

The Place of the Lord's Supper in Divine Worship.

AN ADDRESS GIVEN BY THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER AT THE CHURCH HOUSE, WESTMINSTER, ON JANUARY 30.

THE place of the Lord's Supper in Divine worship depends ultimately on our conception of worship. For not only is worship anterior in point of time to the institution of the Lord's Supper, but it is also the larger and wider category in which the Lord's Supper must find its place. It is, of course, not only conceivable, but very probable, that our Lord instituted this ordinance with the express purpose of amplifying and clarifying our conception of worship. But it is not supposed by any one that it was His intention that it should supersede and abolish all other forms of worship. Private prayer, family prayer and even congregational prayer may be offered without any celebration of the Eucharist. However great the value that we assign to this particular service, it is one of many means of approach to God. It must, therefore, be in its essence and conception subject to the general laws which govern the access of man to his Maker.

Now, it is admitted by all that it rests with God and with God alone to prescribe the terms and modes upon and through which we, as sinful beings, and by sin cut off from communion with Him, may yet be restored to such communion. There is also a widespread, though not unanimous, consent, through many ages and races of mankind, that sacrifice is an essential condition of right approach to God. For the purposes of our inquiry we may accept this consent or instinct as true, for it is not at this point that difficulties about the Lord's Supper arise. It is also agreed that the only true and effective Sacrifice by which man can offer worship acceptable to God is the Sacrifice wrought once for all by our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross of Calvary. But the cleavage arises at this point. Is that Sacrifice upon the Cross efficacious for all times to all who rest their faith on it, so that no repetition or re-presentation of it is in harmony with the Will of God, or is it ordained by God that this Sacrifice should be repeated, as the Roman Catholics teach, or re-presented, as Anglo-Catholics teach, and be of avail with God, only, or at all events most effectively, through such

repetition or re-presentation? If the former view is true, two consequences follow :

1. The access of each sinner to God is direct, and is not mediated by any human agency.

2. The condition of access is a spiritual condition, namely, faith which is not a bare assent to intellectual propositions, but a relation between God and the soul, carrying with it certain moral consequences, commonly called fruits.

If the latter is true, it would follow that :

1. No true sacrifice can be offered except through a priesthood ordained by God.

2. The sacrifice rightly offered has an efficacy independent of the faith of the worshippers, if a rightly ordained priest has the right intention.

It is here that our whole conception of worship is called into play and tested. For it is in fact this conception which largely determines men in their choice between these two views, more than the arguments commonly adduced in support of them. Judged on their merits as purely rational arguments, the Scriptural pleas urged on behalf of an order of priests ordained by Christ to repeat or re-present His Sacrifice upon the Cross are utterly unconvincing. The evidence is scanty, and the whole of it admits of another and perfectly natural explanation. The same is not true of the other class of views. However much preconceptions may lead men to embrace them, they do find very adequate support in the New Testament. But the mind which demands that Christ should have established an order of sacrificing priests, and a continuation of His Sacrifice, will have no difficulty in satisfying itself that the Scriptural pleas are sufficient, at all events when supplemented by tradition. Nor is the mind which makes this demand abnormal. On the contrary, the primary and elemental laws of worship are found historically to demand (1) the establishment of right relations with God by means of sacrifice, and (2) habitations of the Deity on earth, where He manifests Himself to His worshippers through the medium of external objects, so that these objects themselves become entitled to veneration. The only voice—if we except the few Atheists of the old world—the only voice raised in protest against these conceptions was that of the Hebrew prophets. Their **insistence (1) on the inefficacy of any sacrifice that man could offer,**

and (2) on the truth that the Almighty dwelt, not in temples made by hands, but in humble and contrite hearts, was, and always has been; unwelcome to popular theology. The prophetic teaching has seemed cold and unlovely. It does violence to two of the strongest instincts of human nature in its relations with God, violence to the desire of man to make atonement in some shape or form for his own sins, and violence to his desire to stimulate his religious emotions by æsthetic accessories. The Puritanism of the prophets never has been, and never will be, popular, and it must fail if it is to be judged before the tribunal of the *orbis terrarum*. But that tribunal is not quite so secure as it imagines itself to be.

It condemned the Christ once at least, and has, it may be, rejected Him more than once since that first condemnation.

