

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE HOLY
EUCCHARIST.

A

SERMON,
PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF CHRIST,

In Oxford,

ON THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY, 1853.

BY THE REV.

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Christ is my Food.
S. AMBROSE.

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PREFACE.

MY former Sermon,—“The Holy Eucharist a comfort to the Penitent,”—was misunderstood by some, because it was not controversial. My object in it was not to *teach* the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, but rather, assuming the doctrine of the Church of England to be identical (as I believe it to be) with that of the Fathers, to present that doctrine in one aspect as “a comfort to the penitent.” To this end I dwelt, not on the doctrine of the Real Presence in itself, nor even on the mode in which “the Body and Blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper,” but on the exceeding greatness of the Gift which is thus conveyed to the soul. I wished to impress on the souls of my hearers, the actualness and closeness of the union of man’s soul with its Redeemer, and in Him with God, wrought through that sacrament. I wished to aid to lift up the hearts of true peni-

tents, by showing them what stores of Mercy and Divine love, and nearness to God in Christ, were yet open to them.

One object alone, or at least above all others, I had in view in the whole course of Sermons, of which this Sermon was a part, "the comfort of the penitent." I wished to set forth to the weary and broken-hearted, the comforts in store for those who in truth, not in word, were "grieved and wearied with the burden of their sins." To the penitent the special comfort of the Holy Eucharist is, that it is the Body and Blood of his Redeemer; "that his sinful body is made clean by His Body, and his soul washed through His most Precious Blood." This being so clearly embodied in the prayers of our Church, it never even occurred to me, until after the Sermon was preached, that any grave question could be raised upon it. I was prepared for the sort of objection which, for ten years, had been raised on the doctrine of Baptism, and on that ground, and in order (if it might be) to bring home to men's minds the unseemliness of angry and irreverent disputing on this, which our Saviour left "as the pledges of His love to our great and endless comfort," I made the appeal in the outset of my Sermon¹. I suspected nothing, and so I scarcely

¹ The Holy Eucharist a Comfort to the Penitent, p. 3.

guarded any thing. I thought that it must be enough to state generally that I did, without inquiring or defining, believe that we received at once elements of this world and His very Body and Blood. I said, "We², if we are wise, shall never ask, *how* they can be elements of this world, and yet His very Body and Blood." Having said this, I imagined that the rest of my Sermon would be understood in the same sense. It never even came into my mind to apprehend, that language of the Fathers, which simply expresses the reality of the Gift, could be thought to contradict the Church of England, which asserts the same reality.

My object throughout that Sermon was to show how, through the Holy Eucharist, we have life from our living and loving Lord Himself, re-creation in Him, and the earnest of endless joy and bliss in Him. To this end, I selected passages from the Fathers which spoke most fervently of the closeness of the union with our Lord, which He vouchsafes thereby to bestow upon us. I wished altogether to avoid controversy, and not to risk distracting men's minds from the one object which I desired to bring before them, the greatness of our loving Saviour's gift to *them*, and His unspeakable goodness. Men's minds so easily go off upon controversy, that I thought it right

² Ib. p. 7.