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FRANCIS SIMON, OF AMSTERDAM.

OUR CHRISTIAN PASSOVER

EDITED BY FRANCIS SIMON, OF AMSTERDAM.

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THE LORD'S SUPPER

BY

MR. THOMAS A. CATAPUTTA, M.A.

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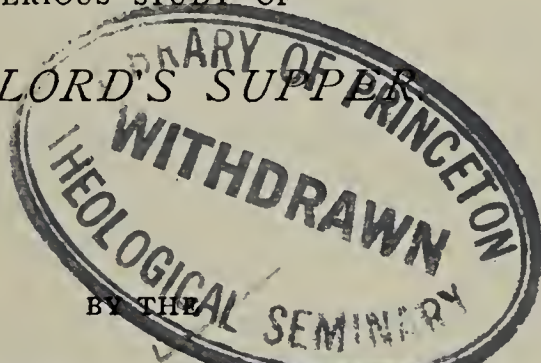
Bible Class Primers.

EDITED BY PRINCIPAL SALMOND, D.D., ABERDEEN.

OUR CHRISTIAN PASSOVER:

A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE
SERIOUS STUDY OF

THE LORD'S SUPPER



BY THE

REV. CHARLES A. SALMOND, M.A.,
SOUTH MORNINGSIDE, EDINBURGH.

Edinburgh:

T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS Manual is intended for the use not only of Young Communicants, but of all young persons who are minded to give serious consideration to the important subject of which it treats. The writer, in the course of his ministry, has found it of great practical consequence to announce, from time to time, the general invitation to "a Class for the Study of the Lord's Supper," rather than a limited invitation to "a Young Communicants' Class" strictly so called. Many young persons have been induced in this way to enter upon a line of earnest enquiry, which, by the Divine blessing, has led to the best results.

While the plan and the working out of the Manual is the Author's own, he thankfully acknowledges obligation for valuable hints derived from kindred treatises by others. The book is designed either for private study and meditation, or for class instruction. With the latter end in view, an Analytical Table is given in the Appendix, which may provide a basis for examination.

C. A. S.

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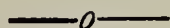
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OUR CHRISTIAN PASSOVER.



CHAPTER I.

ITS ORIGIN AND INTEREST.

I. THE ROOM IN JERUSALEM.—Upwards of eighteen centuries ago, a small band of thirteen Israelites met on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, in a room in Jerusalem, to celebrate the Passover. This time-honoured festival, instituted in the days of Moses, had been observed year by year and generation after generation by the faithful families of Israel; and it behoved the little group of whom we speak, since they constituted in effect a family circle, to gather round their paschal lamb and celebrate the loving-kindness of Jehovah.

Who were they? And what did their service mean?

They were Jesus the Prophet of Galilee and His disciples :—Jesus, whose wonderful deeds and not less wonderful words had been filling Palestine with amazement these three years past—and those twelve men whom from the company of His followers He

had admitted to a place of special intimacy with Him and to a daily share in the experiences of His life. And their service meant that, like their fathers, they rejoiced in Jehovah as the God of salvation, and were minded to express, through His appointed Ordinance, their thankfulness to Him for the past and their hope in Him for the coming time.

2. **THE PASSOVER.**—The Passover, to a pious and intelligent Jew, had both a backward and a forward reference. It called to mind, as a memorial, a great deliverance already wrought. It suggested, as a type, a greater deliverance yet to come. It was meant to stir gratitude for the redemption brought to His people by Jehovah, on the memorable night of Israel's emancipation in the land of Egypt. It was also meant to point to a fuller and more blessed emancipation through One whom the slain lamb prefigured, and who was to come in the fulness of time.

Its main lesson was—there is safety for those, and only those, who are ready to accept it on God's terms.

On the eventful night of the Exodus, Jehovah, who in the three days of Egyptian darkness had been His people's Sun (Ex. x. 23), proved Himself in the hour of Egyptian dismay His people's Shield. In all the homes of the Egyptians, there was a great cry of anguish heard; for there was not a house where the first-born, the flower and hope of the family, had not died. But in the houses of the Israelites there was tranquillity, "the melody of joy and health": those within were perfectly safe, in the enjoyment of a family feast.

What made the difference? Look at the outside of the Israelitish dwellings, and what do you see? I see a little blood sprinkled on the lintel and doorposts, which the Egyptian houses do not seem to have : but surely that can have nothing to do with the safety of those within? Yes : it has everything to do with it. In itself, indeed, that sprinkled blood could have no effect whatever : but it means that Israel—not less deserving than the Egyptians to die—have obeyed God and accepted salvation on God's terms. By an act of implicit obedience, they have put to the proof Jehovah's promise—"When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you" (Ex. xii. 13). And their confidence has not been misplaced. To them it means safety.

3. **THE PARALLEL.**—Even so with the greater salvation, that God had promised through the Coming One. It was to be accepted, by a simple act of faith, on God's own terms. They might as little know, these ancient Israelites, how spiritual salvation could be theirs through the Promised Seed, as they knew how their safety was bound up that night with the sprinkling of the blood. But they were not called to understand. They were only asked to trust. And when our eyes, in the light of prophecy fulfilled, are turned to God's own Lamb slain for us on Calvary—to what are we invited but to the same act of simple faith? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Trust Him : trust thyself to Him! Let not the simplicity of the terms stumble thee. "Christ, our Passover, is slain for us (1 Cor. v. 7).

The Lamb has suffered in our room. His blood is sprinkled on our hearts : and we are safe. Therefore let us keep the Feast.

4. JESUS AT THE PASCHAL MEAL.—Returning to the little gathering in the Upper Room—how far every member of it entered into the meaning, and especially the prophetic meaning, of the Ordinance, it is impossible to say. Perhaps some of them engaged in it in rather a formal spirit—as a customary annual celebration, in which from childhood they had taken part, and which old associations made it pleasant to renew. Others may have been occupied, in thought, almost exclusively with what the Passover suggested of the past. But there was One of the company, at least, on whose heart its significance as bearing on the future was very fully laid, and who, ere they left the feast chamber, would set this aspect of its meaning in clearer light before them all.

This was Jesus, “the Master,” who had been wont from His youth to keep the feast, and who had been looking forward to *this* Passover with an interest more intense and feelings more profound than ever before. He well knew to what it was to be the immediate prelude ; and, in language and with a tone fitted to banish indifference and shame formality, He says to His disciples : “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Luke xxii. 15). To Him, at least, it was more than a mere memorial Ordinance. To Him it was intensely welcome, (1) as a feast of religious fellowship with those at whose hearts he had not, in a world of cold estrangement, knocked in vain ; (2)

as a feast of spiritual strengthening, in view of the ordeal of suffering which lay before Him ; (3) as a feast, too, big with promise of the time He would next celebrate it, when, the scene and the guests alike transfigured, the earthly festival would be "fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." And there was yet another reason why, with peculiar satisfaction, He had hailed this Passover, (4) because He knew that He was to transform it into a feast that would be eminently helpful to His people in all time.

5. THE INSTITUTION OF THE SUPPER.—

It was in what seemed an almost casual way, that, in the course of the evening, the Lord Jesus took some of the bread that was lying on the table, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, "Take, eat : this is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me : " and that He likewise also took a cup, containing some of the Passover wine (probably the third cup in order, "the cup of blessing," as it was called), and said, "This cup is the new covenant in My name : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." But, simple and unpremeditated as the act may have appeared, there was nothing casual in it. In these words of Jesus, which must have fallen with a strange impressiveness on the ears that heard them first, a transition was designedly effected, whose importance the world is being brought to feel, more and more powerfully, year after year of this so-called "Christian era" in its history. For, as the Master spake, the Jewish feast passed into the Christian Sacrament :

the Passover of the Old Testament became the Lord's Supper of the New,—the successive observances of which have extended, like the links of a golden chain, from that evening to this hour, and shall extend to that great day when, according to His promise, the Saviour shall come again.

No one who has truly entered into the spirit and meaning of the Ordinance then inaugurated by the Lord Jesus, can fail to understand one main reason why the occasion of effecting a change so fraught with blessing for all His true followers, was an opportunity looked forward to by Him, with all the yearning of a divinely-considerate and loving heart.

6. THE INTEREST OF THE EVENT TO US.

—But here the question arises, What practical concern have we in what took place that evening in that upstairs room in Jerusalem? Why should we be specially interested in that little meeting of the Galilean Rabbi and His few followers in the Jewish capital so long ago? Are we—young men and young women of Britain—called to consider it otherwise than as an incident attractive to the historically curious, as exhibiting a certain phase of religious opinion and observance among a group of Oriental people?

For a sufficient answer to such queries, it may at this stage be enough to say—*circumspice*, look around! Every quarter of the earth furnishes its evidence to-day of the world-wide import of that long bygone transaction in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. Jesus of Nazareth no longer counts among His followers only a little band of Jews and

Galileans. Multitudes of men of every nationality, in the succeeding ages, have hailed him as the Christ. His influence dominates in every civilized country of the world. He has impressed his name—the name of “Christendom”—on all those portions of the earth where the shadows of dark and degrading paganism have at all been lifted. In our own country—this distant island of the sea—we profess to set the name of the Nazarene above every name, and to count it our highest boast, that we are “a Christian people.”

As for the Supper—“the Lord’s Supper”—in what region of earth has it not been celebrated, amid widely diversified surroundings, but in the one spirit of faith and loyalty to the one Lord, by devoted followers of Jesus? How many weary spirits have been revived, how many wavering hearts strengthened by it in generations past, in our own beloved land—in companies small and great, within the sanctuary, or out upon the mountain or the moorlands, or sometimes in dens and caves of the earth—heart speaking to heart of their supreme desire toward Christ, and to the remembrance of His name! Are not some of your own earliest and tenderest recollections associated with the sight of “the Communion,” as, with grave wonder, you saw it partaken of long ago by those you knew and loved, some of whom are with you still; while some, it may be, have departed, leaving behind, as their legacy for you, the memory of a serene and simple faith, and of a holy Christ-like life?

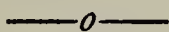
7. **THE CLAIMS OF THE MASTER.**—Now, why has the scene in the Upper Room been so continu-

ously reproduced these many centuries, in companies and amid scenes so various? Why is it that, even in lands where the Israelitish race are scorned, the voice of the Nazarene is still obeyed—"This do in remembrance of Me"? Is it not because men of every tribe and kindred have been brought to feel and own that Jesus of Nazareth is more than the Jew, that He is *THE MAN* and also *THE SON OF GOD*: the Man, in whom all the nations have an interest—the Son of God, who was sent to be the Saviour of the world, and in whose great salvation ("the common salvation," as the Scripture calls it, Jude 3) sinners of every kin and clime are invited to claim in faith their share, and celebrate it in love?

To each of you this much at least must needs be frankly said: You have here in this parting charge of Jesus, which has been enshrined in so many hearts, a subject which presses itself on your earnest personal consideration. Your life's environment is such that you cannot help having something to do with Jesus Christ. You have been baptized in His name. You have been brought up in a Christian community. The very air you have breathed since childhood has been saturated with Christian influences. Jesus Christ at some period of your life has met with you, and offered Himself to you, and His Spirit has striven for Him in your heart. More of this experience, we may safely say, has been yours, as known to you and God, than you have ever told into the ear of man. You have either accepted the Saviour, and yielded yourself to Him, or you have not. At the age you now have reached, it belongs to you, as an inalienable responsibility, either to

acknowledge Him or practically to disown Him. Is the language of your heart, as you see His nail-pierced hand extended to you, and look into His face of divine power and pity: "My Lord and my God!" Or is the language of your life, albeit your heart may the while upbraid you: "I know not this man of whom you speak"?

One thing you cannot honourably evade, or in justice either to Him or to yourself indefinitely postpone, in view of the Saviour's invitation, "This do in remembrance of Me." That is, the devout individual consideration of the question, *What is implied in obedience to this invitation?*—with the second and more personal question, *Is this an invitation for me?*



CHAPTER II.

THE MEANS OF GRACE, AND THE PLACE OF THE SACRAMENTS AMONG THEM.

8. THE MEANING OF GRACE.—What do we mean by "grace"? By that, in this connection, we commonly mean *favour to the undeserving*. It has, however, a more fundamental meaning, which it is also well to keep in view,—*beauty, or comeliness*.

In both these senses grace is attributed to God. The "grace of God," which brings salvation, is a constant Bible theme; and the "beauty of God" is also a Scripture expression, as in Zech. ix. 17, "How great is His goodness, how great is His beauty!"

