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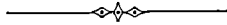
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Thomist bog. The conclusion is inevitable that, in the Roman Church of to-day, Holy Scripture does not occupy the commanding position it once held for more than twelve hundred years. The teaching of the Fathers of the first six centuries, though referred to with high commendation in the Pope's Letter, is more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

An excuse is suggested for such a practice by the assertion of the Encyclical that "it must be recognised that the Sacred Writings are wrapt in a certain religious obscurity, and that no one can enter into their interior without a guide."¹ Patristic testimony, on the other hand, is flatly contradictory to this statement. The Fathers say most distinctly that in the things pertaining to salvation the Scriptures need no interpreter. The witness of St. Chrysostom is sufficient: "The Apostles and prophets have made all the things they published manifest and clear, and they have expressed them to us, just like ordinary secular teachers, so that each person by himself, from his own private reading, can learn the things which are said."²

The suggested difficulties of Holy Scripture, the expressed necessity of special guidance, the commendation of a difficult and obsolete system of preparatory studies practicable only for a select class, leave, after a careful perusal of the Papal Letter, the conviction that there is not, after all, any new departure to be found in the Vatican counsels on the subject matter of the Manifesto, and that the Holy Book will remain as jealously guarded and restricted from lay use as it has been for some centuries past.

D. MORRIS.



ART. IV.—WORTHY RECEIVERS.

THE beautiful city of Corinth lay smiling between its azure seas. It was a large and important commercial town, spread at the feet of a gigantic rock, like the Rock of Dumbar-ton, 2,000 feet high, which formed its citadel. The ancient city, which was one of great beauty and splendour, had been destroyed in a former generation by the Roman general Mummius. For nearly a century it lay desolate; but a new Corinth had risen from the ashes of the old. Julius Cæsar, recognising the importance of the isthmus as a military and mercantile position, sent to it a colony of Italians, who were

¹ P. 16.

² Hom. III. de Laz.

chiefly freedmen. The new establishment rapidly increased by the mere force of its position. Within a few years it grew, as Singapore has grown in our days—from nothing to an enormous city. The Greek merchants, who had fled on the Roman conquest to the island of Delos and the neighbouring coasts, returned to the home of their fathers. The Jews settled themselves in a place most convenient for the business of commerce and for communication with Jerusalem. The beautiful temples were restored. The city was again shining with marble and gold.

It was the first day of the week. The Christians who had been converted by St. Paul had, of course, no church in which to assemble. It was not for many generations afterwards, when the age of persecutions had ceased, that places of worship could be built. Nor was there a day of rest. The Jews, indeed, observed their Sabbath the day before; but for Gentile Christians there was no such day of rest until the edict of Constantine in the fourth century. But they held gatherings for common worship in each other's houses. There would be among them a few more prosperous middle-class men who would have rooms large enough to admit a sufficient number. Towards some such room, then, they were now making their way along the various streets. With their meeting for worship they combined the Greek national custom of a social meal in common. In that warm and delightful climate the Greeks were not in the habit of having more than one set meal in the day. The others were just short snatches for the satisfaction of hunger and the support of nature. The one chief meal they often ate in common, the members of several families together. This custom the Christians naturally retained, making their Christianity the basis of their union for eating together. This day you would see them carrying baskets of food towards their well-to-do brother's house. Those who were better off would have large baskets carried by slaves. Some would be so poor that they would have little or nothing to contribute.

The result was very different from what might have been expected by St. Paul after his prolonged stay in Corinth. It appears that the wealthier people brought much more than they wanted, in order to make a display and cause the poor people to feel their inferior position. It became a kind of picnic. There seems to have been a sort of eager, scrambling spirit about it all.¹ Some of them wanted to be first. Some of them wanted to have the best things. Some wanted to get most of the food and wine. Many of them ate too much.

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 20, etc.

Some actually became intoxicated. In the midst of it all they celebrated the Christian mysteries, the memorial of the death of Christ. Can anything be imagined more unlike the Lord's Supper? Can you possibly picture to yourselves anything more unlike our service of Holy Communion? Is there any member of any congregation throughout the length and breadth of the Church of England, who could possibly be guilty of such blasphemous irreverence?

