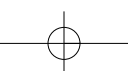
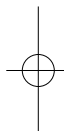
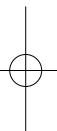


# ESSAYS AND ADDRESSES.



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BY

**R. W. Dale.**

**Quinta Press**

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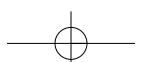
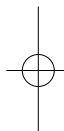
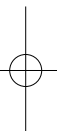
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BY

R. W. DALE, LL.D.

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

IN making this selection I have had more than my own preference to guide me. Some time before his death, when broken health had left him little heart or strength for sustained work, my father spent some of his leisure in gathering up his essays and addresses for publication. Once at least we talked over the plan, and discussed what might be rejected and what must be retained. Memory, in such matters, soon becomes treacherous, but there was no need to trust to it; for among my father's papers I found a plan, roughly drawn, of more than one possible collection. His scheme must have been on a larger scale than mine; for the shortest of his lists would fill two volumes, and the longest three or more. I have taken the papers to which he gave the foremost place. All of them deal with religious questions; all relate to abiding and fundamental



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principles, even when they are the outcome of the controversies of the day.

Here and there a sentence or a paragraph has been omitted; a few obvious errors have been corrected; but I have not thought it right to add anything to the text. With the notes—especially in the latter part of the volume—I have dealt more freely, and have tried to make the references more complete and more accessible.

A. W. W. DALE.

TRINITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE,  
*April 17, 1899.*

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## I

CHRIST AND THE CONTROVERSIES  
OF CHRISTENDOM

THE Controversies, practical and speculative, which are agitating the religious thought of our own country, and of all Christendom, are so numerous, so vast, and so intricate, that it is hardly possible to determine with any confidence what are the topics which have the most urgent claim on the attention of an assembly like this. The true relations of the Church to the political organization of society are being investigated in nearly every country in Europe, and the principles for which we and our fathers have so long contended, are passing out of the region of abstract discussion into the region of practical politics. Another question of still greater magnitude and involving unknown issues, is gradually forcing itself upon the consideration of all who have thought deeply on the social condition of mankind. The ancient ties which have united Christian Churches

<sup>1</sup> An address delivered before the Congregational Union of England and Wales, May 11, 1869.

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to secular governments are being dissolved; but has Christianity itself anything to say concerning the general structure of civil society? For many centuries we have been accustomed to speak of the civilization and social order of Europe as resting on Christian foundations; and yet the sharp and startling contrasts of poverty and wealth, splendour and wretchedness, in some of the most powerful European countries, are exciting indignation and dismay. A great democratic movement threatens—or promises—to reconstruct not the mere political framework of nations, but their social order and institutions. Is Christianity pledged to the past or to the future? Is it the ally of the old order or of the new? Established Churches have resisted the advance of the spirit of democracy; will it find in Christianity itself an enemy or a friend?

While these perplexing problems are asking for solution, we find ourselves involved afresh in discussions which recall the memory of the most tumultuous periods in the history of Christendom. The Roman Church is re-asserting her traditional claims, and, after an interval of three hundred years, we are about to witness the assembling of a General Council, which will claim authority to declare with infallible certainty the will of God. In our own country the dogmatic controversies of the Reformation will have to be fought over again; and we are being called upon to give solid and substantial proofs of what we have so often and so loudly asserted, that

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the Free Churches are the true bulwarks of English Protestantism.

As if all these great and various controversies were insufficient to task the strength and courage of a single generation, a keen, learned, and relentless criticism is sweeping like a destructive tempest over the whole of our sacred books. That "higher criticism," the ultimate aim of which is, we are told, to "discover what actually happened," and which refuses to be satisfied with what is "only related to have happened," is attempting in these last days to reconstruct out of what it regards as the confused, unsifted, and untrustworthy literature of ages of credulity, passion, and fanaticism, the whole of that wonderful story which has solaced the sufferings, sustained the strength, and inspired the sanctity of so many generations of saints. The Pentateuch and the Acts of the Apostles are alike impeached. The history of the foundation of the Jewish state and the history of the origin of the Christian Church are both to be re-written; but the tragic miracles of the Exodus and the awful mysteries of Sinai are to be excluded from the first; and, from the second, the diviner glories which bore witness to the supernatural commission of the Lord Jesus Christ while He was on earth, and which signalized His return to the throne of the Father.

To this attempt the "higher criticism" is impelled, not by its native instincts alone, but by the whole temper and spirit of our times. The supernatural is

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to be expelled from every province in which its presence has hitherto been recognized. Human thought and volition are but functions of man's physical organization. The history of nations is the necessary development of laws which may be discovered by human science, and over the action and results of which no will, human or divine, has any control. The material universe, with all its majesty and beauty, bears no witness to the power and wisdom and beneficence of the eternal God;—"The heavens no longer declare any other glory than that of Hipparchus, of Kepler, and of Newton, and of all those who have contributed to establish their laws."

For centuries there has been no such crisis in the religious thought and life of mankind as that which is now impending. Hostility to the Christian faith, deeper, sterner, and more systematic than that which terrified our fathers in the most volcanic and tempestuous hours of the French Revolution; theological confusion and uncertainty far more chaotic than that which followed the revolt of Northern Europe against the infallible Roman Church—these are the perils which we have to encounter. The time for speaking lightly of these tremendous controversies has long gone by. If only a theory of inspiration were breaking down, if men were discussing nothing more serious than the precise and minute accuracy of the four Gospels, if we were threatened with nothing more formidable than the demonstration of the

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historical untrustworthiness of a few chapters here and there in the Old Testament, we might look on calmly, and wait for the issue of the conflict with indifference.

But it becomes plainer every year that the real questions in debate are far different from these. The storm has moved round the whole horizon; but it is rapidly concentrating its strength and fury above one sacred Head. This, this is the real issue of the fight—Is Christendom to believe in Christ any longer or no? It is a battle in which everything is to be lost or won. It is not a theory of ecclesiastical polity which is in danger, it is not a theological system, it is not a creed, it is not the Old Testament or the New, but the claim of Christ Himself to be the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind. This is surely enough to stir the Church to vehement enthusiasm, and to inspire it with its old heroic energy. It is a controversy, not for theologians merely, but for every man who has seen the face of Christ, and can bear personal testimony to His power and glory.

How are we to speak aright to an age excited and distracted by questions like these? All the troubles of Christendom are ours. The faith of Christ and the fortunes of the Church are involved in the debates of Parliaments, in the theories of social reformers, in the speculations of men of science, in the perplexities of theologians. We have not merely to evangelize the heathenism of remote countries, and the heathenism at our own doors; we are debtors



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to the Greeks as well as to the barbarians, to the wise as well as to the unwise. The old controversies and the new concern us as deeply as they concern other Christian men; and so much as in us is, we, too, must be ready to preach the Gospel to them that are at Rome also.

But I ask again, What are we to do? Must we lecture to our congregations on Kant, Fichte, and Schelling, and try to discover for ourselves and to reveal to them "The Secret of Hegel"? Must we discuss the Positivism of France, and the degenerate Transcendentalism which, during the last twenty-five years, has been making such startling progress in Germany? Is it the duty of every one of us to investigate the history of civilization and the philosophy of national life, and to determine for ourselves the true limits of the functions of Governments? Are we unfit for our work unless we are familiar with all the schemes for the social regeneration of mankind which have fascinated the intellect and the imagination of France from St. Simon to Fourier? Must we pursue the history of the protracted conflict between the Patriarchs of the East and the Bishops of Rome and the discussions of Roman theologians themselves on the rival claims of infallibility of Popes and Councils? Should we devote our days and nights to the controversy—stretching over a thousand years—on the doctrine of Transubstantiation, ransack the Fathers to discover how much of novelty there was in the theory of Paschasius Radbertus, demonstrate

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the essential Protestantism of Ratramnus and Rabanus Maurus, follow the vacillations of Berengarius, and challenge the authority of the Council of Lateran? Must we plunge into the abysses of modern criticism, read whatever has been written at Strasburg and Tubingen, and master all the theories which have divided the scholars of the Continent on the authorship of the Pentateuch, the comparative trustworthiness of the Books of Kings and Chronicles, the origin and formation of the four Gospels, and the integrity of the history of the Acts of the Apostles?

Life is not long enough for such labours as these; and if we ourselves were equal to these intricate and exhausting discussions, our congregations would have neither heart nor strength to listen to them. Our people come to us wearied with work and worn with sorrow, distracted with the cares of business, anxious about their children, mourning for their dead. They are conscious of sin, and are yearning for a deeper and more perfect peace with God; conscious of spiritual darkness and weakness, and longing for the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. I believe as firmly as any one, that no Church discharges its duty to man and God that does not produce thinkers and scholars competent to take their part in all the religious conflicts which disturb and excite the intellect of Christendom; and I also believe that we may sometimes discuss in the pulpit the critical, social, and philosophical theories which

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are imperilling the faith of our contemporaries. But such discussions can be attempted only occasionally by any of us; and very many of us must leave them altogether untouched.

Again, therefore, I ask, What are we to do? It appears to me that our true course is plain and direct. We have one duty to discharge, which includes all others. We have no new Gospel to preach; we must preach the old Gospel still, and preach it to all men. Christ is the Prince, and Christ is the Saviour of the human race. That is just as true to-day as it ever was. It is not for *us* to rescue either individual men or nations from the doubt, from the misery, from the confusion, or from the sin by which they are distracted and oppressed, but for Christ. I want to show that by preaching CHRIST we shall best discharge our duty to this troubled and restless age.

### I.

We need not fear that the world is weary of hearing about Him. It wearies of everything else, but it never wearies of Christ. After the lapse of eighteen hundred years, He still exerts over foes and friends the same mysterious power which belonged to Him when He was on earth. Every attempt to tell the story of His life over again, stirs the human heart as nothing else can stir it. The genius of M. Renan, the ineffable grace and beauty of his style, his great reputation, invested his "Life of Jesus" with excep-

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tional attractions; but after all, it was the story itself that France wanted to hear; and when even he wrote about the "Apostles," France cared nothing for his book. The literary beauty of "Ecce Homo," the freshness of its spirit, the originality of some of its views, and the ignorant and indiscriminating abuse which it provoked, all contributed to its popularity; but what made men read it with such eagerness and delight was this—it was another effort to tell the world the wonderful facts of the life of Christ.

What do we, and our Churches, and our fellow-countrymen know about Christ? How much of our strength is given to the endeavour to make men familiar with His character and history? I suppose that most of us are conscious that when we attempt to preach about Christ, we are in danger of preaching about everything and everybody that had any connection with Him, and of forgetting Christ Himself. We have something to say about the blue of Syrian skies; we make comparisons between the Sea of Galilee and Windermere; we describe the valley of the Jordan; we are poetical at times about Bethlehem and Nazareth; we explain the structure of Eastern houses, and are learned in the topography of Jerusalem. We give the history of the sect of the Pharisees, and of the people of Samaria, and the genealogy of the family of Herod. We suggest ingenious methods of harmonizing the discrepancies of the four Gospels. We answer objections to the Christian miracles. We take isolated moral precepts

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from our Lord's discourses, and show their application to modern life; or isolated statements of doctrine, and illustrate their bearing on the controversies which divide hostile schools of theology. Phrases which fell from His lips, phrases which occur in the Gospel narratives, suggest long trains of thought, which appear to us to be striking and pathetic, and perhaps "original." We discuss a thousand questions about Him; we reply to a thousand difficulties; we declaim, we argue, we entreat. We may do all this, and fail to tell the actual story. We may criticise the portrait contained in the Gospels, instead of trying to paint it afresh. We may discuss the merits of the drama, instead of letting men see it acted before their eyes.

Hence it happens that, to the very people to whom we are constantly preaching, the story of Christ's life, as a whole, is new and unfamiliar. When it is told them, they are, as we have seen lately, charmed and fascinated by it. We may have been able to give them many admirable thoughts about the facts of our Lord's earthly history, but the facts themselves are better than the thoughts. If we could only make them see Christ as He lived and moved among men—if His own thoughts, His own words, and His own deeds were so presented to them that they should feel as though they had listened themselves to His Sermon on the Mount, and to the parable of the Prodigal Son, had been with the Apostles in the boat when He walked across the stormy sea, had seen Him lay

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His hand on brows burning with fever, and take the little children in His arms and bless them, had stood by His side when He wept at the grave of Lazarus,—sat in the upper chamber when He said, “Let not your hearts be troubled,”—watched Him in His dying anguish, and gazed on Him as He ascended into Heaven—I cannot but believe that we should have new and wonderful proofs that Christ—not our speculations about Christ, not our arguments in support of His Divine commission, not our learned dissertations on the geography of the land in which He lived and the civil, political, and religious life of the Jewish people—but Christ Himself, is still the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Anyhow, in this great debate which is agitating Europe—in this fierce struggle with unbelief—it is time that Christ Himself were permitted to take part. It has come to this, that Christendom is asked to pronounce an adverse judgment on His claims; and while we are pleading for Him, He stands silent at the bar. *We* are answering the counsel on the other side; and *He* is not permitted to speak. We forget His own words: “I am one that bear witness of Myself.” It is not for us, indeed, to abandon the conflict. Scholarship must be met by scholarship, argument by argument, philosophy by philosophy. Wit, humour, poetry, eloquence, and passion are being used against Christ, and we must use them for Him. But in such a crisis as this, for us—for any of us—to stand between the intellect, the heart, and the conscience of mankind

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<sup>12</sup>

and Christ Himself is presumptuous and suicidal folly.

Religious faith is not the result of intellectual processes alone. If the history of Christ were a common history, it would be necessary, now that it is impeached, to illustrate its internal coherence, to develop the latent coincidences in the various documents which perpetuate the testimony of those who "from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the Word," and to adduce all the external proofs of the historical reality of the story. We should have no choice. This would be our only course. But it is much more than a common history; it is the supreme revelation of God to the human race.

Now, there are some beliefs of such importance to the higher life of man, that God has not made them dependent on proofs which appeal to the intellect alone. He has rested them on less precarious foundations. Theories of morals vary from century to century, and share all the vicissitudes of our intellectual history; but the broad lines which separate the great virtues from the great vices remain, and man's faith in the august authority of duty is unchanged. Men know that it is wrong to tell a lie, who never heard of the categorical imperative of Immanuel Kant, or the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham. Nor is their moral faith either irrational or insecure because they can give no logical account of it.

Most men believe in God, not because His existence

<sup>13</sup>  
has been demonstrated to them, but because they cannot help believing. Their faith is not the product of *à priori* arguments, or of arguments from design; it is rooted in the very depths of their moral and spiritual life; it is the act, not of the logical understanding, but of the Higher Reason.

If this be so, is it not reasonable to suppose that a Divine revelation will appeal immediately to the same regal faculty of our nature? When God is silent, the soul is sure that He is near; when He speaks, will it not recognize His voice? When God is invisible, the soul affirms His majesty and glory; when He personally appears, will it not instinctively adore? Of all the innumerable souls who have trusted in Christ for salvation, how many could have given a demonstration of the reasonableness of their faith? They believed, not because they were critics and scholars, but because to all the higher faculties of their nature the revelation of God in Christ was irresistible. They did not ask for proof; proof was unnecessary: "We have heard Him ourselves—"to hear Him was enough—"and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World."

It should also be remembered that the strength of that movement against the Christian faith which we have to resist and overcome is not derived from the mere intellectual force either of hostile philosophical theories or of hostile schools of criticism. Mr. Lecky, in his "History of Rationalism," justly says that "nothing can be more certain than that the great



<sup>14</sup>majority even of those who reason much about their opinions have arrived at their conclusions by a process quite distinct from reasoning";<sup>1</sup> and he speaks of "the extremely small influence of definite arguments in determining the opinions either of an individual or of a nation."<sup>2</sup> The religious faith of an age is, to a very considerable extent, the result of its general intellectual and moral condition.

Why are men reluctant to believe in the possibility of miracles? The only philosophical argument against miracles that has even the show of conclusiveness is that which was advanced by David Hume one hundred and thirty years ago; and that argument can never trouble for a moment those who have read a well-known chapter in the "Logic" of John Stuart Mill.<sup>3</sup> Physical science cannot pretend to pronounce against either the possibility or the probability of supernatural interferences with the common order of nature: these questions lie altogether beyond her province. But miraculous stories are listened to now with unreasoning suspicion, just as they were listened to in other ages with unreasoning credulity. Once there was a general tendency to believe in miracles in the absence of evidence; now there is a general tendency to refuse to believe in them, in spite of evidence. The most irrational and incoherent explanation of the origin of Christianity which denies the miracles of Christ is received; and

<sup>1</sup> W. E. H. Lecky, "Rationalism in Europe," *Introd.* p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. xvii.

<sup>3</sup> J. S. Mill, "Logic," book iii. c. 25.

<sup>15</sup>  
the most coherent and rational explanation which acknowledges them is rejected with contempt. To prove that miracles are possible is to do almost nothing, for they are not disbelieved because of any supposed proof of their impossibility. To allege the historical evidence that miracles were actually wrought, is to do almost nothing, for we have to contend with a reluctance to receive them which no evidence can remove. We must so preach Christ, that the strong bias against miracles in general shall be overborne and subdued by a passionate longing to believe in HIM.

And why do men accept what I suppose courtesy requires me to call the philosophy of Auguste Comte? Do they think that he has really demonstrated that those great inquiries which have attracted the speculations of the noblest and most glorious intellects, from the days of Plato to our own, relate to regions which are inaccessible to human thought, and that man can do nothing more than investigate the laws of the co-existence and succession of material phenomena? So far as I know, he has never even attempted to demonstrate the ultimate principles which underlie the philosophy of despair; and, notwithstanding the great and remarkable merits of the *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, I doubt whether, in the general exposition of any system of philosophy which has received the serious attention of mankind, there was ever so complete an absence of the peculiar logical powers which are necessary for the discussion

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of abstract philosophical principles. It is not because Auguste Comte has proved that inquiries relating to the invisible and eternal are insoluble that men are Positivists, but because they have ceased to be interested in those inquiries, or because they have not the courage and the faith which are necessary to sustain the heart in prosecuting them, notwithstanding repeated disappointment and failure. For such reasons as these, they accept a system which takes for granted that all which we have been accustomed for more than two thousand years to call philosophy lies beyond the range of human faculties. But if, as M. Comte admirably says, the loftiest aim of all the sciences is not to minister to the arts of life, but to satisfy the fundamental necessity of the intellect to know the laws of phenomena, we must try to quicken and to intensify that nobler necessity which has impelled men in all countries and in all ages to pursue with restless and agonizing earnestness a still deeper knowledge. We must try to unchain the thoughts which were wont to wander through eternity, but which are now imprisoned within the narrow walls of the physical sciences. We must discover how the higher nature of man can be roused from that fatal sleep which has made him indifferent to his origin, to his present relations to the invisible world, and to his destiny beyond the grave. The moral and spiritual faculties must be appealed to. The conscience must be awakened. The heart must

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be touched. And I know not how we can do this so well as by telling the story of God manifest in the flesh.

My answer to the question how we are to meet the unbelief of our times is this—preach CHRIST.

Let the world look on His face again, and hear His voice, and see whether the tide of battle will not turn, and a glorious victory be won. We know how marvellous was the spell which He exerted over all sorts of men when He was here. The rabbi came to Him by night; the woman that was a sinner crept to His feet and washed them with her tears; fishermen forsook their boats and their nets to follow Him; Zacchaeus, the extortionate publican, climbed the tree to see Him pass by, and repented of all his rapacity as soon as Jesus entered his house; rich Pharisees asked Him to dine with them; the common people heard Him gladly; Herod desired to see Him; Pilate pronounced Him innocent; the officers who were sent to take Him said, "Never man spake like this man"; the thief on the cross became a penitent, and turning his eyes to the inscription which was hung in mockery above the head of the rejected and crucified peasant of Nazareth, cried, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The ancient spell has not lost its power. In our great controversy with unbelief, our supreme argument for the authority of Christ is CHRIST Himself.

## II.

In our controversy with Rome, it is equally true that our strength must come from Him. The ignorant contempt with which, not very long ago, it was the custom of English Protestants to speak of the theology of the Romish Church, and of the intellectual power of those who submit to her claims, is passing away. How it could ever have been forgotten that she had the undivided control of the highest European thought for centuries, and that since the Reformation she has had the allegiance, not merely of blind enthusiasts and impassioned saints, but of the brightest genius and the wealthiest learning, the keenest logical acuteness, incomparable sagacity, and the loftiest eloquence, is unintelligible. And no one who has any acquaintance with the writings of that stately succession of scholars and theologians who have gradually built up the vast and wonderful structure of Romish belief will ever dream that the mere diffusion of education, or a general increase of intellectual activity, will render hearty faith in the creed of the Church of Rome impossible.

The resources of the Romanizing clergy of the English Church are far less formidable; their position is more easily assailed: but we make a serious mistake, and a mistake which may be followed by very grave consequences, if we suppose that the

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movement of religious thought and feeling which has lately received the name of Ritualism, has no deeper origin than a silly fancy for gorgeous vestments and decorated churches, or that there is nothing in it which can command the adhesion of intellectual force and the most earnest piety.

I believe, indeed, that neither Anglo-Catholicism nor Roman Catholicism is logically tenable; that the general dogmatic positions common to both, and the theory of the sacraments common to both, admit of no valid defence. I believe that the Anglo-Catholic appeal to the authority of the Church is incoherent; and that the claim of the Roman Church to infallibility rests on the most insecure and uncertain foundations. If an Ecumenical Council decrees the personal infallibility of the Pope, our controversial advantages will be immensely increased. But so much can be said, both by Romanists and by Anglo-Catholics—so much has been said, and said so well—on behalf of every doctrine that we impugn, and on behalf of every pretension that we resist,—the argument is so subtle and so complicated, and the traditions and authorities by which we are opposed exert such a mighty control over the imagination and sentiment and even the understandings of men,—that, for myself, I should often look forward to the issue of the conflict with gloomy apprehension, if Truth had nothing more to rely upon than the logic and learning with which we may be able to sustain her claims. My hope rests in this, that the clouds of error and superstition will be driven away

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by the presence of Him who is the Light of the world.

Take, for instance, the doctrine of Justification by Faith. It is, no doubt, our duty to show how great a place that doctrine occupied in the theology of the Apostles. The proof is obvious and conclusive. The very objections, the very calumnies which St. Paul's teaching provoked, are an unanswerable demonstration that he absolutely denied to good works any place in the justification of a sinner. But for this, it would never have been "slanderosly reported" that he said, "Let us do evil, that good may come"; nor would he have had any occasion to raise the question to which he has given so elaborate a reply, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"

And yet there is the impression that the doctrine of Justification by Faith is immoral, and therefore cannot be true; and there is the difficulty strongly felt by many of reconciling it with what is taught in the New Testament just as explicitly, that at the Final Judgment we are to give account, not of our faith merely, but of the deeds done in the body and of every idle word; and there is the famous passage in the Epistle of St. James, which provoked the great Reformer to exclude that Epistle from the canon altogether.

And so it happens that, although the doctrine is affirmed so strongly, and in such various forms, by Christ Himself and His Apostles, the argument is somehow evaded, and men, whose hearts are as loyal

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to the truth as our own, and over whom we can claim no intellectual superiority, remain unconvinced. This is no reason for abandoning the controversy; but it suggests that something besides the clearest and strongest argument is necessary if error is to be dislodged from the minds of even the best and ablest men.

Let us preach Christ, and we shall find that *He* carries conviction where our logic fails. Let us dwell upon the love which moved Him to descend from His eternal throne and to become incarnate; upon His eagerness to seek and to save that which was lost; upon the tears which He wept over Jerusalem; upon the free mercy that He showed to publicans and harlots. Let men see Him hanging on the cross, and let the glory He had forsaken blend with all the anguish and desolation and shame. Let them have the mystery interpreted by His own words, that His blood was “shed for the remission of sins.” Let us constantly reiterate that “He is the propitiation for the sins of the world”; that He died, “the just for the unjust,” to “bring us to God.” And while men are filled with wonder and fear, and gratitude and hope, be sure of it, all thought of associating their own penitence or their own well-doing with that One Perfect Sacrifice will vanish, and the heart, if not the intellect, will exclaim that, since Christ has died to save us, His death must be the solitary and adequate ground of our salvation; and when the heart is relying on Him alone, and on Him absolutely, for the forgiveness



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of sin and eternal life, the doctrine of Justification by Works will perish in the fires of passionate love, gratitude, and joy.

