

RESERVATION OF THE SACRAMENT : A PLEA FOR RECONSIDERATION.

BY W. GUY JOHNSON.

IN an article on "Benediction and its Advocates" which appeared in the *CHURCHMAN* for October last, the present writer stated that there was a close connection between the practice of Reservation of the Sacrament and such services as Exposition and Benediction, in the sense that it is practically impossible to have the former and yet to prevent the latter, together with many other corruptions connected with superstitious ideas of the Eucharist, from following upon it. And in support of the statement a passage was cited from the Rev. A. H. Baverstock's book, *Benediction and the Bishops*, where on page 13 he tells us that "the increase of opportunities of access to the Blessed Sacrament led inevitably to the demand for something in the nature of Exposition and Benediction." There is no doubt upon the matter. It is simply a question of fact to which the whole course of Church History testifies, and it has been fully verified by the events of recent years. Mr. Baverstock is himself as competent a witness on the subject as we could have. It is not, of course, meant that every one who desires to reserve the Sacrament for the use of the sick will make use of it for adoration or similar purposes, or will wish to do so. But the very knowledge that the Sacrament is reserved in a particular church is an encouragement to those who believe, in whatever sense it is not necessary now to define, that our Lord is present in the consecrated bread and wine, to seek opportunities of worshipping Him there. This again is simply a matter of common experience, and has more than once been expressed in recent debates on the subject in Convocation. It is quite obvious that if there is no Reservation there cannot be any such services as Benediction, Exposition, "Ten Minutes with Jesus in the Tabernacle," or others of a similar kind. This being the case, we are surely entitled to ask the Bishops to reconsider the whole question. The Bishop of Chester (Dr. Jayne) shortly before his resignation is known to have made such a request on the ground that so much which would have modified the earlier decision of the Bishops had transpired since it was arrived at. We ask this, not on any grounds of party or of mere opinion, but for grave and

substantial reasons which appear more weighty the more the matter is looked into.

The question of a new rubric permitting Reservation of the Sacrament for the Communion of the Sick has been debated with considerable fullness by all four Houses of Convocation in the course of the discussion on Prayer Book revision arising out of the issue of the King's Letters of Business, and very great diversity of opinion has been manifested. In the Upper House of York there was an interesting and instructive debate in February, 1914, upon a Resolution moved by the Bishop of Durham and seconded by the Bishop of Chester which read as follows:—"That the present rubric forbidding the consecrated elements to be carried out of the church be so far modified as to allow them to be taken *forthwith, and without ceremonial*, to known and intended cases of special urgency, and if any of the bread and wine that was consecrated for any such intended cases remain over it shall be reverently consumed in the house of the last sick person so communicated." This Resolution did not make any provision for the case of such invalids as might prefer to be communicated in the manner at present provided by the Prayer Book; but the point was very strongly emphasized during the discussion, and a rider supplying the omission was adopted, and the principle has been embodied in the proposed Rubric agreed upon at a Conference of members of the four Houses of Convocation which was held in October, 1918. The point is an important one, for there are great numbers of Churchpeople, without doubt the majority, to whom Holy Communion means the entire service, at least as set out in the Office for the Communion of the Sick, and who would strongly object to having it mutilated and to being communicated with the Reserved Sacrament, more especially if, as is sometimes the case, the bread alone were given. The Rev. Edgar Lee, in giving his evidence before the two Archbishops during the course of the Lambeth "Hearings" in 1900, admitted that he never administered Holy Communion to the sick except with the Reserved Sacrament, and declined to say what he would do if the sick man desired it otherwise. If there is a case in which the communicant's wishes should be considered it is surely here, for the service is intended for him and not (except incidentally) for the minister. But a difficulty at once arises. It has been made quite clear throughout the

course of the discussions upon the subject that Reservation is asked for, not so much in the interests of the sick person, but to meet the case of those clergy who feel that they cannot partake of the Holy Communion unless they are fasting. If, however, it is left to the sick person to decide in which form he shall be communicated, and if he desires the present form of service, then there is no relief whatever to those clergy who say that they cannot go through the service after they have broken their fast.

There is another point which should be borne in mind. It is expressly referred to in the Resolution of the Upper House of the York Convocation quoted above. The Resolution states that the consecrated elements to be carried out of the Church "be taken forthwith, without ceremonial" to the sick person's house. In this connection there is a significant note in the Report of a Committee of the Upper House of York:—

"Reservation for the Sick. If allowed at all great care must be taken to define the words suggested by the Lower House of Canterbury "without ceremonial." Serious evasions are likely. Robes, processions and lights should be expressly forbidden."

