

The Ministry of the Word and Sacraments.

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(Concluded from p. 264.)

I HAVE limited myself thus far mainly to an examination of the Ordinal as an evidence of the loyalty of the Church of England to the guidance of Scripture in her assignment of the relative values and the true proportion of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments respectively. The Ordinal, however, is only a sample of the entire Book of Common Prayer in this respect. In every other part of the book a like proportion is maintained. No exception can be found to this rule. The rubrics require that Morning and Evening Prayer, with their appointed Psalms, shall be said daily throughout the year. The calendar appoints four portions of Holy Scripture to be read daily. But nowhere does the Prayer-Book require, or even suggest, that there shall be a daily administration of the Holy Communion. It requires, indeed—and this we may consider the minimum, not the ideal, of obligation—that every parishioner shall communicate at least three times a year, of which Easter shall be one. It forbids a Communion except four (or three at the least) communicate with the priest. It does not even command, though it by no means forbids, a celebration of the Lord's Supper every Sunday and holy day, as is manifest from the first rubric after the Order for Administration. It certainly never contemplates a celebration without a sermon, the rubric being very distinct that after the Nicene Creed shall (not may) follow the sermon. Even in the Collects the prayer for the right use of the Holy Scriptures goes before the prayer for the ministers and stewards of Christ's mysteries. And although I am far from thinking that these mysteries do not include the Sacraments, yet I remember that in the New Testament the word "mystery" is never applied to the Sacraments, but to such marvellous revelations, once hidden; but in Christ unfolded,

as the manifestations of God in the flesh, His justification in the Spirit,¹ the witness of angels, the Gospel for the Gentiles, the faith of the heathen, the Ascension into glory. And it is in this large sense of "mystery" that the Collect for the Third Sunday in Advent would seem to use the word, seeing that the drift of its petitions is that the hearts of the disobedient may be turned to the wisdom of the just. The Baptist, by his preaching, was ordained to prepare the way for the First Coming of the Lord; and Christian ministers, by their preaching, are ordained to prepare the way for His Second Coming. And as in the Collects, so everywhere in the Prayer-Book. The sufficiency of the Scriptures takes precedence of the sufficiency of the Sacraments. The reception of the Sacraments is of immense importance, but the knowledge and obedience of the Word have an importance still more immense. We dishonour not the Scriptures alone, but the Sacraments also, by preferring the latter above the former, seeing that all things are dishonoured if not given their rightful place; and neither Scripture nor the Prayer-Book seems to me to admit of any doubt as to the relative position Divinely assigned to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the Church of Christ.

How far some of the branches of that Church have discarded this Divinely-assigned proportion is a matter of common knowledge. In one branch an eikon is often more greatly treasured than a New Testament; in another the Scriptures are withheld in free and full measure from the private searchings of the people, while in the public services a mutilated Sacrament is adoringly worshipped; in another the Scriptures have much more than their rightful precedence, and the Sacraments much less than their rightful honour. Here and there the Sacraments, in contradiction to both Scripture and primitive Church history, are practically ignored. True Anglican Churchmen can regard none of these extremes as acceptable, or even tolerable, in their own Communion. Her way is the middle way, the Gospel way, the way of right pro-

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 16.

portion in both faith and worship, the way Divinely prepared in Holy Scripture and faithfully pursued in all her authentic offices and documents.

But many declare, and not without some show of evidence, that the Church of England is to-day in great danger of forsaking this ancient, historic middle way, and of disturbing, if not denying, the Divine proportion of the Gospel. They are asking: What means the cry for the elevation of the Holy Communion to the throne of central honour in the English Church—a throne not to be approached after a meal, a throne gorgeously illumined, a throne before which no prostration is too low and no ceremonial too high? What means this splendid apparel for the celebrant, this rich and soul-subduing music, these clouds of incense, this awful keeping back from the Table of the Lord of the non-communicating worshippers, this daring re-introduction of Jewish and medieval terms and practices, these manuals for the altar, this Sacrifice of the Mass, in the English Church? What means this utter reversal and overthrow of the Divine proportion allotted in the New Testament, and accepted throughout the Prayer-Book, to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments respectively; this notable magnifying of one Gospel Sacrament so loftily above the other, and this glorifying of both Sacraments above the ministry of the Word? Doubtless part of the meaning may be found in the influences of reaction from the carelessness and irreverence of former days, when both Sacraments were often administered with slovenliness and in a beggarly fashion, when the font was hidden in a corner and the pulpit obscured the Table of the Lord. But is this the whole, or even the chief, meaning?