Still, to those who carry these two instincts into their worship, there is no doubt that the Eucharist will furnish a full satisfaction of their ideal of worship, interpreting the service as they interpret it. For in it man approaches God with an objective sacrifice in his hands. That the sacrifice is not costly matters little. Its nature is such that it must compel the mercy of the Almighty Father, seeing that it is the Sacrifice of His dearly beloved Son. It is offered by the hierarchy whom Christ appointed for the purpose of offering it. The Roman Catholic claims that he is repeating the Sacrifice, and that it is propitiatory. The Anglo-Catholic claims that as Christ is for ever presenting it to the Father, so he, the earthly priest, is re-presenting it on earth, and hesitates, though he does not quite refuse, to call it propitiatory. He believes that by his act he is making an appeal which influences the Father. The principle of a material sacrifice offered by man is there, and the necessity for an earthly hierarchy is there.

Further, the Eucharist satisfies the instinct of stimulating devotion by æsthetic accessories, for in it He Who is very God as well as very man, being invoked in the right way and by the right person, presents Himself under or through the consecrated Bread and Wine to be worshipped or venerated. The exact spot where He is, is known. No gestures, no prostrations, no richness of accompaniments of music or of scene can be too extravagant to greet Him, and to pay Him the honour which is His due. It is not the Upper Room in Jerusalem, nor even the Cross of Calvary which this holy Ordinance presents. The sanctuary (as it is called) of the Church has become

for the time an ante-room, or rather a Presence Chamber, of the Court of Heaven, and the King of Glory is there upon His Throne. "Let all the earth stand in awe of Him." That is worship at its highest to this class of mind, and the fascination of it is unquestionable. It is adoration of an objective and localized Presence of the Deity manifested in or through the medium of sensuous objects.

What is more, the devotion of worshippers will not let it rest there. Why should the courts of the sanctuary ever be robbed of the presence of their King? Why should He not be retained there always through the reservation of the consecrated elements upon the altar? Then the sanctuary would be always hallowed, prayers could always be offered in His Presence, and the heart rejoice itself in frequent adoration. It seems to me that the demand for reservation for purpose of adoration is an irresistible corollary of the Anglo-Catholic view of the Eucharist, and that the devotion of worshippers must in the end triumph over the timid reluctance of those in authority to accept the logical and devotional outcome of their own teachings.

But amid all this veneration what has become of the origin of this mystery—of the command, "Take, eat," "drink ye all of this?" The emotions excited by the appearance of the King upon His Throne have in fact carried us away from the Cross of Calvary. The consecrated elements have become associated with His glorified and no longer with His crucified body. We draw near to partake of material objects which are no longer purely material—objects so transformed by association with a spiritual Presence that no unbelief or unworthiness of the recipient can do away with that Presence. It is an awful responsibility under such conditions either to give or to receive. The priest may well shrink from admitting to Communion one whom he has not, after full confession, absolved; and the worshipper may well hesitate to press with his teeth and receive into his body Him Whom he has been worshipping. Solitary Masses and infrequent Communions are the logical outcome of Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic teachings.

That the practice of frequent Communion persists among Anglo-Catholics is due to teaching which they are rapidly outliving. It is a survival—a survival of the attempt to do honour to the Sacraments as a protest against those who were supposed to disparage

them. Now, a Sacrament is no Sacrament at all unless it is received.¹ The earlier Tractarians put the receiving of the Sacrament in the forefront of their teachings. They insisted on the reality of the gift received, but, following Hooker, were content to accept the Real Presence without defining the mode of that Presence. But the logic of Rome has been too strong for them, and the devotion of their less learned followers. These two wings of their body, the logical and the unlearned, have insisted on defining the Presence, on locating it on the Altar, and, in the elements, have insisted that an Altar means a sacrifice, and that the sacrifice is offered on earth as well as in Heaven. But the more the Sacrifice is taught, the more will the Sacrament be thrown into the background.

The prophetic conception of worship, on the other hand, while true in its main concepts, was not by itself adequate to the spiritual needs of man. The soul cannot subsist on negations. Let it be granted that man cannot offer acceptable sacrifice, nor build temples to contain the Almighty—let it be granted that His dwelling-place is the lowly and contrite spirit, of what use is this when the lowly and contrite are not to be found? The work of our Lord was to reveal, and Himself to make, the only Sacrifice that can be acceptable to God, and also to create out of sinful hearts a dwelling-place for the Almighty.