Read Martin Luther's "Commentary on the Galatians," and see how this doctrine won its triumphs three hundred years ago. Did he think it enough to give a calm and logical proof of the doctrine, to quote texts, and construct syllogisms? The heart of Europe was not thrilled by such means as these. He insists on the utter ruin and miserable weakness of mankind, on the aggravations of our guilt, and the terrors of our destiny; but, above all, he dwells with vehement rapture on the inexhaustible fulness of the love of Christ and on the infinite value of His sacrifice. He refuses no image, however bold and perilous, which can help him to represent more vividly how completely Christ has identified Himself with the sinner, and borne the whole weight of his sin. He cares nothing about the consequences which a cold and critical logic may infer from his unmeasured and exulting declarations of the sufficiency of the sufferings of Christ to cancel the most horrible guilt, and to secure for the red-handed criminal immediate pardon and full redemption. He so exalts and glorifies Christ that no room is left for penitence, for tears, for reformation, for midnight watchings, for fastings, for prayers. The work is done. There is nothing left for us but to receive forgiveness and justification, as God's free gift through Jesus Christ our Lord. If the battle is to be fought again, we must

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fight it in the same way. Scriptural proof, theological arguments—these are necessary; but the doctrine of Justification by Faith will never have any firm and secure hold of the moral and spiritual nature of man, except when the death of Christ as the atonement for the sins of the world is preached with something of the same rapture and confidence. Give up that—preach it hesitatingly, or with qualifications which destroy its power over the conscience and the heart—and the characteristic doctrine of Protestantism will be lost. The more vividly men apprehend Christ as the sufficient sacrifice for their sins, the more firmly will they hold the doctrine of Justification by Faith.

And the Romish theory of the priesthood and the sacraments will be destroyed, not by argument, but by Christ. If logic could have destroyed it, it would have perished centuries ago. It has its roots in a region of our nature into which logic cannot penetrate. Give men the alternative of obtaining forgiveness by believing in a creed, or by confessing to a priest, and there are vast numbers who without hesitation will turn to the priest. The priest stands before them as the personal representative of Christ; it is far more natural to trust in the priest than to trust in a set of theological propositions. Give them the alternative of securing salvation through a doctrine or through a sacrament, and they will cling to the sacrament. In the Eucharist, they are assured that Christ is personally present; they feel

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far more certain of securing eternal life by receiving Christ Himself than by receiving a doctrine about Him.

You may demolish every proof which is alleged in defence of priestly claims; you may illustrate, and as it seems to you with irresistible force, the terrible evils which these claims have inflicted on the spiritual life of the Church; but if, when they have forsaken the priest, men suppose that they are to have nothing but a "method of salvation" instead of a personal Saviour nothing but a book in which promises of forgiveness are printed, and no immediate access to One from whose lips they can receive absolution your argument and your history will, in thousands of cases, be powerless.

The real strength of the theory of Transubstantiation and the theory of the Real Presence lies in the impression of multitudes of men, that if they surrender their faith in the awful mystery of the Eucharist, Christ will seem no longer near to them. If He is not present in a supernatural way on the altar, they think that they must lose Him altogether; and they are accustomed to speak about our own service as a mere "commemoration of an absent Lord." The exigencies of the spirit are more imperious than the exigencies of the intellect. No logic can master the craving of the soul for Christ. We must satisfy the craving, or the error will not be renounced. We must preach Christ—the living Christ—till men shall feel that He is so near to them that

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the intervention of the priest is an impertinence and an affront. We must preach Christ—the living Christ—till men shall feel that He is near to them always and everywhere, and that His alleged union with the consecrated elements is rather a hindrance than a help to faith.

It is by preaching Christ that we shall most effectually meet the exclusive claims of the Roman Church to the perpetual presence of the Holy Ghost, and to the power of interpreting to every generation the mind of God. These claims have thrown a spell over many noble natures. They appeal to instincts and wants of the soul which can never be repressed. We cannot live on the story of Divine revelations made to remote countries and remote ages. We have our own sorrows and sins, perplexities and fears. To tell us that in distant times God manifested Himself to our race, is to mock us in our misery. We, too, are His children, and He alone can give us rest. If He ever spoke to men, why does He not speak to us? He can be no respecter of persons, of nations, or of centuries. In His sight—

This time is equal to all time that's past;  
Man is to God

That he hath ever been.

A dead history is not what the living soul requires.

Rome declares that, though the voice of Christ Himself is no longer to be heard, God still speaks to man in her Councils, or in her Popes, or in both.

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determining the new perplexities of new times, and giving to the unchanging Truth the new and more articulate intellectual forms which the restless activity of the intellect demands. How can we answer her? By proofs that the decrees of her Councils and her Popes are destitute of authority, and that the history of Christendom demonstrates that she has not been saved from grievous perplexity and error? Yes; but that answer is incomplete. We must appeal to the promise of Christ, that He would not leave His Church comfortless, and show that His promise was in no way connected with the supremacy of a bishop or the organization of Councils. We must maintain that He has kept His promise—that He Himself is with His Church still, and that the assumptions of Rome obscure His present glory, and lead the trust of men away from Him. Rome has erected in all her churches the image of Christ in His dying anguish. We must answer her claims to infallibility by the clear, vigorous, devout, triumphant declaration, that He who is the Truth, as well as the Way and the Life, is not dead—that He is risen, and abides with His Church for ever.

The conflicts, and controversies, and divisions of the Church may indeed appear to prove that Christ is with it no longer, and that either His promise is misunderstood, or that its fulfilment depends on conditions which we have failed to satisfy. The Church, so many seem to think, is no longer one, and they pray for the restoration of the unity of Chris-

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tendom. The grave doctrinal differences which have separated wise and saintly men, are supposed to demonstrate that Christ, the great Teacher of the Church, is absent, and that the Spirit, who was to lead us into all the Truth, does not reveal the thoughts and will of God to individual souls. But is it so? These very divisions—these very controversies—these rival systems of theology—afford the strongest incidental proof that the unity of the mystical body of Christ is inviolable, and that the Spirit of Truth is indeed among us. Christ never promised that the Spirit would reveal to us a perfect system of scientific theology. Theological knowledge is one thing; and the knowledge of the Truth, as taught by the Holy Ghost, another. There is a region lying far beyond the limits which confine the activity of the intellect—a region whose infinite and transcendent glories and terrors cannot be represented under the forms of the logical understanding: it is there that those who are taught of the Spirit see Divine visions and receive revelations of the Lord. Scholars and peasants, men who have grown grey in speculation, and little children, have the same teaching; it is independent of human culture. When the visions have faded, and the voices are silent, they try to tell what they have seen and heard, but they always fail. The intellect does its best to give form and shape to the knowledge of the Spirit; but it constructs systems which contradict each other, and systems which in themselves are not coherent. The words to which the soul has

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listened remain for ever “unspeakable,” for they can be translated into no language spoken among men; they cannot be “uttered,” for the laws of human thought, which are the laws of human speech, forbid.

And yet we are sure that the saints of every Church have had the same eternal truth revealed to them. The same pure white light fell upon every soul from the face of God, though it is refracted and divided when it passes through them to us.

For in them all we find the same penitence, the same fear, the same abhorrence of sin, the same thirst for perfect holiness. They have all seen the same Christ; for He has inspired them all with the same trust, the same love, the same reverence, the same gratitude, the same joy, the same intense and burning zeal for His glory. The hymns of the Church prove it; books of devotion prove it; the bright perfections of ten thousand saints prove it. How do you account for this wonderful and indestructible unity of the Church—a unity which is not impaired, but only illustrated, by differences of culture, of rank, of race, of language, and of civilization? If there were unity of ecclesiastical government and discipline, this might explain it. If there were unity of theological creed, this might explain it. But it remains unbroken, spite of the fierce and protracted controversies which have shaken Christendom to its very foundations. It is a Divine work. It is the supernatural sign of a Divine presence. Ecclesiastical

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systems vary; creeds vary; but Christ is one, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. What Rome claims for herself, we claim for Him. The true answer to Rome, when she demands submission to her infallibility, is that we have Christ, who is the Truth itself, with us still; and when she demands our reverence as the true Temple and Church of God, we must reply that Christ is greater than the Temple, and that wherever two or three are gathered together in His name—not only in Œcumenical Councils,—there is He in the midst of them. Our truest way of answering Rome is to preach CHRIST.

## III.

But Christ is not merely the Teacher of the Church: He is also her King. If He is with us, we can acknowledge no King but Him. It is true that He has received power over all flesh; the “heathen” are His “inheritance,” and “the uttermost parts of the earth” are “His possession.”

When we baptize little children, we declare that it is not by their own choice that men become the subjects of Christ, any more than it is by their own choice that they become the subjects of any earthly sovereign. He is their Prince, simply because they are born into the world for which He died. He claims them through our hands. There are no longer any “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,” or any “strangers from the covenant of promise.” But



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though men cannot be “aliens,” they may be rebels; though they are no longer “foreigners,” they may be traitors. The true idea of a Christian Church is that it consists of those who are loyal to the throne of Christ, and are trying to obey His laws. That “field” in which the wheat and the tares are to be permitted to grow together till the harvest, is not the Church, but the “world.” No form of polity, indeed, no severity of discipline, can enable us to draw the line with unerring accuracy between “the saints and faithful brethren” and “those who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”; but the attempt must be made.

If one of the great Christian ordinances is to be administered to all who are the subjects and “servants” of Christ by birth, the other is to be celebrated by those who, through personal faith and love, are His “friends.” These principles underlie our whole polity and creed. I do not stay to prove them. If they are false, we have no longer any reason to glory in our ecclesiastical history. Our fathers “suffered so many things in vain.” Our very existence is a mistake.

But we are not prepared to abandon our old position. Never, during the last three hundred years, has there been a time when it was more necessary to maintain the great principles on which our Churches are founded than now. These principles contain the only adequate and permanent solution of the politico-ecclesiastical controversies by which Christendom is

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perplexed. I do not imagine that the details of our system of ecclesiastical polity will be reproduced in the organization of all other Christian Churches; but the spirit and principles of Congregationalism, if I rightly understand them, are destined to universal triumph.

That triumph will not be won by the arguments of ecclesiastical antiquarians. It will not be enough to show that neither Presbyterianism nor Diocesan Episcopacy existed in the Apostolic Churches. Of the precise organization of the Churches of the first century we know very little. It is not true, indeed, as some one has said, that "there is room enough in that unknown space for every denomination of Christians to consecrate a temple and raise an altar"; but it is obvious that if every Church must be built on the exact model of the Church at Corinth, at Ephesus, or at Antioch, we are in hopeless difficulties. The plans have been lost, and the specifications destroyed. But the foundation remains. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." We ask every man—this is the explanation of all our characteristic principles—to "take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

For us, the foundation determines everything. Even in the primitive Churches there were some who built upon it, not gold, silver, and precious stones, but wood, hay, and stubble. No matter. We do not appeal to them, but to Christ

The mere external framework of the Church it may

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be necessary to vary with the varying circumstances of mankind. For anything I know, it may be a fact, as some of the members of this Union maintain, that at first there was but one Church in one city; but that this should be a hard-and-fast law for all countries and all ages is to me inconceivable.

Who can believe that the organization of the Christian Church had any vital relation to the municipal arrangements of pagan cities like Corinth and Rome? The theory would involve the necessity of reconstructing our Churches whenever the House of Commons passed a new bill for altering the boundaries of Parliamentary boroughs; it would imply that, so long as the suburb of a large town was under the management of a Board of Health, the Christian people there should form a separate Church—a kind of dependent Mission Church perhaps; but that as soon as a local act was passed which brought them under the mayor and corporation, and invested them with the privilege of paying the borough rates, they should be absorbed in the great central Church.

It would be rather difficult to show that any Christian Churches were founded, before the close of the first century, in villages and country places. That was a later innovation, like having more than one Church in one city. Primitive practice does not sanction it. But I do not imagine that this is a reason for breaking up our village Churches. Nor need we wait till a country town is incorporated, before we establish a Church

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there. Parchment and leaden seals, the golden chain of a mayor, the scarlet robes of an alderman,—we are quite sure that these have nothing to do with Church organization and polity.

Whether it is expedient, and in harmony with the unchanging spirit and laws of the Church, that there should be a score of Churches, absolutely independent of each other, in a town of a hundred thousand inhabitants, and that the Christian people in two villages a mile and a half apart should have as little to do with each other as though they were Jews and Samaritans, are very fair questions. But I do not think we can solve them by proving that there was but one Church in Rome and one Church in Ephesus. It is not, I repeat, by the mere practice of the primitive Churches that we profess to be ruled even in matters of polity, but by the Law of Christ Himself—implicated and involved in the great verities of the Christian Faith—illustrated in the teaching and work of the Apostles—confirmed by the instincts of the spiritual life.

We are to be governed, not by precedents, but by principles; not by technicalities and traditions, but by the Spirit. Christian Churches—that is what we believe—are not the artificial creations of human sagacity or political laws; they exist by the Will of Christ; their true members, all of them, have the Spirit of Christ; when they meet they have the presence of Christ; and Christ is their living Ruler and Head.

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Christ, the living Christ, is the Ruler and Head of the Church. There is scarcely an argument which is urged in support of national ecclesiastical establishments which is not paralyzed by that solitary truth. Nearly every plea for a State Church derives its force from the disposition of men to think of the Church as being nothing more than a great human organization for maintaining Christian learning and propagating religious truth, or for civilizing mankind and improving the morality of nations. Let Christ be revealed as the actual King of the Church, and nearly all the arguments for ecclesiastical establishments are answered. Try whether it is possible to state the case to Him.

Will any one venture to say to Christ, There is not love enough in the hearts of Thy friends to bear the expenses of maintaining Thy worship and of preaching Thy Gospel; the cost is heavy; they will not, or they cannot bear it; but we will use our political power to compel the unwilling to take their share of the burden? Yet this is one of the chief arguments for a national establishment.

Or will any one say to Christ, Thy servants in whom Thy Spirit dwells are fanatical and unjust; if the government of the Church is left to them, they will be guilty of tyranny, and no freedom will be left for those to whom Thou art revealing truth which Thy Church has not yet received or understood; it will be better to remit all questions concerning the character and doctrine of the pastors of Thy Church

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to men who, though they may not be taught of Thee, are familiar with human laws, and who, though they may have no love for Thyself, love justice and liberty better than Thy most ardent friends: whether Judas shall continue an Apostle is likely to be determined unjustly by his brethren; it will be safer to consult Pilate or to appeal to Cæsar? Yet this is one of the chief arguments for a national establishment.

Arguments which are gravely urged by statesmen in the House of Commons, no man would be profane enough to address to Christ. Address them to Him, and they require no reply.

We may sometimes discuss this great question on the common grounds of political equity and expediency. We may illustrate the injustice of religious establishments, and the social disorders they create. The darkest and bloodiest pages in the history of Europe are those which record the crimes and cruelties of which governments have been guilty when they have used their power to support the Church. But our chief concern should be, not to conquer the advocates of ecclesiastical establishments in political struggles, but to convince them by the force of Christian truth. We must preach CHRIST till all our brethren in all Churches, whether bond or free, shall feel it a humiliation for them to rely for the wealth they need on anything but the love and loyalty which Christ inspires in Christian hearts, and till they shall feel it to be the worst treachery to permit any human power to come between His Church and Him.

## IV.

Perhaps, of all the problems which are now pressing for solution in the chief countries of Europe, the most perplexing are those which relate to the general social condition of the people. Here, in England, we are beginning to be terrified by the wide and widening gulf which separates the rich from the poor, and by the misery, the ignorance, and the crime which disgrace and corrupt our national life. Every year we are demanding with increasing earnestness that some remedy should be found for these appalling evils. But, probably, very few of us have appreciated the real gravity of our position. Those, however, who watch with any care the thought and temper of the working people of our great towns know very well that the questions which they are discussing with the keenest interest affect the whole structure and order of society; and that there are ominous signs of deep-seated and growing dissatisfaction with our existing social institutions. On the Continent, it is distinctly and frankly avowed that no remedy for the evils which afflict the great masses of the people can be effectual which does not involve a complete Social Revolution. That great democratic movement, the strength, depth, and tendencies of which were estimated with such consummate sagacity by M. de Tocqueville nearly forty years ago, is still disturbing the thoughts of statesmen in every part of the civilized world. It cannot be repressed; it is impatient

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of control; its ultimate triumph is certain. What especially concerns us is this, that its representatives are almost everywhere hostile to the Christian faith. They maintain that the mightiest spiritual force in England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, for more than a thousand years, has been Christianity; that ever since the fall of the Empire the Christian clergy have had the control and discipline of European thought and morality; and that, as they have claimed the glory of being the founders of modern civilization, they must bear the disgrace of its failure. The vices of wealth and the miseries of poverty; the dishonesty, covetousness, and selfishness of trade; the pride and ostentatious splendour of hereditary nobles, and the degradation of hereditary paupers; the tyranny and ambition of governments, and the ignorance and servility of the people—all are declared to be the necessary and natural results of our social institutions; and for these Christianity is made responsible. Against the great Churches the representatives of democracy produce a formidable catalogue of crimes. These Churches have been the bulwarks of privilege and absolute power. They may have relieved the sufferings of the poor, but have not contended for their rights; they may have taught men to be charitable, but not to be just. To subjects they have preached submission, but they have not preached righteousness to kings. They have refused to listen to the cry of the oppressed, and the tremendous forces which threaten to break in pieces the oppressor



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will utterly destroy the Churches which have been the confederates and allies of tyranny.

What reply are we to give to this terrible indictment? Shall we tell them of the times when the Church rescued Europe from barbarism, when she was the home of the outcast, the asylum of the wretched, the liberator of the slave, the champion of all who suffered wrong? They will not dispute the truth of the story; but they will answer that these times have long gone by, and that when the Church was the defender of the oppressed, it was rather from the accidents of her position than from any deep and enduring hatred of injustice. Let us appeal to CHRIST. Let us tell the representatives of democracy that every generous principle, and every glorious hope by which their hearts are stirred, they have learned from Him; but that His ideal of the golden age of the human race is nobler than theirs, and that He would have us seek it by nobler means. They are trying to redress the social inequalities of men by stripping the great of their privileges; He is more anxious to redeem the miserable from their degradation. They are creating hostility to the prosperous; He inspires love for the wretched. They claim equality with the rich; He made Himself the brother of the poor. Do they denounce the evils which come from the selfish and immoderate accumulation of wealth? He said long ago, "Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth." Are they indignant that the institutions of society should

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stimulate ambition and covetousness, and the pride of birth and station? He said to His disciples, "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." If they will help us to translate these laws of Christ into the organization of society, they are our friends, not our enemies. Churches may perish. If Churches have pledged themselves to the defence of social institutions which deny and outrage the transcendent dignity and inalienable rights of man; if they forget that the common people are not merely of the same "flesh and blood" as statesmen, nobles, and kings, but of the same "flesh and blood" as Christ Jesus Himself—let them perish! It is not the spirit of democracy alone, but the spirit of Christ, that destines them to destruction.

But have we ourselves sufficiently preached Christ as the brother of all men? I believe that the mutual hostility which separates class from class, the envy with which the poor too often regard the rich, the contempt or the indifference with which the rich too often regard the poor, will never be subdued but by the sense of their common brotherhood in Him. In Christ, Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, forgot the hatred of centuries; in Christ, and in Christ alone, will the social alienations which are the peril of our country be healed.

Nor do I know where we can find the courage, and

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the hope, and the enthusiasm which are necessary to sustain us in the attempt to solve any of the graver problems suggested by our social condition except in Him. But for Christ, I should despair of the civilization of the modern world and the future of the human race. How the struggle between labour and capital, now only just beginning, is to end, I cannot tell. How the fever and excitement of unscrupulous commercial competition are to be cooled and quieted, and all the immorality and misery it occasions prevented, I cannot tell. How that army of crime, which has encamped in the very heart of all our wealth and greatness, and whose ravages no force of law seems able to repress, is to be swept away, I cannot tell. How that hereditary pauperism, which no changes in our commercial policy, no manufacturing prosperity, no reforms in the method of administering relief, no schemes of emigration, seem able altogether to remove, is at last to disappear, I cannot tell. We are confused and bewildered by the schemes of social reformers. We are disheartened by repeated failure. I am afraid of the indifference which comes from despair. But there is hope in this, that Christ came to save the world, and He will surely save it. And while this is a reason for hope, it is also a stimulus to exertion. It fires enthusiasm. It transforms the work of common philanthropy into a religious duty. It elevates our war against poverty, and ignorance, and crime, into a crusade.

Every morning and every night our people pray,

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“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Let us make them understand that it is not Christ’s Will that thousands of English children should grow up without the most elementary rudiments of education; and, since this is a region in which the Will of Christ may be enforced by human law, let us ask them in His name to throw around every child that is born into the country an inviolable protection against the carelessness or stupidity, or covetousness or necessity of its parents, and defend, so far as we can, with all the authority and power of the State, the child’s right to receive the education which the Will of Christ requires to be given to it.

It is not Christ’s Will that there should be in this country a million or a million and a half of paupers, whose condition—whose hereditary condition—renders a happy and honourable life almost impossible. It is not His Will that criminals should go on breeding criminals, and that the foul inheritance of pollution, blasphemy, and villainy should be entailed on generation after generation. In struggling against pauperism and crime, we are contending, not merely for the security of a human empire, or the honour of an earthly throne, or the safety of a majestic and splendid civilization; we are contending for the glory of Christ, and translating into action the prayer He has taught us to offer—“Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Does any one suggest that we who press for the separation of the Church from the State have no

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right to speak of the Will of Christ in connection with the laws and institutions of nations?

The suggestion rests on a complete misconception of our position. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein." We deny that the will of the State should control the Church of Christ; but that the Will of Christ Himself should control the laws, the institutions, the policy of the State—this is our incessant and agonizing prayer. To deny that our national life and legislation are to be governed by the Will of Christ, is a heresy that would destroy the hopes of the human race. It is blank atheism. If the State is to be rescued from the darkest dangers which threaten it, we must preach CHRIST—Christ not merely as the supreme revelation of God—Christ not merely as the sacrifice for human sin—Christ not merely as the Head of the Church, but Christ as the Ruler of all men, the Regenerator of nations, the Saviour of Society.

Brethren, do we really know Christ? This is the supreme question for our Churches and for ourselves.

The philosophy of our age, its criticism, its heresies, its ecclesiastical perplexities, its social troubles—it is not enough that we know all these. Nor is it enough that we know Christ Himself by the mere report of others. What Evangelists and Apostles have told us of Him is not enough. We must tell the world what we have heard from His own lips, or the world will not listen; and when we make known "the power

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and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," we must speak as "eye-witnesses of His Majesty." Our whole nature, our whole ministry, must be penetrated and transfigured with His glory. I pray God that this direct and supernatural revelation of Christ may be made to us all.

And now I must bring this protracted address to a close. I have been speaking of the new age in which we are living, with its new perplexities and new troubles; but, after all, "the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun." Spring comes to us still, as when the world was young, with the music of birds and the brightness of flowers; and Autumn with her golden harvests. The running streams sing their old song, and the mountain-sides are still rich with the purple heather. God still "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." "Fire and hail, snow and vapours," and "the stormy wind," still "fulfil His word." And the life of man is still brightened with the old joys, saddened with the old sorrows, ennobled with the old virtues, stained with the old sins. We listen still to the silver laughter of childhood. Love kindles in the hearts, and shines from the eyes of youth and maiden still. Manhood is still vexed with care and weary with toil. Old age sinks into weakness and decay. The men of our own times must descend into the grave like their fathers; they must stand before the

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same judgment-seat; and the same awful alternative lies before them, of eternal death or eternal glory. They “have all erred and strayed like lost sheep”; and the Sacrifice for the sins of past ages is the Sacrifice for the sins of men to-day. They must be renewed by the same Spirit. If they are saved, they will rise to the same heaven. If they are lost, they will sink into the same hell. The world may seem new and strange to us; but “we are of yesterday, and know nothing.” To Christ it is the same world which for so many centuries He has been pitying, loving, and trying to save. The new perplexities of the age do not baffle His wisdom; its new troubles do not appal His heart; its new sins do not exhaust His mercy. He is not weary yet of the great attempt to rescue our race from all its sins and all its sorrows. He is still mighty to save. His eye is not dim, nor His natural force abated. Christ does not despair of mankind, for He does not despair of Himself. Let us trust in Him, and look forward with unfaltering hope to the world’s better future. The earth has grown old in misery and sin; but in His presence its youth shall yet be renewed like the eagle’s. The words are truer, nobler, than they seem—“the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be”; for the golden age of the race shall return once more, and, in a fairer Paradise than Adam knew, coming generations shall see the face and hear the voice of God.