If the modern movement had gone no farther than the education of Churchmen in due reverence for the Sacraments, all men would have had good cause to be thankful. It is unquestionably meet and right that these blessed institutions of our Lord should be administered with impressive reverence and received with profound and grateful humility. No ceremonial

can be too solemn for their honour ; no reverence too profound for their worthiness, so long as it is not destructive of the inspired proportion of Gospel faith and Gospel worship. But these modern innovations, these returns to the customs of unscriptural ages, are altogether destructive of that proportion. They put first what Christ and His Apostles put second, and second (if not lower) what they put first. And it is impossible to hope that anything but evil, either for Church or nation, can be the ultimate issue of such a reversal of the revealed proportion and Divine relation of the ministry of the Word to that of the Sacraments.

Sometimes it is pleaded as a justification of this ornate and æsthetic exaltation of the Holy Communion that the Sacred Supper was the only ordinance instituted by Christ Himself and of which He was a partaker. Assuming this to be the case, it yet by no means follows that the ministry of the Holy Communion takes precedence of the ministry of the Word, or has greater glory attached to it. Nowhere in the New Testament is such precedence allowed. Had that precedence been Christ-given, it is incredible that the Apostles and Evangelists in their writings and habits should have overlooked or neglected it. Yet we find the Apostles giving themselves up continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.¹ In none of the inspired narratives are they recorded as giving themselves up to the ministry of the Sacraments. Far otherwise, as I have in this paper previously shown. The Pentecostal converts, indeed, were daily praising God in the Temple and breaking bread at home, or from house to house.² And we know from Pliny's rescript that this "breaking of bread together" was a recognized sign of membership in the Christian society. Would, indeed, that it were a more frequent—yea, universal—sign to-day! But there is no trace of this "breaking of bread," assuming it to be identical with the commemoration of the Supper, taking precedence of the ministry of the Word ; otherwise Apostles would unquestionably have so taught and so practised.

¹ Acts vi. 4.

² Acts ii. 46.

Moreover, if the presence of the Saviour be the ground on which precedence be accorded to the Communion, then what of fasting Communion and Communion in the evening? He instituted the Sacrament after supper.¹ It was "as they were eating" that Jesus took bread and said, "This is My body," and took the cup, saying, "This is My blood of the new testament." Neither the Saviour nor His Apostles at the first institution communicated fasting; nor did those of a later day, as the corruptions in the Corinthian Church testify.² Again, the original institution was at night, and if the breaking of bread at Emmaus be (as its illuminating results seem to warrant us in supposing it was) an administration of the Sacred Supper by our risen Lord Himself, then we know that that was in the evening also.³

Would it not be as reasonable to infer that because our Lord instituted His Supper in the evening and as His Apostles were eating, therefore all morning or fasting Communions are contrary to Scripture, as that because our Lord Himself instituted the Supper, therefore its administration takes precedence of the ministry of the Word? That He instituted the Supper makes the Supper Divinely sacred. It also justifies the Church in surrounding its administration with glory and honour, and in lifting it high above all materialistic considerations of food and time; but it is no justification for, according to that Sacrament, ascendancy over the Word. The Church has authority over rites and ceremonies, but it has no authority to make secondary that which the whole New Testament makes primary, or primary that which neither Christ nor His Apostles so exalted. In her Book of Common Prayer the Church of England loyally builds all her ministrations on the foundation-rock of the Apostles and Prophets, not on the shifting sands of Judaizing priests, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-Stone; and on no other foundation can either the Christian society or the Christian individual be safe and strong.

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 26, 27.

² 1 Cor. xi. 20 *et seq.*

³ St. Luke xxiv. 29.

