of baptism. This is because he sees that our salvation is fixed only in Christ. And yet Calvin can quote the promise in Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved". The reality of what God does in baptism was so reliable to him that he said: "those whom the Lord has once admitted into His favour, and ingrafted into communion with Christ, and received into the fellowship of the Church by baptism, are freed from guilt and condemnation while they persevere in the faith of Christ, though they may be beset by sin and thus bear sin about with them"⁽⁵⁾

In this last quotation the reality of what God does in baptism is shown. Here God assures us "that we are ingrafted into the life and death of Christ", and moreover, that we are "so united to Christ Himself as to be made partakers of all His blessings".⁽¹⁾ We can be certain that "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus". (Rom. 8:11) Indeed the corruption (which is original sin) still continues after baptism; just as the Egyptians remained alive on the far side of the Red Sea. Thus the baptised person may not be complacent. "We ought to hold that we are baptised for the mortification of the flesh, which is begun in baptism, is persecuted every day, and will be finished when we depart from this life to go to the Lord." ⁽²⁾

INFANT BAPTISM.

Calvin advanced with great vehemence that infant baptism should be practised. If we are to understand his reasons for doing this we "must not stop short at the element and corporeal object, but look forward to the divine promises therein offered to us, and rise to the

(1) 4.15.6

(2) 4.15.11

eternal secrets therein represented." (3) "For, attending to the end which it was instituted, we clearly perceive that it is not less applicable to children than to those of more advanced years." (4)

It is the contention of Karl Barth that infant baptism "can hardly be preserved without exegetical artifices and sophisms..... One wants to preserve it only if one is resolved to do so on grounds which lie outside the biblical passages on baptism and outside the thing + itself." (5) He then examines these "extraneous reasons" as found in Calvin's teaching:

- 1) "Calvin in really affecting fashion referred to the need which pious parents have of comfort,"
- 2) "Calvin, again, understood infant baptism inversely as instituted for the welfare and benefit of the child, obliging the parents, the godparents, and the whole community, to give him a Christian upbringing." Barth maintains that both of these purposes could be affected without the use of baptism.

However, Calvin claims that it is in examining the end for which baptism was instituted, and the divine promises contained in it, that he arrives at his conclusion. He takes his stand upon the Bible as a whole, he says: and also upon what he believed to be the practice of the apostolic Church. He claims that "there is no writer, however ancient, who does not trace its origin to the days of the apostles," (1) and Calvin's knowledge of the fathers is not easily found wanting.

Calvin teaches that the promise of God sealed in baptism is not only to believers but to their children as well. Just as the children of the Jews were included in the covenant, and were called a holy seed, so, "and

(3) 4.16.2 (4) 4.16.8. (5) The Teaching of The Church Regarding Baptism, p. 49. (1) 4.16.8

for the same reason, the children of Christians... are called holy, and, by the testimony of the Apostle Paul differ from the impure seed of idolators." (2) "Therefore", he says, "let it be without controversy, that God is so good and liberal to His people, that he is pleased, as a mark of His favour, to extend their priviledges to the children born to them," (3)

His main defence for this position is that baptism takes the place in the new covenant which circumcision held in the old. Thus children of Christian parents are born within the new covenant. Such children are then partakers of the blessings signified in baptism, and they should not be refused the sign and seal of these blessings. (4)

"Since the Lord, immediately after the covenant was made with Abraham, ordered it to be sealed in infants by an outward sacrament, how can it be said that Christians are not to attest it in the present day, and seal it in their children." (5) The children of Christian parents are blessed in this way not by any natural rights but only by a gracious ordinance from God.

From this practice there are two special benefits (as mentioned by Barth) which are over and above the benefits of adult baptism. First there is the benefit to the believers who bring their children to the Church to be baptised. Their faith is strengthened when they see the confirmation of God's promise, that He "will be a God not to them only, but to their seed; not merely visiting them with His grace and goodness, but their posterity also to the thousandth generation." Some might argue that it would be sufficient here merely to assure the parents by word. "But", says Calvin, "it has seemed otherwise to God, who, seeing our weakness, has herein been pleased to

(2) 4.16.6. (3) 4.16.15. (4) 4.16. 5. (5) Ibid.

condescend to us." (1) In this way baptism is not merely of interest to the individual, but it proclaims the Glory of God, it strengthens the faith of the parents and of the whole body of the Church. Here the infant is made "an object of greater interest to the other members." (2) The child is personally benefited. He is brought into a new environment in which the Church is the mother of the faithful. In this environment he can grow up, ever looking back to the symbol of his adoption, which shows that even before he could recognise God as father He had received him as son. Thus is a basis given upon which can be built the Christian life of assurance.

It is argued that these are merely indirect benefits. (3) However, Calvin does not avoid the question of baptismal regeneration. He says that since the children of believers are promised the blessings of Christ along with their parents we can be sure that they are saved from hell. If this is so then they must have been sanctified from their mother's womb (as was John the Baptist.) To deny this on the grounds that one can only be regenerated when possessing understanding, is to "confine the power of God within limits, within which it cannot be confined." (4) In fact he says "We confess that the word of the Lord is the only seed of spiritual regeneration; but we deny the inference that, therefore, the power of God cannot regenerate infants." (5)

The children of Christian parents are sanctified from the womb by the "wondrous and incomprehensible" work of God. But it must not be forgotten that Calvin teaches that those "whom the Lord has once admitted into favour, and ingrafted into the communion of Christ, and received into the fellowship of the Church by baptism, are freed from guilt and condemnation while they persevere in the

(1) 4.16.9. (2) Ibid. (3) Bakin "Calvinism" p.117
 (4) 4.16.17. (5) 4.16.19.

faith of Christ." (1) Those last words are important.

In baptism the Lord seals this promise of forgiveness and regeneration, and "nothing more of present effect is to be required in paedobaptism, than to confirm and sanction the covenant which the Lord has made with them. The other part of the meaning of the sacrament will follow at the time which God Himself will provide." (2) That "other part" is repentance and faith. Thus "children are baptised for future repentance and faith. Though these are not yet formed in them, yet the seed of both lies hid in them by the secret operation of the Spirit," (3) What this means is that the sacraments are made effective by the hidden work of the Spirit, and that this as was noted earlier cannot be pinned down to any moment of time.

Thus paedobaptism is to go hand in hand with a faithful instruction by the Church, so that when children reach an age when they can be instructed in the meaning of baptism, they will thereby be animated to a greater zeal for renovation, the badge of which they will learn that they received in earliest infancy in order that they might aspire to it during the whole of their lives." (4)

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Once we have been received into the family of God, our Father continues to care for us as His children. He provides us with a "spiritual feast", whereby he continually supplies us with "the food by which He may sustain and preserve us in the life to which He has begotten us by His word." (5) Now "Christ is the only food of our soul", and it is He on whom our souls feed in the Lord's Supper. The symbols of bread and wine which are held out to us are "visible signs adapted to our capacity". For it is inconprehensible to us ~~whe~~ that we should be united to Christ

(1) 4.15.12. (2) 4.16.21. (3) 4.16.20 (4) 4.16.21
 (5) 4.17. 1.

by having His presence within us. Here though, however dull we be, we are shown that our souls are fed by Christ just as our corporeal life is sustained by bread and wine. Just as truly as we grasp the bread and eat it, so can our faith hold Christ and our souls partake of Him.

The sacrament is not something which stands in its own right. Here at the Lord's Table Christ does not become for the first time the bread of life. "It would not be of much importance to us that the body and blood of the Lord are now distributed, had they not once been set forth for our redemption and salvation". (1) In other words it is not some secret spiritual tonic which is offered. What is offered is none other than salvation; the salvation promised to men in the Christian Gospel.

We see that the core of the sacrament lies in the words: "It is broken for you: it is offered for you". "In affirming of His body that it was broken and of His blood that it was shed for us, He shows that both were not so much His own as ours, because He took and laid down both, not for His own advantage but for our salvation." (2) What then is the importance of the body that was once broken and offered for us? In it there was a "wondrous exchange wrought by his boundless goodness." For Christ in becoming man has made us sons of God: in descending to earth He has prepared our ascent into heaven. "Having received our mortality, He has bestowed on us His immortality. Having taken upon Himself the burden of unrighteousness with which we are oppressed, He has clothed us with His righteousness." (3) Thus was the body of Christ once sacrificed for our salvation.

"The body which was once offered for our salvation we are enjoined to take and eat, that, while we see our-

(1) 4.17. 3 (2) Ibid. (3) 4.17.2

selves made partakers of it, we may safely conclude that the virtue of that death will be efficacious in us." (4) In this sacrament we are made confident "that we form one body with Christ, so that everything His we may call our own." (1) Consider the words of institution of this sacrament - "take, eat, drink. This is my body, which is broken for you; This is my blood, which is shed for the remission of sins. In bidding us take, He intimates that it is ours; in bidding us eat, He intimates that it becomes one substance with us". (2) Here we do not merely see the body of Christ held out to us without any higher consideration. Here we are given confirmation of the promise that His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed, and whoever eats of this bread shall live forever. This sacrament is intended to seal that promise; and Calvin adds: "in order to do so, it sends us to the cross of Christ, where that promise was performed and fulfilled in all its parts". (3)

The covenant sealed on the cross with His blood is made real to our faith as often as He stretches forth His saving blood as drink to us under this sacramental sign. For the efficacy and fruit of His nativity, death, and resurrection are eternal. Thus when Christ gave Himself that once for the redemption of the world, He gave Himself that He might be living bread for all men at all times. Ever since then He gives Himself a daily when by the word of the Gospel preached He offers Himself to be partaken by us. That offer He seals by the sacred mystery of the supper. (4) In all the discussion which follows it must be understood that none of the blessings promised in this sacrament could be ours had not Christ previously made Himself ours when he poured out His life for us.

(4) 4.17.1. (1) 4.17. 2 (2) 4.17.3 (3) 4.17. 4
 (4) 4.17.5

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST.

Calvin sees a promise in the words of institution of this sacrament, and these words can never lie or deceive: "This is my body." Thus we are to conclude that the body and blood of Christ are here given to us "as if Christ were placed in bodily presence before our view, or handled with our hands." (5) He will not have us set too little value on the signs and so lose their full significance. He has a purpose when he insists on stressing the fact that Christ's body must be eaten, and that it is actually His flesh and blood which are here partaken of. Calvin will not allow the eating to be explained away by saying that it means nothing more than believing in Christ Himself. It is true, He says, that we do eat by faith, that eating is by faith and not by mouth (Augustine). Yet he stresses that this eating is a matter of flesh and blood. Here we do not merely partake of the Spirit in a mystical way.