During the debate the Bishop of Manchester reminded them that their Resolution was not the final form which the rubric would assume, and they might find themselves committed to a rubric with which they could not agree. He said further that while the rubric, whatever its form was to be, would remain, the explanations and qualifications with which they had guarded their Resolution would be forgotten. The Rubric as proposed by the joint conference in 1918 has indeed travelled far from the Resolution of the Northern Bishops. It reads as follows:—

But when the Holy Communion cannot reverently or without grave difficulty be celebrated in private, and also when there are several sick persons in the Parish desirous to receive the Communion on the same day, it shall be lawful for the Priest (with the consent of the sick person), on any day when there is a celebration of the Holy Communion in the Church, to set apart at the open Communion so much of the consecrated Bread and Wine as shall serve the sick person (or persons), and so many as shall communicate with him (if there be any). And, the open Communion ended, he shall, on the same day and with as little delay as may be, go and minister the same. . . .

If the consecrated bread and wine be not taken immediately to the sick person, they shall be kept in such place, and after such manner as the Ordinary shall approve, so that they be not used for any other purpose whatsoever.

The Holy Sacrament shall be taken to the sick person in such simple and reverent manner as the Ordinary shall approve.

Here we find an express provision for the Reservation of the Sacra-

ment in the church, for no Bishop is likely to "approve" of its being kept elsewhere; and an opening is given for a very considerable amount of ceremonial when it is carried from the church to the sick person's house. In the light of recent experience, in the face of the minatory Memorial of 1,000 clergy of the Province of Canterbury, and in view of what has already been permitted by some Bishops, we are justified in quoting the words of the Bishop of Liverpool with reference to the far more moderate Resolution of the Northern House. "I am afraid the result of the alteration will be that while the permission which we give will be gladly accepted, the conditions which we make will be forgotten."

The permission to carry the consecrated elements direct from the celebration in church to the sick person, who may quite possibly have been following the service in his Prayer Book, which was at first proposed by the Bishop of Durham in the Northern Convocation, does stand upon a different footing from the rubric now submitted for acceptance by the Church. It is in harmony with the practice described by Justin Martyr, though that may have been more a local and occasional custom than a general practice of the Church; and it cannot properly be called Reservation at all. The Archbishop of York, in giving his "Opinion" or "Decision" in 1900, described it as a "continued ministrations." Bishop Westcott, who gave permission in certain cases for this form of communicating the sick, did so on the express ground that it was a means of meeting the difficulty which had been felt, *without resorting to Reservation*. But even if this were all that is now proposed, there would still be considerable objection to it, and the Bishop of Liverpool, who at one time favoured the plan, expressed his own objections, during the discussion, in words which have already been quoted. The circumstances of Justin Martyr's day, when Christianity was a proscribed and persecuted religion, and when Christians had no churches or buildings other than private houses in which to worship, afford no example for our own times. The arrangement which Justin records had no special reference to the sick, and it would not meet the wishes of those who now desire Reservation.

But what we are now asked to accept goes very far beyond this. It is a reversal of the position taken up by the Reformers in the compilation and revision of the Prayer Book. The Bishop of Manchester, to whom the whole Church is indebted for the energy with which he

has devoted his great learning and unrivalled ability to the defence of the principles maintained at the Reformation, pointed out that the Reformers deliberately rejected the practice of Reservation for good and clearly ascertainable reasons. One of the Bishops, in the course of the debate, asked if the Church was always to be bound by the rules and rubrics of the sixteenth century. That is not the point, and the Bishop of Manchester certainly did not suggest any such attitude. The point of his contention was that in the presence of certain errors and superstitions connected with the Holy Communion the Reformers adopted certain safeguards which, so long as they were observed, left no room for these abuses. Those safeguards have of late years been relaxed by the unauthorized action of some of the Bishops, or ignored by some of the clergy in defiance of the Bishops, and since then the abuses have revived. This being the case, the Bishop of Manchester very reasonably urged that we should retain the safeguards which had proved efficacious in the past. This is really the explanation why so strong an opposition has been offered to many of the proposals for Prayer Book revision. The Prayer Book was drawn up to maintain a particular doctrinal position and to exclude certain erroneous teaching, and it was drawn up with very great care and skill. If the errors which it designedly excluded had no longer any existence among us we should perhaps not scrutinize too closely changes of language or rubrics which might on general or even antiquarian grounds be desired by some Churchmen. But since all the distinctive errors of Romanism are being actively and avowedly propagated in our midst, we are not inclined to assist in pulling down the bulwarks which were erected against them, and we are not controversially embarrassed because they happen to have been built so long ago as the sixteenth century.