What was the natural consequence? Such persons, as St. Paul said, stood self-condemned. They ate and drank their own condemnation, not remembering that this assembly was in reality the Lord's Body—His Church. St. Paul says nothing about damnation. The word he uses means condemnation, judgment, decision—nothing more. He is not thinking in the least about the place of punishment or the Last Day—simple condemnation. Such people condemned their own conduct. Nothing could be simpler or plainer. St. Paul was thinking of nothing of the kind. What he meant was that if these riotous, disorderly communicants once thought about it, they could not help seeing that such conduct was indecent and scandalous. And then there were other results. What follows now if people eat too much, or drink to excess, even once? They are ill the next day. What follows if they form the habit of indulging in superfluous food, and in frequent intoxication? They are visited by all kinds of diseases of the digestion. They become a mass of diseases. Physicians will tell you that most of the diseases of society come from the pleasures of the table. So it is now with gluttons and drunkards, and so it was then. Many of them became weak and sickly, says St. Paul. It was the just and natural order of God's providence. It would require a miracle to prevent gluttons and drunkards from becoming weak and sickly. Perhaps God punished them besides; but that would be enough.

One consequence more there was. For this cause, says St. Paul, many sleep. That is his word for the absence of religious life. How could there be any spiritual vitality in people who behaved in such a scandalous and abominable manner, turning the very Supper of the Lord, as St. Paul pathetically calls it, that sacred, solemn, holy, touching festival, into a noisy and unseemly picnic? Of course they slept; of course there was no religious life in them at all.

“When ye come together into one place, THIS is not to eat the Lord's Supper! For in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken! What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have

not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh in this unworthy manner, eateth and drinketh his own condemnation, not seeing that he is in the midst of the Lord's Body, the assembly of His Church. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat wait for one another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together with condemnation."

There you have it all. That is the whole account of the matter. There is nothing behind. Take care, in any application of these words, that you do not merely take them by themselves, snipping off what was before and behind, without making any reference to the scrambling, unseemly, impious picnic of the Corinthians.

Now there is a serious contrast between the days of the early Church and our own—not in this matter, to which I shall again presently refer, but in the point of attendance at Holy Communion. Communion has fallen very much into neglect amongst modern Christians. In the early days, the Lord's Supper was the principal part of public worship every Sunday. Every Christian partook of it regularly. If he failed for three Sundays together to participate in the common pledge of union with Christ and with the brethren, then he was *ipso facto* excommunicated. With us it is just the reverse. It is only a very small minority in our modern congregations who remain to partake when the Holy Communion is celebrated and administered. The rest troop out of church at the close of morning prayer as if they had done their duty, and anything farther was no concern of theirs. Of course, some have communicated at the early service. But that accounts for a very few among the vast number of professing Christians. The present Archbishop of Canterbury, in his last Charge in St. Paul's as Bishop of London, to the clergy of his diocese, told them that in the previous year on Easter Day, the day of all others when the Prayer-Book insists on every baptized grown-up Christian coming anew to pledge his faith and loyalty to his Lord by receiving the emblems of salvation, as far as calculations could be made out, out of three and a half millions of people in the diocese, only 110,000 partook of the Lord's Supper in the churches of the Church of England. And yet, as I say, Easter Day is the one typical day of all

others when Christians are urged to avail themselves of that privilege.

Perhaps it is partly the fault of those who arranged, or still arrange, our services. Possibly the morning service is too long: possibly the attention and devotion of most people is exhausted before the point arrives for Communion.

Perhaps some persons shrink back from some vague notion that, if they are known to partake of Communion, they will be put on a moral pedestal where it will be difficult for them to remain, forgetting that there is nothing required of Communion people—as they are sometimes absurdly and disloyally called—which is not required from every professing Christian who wishes to be considered a living member of Christ; and that the only difference between these so-called Communion people and those who are not, is that the one set have found out for themselves the most direct means of grace and Divine help, and the others, alas! have not.