He has a purpose, and that is to lead our considerations to a higher mystery than this explanation offers. He confesses that he is not able to comprehend this mystery with his mind, and asks his readers to rise even higher than he can guide them. (1) It may seem that he is quibbling over words but there is a truth which he wishes to safeguard. As he says: "The difference is little in words, but not little in reality." (2) He wishes to safeguard the truth of that which is brought out by St. Paul when he says that we are so united with Christ, that we "are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." (Eph.5:30) St. Paul himself concludes with the words: "This is a great mystery"

Calvin is convinced that spiritual blessings are only to be obtained through our union with Christ. Our only real life is to be found in God, the fountain head of all

(5) 4.17. 3 (1) 4.17.7 (2) 4.17.5

life. But, asks Calvin, what good is it for us to know that fullness of life is contained in the Godhead "whereas in ourselves, in whatever direction we turn, we see nothing but death?" However, since God, the fountainhead of life, took upon Himself our nature, He is no longer from us. Thus has Christ, our mediator, made the fullness of life attainable for us. As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given us the Son to have life in Himself. "(John 5:26) It is in the humanity of Christ that this fullness of life dwells, " so that everyone who communicates in His flesh and blood, at the same time enjoys the participation in life." 1. "The flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain, which transfuses into us the life flowing forth from the Godhead into itself."²

If we are to receive these blessings from God we must be joined wholly to the body of Christ, so that we are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones". To be united to Christ is not a merely mystical or purely spiritual matter, it is a relationship which drives to the very core of our existence. As some modern theologians might put it, it is an ontological relationship between ourselves and the whole being of the Mediator.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Nevertheless, the "sign differs essentially from the thing signified." (3) The bread and wine which are signs of the flesh and blood of Christ are not themselves that flesh and blood. For the flesh and blood of Christ are in

1. 4.17. 9 (2) Ibid. (3) 4.17.21.

heaven. Calvin claims that his doctrine is from the word of God. (4) This word declares that the body of Christ rose from the earth and will be contained in heaven until the last day. (5) Christ Himself said: "We ye will not have always." He was then speaking of His bodily presence - of that body which was born of the virgin Mary, suspended on the cross, laid in the tomb, and manifested in the resurrection. But, says Calvin, in regard to His majesty, His providence, and His ineffable and invisible grace, He said: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." In this way we have Christ always, and it is in this way that He is present with us in this sacrament. But His body is at the right hand of the Father. The Holy Spirit now substitutes for Christ's presence with us, and it is through the Spirit that we have communion with the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

Despite this it must be said that there is in this sacrament a "true and substantial communication of the body and blood of the Lord they are received not by the imagination or the intellect, but are enjoyed in reality as the food of life." If Christ's body is to be communicated here it is not necessary for us to say that He must descend to us; rather, Calvin claims, we are raised up to Him. The presence of the flesh and blood of Christ are in heaven and not in the elements. Thus we do not take the body of Christ and chew it with our teeth." (1) In fact "the real flesh of Christ does not enter us". (2) The bond of connection between Christ, who is in heaven, and ourselves, is the Holy Spirit, "who unites us to Him and

(4) The influence of the liturgy of the Mass can also be seen here. Supplices te rogamus from the Consecration in the Canon of the Mass reads as follows: "Suppliantly we implore Thee, almighty God, bid these things be borne in the hands of Thy Holy Angel up to thine altar on high, before the sight of Thy divine majesty: that so many of us as, by this partaking at Thine altar, shall receive the most holy body and blood of Thy Son, may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace."

(5) 4.17.26 (1) 4.17.12 (2) 4.17.32

is a kind of channel by which everything that Christ has and is, is derived to us." (3) Calvin claims that St. Paul "shows that the only way which Christ dwells in us is by His Spirit." (Rom. 8:9-11) This however, "does not take away that communion of flesh and blood of which we now speak."

Calvin must admit that the mode in which the body of Christ is given remains a mystery to him. He can only embrace the truth of God's promise. "He declares that His flesh is the meat, His blood the drink, of my soul; I give my soul to Him to be fed with such food. I have no doubt that He will truly give and I receive."(4)

TRANSUBSTANTIATION AND CONSUBSTANTIATION.

There are two guiding principles which must be maintained: (a) There must "be nothing derogatory to the heavenly glory of Christ". For this reason Calvin must make his stand against transubstantiation.

(b) We must "let no property be assigned to His body inconsistent with His human nature". Thus Calvin refutes Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation which declares the body of Christ to be ubiquitous.(5)

Calvin rejects the theory of transubstantiation, for according to it "Christ is brought under the corruptible elements of this world". He is circumscribed and enclosed. This is unworthy of the heavenly majesty of Christ. He maintains that the principle of this sacrament is not different from that of baptism. Just because the words "This is my body" are used does not mean that the bread is changed into the body of Christ. The schoolmen might be satisfied with their subtle use of the word "substance". But Calvin is convinced that all that this will mean to the

(3) 4.17.12. (4) 4.17.31. (5) 4.17.19.

common people is that they will regard the bread as God.

It is equally wrong to try to preserve the objective reality of Christ's presence here as Luther did. For the Lutheran doctrine threatens the humanity (even the glorified humanity) of Christ, by making His humanity omnipresent. For Luther's theory of consubstantiation involved a view of Christ's glorified humanity as being ubiquitous. Luther said that Christ sits at God's right hand and that this is everywhere ;since Christ is everywhere He is certainly under the elements of bread and wine. But this seemed to Calvin to make a phantom of Christ: even when He walked on this earth He could not have been a mere man. (1) No, says Calvin, we must not assign any property to His heavenly body inconsistent with His human nature. In the words of W. Niesel: "Calvin said that he quarrelled with the Lutherans only on this ground. Because they substituted a reality of infinite extension for the flesh of Christ, he defended as against them "the truth of the human nature in which our salvation is grounded." (2)

Yet Calvin himself says that "the whole Christ is everywhere." Indeed "our mediator is everywhere" - but a distinction is made - "yet so that while He is present, not everything which is in Him is present, because, as has been said, in His flesh He will remain in heaven until He come to judgement." (3)

Christ sits at the right hand of God, there He reigns in power and in majesty. His kingdom is not limited, and "Christ can exert His energy wherever He pleases..... can

(1) Calvin partly misunderstands Luther. Luther consistently refused to attach a literal meaning to the Ascension. There, he believed, Christ's body ceased to exist as a local, bounded thing. It escaped from all the limitations of the earthly nature and was henceforth in all parts of the world as well as in heaven.

(2) The Theology of Calvin, p.224 (3) 4.17.30

manifest His presence by the exercise of His power, can always be present with His people, breathing into them His own life". (4) As the sun sends forth its life-giving rays into the fruits of the earth, so "the radiance of the Spirit conveys to us the communion of Christ's flesh and blood." (5) In spite of the emphasis which Calvin places on the communion of Christ with us, He is concerned to note that there must be a distinction between Christ and ourselves. He says: "It is enough for us that Christ out of the substance of His flesh brings life to our souls, indeed pours out His life into us, although the flesh of Christ itself does not enter us." (1)

Thus although we see a similarity between Luther's ubiquitous Christ at the right hand of God, and Calvin's Christ present wherever He exercises His power through the Holy Spirit, yet for Calvin the present existence of Christ's humanity is localised in heaven; Luther gives it the omnipresence of spiritual deity. This then brings about a different account of how the benefits of Christ are enjoyed. Those that say that Christ is present in or under the elements of the bread must say that Christ is partaken of by believers and unbelievers alike, even though they may say that faith is essential for a beneficial reception (as Luther did maintain). But Calvin teaches that although Christ is offered to all alike in this sacrament, He is received only by faith. Calvin can say that "the body and blood of Christ are given to the unworthy and to the elect of God". (2) But as the rain falls on rocks and runs off them, so does Christ pass by those who are not quickened by the Spirit to receive Him in faith. (As we saw before, it is the Spirit which opens our hearts to receive Christ: this accessibility to Himself which is created is called faith). We must differentiate between the body of

(4) 4.17.18 (5) 4.17.12 (1) 4.17.32 (2) 4.17.33.

Christ and the symbols of the sacrament. For everyone that partakes of Christ partakes of Him unto eternal life (Augustine). Unbelievers however do not partake of Christ, but only of the visible symbol.

Those who partake of this sacrament unworthily do not eat the body of Christ. Their offence is that they have trampled under foot the pledge God gives. To them this sacrament is poisonous, for they are making of it a lie and a deceit. Thus we should all examine ourselves at the table and see whether we do truly love Christ and our brethren, whether it is our decision to be united here with Him and them in one body. Yet, says Calvin, we are all unworthy. And we should remember that this feast is meant to be "medicine to the sick, comfort to the sinner, and bounty to the poor." "Wherefore the best and only worthiness which ^{we} can bring to God, is to offer Him our own vileness and unworthiness". (1)

THE BOND OF CHARITY.

Calvin also sees in this sacrament an exhortation, not merely to holiness of life, but to charity, peace, and concord. For here we communicate in the body of Christ, and being made one with Him, we are united to one another as well. "By this participation we all become one body". Thus we cannot have ~~de~~ dissension amongst ourselves without at the same time dissenting from Christ. "We cannot love Christ without loving our brethren". Augustine therefore rightly calls this sacrament the bond of charity. "What stronger stimulus could be emphasised to excite mutual charity, than when Christ, presenting Himself to us, not only invites us by His example to give and devote ourselves continually to each other, but inasmuch as He makes Himself common to all, also makes us all to be one in Him." (2)

(1) 4.17.42

(2) 4.17.38

THE SACRIFICE.

Throughout the account of this sacrament Calvin has painted the picture of Christ our eternal Mediator and High Priest through whom we receive all the blessings of the spiritual life. "The flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain". In the Supper Christ offers Himself to us with His blessing. He is the bread of life now because "the efficacy and fruit of His nativity, death, and resurrection, are eternal". (3)

In the Lord's Supper we do not come to offer a propitiation for our sins, or to repent the sacrifice of Christ. We come here to receive. Here His sacrifice is not repeated, it is applied. It can be applied now because Christ offered Himself on the cross "that He might sanctify us for ever, and purchase eternal redemption for us". (1)

It is Christ who was delivered unto death for us who is now given to us as the food of eternal life (2). Calvin insists upon the finality of Christ's death upon the cross. "He ~~wants-~~ once gave Himself that He might become bread when He gave Himself to be crucified for the redemption of the world. He gives Himself daily "in the word of the Gospel, and in the Supper. But this giving involves no new or repeated sacrifice. He now gives Himself as the bread of life, for He is in power at the right hand of God.

However, it is absolutely essential that here there should be a sacrifice of praise. This is the sacrifice which St. Augustine talks about says Calvin. This sacrifice can be called the eucharist. Here we offer "all our prayers, praises, thanksgivings, and every act of worship which we perform to God." (3)

(3) 4.17.5 (1) 4.18.3 (2) cf. Calvin's Post-communion prayer as found in the Book of Common Order; "Thy Son Jesus Christ: whom Thou didst deliver up unto death, and dost give for the nourishment of our souls unto eternal life"
(3) 4.18.16.

