

scope for exercising his ministry. The case is quite different, however, with the younger masters, especially those who have just arrived. They bring with them from the university the tradition of free and frank discussion, and the chaplain will often find an opportunity, in the course of a friendly discussion on general matters, to urge the claims of personal religion.

## “Priesthood and Sacrifice”—A Reply

BY THE REV. A. R. FOUNTAIN, M.A.

MANY of us will be very grateful for the Bishop of Chelmsford's sermon on Priesthood and Sacrifice which was published in *The Churchman* for September 1954, and which, if one judges aright, was an attempt to join the two main streams of thought about the Eucharist in the Church of England to-day. At the same time, and with great respect, there must be many of us who disagree with the Bishop over his interpretation of the eternal self-offering of Christ in relation to the Sacrament of the Holy Communion. The danger of trying to define the Sacrament, and to clothe the mystery of our Redemption in words which will not be misunderstood, is proverbial; and it must be remembered that in this, as in other matters, two views which apparently contradict each other may in fact be trying to express the same thought. Nevertheless, when all that has been said, the interpretation of the words “the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross” in Article 31 is a major dividing point in the Church of England at this moment. Further discussion of this issue is all to the good, and may lead to greater enlightenment and a drawing together of two divergent views. My only excuse for entering the lists upon this issue is the hope that someone better qualified may be persuaded to take up the points that are raised.

The comparatively modern attempt to substitute, at least in thought, the words “eternal self-offering” for the words “one Oblation of Himself once offered” in the Consecration Prayer is theologically a confusing one, and, in so far as it refers to the Sacrifice of the Cross, has no confirmation in Scripture. However much truth there may be in the paradox that the Nature of Him Who once offered Himself upon the Cross is eternally to offer Himself to the Father, it is not the Cross which is being offered to the Father as though He needed to be continually reminded of it, for the Cross is eternally at the heart of God Himself. The focus of our attention in the Holy Communion is upon the visible declaration of something which has been accomplished by God; it is the Sacrament of our Redemption. As far as we are concerned in the Atonement it is of less concern to us to know the inner meaning of it in the relationships of the Persons of the Eternal Trinity than to know the declaration through it of God's love to us “while we were yet sinners”. As Dr. M. A. C. Warren puts it, “The essential thing to know for our soul's salvation is that here it is God Who does something and not man” (*Strange Victory*, p. 83). The Atonement is something wholly other than ourselves; it is something which God has done for us which we could not do for ourselves. We have nothing to

add to the Atonement, nor can we add anything to the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross, least of all by joining in His self-offering. Something was accomplished upon the Cross which can never be repeated. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes a great point of the fact that whereas the earthly high priests had to make continual offerings which were repeated over and over again on behalf of the people, Christ made a perfect offering once for all. The perfection of His offering was demonstrated by its uniqueness and the fact that it was made once for all. This once-for-allness of the Cross is essential to our understanding of the Sacrament of our Redemption. Our Lord is spoken of in Hebrews as entering heaven with the blood of propitiation, and there sitting down in the place of honour at the right hand of God, not standing as a suppliant to the Father but reigning as a Victor in the sight of men. "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9. 25, 26). The theory that Christ is eternally presenting the Sacrifice of the Cross before the Father finds no confirmation in Scripture, as has been most clearly pointed out by the Principal of St. Aidan's, Birkenhead in his article, "The Eucharist and the Heavenly Ministry of our Lord," which was published in *Theology* in February 1953. The theory, for it is only a theory, may even claim joint parentage with the mediaeval doctrine of the Mass as having originated in the rather careless definition, by Thomas Aquinas, of sacrifice as "something done for the honour properly due to God in order to appease Him" (Summa, III, 48. 3). It is only a short step from the theory that Christ is eternally presenting His Sacrifice on the Cross to the Father to the thought that in the Holy Communion we join with Him in presenting His Sacrifice before the Father. This is the heart of the matter. This is where the Church of England divides upon the interpretation of the Sacrament of our Redemption. There are those who believe that the Sacrament is something in which we join with Christ in presenting His Sacrifice before the Father, as in the words of the hymn—

" Having with us Him that pleads above,  
We here present, we here spread forth to Thee,  
That only offering perfect in Thine eyes,  
The one true pure immortal sacrifice ".

And, on the other hand, there are those who believe that the Sacrament is the visible declaration of the fact that God is offering Himself to man. As Waterland reminds us, "We do not offer Christ to God in the Eucharist, but God offers Christ to us" (*The Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 339). If we accept the theory that Christ is offering Himself to the Father in the Sacrament then we make a great division between the Persons of the Trinity in respect of the Atonement. It strongly suggests that it is God the Father Who needs the continual reminder of the Atonement, whereas it is we ourselves who need reminding. It suggests that the Father has no part in the Atonement except in so far as He receives the self-offering of the Son. But "God

was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself ” (2 Corinthians 5. 19). This division of the functions of the Persons of the Trinity in respect of our Redemption fails to take account of the whole picture given in the New Testament. While it may be true to say that the Nature of the Son is eternal self-offering, it is equally true, and just as important in our understanding of the Sacrament of the Holy Communion, to say that God the Father is eternally self-giving in that He “ so loved ” and loves the world “ that He gave ” and goes on giving “ His only begotten Son ”. God the Father does not need to be reminded of the Atonement effected in the Cross of Christ, for the Cross is at the very heart of God.