Grace, in both senses, is specifically attributed also to Christ. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,"—His undeserved mercy to the sinful,— "through which we shall be saved" (Acts xv. 11), is the great marvel of the Gospel. And "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"—the moral and spiritual beauty of the Prince of Heaven, in stooping low for our redemption—is held forth for adoring contemplation, as a quality of character in which we should ourselves earnestly seek to abound (2 Cor. viii. 7-9). In the Old Testament, too, it is said, "touching the King," in Ps. xlv. 2: "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever."

We have both senses of the word "grace" preserved in two very common adjectives,— "gracious" and "graceful,"—which are applied by us either to a person or to an action.

Now, by the "*means* of grace," we commonly understand the channels, or media, by which God's unmerited favour flows down to us. But, keeping in mind the root meaning of the word "grace," we may also fitly regard the Means of Grace as divinely furnished helps to the re-attainment on our part of the moral comeliness and spiritual beauty lost to us by the Fall. Through sin, we have become not only guilty, but deformed. We need to be not only pardoned, but restored. And in the "Means of Grace," we have not merely channels for the heavenly mercy, but Ordinances by the faithful use of which we shall take on more and ever more of the highest of all beauty,— "the beauty of holiness"

(Ps. xcvi. 9), "the beauty of the Lord" Himself (Ps. xxvii. 4, Ps. xc. 17),—discoverable to others in the "graces" of the Christian character,—“the beauties of holiness” (Ps. cx. 3),—which, when unmistakeably seen in believers, do so much to commend their religion to the world.

9. THE SEVERAL MEANS OF GRACE.—If we now inquire, What *are* the outward and ordinary Means of Grace? we find that these are principally three : the Word, Prayer, and the Sacraments.

The first two are for wider use than the third. In the Word, we learn God's message to man ; in Prayer, we send man's message up to God ; and both of these Means of Grace are designed for everybody. The Gospel is appointed to be preached to "every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). And wherever there is a poor human soul, feeling in any degree its need of God, that soul is encouraged to come to Him in Prayer (Ps. lxxv. 1).

The Sacraments, on the other hand, are meant only for a circle within the wider circle of all mankind. Those who have truly heard the Word and "obeyed the Gospel" in their hearts : those who have made the publican's prayer their own in very truth,—“God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke xviii. 13),—they, and only they, are invited to the use of the Sacraments. For others, indeed, the Sacraments could have no meaning : their engaging in them would be little better than a mockery.

10. THE SACRAMENTS.—In speaking of the relation between the Sacraments and the other Means of Grace, we may recall the saying of Augustine—"The Sacrament is *the Word made*

visible." By this, he meant that in the Sacrament you have the vital truth of Scripture—declarations, promises, offers, which have already been given in word—taken up and presented as in a picture ; so that what before was heard by the ear you now have suggestively presented to the eye. Thus it is in the Word that you have the key to the meaning of the Sacrament. To one witnessing the celebration of the latter, without having had the Word going before, it would be a dumb, meaningless show. If a savage, for instance, were to be suddenly introduced into a Christian church during the observance of the Lord's Supper, the only impression he would have might be, that it was the most meagre semblance of a feast he had ever looked upon ; whereas, to a believer who knows and loves his Bible, it is the most glorious festival on earth.

We might, perhaps, extend Augustine's definition of a Sacrament to include Prayer as well as the Word : "the Sacrament is the Word and Prayer made visible." For in the Sacrament the Divine and the human come very near together ; and while, in one view of them, the symbols embody a divine message of mercy, they are likewise an expression of our human need and of the believer's hope in God. Thus, in Baptism, there is the confession of our need of spiritual cleansing, with the thankful recognition of the provision made by God to meet it ; in the Supper, with the exhibition of divine Atonement and the offer of heavenly nourishment for the soul, there is the declaration on the part of the participant of a grateful reliance on the

efficacy of the Atonement made in the sacrifice of Christ, and the expression of the believer's desire for the Bread of Life and the Royal Wine of Heaven. *The Sacrament*, we may therefore say, *is the Word, and Prayer, made visible.*

It may be convenient here, having considered how the Sacraments are related to the other Means of Grace, to enquire how the two New Testament Sacraments — Baptism and the Lord's Supper — stand related to one another.

II. BAPTISM.—When your parents brought you, in your infancy, into the midst of the congregation and presented you for Baptism, what did it mean? Have you ever considered what benefits that simple ceremony of the sprinkling with water conferred, and what obligations it involved?

There were four distinct parties to the transaction that day. There was the unconscious infant—you—with no personal responsibility as yet for what was done with you then. There was God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—by whose authority you were baptised, and into relation to whom as the Three-One God of Salvation you were then distinctly brought. There were your parents, who committed you to the care of God, and dedicated you to His glory, vowing to do for you in coming days the Christian parents' part, in training you up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And there were the congregation (including the minister), who joined in the act of dedicating you, as one of the lambs of the flock, to the care of the Good Shepherd, and undertook that the influence of the Christian Church would second

and support the endeavours of your parents to bring you, by the Divine blessing, to know, and love, and choose, and yield yourself to Christ.

If you had been a grown-up person at the time of your Baptism, and one who had been reared outside the Christian Church, your Baptism would have signified your *admission* into the ranks of the visible church, on your own profession of faith in Christ as your Saviour (Acts viii. 37). You would have said in effect, as you submitted yourself to the washing or sprinkling of the cleansing element (for the mere quantity of water used is of little moment) —“I have been brought to perceive my own need of cleansing as a sinner; and I have been led to rejoice in and to confess Jesus Christ, as the Saviour through whom the cleansing is provided that I need. And now I hereby consecrate myself to God, and take my place openly among the followers of Christ.”

What your baptism as an infant meant was your *recognition*, being the child of professedly Christian parents, as already belonging to the visible Church of Christ (1 Cor. vii. 14), and as having a title to whatever advantages association with it may bring. And it is for you now, while you reflect on the history of your personal association with the Church, not only to consider what benefits it has secured for you in your early years, but to keep seriously in view the responsibilities it devolves on those who, like you, have reached maturer years.

12. INFANT BAPTISM. — We believe in the scripturalness of Infant Baptism, it may here be

said, not only from traces of apostolic precept (Acts ii. 39), and apostolic example (Acts xvi. 15 ; Acts xvi. 33 ; 1 Cor. i. 16), but from the analogy of the Old Testament rite of circumcision. If in the ancient Church there was a recognised place for the children, and if Jehovah's claim upon the little ones was put forth by Him and recognised by Israel in that dedicatory rite, it is surely inconceivable that there should be no recognised place for the children in the New Testament Church. We cannot believe that Jesus, who took the little ones in his arms and blessed them, has overlooked in the appointments of His Church the value and the interests of the children of His people. And, without arguing the question further here, we do believe that it is in accordance with His will, that you, as the child of professedly Christian parents, have been owned in Baptism as belonging to the visible Church of Christ, and have been openly made over by your parents and their fellow worshippers, in so far as their desire and will could do it, to Christ as His own possession.

Now, we do not hold by any means that your Baptism made you, in the deep spiritual sense, a Christian. The Church of Rome and a section of the Church of England erroneously teach that Baptism, when properly performed, does regenerate those submitted to it, quickening into life the dead soul, through imparting to it a mystic magical grace. That is a superstition, contrary alike to Scripture and to the facts of experience. But the old Scotch word "Christening" does bring into view an aspect of your Baptism which ought not to

be overlooked. When you were baptized, you did not merely receive your name. The naming of the child, indeed, is no proper part of the rite at all, and is purposely omitted, for that reason, by some ministers. You were then "Christened," as being brought to Christ and dedicated to Him, and as being introduced into the midst of that whole circle of Christian influences which have been operating upon you and within you ever since.

13. RELATION OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER.—The question which confronts you now is—Was it a good thing which my parents and the congregation did with me in dedicating me to Jesus Christ, or was it not? Their prayer for me and purpose with me then—are they my own prayer and purpose now? Am I to give in my personal and avowed adhesion to the Lord, or am I to ignore and practically to renounce my early dedication? While my parents and the congregation have had *their* responsibility in connection with me in my earlier years,—for the discharge or neglect of which they are answerable to God,—how am I fittingly to deal with the responsibility which has now undoubtedly been transferred to me, of owning or disowning the claim of Christ?

Such questions inevitably assert themselves in the years of early manhood and womanhood with those who have grown up within the Christian Church; and they demand, and will have, an answer. Their proper settlement will not become easier through delay. They ought to be sincerely and frankly faced: and, whatever may or may not be told into a human ear, Christ Himself, whose

Spirit searches the hearts, should be taken fully into confidence about them. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord," (Hosea vi. 3)—that Lord who said, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine," (John x. 14).

If, as the result of honest inquiry, a young person is led to the conclusion, "*I am a Christian only in name as yet,*" then the best prayer for such an one will be,—"*Lord, give me no rest, till I find rest in Thee !*" But if the conclusion reached is along this line—"My parents and the congregation did the best thing possible with me, in dedicating me in earliest infancy to be the Lord's. I am thankful for all the Christian influences which from that time forth have been exerted upon me. Especially do I bless God, that He has brought me to see my need of a Saviour, and to lay hold of the Saviour that I need. Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief. Lord, I obey ; deliver me from the spirit of disobedience. *I yield to Thy claim, and I take Thee to be mine*"—the way in such a case is clear, the path of duty plain. *The young enquirer, now a personal believer, is called to become the witness, the confessor of his Lord.* And for such an one the proper medium of confession is not Baptism—which, from its nature, does not need to be repeated,—but that other Ordinance, which is at once a means of glory to Christ and a means of grace to His people,—the simple but significant Feast, in which, as oft as they eat the bread and drink the wine, believing, their unseen Lord who died but ever lives is magnified, and the life of their souls is nourished and confirmed.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRINCIPAL USES OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

14. THE LORD'S SUPPER—A PICTURE.—

We have, in a general sense, seen that the Lord's Supper, while it is a means of glory to Christ, is a means of grace to His people. This will more strikingly appear, if we now proceed to look at the Ordinance from the several points of view indicated by the Shorter Catechism's definition of a Sacrament,* as "an holy Ordinance, instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers."

It is here suggested that we have in the Lord's Supper—

I. A PICTURE. What we see in it is a representation of something which we do not see.

Even a heathen, if he were to observe companies of people gathering from time to time, as Christian people gather,—young and old, rich and poor together,—to partake in solemn joy of only a morsel of bread and a sip of wine, could hardly fail to be arrested by the sight. His first thought and exclamation might be: "What a strange, what a sorry feast!" But if he were an intelligent heathen, it would inevitably dawn upon him that there must be something beneath the simple celebration which did not

* Rome adds five to the two New Testament sacraments; but three of them (Confirmation, Penance, and Extreme Unction) are not Scripturally authorised, and two of them (Matrimony and Ordination), though Scriptural Ordinances, are not symbolic.

meet the eye upon the surface ; and the question raised within his breast would sooner or later find its way to his lips, "What mean ye by this service?" A delightful task it must be for the missionary to lead such an one to the Bible for his answer, and to show him that, simple and sorry as the feast may seem to an uninstructed and unsympathetic onlooker, it is the richest feast on earth, because it is *the Lord's Supper*,—full, in every detail of it, of meaning and comfort for His disciples.

That the Ordinance was "instituted by Christ," four Scripture writers bear witness. The first three are St Matthew (ch. xxvi. 26-29), St Mark (ch. xiv. 18-25), and St Luke (ch. xxii. 14-20). The fourth is not St John, but St Paul (1 Cor. xi. 23-25); for, although St John recounts most vividly some of the incidents that occurred at the feast (ch. xiii.), and records the precious Communion discourse (ch. xiv.-xvi.) and Communion prayer of Jesus (ch. xvii.), he does not give the actual institution of the Ordinance.

In the four inspired accounts which we have, there are only the slight variations which are to be looked for in several narrations of independent truthfulness. We may here follow the account given by St Paul, which compares very closely with that of St Luke, though, as St Paul tells us, it was received by him (probably during his stay in Arabia, Gal. i. 17-18) directly from the Lord:—

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread : And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat ; this is My body which is

broken for you ; this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood ; this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me " (1 Cor. xi. 23-25).

In this Ordinance, then, instituted by Christ, we have not only certain words uttered, but certain things used, which are intended to speak to the eye, and through the eye to the heart. These are what the Shorter Catechism calls "sensible signs" *—signs, that is, which appeal to the senses ; and in the Lord's Supper they are of two kinds. We have first *the things themselves* (the bread and the wine), and then we have *what is done with the things*. Here everything is significant, not only *the elements* (the bread and the wine), but all *the actions* performed with them.