Perhaps, also, many persons have a lingering feeling of alarm at the very solemn denunciations in the Prayer-Book, adopted from the language of St. Paul to the Corinthians, addressed to outrageous offenders against public morality and decency if they should dare to present themselves, and so place themselves in the category of the disorderly communicants at Corinth. That adaptation of those words has been greatly misunderstood. It is with the last of these obstacles that I wish to deal in this paper.

Now, at the time when our present Communion Office was compiled from the old liturgies, the state of ungodliness and evil living brought on by the Dark Ages was exceedingly gross and exceedingly prevalent. And yet, remember, that all professing Christians were supposed to be communicants. The practice of the unreformed Church had made Communion extremely difficult. As a matter of fact, men for the most part communicated only once a year—at Easter. These difficulties were removed by the Reformation; and, for fear of sacrilege, our forefathers mentioned the reasons for abstaining from Communion in very plain terms, terms which astonish us by their nature. We should not have supposed that anybody coming under these few disgraceful heads would have thought of coming near the feast. These terms can apply to few, if any, of those who form our regular Christian congregations in these days. We are all aware that in our times, unfortunately, church-goers are only a minority of the population. Our regular Christian congregations rather need encouraging and stirring up to warmth, earnestness, zeal, and reality. Think of the list of people who were the only ones whom our forefathers wished to prevent from participation:

“Therefore if any of you be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of His Word, an adulterer, or be in malice, or envy, or *in any other grievous crime*, repent you of your sins, or else come not to that Holy Table.”

I do not think that anyone in our modern congregations is likely to be a habitual blasphemer of God, a deliberate hinderer or slanderer of His Word, an adulterer, or living in black, malignant malice or envy, or in any other grievous crime. Sins you have. Sins we all have. The heart knoweth its own bitterness; and those sins of yours you bring to God for pardon at that glorious service when we specially plead the passion, death, and sacrifice of Christ.

It is against these notorious offenders whom the Prayer-Book wishes to keep away—the blasphemers of God, the hinderers or slanderers of His Word, the adulterers, the malicious, those whose hearts are full of bitter envy, or who are guilty of any other grievous crime—that our forefathers adopted the serious language of St. Paul to the Corinthians; not against the trembling sinner who comes to sue for pardon and relief. It is in reference to these notorious offenders, and the imminent danger of their presence, that they inserted these words:

“So is the danger great if we receive the same unworthily. For then we are guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ our Saviour; we eat and drink our own condemnation, not considering the Lord’s Body; we kindle God’s wrath against us; we provoke Him to plague us with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death.”

If any of us wish to behave as the Corinthians did, or if we come under the few, distinct, black and terrible heads of impossible receivers in the Prayer-Book, then we should be right in applying these words of St. Paul in some sort to ourselves. But not till then. The unworthy receivers St. Paul was thinking of were the impious gluttons and drunkards. The unworthy receivers the Prayer-Book was thinking of were the blasphemers, the slanderers of Scripture, the adulterers, and the like. But do not allow those words to be misunderstood. Do not tell the poor conscience-stricken sinner who longs to taste and see how gracious the Lord is that some mysterious visitation of disease is the punishment of all unworthiness alike. In that sense none of us are worthy. Christ our Lord has told us that disease does not come in that way, but as it came to the Corinthians, as it would have come to the notorious evil-livers at the time of the Reformation, by way of natural consequence of their evil-living. Do not allow the hesitating sinner to be told that, if he comes to the spiritual banquet of Christ’s dying love, our Heavenly Father

is waiting to pounce upon him like a lion if he is not in a perfect condition, because Christ and St. Paul have told us that God is longing and yearning to receive us, and that we can never have any righteousness or worthiness of our own. In Christ's name do not let us misinterpret St. Paul's words to those riotous Corinthians, or our Prayer-Book's application of them to blasphemers and adulterers. The Communion was meant for sinners seeking pardon and grace, not for righteous persons who need no repentance.