This sacrifice is not intended to appease God, but it is meant to magnify and extol Him. All of this we offer through Christ our Mediator, "He is the altar on which we lay our gifts". (4)

In all his account of the Lord's Supper, Calvin has not attempted to "measure this mystery by the capacity of human reason". (5)
He confesses that it is a miracle. We see here one who approaches humbly, marvelling at what God is pleased to offer to us men and for our salvation.

(4) 4.18.17

(5) 4.17.24.

SECTION THREE.THE TEACHING ON THE SACRAMENTS OF THE EARLY SCOTTISH REFORMERS.

The teaching of the early Scottish reformers is contained in the confessions which they drew up. We shall confine ourselves to the confession of faith, (First Scott Confession) and the Book of Discipline of 1560, and the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647.

These Confessions give the reformers most significant and influential teaching. J.A. Duke in his History of the Church of Scotland to the Reformation, writes: "three important documents - The Confession of Faith, the Book of Discipline, and The Book of Common Order - laid the foundation of the Reformed Church which replaced the Church of Rome in Scotland, and defined, respectively, its creed, and government, and worship". (1)

The Confession of Faith was drawn up by six leading reformed pastors. They were Knox, Spottiswoode, Willock, Douglas and Row. It was ratified by parliament on the 17th August, 1560. This document adheres closely to the teaching of Calvin. Zwinglian and Lutheran views are condemned as strongly as Roman. The First Book of Discipline was drawn up by the same six men. It was intended to meet the particular practical problems of the local Church. It "was a far more original and distinctive product of the Scottish Reformation than the Confession of Faith". (2)

The Confession of Faith remained the confessional standard of Scotland until it was superceded in 1647 by the Westminster Confession of Faith. This latter document is of special interest because it remains the confessional

(1) p. 249

(2) Ibid. p. 255.

standard of many reformed Churches today (including the Presbyterian Church of South Africa). Without going into a lengthy history of this confession, suffice it to say that the Westminster Assembly was called at the request of the famous "Long Parliament" held in 1643. The committee which drew up this document consisted of a number of English clergy and laymen plus the Scottish, assessors (1) at the Assembly; amongst them were Alexander Henderson, George Gillespie, Samuel Rutherford and Robert Baillie.

The FIRST SCOTS CONFESSION AND THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE.

In reading these documents we see that the early Scottish reformers were entirely in agreement with Calvin in their doctrine of the sacraments. However these statements of faith are brief and thus bring their chief emphases into a sharper focus than does Calvin.

It is not often realised that Calvin and those who were reformers with him were not only concerned to establish the Bible as guide and help to the Christian life. Their intention was to establish the word and the sacraments together at the centre of Church life. Both of these had been shamefully neglected in the past. John Knox says: "We seek nothing but Christ Jesus His glorious evangel to be preached, his holy sacraments to be truly administered".(2) The Book of Discipline clearly states that unless the sacraments be "truly ministered, as seals and visible confirmation of the spiritual promises contained in the word", then the holy evangel cannot be truly preached.

Knox in his argument with the Subprior of St. Andrew's (3) states that a sacrament "must have the word of God for assurance". "It is not enough that man invent a ceremony, and then give it a signification, according to his pleasure". Here again is that quotation from St. Augustine (used by Aquinas and Calvin), "that faith comes by hearing, and

See next page for footnote.

1. These Scottish Assessors were advisers only and had no vote.
 2. J. Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland, p.146
 3. Ibid. p. 81 ff.
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hearing by the word of God". All three theologians bring out a similar emphasis: that it is the promise of God only which can be accepted in faith, and that therefore the sacraments must be commanded by Him, and must enshrine His promise. For this purpose the Book of Discipline says that when the sacrament is administered the people must be "instructed and put in mind of God's free grace". For, as the Scots Confession expresses it, God gave the sacraments to His children "to seal in their hearts the assurance of His promise."

However the words which follow on from this show that when the Scottish reformers spoke of the sacraments as "seals" they mean no less than did Aquinas when he called the sacraments "signs". For the Confession of Faith then reads: "We utterly damn the vanity of those who affirm sacraments to be nothing else but naked and bare signs. In no uncertain terms this Confession shows that it holds what can be called a "high" doctrine of the sacraments. In warm solid phrases the Confession goes on to declare "that the faithfull, in the right use of the Lord's table, so do eat the body, and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus, that He remaineth in and they in Him." The early Scottish reformers did not attempt to "de-supernaturalise" the sacraments.

However they were careful to safeguard themselves against the view that the sacraments have any inherent power or virtue. ~~xxx~~ In the first Scots Confession it is said that the effect of the sacraments "come by true faith, which apprehendeth Christ Jesus, who only makes His sacraments

effectual unto us." Moreover they add: "We make a distinction betwixt Christ Jesus, in His natural substance, and betwixt the elements in the sacramental signs." The power is not lodged in the elements; however (although it is not said in so many words), the sign effects that which it signifies. This work "is wrought by operation of the Holy Ghost, who by true faith carries us above all things that are visible, carnal, and earthly, and makes us to feed upon the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which was once broken and shed for us."

They assert: "Whosoever slandereth us, as that we affirmed or believed sacraments to be only naked and bare signs, do injury unto us, and speak against a manifest truth." For the "Holy Ghost, which can never be divided from the right institution of the Lord Jesus, will not frustrate the faithful." And since it is the Holy Ghost who ministers grace through the sacraments it is sure that although "the faithful oppressed by negligence, and manly infirmity, do not profit so much as they would at the very instant action of the supper, yet shall it after bring forth fruit."

BAPTISM.

The Scots Confession does not deal with the sacrament of baptism in any detail. As has already been indicated, the Scottish reformers did not minimise the importance of the sacraments. In the First Scots Confession they say: "No, we assuredly believe that by baptism we are ingrafted into Christ Jesus to be made partakers of His justice, by the which our sins are covered and remitted." Baptism is not an empty symbol, it is a divine instrument through which men are regenerated.

This Confession condemns the "error of the anabaptists, who deny baptism to appertain to children, before they have faith and understanding." Only two statements are

specifically made here: that regeneration is imparted through baptism; and that baptism should not be denied children on account of their lack of faith and understanding. Also in the Book of Discipline it is maintained that it is an error to believe that children are damned if they die without baptism. They did not regard baptism as a superstitious or an empty rite. No complete doctrine is expounded, but it would be in keeping with the other teaching in First Scots Confession to presume that their belief would be as follows: the baptised child would be led in later years to a saving faith in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

In this sacrament the Holy Spirit makes us by faith "to feed on the body of Christ, which was once broken and shed for us, which now is in the heaven." Thus it is that in the Lord's Supper "Christ Jesus is so joined with us that he becomes the very nourishment and food of our souls."

For if we are to believe that "the bread which we break is the communion of Christ's body, and the cup which we bless the communion of His blood", then we must believe that in partaking of these elements with faith we do "so eat the body, and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus that He remaineth in us and we in Him: yea, that we are so made flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bones, that as the eternal Godhead has given to the flesh of the Lord Jesus life and immortality, so doth Christ Jesus His flesh and blood eaten and drunken by us, give us the same prerogatives". Here in warm, vital, words the picture is painted of believers being united to the body of Christ - "flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone". This is what Calvin was also eager to show; in this sacrament believers

are united to Christ, they are "in Christ".

Nevertheless transubstantiation is refuted. The reformers state: "we make a distinction betwixt Christ Jesus, in His natural substance, and betwixt the elements in the sacramental signs." In other words, the body of Christ is in heaven, and there can be no question of the conversion of the substance of the bread into the substance of Christ's natural body. Thus the Scottish Reformers are entirely in agreement with Calvin. The "idolatry of the mass" is condemned in no uncertain terms, and the expression in the First Scots Confession is no doubt mild compared with their verbal declamations: Here they describe transubstantiation as the doctrine which "the papists have perniciously taught and damnably believed."

The explanation which they put forward is the same as that of Calvin. In the First Scot Confession it is explained that "notwithstanding the far distance of place betwixt His body now glorified in the heavens, and us now mortal in this earth", yet we do truly partake of His body and blood. "This union and communion which we have with the body and blood of Christ Jesus..... is wrought by operation of the Holy Ghost, who by true faith carries us above all things that are visible, carnal, and earthly, and makes us feed upon the body and blood of Christ Jesus, which was once broken and shed for us, which now is in the heaven." A. Mitchell Hunter quotes from John Knox's liturgy included in the First Book of Discipline: "The only way to dispose ourselves to receive nourishment, relief, and quickening of His substance, is to lift up our minds, 1. by faith, above all things worldly, and sensible, and thereby to enter into heaven that we may find and receive Christ where He dwelleth undoubtedly, verie God and verie man, in the incomprehensible glory of His Father."

1. This concept was not peculiar to the reformers, but comes directly - from the Sursum Corda: "Lift up your hearts"

For this reason the sacrament of the Lord's Supper appertains "only to such as have been of the household of faith". For those "who eat at the holy table without faith, or being at dissension or division with their brethren, do eat unworthily."

THE WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH.

H.H. Farmer in his booklet "The Westminster Confession of Faith after 300 years" quotes from Schaff (2) who tells of how the reformation of the 16th. Century was followed by a dry scholasticism which lacked intuition into hidden depths and transcending heights. He says: "The Westminster standards do not go so far in this direction as some others of the same period, but certainly further than the reformation symbols, which are less logical and precise, and more fresh and elastic. They reflect the hard severity of Puritanism. They embody too much metaphysical divinity, and overstep the limits which divide a public confession of faith from a scientific treatise of theology".

The doctrine of the sacraments here lacks the vision and vitality of Calvin and the First Scots Confession. Some of the sacred mystery of the sacraments is lost; instead the sovereign will and power of the Holy Ghost is stressed. This Confession does not seem as aware as Calvin and the early Scottish reformers that it is essential that the word and sacraments supplement each other in building up the Christian life within the Church.

It is recognised that the sacraments stand on the promise of God. "The sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace.....to represent Christ". The same promise proclaimed in preaching is here represented as a visible sign. The promise of the Gospel (here called the covenant of grace) is sealed or confirmed in the sacrament.

(2) "The Creeds of Christendom" Vol.1, p.790.

However this is not a bare symbol. "There is.....a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified". In the Lord's supper Christ is "as reality, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements are to their outward senses".

When talking of the sacraments in general this confession does not say that faith is essential, for in infant baptism this is not so. Instead it states that the efficacy of the sacraments is dependent "upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains.....a promise of benefit to worthy receivers." Thus while implying that faith is necessary this is not made essential. The sovereign will and power of the Holy Spirit is stressed. In baptism grace is "offered", "exhibited", and "conferred", by the Holy Spirit.