This sacerdotal inversion of the Divine order in these great matters seems to me the gravest peril of the Church of England at the present day. It is not a small and accidental peril, but a peril vast and fundamental. No Church can be truly catholic, as I believe the Church of England is, which is not patient of great diversities in subsidiary matters. A catholic Church must have a catholic mind and a catholic heart. It must be the patron of a large liberty, the friend of all truth, the example of the highest love. A Church cannot be catholic and narrow. Neither can it be catholic and stationary. The world moves because it is a living world. The Church must move also or it will die. An historic Church rightly appeals to the past; a living Church works in the present; a Christian Church has visions of the future. But past history is to be the guide of the Church, not her domineering despot. The Church is the Bride of the living Lord, not the bond-slave of obsolete traditions. And so the Church has full right—a right inherent in all vitality and health—to adapt herself to her environment. It is a small thing to us now that the early Christians broke bread from house to house, and that they had no music or liturgical forms at their administrations of the Holy Supper. We are not in their case. Their customs would not suit either our age or our circumstances; therefore we preserve them not. We prescribe our own, and we prescribe them with much diversity; for the absence of diversity in customs, as in gifts, suited to the varying needs of men, is a sign of the absence of the Holy Ghost. Dead things are uniform. Where there is life there is also variety. You may make machines all on one pattern, but not men. Skulls have more of a common likeness than souls. And so where life is, and especially Divine life, there of necessity is diversity. This diversity is part of the glory of the English Church, one sign and seal of the dwelling within her of the Holy Ghost, the Author and Giver of her life.

But this full and free diversity in customs, usages, forms of worship, and the like, does not reach to essentials. We cannot change the essentials of our Christian faith, or their respective

values as they have been revealed to us. One of these essentials is the supreme authority of the teachings of Christ and His Apostles ; another is the necessity and benefit of the Holy Sacraments. These are unchangeable and never obsolete. And so also is their relation to each other, the Scriptures being primary, the Sacraments secondary. Neither our Lord nor His Apostles ever laid the same stress on the Sacraments as on the Scriptures ; and the Christian Church has no power, no authority, to take the stress from where they laid it and lay it where they laid it not.

If the relative positions of the Word and Sacraments were mere matters of custom, they would be rightly regarded as changeable ; but their true proportion is not merely customary ; it is fundamental to the integrity and progress of the Christian faith. Experience confirms revelation in this matter. For there is no instance in any age of a Church remaining true or strong which has reversed this relative order. The Greek Church has reversed this order—at least, partially ; and where is the renovating, converting influence of that Church to-day ? The Roman Church has wholly reversed it, and by the reversion has opened the flood-gates of error and made plain the downward path of priestcraft. Almost every new day beholds a new diminution of the influence of the Papacy upon intelligent religion and religious intelligence, a new revolt against the usurpation by a superstitious sacramentalism of the supreme authority belonging to the Word of God—a revolt which, alas ! though not unnaturally, finds not infrequent expression in hostility to religion of every kind. And signs are not wanting of the same kind of Nemesis dogging the heels of over-sacramentalism in the English Church to-day. I was in an Anglican church not long ago where one of these so-called Masses was being celebrated with all the pomp wherewith vestments and music and incense could magnify it. There must have been not fewer than four hundred persons in that church, and, excluding the clergy and choir, there were only six men besides myself. I am constantly hearing the same story. Earnest,

intelligent, spiritual men tell me they simply cannot go to church, because what they see and hear drags them down instead of lifting them up spiritually. It appeals to their senses, but leaves their reason numb and their spirits cold. Multitudes still go for the sake of their wives and families, for old sake's sake, for the sake of example to others, and, above all, because they desire to worship God in the public assembly. But the strain is growing very great, especially in country parishes where there is no choice of churches. Under the influence of this strain some are drifting to Nonconformity, some to private worship at home, and many more to week-end festivities and the non-observance of Sunday altogether. It is a deplorable state of things, but it is an inevitable result of over-sacramentalism. Man cannot invert the ways of God and not suffer for the inversion, however well-meant and sincere his object in the inversion may be. He cannot over-elevate the Sacraments without doing injury to the Word; he cannot under-estimate the Word without doing injury to the Sacraments; he cannot put either in the rightful place of the other without doing injury to both.