15. THE SIGNIFICANT THINGS AND ACTS.—

As regards *the elements*, Christ Himself tells us what they signify. Of the bread He says : "This is *my body*." Of the wine : "This cup is the new Testament (or Covenant) in *my blood*." The word "*is*" here of course stands for "represents," in accordance with a mode of speech in use among us every day, and quite usual in Scripture (Gen. xli. 26 ; Ex. xii. 11 ; Dan. ii. 38 ; Matt. xiii. 19 ; John x. 7 ; John xv. 1).

As regards *the actions*, it is not difficult, keeping in mind what the bread and the wine are, to discover what these, too, mean. Let us see.

* The ringing of a bell to be heard, the lowering of a railway signal to be seen, a tap upon the shoulder to be felt, are common instances of *sensible* signs.

"*The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed*"—the night when He *knew* He was to be betrayed, but when, instead of thinking only of Himself, He was thinking most of His people—"took bread." Here already we may find a suggestion of that great fundamental truth of our religion, the Incarnation (Heb. ii. 14 ; Philip. ii. 6-7), that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John i. 14), that the Son of God took to Himself a human nature, and became man without ceasing to be God.

"*And when He had given thanks*"—for what? That He had been sent by the Father to be the Saviour of the world (John iii. 16) ; that His Messianic work was so near its accomplishment ; that He was within sight of the death-grapple with the powers of darkness ; that the cry of relief and of triumph, "*It is finished,*" would so soon ascend into the ear of Him who had sent Him to finish the work He had given Him to do (John iv. 34) ; that the sowing time of tears was so soon to be over, and the reaping time of joy to be begun.

"*He brake it.*" What have we here portrayed, in the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine? What but the ordeal of the suffering Saviour on the Cross, when He gave His body to the nail-prints and the spear, and poured out His soul unto death as an offering for sin ! Not the agony of His body only, be it remembered, but the anguish of His spirit (Matt. xxvii. 46), the sufferings of His soul, which were "the soul of His sufferings" (*Peter Lombard*).

"*For you.*" Yes, here was the Saviour's own ex-

planation of the dread ordeal thus pictorially set forth. "*Broken for you.*" "*Shed for you*" (Luke xxii. 20). *He* had not sinned ; He had never deserved to suffer. But He died, believer, that you might not die (Matt. xx. 28). He suffered and died, not only for your benefit as a martyr might, but *in your room* (Gal. iii. 13)—He, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring you to God (1 Pet. iii. 18). "For you," "For you:" the sinners' Substitute bore your penalty upon the tree. So that now, to the confession of sin : "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way"—His ransomed ones have to add the confession of faith : "but the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. liii. 6).

"*And said, Take, eat. . . . Drink ye all of it.*" Here is the offer on the part of Christ of the benefits of His atoning death to those who, by faith in Him as their Substitute-Redeemer, are ready to receive them. As He puts into their hands the bread and the wine, He of His free grace makes over to them the redemption blessings purchased in His death.

And when those gathered at His board receive into their hands and into their mouths these touching emblems, what does each of *them* say by that significant act? "Thanks, Lord, eternal thanks to Thee, who givest me to share in the benefits of Thine atoning death, without having to share its pains! Even as I receive and make my own the bread and the wine, which remind me of Thy death for me, I receive and appropriate with heartfelt thankfulness the blessings purchased for me in Thy death, and now made mine in virtue of that Covenant of Grace, of

the new dispensation of which this precious Ordinance is Thine appointed sign. Yea, I receive Thyself, as Thou art freely offered to me in the Gospel. By faith I feed upon Thee, O Thou bread of life ! and, as in symbol, here and now, I eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, I find in Thee the nourishment of my soul, to its establishment and growth in grace !”

Thus, in the Lord's Supper we have first a Picture : suggestive of the great *event* of the Crucifixion of the Son of God in the room of sinners, and of the great central *doctrine* of the Atonement, which rests upon that event. In it, we “shew the Lord's death, until He come”—in presence of heaven, earth, and hell—as the ground of our hope for time and for eternity. In it, we do not gaze upon a mere spectacle (such as the Ammergau Miracle Play, arranged by man for popular impression), but upon a divinely appointed representation of the decease which was accomplished so long ago at Jerusalem—upon a Picture which says touchingly to every believing heart, *Remember !* In responding to the Saviour's call, “Do this in remembrance of Me,” the true disciple proclaims, with the devout thankfulness of an appropriating faith,—“He died for me : I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. ii. 20). And, reminded in the Ordinance of how completely the breach which separated us from God has been healed “through the blood” (Eph. ii. 13), there is gladness for us even in contrition. “We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the At-one-ment” (Rom. v. 11).

16. THE LORD'S SUPPER — A PLEDGE. — Then, besides a Picture, we have in the Lord's Supper—

II. A PLEDGE.—As the Shorter Catechism expresses it, the Sacrament not only *represents* Christ and the benefits of the new Covenant, but *seals* them to believers. Besides saying *Remember*, it says to such, *Rely!* It affords them an additional assurance, that every word of promise given to them by Him who has appointed this Ordinance shall be fulfilled.

The use of “a seal” is familiar to us in common life. We find it there applied in two ways—either to a piece of goods or to a document. In either case, it is an authenticating mark, which tells to whom it is that the property or the letter should be referred.

You go down, let us suppose, to the docks : and, reaching one of the wharves, you see numberless bales of goods of different sorts and sizes huddled together on it. But order will yet come out of confusion there. For each bale has its appropriating mark, the firm's particular brand or seal upon it ; and it will be duly claimed, and taken to its proper destination.

Or, you receive one day a missive, which, to your surprise, announces that you have been invested in a high dignity or a rich dower, as a favoured subject of the British Crown. You can hardly believe your eyes while you read ; and, with pardonable eagerness, you turn to look at the signature. There it stands, the royal name, with the royal seal attached. And, looking at that

signature and stamp, your incredulity passes into loyal gratitude and joy.

Now we find both of these applications of the seal illustrated in Holy Scripture. Certain property is mentioned as belonging to a certain Proprietor, and as having His Seal upon it. And we have instances of letters being signed, whose value and importance consisted entirely in the seal which was affixed to them.

17. **THE SEAL.**—There is a remarkable passage in the sixth chapter of St John's Gospel at the 27th verse, in which it is said of the Son of Man Himself — “Him hath God the Father sealed.” This is a manifest allusion to what occurred at the baptism of Jesus, when the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a Dove; and, “*being full of the Holy Ghost*, He returned from the Jordan.” The Seal of God was evidently set upon Him, when, in confirmation of the Father's testimony to Him—“Thou art my beloved Son”—the Spirit of God was so plainly given to Him without measure.

And what is true of Christ, is true, in their place, of every one of His people. “The foundation of the Lord”—the Church which He has founded and which rests upon Him—is in its every stone sealed with the same Seal as is to be seen upon the Chief Corner-Stone (2 Tim. ii. 19). Any stone which may outwardly appear to belong to the sacred edifice, but which has not God's appropriating mark upon it, is certain to fall out, or to be cast out by God's own hand. For whosoever hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of His (Rom. viii. 9); and they only in whom the gracious sanctifying work of the Holy

Ghost is at least begun are living stones in God's enduring, spiritual Temple.

Still more explicitly are believers spoken of as the sealed *property* of God in such passages as 2 Cor. i. 22 ; Eph. i. 13 ; and Eph. iv. 30—"the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the Day of Redemption."

The Day of Redemption ! On that great Day, none of the Lord's property (His "peculiar" possession) will be amissing. As with the goods upon the wharf, there may be much apparent confusion in society on earth—such intermingling among Christians and non-Christians, as to make it sometimes difficult for others to know who really belong to Him. But "the Lord knoweth them that are His." Looking on every soul, He sees whether His own Seal is upon it or no ; and He will see to it that, in the great day of separation (Ps. i. 5 ; Matt. xxv. 33), no single soul which belongs to Him shall fail to reach its proper destination.

Then, the use of a seal as applied to a *document* is illustrated in 1 Kings xxi. 8, and also, more than once, in the Book of Esther. When the wicked Haman, desirous to compass the death of the Jewish people, sent letters by post, commanding them all in every province, both young and old, to be slain on a certain day, he was careful to have the letters sealed with the king's ring (Esth. iii. 12). Prime Minister though he was, his own signature would not have secured the execution of a command like that. It needed the authority of Ahasuerus himself : hence he had every letter marked with the royal signet, in token that it gave expres-

sion to the king's own wish. So was it, too, with Esther, when, interceding for her people with Ahasuerus, she induced him to countermand the dire decree before the day for its execution came. She secured no mere verbal acquiescence on his part, but a fresh rescript, copied by the king's scribes. It was "written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring; for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse" (Esth. viii. 8-10).

Now, it is in this latter sense—of a stamp applied to a document—that the Sacrament is called *a seal*. It is not intended, by any means, that the Sacrament marks off all who take part in it as truly belonging to Christ. Alas! no. But it is meant, that in the Sacrament you have the stamp, the authenticating mark of Christ set to a promissory letter of His, your belief in the declarations of which this Ordinance has been appointed by Him to confirm.

18. THE ASSURANCES IT SEALS. — By Christ's letter to His people, you may understand either in a general sense the Written Word, or, more particularly, those personal utterances of His at the first Lord's Supper, which, as recorded by St John, are so full of comfort and heavenly promise to His disciples in every age. In these, we find the Lord giving gracious assurances as to what He is to do and to be for His people; and, when He says to them, "Do this in remembrance of Me," what does He imply? He says in effect, "Now, these offers and promises of mine are all intended to be realised, and I appoint you this

simple Ordinance, that every time you see and partake of these emblems you may be reminded of ME, and of how ample is the guarantee in ME for the fulfilment of your dearest expectations." The Ordinance thus becomes an additional pledge from Christ, who is Surety to His people for good,—the seal* from His royal signet, that every word in which He has caused them to hope shall assuredly be fulfilled. What gives it such significance and value is, that, though a humble rite, it has been appointed by Himself, and has been connected by Him with such great and precious promises.

You have a friend going to a foreign land, between whom and yourself there are the bonds of a love that is stronger than death. He is to push his way and provide a home for you on the far-off shore ; and he promises to return in due time for you, that, when it is prepared, you may share its joys together. And, as he steps on board the vessel that is to bear him to the other hemisphere, he puts into your hand a little trinket, saying, " Now, every time you look on this, pray think on me ; and let it be my pledge of troth until I come again." You prize the token—why ? not because it is a rare jewel like the Koh-i-noor, with a great market value, but

* It was probably from the verse, Rom. iv. 11, that the compilers of the Shorter Catechism took the conception of the Lord's Supper being a seal. It is there said of " the sign of circumcision," that Abraham received it, as " a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised." That is, Abraham had accepted salvation on God's terms ; his faith was counted to him for righteousness ; and in circumcision he had not only a reminder of his dedication of himself to God, but an abiding assurance from Jehovah, that *He* would be true to the covenant into which He had entered with Abraham and his seed after him.

because in its simplicity it was given to you by *him* who is the centre of your dearest affections and the surety of your fondest hopes.

Even so, the Lord Jesus, "the Bridegroom of the soul," when He was going to the world unseen, gave to His disciples in the Communion Ordinance His forget-me-not, a love-token from Himself. "I am going away," He said; "but in Heaven I am not to be forgetting you. I am to be planning and providing for you yonder; I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am there ye may be also. I would not be forgotten by *you* when I am away; and, that you may be helped to remember Me, and may also be assured that I am remembering you, I leave with you this simple Ordinance: 'Do this in remembrance of Me;' and every time you eat this bread and drink this wine, let it not only remind you that I died, but that I live for evermore, and live to fulfil your holiest expectations."

Thus a second important use of the Lord's Supper is to confirm the faith of His disciples in the truth of His most comforting assurances. It is like the Saviour's signature to a promissory letter, setting forth an heirdom of blessedness richer than human tongue can tell or human heart conceive.

19. THE LORD'S SUPPER—A PORTION.—But while it is a Picture and a Pledge, let us not forget that we have in the Lord's Supper, also—

III. A PORTION. In it, Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are not only represented and sealed, but *applied* to believers. It says to us, not

only *Remember*, and *Rely*, but *Receive*! All the blessedness Christ spake of is not postponed to the eternal future. Instalments of it are vouchsafed by Him on earth. The disciples got much at that first Communion in the Upper Room. What moments on the Mount were these! And theirs was an experience of actual present benefit, which was intended to be repeated in the case of every believing company who might gather, while the world should last, for the observance of the Christian Feast.

The Lord's Supper is peculiarly the nourishing and strengthening Ordinance for believers; the observance of which, therefore, falls to be renewed again and again, for the refreshment and furtherance of the divine life in the soul. In this it differs from Baptism. The latter, from its nature, does not need to be observed again in the case of an adult once admitted, or a child recognised, through it as belonging to the visible Church of Christ. But we need not only to have life, but to have it more abundantly (John x. 10); and in the recurrence of the Supper we have an occasion which the Lord is wont very notably to bless to the hungering souls of His waiting people (Matt. v. 6).