Moreover, the reasons which are given for the proposed change are very unconvincing. It is urged that on account of the crowded and insanitary condition of certain parts of large cities it is not possible to celebrate the communion in the homes of the sick poor. But against this we have the positive testimony of those who have worked in slum parishes that they never found any difficulty in this respect, or found any need for Reservation. The Bishops of Manchester, Chelmsford, Liverpool and Winchester, to mention no others, spoke to this effect from their own experience. The Bishop

of Chelmsford reminded his hearers that our Lord condescended to be born in the manger of a stable, and there could be no incongruity therefore in His presence amidst even the humblest surroundings. Moreover, he added, it was not true that the homes of those among the poor who desired to receive Communion were kept in a state which would preclude a celebration. If there were any of this kind, they would, as Bishop Maclagan said, be equally unsuitable for any kind of administration. Again, it is sometimes urged that the patient is so far advanced in illness as to be unable to follow or to bear the strain of the service, but as Archbishop Temple said, "The administration of the Holy Communion to those who are too ill to understand fully what they are doing is certainly not to be desired under any circumstances. The Holy Communion is not to be treated as if it worked like a magical charm without any co-operation on the part of the recipient." There is something unsubstantial about these reasons. There may be occasionally exceptional cases which if treated in an honest spirit can be dealt with on the principle *necessitas non habet leges*; but these represent no such widespread and pressing need as is represented. And against such exceptional cases we have the real and positive danger that the Sacrament, when reserved in the church, with whatever limitations and restrictions individual Bishops may see fit to impose, will be the centre of acts of adoration, and will be a continual cause of demands for "access" and for special services such as Benediction. And it will be much more difficult to resist these demands when once a change has been made in the rubrics, for the very fact of the change will be taken as a sign that the Church has relaxed her position in regard to the Holy Communion, and as an augury that further pressure will yield further concession. Even under existing circumstances, the Bishop of Salisbury stated that the regulations issued by the Bishop of London as to the manner in which the Sacrament if reserved was to be kept, had broken down and proved futile as long ago as when he was a Suffragan in the Diocese, and the Bishop of London himself testified to the continued impossibility of enforcing them.

It is not, therefore, unreasonable to fear that if there should be a new rubric authorizing Reservation, a great impetus would be given to the pro-Roman party, and the Bishops would have lost the one instrument put into their hands best fitted for resist-

ing its advance. We cannot but feel that in their own interest, and in the interest of the Church of which they are the responsible ministers, the Bishops will do well to consider afresh the whole question. The best solution seems after all that which has many times been suggested during the last few years, namely, to exclude the service of Holy Communion altogether from the sphere of Prayer Book revision. Agreement upon the other points ought not then to be very difficult.

W. GUY JOHNSON.

THE HOLY ANGELS: THEIR APPEARANCES AND MINISTRATIONS.

BY THE REV. JOHN R. PALMER, Litt.D.

IN these days we need to bear in mind that true faith in the reality of the unseen world, and of a future life, does not necessitate any prying into the "secret things that belong unto the Lord our God," and which are not "revealed" unto us in His holy Word.¹ But the present subject is one which has always possessed a genuine and reasonable interest for Christian students and believers.

St. Matthew closes his account of the temptation of our Lord with the words—"and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."² How full of comfort are these words! Is it not matter of rejoicing to know that at the end of our blessed Lord's forty days' fast and temptation He was strengthened and refreshed by the ministry of angels? They had looked down with wonder from their bright abode upon the mysterious conflict between their Lord and the Prince of Darkness, and now it is ended, they hasten to supply His wants. These holy spirits, St. Paul tells us, were witnesses in a special way of the mysterious Incarnation—"God manifest in the flesh was seen of angels."³ They sang at His birth.⁴ They ministered to Him after His temptation. They strengthened Him in His Agony.⁵ They announced his "glorious Resurrection."⁶ They "desire to look into"⁷ the mysteries of man's Redemption.

¹ Deut. xxix. 29.

⁴ St. Luke ii. 9-14.

⁶ Ib. xxiv. 4-8.

² St. Matt. iv. 11.

⁵ Ib. xxii. 43.

⁷ 1 Pet. i. 12.

³ 1 Tim. iii. 16.