The Bishop of Chelmsford said in his sermon that in the Eucharist the Church “ makes its own act of self-oblation in union with the perfect and eternal self-oblation of Jesus Christ ”. If by that is meant that all our prayers and all our worship is offered “ through Jesus Christ ” and in His Name because we have been made acceptable to the Father through the Redeeming Sacrifice of the Son, then no Christian could fail to agree. But if it suggests, as it seems to do in the context of the Sacrament, that we can join in the Redeeming Sacrifice of Christ, then there are very many Anglicans who would find this impossible to accept. We make our act of self-oblation not “ in union with ” but *in response to* the one perfect offering of Himself for us men and for our salvation. The rhythm and movement of the Holy Communion as far as we are concerned is first receiving and then giving. The reformers were very careful to make this clear by putting the prayer of our self-oblation *after* the reception of the elements. This order was reversed in the 1928 prayer book; and the experimental Liturgy of the Church of South India, while keeping the prayer of Oblation in its original position, does tend to reverse the order by including in the Offertory prayer the words, “ Mercifully accept us as with all these gifts we dedicate ourselves, unworthy as we are, to Thy service, through Jesus Christ our Lord ”. The Holy Communion is the declaration, the Sacrament of, God’s Gift in Christ. We receive that gift by faith, and then, and only then, make our response. If one identifies the response with the receiving of the gift or with the gift itself, it suggests that one has something to add to the Cross of Christ, something to do to earn our Redemption. But the offering that we are called upon to make, namely the offering of “ ourselves, our souls and bodies ” is in response to the love of God revealed in the Cross of Christ. The first response of man is to receive God’s gift. “ What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me? I will receive the cup of salvation ” (Psalm 116. 11, 12). That receiving in faith is much more important than any giving we can make. The Sacrament is not first and foremost an opportunity for us to offer our worship but to receive God’s grace. And then, as the result of receiving and recognizing by faith that we are at one with God only by His grace, we can offer ourselves to Him as those to whom “ much has been forgiven ”. We offer ourselves to God as the woman in Simon’s house did who poured out her most costly gift and washed the feet of her Master. She loved much, for much had been forgiven her. “ We love Him because He first loved us ” (1 John 4.

19). The initiative in loving and self-giving is with God, and as a result our answering love is called out. Here in the Holy Communion is the gift of God and the response of man, in that order. Once the gift and the response are identified and merged into one, the grace of God is in danger of becoming merely an addition to graceful living and acceptable worship and not, as it most surely is, something wholly other than ourselves, redemptive, and of which we stand in need. Our natural eagerness to do something for God and to offer ourselves obscures the fact that before ever we can do or offer anything for Him we must in the true humility of self-revelation in the light of the Cross, receive everything from Him.

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## Correspondence

THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

To the Editor of *The Churchman*.

Sir,

Your readers are all indebted to the Rev. F. J. Taylor for his lucid exposition of some of the theological factors that must enter into our thinking about the C.S.I. I hope you will allow me to add one or two simple and practical considerations.

The Ministry of C.S.I., particularly during the "interim period" of thirty years, presents certain really grave anomalies: and so (to some people) does the fact that that Church remains necessarily in communion with her non-episcopal parent Churches. These are the two chief difficulties in the minds of many Anglicans. But against them we ought to set two facts: the first, that the Ordinations and Consecrations as at present administered in C.S.I. are undoubtedly sufficient in form, matter, and intention, and therefore should be recognized as such: the second, that in the words of Archbishop Temple, "the fundamental anomaly is that any two disciples of Our Lord should not be in communion with one another"—a consideration which ought to overrule all lesser anomalies.

I would add further that the theologians who were appointed to enquire into the orthodoxy of the Church have expressed themselves as wholly satisfied. On grounds therefore of Faith and Order it is our duty to press for the "recognition" of the Holy Orders conferred in C.S.I., and to work steadily towards that full intercommunion which would remove the "fundamental anomaly". This is a call based not on sentimentalism but on orthodoxy, and on loyalty both to Our Lord and to His Church.

Yours faithfully,

St. Leonards-on-Sea.

DOUGLAS F. HORSEFIELD.

To the Editor of *The Churchman*.

Sir,

May I, as one who recently had opportunities of personal contact with the Church in South India, add a few comments to Mr. Taylor's valuable article in your issue of September last?

Mr. Taylor rightly stresses the determination of the Church of South India not to break off the full communion which it now enjoys with its