Brethren, let us preach Christ, under the inspiration

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of the Spirit of Christ, with vehement love, with perfect faith, with exulting hope, and soon He “shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.” He will make all things new. The Holy City—the New Jerusalem—shall descend out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God, with its wall of jasper, its gates of pearl, its streets of gold, its foundations of precious stones; the nations of the saved with their wealth, their splendour, and their power, their genius and their learning, their wit, their beauty, and their gladness—shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth—their thrones established in righteousness, their laws and policy inspired and controlled by Him who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords—shall bring their glory and honour into it. Hunger and nakedness, sorrow and shame, doubt, ignorance, and sin, shall be known no more, but

“Earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth,  
One Kingdom, joy and union without end.”



## II

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION  
TO THE MINISTRY, THE WOR-  
SHIP, AND THE WORK OF THE  
CHURCH.<sup>1</sup>

IN the summer of 1867 there was a festival in Rome, which far transcended in brilliance and splendour any religious spectacle which Christendom had witnessed for many centuries. Just eighteen hundred years had passed away since, according to the tradition of the Roman Church, St. Peter and St. Paul had suffered martyrdom together in that ancient city; and from every part of the world a vast assembly had met to celebrate their saintly lives and their glorious deaths. The excitement of the festival was intensified, and its joy perfected, by the homage which was done to martyrs and confessors who, in more recent times, were inspired with the same unshaken faith, the same ardent devotion, the same heroic constancy in suffering, the same victorious hope of immortal life and

<sup>1</sup> An Address delivered before the Congregational Union of England and Wales, October 19, 1869.

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blessedness, and to whom, on that day, a place was decreed among the shining company of the saints.

Over the tomb in which the ashes of St. Peter are supposed to lie, has arisen a stupendous dome, which crowns one of the most magnificent structures ever consecrated to the worship of the Saviour of mankind. Through many ages that vast cathedral has been enriched by the policy of the Popes, and by the genius and devotion of the Catholic world. The very pavement is of costly marbles. The walls are covered with mosaics. There are statues by famous sculptors, silver shrines, and altars gorgeous with precious stones. On this great festival, its massive columns and lofty arches were hung with crimson and gold. And there were the banners of saints, and the scarlet robes of the princes of the Church, and the jewelled mitres of bishops, and priestly vestments of strange barbaric splendour worn by men who had come from ancient Asiatic Churches to increase the pomp of the great solemnity. The head of the Roman Communion was surrounded by the representatives of two hundred millions of the faithful. There were men of every complexion, of every climate, and of every tongue. They had come from the north and from the south, from the far east and from the far west. There were bishops and archbishops from nearly all the countries of Europe. The Patriarchs of Constantinople, of Alexandria, of Antioch, and of Jerusalem were there, who claim to be the successors of Chrysostom, Athanasius, Ignatius,

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and Cyril. They came from India and China, and the islands of the Indian Seas; from Cincinnati, Baltimore, and St. Louis; from Canada, and from Brazil. There were Greeks, Armenians, Maronites, Chaldeans, Syrians, and Copts. Even at the most famous of the Councils there was never present so large a proportion of the whole number of the bishops of the Catholic world; and there were forty thousand priests.

When choir after choir and the vast assembly itself burst into song, and the exulting tones of the *Te Deum* rose at once from tens of thousands of voices of "all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues," who can wonder that there were some who felt as if innumerable angels and the glorified spirits of the just had descended from the City of God, to unite in the worship and rapture of the Church below!

Catholic writers speak of the festival with triumph, as illustrating "the unity of loving allegiance, strong as death, and stronger than hell," which, even in these days of trouble and schism and fear, binds, as if with a golden chain, all tribes and races to the everlasting rock of Rome; and Protestants can neither deny the splendour of the celebration, nor refuse to recognize its significance.

The remarkable success of the centenary has had a result which may prove to be one of the most momentous events in the history of Christendom. It suggested or confirmed the resolution of the Pope

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to convoke the Œcumenical Council, which is to meet in Rome in the month of December. It is probable that the deliberations of the Council will be principally directed neither to definitions of doctrine nor to questions of ecclesiastical discipline. The Bull convening it appears to be accurately interpreted by a Catholic writer, who says that "it has been summoned to re-assert and practically to enforce the Church's political supremacy over civil society; and also her intellectual supremacy as conservator of Christian dogma over philosophical, ethical, historical, critical, and literary investigation." In other words, the Council will be called upon to confront, in the name of God, the great revolt of all the European nations against the authority of the priests—a revolt inspired by all that is most active and energetic in the intellectual life of Christendom—a revolt sustained by the policy of statesmen, the enthusiasm of social reformers, and the passions of the people, and embittered by the remembrance of the innumerable evils and sufferings of those centuries during which the intellectual and moral freedom of mankind was suppressed by the tremendous power of the Church.

To have convened a Council for any purpose in such an age as this would have been an act of singular courage. But had it been summoned merely to define a new dogma, to condemn theological heresies, or to regulate the interior discipline and organization of the Church, the world might have

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listened to its lofty pretensions with a cynical smile, and suffered its decrees to pass into speedy oblivion. Rome, in the hour of her apparent weakness and peril, in the very extremity of her distress, has dared to do something far bolder than this. She has called her faithful sons from every country under heaven, that they may assert her right to legislate for the human intellect in every province of its activity, and to control the social and political development of all Christian nations. Physical science, flushed with unexpected and intoxicating triumphs, must submit all its discoveries to the judgment of the Church,—perhaps of the priest who happens to be Bishop of Rome. Criticism must shrink from investigating what the Church pronounces sacred, and be ready at her bidding to repudiate the conclusions which have been confirmed by the consent of innumerable scholars. Statesmen must invoke for their laws and policy the sanction of the Pope. Nations must lay at the feet of the priesthood the imperfect liberties which have been won by the suffering, the heroism, the treasure, and the blood of past generations; and if Rome commands it, that hope of a larger freedom which consoles and strengthens the hearts of the common people in every country in Europe, must be surrendered. These are the claims which the Council will be asked to invest with the most solemn sanctions, and to defend with the most awful anathemas.

The rulers of the Roman Church are not ignorant

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of the temper of the age. They have measured the strength of that great movement against which the Church has to struggle. They have seen that the most venerable traditions and the most august institutions are powerless to resist its progress; that it is reorganizing the constitution of European society; and they have resolved to meet it in the plenitude of an authority declared to be derived from the supernatural illumination of the Holy Ghost.

Whether this assertion of the transcendent endowments and powers of the Church is to be ascribed to policy or to faith, or whether it was suddenly inspired by the great enthusiasm of the centenary, there is a certain moral grandeur in it, to which no abhorrence of Roman superstition can make us insensible. It may be our duty to challenge the claims of Rome, to resent them, to demonstrate that they are hostile to the dearest interests of mankind, and a presumptuous invasion of the inalienable prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ; and yet there is something in the spectacle of this ancient Church reasserting its supernatural claims, which may not only provoke controversy, but suggest deep and serious reflection.

*We* also profess to believe in the Holy Ghost. Our faith is, that as in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word, retaining His Divine personality, became man, so we, through the power of the Spirit, retaining our human personality, receive the life of God. We are "made partakers of the Divine nature," and have entered "the kingdom of Heaven." That

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we are regenerate of the Holy Ghost determines the law of Christian perfection, and the whole theory of Christian ethics from its fundamental principles to its ultimate and minutest details. We believe that, as for all supernatural virtues we have the inspiration of a supernatural life, we have also supernatural endowments for all supernatural work. We lay claim to "the spirit of wisdom and revelation." It was to common Christian people that an Apostle wrote, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

We do not admit that the Church was deserted by the Holy Ghost at the close of the Apostolic age. It was expedient for us that the old Temple should be destroyed, that the whole world might become holy ground, and that men might no longer feel that, when far away from some sacred mountain or from some sacred city, they were far away from God. It was expedient for us that a human priesthood should be stripped of its sanctity, that every one of God's children might rejoice in the freedom and blessedness of immediate access to the Father. It was expedient for us that Christ Himself should go away, that being no longer visibly present in the streets of Jerusalem or the synagogue at Nazareth, or on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, He might be the nearer to all that love Him in every country and under every sky. And it was expedient that the exceptional authority of Apostles should cease, that the supernatural presence and teaching of the Spirit

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should more manifestly belong to the whole Church, and to the very obscurest of its members.

This is what we profess to believe. Rome, in an age of universal scepticism, has declared her unchangeable faith in the supernatural presence of the Holy Ghost in ecclesiastical rulers and Councils; she is about to act upon that faith in magnificent defiance of the derision of nearly all Europe. I wish to inquire whether our nobler creed is held with the same firm and vigorous grasp, and whether it is illustrated and consistently maintained in the actual life and organization and customs of the Congregational Churches of this country.

To prevent misapprehension, it may be well to state distinctly that this inquiry must be pursued within very definite limits. Many grave questions must be left altogether untouched. I should like to inquire whether, in the culture and discipline of the religious life, we adequately recognize the relation of the Spirit of God to the development and perfection of Christian holiness; and whether in our evangelistic work, both at home and abroad, we habitually remember that the Spirit of God has direct access to the inner depths of the human soul which lie far beyond the reach of all argument and of all appeal. When the whole drift of European thought is to exclude the living God from the material universe, we ourselves are in danger of denying or ignoring His immediate presence in the higher life of



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man. What the laws of Nature are to some students of physical science, the great facts and doctrines of the Christian faith, its sacraments and discipline, may be to us. We may think of them as a vast system of spiritual forces, originating indeed in a supernatural and Divine act, but now left to themselves, to work on through age after age without any interference from the Divine volition—forces which are invariable and constant, and whose laws human ingenuity can discover. The present relation of the Divine Will to the regeneration of man and his restoration to purity and blessedness may be almost forgotten. This subtle form of Atheism is perhaps just now desolating and paralyzing the religious thought and life of Christendom. But the time which is at my command does not permit me to enter upon this larger and deeper discussion. All that I propose to do is to consider the theory and the practice of Congregational Churches touching certain relations of the Holy Spirit to the Ministry, the Worship, and the Work of the Church.

#### I.

In our theory of the Ministry, the direct and supernatural action of the Holy Spirit is very distinctly recognized. We say that men should not become ministers unless they are “inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost.” The imposition of human hands is worthless, apart from a diviner consecration. “No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God.”

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As the "call" to the ministry is supernatural, we believe that the qualifications for it are also supernatural. Intellectual vigour, brilliant genius, eloquence, learning—we say that a man may have them all, and be utterly destitute of the powers which are necessary for this work. It is not enough that his moral character should be blameless. It is not enough that his spiritual life should have intensity and depth. I believe that many men have entered the ministry and failed, who had strong sense, adequate culture, practical sagacity, untiring industry, and genuine religious earnestness. All of us may be taught of God what we need to know in order that we ourselves may love Him with a perfect heart, and keep all His commandments; but all of us do not receive those revelations which we need if we are to stimulate and direct the religious thought and life of the Church, and if we are to make men tremble while we reason with them of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come."

And, as there are regions of truth which must be supernaturally revealed to the true minister of Christ, there is also a supernatural power of "exhortation" and "teaching," which is necessary to him, and without which, though he may thrill and charm vast audiences, and command admiration for his genius and eloquence, his preaching will be without any adequate spiritual results. The elements of that power escape the most critical and delicate analysis. It may receive a name in homiletical treatises, but

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it cannot be defined. It is too subtle for the examination of any Christian Aristotle. It is not a natural endowment. Devout and spiritual men, who can speak with clearness and persuasive force on common subjects—men who can deliver great sermons—cannot really preach. The faculty is not to be acquired by any rhetorical discipline. There is a gift of “utterance” as well as of “knowledge.”

Nor is this all. There are special supernatural virtues and graces, as well as special supernatural powers, which are indispensable to the Christian minister. It is not clear that every Christian heart is necessarily inspired by God with an ardent passion for the rescue of men from the pains of eternal death, or for the development of the spiritual perfection of the Church. “There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” To one is given by the Spirit a tender sympathy for the physical sufferings of mankind; to another, a noble abhorrence of social injustice and mischievous laws and political tyranny; to another, an unquenchable thirst for a more perfect knowledge of the mysteries of God’s material universe; to another, an ineffable delight in poetry and art. Who will venture to say that John Milton would have shown himself a better Christian if he had written the “Call to the Unconverted,” or the preface to the “Reformed Pastor,” instead of the “Areopagitica,” or “Paradise Lost”? Or that Wilberforce should have left the House of Commons and employed his enchanting

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eloquence in preaching the Gospel? The indignation which glowed and burned in the heart of Wilberforce against the slave trade—was it not a Divine fire? And yet how different it was from that fervent zeal which consumed the soul of Whitefield for the conversion of the human race! Milton's patriotism and the rapture of his spirit when he heard the symphony and song of angels, and saw "the sanctities of heaven" stand thick as stars around the throne of the Eternal—were not these Divine gifts? And yet Milton could not have done Baxter's work at Kidderminster. Both the men had genius and eloquence; they were both the servants of Christ: but, apart from the purely intellectual differences which made one a poet and the other a preacher, there was given to the one and not to the other a vehement solicitude for the spiritual welfare of mankind. You will not imagine that I mean that any Christian man can be indifferent to the salvation of the human race. If the Spirit of Christ dwell in us—and without His Spirit we are "none of His"—we must be touched with that Divine compassion for sinful men which moved Him to "seek and save that which was lost." We must all bear His image, and we can have no trace of it if the brightest glory of His character is not reflected in ours, and if we know nothing of His mighty passion for the redemption of the world from sin and from eternal destruction. Anticipating the hour when we shall have to give account to Him of the deeds done in the body, and

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shall have to listen to His sentence on our earthly history, it appears to me that, with whatever humiliation and sorrow we may have to acknowledge other forms of sin, the most awful fears will shake the soul of that Christian man—if there be one—who will have to confess that when he himself, through the infinite mercy of God, had escaped from all fear of the indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which threaten the impenitent, he cared nothing for the rescue of those who were still exposed to the same intolerable doom; and for that man, “saved, yet so as by fire,” will be reserved, in the hour of judgment, the keenest agony and the deepest shame. God forbid that I should ever write or utter a solitary syllable that might lessen the force and pathos of any appeal to the Christian heart to have pity on those who are in danger of eternal perdition! Sooner than that, “let my right hand forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.”

And yet it is surely true, with whatever qualifications, that with equal saintliness the depth and fervour of evangelistic zeal may vary. It was not so intense in St. John as in St. Paul. Nor is it less true that with equal saintliness, the strength of those spiritual sympathies may vary which are necessary to a man entrusted with the culture and discipline of the holiness of the Church. For a minister, therefore, to be a very spiritual man is not enough; his spiritual life must receive a special development corresponding to his special work.

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According, then, to our theory, every true minister of Christ must have received a Divine call; revelations of Divine truth, not necessary to his own personal consolation and sanctity; a supernatural faculty for speaking to the nobler powers of the human soul; and spiritual affections and sympathies of a special order, originated and sustained by the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

This is our theory. If, then, we are anxious to create for the Church an adequate number of faithful ministers, what ought we to do? Increase the attractiveness of the ministerial office, by investing it with great social consideration and honour? Agitate for the augmentation of ministerial incomes? Build ministers houses? Found a Sustentation Fund? I will say nothing now of the expediency or necessity of any of these measures considered in relation to other objects; but if the strength and efficiency of our ministry are in any peril, measures like these will bring us no deliverance. No increase of salaries, no Sustentation Fund, no comfortable residences for our pastors, will secure for us the ministers we require. We must appeal to God. It is because men have never received the supernatural call and the supernatural inspiration, that the vacancies which are occurring in our ranks are in danger of not being worthily filled, and that the number of our ministers does not more rapidly increase. If men are to be "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost," we must entreat Him to move them. If they are to receive

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a fiery baptism from Heaven, kindling in their hearts a passion for the salvation of mankind, we must entreat God to grant it to them. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." But we cannot by any scheme of ours make them more numerous; no wages that we can promise will attract them; no training that we can give will qualify them; their call and their qualifications alike must come from God; "pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

And we must leave it to Him to send whom He pleases. Loud complaints are sometimes heard that our ministers come chiefly from the less educated and less wealthy classes in our Churches. That is God's concern, not ours. If these are the men He calls, it is not for us to receive them with suspicion and doubtful cordiality. The sons of our more prosperous people, it is said, seldom enter the ministry; so much the worse for the sons of our more prosperous people. It is said that their parents discourage them, because of the social disadvantages and pecuniary loss in which the ministry would involve them. I cannot believe it; but if it is true, so much the worse for their parents. What seems to be the fact is, that the Divine call is seldom heard by the sons of rich men; and rich men should ask why it is that their children are not "counted faithful," and why it is that "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" is not "committed to their trust." Is there anything in

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their own temper and spirit which explains it? Do they themselves love the world too much, and Christ too little? Their sons should ask why it is that to the children of the poor, and not to them, this "grace" is given that they should preach to mankind "the unsearchable riches of Christ." These are questions for them to ask, rather than for us; and they are questions which should be asked with humiliation and pain, and with devout solicitude to know the truth.

There is another complaint which, in the form in which it is very frequently made, appears rather inconsistent with our theory. Every few months the roll of our ministers is critically examined; the discovery is made that a large proportion of them have neither passed through one of our colleges, nor taken a University degree; and their presence in the ministry seems to be censured as an irregularity for which either they or their Churches are responsible, or is at least regarded as a necessary evil. But have we any right to impose upon the Spirit of God the restraints which this complaint implies? Must the Divine call never come to any one who is over four-and-twenty, and is too old to enter college? Are we to lay it down as an axiom, that when a man has ceased to be "a novice," and when by many years of devout and holy living he has not only obtained "a good report of them which are without," but acquired a depth of spiritual knowledge, and a steadfastness of faith, and a wealth of human experience, hardly possible in



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early manhood, the Spirit of God cannot be permitted to stir his heart to “desire the office of a bishop,” and that, if he does desire it, the desire should be suppressed as presumptuous, irregular, and illegitimate? Colleges are intended for men who are capable of becoming scholars; can we venture to say that no man who does not show a capacity for mastering a Greek chorus or the intricacies of the Athanasian controversies can ever receive direct from Heaven the supernatural gifts which constitute the supreme qualification for the ministry? We do not believe that a minister is under any obligation to celibacy; why do we lead men to think that after a Christian man is married, and it is practically impossible for him to become a student, he has no right to be “inwardly moved” of the Holy Ghost to become a minister? Among us, is the certificate of a college committee to be invested with the same mysterious importance that belongs to episcopal ordination in some other Christian Churches? Is it necessary to the validity of our orders? Is any symbol of inferiority to be branded on the men who do not happen to possess it?

“If there come” into our ministry “a man with a gold” medal, “in goodly apparel,” with a bachelor’s gown or a master’s hood, “and there come in also a poor man in vile,” unscholarly “raiment, and we have respect unto him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place,” and let thy ministerial authority be confessed and honoured of

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all men; "and say to the poor, Stand thou there" afar off, in the kindly obscurity of some country village, and keep there; or, "Sit here under my footstool" as town missionary, and never presume to enter the pastorate;—"are we not then partial in ourselves, and become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren"; if God hath "chosen the poor," unscholarly man, "rich in faith," in energy, and zeal; if God hath given him the spirit of power and of love, and of a sound mind; if he has received of God the "spirit of wisdom and revelation,"—"who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."

I feel as strongly as any of you that the portentous development of religious indifference and unbelief among the educated classes should make us strive to secure for our ministry men of the richest learning as well as native intellectual power, and that the controversies which are troubling the thoughts of the Church on the contents of the Christian revelation, as well as its authority, impose upon us the duty of cultivating far more earnestly and courageously than we have cultivated of late, every province of theological learning; but when I think of the vast numbers of our working people who are untouched by any form of evangelistic agency connected with any Christian Church, I long to see a great army of preachers rising up among the working people themselves preachers who shall be familiar, as the

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wealthy cannot be, with their sorrows, their hardships, their pleasures, the passions by which they are stirred, the hopes by which they are animated, their scepticism and their faith, and who shall speak to them in their own tongue of the infinite love of God revealed to mankind through Christ Jesus our Lord. Strong sense, intellectual activity, shrewdness, wit, humour, fancy, these are to be found among our working people in far larger measure than some of us perhaps suppose. On political and social questions they speak with great clearness and vigour. Let the baptism of fire descend upon some of them, and, as evangelists to the masses of our manufacturing population, they will have a power which scarcely any of us possess.

And if the hearts of men are touched by their preaching, and if the people they have taught to fear God cling to them with reverence and love, why should they not become the ministers of the congregations they have founded? It is very possible, indeed, that the fervent evangelist may be an unwise ruler of a Church, and an incompetent teacher; but to have created a Church is at least a surer proof of the possession of some of the supernatural gifts which are necessary to the pastorate than a college certificate or a university diploma. As for the unworthy apprehension that the ministry would suffer in dignity and social consideration if any large number of men of this kind received full recognition as Congregational pastors, I have too

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much respect for this assembly to discuss it. What right have we to ask for social consideration on the ground of ecclesiastical office? Let our dignity perish if we can but bring our countrymen to Christ, and obtain for our Churches a larger number of pastors rilled with the Holy Ghost.

And what reason can be alleged why Christian merchants, manufacturers, professional men, and tradesmen, are not more frequently called to the pastorate? It cannot be fairly said that in all cases their business and professional engagements render it impossible for them to find time to discharge its duties. They are active members of Town Councils; they are mayors; they are Guardians of the poor; they are Justices of the peace; they go into Parliament. Are there none of them who, under the stress and strain of their secular duties, lead a devout and saintly life? Are there none of them to whom wonderful visions come of the glories and terrors of the eternal and spiritual universe? Are there none of them whose hearts are saddened and agitated by the destiny which hangs over the impenitent? Are there none of them who, if their tongues were once unloosed, would speak with pathos and fervour to their Christian brethren, and give them wise counsel concerning the maintenance of unbroken communion with God and the keeping of all God's commandments? When Christian men are without a pastor, and no man comes to them in whose words they can recognize the voice of God, when they pray week

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after week and month after month that the vacant office may be divinely filled, how is it that it never occurs to them that they might find perhaps among themselves what they have vainly looked for among strangers—the sanctity, the wisdom, and the zeal, the faculty for teaching and the faculty for exhortation, which are the great qualifications for the pastorate? It is one of the evil traditions which we have received from ecclesiastical communities founded on principles which are altogether different from our own, that no man can become a minister, and yet “abide in the same calling wherein he was called.” It seems to be supposed that the boast of the great Apostle, “These hands have ministered to my necessities,” would be the shame and dishonour of a modern pastor. It is this which lies at the root of many, though not of all, the evils against which we are maintaining a feeble and ineffectual struggle by ignominious ministerial charities, and by schemes for the augmentation of ministerial incomes.

It lies at the root of still graver evils. It restrains the free action of the Spirit of God: the fire which He kindles is quenched; the call which He gives is resisted; and He is grieved by the exclusion from the highest forms of Christian service of men on whom He has conferred the richest grace and the noblest gifts. We “make void” the promises of God and our own faith through our “traditions.”

There is, however, a kind of service which can be rendered to the Church only by men of intellectual

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vigour who have been disciplined by severe studies, by men who are familiar with the great movements of human speculation in our own times and in past ages, and who can give all their strength to thought and prayer. We require scholars and theologians as well as saintly and sagacious pastors and impassioned preachers. But it is not a natural policy, and in very many cases it will not be a successful one, to take young men of nineteen or twenty whose early education has been very imperfect, and attempt to make them scholars. We must begin earlier. We must try to secure for the children of our Churches a far higher education than that which they generally receive now. Middle-class schools must be established. We must endeavour to inspire manufacturers and tradesmen with the same spirit which is often manifested by the poorest of professional men, and by large numbers of our working people. We tell carpenters, and blacksmiths, and masons, who are earning thirty shillings a-week, that it is shameful to take their boys away from school when they are ten years old, as soon as they have learned to read and write; we must tell tradesmen and manufacturers, who are earning their eight hundred or a thousand a-year, that it is quite as shameful to take their boys from school at fifteen, when they have just caught a genuine enthusiasm for learning. There are many homes in this country in which the payment of a few pence every Monday morning for school-fees and the cost of school-books,

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and the loss of the two or three shillings a-week which a lad of twelve would be able to earn, deprive widowed mothers of the small comforts which alleviate the hardships of the poor; and the sacrifice is endured in heroic silence. But how very seldom it is that any similar sacrifice is ever dreamt of by a man in business, in order to give his son a university education. The boy must leave his Sophocles to enter his father's counting-house, and save the salary of a clerk. He must become an apprentice, that he may be the sooner off his father's hands. Why, the money which is spent on greenhouses and hot-houses would go very far towards enabling the boy to spend three or four years at one of our own colleges, or at Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow, or University College, London; but his father cares more for grapes and geraniums than for Greek, and wastes on dreary dinner-parties the money which might have made his son a scholar.