It follows that, from this they should teach (with Calvin) that "the efficacy of the sacrament is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered. The Confession was referring here to baptism. It goes on to say that the grace promised in the sacrament is conferred by the Holy Spirit " to such as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time".

It is made clear that there is no power contained in the sacraments themselves, and the grace conferred is not given automatically through the reception of the material signs. The Confession says that the spiritual things signified in the sacraments of the Old Covenant were, in substance, the same as those of the New. No doubt their intention is the same as Calvin's. He teaches that Christ was exhibited in the sacrament of the Old Covenant, the sacraments of the Old and the New Covenant have the intention of leading men by the hand to Christ.

BAPTISM.

Baptism is not essential for salvation. One could be regenerated or saved without this sacrament. Also it is not so certain that all who are baptised are undoubtedly regenerated.

The purpose of baptism is first, the "admission of the party baptised into the visible Church"; and secondly, it is "unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ." This means that all the treasures which are in Christ are opened to him. This is not a mere promise of grace, for the grace "is not merely offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost" (according to His sovereign will).

There are certain requisites before a person can become eligible for baptism. The person must either "actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ", or else be the child of a believing parent. Also it is implied that the sacrament will only be effective in the elect of God, to "such as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time." This may seem harsh to some. But here baptism is regarded as entirely the act of God, and on God's side it is effective and sure. What matters here is not what we profess or do, but what God does for us.

Infant baptism is quite in keeping with this teaching on baptism. The Directory of Public Worship drawn up by the Westminster Assembly says "that the promise is made to believers and their seed, and that the seed and posterity of the faithful, born within the Church, have by their birth interest in the covenant, and right to the seal of it, and to the outward privileges of the Church..... that the children by baptism are solemnly received into the bosom of the visible Church, distinguished from the world,

and them that are without, and united with believers,.... that they are Christians and federally holy before baptism, and therefore are they baptised." 1.

The Westminster Confession does not try to explain how this engrafting is effected. It says that the grace promised is conferred by the Holy Ghost, according to God's will, whether the person concerned is an infant or an adult. D.M. Baillie tries to explain what difference it makes to an infant whether he is baptised or not. He says that "the sacrament of baptism brings the child into a new environment, the environment of the Church of Christ, which Calvin, following Cyprian, called the Mother of all who have God as their Father, in that sense the baptism even of an infant is, as the Westminster Confession puts it, 'an engrafting into Christ', who lives in the Church which is His body; and the child is thenceforth surrounded by the life of the Church, an environment which touches him most closely in the life of his parents." 2.

Prof. Baillie goes on to show that the touch of this environment is supernatural. This modern concept which he expresses does take up a similar thought to that expressed by the Westminster Assembly when it says that the baptised child is "received into the bosom of the visible Church", and "united with believers."

Moreover, as has already been pointed out, they teach that "the efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered."

D.M. Baillie comments: "The point is that a person's baptism should be to him a means of grace, not merely at that moment, but ever afterwards; and the faith which appropriates the grace offered in that sacrament includes the faith by which all his life he looks back to his baptism." 3.

1. cf. 1 Cor. 7:14
the Sacraments", p. 85

2. D.M. Baillie "The Theology of
3. Ibid.

As Calvin teaches: "Children are baptised for future repentance and faith," 4. Thus baptism is given but once in a life time, and the "improvement of baptism",⁵ is the task which lies before us till we depart this life.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

This sacrament was instituted by Christ on the same night on which He was betrayed. The Westminster Confession says that it was instituted for three purposes: first, to be a remembrance of Christ's "sacrifice of Himself in His death"; secondly, to "seal" the benefits of that death to all true believers; thirdly, to unite the believers with Christ, and with each other "as members of His mystical body".

In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to His Father. Here we see only a "commemoration of that one offering up of Himself, by Himself, upon the cross, once for all." But this is no mere memorial feast as the Zwinglians would describe it. The Lord's Supper is "a bond and pledge of the believer's communion with Him, and with each other, as members of His mystical body."

They did not teach that the bread and wine are empty symbols. Here the body and blood of Christ are communicated to men. "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements..... do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not corporally and carnally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified and all the benefits of His death; the body and blood of Christ being..... as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses."

The presence of Christ here could not be described as a subjective or imaginary one. Nay He is objectively

4. Insit. 4.16.20

5. Westminster Larger Catechism
Answer 167

and as "really" as He is described to be by the theory of transubstantiation. What then is the quarrel with transubstantiation? Does not Aquina himself say that the presence of Christ here is "spiritual" and "sacramental"? The Confession says: "In substance and nature the elements still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before." Their reason for condemning the theory of transubstantiation so vehemently is that it is "repugnant, not to scripture alone, but even to commonsense, and reason;" and besides, "it is the cause of manifold superstitions; yea, of gross idolatries." These criticisms could hardly be levelled at Aquinas' doctrine, but are justifiably made against transubstantiation as it was commonly believed.

Thus it is that "although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward element; yet, they receive not the thing signified thereby." For Christ is only present to the faith of the believers in this sacrament. Nevertheless it is a sin against Christ to come to the table unworthily.

This Confession opposes the conception of the sacrifice of the mass which was then taught by the Roman Catholic Church. They believed that this minimised the finality of Christ's death upon the cross. They will not have it that any sacrifice is made which might add to the redemption wrought upon calvary by Christ. In the Lord's Supper there is no sacrifice made at all "for remission of sins of the quick and the dead." That which is called the sacrifice of the mass by the papists "is most injurious to Christ's one, only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of His elect."

Prof. D. Baillie comments: "It is quite plain that these expressions of strong repudiation,..... are due to a violent reaction against the abuses and superstitions connected with the Roman mass in the middle ages.

But we must ask: "Is there any truth at all in the idea that the sacrament of the holy communion, properly and fully understood, contains something of the element of oblation, sacrifice, or offering?" Bishop Gore in his remarkable book The Body of Christ, writes that "There can be no doubt that from the earliest days the Christian Church thought of the eucharist as sacrifice." (p.157) 1.

In the Westminster Confession all ideas of a sacrifice of the death of Christ, or of Christ Himself, are completely excluded: "In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to His Father; nor any real sacrifice made at all, for remission of sins of the quick and the dead." The only sacrifice that can be spoken of here is the "commemoration of that one offering up of Himself, by Himself, upon the cross, once for all; and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God, for the same." It is allowed that we can speak of a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered to God through Jesus Christ. But the "remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death" which is made at the Lord's Supper cannot be understood as effecting any offering; the Confession implies that "remembrance" means no more than a memorial.

CONCLUSION.

There is a noticeable difference between the First Scots Confession and the Westminster Confession. This is not merely because the Westminster Confession is more a product of the English than the Scottish reformers. A change had taken place between 1560 and 1647. The Westminster Confession shows signs of that orthodoxy which Brunner says "appears like a frozen waterfall - mighty shapes of movement, but no movement."

1. D.M. Baillie: "The Theology of the Sacraments", p.109

But Confessions show that truth is not the only divine means of appeal to the soul: the sacraments do actually effect that grace which they signify. But the Westminster Confession does not relate the promises of the word with the sacramental seal in the vital way the First Scots Confession does. This is because it does not have the same stress on faith.

It is true that both teach that the sacraments are not empty symbols which do nothing more than arouse our imaginations. The sacraments are means of grace; in them the Holy Spirit will actually "confer" the grace which is promised. Also they deny that there is any power in the sacraments themselves, or that the grace conferred is given automatically through the reception of the material signs.

Where then do they find their surety for the efficacy of the sacraments?

The First Scots Confession attributes this efficacy to "true faith, which apprehendeth Christ Jesus, who only makes His sacrament effectual unto us." And also to "the Holy Ghost, who by true faith carries us above all things that are visible, carnal, and earthly." The Westminster Confession on the other hand finds its surety in "the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution..... authorising the use thereof." It does say that Christ is spiritually received "inwardly by faith" in the Lord's Supper. But it is not seen that faith and the working of the Holy Spirit are closely linked. Thus the faith spoken about does not imply the same living quality as the faith mentioned in the First Scots Confession; and the Holy Spirit does not seem to be related so much to persons as to the sovereign will of God.

In their concern for the problems raised by Calvin

and the early reformers the Westminster divines lost much much of the validity embodied in the earlier doctrine. In their careful definitions there is none of the homely fervency expressed in these words of the First Scots Confession: "The faithful in the right use of the Lord's table, so do eat the body, and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus, that He remaineth in them and they in Him; yea, that they are made flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones."

The Westminster Confession had lost the insight of Calvin of the life of the Church as union with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit sharing in His glorified humanity. In their ~~etern-~~ rational approach to the sacraments they did not conceive the union which we have with Christ which was so vitally expressed by the First Scots Confession.

SECTION FOUR.A criticism and synthesis in the light of recent thought.

The doctrines we have studied are framed in words and arguments which do not always convince the mind of the twentieth century reader. Here were sincere and devout Christians attempting to express the meaning of the sacraments to their own generation. Aquinas was a scholastic theologian, thinking in terms of the Aristotelian metaphysics which he had transformed and planted within the Christian faith. Calvin and the early Scottish Reformers, trained in the same tradition, were zealously striving to safeguard a spiritual and meaningful doctrine of the sacraments. They desired to restate the doctrine to be analogous to early Christian beliefs, and to remove the superstitions which had come largely to surround the sacraments in the popular medieval mind.

Today we have theologians standing in the reformed tradition asking the question: "Have the reformed Churches not perhaps something to learn from Aquinas and the catholic tradition?" An example of this is the late Prof. Donald Baillie. It is becoming easier now to ask questions like this. In fact, the question is forced upon us when we see the indifference with which the sacraments are now regarded in the reformed Churches.

We are now realising afresh the words of Augustine (quoted by both Aquinas and Calvin): "It is impossible to keep men together in one religious denomination, whether true or false, except they be united by means of visible signs or sacraments."

In a missionary Church, aware that it is surrounded by pagans, this needs particularly to be emphasised. The Church of the West is rapidly recognising that this is its own present position.

In conjunction with this unifying and corporate aspect

of the sacraments it is necessary today to recognise that Christianity, properly practised, integrates life and makes it whole. Man's full response to the Gospel is not merely a response of his intellect to the truth, but the response of his whole life, intellectual, emotional, and physical, to the call of Christ. The sacraments help us not only to understand that ~~see~~ soul and body cannot be separated; they help us also to achieve an integration of body and soul in the worship and service of God.