How often its observance should be repeated has not been strictly laid down in Scripture. It is evident that, in the first glow of devotion in the early Christian Church, and for the confirmation perhaps of the hearts of believers in face of persecution, "the breaking of bread" was a weekly occurrence (Acts xx. 7). Some think that, for a time at least, it was even a daily observance (Acts ii. 46). But its frequency is clearly left as a matter to be deter-

mined by different communities of Christians for themselves, in obedience to the dictates of their hearts, and according to what, in the light of their circumstances, appears to be most really fitted to promote the glory of Christ and the good of His people.

The tendency in most Churches has latterly been in favour of a more frequent celebration of this Sacrament. With what was in some respects a commendable anxiety, our forefathers were afraid lest by holding the Communion more than once or twice in the year the observance should be too greatly familiarised. But if professing Christians are jealous over their own hearts, and careful to remember that "*as often as we eat this bread and drink this wine we do shew the Lord's death till He come,*" there is reason to expect that the repetition of the Feast, at intervals less extended than formerly, will by the divine blessing secure the feeding purpose of it all the better, "to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."

In the choice of the symbols—*bread* and *wine*—the nourishing virtue of the Ordinance, its use for spiritual strengthening and refreshment (Ps. civ. 15), is plainly indicated. But when we come to enquire wherein its nourishing virtue consists, or in what way it promotes the spiritual life in us, very different answers are given. On this subject there are two extreme opinions, both of which are wrong, and a third view, which we believe to be the right and Scriptural one.

20. DIVERSE THEORIES AS TO THE VIRTUE OF THE SACRAMENT.—On the one hand, we have

the Church of Rome, with its monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation, affirming that every time this Sacrament is properly observed, there is a repetition of the *Sacrifice* of Calvary ; that the substance of the bread and wine is changed across (*trans*) into the veritable body and blood of Christ ; and that all who partake of the Sacrament as properly administered by a duly qualified priest, and who do not actually resist the blessing (whatever their moral state and conduct otherwise), have grace infused into them, whereby their souls are necessarily made better — “*as inevitably as that fire burns.*” This is what we may call the *magical* (and at the same time *materialistic*) *theory* of the operation of the Sacrament ; which has nothing either in Scripture or in the testimony of experience to commend it.

At the other extreme, we have a class of Protestants who say—“No ; it is all a mistake to speak as if this Ordinance had any peculiar or magical effect upon the soul. There is nothing really mysterious about it, no result which cannot be explained in accordance with the ordinary laws of mind. In the symbols of the Sacrament, you have a vivid presentation of certain truths, and a strong enforcement of certain considerations. The eye is appealed to, and through it the mind is reached, and through the mind the heart ; and it is because of the influence thus wielded on the understanding, the affections, and the will, that there is such virtue in the Sacrament, and such religious benefit from the thoughtful use of its sacred and touching emblems.” This is what we may call the *moral theory* of the operation

of the Sacrament, as it ascribes all its salutary influence to the moral impression it effects, in the way just indicated, on the mind and heart of the participant.

But while there is truth in this second theory, it does not express the whole truth, or account for the full benefit received by multitudes of believing communicants through "the Feast." The effect produced on the hearts and lives of such is not to be referred to the mere elements and to the thoughts and feelings stirred by our poor meditation on them, but to the blessing of the Divine Spirit, whose gracious prerogative it is, in connection with the faithful use of the appointed means, to take of the things of Christ and impart them to His people. It is He who works faith in us, and who also answers and enriches faith, when, aided by the God-appointed symbols, it rises to its opportunity, and holds out the hand of emptiness to receive more and ever more of the fulness that is in Christ. It is He who enables us in the Sacrament to feed, in a spiritual sense, upon the body and blood of the Redeemer (John vi. 51-7), so that, crucified therein with Christ by faith, we nevertheless live, because Christ liveth in us. This is what we may call, by way of distinction, the *spiritual theory* of the operation of the Sacrament—ascribing all its sanctifying efficacy to the accompanying blessing of the Holy Spirit.

21. THE GRACE GIVEN IN THE ORDINANCE. — What is bestowed in the Sacrament, it should be observed, is not a peculiar kind of grace, (as with the seven sorts of grace ascribed by Rome

to her seven so-called sacraments), but more grace—as the believing communicant is enabled in it to appropriate more of Christ, or, as an old divine expresses it, “to get a better grip of Christ Jesus.” And what secures in us readiness for this is the working of the Spirit of God in our hearts. As many a believer can testify, He makes sacramental occasions glorious spiritual opportunities for those whose desire is toward Christ and the remembrance of His name.

Without the Spirit’s blessing, any impression produced by the mere emblems, and the most concentrated meditation on them, would be superficial and fleeting indeed. Turn your camera to yonder landscape ere the sunrise. Prepare the plates with every care. Burnish the lenses : and now uncover them. You keep them full in view of the beauteous scene, and so you keep them long. But I see no semblance of a picture on your glass. What you hoped to reproduce eludes your patient skill. And why? Because the Sun is not shining in the heavens, and these twinkling starlights mock your purpose with their feebleness. But when the Orb of Day pours down his quickening rays, how different ! Even so with the soul of man. When it is turned in faith to the Lord Jesus under the Spirit’s life-giving beams, the great aim of the Christian—likeness to Christ—is progressively attained. “We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass (*or* reflecting as in a mirror) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, *even as by the Lord the Spirit*” (2 Cor. iii. 18).

CHAPTER IV.

THE LEADING NAMES OF THE ORDINANCE—WITH THE PERSONAL QUESTION, OUGHT I TO PARTAKE?

22. **THE EUCHARIST.**—The names given to the New Testament Feast are several ; and each of them has its own suggestiveness.

Perhaps the commonest of them all is *The Lord's Supper*. This is a Scripture name for the Ordinance (1 Cor. xi. 20), and is the most comprehensive designation for it. It is called *The Lord's Supper*, because it was instituted by the Lord ; is presided over by the Lord, in his real though invisible presence ; speaks to us of the Lord in its every part, and has reference to the Lord in its every aspect.

Then, not to dwell on the cognate name, *The Lord's Table* (1 Cor. x. 21), or on the early but now obsolete name, *The Action*,* there are three names in frequent use, which we may place under *The Lord's Supper* as giving prominence to three distinctive aspects of the sacred feast. These are—the *Eucharist*; the *Communion*; the *Sacrament*.

(1.) The first of these, the *Eucharist*, means the *Thanksgiving*. The name is derived from the expression in 1 Cor. xi. 24—"And when He had given thanks" (*Eucharistēsas*). We have already seen (p. 27) what the Lord gave thanks for at the

* A name derived from a Latin expression, *actio gratiarum*, meaning "the giving of thanks," and still preserved in some parts of Scotland in the term, "the Action Sermon."

institution of the Supper ; and if even for Him it was a Eucharist, much more should it be a Feast of Thanksgiving for His people. While, saved from death, they sit at the Table and enjoy the bounties He has prepared for them, the language of their hearts may well be—"What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" It is called the Eucharist, says Chrysostom, "because it shews forth the crowning act of God's regard, and prepares us to be perpetually thankful."

The Lord's Supper as *the Eucharist* sends our thoughts back with gratitude to the past. It is our feast of *Commemoration*, in which we call to mind the dying of the Lord Jesus, and glory in the Cross of Calvary as transfigured for us, through His willing suffering upon it in our room, from an instrument of death and a symbol of shame, into a vehicle of blessing and the abiding symbol of the grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life (Rom. v. 21). Through the *Eucharist*, we openly declare that the memory of Christ, and of all He has been and done for us, is treasured deep within our hearts : and thus it becomes a public perpetuation on the part of the Church of her great Redeemer's name.

23. THE COMMUNION.—(2.) The second name, the *Communion*, is more familiar than the Eucharist.* It is a Bible name, applied by St Paul to the

* At least in Scotland, where the Presbyterian mode of observance—with the guests seated together and partaking together of the bread and wine, instead of being supplied singly with the elements from the hand of the officiating minister—realises simply but beautifully the aspect of the Ordinance which the name *Communion* suggests.

Christian Feast in 1 Cor. x. 16-17 : "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body : for we are all partakers of that one bread." The fact of "sharing in common" (having "Communion" in) these sacred emblems ought, he insists, to be not only an expression of ideal oneness in Christ but a bond of actual unity among believers.

The Lord's Supper, as *the Communion*, suggests the precious truth that He who died still lives, and lives to be our Friend. We have still the real presence—spiritual and unseen, but none the less real—of Him we love. "It is not at a Grave, but at a Table, that we are called to gather." The Tomb is empty ; but Christ's place at the Table is not unfilled. As, in the olden time, "when the even was come, He sate down with the Twelve," He still gathers His own around Himself, that they may have spiritual fellowship, not only with one another but with Him—"whom, having not seen, they love." He still grants to His disciples at the feast an Upper Room experience—making it for them the place of peace and love, holy comfort and heavenly hope, even while, as with the first disciples, it may sometimes have to be the place of anxious self-questioning and of divine instruction and rebuke.

Thus, besides being a Commemoration of the past, the Lord's Supper is a *Communion* in the present — drawing the hearts of Christ's people closer to one another, and giving them, above all, sacred opportunities of living, loving converse

with Him who rejoices to be called the Sinner's Friend.

The matchless friendship of Christ, *and* the oneness of believers in Him, are what we should seek to realise in the Lord's Supper as the Communion. "The Church of God is one—all its members from the beginning redeemed with one price, washed in one blood, clothed with one righteousness, crucified on one cross, partakers of one resurrection, heirs of one kingdom, and possessors of one hope. . . . They feast at one banqueting-house, sit at one table, drink of one cup, are overshadowed by one banner, and sing one song 'to Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.'"

Our oneness, not only with those actually at the Table with us on earth, but with those who have gone into the immediate presence of the King, should be remembered by us at the Communion—

" One family we dwell in Him ;
One Church, above, beneath ;
Though now divided by the stream—
The narrow stream of death."

24. THE SACRAMENT.—(3.) The remaining name in frequent use, *the Sacrament*, brings out yet another aspect of the feast—its reference to the future. This is not a Scripture name, but it is one which came into very early use in this connection in the Christian Church. It is now perhaps as common a name as any for the Lord's Supper, which, although it is not the only Sacrament, has—probably from the frequency of its recurrence,

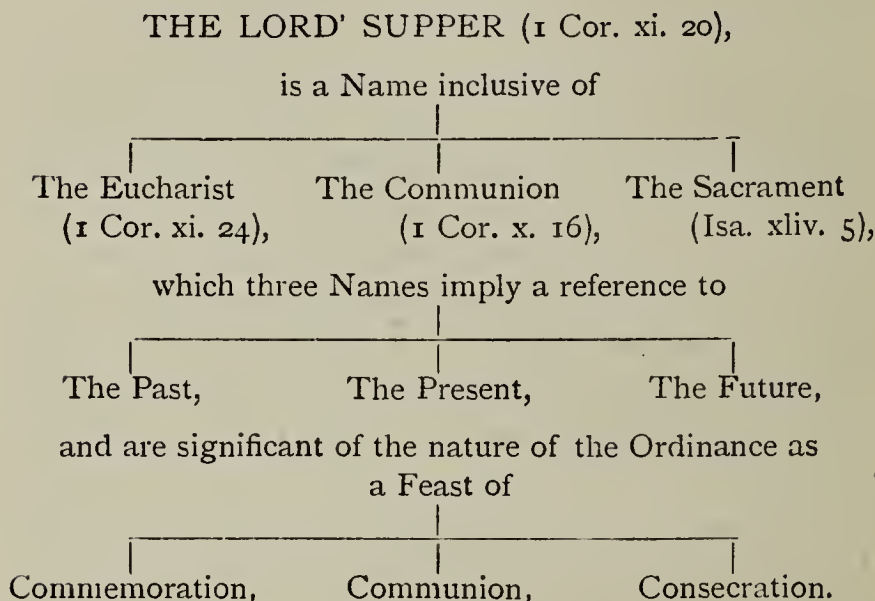
and the peculiar suggestiveness of its symbols—come to be regarded and spoken of as “*the Sacrament*.”

The word, in early Church writings, often stood for *a mystery*—“anything that had a hidden significance.” But its common Latin translation—*an oath*—conveys very suitably the special conception of the Ordinance which it is of importance for us to keep in view, along with the other two aspects of it already commented on. The Lord’s Supper, besides being a Commemoration of the past, and a Communion in the present, is a *Consecration* for the future. It is the believer’s Sacrament.