Nor is there any reason why Christian young men of this class, who have received no call to the ministry, should not have a thorough theological education. The learning which enables a man to read for himself, and to read intelligently, the words of prophets and Apostles, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, should cease to be a ministerial monopoly. Theology, the grandest of all the sciences—the result of the thought of a long succession of saints and men of genius on God's supernatural revelation, and on the great mysteries of the spiritual universe—is the common inheritance of

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the Church. Some who, when they commenced these studies, had no intention to enter the ministry, would gradually come to have an inextinguishable passion for ministerial work. Others who might leave college to engage in business would be able, as teachers of Bible-classes, to render to the young people of our congregations inestimable service. Many of them might in after years hear the Divine voice calling them to become preachers and pastors; and in them we should have a race of ministers disciplined and qualified for their office by long experience of the perils and temptations of human life, as well as by sacred learning and the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. If we desire to have a learned ministry, and yet believe that no man should be a minister who has not received a Divine commission, the only reasonable course seems to be to induce a far larger number of educated Christian youths to consecrate the years of early manhood to theological studies, and then to implore God to grant them that inspiration of the Holy Ghost without which no intellectual discipline, no wealth of theological learning, can fit them for ministerial service. Our present methods, though the best available in our actual circumstances, are artificial. We shall never have a really learned ministry until we have a more learned Church.

Shall I venture to discuss what our creed requires of those of us who are already in the ministry? We believe in the Holy Ghost. The same Spirit that



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dwelt in prophets and Apostles dwells in us. It is not the sunlight of other centuries which fills the heavens and the earth with its glory to-day; and it is not by the inspiration of other centuries that men now come to know God. We have the wonderful history of our Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh; we have the interpretation of that history in the writings of the Apostles; we have a Christian literature of almost infinite preciousness; but we tell our people that, apart from the supernatural illumination of the Holy Ghost, they can have no real knowledge of Divine truth. That illumination is still more obviously necessary to ourselves. We confess the necessity; do we habitually and practically recognize it?

There are times when we are conscious of a strangely vivid and intense apprehension of the Eternal and Divine. A power which is not our own takes possession of us. We cease to originate our own thoughts. We listen in silence to supernatural teaching. The people know when these visions have come to us; the words which we speak under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost move the very depths of their spiritual life.

Why is it that we do not more frequently speak thus? With the work we have to do, no other speaking seems to have any considerable value. It may, indeed, be impossible for us always to dwell in the ineffable glory. Sometimes, perhaps, even Apostles had only the remembrance of what they

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had received when the heavens were opened and they heard the voice of God. There are kinds of teaching necessary to the Church, which may not require the immediate and supernatural teaching of the Spirit.

But are we content that these hours “of visitation from the living God” should be exceptional and rare? When they come, do they come unsought? Do we suffer the vision to depart without any effort to retain or recall it?

Our creed requires us to consider by what spiritual discipline, by what urgency of prayer, we may secure for ourselves a more permanent inspiration. For us the words of Christ have a special emphasis: “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.”

Must not some of us acknowledge that we have too often forgotten this? Do we not wander restlessly from theologian to theologian in search of the Truth, which can come only from Him? Do we not listen to grammarians and critics, when we ought to be listening to the Spirit? When our sermons have appeared to us to have logical vigour, brightness of fancy, a mere human pathos and rhetorical fervour, have we not been too ready to think it enough? When we have prayed most earnestly, has it not often been when our preparation for the pulpit has been over? Instead of asking God to reveal His own thoughts to us, have we not rather entreated Him to

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move the hearts of the people by words which we did not receive directly from Him?

Our books are "too much with us." We should compel them more frequently to be silent, that we may hear a diviner voice and receive a deeper teaching than theirs. In those high regions where the truths lie which are the supreme of our ministry, scientific methods and the natural keenness and force of the human intellect are of no avail. What we need to know must be revealed; it cannot be discovered. Without the immediate teaching of the Spirit, we may be lecturers on Christian doctrine and ethics, but we are not ambassadors of Christ.

It is the reach of prophetic vision, and the fire of prophetic inspiration, which both the world and the Church require. We believe that they are within our reach. Let us entreat God for His mercy's sake that they may be ours.

## II.

But the Spirit does not dwell in the ministry alone; the whole Church is the temple of the Holy Ghost. M. Comte, in his remarkable review of the influence of the Papal system on the life and thought of Europe, has observed that the claims of the Papacy limited the right to inspiration. He saw very clearly that, according to the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, every Christian man may receive supernatural illumination as well as supernatural strength from the Spirit of God; and to him it appeared to

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be one of the signal benefits conferred on Christendom by the stupendous development of the Roman Church during the Middle Ages, that the great prerogative originally conferred on every Christian soul and on the whole Church was overborne and crushed by the lofty and exclusive pretensions of Popes, Councils, and a consecrated priesthood. The true genius of Protestantism, he says, instead of suppressing the right to inspiration, extends it to all men, and by recognizing in every Christian the mysterious capacity for receiving light direct from heaven, has introduced into the political, social, and intellectual life of Christendom a disturbing force which, but for the simultaneous decadence of every form of theological speculation and belief, might have involved Europe in chaotic confusion. The sagacity of the founder of the Positive Philosophy was not at fault. Those who believe with him, that "the gradual development of humanity" is imperilled by a living faith in the supernatural, have more to fear from "the free spirit" of Protestant Churches than from the strong organization of Catholicism. The innumerable differences between ourselves and Rome are resumed in this simple controversy. Rome is reasserting her claims with more than her ancient energy and boldness; I ask again whether our own faith is maintained with equal vigour and consistency?

We believe that the Church of Christ is not an artificial society, consisting of persons who hold a common belief, and who have agreed to order their

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lives by a common rule, but a Divine creation. Those who belong to it have received a supernatural life, which reveals itself in supernatural acts and a supernatural character.

Perhaps there are no higher manifestations of the presence of the Spirit of God in the Church than the great acts of prayer and praise. They imply a reconciliation between God and man. They transcend our natural powers; it is the Spirit that "helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us." The joy of our thanksgiving is "the joy of the Holy Ghost" And if we are filled with reverence and awe, it is because the Spirit reveals to us the greatness and glory of God.

It is very possible, however, to produce, by inferior and merely natural agencies, an emotional condition which may be easily mistaken for the rapture and devout fear which come from supernatural inspiration. The mystery of sacred rites, the vastness and solemnity of sacred buildings, pathetic music, a stately and artistic liturgy, may awaken religious sentiment where diviner influences are altogether absent

During the last quarter of a century, the conviction has been deepening and spreading in the Congregational Churches of this country, that in our public services worship has been unduly subordinated to preaching. The conviction is just; but the measures which have been almost exclusively resorted to with

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the hope of remedying the evil are aesthetic rather than spiritual; they appeal to natural religious sentiment, and leave the spiritual life untouched. We are, indeed, under the greatest obligations to those whose exertions have refined and ennobled our sacred music and added beauty to the form of our services. All that is grandest, fairest, brightest, and purest in the creations of human genius should be consecrated to the expression of our joy in God, our thankfulness to Him for His goodness and our reverence for His infinite perfections. But the joy, the thankfulness, and the reverence must *exist*, or they cannot be expressed; and to attempt to create them by merely artistic means—by passionately sensuous hymns, by music, or by the mere rhetoric of public prayer—is to injure the simplicity of the spiritual life, and to kindle “strange fire” on the altar of God. Devotional earnestness may be troubled and repressed by the coarseness and incongruity of the form in which it has to be uttered; but true earnestness suffers more from the excess than from the deficiency of the mere instruments of expression. The regal powers of the soul are sufficient to themselves. Passion can be eloquent almost without words. The genius of the true artist can dispense with canvas and colour, and reveal itself in a chalk sketch on a barn-door; and, incredible as it may appear to some of us, there are innumerable saints singing now to the music of golden harps, whose hearty trust in God triumphed over the dreary move-

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ments of "Devizes" and breathed life and fire into "Shirland" itself, whose missionary zeal survived the surprising eccentricities of "Calcutta," and whose joy in the Divine grace received no mortal injury from the riotous vulgarity of "Cranbrook." The nobler music is not always felt to be the natural expression of a noble devotion. I have a strong suspicion that there are some among us still—very devout and fervent men too—to whom it seems that the great prophets of Modern Psalmody—Gauntlett and Monk and Waite and Allon and Curwen—have brought us as yet into no Land of Promise, but into a very desolate wilderness, and they look back with ill-disguised regret on the flesh-pots of Rippon and Walker, and almost long to hear again the ancient groan of the bass viol and the ecstatic flourish of the cheerful clarionet.

The problem to be solved by those who are interested in the aesthetics of public worship is singularly delicate. They have to consider how they can secure perfect freedom for the highest activities of our spiritual nature; but they must not attempt to stimulate and intensify these activities. Reverential awe, peaceful trust, the fervour of love, the exultation of hope, can be created only by the Holy Ghost; all that Art can do is to provide for these supernatural affections a just and adequate expression. It may provide the instrument for the Divine hand, but must not attempt itself to strike the chords. Physical restlessness may be soothed, and the gloom of

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physical depression may be driven away by its spell; it may cast out the "evil spirit" which sometimes takes possession of us; but when this is done, it must leave the soul vacant for a diviner guest, and its own voice must not be heard in the temple. The true solution of this problem will vary with the varying culture of the Church and the varying temperament of nations; but I am Puritan enough to believe that the higher life suffers infinitely less from those forms of service in which there is neither beauty, nobleness, nor pathos, than from those which in themselves are so rich, so stately, and so pathetic that they excite, even in the undevout, emotions which are easily mistaken for the sorrows of a supernatural penitence and the triumph of a supernatural joy.

The true spirit of praise and adoration must come from the Holy Ghost. When He reveals to us the majesty and the glory, the wisdom and the power and the stainless holiness of God, we shall be filled with reverence and wonder and devout fear; and not till then, with whatever stateliness and solemnity we may invest our worship. The wintry desolation of our souls will yield to no fires that we can kindle; but when "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," as the sun's heat and splendour are shed abroad on mountain and valley, cornfields and vineyards, when the days of winter are over, the summer of our souls will come with its abounding beauty of thanksgiving, and the autumn with its golden harvest of praise,



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What vehemence, what passion, what rapture there would be in the songs of the Church, if “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,” gave to us and to all our people “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,” and if we all knew “what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe”! Then, though we should gratefully accept the ministry of chant and anthem and choral harmonies, and the majestic music of organs, and should be thrilled while a thousand voices blended in the triumphant shout of joy, our hearts would be on fire before the song began, and we should be able to say, “Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion.”

The spirit of prayer must come from the Holy Ghost, as well as the spirit of thanksgiving and worship. Discussions about the mere arrangement and order of our services may be very necessary if it is inconsistent with our faith in the living presence of the Spirit of God in the Church to regard with distrust and resentment every departure from the customs of our fathers. God is as near to us as He was to them. But when we have abandoned as wearisome that “long prayer” which was consecrated by the usage of two centuries, it is not certain that our shorter prayers will be offered with more faith and fervour; and in a few years our Churches and congregations may become weary of them too. When

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these in their turn are abandoned, we may weave into beautiful liturgies the words in which the saints of other ages and of other lands confessed sin and sought Divine light and strength and peace for themselves and all mankind; but we shall find that the words of saints will not always inspire saintly devotion. We shall never be able, by any artifices of liturgical arrangement, or by any beauty of devotional thought, to charm the impenitent into a sorrowful confession of sin, or the undevout into reverential worship.

In our public prayer we must think less than we have been accustomed to think of the taste, the criticism, the impatience of men who do not pray. In the presence of the awful perils from which we ask to be redeemed, of the infinite blessings we desire to obtain, and of the bright perfections we adore, we must not be troubled by the indifference and the weariness of those to whom these transcendent terrors and glories are all unreal. When we pray, our great design is not to move men, but to move God; and if we fail to do that, we fail altogether. We must appeal to the Holy Ghost. It is He who creates in the heart a thirst for communion with God. By Him "we have access to the Father." He reveals to us what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard" the wisdom, strength, and joy "which God hath prepared for them that love Him" and kindles a vehement desire for all spiritual blessings. It is He who inspires us with that perfect charity which "seeketh not her own,"

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but pleads with God to console the sorrows and forgive the sins of others. Faith in the Divine promises is His gift, and through Him we come to that immediate knowledge of God which would enable us, if all promises were cancelled, to rejoice in the boundless wealth of the Divine goodness. Apart from Christ we can do nothing; and it is through the Spirit that we abide in Him, and His words abide in us, so that, ask what we will, it is clone unto us. "Praying in the Holy Ghost," we should make the infinite treasures of God our own. We should find in the presence of God "fulness of joy." Controversies about the form of our service would cease. The energy of the living Spirit would create its own form. The longest prayers would be too short; the most numerous would be too few. If even then, to the undevout our worship seemed destitute of brightness and beauty, to the devout the rudest and simplest service would glow with a supernatural life, and would shine with a supernatural glory as the gloomy and shapeless clouds of night are transfigured when touched with the light of the dawn.

### III.

From the Worship of the Church to its Work is an easy and natural transition. In these days, and especially among English Nonconformists, religious work of various kinds absorbs whatever life and strength the Church possesses. We may

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have no heart to pray; we may contribute very little to the development of theological thought; but we are restlessly active. In no previous age did the Church sustain such powerful organizations for the conversion of mankind. Missionaries are preaching the Gospel on the remotest shores. Christian women are speaking of Christ in the obscurest streets and courts of our great cities. The most lonely hamlets are reached by evangelists. Throughout Europe, colporteurs are moving ceaselessly from town to town and from village to village. There is not a seaport in the East or the West to which our ships have not carried the writings of Hebrew prophets and of Christian Apostles; and the discourses which were spoken on the shore of the Lake of Galilee and in the Upper Chamber at Jerusalem have been translated into every language spoken under heaven.

Nor is it by official persons alone that the great and systematic attempt to compel the world to repent of sin and to trust in Christ for eternal life is being sustained. We press upon all the members of our Churches the obligation to take part in this gigantic enterprise. We are incessantly reiterating that this is a duty which cannot be neglected without guilt. If we believe in anything, we believe in this. The doctrinal controversies, which appeared to our fathers of such importance, have become almost obsolete. Questions about the Divine decrees the extent of the Atonement, the Perseverance of the

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Saints, create hardly any interest, and no excitement. The most active and living element in the religious thought of our Churches, is the conviction that every Christian man ought to attempt to save the lost. The duty is confessed even when it is not discharged.

But have you ever considered how extremely difficult it is to discover in the New Testament any direct precept in which this obligation is imposed upon all Christian men? Innumerable duties are explicitly enforced—the duty of prayer, of patience, of gentleness, of love for the brethren, of alms-giving, of submission to secular governments, and of industry in our secular callings. Innumerable sins are explicitly condemned—anger, lying, drunkenness, all forms of sensuality, blasphemy, and covetousness. But the duty of entreating those who have not yet believed in Christ to believe in Him, is not enforced; the sin of neglecting to do it is not condemned. The omission cannot be an accident. The Christian people to whom the Epistles were written were surrounded by numerous populations of idolaters. Why was it that St. Paul, with all his evangelistic passion, said nothing to the Churches at Rome, at Ephesus, at Corinth, about their responsibility for the conversion of mankind? The silence is startling. Can we discover the reason of it?

I believe we can. That we ought to do our utmost to save man from sin and eternal death cannot be denied; but if we attempt to save them only because we ought, we shall almost certainly fail. You may

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cover the land with churches, but if the men who preach in them preach the Gospel only because conscience compels them to preach it, they will preach to very little purpose. You may double the number of your Sunday-school teachers, but if they teach only because you have made them believe that it is their duty to teach, the children, whatever else they may learn, will not learn to love Christ. You may multiply your missionaries a thousandfold, but if it is only the sense of responsibility for the conversion of the heathen which obliges them to become missionaries, the heathen will never be converted.

Have we not already discovered that if the evangelistic work of the Church is to have life and force in it, something very different is necessary from this reiteration of the idea of responsibility? "We are not under law, but under grace." This is quite as true in relation to what we call our "Christian work," as in relation to our individual Christian life. "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good"; but the law with its authority, the commandment with its threatenings and promises, never inspired any of us with steadfast loyalty to God, or gave us strength to master sin. Nor will the authority of conscience, alone and unaided, ever create in the Church the fervent zeal and the heroic energy necessary for the salvation of the world. It was not in response to the imperious call of duty that the Son of God descended from the height of His celestial majesty to rescue men from eternal

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perdition, but at the impulse of irrepressible love. He was moved, not by conscience, but by compassion, when He stretched forth His hand to cleanse the leper, to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, and to raise the dead. The tears which He wept over Jerusalem were the tears of defeated pity, the tears of an infinite mercy mourning that its purposes were baffled and thwarted by human perversity and sin. And we, too, whether ministers or unofficial members of the Church, if we are to preach the Gospel as Christ preached it, must preach, not because we ought, but because we must. It must become intolerable to us that the people about us, the men with whom we transact business, our friends, our neighbours, should be “alienated from the life of God” in this world, and should miss eternal glory in the world to come. We must be possessed with that strong and vehement love for men which made Christ endure the Cross, “despising the shame,” “for the joy that was set before Him” of rescuing them from the pain of eternal death. To create this, law is powerless; it is a supernatural gift. We may be stung and tortured into activity by conscience, but “the mind that was in Christ” must come from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

If that inspiration were granted to our Churches—and it would be granted in answer to devout and persistent prayer—our evangelistic work would assume greater variety of form, and resources which are now lying idle would be used with unexpected vigour and

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effect for the conversion of men. Every kind of faculty and genius, every type of temperament, every advantage of social position, of wealth and of poverty, of literary culture and knowledge of human life, would create for itself appropriate service. The dull uniformity of our work would disappear. It would no longer be necessary that every one should enter the ranks and practise the drill of one of the three or four great regiments on which we now rely for the subjugation of the world to Christ. The clerk at the desk, the carpenter at the bench, the smith at the forge, the bricklayer on the scaffold, the collier in the mine, the sailor in the ship, the labourer in the harvest-field, the girl in the mill, would find their true work lying about them. Christian women, living in dreary courts, would become the evangelists of their neighbours. Women of fortune, without entering a "Sisterhood," would become the nurses of the sick, the comforters of the sorrowful, the friends of the lonely and desolate, and would be incessantly winning their hearts for Christ. The sons of the wealthy would begin to ask their fathers for "the portion of goods" that fell to them, and would gather all together, and take their journey into far countries, not to waste their substance in riotous living, but to give courage and aid to Churches in France and Italy, which are struggling hard to keep the light of God burning brightly amidst the dense darkness of Romish ignorance and error, or would become the allies and the friends of missionaries in



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India and China, and would share the glory of founding new Churches among the heathen. Physicians, when their reputation was established and their fortune made, would cease to use their science and skill to increase their wealth, and would do the same work among the destitute of our own cities that Lockhart and Hobson and Lowe have been doing in the cities of the far East. Christian merchants, manufacturers, and tradesmen would sooner leave their businesses to their children, and would find for their leisure the noblest employment; would render sustentation funds almost unnecessary, by scattering themselves among the pleasant country villages of England, and entering the fellowship of Churches, which their wealth would rescue from all pecuniary difficulties; and they themselves, in unostentatious and informal ways, would Christianize solitary farmhouses and secluded cottages, which can never be reached by any organized agency which it is in our power to sustain.

For years we and our Churches have been maintaining a large and costly machinery for the conversion of the world; is it not time for us to attempt to convert the world ourselves? Suppose it were possible for us during the next twelve months, by a gigantic effort of generosity, to double the number of buildings which we have erected for Divine worship in this country; suppose that every one of our congregations built in some neglected district a church as large as its own;—that would be a

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magnificent achievement. We know that it is beyond our power. But there is no reason why we should not accomplish a far grander work. Why should not every member in every Church throughout the country resolve, with God's help, to prevail upon a friend, a neighbour, a brother, a sister, to trust in Christ for the forgiveness of sin and for eternal salvation before twelve months are over? If the resolve were made, I believe in my heart that it would be accomplished, and the result would be that before the year had gone by and we met again in this autumnal assembly, every Congregational Church in England and Wales would have created—not a material edifice for Divine worship whose walls and foundations, though of granite, would at last decay,—but another living Church as strong as itself—a true Temple of God, imperishable as the Divine throne, and destined to be the home of the Divine glory for ever. To do this, the very dream of which thrills the heart with unutterable bliss, we need—not boundless wealth, not heroic self-sacrifice, not an impossible perfection in the organization of the strength of our Churches, but only that which God is eager to grant and which may be had for the asking—the baptism of the Holy Ghost. We believe this. Why do we not invoke it?

Inspiration in our Preaching, Inspiration in our Worship, Inspiration in our Work—without these, we are powerless; if we had them, the whole world would soon be at the feet of Christ.

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And now, brethren, I have done. In the course of this address I have ventured to criticize very freely some of the traditions of Congregationalism, and some of the tendencies which appear to me to be exerting an injurious influence on the life and work of Congregational Churches. For doing this I shall offer no apology. I believe that you will never tolerate in this chair a man who shrinks from using the prerogative of perfect freedom of speech. Without that, this honourable position would lose all its worth, and to accept the distinction would be to submit to degradation. From my very heart I thank you for your generous confidence which called me to preside over this assembly, and I trust that in all our deliberations we shall be conscious of the invisible presence of Christ, and shall be guided by the wisdom which is His gift of the Spirit.

## III.

THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH IN  
RELATION TO MODERN CON-  
GREGATIONALISM<sup>1</sup>

THE supreme fact in the history of the world perhaps in the history of the universe is that God has become man in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him it is possible for all men, not only to obtain the forgiveness of sin, and deliverance from eternal destruction, but to receive the very life of God. The life is more than raiment, and whatever varieties of theological creed and ecclesiastical polity may exist among those who have been "made partakers of the Divine nature," however widely they may be separated from each other by bitter controversies, by mutual suspicion and hostility, and by the evil traditions of dark and evil times, their transcendental unity is indestructible. But it is not my intention to discuss the nature or the supernatural prerogatives and glories

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesia: a Second Series of Essays on Theological and Ecclesiastical Questions, 1871.

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of the Catholic Church. These have been already illustrated in an earlier paper in this series.<sup>1</sup>

Nor is it my intention to discuss, except incidentally, the conflicting claims of the great Churches of Christendom or the merits of rival systems of ecclesiastical polity. As a Congregationalist, I believe that Congregationalism is not only a legitimate form of ecclesiastical organization, but that it is sanctioned by whatever authority belongs to the example and practice of the Churches of the first century. "We for our parts," said John Robinson, "as we do believe by the Word of God, that the things we teach are not new, but old things renewed; so are we no less fully persuaded that the Church constitution in which we are set is cast in the apostolical and primitive mould, and not one day nor hour younger, in the nature, and form of it, than the first Church of the New Testament." This position has been maintained by a long succession of controversial writers; and it has been conceded by eminent Church historians and distinguished theologians who were not themselves Congregationalists.

Most modern Congregationalists, however, would admit that the polity of the Church is not a matter of positive institution, and that although the Church order established by the apostles ought not to be departed from except for very grave and sufficient reasons, there is no formal authority restraining the

<sup>1</sup> "The Catholic Church," by the Rev. H. R. Reynolds, D.D.

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Church from varying its organization to enable it to meet the varying exigencies of its history. That any adequate reasons have ever arisen for suppressing the ecclesiastical independence of separate congregations, and depriving them of the free choice of their own officers and the ultimate control of their own ecclesiastical affairs, we should deny; and most of us would probably maintain that no such reasons are conceivable. We should also contend that *formally* a religious society ceases to be a Church when it ceases to require personal union with Christ as the condition of communion with itself, and when it consciously, voluntarily, and of deliberate purpose, includes within its limits what John Robinson, after the manner of his age, calls "a mingled generation of the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent." But "the communion of saints," though it may be hindered, cannot wholly be destroyed, by defective ecclesiastical organization, and it is certain that the Idea of the Church has been realized, more or less perfectly, under the most dissimilar forms of Church polity. It has been realized in many of the monastic communities of the Church of Rome, in Wesleyan class-meetings, in the unorganized congregations of the English Establishment, in the meetings for worship of the Society of Friends, and in the services of the Plymouth Brethren. The true Form of the Church may be absent, and yet the Idea of the Church may be present, though imperfectly developed and expressed.