Aquinas says that "the condition of human nature is such that it has to be led by things corporeal and sensible to things spiritual and intelligible." (1) Calvin follows him closely here. But both of them did not mean by this that man cannot perceive or understand spiritual things and therefore must have sacraments to help him, as paintings in medieval times portrayed to illustrate Christians the Gospel stories they were unable to read. They call the sacraments "signs" and "seals"; and mean that by the sacraments we are helped to participate in, and experience in our lives, the life of Christ. This was brought out clearly by Calvin who said that the sacraments do not merely confirm the promise of the word, but they establish us in the faith of the word; and through them God actually "leads us to Himself". 1.

Why is it that the sacraments should offer us spiritual things? All three of our sources have taught that the sacraments are not essential to salvation; that the grace of God cannot be limited to any external means, but that He can approach man as He wills. The sacraments however, should not be neglected. The sacraments were instituted by Christ, they are backed by the word of God. Thus Calvin can say: "In baptism, the Lord promises forgiveness of sins: receive it, and be sure". 2.

(1) Summa, III, Q.61. A.1 1. Institutes IV.14.5
 2. Ibid IV.15.15.

However, as D.M. Baillie writes: "It is easy to answer: "We do these things because our Lord has laid them upon us. They are not our inventions, but His commands." But I hardly need point out that such an answer is not enough. And it is insufficient not only because it has been widely questioned by modern scholarship whether the words of command and institution of baptism and the Lord's Supper are really authentic utterances of Jesus Himself in the days of His flesh."

For, as he goes on to say, even "if Jesus instituted these sacraments as the New Testament bequeathed them, we want to know why; otherwise we cannot use them with with the understanding that alone can save them from formalism at the best, and at the worst from magic. What is there in human nature, and human needs, and our human situation, what is there in the Christian faith, the Christian Gospel, the Christian salvation, what is there in the nature of the divine grace and its way of working, to demand this strange visibly tangible expression in material things and in perceptible actions, which we call sacraments?" (1)

THE SACRAMENTS AND NATURE.

The principle Calvin stressed and which has become a special note of reformed theology is that the sacraments depend entirely on the word of promise accepted in faith. However, this teaching is not peculiar to the reformers, it is found in St. Augustine, and appears in the Summa of St. Thomas. "The word is added to the element and this becomes a sacrament" - not because it is spoken but because it is believed.

Although this truth must not be lost, it seems to point to a universe which is sacramental. As D.M. Baillie asks : 1. "Is there not a basic reason why material things should be taken by the word and consecrated to be instruments

(1) The Theology of the Sacraments, p.42 1. The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 43.

of divine grace? Do they not lend themselves to such a use because God made them, because they are His creatures?"

This is what Calvin teaches. God can take any object from nature and use it as a sacramental sign. This He has already done not only in the elements of baptism and the Lord's Supper. He used the rainbow as a pledge to Noah. It is not mere credulity which makes Calvin accept this, for he says: "If any dabbler in philosophy, in order to deride the simplicity of our faith, contends that such a variety of colours is the natural result of the refraction of the solar rays on an opposite cloud, we must immediately acknowledge it; but at the same time we will deride his stupidity in not acknowledging God as the Lord and Governor of nature, who uses all His elements according to the promotion of His own glory. And if he had impressed similar characters on the sun, on the stars, on the earth, on the stones, they would all have been sacraments to us. Shall not ~~be~~ God be able to mark His creatures with His word, that they may become sacraments, though before they were mere elements!"¹

Thus God can make any of the natural elements speak sacramentally to us. And on our side it is most helpful, if not necessary, that God should do this.

As Aquinas says: "Signs are given to men, to whom it is proper to discover the unknown by means of the known." For man perceives the created things of this world. "They are vernacular to him - he is native to the universe and is intuitively aware of its significance, and reads the thought which it expresses."²

It is through this material order that man is provided with an organism by which he is in touch with his fellow-men. Through these natural elements he comes to know his

1. Institutes IV.14,18.

2. Wetherspoon, Religious Values in the Sacraments, p.15

fellow-men, and through them we too come to know God. It cannot be otherwise. It was through the burning bush that God spoke to Moses, and it is through the common things of the world, and events in the course of changing life that God is known to man. Thus, as Calvin expresses it, the sacraments lead us by the hand to God, "just as nurses lead children by the hand," and through the sacraments "He manifests Himself to us in so far as our dullness can enable us to recognise Him".¹

Wetherapoon reminds us therefore, that it is not so much that the sacraments supplement our intercourse with God, as that they interpret and express it. Thus "we may have made our deepest confession of sin, we may have exhausted our powers of supplication and praise, the Gospel may have been set forth in some attainable fullness and still there is so much unexpressed. But there remains that the bread and the cup may ~~see~~ speak for God to us and for us to God, and may show what words cannot say."²

We get a picture of what Aquinas is trying to put into the word "sign", and Calvin into "seal". We see why it is that the sign actually effects what it signifies, why the symbol is not an empty one. Also there can be no question of there being a separation between the outward and visible sign, and the inward and spiritual grace. This is what Aquinas intends when he says that the sacraments are not mere signs, that we cannot say that the element touches men's bodies, while the spiritual reality signified touches their hearts, but that the sign effects that which it signifies. "It touches the body and cleanses the heart" (Augustine).

Aquinas and Calvin did not have the insight modern psychology gives us into the inter-relation between soul

1. The Religious Values in the Sacraments, p.15.

and body. Thus the sacraments are not explained as the natural way for God to converse with His people, but rather as a special concession to man in his weakness. However, they teach quite clearly that the sacraments are vehicles for God's communion with men and means by which He draws men to Himself. Calvin says that through these material elements God actually "leads us to Himself."¹

THE SACRAMENTS - A MEANS OF GRACE.

We have tried to show that it is God personally working through the sacraments that makes them spiritually beneficial to us. All of the theologians we have studied would agree that the grace spoken of in the sacraments comes from God alone, and that it comes only through Christ His Son. Aquinas says: "The saving power must needs be derived by the sacraments from Christ's Godhead, through His humanity."²

D.M. Baillie says that in the twentieth century it is being emphasized that "the grace of God is simply His personal influence upon men."³ However, neither Aquinas nor Calvin describe grace in such a personal way. We saw how Aquinas taught that the sacraments were "causes" of grace. He says that there is "a spiritual power in the sacraments inasmuch as they are ordained by God unto the production of a spiritual effect."⁴ Thus grace comes to be regarded as a separate thing, derived from Christ, and passed on in the sacraments. The word "grace" is still often misinterpreted in a very materialistic fashion.

Calvin, followed by the First Scots Confession,

1. Institutes IV.14.5.

2. Summa III Q.62. A. 5

3. The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 52

4. Summa III Q. 62. A. 5

reframed this scholastic argument of Aquinas. He emphasized that the true meaning of the sacraments is to be found in Christ, and outside of Him they promise nothing. "Christ is the matter... or the substance of all sacraments"¹ Thus he takes the scholastic terms "matter" and "substance", but leaves no doubt that it must be Christ to which they refer. It is his great contribution that he clearly states that it is through union with the glorified humanity of Christ that we derive grace. He says: "I am not satisfied with the view of those who, while acknowledging that we have some kind of communion with Christ, only make us partakers of the Spirit, omitting all mention of flesh and blood. As if it were said to no purpose that His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed: that we have no life unless we eat that flesh and drink that blood."²

Aquinas did say that Christ is the "substance" of communion, but this is because of the miracle of transubstantiation. As a rule Aquinas, with his stress on the Passion above all else in the atoning work of Christ, gives the impression that there is something called grace created by the Passion. He says that "the sacraments of the Church derived their power specially from Christ's Passion"³

It would not be true to say that Calvin teaches simply that Christ is offer^{ed} personally through the sacraments. For he has taken from Aquinas a distinction between body and soul, a distinction between the matter and spiritual reality of the sacraments.⁴

They could not see fully that it is actually sensible

1. Institution IV.14.16.

2. Ibid. IV.17.7.

3. Summa III Q.52. A. 5

4. Summa III Q.60. A. 6

element that we know God's presence, or grace, and that it is this that our faith is touched.

Too often they speak as though faith were an intellectual faith in words. Calvin says with Augustine that the sacraments are the "visible word", they "speak" to us, it is the "promises" which they confirm that we believe. Calvin says that the sacraments are intended as helps to our faith and also that they offer Christ. Because faith is always something intellectual Calvin is never able to show that these two statements mean the same thing - that faith is strengthened because Christ touches our lives here - and that Christ is enabled to touch our lives here because through the sacramental signs the Holy Spirit is enabled to open our eyes of faith.

Although Calvin as a rule speaks of faith as an acceptance of promises, and implies that only when this faith is present can we be united to Christ, Yet he seems to have grasped the true significance of the grace offered in the sacraments when he describes that faith as a hunger after Christ (which hunger can only be aroused by Christ); such faith is then followed by a fuller union with Christ. Thus can the grace offered in the sacraments be seen clearly as Christ giving Himself to men.

GRACE AND FAITH IN THE SACRAMENTS.

All of our theologians stand in the tradition of Augustine with his evangelical insistence on grace alone. The danger of this is that it can lead to a very strict determinism.

In the teaching of Aquinas there is no hint of Pelagianism, for the emphasis is laid on grace, and there is no idea that man can in any sense merit grace, even if only through faith. As long as man imposes no obstacles to the working of the sacraments they will effectually convey grace to him.

Thus great emphasis is laid on the fact that the sacraments "cause grace", and that they have an "instrumental power" for doing this. It is true that they have this power, but only because God wills to work through them.

It is this view of grace which makes it a medicine to be applied through sacramental rites and that gives rise to the problem of the irresistibility of grace, and of man's freedom. For grace appears to be quite detachable from the person of Christ. Aquinas would not for one moment believe that grace is separable from Christ. But since he emphasises the "thing done" in the sacraments, the man in the street would think that he could obtain grace without meeting with Christ.

Calvin agrees that "God truly performs whatever he promises and figures by signs; nor are the signs without effect." Yet he says: Rather "the Holy Spirit, whom the sacraments do not bring promiscuously to all, but whom the Lord specially confers on His people, brings the gifts of God along with Him, makes way for the sacraments and causes them to bear fruit."¹ Also he says that the sacraments "confer nothing, and avail nothing, if not received in faith", and faith, he teaches is "the proper and entire work of the Holy Spirit." Thus the efficacy of the sacraments appears to be rooted and grounded in the sovereign will of God exercised through the Holy Spirit. We find this conception in its ultimate hardened form in the Westminster Confession. This says that the blessings of baptism are given by the Holy Ghost "to such as the grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time. In this way faith appears to be given by God in a way quite as automatic as the schoolmen teach grace to be given.

1. Institutes IV.14.17.

It must be understood that Calvin does not insist on faith as a precondition to grace. The reason why he insists on faith is because the sacramental sign speaks "not to the imagination, but to the faith; and the faith to which it speaks is faith in God, that He is true to His own appointments, and that what by the symbol He indicates Himself as doing, that He does".¹ In this way faith is not a condition, but the medium through which God works. For Calvin was not a "receptionist". God is actually offering Himself through the sacraments, but it is only through our faith that He enters our lives.