We saw, in the foregoing chapter, that the Lord’s Supper is a pledge from Christ to His disciples that He will be true to them. It is also a pledge from His followers to Christ, that, His grace helping them, they will be true to Him. As the *Sacramentum* was the Roman soldier’s oath of allegiance to his commander—his pledge that he would serve loyally beneath his banner even to the death; so *the Sacrament* is the believer’s oath of allegiance to the great Captain of Salvation, his pledge that, by the help of God, he will serve under His banner—the Standard of the Cross—even until death, in the great campaign which He is waging in the world against sin and wrong.

Thus the Lord’s Supper has a reference both to the past, and to the present, and to the future; and what has just been said of the significance of

its several names may be summed up thus, in tabular form :—



25. THE PRACTICAL QUESTION. — These leading names of the Ordinance, with the lessons they suggest, may help you in determining the deeply-important practical question, “Ought *I* to partake?”

This is a matter to be decided between you and Christ. He instituted the Supper, as you know, for His disciples—for true believers in Him, and loyal adherents of His cause. If, therefore, there is no personal tie between your soul and Him, your participation in this Ordinance will be an empty form, if not a heedless and hurtful profanation. But if in very truth you can call Christ Lord and your Lord, then His Supper is meant for you. If you have received and are resting upon Him alone for salvation, then every aspect

of the Ordinance furnishes an additional argument for your having a part in it.

The Death of Jesus—if that is nothing to you but a historic event of more than eighteen centuries ago, which has some interest of its own, but has no special interest personal to you, then a feast in celebration of it will for you have little meaning. But if “the dying of the Lord Jesus” means to you not only the most marvellous exhibition of God’s love, but the willing sacrifice of God’s own Son as the propitiation for your sins, then the Supper will be indeed *your* Eucharist.

The Life of Jesus—if that, in your view, is a thing merely of the past, and His a history which closed for men more than eighteen centuries ago, then, however you may admire its beauty and its heroism, His life will not bring to you, except in the most shadowy, figurative sense, any offer of fellowship with Him. But if in your heart you believe and are sure that Christ lives and loves you, if He is the One above all others who to you deserves the name of Friend, and if you hear in the invitation to the Supper a call to *you* to draw near to Him in His spiritual presence for the comfort of your soul—then, as you not only remember His name but seek His face in the Ordinance, it will be to you a Feast of Communion with Him and His. Yours will be truly a “fellowship with God the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ ;” and you will progressively learn the meaning of that word—“If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His *life*” (Rom. v. 10).

The Service of Jesus—if that is to you a thing of indifference, and your attachment to His cause only a nominal attachment, then your profession of devotion through this Ordinance will be an empty form. It will be, if not an act of deliberate treachery, only the mock allegiance of a recruit who appears upon parade, but is awanting when the call to action comes. But if Jesus has your heart, then your placing yourself beneath His banner will be no mere formality: it will be the solemn yet joyous sacramental engagement of a soldier who is resolved, God helping him, to be true till death. And that engagement will, by Divine grace, be made good in all the future life: for “the life is the appendix to the heart.”

You see how all-important this question is, of the personal tie between you and the Redeemer. If you are not one of His friends, it is an unwarrantable intrusion for you to seat yourself unbidden at His table. If you are not a believer in Him, it is worse than an impropriety to wound Him in the house of His friends, by handling profanely the sacred emblems of His broken body and shed blood. But if you have come first, in penitence and faith, to the Lord Himself, then you not only may but ought to come to the Feast to which He calls you. If He is yours, and you are His, then this is an Ordinance for you, in the suitable observance of which your Saviour will be glorified and your soul blessed.

Now, it is no doubt a responsible thing to go to the Table of the Lord; but, if you are really a disciple, it is a more responsible thing for you to

stay away. As to which of these responsibilities you are to accept, it is for yourself to decide. The Church, by its ministers, must see to it that those who propose "to join the Church," as it is called, (1) *have sufficient knowledge*—that is, are intelligently aware of the meaning of the step they wish to take ; and (2) *are prepared to make a credible profession of faith in Christ*—that is, a believable profession, to which nothing in their known character and life manifestly gives the lie. But the Church, or its ministers, cannot read the heart. As Dr Robert S. Candlish put it—"They may determine negatively that there is no reason for pronouncing the applicant not a Christian ; but they do not take the responsibility of positively judging of his conversion." The responsibility of determining whether he should approach the Lord's Table or not ultimately rests, and must rest, with the individual himself. And for a conscientious enquirer it will not be enough that his fellow men do not forbid him, or even that they are prepared to welcome him. What he will be concerned to have is the warrant and the welcome of the Lord of the Feast. "Let a man examine *himself*, and so let him eat."

26. IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS.—But now, it is of great importance in this connection to observe one or two distinctions which, though manifest, are apt sometimes to be overlooked.

One of these is the difference between *merit* and *meetness*—between being *worthy to communicate* and *communicating worthily*.

None who has ever sate at the Lord's Table on earth has been, in a sense, worthy to sit there ; for

who is fit to sit beside the King? The vilest outcast in the city slums is more worthy of a place at the royal table by our monarch's side than the holiest saint is, in himself, to sit by the side of Him who is the King of Glory. You are not worthy. But worthy is the Lamb that was slain. And you will come worthily, if you come recognising from the heart your own unworthiness, and casting yourself entirely on the merit and mediation of the Saviour, who invites you to draw near.

It may here be noticed that the term "damnation," used in the authorised version of 1 Cor. xi. 29, is needlessly terrifying to many tender souls. It ought unquestionably to be rendered—as in the margin and in the revised version—"judgment." The warning against "eating and drinking unworthily" is sufficiently solemn without the mistranslation; but what is really pointed to is a chastisement designed to keep the subjects of it *from* destruction, as the Apostle's own explanation immediately shews—"For when we are *judged*, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (v. 32). It may be noticed, too, by young enquirers, that this is not a warning specifically addressed to those proposing to take part in the Lord's Supper for the first time. It has its application, no doubt, to these; but it applies equally to all who at any time communicate,—for it behoves such, every time they do it, to seek to communicate in a worthy way,—and the warning bore specially, in the context, on those in Corinth who had been habitually subjecting the Ordinance of the Supper to gross abuse. What the case of such

is brought before us for is—not to deter us from coming, but to deter us from coming unworthily.

Another distinction to be observed is the difference between a *true* faith and a *strong* faith: or between a *real* and a *ripe* Christianity. The Lord's Supper is not for advanced believers only, but for all genuine believers in the Lord Jesus.

“It is for all who truly belong to Christ. It is suited to the youngest disciple, who has sought Christ early and found Him. It is suited to the greatest sinner, who has turned from his evil ways—for it speaks of a Saviour who came to seek and to save that which was lost: and to the ripest saint—for it reveals a love that passeth all understanding.” The sense of weakness ought not to keep the disciple back from the Supper, but rather the reverse. If any soul is able sincerely to say, “Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief,”—Jesus gives the answer, “Yea, I will grant that prayer: and, lo! here is the way in which I love to answer it—‘Do this in remembrance of me.’” To treat this strengthening Ordinance as a “superfluity” is to dishonour Christ and to injure ourselves: and to delay participation in it till our faith is strong is to go directly in the teeth of the very purpose for which the Ordinance was designed. “As justly might the sick man propose to take the prescribed tonic after he got well, as that we should propose to wait till our faith is strong and healthy and all we could wish it to be, before we will make use of the means God has furnished for deepening and strengthening our faith.”

The answer to the 172 Question of the West-

minster Assembly's Larger Catechism is very encouraging here. The Westminster Divines are frequently spoken of as hard and severe; but what could be more tender than the reply they give to the query—"May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, and of his due preparation, come to the Lord's Supper?" The answer is—

"One who doubteth of his being in Christ, and of his due preparation to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof; and in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity: in which case (because promises are made, and this Sacrament is appointed, for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians), he is to bewail his unbelief, and labour to have his doubts resolved; and, so doing, *he may and ought to come to the Lord's Supper, that he may be further strengthened.*"

Personal unworthiness, and the weakness of our faith, afford, therefore, no good reason for holding back from the Table of the Lord. As little is such a course warranted by certain excuses which are sometimes offered by those who live on in the neglect of this Ordinance of Christ.

27. **VAIN EXCUSES.**—One of the flimsiest of these excuses is—*Many go to the Table who should not.* This is unhappily true. But there is plainly all the more reason for those to go forward who should. "A Judas may be among the disciples; but shall John, therefore, refuse to lean upon the Master's bosom?" Let a man examine *himself*—not other people; and so let him eat.

A more genuine excuse is—*I am afraid of being*

inconsistent afterwards. But will disobedience help you to be more consistent? A fear of declension is a salutary fear; but it ought only to shut you up to a more entire and constant reliance on Him who is stronger than sin. “*He hath said, ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee:’* therefore, *we* may boldly say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not fear.’” Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

I do not feel ready—again it is sometimes said—to *profess so high a standard of living as going to the Lord’s Table would imply.* But if you count and call yourself a Christian, your standard dare not be pitched one whit lower than Christ places it; and to withhold obedience in this particular cannot surely absolve you from any other Christian obligation. Your non-profession of religion, moreover, may reasonably be construed by the world as a profession of indifference. And your reluctance to give up sin may really imply a terrible preparedness to part company with Christ.

One common objection—*I believe I am a Christian, but I am not old enough to communicate*—raises a very interesting question as to the age at which it is proper for a young person to approach the Table of the Lord. When pastoral advice is sought on this point, a minister may have to take into consideration a variety of circumstances in each particular case.* But a good general rule is,

* A well-known Free Church minister in Edinburgh told the writer that he and his Kirk Session were confronted with an earnest application from a young girl of nine for admission to full Com-

that your youth need be no obstacle, if you are "old enough to understand the nature, object, and uses of the Supper, and to judge upon your character and life as in the sight of God;" or, as the Larger Catechism more briefly puts it, "of years and ability to examine yourself." If this be granted, then you are not entitled, on the ground of age, to postpone obedience to the Saviour's charge. He does not say, "Do this in remembrance of Me a year hence, or after six months, or three—but *now*, if you are one of Mine, and if in Providence the opportunity is given." You are certainly not to "join the Church" just because you have reached a particular age; or because your friends wish it and your companions are doing it; or because you think it will now promote your worldly interests. But if you are in heart a Christian, then remember that Christ's call demands a prompt obedience.

28. IS THE ORDINANCE NECESSARY?—The question is sometimes started—*Is the Sacrament necessary?* And the answer may, correctly, be either *No* or *Yes*.

The Sacrament is *not* necessary, in the sense that none can be saved without it. Take, for instance, the case of a castaway on a desert island. Some word of truth (such as John iii. 16), early implanted in his memory or floated to him on a stray page of Scripture, is quickened within him
munion privileges. Though somewhat taken aback at first, they found the youthful applicant so intelligent on the whole subject, and so apparently full of love to the Saviour, that—while regarding the case as exceptional—they felt that they could do nothing but joyfully accede to her request.

into living power by God's free Almighty Spirit. He is led in his solitude to put implicit confidence in the Redeemer, and to include himself under the "whosoever believeth," to whom the Divine assurance is given. Surely that man is saved, though he may never regain the companionship of his fellow men on earth, or be permitted to join the communion of his fellow believers below. The Word avails without the Sacrament.

There will be many at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in heaven who have never sate at the Lord's Table on earth — the penitent thief, for example, and multitudes of others, including infants, who had no opportunity of celebrating this Ordinance; and among them will be, doubtless, some who have mistakenly and culpably neglected the Sacrament—just as there will be many outside of heaven who have often been at the earthly table as unbidden guests. The Church of Rome, indeed, says that Baptism is necessary to salvation; and the Greek Church (founding upon John vi. 53), says the same of the Lord's Supper, which, therefore, it administers to infants. But this is just one of the errors of what is called *Sacramentarianism*—the system which rests everything on the Sacraments. The Sacrament is *not* essential as the indispensable means of salvation.

There is, however, a true sense in which the Sacrament *is* necessary. There attaches to it what the old divines called "the necessity of *precept*" if not "of *means*." The invitation to the Lord's Supper, as we have already insisted, coming to us from the King, comes to us as a command, which

every loyal subject *must* obey. It is ours to "observe all things which Christ hath commanded"; and if there is any injunction of His to which we should have a specially tender regard, surely it is His parting charge—"Do this in remembrance of me." "Suppose," as one has said, "the last request of a dying mother were: 'Scatter a few flowers year by year on my grave,' with what reverent care and fond affection would the filial heart do that. And should there be less reverence in our heart, less jealousy over it, in executing the last command of God's dear Son, our Saviour?" To neglect this Ordinance is wilfully to dishonour Him. Surely, if Christ said, in His yearning desire for your salvation, "I *must needs* suffer," it is not a great thing for Him to expect that your heart will lovingly respond—"I *must needs* commemorate the sufferings of my Lord!"