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On the other hand, where the Form is maintained, the Life may be lost. It is one of the great perils of modern Congregationalism that while it preserves the apostolic polity, it does not apprehend very vividly the Idea from which that polity sprang, and for the sake of which alone it deserves preservation. We have exaggerated and misinterpreted the great Protestant principle that religion is an affair that lies altogether between man and his Maker. In the energy of our revolt against the interference of secular rulers with the religious life of nations, and in the vehemence of our antagonism to the presumptuous claims of priesthoods and to the illegitimate pretensions of the great Churches of Christendom, we have sometimes appeared to maintain that the whole idea of religion is included in the immediate relations between the soul and God. The relations between the individual Christian and the Church have been ignored. The necessity for the existence of the Church has been implicitly denied.

But nothing can be clearer than that isolation is not the law of the religious life. The supernatural action of the Holy Ghost is not indeed restrained by any inflexible method. Infants are made "partakers of the Divine nature" without the interference of any human agency, and inherit everlasting blessedness in Christ, although they pass away from the world before they can receive any advantage from the ministry or services of the Church. There may be immediate revelations of God to the soul which has

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never heard of Christ, quickening it to penitence, and creating passionate yearnings for rest and life in an almost unknown God. But, normally, spiritual activity is originated and developed under other conditions. We are restored to God by those to whom God is already revealed. We are taught His will by those who are already doing it. God shares with those who have already repented of sin, and trusted in His mercy, the blessedness of prevailing upon other men to repent and to believe. He will not do this great work alone. He will not accomplish it even through angelic agency. When the glory of Christ appeared to Saul on his way to Damascus, the persecutor did not receive, direct from Heaven, a perfect revelation of Christian truth and duty: the Lord said to him, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." When he had reached Damascus, "a vision" came, not to Saul himself, but to "a certain disciple ... named Ananias," and Ananias was sent to him that he might both receive his sight and "be filled with the Holy Ghost." "The angel of the Lord," who might have appeared himself to the Ethiopian eunuch, sent Philip to meet the chariot of the stranger, and to interpret to him the ancient prophecies of the Messiah. An angel came to Cornelius, but only to tell him to send for Peter.

The same law still determines the Divine action. The saints of past generations teach us the truth and will of God. St. John tells us how Christ insisted on



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the necessity of the New Birth as the condition of entrance into the kingdom of Heaven. We learn from St. Paul that we are to be justified by Faith. Our hearts are touched by the story of Christ's infinite compassion for the sorrows and sins of mankind, as told by St. Matthew and St. Luke. Or it is Augustine's fierce and terrible struggle with sin, as recorded in his Confessions, which reveals to us our need of the Divine mercy. Or we discover how far away we are from God by the intimate communion with Him of Thomas à Kempis. More commonly it is the devoutness of living men which convinces us of the guilt of an irreligious life. We are taught by our parents to love and fear God. The warnings of the preacher create alarm; what he tells us of the grace of Christ inspires Faith. We owe the very origin of our religious earnestness to the ministry either of the living or of the dead.

And, as we are not alone in our first return to God, we continue to be dependent upon human teaching and influence for the perfecting of our spiritual strength and knowledge. Many of God's best gifts do not come to us direct from His own hand. Our ideal of Christian holiness is heightened and ennobled by the lives and characters of saints. The patient suffering of the sick and the poor, and their quiet trust in God's love, rebuke our despondency and discontent, and we learn from them the meaning of Divine promises. The fervour of apostles kindles the fire of zeal in our own hearts; the depth and

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vehemence of their love for Christ intensifies our own love for Him. Our knowledge of God is enlarged by the teaching of men who have received more of "the spirit of wisdom and revelation" than ourselves. We are reminded of neglected duty and of forgotten truth by public or private remonstrance and exhortation. While the direct illumination of the Holy Ghost is necessary for all true spiritual knowledge, it is not in our solitary thoughts alone that we are taught of God; and the supernatural energy which is the strength of all Christian perfection is revealed in its highest forms when we are in most intimate communion with those who are "filled with the Spirit."

Nor can the regenerate soul in its healthiest and most vigorous condition endure spiritual solitude. Its hunger for communion with those who love Christ is almost as keen as its hunger for communion with Christ Himself. When St. Paul was warning the Thessalonian Christians against gross sensual sins, he added, "but as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." And St. John said, "By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." But where there is love for other men, there will be a strong desire for intercourse and union with them; voluntary isolation will be impossible. John Owen puts this very forcibly, and with a pathetic allusion to the troubles through which the Nonconformists were

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passing at the time he was writing. He says that the perpetuation of the Church in the world depends partly on

*the instinct of the new creature, and those in whom it is, to associate themselves in holy communion for the joint and mutual exercise of those graces of the Spirit, which are the same, as unto the essence of them, in them all. ... And, therefore, none of His [Christ's] true disciples, since He had a church upon the earth, did or could satisfy themselves in their own faith and obedience, singularly and personally; but would venture their lives and all that was dear unto them for communion with others, and the associating themselves with them of the same spirit and way, for the observance of the commands of Christ. The martyrs of the primitive churches of old lost more of their blood and lives for their meetings and assemblies than for personal profession of the faith; and so also have others done under the Roman apostasy. It is a usual plea among them who engage in the persecution or punishment of such as differ from them, that if they please they may keep their opinions, their consciences, and faith unto themselves, without meetings for communion or public worship; and herein they suppose they deal friendly and gently with them. And this is our present case. It is true, indeed, as Tertullian observed of old, that men in these things have no power over us but what they have from our own wills: we willingly choose to be, and to continue, what they take advantage to give us trouble for. And it is naturally in our power to free ourselves from them and their laws every day. But we like it not; we cannot purchase outward peace and quietness at any such rate. But, as was said, the inward instinct of believers, from the same principles of faith, love, and all the graces of the Spirit in them all, doth efficaciously lead and incline them unto their joint exercise in societies, unto the glory of Christ, and their own edification, or increase of the same graces in them.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> "An Inquiry into the Original Nature, Institution, &c., of Evangelical Churches." John Owen, Works (edited by W. H. Goold), vol xv. p. 256.

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The temper of our times is, no doubt, very different from that of the more vigorous ages of the Church. Many excellent people must be surprised that in times of danger the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews should have said to the Jewish Christians, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." To require men to attend public worship, if it involved them in any serious risks, would seem to us very preposterous and fanatical. Very slight reasons appear to constitute a sufficient ground for neglecting this duty or for discharging it very irregularly. We are suffering from slight indisposition; or we have far to walk, and the weather is hot and the roads are dusty; or it threatens to rain; or the pink may and the chestnut blossoms are in their glory, and the cool shade of an elm tree tempts us to an hour's dreamy meditation; or the preacher is dull; or there is to be a sermon and a collection for some institution in which we feel no interest; and so we stop at home. It seems to be supposed that we can pray to God just as devoutly when we are alone as when we are worshipping with our Christian brethren; that the solitary reading of the Holy Scriptures and of good books is likely to do us quite as much good as listening to most sermons; that the public services of the Church may be very useful to Christian people who have not much intelligence or moral vigour, but that they are of no great importance to men of liberal culture and force of character; and such men go to public worship, not because their spiritual instincts

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make it necessary for themselves, but to support what they regard as an institution which does something to maintain religious faith among the ignorant and the poor, and for the sake of example. It is doubtful whether there exists any such strong conviction of the necessity of religious communion with others as would lead any considerable number of us to expose ourselves to serious danger rather than cease to worship with the Church. We might indeed suffer the worst penalties which persecuting laws could inflict rather than submit to a tyrannical interference with our religious freedom; but it was not for the sake of freedom, but for the sake of communion with the Church, that the martyrs of early times, and the Huguenots, and the Covenanters, and the Nonconformists of later days defied the secular power. When they imperilled their fortunes, their liberty, and their lives, they were not thinking of vindicating a right and resisting an injustice, but of satisfying the irrepressible cravings of their spiritual nature.

The tendency to religious isolation which seems just now to have great strength in all Protestant communities in this country, is a sign either of the weakness of the religious life or of its abnormal development. From those great days which followed the coming of the Holy Ghost when "all that believed were together, and had all things common," and when they continued "daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house," down to the Evangelical Revival of the last century,

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a healthy intensity of spiritual life has always manifested itself in the breaking down of the barriers by which men were divided. Neither differences of social position, nor differences of culture, nor differences of race, have been strong enough to repress in regenerate souls the consciousness of their union with each other; and there has been a persistent endeavour to realize, to assert, and to express that union in common worship, even at the peril of life itself.

The energy of this passion for spiritual communion with other men would, of itself, constitute an adequate proof that it was not God's purpose that the soul should reach its consummate strength and joy in solitary communion with Himself. The strong and permanent impulses of the supernatural life reveal the Divine idea of human duty. The Law of God, according to the ancient promise, is written on the regenerate heart.

But our Lord Jesus Christ Himself explicitly confirmed the authority of the inward law. He encouraged the instinctive desire for spiritual fellowship with others, and the instinctive impatience of spiritual isolation. He gave a special promise to common prayer: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven."<sup>1</sup> He declared that He is specially present in some mysterious and wonderful way where "two or three

<sup>1</sup> Matt, xviii. 19.

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are gathered together” in His name.<sup>1</sup> His most characteristic representations of the spiritual life, and of our relations to Himself, contradict the theory that religion lies altogether between the individual soul and God. He does not speak of us as being separately rooted in Himself, but as being branches of one great Vine, sharing a common life, living in each other as well as in Him. According to the unanimous conviction of Congregationalists, the Lord’s Supper is not to be celebrated by a solitary communicant; it is a festival in which Christian men sit together at the Table of Christ; and hence, whatever exceptional intimacy and freedom of intercourse with Christ we have a right to expect when He invites us to approach Him, not as His servants but as His guests and His friends; whatever exceptional wealth of spiritual blessing He confers when He gives us the Bread and the Wine which are the symbols of His Body and His Blood, are not to be attained in solitary religious acts; they are made dependent upon our communion with our Christian brethren.

There is nothing arbitrary in all this. It is but the reappearance, in the spiritual sphere, of a law which governs the whole course of human development, and of a Divine idea which lies at the very foundation of the moral order of the universe, so far as that order is known to us. The theory of Individualism, in its exaggerated form, is flagrantly inconsistent with the

<sup>1</sup> Matt, xvli. 20.

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whole organization of human life. Isolation is impossible to man. We cannot stand alone. The most vigorous genius is not developed altogether from within. It receives as much as it gives. It inherits the wealth accumulated by former generations; it appropriates and transfigures the thought of its contemporaries; in its noblest and most daring creations it is never absolutely original. Michael Angelo could never have designed St. Peter's, nor could Shakespeare have written Hamlet, nor could Kant have elaborated the Critical Philosophy, had they lived among barbarians.

No tenable theory of conscience ascribes to our moral perceptions an absolutely independent development. If, in a sense, moral ideas are innate, they are not realized in consciousness until we have entered into moral relations with other men, and have been disciplined by the traditions and institutions of Society. Our ideal of virtue is largely determined by the spirit and temper of the people among whom we live. Every nation, every Church, has its characteristic type of moral perfection. The Catholic type is different from the Protestant; the European from the Asiatic. The development of conscience varies with the varying pursuits of men; the ethical ideas of a merchant, or a statesman, are not identical with the ethical ideas of a solitary student; and masters and servants are continually discovering that they have not the same moral code, but that their conflicting interests have modified their very conceptions of their mutual obligations. There is an eternal law of



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righteousness, but it is not revealed to us direct from Heaven. There is a Divine "light which lighteth every man," but it does not shine with uniform clearness and brightness; it is refracted by earthly mists and clouds; it is obscured by the sins of other men as well as by our own. According to the Divine order of the world, conscience is not developed under the influence of direct inspiration merely; it is rarely possible that a man's moral ideal should far transcend that of his country and his age.

It is this law of interdependence, this vital union of men with each other, which underlies the darkest mysteries and the divinest glories of the moral universe. We are not isolated individuals, but members of a race. We cannot dissolve our relations to mankind. It is not true, without qualification, that we have our life and character and destiny in our own hands. We are involved in all the sins and follies of past generations, and their wisdom and virtue are ours. To say that we inherit the consequences of the crimes and of the heroic goodness of former ages, and that we receive benefit or suffer harm from the virtues or vices of living men, is an imperfect expression of the truth. Language like this suggests that our relations to the race are merely external; that the conduct of other men affects our circumstances, not ourselves. But the very fountains of our moral life are troubled and poisoned by sins which are not our own. I cannot escape the sense of personal guilt when I yield to the impulse of an evil

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passion, but the strength of that passion is often the memorial of ancestral vice. My moral weakness is my sin and my shame, but it is often the direct result of the follies of my progenitors. Nor is the moral influence of living men over each other explained by what is called the power of example. Vicious passions are contagious. Courage, generosity, hopefulness, travel like fire from heart to heart. No sooner does a strong emotion begin to agitate the soul of one man, than kindred emotions begin to stir in the souls of other men. Passion creates passion. "Deep calleth to deep." There is an intensity of feeling of which most men are capable only when the feeling is shared by a crowd,—a fact which the Germans have recognized in one of their words for enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*). Armies are suddenly struck with a common panic. Great assemblies are moved by a common impulse. There is such a thing as a Spirit of the Age which takes possession of a whole generation and moulds its character and its faith. A nation is very much more than a collection of individual men, living in the same country, speaking the same language, and governed by the same laws; there is a national life common to all classes in the State, and whatever institutions interfere with the unity and intensity of that life, diminish national strength and imperil national stability.

Christian Theology has steadily refused to acknowledge that there can be any real separation between the individual and the life and fortunes of the race.

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It has elaborated the doctrine of Original Sin; it has maintained the corruption of human nature; it has spoken of the Federal Relations of Adam to all his descendants. Nothing can be more technical, artificial, and unreal than many of the forms in which the truth has been expressed. Perhaps any expression of it must necessarily involve the most startling paradoxes. But every theological system which has had any life in it, has vigorously asserted the mysterious law by which we are involved—to put it in an extreme, exaggerated, and offensive form—not only in the consequences of each other's sins, but in the very sinfulness of those sins.

However difficult it may be to vindicate by an appeal to the authority of our Lord and of His apostles any theological definition and explanation of what is called the corruption or depravity of human nature, the New Testament explicitly affirms that every man is somehow implicated in the general sinfulness of mankind. It does not represent the life of the individual as a separate and independent moral development. Our Lord Himself recognized what may be described as the organic unity of the race when He spoke, as He so often spoke of "the world," and not merely of individual men, as being opposed to Himself, to Righteousness, and to Truth. When He condemned the Jews, He did not charge them merely with the guilt of the particular acts and dispositions in which they had manifested their hostility to Himself, but said, "Ye are of this world;

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I am not of this world.” “The world,” He said, cannot “receive” the Spirit of Truth<sup>2</sup> He described His triumph as the casting out of “the prince of this world.”<sup>3</sup> The peace which He gives is not such “as the world giveth.”<sup>4</sup> His disciples cease to be “of the world.”<sup>5</sup> St. Paul connects the whole race in some mysterious way with Adam; “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.”<sup>6</sup> In his Epistle to the Galatians, the redemption of the individual is represented as a deliverance not merely from individual sin, but from “this present evil world.”<sup>7</sup> Nor does redemption consist in the mere isolation of the redeemed from the community of unregenerate men; they are translated “into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.”<sup>8</sup> They are made “fellow-citizens with the saints.” They are received into “the household of God.” They are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.”<sup>9</sup> The same law which through human sin had wrought vast and universal evil, is now to play its part in securing and perfecting our eternal glory. We did not sin alone; we are not to be saved alone. It was not merely our individual sinfulness which paralyzed our moral strength, nor our personal crimes which cast their deep and awful shadows on our destiny. We were somehow implicated in the sins of the whole race,

1 John viii. 23. 2 Ibid. xiv. 17. 3 Ibid. xii. 31.

4 Ibid. xiv. 27. 5 Ibid. xvii. 16. 6 Rom. v. 19.

7 Gal. i. 4. 8 Col. i. 13. 9 Eph. ii. 19, 20.

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and involved in the catastrophe in which its guilt was rapidly culminating. It was not morally possible for any one of us to separate his destiny from the destiny of the rest of mankind, and to “redeem his own soul.” Now that Redemption has been wrought for us by God, a union still more intimate and vital exists between all regenerate men, and when Redemption is perfected that union will be consummated. Already the common strength, and the common light, and the common joy of the Church belong to every Christian man. “We are members one of another.” But as yet the ideal unity is not perfectly realized. The prayer of our Lord is the true Apocalypse. The glory of the Church will be consummated when that wonderful petition of His receives its complete answer, “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us.”<sup>1</sup> Pantheism is but the ignoble perversion of a great Christian idea. Our personal life is not to be merged and lost in the infinite life of God; but the troubles and sins of the universe arc to end in the gathering together “in one of all things in Christ, both which arc in heaven, and which are on earth”;<sup>2</sup> a common life—perfect, indestructible, and Divine—a life of which Christ is the Fountain, and of which His character and glory are the highest expression—will reveal its inexhaustible wealth and energy in the everlasting holiness and blessedness of angels and of saints.

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 21. <sup>2</sup> Eph. i. 10.

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But this common life dwells already in all regenerate souls, and it renders the spiritual isolation of those who have received it impossible. There is nothing, however, in the New Testament to indicate that our Lord Jesus Christ gave any directions to the apostles as to the form under which the communion of saints was to be realized. It is very doubtful whether any such directions were given. Nor were they necessary. The polity of the Church was to be the expression of its life. It was to be determined by the spiritual relations of its members to each other and to Christ. It was to be an organic growth, not a formal institution. When the Church came into existence on the Day of Pentecost, the apostles were not prepared with any system of ecclesiastical organization; and the development of the polity of the primitive Churches appears to have been as gradual as the development of the apostolic doctrine.

Some form of organization, however, was inevitable. Those who acknowledged that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind, constituted, from the beginning, a separate community, distinguished from their fellow-countrymen by their religious faith and practices, and united to each other by an intense and ardent mutual affection. They had frequent meetings for prayer and worship, and for communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper. It was necessary to determine when these meetings should be held, and where. It soon became necessary

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to create an organization for the distribution of the alms of the Church, and a special class of Church officers, chosen by the whole body of the faithful, was charged with this duty. The exceptional relationship of the apostles to the Church at Jerusalem appears to have delayed the institution of the ordinary Pastorate; but, elsewhere, it was obviously expedient that as soon as any number of persons became Christians, men of exceptional sagacity and force of character should be entrusted with the general superintendence of the religious affairs of the community, should preside at the meetings of the Church, and should be its recognized representatives. The official authority with which these men were invested was acknowledged by the apostles, who arranged for their appointment wherever a Church was founded.

In this account of the development of the organization of the apostolic Churches, it may be hastily inferred that the whole ground on which the Independents are supposed to have rested their controversy with Presbyterianism and Diocesan Episcopacy, is surrendered. It may be urged that if the polity of the apostolic Churches was an organic growth, the Church of every age is at liberty to organize itself according to the law of its own life. The life of the first Churches may have expressed itself most naturally, and developed itself most vigorously, in the form of Congregationalism; but their practice does not bind us. In the absence of

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any definite system of ecclesiastical organization instituted by the apostles, and declared by them to be of universal and perpetual obligation, Presbyterianism or Diocesan Episcopacy may be just as legitimate as the more ancient polity. These forms of ecclesiastical government are the organic growth of later times. They were the natural expression of the temper and the spirit of the Church in the circumstances in which they were first developed; or they appeared to be necessary to consolidate its power; or they were in harmony with the habits and traditions of the nations which received the Christian Faith after the apostles had passed away. If it is once admitted that the organization of the primitive Churches was formed from within, and not impressed upon them by apostolic authority, how can it be shown that one form of Church polity is more in harmony with the will of Christ than another? The Church, instead of being under the control of apostolic law, "hath" not only "power to decree rites and ceremonies," and "authority in controversies of Faith," but freedom to determine from time to time all questions relating to its own organization. It may change the conditions of Church-membership; may transfer the supreme authority from the congregation of faithful men to which it belonged in apostolic times, to the ministers of the Church; may deprive separate congregations of their original independence, and place them under the government of diocesan



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bishops, with ecclesiastical jurisdiction extending over wide tracts of country and over the ministers and members of many congregations; or may vest the absolute control of the ecclesiastical affairs of a nation, or of many nations, in an assembly or a council; may vary indefinitely the constitution of such an assembly,—making it consist of the bishops of separate Churches, or of bishops and unofficial representatives appointed by the free choice of the Christian commonalty, and changing, according to the temper and habits of different countries and different times, the relative proportion between its official and its representative members. If the Church is not absolutely bound by authoritative precepts or authoritative precedents, no restraints can be placed on its liberty. It is acknowledged that definite precepts do not exist; and if the practices of the apostolic Churches are merely illustrations of the development of the life of the Church in the accidental circumstances of the first century, the power of the Church to modify its polity is absolutely unlimited. The Puritan appeal to Scripture must be abandoned, and we are left, with Hooker, to consult the light of reason and to follow the lessons of experience.

Perhaps the Puritans were not quite so irrational in their demand for scriptural authority on behalf of ecclesiastical organization and practice as is commonly supposed. They handled their argument in what modern theologians would call an unscientific

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manner; but the substance of it was not exactly what the readers of Hooker might imagine. Notwithstanding scores of possible quotations on the other side, they did not really mean that, to the end of time, the Church was to be bound by the mere mechanical arrangements of the primitive Churches. Their opponents might very fairly charge them with meaning this; they constantly used language which, without any illegitimate pressure, seemed to commit them to this absurdity; and yet they were really contending for something very much more reasonable. They felt that the "Idea" of the Church, as that Idea was apprehended in apostolic times, perished when there was any grave departure from the model of apostolic polity; their zeal for the form was, in fact, a zeal for the substance. They repudiated the folly, with which they were not unnaturally charged, of requiring definite scriptural authority for all the circumstances of public worship and for all the details of ecclesiastical practice.

John Owen maintains that very much must be left to Christian prudence and the light of nature. He says:—

It is merely from a spirit of contention that some call on us or others to produce express testimony or institution for every circumstance in the practice of religious duties in the church, and on a supposed failure herein, do conclude that they have power themselves to institute and ordain such ceremonies as they think meet, under a pretence of their being circumstances of worship; for as the directive light of nature is sufficient to

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guide us in these things, so the obligation of the church unto it makes all stated additions to be useless, as on other accounts they are noxious.<sup>1</sup>

He says again:—

Whatever is required by the *light of nature*, in such societies as churches, as useful unto their order, and conducting unto their end, is a *divine institution*. The Lord Christ, in the institution of gospel churches, their state, order, rule, and worship, doth not require of His disciples that in their observance of His appointments they should cease to be men, or forego the use and exercise of their rational abilities, according to the rule of that exercise, which is the light of nature.<sup>2</sup>

It is true that Owen appears to limit very narrowly the province exempted from definite authority, and within which we are to be guided by the light of nature and that spiritual “wisdom, prudence, and understanding” which he says elsewhere are conferred upon the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to this end; but he is certainly not open to the charge of a blind and superstitious determination to reproduce the mere mechanical structure and order of the primitive Churches. He distinguished between the substance of the Church and its accidental form; between the essential elements of worship which are permanent, and its circumstances, which may be varied according to varying times and places, the social condition of the people who

<sup>1</sup> John Owen, “An Inquiry into the Original Nature, Institution, &c., of the Evangelical Churches.” Works (edited by W. H. Goold), vol. xv. pp. 231, 232.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

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constitute the Church, and their national traditions and customs.

There is no reason why Congregationalists should shrink from the boldest assertion of the principle that the Church of every age is perfectly free to make its organization the closest expression of its highest life, and the most effective means for securing the purpose for which an organized Church exists. Any form of ecclesiastical polity is legitimate which suppresses no great spiritual truth, and which satisfies the spiritual instincts which render the communion of saints necessary. But, if this principle is accepted, it must be applied firmly, and with the clearest intelligence of its real meaning. When the restraints of outward law are repudiated, it is necessary to insist with all the greater intensity on making the polity of the Church the expression of its own highest life. Everything must be subordinated to this. The polity must come from within; it must not be imposed from without; it may recognize external circumstances, but must not be controlled by them. If the organization of the Church is to be a vital growth, the life which it is to reveal is the life which the Church has received from Christ. Ecclesiastical statesmen have no right to construct various forms of polity to express the spirit and tendencies prevailing among different races of men, in different countries and in different Churches; the polity of the Church must be created by the Idea of the Church.