While it is true that all is of God, and that even the faith which apprehends God is itself a gift from God; yet as Calvin shows elsewhere, we do not approach the sacraments with perfect faith, in fact they are meant to strengthen our faith. Rather we come with a sincere desire for Him. The faith which embraces the sacraments is described by Calvin as when we "hunger and thirst and sigh after Him with ardent affection".² To such "faith" the Lord offers "mercy", and a pledge of His grace".³

We would add that through this mercy and pledge He does not force our faith, but creates it in us and solicits it from us. Thus faith is seen as God's work, but it is affected by our trust answering His love.

The work of the sacraments seem to be summed up in the following words of Baron von Hügel (quoted by D.M. Beillie)⁴: "I kiss my child not only because I love it; I kiss it also in order to love it. A religious picture not only expresses my awakened faith; it is a help to my faith's awakening". It is through the sacraments that God

1. Wetherspoon, Religious Values in the Sacrament, p.21

2. Institutes, IV.14.8.

3. Ibid. IV.14.9.

4. The Theology of the Sacraments, p. 54.

can express His love to us and bring His redeeming love in Christ into the present. They are "helps to our faith" because when we are loved in this way we are able to respond with trust and committal.

However, God's justifying grace can never be known merely through the natural elements. It is through the Redeemer and Mediator Jesus Christ that we are reconciled to God. Thus as the First Scots Confession says, the effect of the sacrament "comes by true faith, which apprehendeth Christ Jesus, who only makes the sacraments effectual unto us." The effect of the sacraments is nothing else than redemption into Christ.

B A P T I S M.IS BAPTISM A DOMINICAL SACRAMENT?

It is a critical question for both Aquinas and Calvin that baptism should have been instituted by Christ. For Aquinas maintains that the "sacraments derive from their institution the power of conferring grace".¹

While for Calvin it is essential that baptism be appointed by God, else it would be an empty sign and could mean nothing to our faith. The Westminster Confession says: "baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ..... to be continued in His Church until the end of the world."

It is not within the scope of this thesis to examine the large body of modern research which has gone into the question whether Jesus did institute baptism but we can follow the arguments of Aquinas and Calvin and see why it was so important to them that the sacraments should be dominically instituted.

Aquinas claims that the sacraments themselves confer grace because "they were instituted by God for the purpose of conferring grace."² We see baptism instituted in power when Christ was baptised in Jordan. But it was not until Christ died and rose again that baptism was made obligatory for mankind. We find in Aquinas no connection of baptism with Pentecost. From the institution Aquinas teaches that baptism is empowered to confer grace on men.

For Calvin it is fundamental that "baptism has been substituted for circumcision and performs the same office."³ Both stand within God's covenant with man. All sacraments are instituted by the word of God, that He might make men sure of His promises. When Christ came He made the sacraments of the old covenant obsolete, and instituted new ones. He instituted baptism not merely through His teaching, but He Himself was baptised."

1. Summa III. Q.66 A. 2.

2. Ibid. III. Q. 62. A 1.

3. Institutes IV.16.4.

He consecrated and sanctified baptism in His own body, that He might have it in common with us as the firmest bond of union and fellowship which He designed to form with us."¹

Thus both Aquinas and Calvin point to the baptism of Jesus for the institution of the sacrament. But it is in the covenant and in the light of circumcision that Calvin sees the significance of baptism. Gullman considers that there is a continuity between circumcision and baptism, and that baptism therefore can be called a seal of our reception into the divine covenant of grace.

Calvin recognises an effective baptism in John's baptism. He traces Christ's injunction to baptise from the beginning of His ministry and will not have it that the institution of this sacrament is given for the first time in the last chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. Thus his teaching on baptism does not rely on this much contested text.

In His baptism Christ instituted baptism for all men. By it He demonstrated His solidarity with sinners. Karl Barth says: "By His own participation in it He gave command and commission. Therein lies the potency of baptism."² Also, we recognise the surety of God's promise in baptism when we see it as the sacrament which replaces circumcision. Thus it is a testimony that God will be true to His covenant with man. It therefore seems legitimate to believe that baptism was instituted by Christ as a means of grace.

Calvin establishes baptism as a part of the Church's presentation of the Gospel. It is not that God instituted baptism so that through it we might obtain salvation.

1. *Ibid.* IV.15.6.

2. The Teaching of the Church regarding Baptism, p.18.

For it is not that our salvation is perfected in water, "but only the knowledge and certainty of such gifts are perceived in this sacrament."¹

Baptism holds out the promise that God is willing to receive us through Christ the Mediator; that we are united to Christ, who made Himself one with us in our humanity; and that the Holy Spirit will Himself effect our purification and regeneration. Through it we are shown to be participators in God's covenant, and from His side we can be sure that He will do as He has promised.

THE OPERATION OF THIS SACRAMENT.

Both Aquinas and Calvin stress that what God does in baptism is what really matters. Therefore baptism is "received as from the hand of God."² Whoever might administer the ~~salvation~~^{sacrament}, it is Christ Himself who baptises.

Thus baptism cannot be regarded as an empty sign. By the mercy of God baptism makes some difference to the person baptised. Aquinas, according to his scholastic philosophy says that since baptism has some effect the cause must lie within the sacrament. There is "a certain instrumental virtue of sanctification" which operates in the water and enters the baptised. Since the sacrament operates according to God's ordinance, and through the application of the water, we can be sure that in it grace is given and man is undoubtedly "inwardly justified". This is the reality which lies behind the symbolic sacramental action.

Although God is not tied to these external signs and baptism is not essential for salvation, yet Aquinas teaches that this sacrament by its operation effects regeneration. It is true that through the acceptance of this sacrament by faith it can bear varying degrees of fruit, and that

1. Institutes. IV, 15, 6.

2. Ibid. IV, 15, 15

if the grace be rejected it will be to that man's greater shame.

Calvin on the other hand is sometimes believed to say that in baptism nothing is really effected, but that we only receive the knowledge of salvation through it. The individual is only made aware of his salvation, and if anything is achieved by the sacrament it is the strengthening of an individual's faith. This might seem to be so when Calvin gives the example of Cornelius the Centurian, who did not seek "a fuller forgiveness from baptism, but a surer exercise of faith; nay, an argument for assurance from pledge." ¹

However, the only reason why faith can be assured assured is because the sacraments are not empty signs. "We are said to receive, procure and obtain, whatever according to the perception of our faith is exhibited to us by the Lord..... In baptism the Lord promises forgiveness of sins: receive it, and be sure." Also Calvin says: "Nor does he merely feed our eyes with bare show; He leads us to the actual object, and effectually performs what he figures." ²

Thus, whatever else we might wish to say about baptism, one thing is certain: it is God Himself who approaches us through the sign. Aquinas says: "Grace is bestowed in baptism. Calvin says: God Himself speaks to us in baptism. Aquinas' attitude might imply an impersonal operation, Calvin's a stress on a faith which understands. But the truth underlying what they express is that God Himself approaches us here, showing His prevenient love; and He will lead us by the hand to Christ.

MAN'S RESPONSE.

Auten calls this "the sacrament/ of prevenient love". However, as we see in Christ's teaching in the Gospels,

1. INSTITUTES IV, 15, 15

2. Ibid. IV, 15, 14.

man is called upon to "take up his cross", to believe, to leave all. A response is demanded from man. Thus despite the fact that all of the sources we studied stress the providence and sovereignty of God, yet all demand faith on the part of man.

Aquinas himself might sound quite Pelagian: "For some approach baptism with greater, some with less devotion. And therefore some receive a greater, some a smaller share of the grace of newness; just as from the same fire he receives more heat who approaches nearest to it."¹ Calvin too says that unless we accept baptism in faith it profits us nothing. However, he does not demand faith at the moment of administration. Although baptism may lie neglected for a long time it may at some later time be received with faith. Baptism must be followed by faith and obedience.²

We should always strive on remembering that corruption never ceases in us, and that we should strive to perfect that dying with Christ which, he says, "began in baptism."

Baptism does not lose its efficacy through the unworthiness or unbelief of men. "The promise can be neglected but still it remains fixed and true. Although all men were false and perfidious, yet God does not cease to be true, though all were lost, Christ remains safe."³ Because of this Luther could, whenever he doubted his salvation, assure himself with the remembrance that he had been baptised.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM.

Baptism is significant for the individual and for the Church as a whole. By it the individual is born into the spiritual life; this has a special significance for

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1. Summa III. Q.69 A. 8
 2. Institutes IV.15.11 & 17.
 3. Institutes IV.15.17.

infants, for thus, literally, God's hand is placed upon them and they grow up as children of His Kingdom.

To the Church it signifies that this community rests upon the foundation of God, that through it He makes His abode with men. We see in baptism that the Church is made of persons, each born into the Kingdom, yet with "one faith, one Lord, one Baptism" knitted into the fellowship of His spirit.

As Romans 6:1 ff. teaches, baptism is the participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. In it is portrayed man's dying to sin, and rising again. He dies with Christ, and is raised up to life with Christ. This teaching is found in both Aquinas and Calvin. However Aquinas deals almost exclusively with the birth into a personal spiritual life. Calvin's first word on baptism is that it is "the initiatory sign by which we are admitted to the fellowship of the church, that being ingrafted into Christ we may be accounted the children of God."¹

Aquinas certainly regarded baptism as baptism into the Church. For through baptism a man is admitted into the Church. Now he is permitted to use the other sacraments which have been given to the Church, by God, as channels of His grace. He does not teach the same idea which the Reformers had of "the fellowship of the Church."

We see a far more personal, and more corporate conception in Calvin's teaching. "For Calvin each individual Christian's baptism is the ~~saving~~ sharing of one common baptism which the whole Church shares in common with Christ, Himself baptised in Jordan, a common baptism in which the whole Church is made one body and soul in union with Christ."²

1. Institutes, IV, 15, 1.

2. R.S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments

However Calvin would never admit that by this is intended that a forensic relationship with Christ is established here. This is a personal relationship which is marked on mans side by his trustful obedience of Christ.

As Barth says: "In the symbolic representation of baptism, Jesus Christ speaks about Himself and His action on behalf of the candidate." ¹ Thus in baptism the prevenient love of God touches man, it "says to the candidate that He also for him and with him is dead and risen and is a partner in the covenant. In baptism He calls and engages man to be what He is in him." ² As Barth goes on to say: "If it is understood thus, one ought to and must say of it in the words of scripture: it saves, sanctifies, purifies, mediates and gives the forgiveness of sins and the grace of the Holy Spirit, it effects the new birth, it is the admission of man into the covenant of grace and into the Church." It is all these things not because it automatically effects them, but because it tells man that these may be his, and thus wins mans trust in God.