With that act of Sacrifice before Him, He of His great love instituted this holy Ordinance in the first place as a pledge to mankind for all time of the eternal efficacy of that Sacrifice. For if we dare to enter into speculations so lofty we must remind ourselves that for the Almighty time is not. In the eternal "Now" the act of reconciliation never has been, never can be, absent, the consent, that is, of the Eternal Son to be the sin-bearer of the world. The Sacrifice of the Cross was accepted in Heaven before it was offered on earth. The High Priest, after the order of Melchizedec, is without beginning or end of days. The thought of pleading the Sacrifice of Calvary before the Father thus becomes an unworthy conception of the Majesty on high. It was the Father's will, before the world was, that the Son should offer Himself, and it was the will of the Son so to offer Himself. We can add nothing to that; we cannot make that act in any way more vivid before God.

¹ "In such only as worthily receive the same have they a wholesome effect or operation" (Article XXV).

It is the sinner who needs the perpetual assurance of his Saviour's dying love, and to the sinner Christ gave it in the perpetuation of the Last Supper till He comes. Here is the pledge to man, that while he can offer no sacrifice acceptable to God, the Sacrifice that is acceptable has been offered once for all, and once for all accepted by Him, for the sins of the whole world. It is a mistake to speak of the Lord's Supper thus viewed as a mere institution or custom by which men remind and assure themselves of the love of God. It is rather like the bow in the heavens, God's reminder to man that though the world were to last for millenniums immeasurable, yet the love of God in Christ Jesus would never lose its power with God. We receive the bread, we drink the cup. But it is not we who speak to ourselves. It is God Who speaks to us—*i.e.*, to all who rightly receive, not to those who gaze, and the word spoken is the message of pardon and peace.

We rightly receiving the Bread and Wine, discern the Lord's Body, and all that His death and self-surrender are to us; we become partakers of His most precious Body and Blood. We spiritually eat the Flesh of Christ and drink His Blood. We dwell in Christ, and Christ in us. We are one with Christ and Christ with us. Our faith rests once more on His perfect atonement, on the Lamb of God Who to all time taketh away the sins of the world. We have no plea for our sins, but that He died for us. We have no righteousness but His. We are His and He is ours. In the joy of that communion we offer ourselves body, soul, and spirit, a living sacrifice, to Him Who died for us. In the words of angelic hymns, with all the host of heaven we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Thus our communion is a communion of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. But this is not all. Our worship is in a yet fuller sense an act of communion, an act so solemn that we may well pause for a moment to consider with all reverence what is implied in it.

We have spoken of the Cross as the great act of reconciliation, and so it is. But the Cross was made possible only by the Incarnation—the stupendous mystery of Godhead and Manhood united in one Person, and that Person one Person in the Blessed Trinity. This also, though for our sakes it was an act in time, yet belongs by Divine Will to the Eternal Now, from everlasting to everlasting. We have as our intercessor with God not the Mother of

our Lord, not an angelic being, not even the highest of archangels, bending in supplication before His Throne, but seated at the right hand of God, enjoying, that is, the fulness of His Power and Glory, a High Priest, Who, though He be very God, is also very Man. In His Manhood the Lord Jesus Christ is above all angels, principalities, and powers, and above every Name that is named in Heaven, or on earth.¹ His Manhood in virtue of union with His Godhead pleads with authority there. His intercession is not of supplication but of authority. "Father, I will."

Next, be it remembered that it is through His Holy Spirit that He communicates Himself to us ; and, by His Holy Spirit, according to His own most true promise, both Father and Son come to him that loves Christ and keep His word, and with such an one They make their abode. (St. John xiv. 23.) It is not questioned that this abiding Presence is first communicated to us in the new Birth, of which the Sacrament is Holy Baptism, and is renewed and refreshed in each believing child of God through the self-imparting of the Lord Jesus Christ, of which the Sacrament is Holy Communion. We approach that Sacrament not as slaves, but as sons ; we receive what Christ is pleased to give, by faith obeying His command, "Take, eat," "Drink ye all of this." What the Water is in Holy Baptism, the Bread and Wine are in the Holy Communion, not symbols arbitrarily appointed by man, but means appointed by Christ Himself, effectual signs of grace, "insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ, and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ." In other words, the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us enables us by the act of communion to draw into closer fellowship with God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God in Three Persons, the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity.