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Hence, if it is alleged in justification of the elaborate organization of an Episcopal Church, with its ministers rising rank above rank from the obscurity of the diaconate to the splendour of the archbishopric, that such a system is in harmony with the aristocratic institutions of a nation like our own, the justification cannot be accepted as valid. Without discussing the question whether an aristocratic organization of Society may or may not be temporarily expedient and necessary, it is clear that among an aristocratic people it is one of the chief functions of the Church to maintain the spiritual equality of all men in the eye of God. Instead of increasing the perils of aristocratic institutions by constituting itself on an aristocratic basis, the Church is bound to diminish them by ignoring all distinctions of social rank among its ministers and members. According to the Idea of the Church, all who receive Christ are the brethren of Christ, "kings and priests unto God"; and that Idea is seriously endangered if the Church surrenders the utmost simplicity of polity.

On the same principle, we must reject as invalid the defence of a national organization of the Church which rests on the ground that it expresses the vigour and unity of national life. Patriotism is a noble passion and the strong ally of many masculine and lofty virtues; but it requires to be chastened and controlled by the sense of a larger unity than that which is constituted by common blood, a common language, and common political institutions. A

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Church forgets its own Idea when by its very polity it confirms national isolation. In the Church there is "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free." It is of no country. Its members are not to be recognized as English or French, American or German, but as men—men in whom all other distinctions are lost in this, that they have received the life of God.

It is an equally illegitimate plea for a system of ecclesiastical polity that it promotes the civilization and refinement of rude districts and uncultivated people, and places "a gentleman in every parish." To place "a gentleman in every parish" is no part of the Idea of the Church. If the Church were merely or mainly a political or social institution intended to promote good order, and to improve the material, intellectual, and moral condition of mankind, the argument would have great force. Incidentally, the Church, no doubt, answers all these ends answers them better, perhaps, than any institution which has these for its chief and immediate objects;—"the shadow of Peter passing by" still heals the sick;—but the Church is a supernatural society and exists for supernatural purposes; it is in relation to these that its polity must be judged. When young people are choosing a house, they sometimes forget to consider whether the drainage is good and the water pure, and whether the aspect of the rooms in which they will have to live is north or south; but they are eloquent about a pretty paper in the

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drawing-room, and a charming Virginia creeper that mantles the porch. To insist very much on the "gentleman in every parish" argument in discussing a system of ecclesiastical polity, exhibits an equal incapacity to subordinate mere accidental advantages to what is essential to life and health.

Nor is it a sufficient ground for adopting any form of ecclesiastical organization, that it is favourable to the creation of a learned ministry. Great as are the advantages which the Church may derive from the learning both of its ministers and of its unofficial members, secular learning is not necessary to the Church; the Idea of the Church can be realized without it.

It is still less legitimate to maintain any system of ecclesiastical polity, because it secures an adequate ministerial income for every minister of the Church. That there is justice in providing generous maintenance for men whose whole time and strength are devoted to ministerial work is incontestable; but it is not necessary that every minister should be released from secular business, and should depend upon the liberality of the Church for his support. The greatest of the apostles worked with his own hands, and it is quite possible that, with the noblest form of ecclesiastical polity, it may sometimes be necessary for very efficient ministers to do the same.

If a Church organization rests on the hypothesis that it is not safe to entrust the conduct of ecclesiastical affairs to the direct control of ordinary Christian

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men, and that for the sake of avoiding the perils of a democratic Church order, supreme authority should be vested in the official rulers of the Church, or centralized in representative assemblies, it is necessary to insist on the descriptions given in the New Testament of the great qualities which belong to all who are in Christ, and on the special presence of Christ which is assured even to "two or three" who are met together "in His Name." Any form of Church polity which denies that every congregation of Christian men may have the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit in the conduct of its own religious affairs is self-condemned.

Though no sufficient objection can be urged, on the ground of abstract principle, against this method of judging every system of polity by its relations to the Idea of the Church, and without any reference to apostolic precedent, the more natural method is to consider how it happened that the apostolic order was so soon changed, the moral and spiritual influences which suggested innovations, and the loss or gain to the Idea of the Church which these innovations involved.

It can be shown, I think, that every successive departure from the original polity was the result of growing weakness in the spiritual life of the Church, and of declining faith in those great spiritual forces on which alone the Church should rely for its own security and for its victory over the errors, the sins,



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and the sorrows of mankind. It can be shown that these innovations gradually suppressed the recognition of the spiritual equality of all Christian men, encouraged priestly pretensions, and injured the free development of the supernatural life in the commonality of the Church. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." When the Church has been most vividly conscious of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, it has cared least for a complicated and elaborate polity; and the deceptive supports of a strong organization have been created to compensate for the loss of a vigorous life.

It is one principal advantage of this historical method of investigating the claims of various forms of ecclesiastical polity, that it does not require us to start with a perfect theory of the Church; element after element essential to a complete theory will be suggested as the inquiry proceeds. As the rise of every new heresy, with the conflict which it provoked, has enabled the Church to apprehend more fully, as well as to define with greater exactness, the original faith "once delivered to the saints," every innovation on the apostolic order of the Church, by its violation of some prerogative originally possessed by every member of the Church, and by its implicit denial of some great spiritual truth, may reveal to us more perfectly that great Idea which the organized community of believers is intended to express and fulfil.

The intention of this essay, however, is not to

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establish, by either of these methods, the legitimacy of the Congregational polity, which, as a Congregationalist writing for Congregationalists, I take for granted, but to consider the relations of the Idea of the Church to the spirit and faith and practices of Modern Congregationalism. Of that Idea the organization and customs which we have inherited from our fathers may be a true expression, and yet we ourselves may be false to it. The principal topics which, in the present condition of Congregationalism, it appears necessary to discuss are these: the Idea of the Church in relation to the Persons who should constitute the Church; in relation to their Communion with each other; in relation to the Power of the Church; and in relation to Theological Creeds.

I. *The Idea of the Church in relation to the Persons who should constitute the Church.*

The question as to the Persons who should constitute the Church is virtually answered by what has been already said concerning the way in which the Church came into existence. There is nothing in the Acts of the Apostles to suggest that those who received the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost were deliberately and formally organized as a religious Society. The Church organized itself. It assumed an external and visible form—just as the life of the Vine takes form in its branches, its leaves, its blossoms, and its fruit—by the law of its own life. Those who were born again of the Holy Ghost came

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together because they could not remain apart. No pressure was put upon them by the apostles. It was the strong consciousness of common affections, common hopes, and common joys which created the first Christian Community. No external law bound its members together. They had the same creed—a very simple one,—but this was not the secret of their union. They had become members of a new race and had passed into a new world. From the very first, supernatural gifts of wisdom and of utterance bore witness that they had received a supernatural life. These gifts were not intended merely to minister to the development of the knowledge and strength of those who believed in Christ, or to confirm the claims of the Gospel on the faith of mankind; they were the revelation of the supernatural character of the kingdom into which the followers of Christ had entered. The penalties inflicted on Ananias and Sapphira, and on Elymas the sorcerer, were the visible expression of those awful powers which vindicate the sanctity and majesty of the laws of the kingdom of heaven, now at last founded on earth; and the beneficent miracles which were wrought, not by the apostles alone, but by innumerable Christian men, were visible illustrations of diviner benefits conferred on the loyal subjects of that kingdom. It was not a matter of choice, or even of duty, but a matter of necessity, that those who had risen together into the sphere of the supernatural should have fellowship with each other in prayer and thanksgiving, and should exult together

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in the strange and unexpected deliverance which God had wrought for them.

As the Church came into existence as the direct result of the energy of that Divine life which was revealed in the first believers, it is natural to conclude that it belongs to the very Idea of the Church that this life should be possessed by all its members. If the Church was created as the necessary expression of the union of those who possessed a common life, it is inconceivable that men who do not share this life can have any place in the Church. This position is confirmed by the descriptions, contained in the apostolic epistles, of the Churches to which the epistles are addressed. The Church of the Thessalonians is described as being "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> The Philippian Christians are "saints in Christ Jesus."<sup>2</sup> The Christians at Ephesus are said to be blessed ... with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ";<sup>3</sup> St. Paul tells them that God "quickened" them, "together with Christ,"<sup>4</sup> and that they "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."<sup>5</sup> The Colossians were "buried with Christ in baptism," wherein also they "have risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead."<sup>6</sup> They are "dead," and their "life is hid with Christ in God."<sup>7</sup>

In writing to one Church, St. Paul may have occasion to condemn grave doctrinal errors into which

1 1 Thess. i. 1. 2 Phil. i. 1. 3 Ephes. i. 3.

4 Ibid. ii. 5. 5 Ibid. ii. 6. 6 Col. ii. 12. 7 Ibid. iii. 3.

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some of its members had fallen; in writing to another, he may have occasion to rebuke it sharply for tolerating gross moral offences; sometimes he feels it necessary to write moral precepts which indicate that the conscience of Christian men was most imperfectly developed; sometimes, through their defective knowledge, he has to illustrate the very elements of the Christian Faith; but he never loses sight of the Ideal; for him a Church is always a society of men who have received the Holy Ghost, and entered into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Nor has this conception disappeared even in those Churches which have departed farthest from the apostolic type of polity. The great tradition of better times still survives. The Church of Rome includes vast numbers of persons who exhibit no signs of the possession of the supernatural life; but, according to its hypothesis, all its members have received the Divine life in baptism. Although the Church of England has no provision for the maintenance of "godly discipline," it has never sunk so low as to regard every man who happens to have been born in England as belonging to its communion; its communion is restricted to baptized persons, all of whom it declares to be regenerate of the Holy Ghost; and consistently with this, it refuses to pronounce over the unbaptized dead the words of thanksgiving and confident hope with which it commits all its members to the grave. That, in theory, a Church should ever cease to insist on the participation of the life of God

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as essential to communion with itself, is hardly conceivable. If this is deliberately surrendered, the Church can be regarded no longer as a supernatural society; it becomes a mere Club, an organization distinguished from the Royal Institution, or the College of Surgeons, or the Association for the Promotion of Social Science, or a Freemasons Lodge, only by its greater antiquity, and the superior importance of the objects for which it is maintained.

The polity of the Congregational Churches requires in the most distinct and emphatic manner the possession of the supernatural life as the supreme, and, as I think, the only indispensable condition of Church Membership. They receive members, only on the declaration of their personal faith in Christ. No man is a member of a Congregational Church by birth. Nor is Baptism a sufficient qualification for membership; nor an orthodox creed; nor a blameless moral life. For three hundred years, whatever changes may have passed upon our theology, and whatever modifications may have been introduced into the details of our Church organization, we have steadily and with unflinching fidelity maintained that only those who are in Christ have any right to be in the Church.

Nor do I know that there are any of us who have consciously renounced this principle. And yet during the last few years there have been some discussions which suggest the necessity of insisting on the truth that, according to the Idea of the Church, the Church should consist only of the regenerate. We have

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heard something occasionally about “the Church membership of children.” If those who use this phrase meant nothing more than to affirm that children who love God and cling to the infinite goodness of Christ have a right to be received into Church communion; if they meant to protest against the perverse folly of requiring, as signs of the presence of the Holy Ghost in a child, the sharp agony of repentance for sin, and all the shame and conflict and fear which are natural only in those who have sinned against God for twenty or thirty years; if they meant to maintain that in a Christian household children may be drawn to God, they know not how, may find themselves in the flock of the Good Shepherd, listening to His voice and resting at His feet, without any consciousness of ever having wandered into the rocky and perilous wilderness;—if this were all, then there would be no reason for apprehension. Or if they intended only to remind the Church of its forgotten and neglected duties to the children of its members—duties which have been forgotten and neglected in our very eagerness to rescue from ignorance and irreligion the children of those who are outside—they would be rendering us good service. But by those who use it, the phrase “the Church-membership of children” appears to be intended to assert the claims of baptized children, or of the children of Christian parents, to be acknowledged as Church members by virtue of their Baptism or of their Birth. The Birth seems, however, to be regarded as of

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primary importance; Baptism is a very subordinate matter.

Now, it may be conceded for the moment that considerable advantage might come to the children if, instead of having to find their way into the Church when they became conscious of restoration to God, they were required to separate themselves from it by their own deliberate act, if at the age of fifteen or sixteen it was clear that they had not yielded to the influences of a Christian education, and received the Holy Ghost. But, apart from the consideration that this advantage might be fully secured in another way, it requires to be shown that the claim is not inconsistent with the Idea of the Church. Church membership implies participation in the supernatural life of the Church. Is that life transmitted by the ordinary laws of descent? Does faith in Christ come to us by Birth, like our features and our complexion, like the colour of our hair and the form of our limbs? We may inherit the temperament of our parents and their passions; but do we inherit the inspiration of the Holy Ghost? That the children of eminently good men may be born with moral dispositions which show the ennobling effect of their parents piety; that they may possess in exceptional strength those natural sentiments which are akin to the supernatural affections, and are often mistaken for them; that they may pass out of "this present evil world" into "the kingdom of heaven," without any sharp and severe moral conflict; that when they have received the



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Divine life their moral nature may be favourable to the development of the purest and most refined forms of Christian virtue;—it is not necessary to deny; although, apparently, innumerable facts might be alleged on the other side: but, unless we go very much further than this, and contend for the existence of a law under which God grants the supernatural life to the children of all regenerate parents, no adequate reason can be shown why such children should be constituted members of the Church on the ground of their Birth.

It has also been suggested that the traditional practice of Congregational Churches, which require from a candidate something beyond a bare application to be received into membership, should be abandoned. The customs of our Churches vary. Fifty years ago it was not unusual to require the applicant for membership to appear at the Church meeting, and to declare publicly his loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ; and every member present had the right to propose any question to him relating to his personal religious history. In many Churches, till very recently, every applicant for membership was expected to address a letter to the Church containing a profession of his religious faith—not of his theological creed—and some information concerning the circumstances and influences which led him to decide to live a Christian life. It is still usual for one or two of the members of the Church to visit the

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candidate before he is received into fellowship; and it is on their testimony and that of the pastor that the Church determines whether he shall be received or rejected. The "visitors" are sometimes deacons, sometimes private members of the Church. When the applicant is a woman, the "visitors" are often women, and their "testimony" is given in a letter, which is read to the Church by the pastor. The "visitors" are sometimes appointed by the pastor on his own authority; sometimes by the pastor and deacons; sometimes by a vote of the Church on the nomination of the pastor. If they are not directly appointed by the Church, they are sometimes appointed before the name of the applicant is "proposed" to the Church; and if they are not satisfied, fresh visitors are appointed, or the application is withdrawn, and the Church hears nothing of it. In some cases there are no "visitors," and the Church acts on the testimony of the pastor. In nearly all cases, the candidate is "proposed" at one Church meeting and his application is voted upon at the next, the month's interval being intended to afford opportunity for information to be sent to the pastor if it should happen that any of the members know that the candidate is an unfit person to be received into membership. Where there are "visitors," it is considered to be their duty to satisfy themselves by personal conversation with the candidate, that he is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for the pardon of sin and the gift of eternal life, and that

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he is endeavouring to keep God's commandments; in the case of applicants who are unknown to the Church, the "visitors" are also expected to inquire into their general moral character; parents are asked whether their children who desire to enter the Church are obedient and dutiful; mistresses, whether their servants are truthful, industrious, and honest; masters, whether men in their employment are sober and trustworthy. Where there are no "visitors," the pastor assumes the responsibility of giving to the Church satisfactory assurances on all these points.

These practices look very much more formidable on paper than they are in reality. Nearly always, before there is any application for membership, the relations between the pastor and the applicant are so intimate that a special interview is unnecessary. "Visitors" who have any tact and delicacy, satisfy themselves of the religious earnestness of candidates without any formal examination. Looking back over a ministry of eighteen years, I cannot recall more than two or three cases in which what is sometimes called the "ordeal" of admission has prevented persons from applying for membership.

It is maintained, however, by some that all these usages should be abandoned, and that the Church should receive all applicants. The whole responsibility, it is argued, should be thrown upon the candidate; no questions should be asked; whoever desires to enter the Church should be free to enter it.

I am not anxious, in this essay, to defend the

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wisdom and expediency of our traditional customs, much less to maintain that in practice we are never guilty of want of wisdom and generous consideration in our treatment of applicants for membership; but it is of importance to consider the validity of the grounds on which a change is demanded.

It is said that our customs are not sanctioned by the practice of the apostles. It is, of course, absurd to suppose that there was any preliminary inquiry in the case of the three thousand converts who were baptized on the Day of Pentecost, and who constituted the original Church in Jerusalem. Nor is there any reason to suppose that there was any such inquiry in the Churches at Corinth, Ephesus, or Philippi. The Churches received all that came. It was enough that a Jew or a heathen wished to be baptized. But it may be fairly replied, that when the Gospel was preached in the streets of a city whose rulers had a few weeks before put Jesus of Nazareth to death as a blasphemer and an impostor, and when Churches were founded among the pagans of Ephesus and Corinth, men did not enter the Church as a matter of course, or to comply with a decent custom, or to honour a sacred tradition. The Church was kept clear of formalists by a sharper "ordeal" than Congregationalists have ever invented. Some men might be hurried into the Church by an unintelligent enthusiasm; some might be drawn into it by the mystery of its supernatural gifts; some might submit to Baptism and try the worth of the new religion through weariness of life

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and a craving for an unknown rest and peace. But it required so severe a moral effort in a Jew to acknowledge a crucified religious teacher as the Messiah, and a heathen man was subjected to such scorn and social isolation if he separated himself from the worship and usages of his fellow-countrymen, and became a member of an obscure sect whose Founder had been rejected by His own people, and whose representatives were universally despised and hated, that the Church had a right to take for granted that every candidate for Baptism had a strong faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of mankind. To maintain that because the Church was open to all applicants when the profession of Christianity brought with it social suspicion and hostility, and might involve ruin of fortune, and even martyrdom, it ought also to be open to all applicants when the condition of Society has been so changed that to be a Church member may be rather favourable than prejudicial to a man's inferior interests, is to fall into the very mistake with which the Puritans were charged; it is a superstitious and mechanical following of the practice of the primitive Churches. There was infinite moral significance in the act of a Jew or a heathen in the first century who offered himself for Baptism; no such moral significance can attach to an application for Church membership in this country in our own times.

It is also alleged against the traditional usage of

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Congregationalism, that the Church ought not to assume the responsibility of affirming, even by implication, the sincerity of a man's religious faith. Reception into membership after a preliminary inquiry, is said to carry with it a kind of guarantee of the religious earnestness of the accepted candidate,—a guarantee which may only confirm and perpetuate self-deception. I imagine, however, that there are very few Congregational ministers who are so negligent of their obvious duty, as not solemnly to remind all who are received into membership that the vote of the Church conveys no infallible assurance that they have really escaped eternal death; nor do I believe that when a man has grave reason to question whether his whole religious history has not been a delusion, his doubts are ever suppressed by the fact that his name is on the roll of a Congregational Church. It is, however, impossible for a Congregational Church to escape from the responsibility of recognizing the personal religious faith of its members. The alleged difficulty and danger do not disappear with the disappearance of the preliminary inquiry. Unless the very theory of "the communion of saints" is to be abandoned, all who are in the Church must be recognized as being also in Christ. They have to discharge duties which imply that they know the will of God, and desire to do it. When they meet at the Lord's Supper, they acknowledge each other as brethren in Christ, whose sins have been forgiven for His sake, and who are assembled to

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rejoice in their restoration to God through Him. The mere fact that when a man entered the Church, the Church scrupulously avoided whatever might seem to imply an assurance that he was regenerate of the Holy Ghost counts for very little, if, year after year, all his relations to the Church imply that he is living a supernatural life.

Nor should it be forgotten that a man's entrance into the Church involves his reception by the Church. He does not merely act himself, the Church must act also. He cannot be received, unless the Church receives him. If he claims the members of the Church as his Christian brethren, they recognize him as a Christian brother. The heartiness and reality of the recognition must depend on the confidence which the Church places in the integrity of his profession of faith in Christ; and if ever the act of the Church, in receiving applicants for membership, becomes merely formal, the act of applying for membership is very likely to become formal too.

The real ground on which, as it seems to me, the customs of Congregational Churches are open to objection is this:—they appear to imply that as soon as a man has received the life of God, the life will so distinctly reveal itself in new forms of thought and emotion, that there will never be any difficulty in recognizing its presence. This is a very grave mistake. The first movements of the supernatural life are generally very obscure. It must gather strength before it can manifest itself in an unequivocal

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manner. In innumerable cases the consciousness of regeneration does not immediately follow trust in Christ. We rely upon Him for our redemption from this present evil world, but very often, months and even years pass by before there is any vivid sense of actual redemption. And yet it is certain that although the reality of the new birth may not at once be capable of direct verification either to the regenerate person himself or to others, every man who trusts in Christ receives immediately both the pardon of sin and the gift of eternal life. But the usages of Congregational Churches appear to suggest that faith in Christ and the regeneration which, as we know, is granted as the immediate response to faith, are not adequate qualifications for Church membership,—that there must also be certain developments of the supernatural life, sufficiently determinate and sufficiently obvious to demonstrate their supernatural origin to other Christian people. We wait till the regenerate children of God are able to speak and to walk, before we are willing to receive them into the divine “household.” All that we have a right to ask for, is an assurance of personal trust in Christ; wherever this exists, our own faith should make us certain that, whether or not we can discern the signs of regeneration, the man is really regenerate.

The old customs might, I believe, in most cases be retained with great advantage, if it were always remembered that faith in Christ is neither preceded



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nor followed by any uniform “experience,” and if it were clearly understood that the “visitors” have not to satisfy themselves that the candidate has a developed spiritual life, but to receive from him the assurance that he is looking to Christ as his Prince and Saviour, and is endeavouring to do the will of God. Whether our traditional usages are retained or abandoned, the most determined resistance should be offered to any movement which imperils the great truth that the Church is a supernatural society composed of persons who, in response to their faith in Christ, are regenerate of the Holy Spirit.

The theory that every man who wishes to enter the Church has a right to demand admission, appears to involve the conclusion that every man who wishes to remain in the Church has a right to remain in it. If the Church is exceeding its just authority in asking for some assurance that a man is a Christian before receiving him into membership, it is difficult to understand on what ground it can claim authority to exclude him from membership when it is discovered that his character is inconsistent with his Christian profession. But the right to “excommunicate” the irreligious appears to be essential to the very existence of the Church.

It is very curious that our Lord’s Parable of the Tares is usually appealed to as condemning the practice of Congregationalism in requiring some satisfactory testimony to the reality of a man’s

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religious life before the Church receives him.<sup>1</sup> If the Parable had been intended to teach that the Church should receive all comers, the Parable would surely have assumed a very different form. "The householder" would have been represented as condemning his "servants" for being too scrupulous and anxious about the kind of "seed" which they sowed in his "field," instead of condemning them for wishing to root up the "tares" which were already growing among the "wheat." In resisting the intrusion of unsuitable persons into the Church, we are not gathering the tares out of the wheat-field, but preventing them from being sown; which is surely a very different matter. It might be fairly contended that if we have no right to "gather up the tares," lest we should "root up also the wheat with them," there is the more reason for being very watchful against the tares being sown at all.

But that the Parable was intended to forbid the separation of unchristian men from Christian communion cannot be conceded. What did St. Paul mean when, after rebuking the Corinthian Church with great severity for tolerating the crime of incest, he said "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person"?<sup>2</sup> Is it conceivable that when he had "delivered unto Satan" Hymenaeus and Alexander that they might "learn not to blaspheme,"<sup>3</sup> he would have permitted any Church to retain them

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 24-43. <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. v. 13. <sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. i. 20.

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in membership? Whatever may be the precise intention of his precept, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”<sup>1</sup> it seems impossible to suppose that he would have censured a Church for excluding unbelievers and unrighteous persons from its fellowship.

Nor has any Church ever surrendered the right, or deliberately repudiated the obligation, to excommunicate flagrantly irreligious men. The discipline of the Church of England is deplorably lax, but its Articles define how excommunicated persons are to be treated. Its Homilies declare that “in the primitive Church—which was most holy and godly, and in the which due discipline with severity was used against the wicked—open offenders were not suffered once to enter into the house of the Lord, nor admitted to common prayer and the use of the holy Sacraments with other true Christians, until they had done open penance before the whole Church.” Replying to the argument, based on the Parable of the Tares, against Congregational Discipline, John Robinson asks, in his vigorous and severe way—

If the parable be thus meant, how can it be defended that any Church should cast out any offenders whomsoever? How dare the prelates in England, with their substitutes, take this forbidden weedhook into their hands, and use it against any tare amongst them? If any tares be to be plucked up, why not

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 14.

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all? and if all be to be left alone, why meddle they with any? Indeed I must needs acknowledge, and will not wrong them, that if they should execute their own Canons, as they have framed them, they should not very oft practise against this exposition, nor gather the tares from among the wheat, but the wheat from among the tares.<sup>1</sup>

It is only fair, however, to remember that the keen controversialist, in his eagerness to make a “point,” seems to have overlooked the fact that the Canons require that the Lord’s Supper should be refused to those who are guilty of adultery, incest, drunkenness, swearing, ribaldry, usury, malicious and open contention with their neighbours, or openly living in notorious sin.