Nor does this make little of baptism. It says that God Himself makes the sign effective; He approaches man in this sacrament and offers His grace. It makes clear that baptism is not merely a means by which men see clearly and understand what the Gospel is saying. But baptism is still a help to our faith; it evokes and strengthens our trust in God. Through it Christ and all His blessings are made ours.

INFANT BAPTISM.

Within the framework of his doctrine of the sacraments Aquinas has a very sound case for infant baptism. This is not to say that the sacraments operates only in its own

1. The Teaching of the Church regarding Baptism. p.29.

2. Ibid.

right (ex opere operato), and that therefore regeneration is effected by baptism; but also that faith is not required on the part of the infant, but that "the faith of one, indeed of the whole Church, profits the child through the operation of the Holy Ghost, who unites the Church together, and communicates the goods of one member to another."¹

Aquinas justifies the doctrine of infant baptism on the ground that infants as much as adults stand in the need of salvation in Christ. He has no doubt that they will receive this through baptism. Infants who are baptised are truly united to Christ, and "receive an influx of grace and virtues from the Head."²

This is perhaps to quote a phrase which shows St. Thomas's doctrine to be very mechanical. However if baptism is to be an effective sign, if it is not to be a bare symbol, then there must be some truth in the view that the grace of God is made real to a child through the sacrament. This concept is embodied in Calvin's doctrine of baptism. He does not teach that the sacrament of baptism has a cognitive value only - that the symbol only strengthens faith because at the time it was understood. If this were so, he could have no ground for supporting infant baptism. When Aquinas argues that children of believers should be baptised, his reason for doing so could be applied equally well to the children of heathen parents. But Calvin does not wish to bring children to baptism so that through it they may obtain spiritual blessings otherwise not theirs. It is his contention that the spiritual blessings offered in baptism are already promised to the

1. Summa III. Q.68 A. 9

2. Ibid. III. Q.69 A.6

children of Christian parents. Thus "children believers are not baptised in order that through formerly aliens from the Church, they may then, for the first time, become children of God, but rather are received into the Church by a formal sign, because, in virtue of the promise, they previously belonged to the body of Christ." ¹ It is the covenant of God which is fundamental and secure, and baptism is a seal to this.

For God has promised to be a God to us and to our seed after us. Thus baptism replaces the circumcision of the Old Covenant. The promises in both are the same → "The promise of the paternal favour of God, of forgiveness of sins, of eternal life." ² Under the old form of the covenant circumcision was applied to children as well as to adults even though it was the sacrament of penitence and faith. It follows then that "if the children of believers, are partakers of the covenant, without the help of understanding, there is no reason why they should be denied the sign." ³

Barth claims that this makes the Church into a National Church. He claims that in being this it is not truly the Church which is the community of those who believe in Christ. Now by their birth into the Church men become automatically members of it. There is a danger that the meaning of the covenant, and of baptism should cease to be spiritual. He claims that the continuation of infant baptism is not worth the price being paid for it, namely a national, unspiritual, Church. Barth thus wishes to secure for the Church a membership which has come in all responsibility, with a willingness to embrace the full significance of the sacrament. It is true that in some of the Protestant Churches today the sacraments, and particularly baptism, have little meaning. Thus the core upon which the spiritual life of the individual and of the Church should be built, has little

1. Institutes IV 15.22.

2. Ibid. IV 16.4.

3. Institutes IV 16.24.

spiritual significance. But the answer to how the Christian community should be built does not necessarily lie in an exclusive individualism.

Surely it is true that the promise is to us and to our children (Acts 2:39). The Christian community is not built up by stressing the importance of the individual alone. By their birth withⁿ a Christian family, and into the Church, infants are brought into contact with the sanctifying power of Christ. Thus Paul can say that the children of even one believing parent are holy. This does not mean that they are by nature entitled to this holiness, but this privilege is given by God, says Calvin. Thus a carnal relationship is a means, within the covenant, for the transmission of blessing from father to child. Nor is this an unreasonable doctrine, for with our present understanding of psychology we can perceive that spiritual things should be transmitted through a carnal relationship - not forensically, but through persons .

It is most important that the significance of being within the community of the Church should be emphasised. For within the Church the Holy Spirit does make the faith of one member to be the strength of another (cf. Aquinas) Within this community the prevenient love of God becomes something real and the infant is brought into vital contact with the saving grace of Christ. Thus we affirm in the words of the Westminster Directory of Public Worship: The promise is made to believers and their seed; and the seed of posterity of the faithful, born within the Church, have by their birth interest in the covenant, and right to the seal of it..... they are Christians and federally holy before baptism, and therefore are they baptised."

The question then is, Does baptism benefit infants? It would be naive to believe that in baptism (whether of

infants or adults) the person should be so spiritually renewed that his nature should no longer be corrupt. Even if Aquinas is interpreted as teaching that baptism operates entirely "ex opere operato," yet it must be recognised that he does not claim that the person is so regenerated that what he calls "grace and the virtues" should completely govern his life from that moment. Obedient faith is required on the part of the individual.

Calvin also teaches that God will do that which the sign represents. Thus when the child is baptised it signifies that God has adopted him into the family of His children. However, although the child is shown to be sanctified in baptism, this does not mean that sanctification can be had without faith. Calvin says that faith is necessary, but faith need not precede the sign. In baptism God merely confirms the covenant which He has made. In this way the child is admitted into His family, and within this family his faith can be nourished and his zeal exhorted. Thus the sacrament of faith produces faith, says Aquinas. Children are baptised for future repentance and faith, and this will follow as God Himself provides.

When Calvin says that "the seed of repentance and faith lies hid in them by a secret operation of the spirit," he does not mean that some actual mysterious thing is given to infants, but that the Holy Spirit here begins to make Himself known in their lives, and He will lead them on. This operation of the Spirit is within the Church.

By baptism the child is placed within the sphere where the Holy Spirit operates. Calvin asserts that although we should not be able to understand how God should sanctify infants, yet "it would be dangerous to deny that the Lord is able to furnish them with the knowledge of Himself any way He pleases"¹. D.M. Baillie comments here that

1. Institutes IV.16.18.

"perhaps modern psychology has given us a clue beyond which Calvin could possess." ¹

As we see in our own lives, regeneration is not completed in an instant. The grace promised in baptism has no doubt been more real than we shall ever know. The operation of the Holy Spirit has quietly shown us the love of God. Thus the work of baptism is not necessarily effected in the moment of administration.

It has been effective in moments when we were unaware of the working of the Holy Spirit, and it is the work of our whole life-time to perfect that mortification and abundant life in Christ offered us in baptism.

It is for this very reason that God has provided us with another sacrament in the Lord's Supper. "As God, regenerating us in baptism, ingrafts us into the fellowship of the Church, and makes us His by adoption, so He performs the office of a provident parent in continually supplying the food with which He may sustain and preserve us in the life which He has begotten us by His word." ²

1. The Theology of the Sacraments. p. 88.

2. Institutes IV.17.1.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The first thing which both Aquinas and Calvin have to say about this sacrament is that it is a spiritual food. This could have a wide significance, it could mean that here God sustains and nourishes His Church in every possible way. It will be the attempt of this essay to bring out this full significance.

However, for Aquinas and for Calvin the spiritual food is seen as the food of individual "souls". Aquinas teaches that the "sacrament has of itself the power of bestowing grace." Through it a man "procures grace whereby he is enabled to lead the spiritual life."¹ Calvin in his own fashion teaches that through this sign "Christ teaches that He Himself is living bread on which our souls feed, for a true and blessed immortality."² Thus despite their varied and great insights Aquinas and Calvin see the chief importance of the sacramental sign in that it is a means whereby individual men are perfected in their spiritual lives. This is not their sole emphasis, but it indicates the thread which links God and man here, the channel of God's grace to men. It is true that no richer explanation could be given this sacrament, than the sacrament of God's sustaining and nourishing care.

We might indeed say with Papias that this sacrament is "the medicine of immortality." But it is this because it is many other things, and it is an error to characterise it as the food firstly of individuals.

Although this sacrament will be divided into the two sections which Aquinas distinguishes - the sacrifice remembered, and the gifts received, it is not intended that these two parts are separate. In the memorial of sacrifice there is communion, and in the communion there is

1. Summa III Q. 71. A. 1.

2. Institutes IV.17.1.

memorial of sacrifice¹. Nor must we look for the "prime value in the special significance it may have for the individuals experience of Christ, as an individual." But as P.T. Forsyth goes on to say: This is the great confessional act of the Church. His intention is that "To confess a Saviour and a salvation is not saying something, nor thinking, but doing. It is the Church rising with its Lord to the height of action - active reception of His gift who is acting in its midst with the utmost that God could do."²

It is true that both Aquinas and Calvin recognise that when the redemption of Christ is partaken of in this sacrament His sacrifice is shown forth. As Calvin says, in order to be effective in us this sacrament "sends us to the cross of Christ."³ But the great significance of this for the Church is not seen. Calvin, following in the scholastic tradition of Aquinas, still thinks of the sacrament as effective in the individual through the partaking of the elements.

THE MEMORIAL OR SACRIFICE.

The title here has been given as "memorial or sacrifice" because it seems to be an error to make a statement so explicit that it is impossible to accept any element of sacrifice, or, on the other hand, so definitely and precisely to describe that sacrifice that it would be impossible to accept it. For what happens at the Lord's table is something spiritual; it is one of those mysteries at the heart of God's dealings with men, and can be grasped only by the faith of the Church.

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1. cf. Pettinger, The Christian Sacrifice, p.112 ff.
 2. The Church and the Sacraments, p. 274.
 3. Institutes IV.17.4.

As we have noticed before, Aquinas calls this sacrament a sacrifice for two reasons; first because it is "an image representing Christ's Passion, (he quotes Augustine who compares it with a painting); secondly because, being made partakers of the fruit of Christ's Passion, we are caught up in that Passion, and show it forth here.¹ Although it is his intention that the sacrifice of Christ is actually represented in this sacrament, his meaning is obviously spiritual. He could scarcely be accused of consigning the death of Christ to oblivion, and of taking away the benefit which it was intended to convey. Yet this is what Calvin accuses the sacrifice of the mass of doing. However, Aquinas does go as far as to say that "the oblation of the mass is multiplied in several masses, and therefore the effect of the sacrifice and of the sacrament is multiplied."²

This is the conception which the reformers rebelled against - as though the once and for all sacrifice of Christ was incomplete and should need a repetition of masses that its fruit should reach all men.

The reformers agree that there are two aspects in which sacrifice may be admitted to be present in this sacrament. This we saw in Calvin and in the Westminster Confession. First, there is a commemoration of that one sacrifice of Christ; and secondly, there is the offering of all our prayers, praises, thanksgiving, and every act of worship which we perform, to God, and of our dedication of ourselves "soul and body, to be a holy temple to the Lord".