¹ St. John's vision of "the Lamb as it had been slain" may be conceived and explained in a manner that is wholly misleading. The Heaven of the Book of Revelation is that definite, almost material, locality, which in popular Jewish belief was the seat of councils, of wars, of temptations, the Heaven to which the Evil One had access, from which He must needs be cast out, the Heaven which was to be consumed and pass away that the new Heaven might take its place. As such it needed cleansing and atonement, and therefore the Lamb, as it had been slain, is very appropriately seen there. But the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory is exalted far above that Heaven, He has taken our nature into the fulness of His Father's glory. He is seated with the Father on His Throne.

The place of Holy Communion in Divine Worship is from this point of view very clear and well-defined. It is the great corrective of spiritual selfishness. Without it a devout man might seek to establish communion with God by retirement from the rest of the world, seeking to be alone, that he might be nearer to God. The Lord's Supper corrects that very natural desire. The would-be solitary worshipper is like one of the disciples of old disputing which of them should be greatest, and corrected by the institution of that holy feast. Not in isolation, not in solitary devotion, but in the assembly of fellow-partakers of the Lord's Table, and in the exercise of the love which that fellowship involves, will the believer receive in fullest measure the indwelling of his Lord. For God is Love, and Love in solitude is a mere unprofitable sentiment. "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, Whom he hath not seen?" Hence the absolute necessity of being in charity with all men, if we would be meet partakers of that holy Sacrament. Hence also the absolute necessity that all present should be partakers. For to be present without partaking is to stand out of fellowship; it is to fail to discern the Body of Christ by rending that Body in the very act that above all others establishes its unity.

But it will be urged that those two views of worship are not mutually exclusive, and, indeed, that they are rather complementary the one to the other, so that neither by itself corresponds to truth. For as God is both transcendent and immanent, so it is fitting that worship should combine the lowliest adoration with the closest fellowship, and what could God have given us more fitted to excite our adoration than this, His solemn and objective drawing near to us through the consecrated elements in a manner that was outside and beyond ourselves; of His choosing, not of ours; a sovereign act of His grace that was not dependent on our faith? It will be further alleged that it was thus that the Church in the writings of the Fathers, and in most of the Liturgies, regarded the consecrated elements as having a sacred character of their own through association with His Presence, and quite apart from the use of them for purposes of communion. In fact, it will be argued that for the perfection of worship in the Lord's Supper we should first adore and then receive.

It is not enough to reply that our Communion Service is de-

liberately constructed so as to depart from the early Liturgies on this point, changing the old-established Canon of the Mass into a service of Holy Communion, making it to be, after the Prayer for the Church Militant, a service for communicants only, addressed to them and to them exclusively, and making it clear that no others should attend by ordering that the Holy Communion be ministered to Priests and Deacons, and after that to the people (N.B.—Not the communicants), all meekly kneeling.¹ The mind of the Church of England is so plain that to secure the element of adoration it has been necessary to introduce vestments which are not vestments of Holy Communion, to use incense, though thuribles are admitted to have been abolished, to write special hymns, to introduce genuflexions and prostrations—and even then, the service being clearly inappropriate, to set to work to remodel it according to the service of the Mass. About the mind of our Church as tested by her Communion Service there is no doubt. But we have to do more than this. We have to establish the soundness of the lines on which our service is constructed. For that it was constructed carefully by men ignorant of the Fathers or early Liturgies only the very ignorant will dare to assert. You had to be learned when ignorance might lead you to the stake.