But the whole argument from this Parable ignores our Lord’s own interpretation of it. “The field” out of which the servants are forbidden to gather the tares, is not “the Church,” but “the World.” It is curious to observe how different classes of theologians trifle with these two great words. When the representatives of a narrow theology read that “God so loved the *World* that He gave His only begotten Son,” they say that this cannot be true, and insist that it means “God so loved the *Church*.” When the representatives of a latitudinarian theology, or at least of a latitudinarian theory of Church discipline, read this Parable, and find that the tares and the wheat are to be permitted to grow together in the

<sup>1</sup> “A Justification of Separation from the Church of England.” Works (edited by R. Ashton), vol. ii. p. 123.

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*World*, they insist that it means that they are to grow together in the *Church*. I stand by the plain words, and take it for granted that when the New Testament speaks of the World it means the World, and that when it speaks of the Church it means the Church.

The Parable was intended to correct the very natural expectation of the disciples that the Messiah would gather together, in one great secular State, all who acknowledged His authority, and would commission His servants to destroy all who rejected Him. At His resurrection He was to receive "power over all flesh," but He forbids any war of extermination against those who do not confess His majesty and obey His laws. His kingdom is to be unlike any other kingdom. It is not to be a separate nationality, an organized imperial power, maintaining open war against all who are hostile to it. His true and loyal subjects are to live among those who are disobedient to Him; the wheat and the tares are to grow together; the destruction of the rebellious is not to take place till the end of the world. "The reign of the saints" has been the dream of enthusiasts in many countries and in many ages. They have contended that the World, and not merely the Church, belongs to Christ: in this they were right; but when fanaticism has corrupted and degraded enthusiasm they have gone on to argue that those who are loyal to Christ should crush and destroy all His enemies, should give them no chance of accumulating wealth or gaining political

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power, should fetter them with political and social disabilities, make their life shameful and intolerable, and even put them to death for obstinate and contumacious unbelief.

There is very much to be said for religious persecution. It is by no means an irrational theory that if those who have received a Divine revelation can obtain political power, they should hang infidels, and burn flagrant heretics, and fine and imprison all who are guilty of holding and propagating minor religious errors. For infidelity, it may be argued, imperils not only the soul of the infidel, but the souls of other men; and it is treason against the true Lord of mankind. Heresy corrupts and ruins the spiritual life of the race. Even the least religious error is pregnant with a brood of unknown evils. But Christ condemns what the rash and unwise zeal even of good men has sometimes attempted. In "the World," the tares and the wheat are to grow together; to infer that they are also to grow together in the Church is a most illegitimate inference; if the inference were admitted, the very Idea of the Church would be destroyed.

There does not appear to be any disposition on the part of Congregationalists to abandon the principle that the Church is bound to excommunicate those whose character disqualifies them for communion; the only reason for introducing this discussion lies in the consideration that, in the circumstances of modern Society, if the Church has no

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right to assume the responsibility of exercising any discrimination as to who shall be admitted into its fellowship, it appears difficult to resist the conclusion that it has no right to assume the responsibility of determining who shall remain in its fellowship. If to maintain the Idea of the Church it is necessary that unchristian men should be expelled, it seems equally necessary that unchristian men should not be received.

II. *The Idea of the Church in relation to Communion.*

But the Idea of the Church may not be fulfilled even when the Church is constituted only of regenerate members; and it is a grave defect in modern Congregationalism that, although it continues to insist on the necessity of the supernatural life as the condition of Church membership, it does not seem to apprehend with any distinctness the chief purpose for which Christian Churches are organized. It is hard to see what advantage comes to a man from entering the Church. With one great exception, what we are accustomed to call "the privileges of Church membership" often seem practically worthless. Those who are Church members, and those who are not, are present at the same assemblies for worship, listen to the same religious instruction, work the same religious organizations, and contribute alike to nearly all the funds of the Church. When they are in trouble, they receive from the pastor and from their friends the same sympathy. Except once a month,

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when the Lord's Supper is celebrated, the line which separates those who are in the Church from those who are outside, almost disappears. The exception is of transcendent importance, but its magnitude is most inadequately appreciated by many Congregationalists, and some have suggested that even this, which is almost the solitary distinction of Church membership, should be no longer maintained, and that while the separate organization of the Church is still perpetuated, the Lord's Table should be open to all who desire to sit there. Apart from this, most Congregationalists would not find it easy to say in what "the privileges of Church membership" consist. There are many persons who regard the right of voting for the admission of candidates for communion, and for the appointment of a pastor or a deacon, not as a "privilege," but as a responsibility from which they prefer to be free. When no vote of this kind has to be given, "Church meetings" are, I believe, very often, either precisely of the same character as the weekly meetings for prayer, which any person who likes may attend; or else they are meetings for the transaction of formal business, in which no rational man can feel any intense interest.

Those who are familiar with the inner life of Congregational Churches know that there is often wonderful beauty and pathos in the mutual sympathy which is developed among their members; that the rich feel it to be their special privilege and delight to lessen the hardships of their poorer brethren; that



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the Christian life of the young is sheltered and sustained by the love and wisdom of those who have long known Christ; that the loneliness and monotony of the sick-room are relieved by the unofficial ministries of Christian friendship; that when misfortune and adversity come upon a man, he is often astonished by the strength and depth of the loyal affection which is called forth by his troubles; that there is the purest joy in many hearts over the well-doing of those who are faithful to Christ, and that the sin of one member fills many with the keenest sorrow and distress. But this "communion of saints," even where it exists in its highest perfection, does not seem to be directly promoted by the action of the Church; and it might be almost said by an unfriendly critic that a Congregational Church is often nothing more than an organization for keeping improper persons from the Lord's Supper, and for securing the election of well-qualified ministers and deacons.

These were certainly not the ends for which the Church was originally created. It would be very strange if a Society were instituted merely to preserve the purity of its own membership and a regular succession of efficient officers. As the Church sprang into existence to satisfy the strong craving of Christian men for communion with each other, the Idea of the Church is never fulfilled except when this communion is secured. The common prayers and thanksgivings of our ordinary meetings for worship

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are not enough. It is to be feared that they do not develop the consciousness of a common life where that consciousness does not exist. It is certain that where there is an earnest longing in the hearts of Christian men for intimate communion with each other, our ordinary meetings for worship leave it unsatisfied. "Public worship" is often mere "private worship," offered in a public building and in a public meeting. The sense of spiritual isolation remains, although the gratitude and the penitence of a thousand hearts are being expressed to God in the same prayer.

How this unsatisfactory condition of things is to be remedied, it is not easy to suggest. Our traditions are unfriendly to free and trustful religious intercourse. We are said to be a reticent and reserved people. We repress all manifestations of religious emotion. We are afraid of assuming to be "saints," and are unwilling to let men know that we think much about God and Christ. We are shy in expressing our religious convictions and the conclusions which we have reached as the result of our personal religious history and our reflection on Divine truth. No mechanical arrangements for freer and more intimate religious communion will be likely to effect a change. It must come from a nobler conception of the Church, and a truer understanding of the nature and necessities of the supernatural life.

We must work upon the material already in our hands, In every Congregational Church there are

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men and women who have a deep and vivid sense of the spiritual unity of all who are in Christ. These are the persons who care for the sick and the poor, and to whom even the prosperous turn in their trouble for sympathy. Such persons might be gathered together in an informal way, and encouraged to meet regularly for prayer and for conversation on Christian truth and duty. Others would soon be attracted to these meetings, and the whole Church might gradually discover the joy and strength which come from free communion in Christian thought and worship. The younger members of the Church might be assembled in classes for the same purpose, instead of being urged to take up various forms of Christian work before they have attained any depth and steadiness of religious life, and any clearness and definiteness of religious knowledge. But the true Idea will not be fulfilled until there are regular meetings of the whole Church for Worship and Conference—meetings at which whosoever “hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation,” will be free to contribute to the knowledge and to deepen the spiritual earnestness of his brethren. Such meetings would develop and confirm the consciousness of a common life, and would make the “communion of saints” a reality instead of a name. If, at one meeting, a man rose and stated the perplexities which appeared to him to hinder a large and generous trust in the promises of Holy Scripture, that God

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will answer prayer,—if, the next week, another spoke of the difficulties of maintaining a lofty integrity in business,—they would discover that their perplexities and difficulties had troubled many besides themselves, and they might receive far more assistance in overcoming them from the frank suggestions of some unknown member of the Church than had ever come to them from books or from the sermons of the minister. Sometimes the rough but pathetic words of a poor man might remind the wealthy of hardships and sufferings which in their luxurious comfort they are in danger of forgetting; sometimes the manner in which a rich man spoke of the rest and peace and consolation to be found in Christ might suggest to the poor that the wealthy have to endure sorrows as keen and bitter as their own. Truths of which the minister has no vivid apprehension, duties which, through a want of practical knowledge of the common lives of men, he may omit to enforce, would often be illustrated by unofficial members of the Church with clearness and power. The effect of such Conferences would be to create a mutual trust and affection which would be fruitful in a thousand gracious acts of kindness and brotherly care. Isolation would cease, and in all the vicissitudes of common sorrows and common joys, not the pastor's sympathy alone, but the sympathy of the Church, would be the consolation and the strength of its members.

It may be objected that the social distinctions

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which separate the members of the Church from each other render free communion of this kind difficult, if not impracticable. The objection is the strongest confirmation of the position for which I am contending,—that the common prayer and common praise of our ordinary services have not developed the consciousness of our intimate union with all who are one with Christ, and of the equality of the sons of God. We stand apart from each other. The sentiments and habits originated by distinctions of social rank are stronger than the instincts and affections of the supernatural life. We are unable to forget the differences between wealth and poverty, the squire's mansion and the labourer's cottage, the master's private room and the clerk's desk, when we ought to remember only that we have committed the same sins, have felt the same penitence, have been redeemed by the same Sacrifice, forgiven by the same Mercy, regenerated by the same supernatural power, and made heirs of the same eternal glory. There was a time when the life of the Church—as distinguished from the life of its individual members—was so intense that in the consciousness of their communion with each other and with Christ, Christian men forgot all the passions and prejudices and bitter memories which had divided them; the fiercest national animosities were subdued by the sense of common citizenship in a Divine Kingdom; masters and slaves not only confessed but felt that they were brethren in Christ, If the life of the

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Church is not strong enough in our own days to perfect a similar union among its members, and to enable them to rise above the region of "things seen and temporal," to which alone distinctions of social rank belong, into the region of "things unseen and eternal," it is time that we considered how we may recover the diviner spirit of earlier days.

The difficulty of recovering the true ideal of Christian communion arises, perhaps, as much from the unspiritual eagerness of some in an inferior social rank to assert their equality with those above them, as from the unspiritual reluctance of the wealthy to forget their social superiority to those below them. There is an insolent familiarity as well as an insolent pride. Even in the Church a child is not released from the obligation to show to a parent filial respect. Christian brotherhood does not cancel the claim of age and wisdom to respect and deference; nor does it cancel the claim of those who, in the organization of society, have a higher place than ourselves to consideration and courtesy. There have been faults on both sides; and they will disappear only when there is so vivid a consciousness of the dignity of the supernatural life, that in the Church the rich shall cease to think of asserting their superiority to the poor, and the poor of asserting their equality with the rich. Such a struggle on either side is the sign of a defective recognition of the transcendent greatness of their common relationship to God.

It may further be objected that there are some

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who shrink from religious contact with men whose tastes are less refined and whose intelligence is less cultivated than their own; that we are bound to recognize the fastidiousness, if so it must be called, which renders a man incapable of associating with people whose natures are coarse and rude, even though he may believe them to be true Christians; and that we ought all to remain free to follow our own sympathies and preferences in the election of those with whom we are to have spiritual communion. The answer is clear. It hardly becomes us to recoil from men from whom Christ does not recoil. If the Divine "fastidiousness," God's infinite disgust at sin, has not made God shrink from contact with us, we ought to doubt whether we are right in shrinking from communion with any of our Christian brethren who have been less fortunate in their birth and education than ourselves. In the family, we have no choice as to the kind of persons we shall have for our brothers and sisters; we have to take them as they come; and if it were otherwise, the moral discipline of the family would be worthless; we have to love them, and to be gentle to them, live with them under the same roof, and sit with them at the same table, though our temper and our tastes may be very different from theirs, and though we may have very little intellectual sympathy with them. In the Church, analogous obligations rest upon us. The love of the brethren, by which "we know that we have passed from death unto life," is not a love

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for people who are naturally loveable, and to whom we should be drawn by their natural grace and refinement; it is an affection which fastens on the Divine life in a man even when it is almost concealed under a rough temperament, under manners which repel us, and under ignorance and prejudice which, but for the supernatural element in him, would provoke our antipathy and contempt. It makes us eager to share with our brethren whatever advantages may have come to us from the fortunate accidents of our education, or from any felicity of native disposition; if we have had a wider and more generous culture, to loosen their unintelligent prejudices; if we have greater refinement, to soften in them what is rugged and harsh. An Epicurean seclusion from intercourse with the people who most need what we are specially able to give them, cannot be in harmony with the mind of Christ, who "pleased not Himself," and was scorned as the "Friend of publicans and sinners."

We were made to serve each other; and if the Idea of the Church is to be realized, there must be, on the part of Christian men, the frank and cordial acceptance of their mutual obligations, and an equally frank and cordial recognition of the presence of the life of God and the supernatural illumination of the Holy Ghost in all who have received Christ. The restoration of "the communion of saints," instead of repelling people from the Church, as some seem to fear, would constitute an irresistible attraction to it.



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The tendency to spiritual isolation is abnormal. It is generally the result of circumstances which have repressed, by failing to satisfy, the natural and instinctive longing of men to escape from the narrow and monotonous circle of their personal anxieties and sorrows and joys into a larger and fuller life. Give them the chance of real fellowship with the infinitely varied experience of a community, and the instinct will reveal its power. It would then become worth while to enter the Church; and "the privileges of Church membership" would cease to be almost nominal.

The Church would become infinitely richer in spiritual thought; it would have a larger and more varied knowledge of the perpetual revelation of God to those who have received the Holy Ghost; its spiritual and moral life would receive a freer and more complete development. Our faith is, that we are all "taught of God"; that the "spirit of wisdom and revelation" is not granted merely to the official teachers of the Church; that every Christian man is the friend of Christ, and must have something to tell us about Christ which no other man has ever learnt. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man," not for his own sake alone, but for the profit of the whole Church. It is our personal history which renders us capable of apprehending spiritual truth. The highest form of inspiration cannot enable a man to receive manifestations of God which lie remote from his own spiritual life,

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St. Paul declares that one end of the troubles which came upon him was, that he might be able to comfort others in their tribulation by the comfort wherewith he himself had been comforted of God.<sup>1</sup> Every Christian man walks in a path along which no feet but his own have ever travelled before, and every different path leads into new regions of beauty, of wonder, of awe, and of glory. The life of a minister may, perhaps, be more favourable than any other kind of life to the accumulation of large and various spiritual knowledge; but it cannot be supposed that the life of a minister is without its disadvantages, much less that it exhausts all the varieties of human experience. There are many things of which he can know nothing except at second-hand. Many of the sharpest troubles of other men are not his troubles, just as many of his perplexities are not theirs. Divine promises which have infinite depths of meaning to many of his congregation, which are consecrated to them by a thousand pathetic remembrances of sorrow and consolation, of conflict and victory, have for him hardly any significance. It is possible that if the Church sometimes listened to the more devout of its members whose circumstances are most unlike the circumstances of the minister, it would discover that there are aspects of truth which are most unlike those with which the minister is familiar. The minister is generally sheltered from the rougher storms which beat upon other men. He

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. i. 4.

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knows nothing of the rude conflicts in which some of his congregation have to spend their days. His seclusion from secular affairs often results in a certain softness of character, in a want of fibre and muscle, in an almost feminine delicacy of emotion, and in a feminine type of morality. This must affect his apprehension of man's relations to the world and to God, and his ideal of Christian perfection. It is possible that a more masculine element of thought and sentiment might be introduced into the life of the Church if, in free Conference, those members of the Church whose position and history are most different from his, would state frankly what they had learnt concerning the way in which God's will is to be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

However this may be, it must surely be a grave loss to the Church that all the truth to which it listens passes through one man's brain, and is the growth of one man's thought and life. The Idea of the Church will never be fulfilled till the impulse which moved the first Christians to sell their possessions and goods and part them to all men as every man had need, to call nothing they possessed their own, but to have all things common, finds expression in a higher sphere. The Church exists to promote "the communion of saints," and no stateliness of worship, no ministerial eloquence, earnestness, and wisdom, can compensate for the absence of free, generous, and trustful religious intercourse among its members. Apart from this, that transcendent

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union of which the organization of the Church is the expression the union in Christ of men of every variety of temperament, of every degree of intellectual culture, and of the most dissimilar social positions, cannot be vividly present to the Christian consciousness.

III. *The Idea of the Church in relation to the Power of the Church.*

The idea of the Church, as illustrated by its Origin and by the chief Purpose for which it exists, may assist us to determine the limits of its Power. The Church is not an artificial Society or a voluntary Club. It is the organic realization of the supernatural oneness of those who have been made "partakers of the Divine nature," and of the kinship of the sons of God. The Church is the natural home of those who are born from above. No limitations of membership are valid which exclude any who have received the supernatural life. Such limitations involve a refusal to recognize as our brethren those who are the brethren of Christ. Communion with the Church is necessary, according to the Divine order, for the normal development of Christian perfection; and to exclude from the Church those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, is to inflict upon them an irreparable loss and injury. The Church has just as little right to deny to a regenerate person the aid and support of Church-fellowship, as to deny to the unregenerate the knowledge of the infinite mercy of God revealed to the

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world through Christ: to mar and to repress the growth of the Divine life where it already exists, is a crime hardly inferior to that of concealing from men the Gospel by which that life is originally quickened. Refusal of Church membership commonly carries with it denial of access to the Lord's Supper; and, therefore, a Church which is closed against the entrance of any Christian persons, is required to show on what grounds it presumes to exclude the friends and brethren of Christ from His Table.

An elaborate theological creed may have the consent of Christendom through a long succession of centuries; or it may rest on the most unambiguous declarations of Scripture; but if a man may be regenerate of the Holy Ghost, though he is unable to accept, and may even deny, some of its articles, the creed cannot be legitimately imposed as a condition of Church membership. Calvinism may be the true theory of the Divine government; but many Christian people are not Calvinists; and a Church which requires of all who enter it the adoption of a Calvinistic confession, is a Society of Calvinists rather than of Christians. It has lost the true "form" of a Church, and has become a voluntary institution for the maintenance of Calvinistic theology. The Idea of the Church may not have perished, but the Constitution of the Church ceases to express the Idea accurately.

In some parts of England I believe that there are

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Churches which are closed against all who are not Teetotalers. Teetotalism may, perhaps, be the only effective remedy for the drunkenness which is ruining our national strength and prosperity; but unless it be maintained that no man can be a conscientious Christian without being a Teetotaler, a "Teetotal Church," though it may preserve the Idea of the Church, is in form a voluntary club of Christian people for the propagation of Teetotalism. The Idea of the Church limits and restrains its powers; it cannot claim the kind of freedom which belongs to a voluntary Society.

On the other hand, the Power of the Church becomes divine wherever the Idea is fulfilled. Modern Congregationalists would shrink from using the language in which their fathers were accustomed to speak of the effect of Church censures. Thomas Goodwin expressed the judgment which was common to the Independents of his age when he said that to excommunicate a man is to "deliver him to Satan," and that to do this is to inflict upon him very real and terrible penalties. He says:—

That word of delivering to Satan imports something positive, distinct from and including more in it than ejection out of the Church. It imports a giving up a person to receive a positive punishment from Satan. ... It is not to leave the man unto Satan only, but it is to deliver unto Satan, which is an act of authority; to give him up unto him, as to give a man up to the jailor or to the tormentor.

Excommunication imports a positive punishment, for it is a spiritual revenge. The negative throwing out of the Church

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is but that which is common to all societies: "But the weapons of our warfare" (says the apostle) "are mighty through God, having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience" (2 Cor. x. 4, 6), as will be evident if we do but lay all these things together:

1. That Satan is ready to punish the man in his spirit by terrors, and to set on his sins with horrors if he have leave from Christ.
2. This man is by the power of Christ given up, and not left only to him.
3. He is given up to Satan to punish and correct him (1 Tim. i. 20): "Whom I have delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme," that is, that they may learn how horrid a thing it is to blaspheme by what Satan inflicts. The word translated to *learn* is in the Greek παιδευθῶσι, which is to be disciplined as a child is, to learn by rods; so that being-delivered unto Satan to learn how dreadful it is to blaspheme, implies that Satan is to whip them, that they may learn by a suitable punishment what it is to blaspheme, by Satan's casting hellish terrors into their mind.<sup>1</sup>

They also spoke of the supreme sentence of the Church as being in the words of Tertullian, "Futuri judicii praejudicium."<sup>2</sup>

I am not concerned to justify the boldness and definiteness with which Goodwin and Owen explain what seems to be left by Holy Scripture in dark and awful mystery; and I quote these remarkable passages to remind modern Congregationalists that an element is absent from their theory of the Church which had a great place in the theory of their fathers.

<sup>1</sup> "Of the Constitution, Right Order, and Government of the Churches of Christ," T. Goodwin, Works (edited by J. C. Miller and R. Halley), vol. xi. pp. 44, 45.

<sup>2</sup> "An Inquiry into the Original Nature, Institution, &c., of Evangelical Churches." John Owen, Works (edited by W. H. Goolb), vol. xv. p. 267.

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Whatever our opinion may be of the precise form in which the elder Independents asserted the supernatural validity of the acts of the Church, they had a far truer and profounder theory of the Power which belongs to every "congregation of faithful men" than is common among ourselves. The ultimate ground of their theory lies in the vividness with which they apprehended the reality of the union between the Church and Christ. The intimacy of this union has a great place in the New Testament writings. The apostolic doctrine of the Church is inseparable from the apostolic conception of the method and results of Christ's redemptive work. To use St. Paul's favourite metaphor, which he employs in several places and for several purposes, the Church is the "Body of Christ"; individual Christians are "members of Christ." To sin "against the brethren" is to "sin against Christ." When St. Paul was persecuting the Church, Christ said to him, "Why persecutest thou Me?" In the Church the life of Christ on earth is extended; the Church is "His Body," and, ideally, the acts and sufferings of the Church are the acts and sufferings of Christ Himself. The voice of the Church is the voice of Christ; its works of mercy are inspired by His compassion for human suffering; its zeal for the rescue of men from eternal perdition is the manifestation of the very love which moved Him to die for the redemption of mankind; and the perfections of saints are the expression of Christ's holiness.

It is true that in the New Testament very wonderful



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prerogatives are attributed to every regenerate man; but it is difficult to understand how it is possible to resist the impression that the great inheritance of wisdom, strength, and joy which is ours in Christ belongs to the Church rather than to individual Christians.

Nor can the force of those passages, in which the wealth and glory of the ideal Church are described, be broken by the suggestion that these are descriptions of the Holy Catholic Church, and not of separate communities of Christians. For, according to the spirit and idiom of apostolic thought, what is affirmed of the universal Church appears to be affirmed of every organized assembly of Christian men. It is not the manner of the apostles to address any particular Church as though it were a fraction of a larger community. The Church at Corinth is not a mere member of that "one Body" into which all Christians are "baptized" by "one Spirit"; it is itself the "Body of Christ." The whole is present in every part.

If more definite authority is necessary for this conception of the ideal completeness of every separate Church, and of the Power which it derives from its union with Christ, the words of our Lord Himself appear to supply all that can be required: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."<sup>1</sup>

Through some evil accident, these words are constantly quoted with an addition which lowers

<sup>1</sup> Matt, xviii. 20.

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their meaning, and indeed quite suppresses the specific truth which they were intended to teach. There is indeed a double misconception of the passage common in our Churches. It is sometimes spoken of as a "Promise"; but our Lord did not intend to promise that He would be with His disciples when they meet in His name; He declares that, as a matter of fact, "where two or three are gathered together" in His name, He also is present; they cannot meet without having Him with them; whatever this special Presence of His may be, it is not contingent on His fidelity to His promise; He does not say "where two or three are gathered, there *will I be*," but "there *am I* in the midst of them." What, perhaps, is a still clearer indication of how the passage has been misunderstood, is the habit into which many Christian people have fallen, of quoting the passage as though it read "there am I in the midst of them, *and that to bless them.*" This was not at all what our Lord meant.