Nor is it to be forgotten, that our spiritual good is bound up, in this Ordinance, with the glory given to our Redeemer. For our sakes as well as His, He has charged us to keep this Feast. The line of true religious progress is ever along the path of strict obedience to our Heavenly Master. We cannot wilfully neglect any of His precepts without hurting our own souls. We cannot cheerfully obey any of them without being the better for it. And in keeping of *this* precept there is great reward. It advances our own edification and comfort, and it ranks us openly among those who desire to be an influence in the world upon the side of Christ. If we really believe in the heart, then, for our own sake

and the sake of others, confession ought to be made *unto salvation* (Rom. x. 10).

Young men and young women, how long halt ye between two opinions? Such halting is weak, and to be weak is miserable. If you are truly Christ's, the very taking of your stand beneath His blood-bought banner may be very helpful to you, by God's blessing, even in definitely committing you in the eyes of the world to the allegiance and service of Christ. Secret discipleship does not, and cannot, go forward hopefully and healthfully toward the goal that is set before us. It cannot expect to thrive. It hides in the shadow, it lives in the darkness, when it ought to be out in the open light of God's reconciled countenance. Shrinking from the duty of confession, it misses the benefit of it. Seeking a shelter of its own, it loses the strengthening as well as the incentive influences of an avowed Christianity. It declines and rejects an important Means of Grace.

These are solemn words of Christ—"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven" (Matt. xi. 32). "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the Holy Angels" (Luke ix. 26). Who, then, is upon the Lord's side among you? Come courageously forth, and be valiant for Christ, ye who have given your hearts to Him. You owe it to the Saviour, and you owe it to yourselves.

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE, AT, AND AFTER THE COMMUNION.

29. PREPARATION—SELF-EXAMINATION.—

If you have, humbly but decisively, reached the affirmative answer to the enquiry—"Ought *I* to communicate?"—it will be further a matter of concern with you, that you may approach the Feast in the right way—that is, in such a way as best to glorify your Lord and advance your own spiritual wellbeing. Too much, indeed, is not to be made of our own preparation, as if through it we were to *earn* the blessing. But neither are we to make too little of it. The desire to be rightly "exercised," in view of the Communion, is both a salutary symptom and a gracious influence. And, though we dare not so limit the operations of the Spirit of all grace as to call our earnestness in this particular the *sine quâ non* of receiving spiritual benefit, it has yet been said with perfect truth, that much of the profit of partaking in the Communion Ordinance depends on our fidelity in the work of preparation.

BEFORE THE TABLE. There ought to be specific preparation every time we take part in the Feast ("as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup.") This is an obligation which many professing believers are sadly prone to forget. The public preparatory services of the sanctuary, intended to be helpful in this connection, are habitually neglected by them. It is to be feared that no compensation of a more private kind is sought in their retirement. And if, coming heedlessly to the King's Table,

with their souls unattuned to the spirit of the Feast, and their hearts ignorant of the hunger and thirst the Lord loves to satisfy, they go away unblessed—need they wonder or complain? The marvel were, if it had been otherwise. Of many a company of professed communicants it may have to be said as of ancient Israel—"They did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink . . . but with many of them God was not well pleased" (1 Cor. x. 3-5).

To the young Christian, the negligence of others, in this and other respects, will be one of the most abiding and insidious temptations in coming days. Not only in prospect of your first Communion, therefore, but ever afterwards, you must earnestly and consistently seek to live by a higher standard than that of the worldly within the Church. Where public services are supplied in the week preceding the celebration of the Supper, be sure to avail yourself of them, as fully as your circumstances in Providence will allow. And be specially careful, along with this, to review your life, to stir up your conscience, and to cultivate your heart in secret before God.

There are several things which it is good for us to do before every succeeding Communion.

(1.) We are called *to examine ourselves*. The Apostolic rule is, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup" (1 Cor. xi. 28).

It is with the fitness of our own approach, be it noted, not that of other people, that we are to concern ourselves: and we are not to rest content

with being, in a general way, satisfied that we are "in the faith"—genuine believers in Christ. As the Apostle elsewhere reminds us, the duty of self-examination includes much more than this. It seeks an answer not only to the question—"Am I a Christian?" but to the other question, "What sort of Christian am I?" How does what I am compare with what I ought to be, or even with what I might have been? Not only are we to look to the foundation we have been building on—"Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith"—but we are to test the character of the structure we have been rearing thereupon—"Prove your own selves" (2 Cor. xiii. 5).

In this work of self-examination and probation, certain portions of God's word will be found specially helpful. For instance, the Ten Commandments (Ex. xx. 1-17) may with profit be read slowly aloud, pausing over each to make conscience and heart face its requirements, in the light especially of Christ's own spiritual teaching (Matt. v. 21-30). Or the Beatitudes, in which the Lord of the Kingdom sets forth the ideal for those who would be worthy members of it (Matt. v. 1-12). Or the Seven Messages to the Churches, which abound in admonitions to the individual as well as to Church communities, from Him who knows the works of each, and whose eyes are as a flame of fire, searching the inmost recesses of the soul (Rev. ii. iii.).

If we rightly use such passages as these, taking the Lord Himself with us to this work of self-examination, in the prayer, "Search me, O God,

and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me " (Ps. cxxxix. 23-4)—then the candle of the Lord will do its work so effectually, that the next element in our preparation will be made easy to us.

30. FURTHER EXERCISES IN PREPARATION.—(2.) A genuine and thorough self-examination should lead us *to humble ourselves*. True self-knowledge, implying some degree of proper sensitiveness with respect to sin, is sure to bring along with it a corresponding degree of self-humiliation. If every one, or any, of God's Commandments, as we review our past lives, sounds to us like a rebuke ; if every one, or any, of the Beatitudes sets before us an ideal, to which our character offers not a resemblance but only a contrast—then, by the Divine blessing, there will be wrought in us that spirit of contrition which will be to us great gain. For God has said—"I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. lvii. 15). Before proceeding to make confession of our faith before men, it is good for us to feel constrained to make confession of our sin before God.

Here, again, the word of God will help us. The penitential Psalms, for instance (Ps. vi., xxxii., xxxviii., li., cii., cxxx., cxlii.), prayerfully used, will both encourage in us the penitential spirit and aid us in giving suitable expression to it. To go over, upon one's knees before God, say the 51st Psalm—reading into it our own dire experience of the evil of sin, and winging to heaven through it our

cry for mercy and deliverance—can hardly fail to be helpful toward the cultivation of a suitable frame for participating in the Feast designed for penitent yet accepted sinners, whose lips the Lord has opened to shew forth His praise. It is those who feel that they are not so much as worthy to eat of the crumbs that fall from the Table who are most heartily welcomed by the Lord to sit at it beside Himself.

(3.) And then, before Communion, it behoves us *to arouse ourselves*. Not only should we seek to be awakened to the true nature of sin, and to the heinousness of our own particular sins, but we should stir ourselves to the resolute determination, God helping us, to be done with sin. It is vain to ask God to take sin away, unless we are ourselves minded to put sin away. It is vain to tell Christ that we greatly love Him, if we love that more which slew Christ. In godly sorrow, such as the Apostle commends (2 Cor. vii. 11), there is fear, vehement desire, and zeal for better things.

But what, above all, we are to arouse ourselves to is—along with the sight and sense of sin—the vivid sight and the thankful appropriation of the Saviour. Repentance has well been called “the tear of sorrow on the eye of faith.” It is not the tear of mere sorrow: it is not the anguish of unalleviated regret. Faith goes with it, and Hope lights up the penitent face even amid its tears, like sunshine gleaming through the showers of a begloomed summer day. For “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” has arisen upon it through the darkness—light from the compassionate face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. iv. 6).

It is this which best will help us, not only to repentance, but to all the other gracious exercises which should be in lively operation as we go forward to the Table of Communion—the clearer discovery and fuller apprehension of Him who is Surety to His people for good (Ps. cxix. 122). And there is a Divine blessing on distinct personal effort with this end in view.

The reverent and prayerful perusal of “the Golden Passional,” the prophetic 53rd of Isaiah, and of its New Testament counterpart in the Gospel History of the Crucifixion, will be helpful here. Also a loving meditation on those wonderful chapters in St John’s Gospel (ch. xiii.-xvii.), which give us the Redeemer’s discourse and intercessory prayer at the first Communion Table. Through these we may, in anticipation of our Gospel feast, be brought face to face and heart to heart with Christ. And, while questioning ourselves, as in His presence, about our past attainments in knowledge, faith, repentance, love, obedience, we shall gain a fuller measure of these graces, if only our souls go out freely after Him and dwell fixedly upon Him. Even out of the bitter there shall come forth the sweet. As we mourn because of Him whom our sins have pierced, we shall be made to rejoice, that by Him we have “received the Atonement.” The bitter herbs of penitence will make the Living Bread the more sweet, and the flesh and blood of the Lamb of God (John vi. 51-53) the more satisfying to the soul. Forgiven much we shall love much, and be filled with a yearning to manifest our love (Luke vii. 47). And the cele-

bration of the Sacrament in accordance with Christ's command will be the first link in a chain of new obedience—new, if not in motive, rule, and end, at least in the power of consecration and consistency.

But, when all is done,—or, rather, while all is being done,—in the way of examining ourselves, humbling ourselves, arousing ourselves in view of the sacred feast, we must be ever mindful to cast ourselves on the aid of the Holy Spirit, asking from Him that preparation of heart which cometh from the Lord only. Then we may go forward to the Table in the confidence expressed by the Psalmist when he said—"Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear" (Ps. x. 17). And though we are ashamed that our faith is still so feeble, our love so cold, our life so imperfect at the best, our Lord will not spurn us from His presence. It is His merit, not our own, that is our warrant of approach and ground of expectation.

31. **AT THE TABLE.** — What you are to be concerned with in the act of Communion is—"Jesus only." The appropriate exercise for the Communicant actually at the Table is not so much self-examination or introspection, as the direct contemplation of his Lord. That is, we are there expected to look, not so much within or back as out to Christ and forward to the time ("till He come"), when He will make us sharers in the glorious Heavenly Feast, of which the earthly Ordinance is only a type and in some degree a prelude and preparation—the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It is our part at the Table, "to forget self in remembering Christ."

Looking above the Ordinance, we are to wait only upon God, and let our expectation be from Him. The thought of our own sins, sorrows, and responsibilities is to be allowed to come in only that it may shut us up the more entirely to a simple faith in Jesus, and furnish us with the occasion of unrestrained spiritual converse with Him "whom having not seen, we love." If in going to the Table we have felt our need of clearer light and of purer, warmer feeling, we are, when there, simply to seek that with open face we may behold His glory, while the Holy Spirit of promise takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us (John xvi. 14).

It is the custom of some ministers to repeat texts of Scripture while the Communicants are in the act of partaking of the bread and wine. This is perhaps found helpful by some persons, in giving direction to their meditations at the Table. But others may be only distracted by it, and would prefer all other voices to be hushed at such a sweetly solemn moment, that *His* voice only may be heard. In any case, it is well that there should be some interval of silence given, for direct undisturbed communion of the soul with Christ; and to a soul in lively exercise, the sacred emblems, intelligently and thoughtfully used, will themselves be eloquent, and, under the guidance of the Blessed Spirit, instrumental in leading the communicant very near his Lord.

Surely there, if anywhere, shall one say in thankfulness and hope, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isa. xlv. 24). Righteousness? Yes: for have I not here, in these emblems as symbols of

Atonement, the assurance of my justification, and the pledge of my complete redemption from the power as well as the penalty of sin? Strength? Yes: for have I not in these emblems the symbols of that inward strengthening grace which will bear me up under the strain of life's heaviest burdens, and nerve me with a vigour higher than my own, for the conquest of evil and the service of the living God?

It is related of Wellington, at the battle of Salamanca, that he pointed to a redoubt which he wished to have taken in the face of the enemy's fire, and said—"Who will win that height for me?" All the members of the staff hung back, for it seemed certain death to go on such a mission. But in a moment or two, a gallant young officer stepped forward and said—"Sire, I will go: but give me first a grip of that conquering right hand!" The great commander, with a pleasant smile, shook the young man cordially by the hand, and sped him on to victory. Be it ours, while glorying in Christ as the Saviour who has died, to approach Him at the Table as the living and life-giving One. May we ever anon clasp hands there with Him who never knew defeat: and we shall be made "more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 37).