To establish such a point as this in detail would be impossible within the space of a paper. But in principle it is not difficult to establish if it is once granted that the authority of Our Lord and His Apostles is to outweigh that of the Fathers and the Liturgies. To Our Lord and His Apostles there was only one spot in all the world that was associated with the Presence of God, the innermost shrine of the Temple, the Holy of Holies. Every other association of God's Presence with material objects was to them simply idolatry. When it is suggested that Our Lord intended, and that the Apostles held and taught, that a new Shechinah had been established by Him, it is clear that the accusation of not being faithful to the Temple and the law of Moses, which the Apostles indignantly repudiated, was a perfectly just accusation. It is also certain that the existence

¹ It has been urged that the rubrics of the Communion Office imply non-communicating attendance, because they mention "them that come to receive the Holy Communion," "those that are minded to receive the Holy Communion," "them that shall receive the Communion," and also in other rubrics "the people." But this distinction would involve that those who had not confessed their sins should be absolved, and that the non-communicants should be communicated.

of the new Shechinah must have found a place in the Epistle to the Hebrews. This is not a mere argument from silence. For believing Jews there could be no greater shock than that the Shechinah was superseded by the Eucharist. But of that shock there is no trace in the New Testament. Multitudes of Christian Jews continued to worship in the Temple. On the other hand, the spiritual Presence of Christ in the hearts of His people is affirmed and reaffirmed in every form.

If we are asked how it came to pass that teaching not held by the Apostles found its way into the writings of the Fathers and the early Liturgies, the answer is not difficult. Both Jew and Gentile, accustomed to the idea of sacrifice, and associating the Eucharist with the sacrifice of the death of Christ, would read into that service more than they had received. They would seek by so doing to escape the charge that they were atheists. A religion without idols, altars, and sacrifices would hardly seem in those days to be a religion at all. The language which the early Fathers used was figurative, not dogmatic, devotional, not theological. Nor was this very injurious so long as the whole congregation were communicants. The use of the elements for their proper purpose left room for a worship in which the Presence of Christ was associated with the whole sacrament rather than with the consecrated elements. The position of the Tractarian was, in fact, the Patristic position.

But with non-communicating attendance the whole balance of doctrine was changed. For if the non-communicants were to escape the reproach of dividing the Body of Christ, of destroying the fellowship of the Church, some strong reason must be found for their presence during the service. What better reason could be given than the suggestion that the service was a Sacrifice offered or represented to God and that adoration was the great end of the Eucharist? What better means of expressing this could there be than the elaboration of ceremonial, the withdrawal of the altar into the dim distance of a Gothic chancel, the surrounding it with all the artifices of art, music, and architecture that could inspire the sense of mystery? In vain did theologians try to combat the trend of popular theology. The appeal of a mysterious Presence of God manifested through definite external objects is an appeal to which man responds instinctively, but it is the instinct of his lower nature, of his emotions, not of his spirit.

It is incumbent on us to maintain that true doctrine of worship which our Reformers grasped so firmly in the Prayer Book of 1552, which is substantially the Communion Office of to-day. They recognized as the ideal set forth by our Lord the gathering of a band of faithful disciples drawn into closer communion with one another by communion with Him through the Sacrifice of the Cross by means of His appointed sign the perpetuation of the Last Supper till His return. "Of faithful disciples"—for this reason they distinguished between the ordinary service then obligatory by law on all citizens, and the meeting together of those whose hearts were prepared to meet their Lord.¹ Of the Communion so celebrated all present were to be partakers, and the gathering was to be really representative of the whole congregation. Even in parishes where there were only twenty communicants three at least must be present, and presumably in larger parishes a like proportion. The occasions of Communion, with the exception of Easter, were left to the discretion of the parish priest, who was to give solemn warning of his intention to celebrate. In the service he was to consecrate only enough for those present, and before leaving the Church to consume any portions that remained of the consecrated elements. Of consecration or reservation for the purposes of adoration, or even of communicating the sick, not a trace was left, and even the act of kneeling was explained to be an act of gratitude or humility, and not of adoration.

We are being plainly challenged to take a retrograde step and to restore the Mass. If we do so we shall be guilty of disobedience to our Lord. Under pretext of doing Him reverence we shall go back from the high ideal of worship as an act of communion with God through the Sacrifice offered once for all, which communion cannot be fully realized in solitude but only in fellowship with one another, in the Holy Sacrament which He has given us, and returned to the lower and more primitive ideas of worship as influence exercised through Sacrifice upon God presenting Himself to us through material objects. In religion development is often retrogression. Neither antiquity nor continuity are alone proofs of the purity of religious conceptions. Concerning these we easily lose our way when we forsake the guidance of our Lord and His Apostles.

¹ The only possible room left for non-communicants was in Cathedrals where the choir-boy might be unconfirmed and the adult chorister was not obliged to communicate at each celebration.