Think of our Saviour. How it must distress Him to see such a fallacy prevailing amongst us, the very contrary of what He was always teaching! "Come unto Me, *all ye that are weary and heavy laden,*" He said; not those who think they have made themselves perfect. When He allowed the poor harlot to wash His feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head, He was not threatening to punish her with diseases because she was not worthy. When He was sitting in that upper room that evening in Jerusalem, that evening before He went out into the Garden of Gethsemane, and gave His disciples the bread and the wine which He had blessed, and said, "This is My Body, this is My Blood," and knew all the time that on that very evening they would all basely desert Him and flee, and some of them would even deny Him—do you think that at that moment He was wishing to punish them with diseases because they were not worthy? Read the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, and you will see what He was thinking of. "Holy Father," He was saying, "keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me." "Let not your heart be troubled." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." "Ye are My friends." "I go to prepare a place for you." Yet they were not worthy receivers in the Pharisaic and mistaken sense of the word. That very night, a few short hours after they had received the bread from His holy hands, and had drunk from the cup after His holy lips had touched it, they all forsook Him and fled.

And besides that, what was Christ always saying about diseases and death? Why, He was always trying to teach His disciples that diseases were not the arbitrary punishment of sin. The man that was blind was not blind because of his own sin or the sin of his parents. The men on whom the Tower of Siloam fell were not sinners above other people, nor even the Galileans whom Pilate slew near the altar when the sacrifices were being performed. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." The tares are left with the wheat till the harvest. As a plain matter of fact, Christ teaches us that diseases and sundry

kinds of death do not come except very rarely as the direct punishment of unworthiness, but as the natural consequence of evil-doing, and usually in the natural course of God's providence.

No! the warning in the Prayer-Book which is most generally applicable to modern congregations is not that against the blasphemers, the slanderers of the Bible, the adulterers, and the like, who are not found in the small number of those who in these days attend church, but that equally solemn denunciation against those of the congregation who disregard the Eucharistic Feast :

“This He Himself hath commanded ; which if ye shall neglect to do, consider with yourselves how great injury ye do unto God, and how sore punishment hangeth over your heads for the same ; when ye wilfully abstain from the Lord's Table, and separate from your brethren, who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food.”

The Prayer-Book description of the Eucharist is that Christ “hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death, *to our great and endless comfort.*”

The requirements of the Prayer-Book are exceedingly broad, exceedingly simple, and applicable alike to all those who wish to be considered sincere Christians, however feeble and imperfect may be their endeavours :

“Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in His holy ways ; draw near with faith, and *take this holy Sacrament to your comfort.*”

The Prayer-Book strikes a deep penitent note of personal insufficiency throughout the whole service. What could be more humble and self-distrustful, what less suggestive of achieved worthiness and perfection, than the words of the General Confession ? “We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed . . . the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable.” What are the words of comfort which follow ? “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden” ; “God gave His only-begotten Son, that whoso believeth should not perish” ; “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” ; “If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father.”

And, again, what could be less self-reliant or more utterly dependent on God than the prayer of humble access ? “We do not presume to come to this Thy Table trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies. We

are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table."

And even though we have received the pledges of God's love, the note of personal emptiness and self-depreciation is still the same: "Although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto Thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech Thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences."

Holy Communion is not a mystic rite for the initiated few; it is the great and constant means of grace for all needy and sin-stricken believers. Our Lord once for all described the attitude of our Heavenly Father towards even the most sinful of His sons, when they turn again to Him, in the inestimably precious parable of the Prodigal Son. "He arose and came to his Father. But when he was yet a great way off—when he was yet a great way off—his father saw him, and had compassion, and *ran*, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' But before he could get out all the words he had prepared, the father was calling aloud to his servants, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him! Kill the fatted calf, and let us have such a feast and banquet as we never had before; let us eat and be merry! for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found!'"

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

ERRATUM.—Page 639, "Massiglio, the author of the '*Defensa Paris*,'" should read "Massiglio, the author of the '*Defensor Pacis*.'"

SWITZERLAND ONCE MORE.

August 19, 1899.

ONCE more I hear these mountain streams
 Down-rushing from their icy throne,
 The snow-drift thundering from the height,
 The waterfall's enchanted moan;
 Into the secret of the hills
 I mark the glaciers wind their way,
 Or pause to watch some fold of cloud
 Flushed with the rose of dying day.