Your duty and privilege *at* the Communion may be summed up in two words—*appropriation* of Christ, and *surrender* of self. What you are there to seek is the realisation on both its sides of the blessed relationship that subsists between the believing soul and the Redeemer: "My Beloved is mine, *and* I am His." And the joy of this realisa-

tion will be only deepened by the sight of those around you whose hearts are similarly affected toward Him you supremely love ; so that you and they together can thankfully say — “ Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ ” (1 John i. 3).

32. AFTER THE TABLE.—It is of the utmost importance for you to regard your first Communion not as an end but as a means ; and to remember that, if it has been a goal for the past, it is now a starting place for the future. *Excelsior* must be your motto : “ Not as though I had already attained—I press toward the mark ” (Phil. iii. 12-14).

Each succeeding celebration of the Supper which you are spared to join in should mark some genuine progress toward Heaven and toward meetness for entering there. It should be like one of those booths for rest and refreshment, which are provided for weary travellers climbing the Swiss mountains. Besides telling you that so much more of your earthly journey is past, it should bring you cheer, as you press upward still, in Christ’s name, with freshened impulse, toward the very summit of the Holy Hill of spiritual perfection.

You are not to take your Christianity from Christians, but from Christ himself. Your constant endeavour must be to become really worthy of “ that worthy name by the which ye are called ” (James ii. 7). It is a name which was “ called upon you ” (Gr.) in Baptism : and it is now, by your own act of profession, the name by which you are called—your real, your highest, your eternal name, the name of “ Christian.” Surely it is an honourable name. It

is worthy of all honour in Him : it is worthy of all vigilance in you, that you may be worthy of it. King Alexander once said to a delinquent in his ranks, called Alexander—" Be the soldier, or drop my name." If you are a sincere follower of His, Christ does not wish you to change your name : but He does look to you to seek to be growingly worthy of it. As when Simon got the name of Peter, it continued to be to him for many a day both an inspiration and a rebuke, so will it be with your new name of Christian. You are to proceed upon no lower ideal than the Lord has set before you : and what He says to His disciples is—" Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect " (Matt. v. 48). Use the Sacrament, from time to time, along with all other available helps heavenwards, as a means which the Divine Spirit will bless toward the attainment of your coveted end.

Now, the believer's attitude of spirit after the Communion is not less important than his attitude before or during its celebration. It is an old counsel—" Thou oughtest not only to prepare thyself to devotion before Communion, but carefully also to prepare thyself therein after thou hast received it." Yet it is certain that the care bestowed by Christians beforehand is often out of all proportion to the care they manifest afterwards, and that much of the blessing designed for them through the Feast is in this way squandered and lost.

The great thing to aim at is *the maintenance of the Spirit of Communion*, although the Communion

Ordinance itself is past ; and the great danger to be guarded against is *the danger of reaction* to which the believer is often peculiarly liable after a season of special religious privilege and elevation. Elijah under the juniper tree, after his heroic stand for Jehovah ; St Peter and the other disciples in the garden, after the experiences of the Upper Room ; St Paul sunk in despondency because of his thorn in the flesh, after his blissful transport to the third heaven—these all felt the power of this law of reaction ; and the young Christian need not wonder if he should do the same. It is a Divine injunction peculiarly applicable to such after the Communion — “Take heed unto thy spirit.”

33. CAUTIONS AND DUTIES. — We should cherish—(1.) A spirit of *humble thankfulness*. Too often the heart which glows with tenderness at the Lord’s Table is suffered speedily to grow as cold, if not colder than before, through careless unhallowed contact with the world ; and if the customary attendance at the Thanksgiving Services, which are often held only a day or two after the Communion, is to be taken as an indication of the general thankfulness, the Lord of the Feast must often be found saying, in reproachful sorrow — “Where are the nine?” *Be ye thankful* is an apostolic charge (Col. iii. 15). Literally, *Be ye eucharistic* : let your whole character, that is to say, be eucharistic, your whole life a eucharist, a service of thanksgiving to God. Surely Christ deserves this, and not merely an occasional burst of praise at sacramental seasons.

And let ours be a *humble* thankfulness. We must beware of the leaven of pride, which sometimes creeps into the spirit of a man after, and even because, he has been giving respect to religious ordinances. The Pharisee within us is to be persistently suppressed.

(2.) A spirit of *watchfulness against temptation*. Christ's counsel to His disciples, immediately after they had left the first Communion, has its bearing upon all disciples — "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." It has been said of genuine repentance, that while it looks with a weeping eye upon the past it looks with a watchful eye upon the future. If we pray in a listless spirit "Lead us not into temptation," and yet are found heedlessly running into it, we need not wonder if we bring dishonour upon Christ and spiritual disaster upon ourselves. Temptations will have to be met. They are not in themselves sin, though yielding to them is. Properly met, they will be for our strengthening, and will lead to our spiritual coronation (Jas. i. 12). But we must be upon our guard. If we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, we must, in dependence on His gracious aid, cultivate a habit of sensitive repugnance to sin, and be ready to resist *the first* and all subsequent temptations that may confront us, after we leave the Table of the Lord.

(3.) A spirit of *consistent loyalty to Christ*. Like the Hebrew servant spoken of in Exod. xxi. 5, the genuine Communicant is one who has set his ear to the doorpost of the household of faith, declaring, with all possible emphasis—"My choice is made ;

it is final and irreversible ; I love my Master ; I will not go out free." For him the true freedom consists in abiding within, not in going out. He recognises that he is Christ's by purchase, by consent, for ever. And this being so, he may be expected, in the coming days, to resist consistently all attempts to withdraw his allegiance from his Master. Intermittent loyalty, vacillation, irresolution—these are the bane of many a so-called Christian life ; while decision of Christian character is for others at once their comfort and their strength. We are to wear the badge of our Christianity in a spirit of meekness. But if any would tamper with our loyalty, we may point to it with something of the sternness of insulted honour and outraged affection, saying—"Know ye not that I belong to Christ for ever? My allegiance to Him is not to be shaken. Threats, enticements, are alike in vain. Henceforth let no man trouble me."

(4.) A spirit of *patient, practical obedience to the Saviour's will*. Every true prayer has in the heart of it a holy resolution. The Communion Table is the scene of many an earnest petition, and likewise of many a sacred vow. We are not to look for the fulfilment of the one, and to be neglectful of the fulfilment of the other. When we leave the Feast, we are to meet the demands of daily life under a deep and abiding sense of responsibility as well as of gratitude : "Thy vows are upon me, O God ; I will render praises unto Thee" (Ps. lvi. 12). It should be the constant question with us, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" If we are truly Christ's, then we shall not be in-

different to the second part of the Apostle's avowal—"Whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts xxvii. 23). There are some who profess to be His, and yet do not give themselves actively to His service. Be it yours, with St Paul, to glory in the name, "a servant of Jesus Christ"—the love of the Lord, your motive; the glory of the Lord, your end; the word of the Lord, your rule; and the joy of the Lord, your strength. And if the unfolding future should disclose for you a service of suffering rather than of active duty, seek grace to glorify the Lord even in the fires. Never forget that He is your Prince as well as your Saviour.

(5.) A spirit of *loving interest in the concerns of Christ's Church*, and in all that is fitted to promote the highest wellbeing of the world.

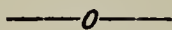
Your interest in the Church of Christ ought to shew itself by what you are as well as do in the particular congregation of which you are a member. If you have any particular gift or aptitude, do not hold it back, but freely consecrate it to the service of Christ through the Church. Your own congregation ought to be somewhat the better because of your presence in it. At least by your character and walk, you should continually seek to commend Christianity to others, and to be, so far as in you lies, a strength to your minister, and to the sacred cause he represents. The spirit of love is not really expressed at the Communion Table if it does not permeate the congregational life in the intervals between successive Communion seasons; and you will do much if you contribute to the maintenance of a warm and loving Christian atmosphere.

Seek that your "conversation"—all your coming and going among your fellow-worshippers—may be "as it becometh the Gospel of Christ" (Phil. i. 27). If you are an idler or a backbiter throughout the year, your sitting at the Table of the Lord at particular seasons will do little, spiritually, either for yourself or for those associated with you. It will not prevent you from being a stumbling-block to those who are without, and a source of weakness to those whom you should regard and treat as brethren and fellow-soldiers in the Gospel cause. If, on the other hand, you model your character and life on the 13th of 1st Corinthians, you will be a blessing and a joy to all around you.

And if, in the community outside your own congregation, you can be of any Christian service, you are taken bound by Christ in your sacramental act to be it. As a citizen,—in so far as you can be of influence in matters pertaining to the wellbeing of the village, town, city, district, commonwealth to which you belong, — you ought to aim at the advancement of the Christian cause.

The great foreign policy of the Kingdom of Christ—which we call the Foreign Mission enterprise—should be no less dear to your heart than the work of Christ at home. You should familiarise yourself with the centres in which your own Church is carrying on Christ's work among the heathen; you should pray for the missionaries; and give a due proportion of your means to the promotion of aggressive work abroad, as well as to the maintenance of Christian ordinances and enterprises at home. Remember, and seek to get others to re-

member with you, the missionary watchword—"Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."



CHAPTER VI.

CLOSING COUNSELS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS.

34. CONTINUANCE AND THE SECRET OF IT.—The great difficulty which young Christians have to reckon with is, to *maintain* the spirit of the Communion. A Christianity of fits and starts is a poor and ineffective thing: and every means should be used by us, day by day, in dependence upon the Spirit's blessing, to prevent ours from being a Christianity of that kind.

It is said in Ezekiel xxxix. 14, regarding an arduous piece of work that had to be done in order to the cleansing of the land—"And they shall sever out *men of continuance*" (marg.). Here you have a good name for true servants of Jesus Christ—*men of continuance*. He expects His followers to continue in His love (John xv. 9), to continue in His word (John viii. 31), to continue in prayer (Col. iv. 2), to continue in well-doing (Rom. ii. 7). Those who so continue hardly need to be "severed out" in the Christian Church. The truth is, that in every congregation and in every Christian community the men and women, young men and maidens, "of continuance" sever out themselves.

The grace of steadfastness is one which is greatly admired in the world, and which is not less needed

in the Church. It is interesting to find how beautifully it was exhibited among the primitive believers ; and not less interesting to find that the secret of it is expressly disclosed in Acts ii. 42—"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Like these early Christians, if you would be steadfast you must continue in Apostolic *doctrine*. You are not to count yourself above the need of teaching. "Sound doctrine is the food of faith." It will be well for you to be in your place on the Lord's Day, at both services of His Church, to hear God's word expounded from the pulpit : and you should make it a matter of conscience to give yourself systematically to the personal study of Divine truth—"the Word of God's grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." Other books may be set aside. The newspaper may without much harm be left for a day untasted. But let there never be a day in which the Bible is left unopened. If you are to be strong, it will be by having God's Word abiding in you (1 John ii. 14).

You must continue likewise in Apostolic *fellowship*. Seek the companionship of the good. Enjoy the best of Christian company. If you surrender yourself to worldly companions, your soul will inevitably be, "like the dyer's hand, subdued to what it works in." If, on the other hand, you cultivate the companionship of the Christ-like, your intercourse with them will increasingly prove a fountain of mutual benefit and delight. Many in

our jails are cursing their own past, and will give you as the explanation of their evil plight—"bad company." Many in our Churches, on the other hand, are thanking God for what true friendship has been to them and made them. If you can say with one of old—"I am a companion of all them that fear Thee," that will tell for good upon your character day by day. Above all, since Apostolic fellowship implies fellowship with the Best of Friends, others will have to take knowledge concerning you that you are of the company of Jesus.

Again, you must continue in *breaking of bread*. That is, you are to make diligent use of the social ordinances of religion. This particular Ordinance of the Supper you are to observe, not only once but as often as opportunity is given, in a spirit of faith, and hope, and love ; and, so observed, it will be for your progressive strengthening. Experience bears out the truth of the observation—"A first Communion is the most striking, but not always, perhaps not often, the most joyful or the most edifying. It is the privilege of true religion, that its delights may go on increasing." As has already been enforced, the Lord's Supper is peculiarly the strengthening Ordinance for believers. You owe it to yourself, as well as to your Lord, to take thankful part in it from time to time. How often has incipient declension been checked, faltering faith confirmed, flagging courage revived, through the return of the Communion season, with its heart-searching, heart-comforting observances ! How many fainting followers of the Lord Jesus it has helped to continue steadfast !