There, perhaps, never was an age which stood so sorely in need of the jealous maintenance of the Divine proportion between the ministry of the Word and Sacraments as the present. It is an age which, for the sake of the Sacraments themselves, needs better and truer and more constant instruction in the Word; for the Sacraments always revert to superstitions unless they are vitalized and their uses constantly unfolded by the teaching of the Word. Men need to feel their need of a Saviour before they can rightly value the blessings of the Sacraments. They who love the Saviour will generally love His Sacraments also. But the great office of the ministry of the Word is the conviction of sin and the setting forth of the Saviour. Let this, then, come first, according to the appointment of God. Let this be the central mission of the Church, and all the rest will, under God, duly follow. But make a Sacrament, apart from the Word, the central service, and both Saviour and

Sacrament will be losers thereby. Imminent danger lurks in the desire to have a costlier dress for the celebrant than the preacher ; it is a visible sign of the disordering of the Divine order. It was a wise and true proposal made by the Royal Commission, and supported by Convocation, in 1870, that the same vestments should be worn in administering the Sacraments as in all the other services of the Church. What those vestments should be is a matter of secondary moment ; the paramount requirement is that they should be the same for all services, or at least that the Holy Communion should not by any special dress or ornaments or other accompaniments be exalted above the Holy Word.

Half a century ago Dr. Pusey deprecated the introduction of Eucharistic vestments—"handsome dresses," he called them, tending "to make an idol of self while seeming to honour God and His Church." During that half-century many things have happened to make the caution far more imperative now than then. What the Church of England sorely needs to-day is not more "handsome dresses" for her clergy, but more clergy for whom the Word of God is a lamp to their feet and a light to their path—clergy who know their Bible, both in its text and its spirit, in whom its fires burn through to the very marrow of their ministry ; not professional or seminarist clergy, but clergy human in feeling, enlightened in thought, spiritual in heart and will, enthusiastically devoted to the glory of God and the service of man. Such clergy can best discharge, in dependence on the Holy Ghost, the ministry of God's Holy Word and Sacraments for the redemption of mankind.

In conclusion, I would desire to strike the same note with which I began. Both the ministry of the Word and Sacraments is essential to the life and power of a Christian Church. No glory too great can be given to the Sacraments so long as their Divine relation to the Word is not disturbed, the Word taking precedence of the Sacraments, and the Sacraments, as in the ministry of Christ and His Apostles, upholding the Word. Neither can the priesthood of the Christian ministry be too

highly magnified so long as it is a true catholic, Apostolic Christian priesthood—not an obsolete Judaizing, sacerdotalizing priesthood. It is the high and glorious office of the Christian priest to be the ordained representative of God to man and of man to God; but, except in this sense of setting forth to men the Sacrifice of the Saviour, once for all offered and incapable of repetition, and of offering the prayers and praises and gifts of men to God, he is not a priest. Even in this limited sense his prophetic takes precedence of his priestly office. This was the Divine order in New Testament times; it is the order of the Church of England to-day; and any attempt to overthrow this order, however unconscious—yea, well-intentioned the action of the overthrowers may be, is nothing less than to unchristianize the Church and to Judaize the Gospel.



Historical Records and Inspiration.

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IN a recent article¹ in the *CHURCHMAN* the opinion was asserted that the “essentials of Evangelicalism” do not involve any one particular attitude towards the modern criticism of the Bible. While this doctrine is as intelligible as it is acceptable to many persons, there are others who deny its soundness altogether. Quite recently circumstances have combined to force this divergence of opinion into prominence. At the Islington Clerical Meeting last January two papers were read in which the opposite position was maintained, and it was urged, in effect, that “Higher Critic” and “Evangelical” were contradictory terms. The representative character of the Islington meeting in relation to the Evangelical school of thought in the Church of England is generally recognized; and consequently

¹ “The Essentials of Evangelicalism,” by the Rev. F. S. Guy Warman, in the *CHURCHMAN* for October, 1910, pp. 750-758. See especially p. 751.