It is right that the reformers should have refuted the idea that Christ should need to be sacrificed afresh each day so that we should enjoy the fruits of His sacrifice, or

1. Summa III. Q. 83. A. 1.
2. Summa III. Q. 79. A. 7.

that there is some automatic relationship between the eucharist and Calvary, so that whenever the sacrament is celebrated Christ is crucified anew. However, these errors do not arise from the central teaching of Aquinas.

Aquinas talks of the sacrifice present in the Eucharist because for him the sacramental sign is not a mere picture, but actually conveys that which it represents. Thus the portrayal or memorial of Christ's Passion in the Eucharist is not mental, it is not a reverie or a proclamation, the memorial is not only in thoughts stirred up and feelings awakened, it is, as Fettinger describes it "the bringing into the present" of "the things done by God in the mighty action of Christ."¹ Thus when we participate in the fruits of Christ's Passion at the Eucharist, it is not merely in a Passion remembered from the past, but a Passion operative in the present.

Calvin too has a theology on the "effective sign". We eat Christ savingly only as crucified, we are sent to the cross.² But there are two points on which he differs from Aquinas. The first is that his emphasis is not exclusively on the Passion. In the Eucharist then it is not the Passion of Christ, but the glorified Christ who is brought into the here and now. In the Eucharist we are savingly united not with the Passion of Christ, but with the glorified humanity of Christ. For it was through His nativity, death and resurrection that Christ, who is now our Priest and Mediator seated on high, offered Himself for our redemption. This is a vital point in Calvin's theology, and indicates a weakness in Aquinas's teaching.

Secondly, Calvin emphasizes the fact that the "efficacy and fruit of His nativity, death, and resurrection (are) eternal." Thus he avoids all mention of this

1. The Christian Sacrifice p. 78.

2. Institutes IV.17.4.

sacrifice present in the Eucharist. Christ gave Himself once, and through that sacrifice is forever the bread of life.

Nevertheless, Christ offers Himself to us in the sacraments, and is present in the Eucharist for our participation. This is so because, as Calvin teaches, the Priesthood of Christ is eternal. He is "the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, being yesterday, and today the same, and for ever."¹

Although it is true that the atonement wrought by Christ on this earth, culminating in His resurrection is complete and final, yet "the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross is not the end of His atoning work, but makes possible His entry into the heavenly sphere where His self-offering goes on forever."²

Calvin is not guilty of what Masure calls an infantile Protestant idea which is satisfied that through belief in the death of Christ upon calvary we are now liberated from sin. Calvin is caught up with the thrill of the resurrected Christ - Christ the eternal priest and Christ, who is forever the bread of life. It is this glorified Christ with whom we ^{are} united in the Eucharist.

It is through union with Him that we find salvation. Yet we especially plead His death upon the cross as the pledge of our salvation. It is wrong to say that in participating in that sacrifice in this ~~sacrifice~~ ^{sacrament} we prolong Christ's sacrifice and His immolation.³ Yet we can accept Aquinas's idea of a sign, as did Calvin, and believe that Christ who was crucified for us is here offered to us in the present through the symbol of bread and wine, which unite us to Him through the operation of the Holy

1. Westminster Confession, chap. viii : 6 cf. Rev.13:8

2. D.M. Baillie. God was in Christ p. 216

3. Masure, The Christian Sacrifice, p. 216.

Spirit. Thus ~~will~~ we would not say merely that the sacrifice is re-presented, we would say that Christ who was once sacrificed, who is now risen on high, and for ever offers Himself for us, is not merely conjured up in the imagination, but is here for our salvation.

There is another sense in which there is a sacrifice offered at the Lord's table. For a worship of God is realised only in the offering of ourselves, soul and body, to God. This is the sacrifice of "a broken and a contrite heart". Calvin insists that we offer this sacrifice here. In offering ourselves we do so individually, but also as a body, the body of Christ; and in doing so we can offer ourselves only as in Christ. Thus in a sense we offer Christ.

The sacrifice of Christ is an eternal offering in which Christ is for ever offering Himself for us; and in offering Himself He offers mankind, a new creation, to the Father. "If this be true," says R.G. Parsons¹, "We may speak of the Eucharist as an offering of the Holy Sacrifice, not a repetition of it, for that it impossible, but an association with it, an incorporation in it. It is the sacrament of sacrifice."

THE COMMUNION.

The scholastic philosophy of Aquinas gives rise to a rather individualistic idea of communion. Grace is looked on as a spiritual medicine or food given to the individual soul. The Passion of Christ is the cause from which this grace is derived. In Aquinas's own words: "Christ and His Passion are the cause of grace..... this sacrament bestows grace."²

1. The Sacrament of Sacrifice p. 28

2. Summa III. Q. 79. A.1.

Calvin too looks on this sacrament as food for the individual soul. However, he does not regard this food as grace "infused into the soul," as though it were quasi-physical. It is made quite clear that it is Christ Himself who is the living bread on which our souls feed. We see that grace cannot be conceived of as having an existence of its own, but that it is a relationship with the person of Christ.

As Aquinas's use of the word "sign" tells us, that which is symbolised is actually given here. Through these physical elements of bread and wine we have actually communion with Christ Himself. It is the Holy Spirit who brings Christ to us. Union with Christ is not the imaginings of faith or intellect, but here the life of Christ becomes ours "just as if it penetrated our bones and marrow."¹

Calvin teaches that this is the work of the Holy Spirit, for "the only way in which Christ dwells in us is by His Spirit."²

Aquinas does not have the same insight into the working of the Holy Spirit.

The reason why Calvin is so explicit about the reality of our union with Christ is because he believes that it is in the risen humanity of Christ that the fullness of life resides. "So the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain, which transfuses into us the life flowing forth from the Godhead itself."³

It is very important for Calvin that we should understand that he does not mean that we are merely spiritually or mystically united to Christ. No, we are united with the

1. Institutes IV, 17, 10

2. Ibid. IV, 17, 12

3. Ibid. IV, 17, 9

flesh and blood of Christ, for it is in that flesh and blood that the fullness of life resides. The First Scots Confession captured the core of this doctrine. It taught that in the Lord's Supper "Christ is so joined with us that He becomes the very nourishment and food of our souls." "We are so made flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bones, that as the eternal Godhead has given to the flesh of the Lord Jesus life and immortality, so doth Christ Jesus His flesh and blood eaten and drunken by us, give us the same prerogatives."

This stress on the saving humanity of Christ was lost by the Westminster Confession. F.F. Torrance comments that the reason why so many of our people, even of our ministers and theologians are baffled by the sacraments is "because the sacraments do not fit into their meagre conception of the person of Christ and of our union with Christ through the power of His Spirit."¹

Is this mistake not made because we too often forget that "He is the risen Lord, and the communion with God and man is the risen life of the crucified Christ?"² Pettinger then goes on to comment: "The Eastern Orthodox Church has expressed this aspect of the Eucharist much more directly and consistently than the Western Church. We of the West have tended to give our attention almost entirely to the sacrificial action in the Eucharist." This criticism is true of Aquinas and the Westminster Confession, but Calvin and the First Scots Confession were conscious of our union with the Risen Lord. Calvin is insistent on the heavenly glory, and of the true humanity of Christ. It is this glorified humanity which is "a rich and inexhaustible fountain," and it is the Holy Spirit who raises us to feed

2. Pettinger, *The Christian Sacrifice*, p. 131.

1. Article in the Church Service Society Annual, May 1956.

upon that flesh and blood which is now in the heavens.¹

When it is understood that in this sacrament Christ demonstrates and makes real his ever-present Lordship then we cannot regard the Lord's Supper as only spiritual food. For here God sustains His Church by placing in its midst His Atonement and His Salvation. Here the covenant is made real, here the Church is assured that it is sustained by God. Here the fellowship of believers is united as the body of Christ, and is offered to God through Christ. Thus the spiritual feast and the sacrifice are linked together. "We are beyond a mere heavenly food, we are in a heavenly atonement and redemption. We are in the region of creation and not sustenance merely. The idea is more tragic and potent than the suggestion of feeding conveys. We have not the assignment of a heavenly manna, of a celestial body, for our spiritual nourishment, but the self-assignment of Christ in His Act of atoning sacrifice."²

THE PRESENCE.

It must be constantly borne in mind that this sacrament is not to be viewed as a means of obtaining the presence of Christ. He has promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in their midst." But rather, as R.G. Parsons says: "The sacrament depends on His presence, not His presence on the sacrament."³

Thus there is truth in Luther's conception of a "ubiquitous Christ" who is everywhere. Calvin, too, asserts that Christ is present wherever He wills to exert His power. And it is only because of this that Christ is

12. P.T. Forsyth, The Church and the Sacraments p.263.

21. of. Knox's Liturgy and the Sursum Corda.

3. The Sacrament of Sacrifice. p. 30.

present in this sacrament.

As for the body of Christ in which He walked this earth, it is ascended into the heavens. Aquinas too affirms that Christ is in heaven. Nevertheless, Aquinas and Calvin both affirm that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, and He is received as the "real" of the sacrament. The difference arises in explaining the way in which He is present.

Aquinas explains this by the doctrine of transubstantiation. In some way the material elements lose their true identity in order to convey spiritual things. Aquinas's doctrine is undoubtedly spiritual, and it is an error to think him materialistic. However, as Calvin shows this doctrine implies that by what seems to be a magical incantation in the consecration, the bread and wine are miraculously changed ~~into~~^{into} the body and blood of Christ.

It is not that Calvin wishes to de-supernaturalise the sacraments. But he is quite correct in criticising transubstantiation on the grounds that if this is the explanation then all men who partake of the elements eat the body of Christ. Calvin agrees that, to the believers, certainly the bread becomes what it was not before, for by means of these elements Christ is made known to our faith. It must be claimed that the gift offered here is real. The body and blood of Christ are given to believers and unbelievers alike. Through the element Christ is present to enter the lives of all, through the work of the Holy Spirit. The unbeliever of some reject this gift, "as the rain falling on the hard rock runs away because it cannot penetrate." ¹

1. INSTITUTES IV, 17, 33

But the faith of others receives the gift offered. We should not however, talk of a gift being offered as though it were an object. For in this sacrament it is Christ whom we come into contact with through the symbols of bread and wine. Christ is not impersonally applied to people. He is experienced only by those who have the faith to see him. Thus is it obvious that men can only carry away from this sacrament what they carry away in the vessel of faith. Faith is not a pre-condition for the operation of this sacrament, but the means through which it operates. Christ is present to the faith of the receiver.

The presence of Christ in this sacrament is the same as His presence with us at any other time. However, here through these sacramental signs our faith is called forth by our experience of God through things which we can touch and see. For it is given to us only to know God through things and events, through the experiences of our life. "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face.

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