And then, like the early believers, you must continue *in prayer*. To neglect this is to live in an implied independence of God ; it is to court failure, and to induce, in the long run, wavering and defeat. How true it is that "Apostacy begins at the closet!" No matter what else we observe, if we neglect this, we shall be spiritual weaklings, and cannot expect, or be expected, to continue steadfast. But real prayer,—not merely "saying our prayers," but really coming into the presence of God with our actual necessities and desires, is a most strengthening influence in any human life. Even apart from other blessings given in direct answer to prayer, how blessed is the power it exerts within the heart. In bringing us into contact with the Fountain of Life, and bracing our souls with the atmosphere of heaven, prayer is the mightiest restorative of moral and spiritual energy. Make sure, then, to have stated seasons, day by day, for the enjoyment of this sacred and strengthening privilege. But also seize throughout the day moments of upward aspiration. And do not neglect opportunities of social prayer. If you wish to be a strong believer, and your congregation to be in the real sense a strong congregation, encourage by example and precept a hearty attendance at the Prayer-meeting. If your life is a very busy one, there is all the more need for you to secure a Sabbath hour in the middle of the week, that, withdrawing yourself from the cares and worries of the world, you may, with kindred souls, commune together of the things of the Kingdom, and strengthen yourself in the Lord your God.

35. JOYFULNESS AND ITS SECRET.—There is another thing which we may well learn from the early believers, besides their steadfastness, and that is their spirit of Christian *joyfulness*.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy” (Gal. v. 22); and theirs was a joy rooted in love. So ardent and diffused was the spirit of mutual love, that, in view of the special necessities of the time, it found expression in a kind of Christian communism—not the socialism which seeks by compulsion to level down, but the socialism which seeks in love to level up. And the joy was no less diffused and frequent than the love to Christ, and to one another, out of which it sprang. “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people” (Acts ii. 46-47).

The Christian has of all men the best right to rejoice. We do an injury to ourselves and to Christianity if we associate religion with gloom. The news of Christ’s coming was heralded of angels, as “good tidings of great joy;” and after His coming He was able to tell His followers, even in the midst of tribulation, to be of “good cheer.”

There cannot be a doubt that the joyous spirit of these early Christians was not only becoming, but beneficial, both to themselves and others. “They did eat their meat with gladness;” and it did them all the more good on that account, for cheerfulness of spirit is favourable to spiritual as well as physical health. And, through their

joyfulness, they were not only "praising God" all the time, but they were "having favour with all the people." Christian cheerfulness is a means of grace to the world. The bright, sunny atmosphere of these primitive believers—in public and in private—was not without its effect upon other hearts and lives besides their own. It is significantly noted—"And the Lord added to the Church daily such as were being saved." Doubtless one of the means which the Lord blessed toward drawing those others into the way of peace was the attractive power of a living, gladsome Christianity in those who already knew Him.

For the Lord's sake, then, and for the world's sake, as well as for your own, cultivate this spirit of Christian gladness. It is a perversion of Christianity which makes doubt a mark of discipleship, and gloominess a token of advancement in the spiritual life. It is a God-dishonouring thing for a believer to go hanging his head like a bulrush, as though God's Son were unable to atone for his guilt, God's Spirit unable to work complete deliverance from sin, God's Providence unable to take care of him, and of the persons and interests dear to his heart. "Rejoice evermore!" For so you will be praising God; and so also you will be dispelling the world's delusion that spiritual earnestness and social moroseness have some necessary connection with one another. In the spirit and under the limitations suggested by the Apostle—"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification" (Rom. xv. 2).

Now, the secret of maintaining this spirit of joy-

fulness is also disclosed to us in the account we have of the early Christians.

The *frequency of their approaches to Christ* had much to do with it. It was their delight to draw near to Him, to contemplate Him as the object of their deepest faith and warmest devotion. Had they sorrow? They could go to Him to soothe it. Had they sin? They could go to Him for pardon and for cleansing from it. Had they a burdensome sense of failure? They could turn to His outstretched hand of help, that He might lead them on. Had they losses? Nothing, they felt, could deprive them of His love.

Their *singleness of heart* did also much for the maintaining of their joyfulness. The double-minded man is not only unstable, but unhappy in all his ways. The divided heart is ill at ease. it does not know true peace and can expect no continuity of happiness. But they were single-hearted: and the one heart they had was all given to Him who had bought them with His blood.

Their *Christian brotherliness* too was a great and constant element in their joy. It was "with one accord," we are told, that they met for the worship and service of God: and, as we find it recorded a little afterwards, they were "of one heart and one soul." Each rejoiced in the other's happiness: each sympathised with all, and all with each. There was no strife, or selfishness, or isolation known among them. They were a household of faith, a true brotherhood in Christ: for "great grace was upon them all" (Acts iv. 33).

And then, lastly, their *readiness for service and*

sacrifice both expressed and strengthened the spirit of alacrity that was in them. They were happy in being well employed. They appreciated the benefits of religion so much for themselves, and their hearts were so full of love for souls, that they sought to lead many to be sharers with them in the blessings of salvation. They felt it their mission to be joy-bearers to the world about them; and so bent were they upon the work that they had no time to fret themselves into the unhappiness that comes through indolence, and the busy-bodying spirit which can only carp at the conduct or the work of others.

36. **THE SOURCE OF STRENGTH.**—No doubt, as a Christian, and as a young Christian, you will have your trials to meet and your burdens to bear. It will not be all sweetness and light. Daily praise (Acts ii. 47; Ps. cxlv. 2) may not be always easy, along with the daily cross (Luke ix. 23). But you are not called to face your difficulties and carry your burdens alone. The disciple's relation to burden-bearing is very comprehensively laid down in three short precepts of God's word. There is, first, the Law of *Christian Responsibility*—"Let every man bear his own burden" (Gal. vi. 5). We cannot possibly devolve *our* duty on another. Then there is the Law of *Christian Sympathy*—"Bear ye one another's burdens" (Gal. vi. 2). If we do not feel and pray for others in their toil and trouble, and try to help them, we are *not* "fulfilling the law of Christ." There is also, however, the Law of *Christian Dependence*—"Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee" (Ps. lv. 22). Only by

thankful obedience to this call, can we possibly discharge aright the other two. Beginning, then, at the proper end, with Christian Dependence, be it yours to advance in a spirit of Christian Sympathy and under a sense of Christian Responsibility, to meet the coming time.

There is a beautiful name given by Jesus to the Third Person in the Godhead that may be of constant comfort for you here. He is called the "Paraclete" (John xiv. 16, etc.). The word is translated in our Authorised version *the Comforter*; but it means, literally, "One to be called upon for help," or One ready to come alongside to our assistance. Such is the Holy Spirit. He is the "other Helper," whom Jesus, in view of his own return to Heaven, promised to send, and has sent, for the solace, and strengthening, and sanctification of His disciples.

Cherish the remembrance that the Holy Ghost is no mere influence, but a living, loving Person, interested in you and disposed to further your highest good. Be ever sensitive lest you grieve Him (Eph. iv. 30): for, just because He loves you greatly, you may wound Him easily. And seek that you may be not only affected but "filled" by the Spirit (Eph. v. 18). This is the true secret not only of spiritual comfort but of spiritual power. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses" (Acts i. 8).

37. **THE LORD'S RETURN.**—Take this fact also as a constant encouragement—*the Lord Himself is coming*. "I will come again," He says, "and receive you unto myself." What love Christ has for us, and what confidence He has in ours! He is not

forgetting us : and He takes it for granted that we count it the best news and the brightest of all prospects that He is coming one day to take us to be where He is Himself. "Till He come"—what a thrill these few words should awaken in the breast of "all them that *love* His appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 8). How John and Peter and the rest loved His appearing ! "It is the Lord." His coming meant for them the sunlight in a world of darkness. So with Paul, and with many a saint since Apostolic days. "If you were actually told, Doctor," said one to Dr Andrew Bonar, "that Christ was coming, what would you do?" "Why," said that saintly, John-like disciple, "I would just run to meet Him !"

We are charged to be "*looking* for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour" (Tit. ii. 13). This was conspicuously the attitude of the early Church ; and Christ's coming is for us too, if we are His, not "that awful terror," but "that blessed hope." We know not when our Lord shall come. The hour of His coming, to us and to the world, is among the secret things which belong unto God. But we should be found looking for it, in fond hope and eager expectation.

We are not only to love and to look for His appearing, but to do what we can to prepare the way for it. In viewing such a glorious consummation, loyalty, as well as gratitude and hope, may find expression. We are to be found "*looking for and hastening* the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet. iii. 12). What an honour, as heralds of light and pioneers of the Kingdom, to prepare the

way of the Lord ! What a privilege to hasten, by prayer and effort, His approach—"Thy Kingdom come !" "Even so, come, Lord Jesus !"

Till He come reminds us of the Feast at which we shall have, in full fruition, the joys of which at the earthly board we have only an emblem, and, at best, a feeble foretaste. For the Lord will be there in His visible presence ; and when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. The precious Ordinance, which has been so often helpful on earth, will then be resigned without a sigh. And it will not be strange that it should be so.

You have a dear friend absent in a far-off land. You cannot see his face, or hear his voice ; and you cannot bridge the distance which separates between you, though oftentimes you would. But you have beside you a letter from him, which tells you of his love, and which, in hours of weariness and despondency, you read and read again. And with the letter you have a picture of him, which ever and anon you take out, that you may sit and gaze upon it, till affection's tears bedim your eyes. It looks so life-like, and makes you almost feel as though *he* were by your side ! These are your treasures, which you would not part with for a great deal. Silver and gold would be simply *no* recompense for them.

But a time comes when you no longer set the same value on them. It would seem as if you viewed them with indifference now. At the most, you are only heard to tell how much you valued them once, and what a comfort they used to be to

your lonely heart. What, then, has happened? Has your love cooled to your absent friend? No. Has estrangement come between you, so that now the mementos of him are put away, lest the sight should bring you only bitterness and pain? Nay; but he himself has come, and fulfilled the pledge they gave, of the fulness of joy which awaited you at his return. And now the poor letter, once so much prized, is of less moment than it was, because you clasp the hand that wrote it; and the picture you so much treasured is little heeded now, because you gaze into the living, loving face of which at best it was the imperfect semblance.

So is it with these Ordinances of Grace. When Glory comes, they will make way for it, and sink into the background. The written Word will not be needed when you clasp hands with the Word made flesh—the glorified Son of Man. The Sacrament will not be needed when the Lord it commemorated is come, and you behold in His actual, glorified presence the Lamb that once was slain. The Letter and the Picture may then be put aside, though still you may remember them sometimes, and lovingly breathe into your Saviour's ear how precious they were to you, so long as you were absent from Himself.

“I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again,” is Christ's own word to us at the Table of Communion. “Till He come” is the echo of her Lord's sweet voice, which the Church in no age of her history will ever suffer to die. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

The Communion on earth is the betrothal, the

mutual pledge of the holiest hopes of everlasting fellowship. God the Father, and God the Spirit, witness between us, till the glad day of heavenly consummation. "Father, I will," is the unfaltering voice of the Bridegroom, looking forward, and never doubting that His wish will be realised—"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am!" "Father, I will," is the response of the Bride—"to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." That is the betrothal here on earth.

And yonder, where the shining of God's countenance is the light, is the Marriage Feast; at which the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, now taken home within the palace of the King, is seated by His side, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband. And nothing shall ever disturb the blissful union with each other, which rests upon "the everlasting covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20). Whom God hath joined together, none shall ever put asunder there.

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APPENDIX II.

The Catechisms, on the Lord's Supper.

The subjoined Summary of Doctrine, from the Westminster Assembly's Shorter (91-7) and Larger (104-5) Catechisms, may with advantage be read continuously :—

A Sacrament is an holy Ordinance instituted by Christ ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the New Covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

The Lord's Supper is a Sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, His death is showed forth ; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of His body and blood, with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

The Sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them ; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them.

It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon Him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience ; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

It is required of them that receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that during the time of the administration of it, with all holy reverence and attention they wait upon God in that Ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on His death and sufferings, and thereby stir up themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces ; in judging themselves, and sorrowing

for sin ; in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on Him by faith, receiving of His fulness, trusting in His merits, rejoicing in His love, giving thanks for His grace ; in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints.

The duty of Christians, after they have received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is seriously to consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what success ; if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfil their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance on that Ordinance ; but if they find no present benefit, more exactly to review their preparation to, and carriage at, the Sacrament ; in both which, if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time ; but, if they see they have failed in either, they are to be humbled and to attend upon it afterwards with more care and diligence.

It may be convenient to give here also "that abridgment commonly called *The Apostles' Creed*," which the Westminster Assembly annexed to their Catechisms, as "a brief sum of the Christian faith, agreeable to the Word of God, and anciently received in the Churches of Christ" :—

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth : and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried . He descended into hell (hades) ; the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty ; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the holy catholic Church ; the communion of saints , the forgiveness of sins ; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

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