He had just said, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."<sup>1</sup> He promises that the prayer in which "two or three" unite shall be answered—not by Himself, but by the Father. The ground on which this promise rests is that when His disciples are gathered together in His name, He is one of the assembly, however small it may be; the prayer

<sup>1</sup> Matt, xviii. 19.

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in which they unite is His as well as theirs; in realizing their union with each other, they realize their union with Himself; He is present, not to answer the prayer, but to unite in it.

But this Presence with “two or three” gathered together in His name, is the ground not only of the assurance that united prayer should certainly be answered, but of the declaration which invests with supernatural efficacy the sentence of the Church on the offending brother who refuses to submit to its authority: “If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”<sup>1</sup> *Ubi Ecclesia ibi Christus*. Christ is the Head of the Church; where the Church is, there Christ is. The prayers of the Church will be answered, because Christ Himself is in the assembly that offers the prayers; and when the Church excludes an obstinate and impenitent brother, the exclusion has a supernatural validity, because Christ is a party to the act: “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”

It was not possible that the full meaning of these words should be apprehended at the time when they

<sup>1</sup> Matt, xviii. 17, 18. It would extend this Essay beyond all reasonable limits if I attempted to discuss the relations of these words to similar words spoken to St. Peter. [Matt. xvi. 19.]

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were spoken. Like many other of the words of Christ, they received their interpretation when the Kingdom of Heaven was actually established, and when the Comforter brought to the remembrance of the apostles all that they had heard from Christ Himself. It is possible, indeed, that even then the mystery remained only partially manifested. There was no necessity that the invisible powers which sustain the action of the Church should be fully revealed. It was enough that men recognized in the Church a supernatural society, and knew that its acts had other effects than follow the acts of a merely human organization. But though we are ignorant of all that is meant by the confirmation in heaven of the sentence by which a man is excluded from the Church on earth, the words of Christ make it perfectly certain that excommunication inflicts a terrible penalty on sin.

The excommunicated are no longer recognized as the brethren of Christ; they are solemnly disowned; they are cast out of "the household of faith." What ever peace of heart, whatever spiritual strength, and whatever sense of nearness to God come from having a home in the Church, are lost. If, as seems to have been the case with the excommunicated person at Corinth, there is spiritual life notwithstanding flagrant sin, those who are excluded from the Church endure all the misery of conscious separation from the region of light, security, and joy in which God dwells. They are thrown back into the evil world from which they

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had been delivered, and in which, if they still possess the life of God, they can have no rest. They are exiles from their country, and live among strangers and enemies. Their right to consider themselves citizens of the Divine Kingdom becomes doubtful. No special manifestations of God's favour support them in their banishment; but the act of the Church—this seems to be suggested—is confirmed by the withdrawal of the consolations of the Holy Ghost. By their exclusion from the Church they also lose all the supernatural help which had reached them through the ministry of Christian affection and sympathy. One great channel of Divine grace is closed to them. Direct access to God is possible to them still; but the vigorous life and the exulting joy which are derived from the "communion of saints," are theirs no longer. Every excommunicated person becomes to the Church "a heathen man and a publican"; and for the loss of all that comes from living union with "the Body of Christ" there is no compensation. The declaration, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," carries with it the assurance that when the excommunicated are denied a place at the Table of Christ, the denial is the expression of the will of Christ. He refuses to receive them as His guests. He no longer recognizes them as His friends. He ceases to confer on them the special blessings which He bestows on those who receive from His hands the broken Bread and the

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Cup of reconciliation. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"; and therefore the act of the Church in excommunicating an offending member is the act of Christ Himself.

But if supernatural penalties follow the supreme sentence inflicted by the Church on those who have grossly sinned, supernatural blessings follow its reception into communion of those who have repented of sin and trusted in Christ for salvation. It is by Christ's own authority that they are brought to His Table, and they may confidently expect that He will give them there, not merely the symbols of His Body and Blood, but all that the symbols represent. They will be enabled by the direct action of the Holy Spirit upon their nature to enter into the larger and fuller life of the Church. New breadth of sympathy and new fervour of brotherly love will be conferred upon them. They will be brought into more spiritual union with saintly souls, and the strength and blessedness which are already in the Church will become theirs. As the indispensable condition of their conscious possession of these new privileges, it may be supposed that their reception into the Church will be accompanied with a stronger and more vivid consciousness of their kinship to the brethren of Christ.

A truer apprehension of the supernatural reality and effect of admission into membership would correct the mistake which it is to be feared that

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some Congregational Churches commit, in requiring that applicants for membership should manifest a vigorous and developed spiritual life. Normally, a developed spiritual life is the result of communion with the Church, and ought not, therefore, to be made the condition of communion. That “full assurance of faith” of which our fathers were accustomed to speak, is not to be looked for among those who have not yet been recognized by the Church as regenerate, and who have not yet sat at Christ’s Table. It is when the prodigal son is once more under the same roof with his brothers and sisters from whom he has been long absent, sharing their life, the years of separation and estrangement quite forgotten, that he most fully realizes how perfectly his Father has forgiven all his follies, and how completely he is restored to all that he had forfeited.

To the question whether the acts of the Church in all cases receive supernatural confirmation, the only possible reply is, that the Power of the Church depends upon its union with Christ—not upon the number of its members, not upon their human culture and natural sagacity. The privileges and powers predicated of the Church in the New Testament, are the inheritance of the ideal Church, just as the privileges and powers predicated of the individual Christian are the inheritance of the ideal Christian. “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.”<sup>1</sup> “Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not.”<sup>2</sup> “Ye are dead, and

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 6.

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your life is hid with Christ in God.”<sup>1</sup> “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.”<sup>2</sup> These things are ideally true of every one who believes in Christ; the extent to which they are true, in fact, varies with the intimacy of every man’s union with Christ. And so, just in the proportion that a Church lives and acts in Christ, does its Power become the very Power of Christ.

The absence of a deep and strong faith in the supernatural validity of the acts of the Church is one of the chief defects of modern Congregationalism. We are alarmed by any theory which invests what seems a human organization with spiritual authority, and have forgotten that since the Church is a supernatural Society it is necessarily armed with supernatural powers.

Every heresy is but the perversion or exaggeration of some truth, and it can never be suppressed by mere destructive criticism; the truth, of which it is the corruption, is the only sufficient refutation. The pretensions of ambitious priesthoods must be met and destroyed by the legitimate authority of the Church. If the Christian Commonalty refuses the Power with which Christ has invested it, the Power will be seized by other hands, and will be used to inflict the worst evils on the spiritual life of mankind. The usurped authority of ecclesiastical rulers rests on the awe and fear which, from the beginning, the

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 10.



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Church has inspired in those who have confessed that the Church is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Ghost. Even among ourselves, there is a vague and mysterious dread of Church censures, for which our timid and unsatisfactory theory of the Power of the Church provides no justification. We must have the courage to maintain that where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there He is in the midst of them; and that whatsoever they shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever they shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. If we believed this, the reception into the Church of those who are trusting in Christ would be a festival of divine gladness, and the exclusion of the obstinate and impenitent would be invested with awful solemnity; all the deliberations of the Church would be controlled by a vivid sense of Christ's immediate presence; the excitements of passion by which our Churches are sometimes troubled would be subdued, and schemes of personal ambition would disappear.

IV. *The Idea of the Church in relation to Theological Creeds.*

The tremendous Power which for many centuries has been exercised by the Roman Church rests on two great foundations—its claim to the exclusive right of administering the Sacraments, which it declares to be necessary to salvation;<sup>1</sup> and its claim

<sup>1</sup> This claim is, however, greatly enfeebled by its concession of the validity of Baptism even when administered by laymen or heretics.

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to infallibility. According to its authoritative documents, the maintenance and defence of the Truth is one of the great purposes for which the Church exists. Recent Roman theologians appear to have insisted on this with even more emphasis than their predecessors. It constitutes the chief part of the definition of the Church as given by the distinguished Jesuit theologian Perrone: he says, "Christi ecclesiae nomine significamus societatem illam, quam Christus Jesus ... instituit, ut depositum asservaret cœlestis doctrinæ in terras ab se delatæ, atque organum seu medium simul esset, quo hæc ipsa doctrina conservaretur integra atque propagaretur."<sup>1</sup> This conception of the Church is not destitute of Scriptural sanction. St. Paul, in a well-known passage, which only the supposed exigencies of theological controversy could have perverted from its true meaning, speaks of "the Church of the living God" as being "the pillar and ground of the Truth."<sup>2</sup> Are we to infer that there is vested in the Christian Church any authority to promulgate a scientific system of theology, and to impose upon its members any theological definitions? What are the functions of the Church in relation to Doctrinal Truth?

The Church, according to its Idea, consists, as we have seen, of those who have received the supernatural life, which is God's highest gift to man. But this life was conferred upon those who first received it, in response to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

<sup>1</sup> "Prælectiones Theologies," vol. iv. p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 15.

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—“a man approved of God ... by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him—who being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore knowledge of God,” was “taken, and by wicked hands” was “crucified and slain: whom God ... raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it “; ... and who, as Peter declared, though He had been crucified by the Jewish nation, had been made by God “both Lord and Christ”<sup>1</sup>

These supernatural facts constituted the Gospel which was preached by the apostles on the Day of Pentecost; and it was to the men who believed this Gospel that the Divine life was given. The development of the Church has corresponded to its origin. The supernatural life has always been associated with this supernatural history. That those who have received Christ have an immediate intuition of God, that they find the whole universe bright with His glory, that they hear His voice and see His face for themselves, that they have the direct teaching of the Holy Ghost, has been the strong faith of the earliest ages of the Church; and the faith is confirmed by the personal consciousness of innumerable saints. But this supernatural illumination has never been separated from faith in the earthly history of Christ—“God manifest in the flesh.” Nor is it possible that the Church should surrender the great objective facts, which are perpetuated in their substantial reality—it

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 22–24, 36.

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matters not to the present argument what with degree of accuracy—in the four Gospels. The ultimate root of the existence of the Church is the Incarnation of God. Men have become “partakers of the Divine nature,” because God first became Partaker of the nature of man. God’s whole method of revelation seems to require that He should be made known to men through an objective history, and not merely by direct spiritual teaching. To the knowledge of God, which is eternal life, both factors seem equally indispensable.

The Church began with the manifestation of God under conditions of human weakness, pain, suffering, and temptation,—and through eighteen centuries has rested upon it with unshaken faith. That wonderful history is continually illustrated by direct communion with the living and glorified Christ. It is continually revealing, under the illumination of the Holy Ghost, fresh and unsuspected abysses of Divine truth. But every new age of the Church adds a new chapter to the imperishable story. St. Paul declared that Christ was “alive”—not merely that He had risen from the dead; and in every succeeding generation the Church has declared “He is living still”; has declared this, not as an article of speculative belief, but as a fact to which it could bear direct and independent testimony. Every devout Christian has been a new Evangelist, with a history to tell of miracles of goodness, of which the miracles of Christ’s earthly life were but the symbols and the prophecy. The

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Church is sometimes described as the Defender and Guardian of the original Records of the Christian Faith; but it is much more than this: regenerate of the Holy Ghost, having its home in Heaven, conscious of present communion with Christ, it declares, on the strength of its own direct knowledge of Him, that Christ is the Prince and Saviour of the human race. It leaves to the freest criticism the Books which profess to preserve the earthly life of Christ; but it affirms with "the full assurance of faith," that no criticism can destroy the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven, or the unique glory of its Founder. *The Church of every age is an independent witness to the power and grace of the living Christ.*

Nor is this all. The relations between the Church and Christ originate and develop a whole system of spiritual affections and activities, in which certain great truths are necessarily implicated. Where Christ is revealed, He inspires boundless love and perfect trust. Communion with Him is felt to be the highest blessedness, and His approval the sufficient reward and the brightest crown, of suffering for righteousness' sake, and of fidelity to difficult and painful duty. Apart from any theory of its relations to the moral government of God, His Death gives rest and peace to the heart which is oppressed by the sense of guilt; and in times of weakness and temptation, those who know Christ appeal to Him for strength and safety. The Church lives and moves and has its being in Christ. Penitence, faith, fear, joy, worship, make its

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union with Him more intimate. Its supreme memory is the manifestation of Christ in earthly weakness; its supreme hope is the manifestation of Christ in heavenly glory. As certain great moral truths are implicated in the judgments of conscience and in the instinctive movements of the moral affections, so the great truths of the Christian Faith are implicated in the energies and emotions, the impulses and the habits, of the supernatural life. The moral nature of man is the indestructible guarantee of the fundamental principles of ethics, and *the spiritual life of the Church is the indestructible guarantee of the fundamental principles of the Christian Revelation.*

Further, *those who dwell in the light of God have direct intuitions of spiritual truth*, just as those who have a healthy and developed moral nature have direct intuitions of moral truth.

It may, therefore, be expected that wherever there is life in Christ, the substance of the Christian Faith will be preserved under all varieties of ecclesiastical polity and theological creed. The expectation is confirmed by the history of Christendom. The saints of the East and West, Romanists and Protestants, Pelagians and Augustinians, have all received a common revelation, and conflicting systems of theology are imperfect expressions of the same spiritual facts. The Church was agitated for centuries by controversies about the Person of our Lord; but it is not necessary that a man should accept the Creed adopted at Nicaea, or the Creed which bears the name

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of Athanasius, to worship Christ as God; and there are some Unitarians whose spiritual relations to Christ are wholly inconsistent with their denial of His Divinity. St. Francis was as sure as Luther, that we are saved by God's mercy through Faith. Calvin was as eager as John Wesley to insist on the freedom of Divine Grace. Notwithstanding conflicting theories of the Atonement, the Death of the Lord Jesus Christ is recognized by all Christians as having a unique relationship to the remission of sins. What M. de Rémusat has said of the great Ideas of Philosophy which appear and reappear in every age, from Plato's to our own, is still more true of the great Ideas and Facts of the Christian Faith; they are handed down from generation to generation, like the diamonds and precious stones which are heirlooms in a great family; they are set and reset, arranged and rearranged, according to the varying taste and fashion of every age, shining now on the hilt of a sword, and now in the necklace of a bride; but the stones themselves remain, indestructible and unchanged.<sup>1</sup>

But the "setting" of these Ideas—their intellectual conception—their scientific expression—is affected by the incompetence of human language for the definition of transcendent spiritual truths, and by the imperfections of prevailing philosophical methods. The true nature and intention of the illumination of the Holy Ghost are misconceived when it is

<sup>1</sup> C. de Rémusat, *Abélard*, vol. i. p. ix.

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attempted to enforce, as of supernatural authority, the Syllabus of a Pope, or the Creed of a Council, or the Confession of a Synod, or when the consent of many Churches and many centuries is regarded as investing with the Divine sanction a theological theory. A man with the clearest vision of the sun and stars may hold a very worthless system of astronomy; and the noblest moral intuitions and the purest moral nature are no secure defence against a false theory of ethics. It is for the Church to bear testimony to great spiritual facts, and the worth of its testimony will be determined by the energy and depth of its spiritual life; but when it descends from the spiritual to the intellectual sphere, its authority ceases.

The question, however, may be raised whether certain forms of theological belief or unbelief are not inconsistent with the presence of the supernatural life, and whether, therefore, the Church has not the right to make the renunciation of flagrant heresy a condition of Church membership. The creed of a Buddhist or of a Mahometan is plainly a disqualification for membership of a Christian Church; it must be abandoned before a man can be regarded as a Christian; may not some of the theological opinions which prevail in Christendom be an equally sure sign that a man is not in Christ, and ought not therefore to be in the Church? The question, though affording considerable opportunity for interesting speculative discussion, is of no great practical or



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historical importance. It cannot be maintained that the creeds which have been imposed by the great Churches on their adherents, and the denial of which has been punished with the severest ecclesiastical penalties, could be rejected only by those who were destitute of the supernatural life. Nor is it common, for those who desire to enter into the communion of a living Church, to hold religious opinions of a kind which demonstrate that they have no spiritual knowledge of Christ. The principle by which the difficulty is to be determined, whenever it arises, is clear—however difficult may be the application of it in certain hypothetical cases: there are certain great spiritual truths, the recognition of which is necessary to the existence and development of the Christian life; and, therefore, the rejection of those truths is inconsistent with membership of the Christian Church. The denial of the evil of sin, or of the duty of repentance, or of the holiness of God, or of the obligation to keep His law, or of the wealth of the Divine mercy, or of the reality of the redemption achieved for mankind by the Lord Jesus Christ, is inconceivable where the supernatural life exists. But the theological definition of any one of these truths involves a vast number of purely philosophical questions, about which there may be grave differences among those whose spiritual intuitions of the truths themselves are equally clear and distinct. It is the spiritual intuition, not the intellectual conception, which determines whether there is spiritual life or not.

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On this ground, Articles of Religion, Creeds, Confessions of Faith, are, in their very nature, inadmissible as terms of Church Communion.

It would be obviously impossible, within the limits assigned to this essay, either to illustrate fully the Idea of the Church, or to discuss the relations of that Idea to all the practical topics suggested by the present condition of life and thought in Congregational Churches. Many questions, hardly less important than those to which I have invited consideration, must be altogether omitted; but I venture to think that the general principles for which I have contended might assist us to arrive at just conclusions in reference to the functions of Church officers, their qualifications and their tenure of office; the connection between the Church and Evangelistic work; and the controversy concerning Religious Establishments.

But it is not sufficient that we should have a true theory of the Church. The theory must be translated into fact. During the next thirty years, the ecclesiastical organizations as well as the theological systems of Christendom will be subjected to a severe and critical test. "The fire will try" their "work of what sort it is." The gravest responsibilities rest on those religious communities which believe that their polity approximates most nearly to the apostolic model, and affords the noblest organ for the expression and development of the true Idea of the Church.

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It is to be feared that modern Congregationalists do not apprehend with sufficient firmness and vigour their distinctive vocation. During the last half-century our thought and strength have been absorbed in the attempt to evangelize the great towns and the scattered hamlets of our own country, and to establish Missions among the heathen. But the work of Evangelization is not distinctively ours; we only share it with Christians of other Churches. Much less is it the supreme duty of Congregationalists to redeem the Episcopal Church of England from that subjection to the secular power to which it has voluntarily submitted, and to force upon it the Divine gift of freedom, which it vehemently resents and rejects as a grievous injustice and an intolerable humiliation. As citizens, it may be one of our chief political duties to vindicate the principles of religious equality, and, as Christians, we may be under most solemn obligations to protest against the injury inflicted on the religious life of the nation by the existing Ecclesiastical Establishment; but if we devote ourselves to redressing the evils of other Churches, and do little or nothing to promote the perfection of our own, we shall fail to render to our country and to our age the service to which God has appointed us. Nor is it our special and characteristic function to contribute to the reorganization of theological science, or to hold a chief place in the controversy with unbelief.

Our history, our ecclesiastical principles, and the disorders which afflict the great ecclesiastical organiza-

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tions of Christendom, all indicate that we are called to reveal and to realize the true Idea of the Church. By holding fast to the fundamental principle of our polity, that the Church should consist only of those who have received the supernatural life, by strengthening the faith of our people in the presence of Christ "where two or three are gathered together" in His "name," by the development of freer and more intimate spiritual communion among those who have received the Holy Ghost, by the patient cultivation of all the manly and gentle virtues of the Christian character, and of all its spiritual affections, we must endeavour to fulfil that bright Ideal, for the sake of which our fathers, three hundred years ago, endured scorn and exile, imprisonment and death. To them the vision of a Church had come, which should be, indeed and of a truth, what the Council of Trent described as "the most august and blessed Society of Saints." If that vision has faded from our eyes, modern Congregationalism has become false to its noblest traditions, and has lost the ultimate secret of its power.

## IV

CONGREGATIONALISM—I<sup>1</sup>

THE Congregational Union of England and Wales held its first annual meeting in Reading in the year 1831. Regarded at its formation with deep and reasonable distrust by many sagacious and zealous Congregationalists, and visited more than once within the last thirty years by storms which threatened its destruction, it has gradually secured the confidence of the large majority of the Congregational Churches of the country; and its spring and autumn meetings of this year [1881], which are to be held in London and Manchester, are anticipated with keen and general interest.

The Jubilee of the Congregational Union affords a natural occasion for reviewing our ecclesiastical position. Churches as well as individual Christians should have their times of self-examination—times when they should measure their actual work against their responsibilities, and should test their practice by their principles—times when they should recon-

<sup>1</sup> *British Quarterly Review*, January, 1881.

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sider, in the increasing light which comes to devout men in every generation, the traditions and institutions which they have received from their ecclesiastical ancestors. We should not shrink from revising the fundamental principles of our polity.

In this serious and anxious inquiry it will be of advantage to recall the spirit, the convictions, and the aims of the Elizabethan Congregationalists. Whatever anticipations of our ecclesiastical theories may be found in writers of an earlier date, it is to them that we owe the practical recovery and revival of the principles which, according to a long line of Congregational apologists, governed the organization of apostolic Churches, and should continue to govern the organization of the Churches of our own times.

In Elizabeth's reign, and especially during the first thirty years of her reign, English Protestantism was exposed to great perils. Why was it that the founders of English Congregationalism separated themselves from men who were as loyal to Protestantism as themselves? Why did they create divisions which increased the troubles of the Queen's government at a time when Spain and the Pope were threatening the Protestant Queen from abroad and when recusants were plotting against her throne and her life at home? Why was it that, for the sake of an ecclesiastical theory, they thought it worth while to incur the fierce hostility of the crown, the resentment of statesmen, popular hatred, and the distrust and animosity of men who shared not only their

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hatred of Rome but their faith in the theology of Calvin? What was there in their conception of the Congregational polity which made them willing to endure fine, imprisonment, exile and death itself as the penalty of their defence of Congregational principles and of their endeavours to organize Congregational Churches?

There seems to me to be only one reply to these questions. To them the New Testament contained a revelation of infinite glory and of infinite terror. Its menaces were as real as its promises. They had a deep and intense conviction—the depth and intensity of it we can hardly imagine in these days—that Christ came to seek and to save the lost; and that those whom He has not found are lost still. They took the words as they stand, and took them quite seriously—“He that believeth on the Son hath ever lasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”<sup>1</sup> The vast and awful contrast between the final destiny of those who dwell for ever in the light of God and those who are condemned to darkness and eternal death, was to them the revelation of God’s present judgment on the difference between those who listen to the voice of Christ and those who refuse to listen to it. Faith in Christ was not only the condition of the pardon of sin, it was the condition of regeneration in which men receive the power and the blessedness of the new life; it was the condition of that union

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 36

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with Christ which is the source and strength of all righteousness; apart from faith in Christ men were not in the highest sense the sons of God; and apart from faith in Christ they could not receive the permanent illumination of the Spirit of God.

To them the mere acceptance of a Christian creed and mere attendance at Christian worship were matters of absolutely no moral or spiritual value. They lived in the region of realities, and were impatient, fiercely impatient, of whatever obscured the truth of things. They thought that nothing deserved to be called faith in Christ that did not root a man's life in Christ's life and secure Christ's authority over conduct. And apart from faith in Christ they believed that no man had a right to be in the Church of Christ. Their conceptions of Church polity were determined by their doctrinal and religious faith.

The constitution of the Anglican Church declined to recognize the awful contrast between those who are loyal to Christ and those who are in revolt against Him. The English nation constituted the English Church. This was the theory of Whitgift, as it was afterwards the theory of Hooker. It was the theory which governed the ecclesiastical policy of the Queen. Under the Act of Uniformity, and the Acts enforcing attendance at the Queen's churches, the whole nation was forced into one fold. With what vehemence the early Independents denounced this policy may be seen from the following passage extracted from Henry Barrowe's "Briefe Discovene of the False Church,"



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printed in 1590. After a long description of the kind of persons who alone should be built into the temple of God—a description drawn from the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and from the Song of Solomon, as well as from the four gospels and the epistles of the New Testament—he goes on to say—

Thus we see what kind of stones, what manner of people, the Lord will have built and received into His Church. Now it remaineth that we by these rules examine the stones and people of the Church of England; whether they be such chosen, precious stones as we see here described, as the high-priest carried in his embroidered breast-plate; whether they be such a chosen, redeemed, faithful, free, holy people as are called unto and walk in the faith of Christ Jesus; or they be rather of the refuse, common pebble chalk-stones, which cannot be used to any sound and sure building, even *all the profane and wicked of the land—atheists, papists, anabaptists, and heretics of all sorts, gluttons, rioters, blasphemers, perjurers, covetous, extortioners, thieves, whores, witches, conjurers, &c., and who not, that dwelleth within this island, or is within the queens dominion.*

All, without exception or respect of person, are received into and nourished in the bosom of this Church, with the Word and sacraments. None are here refused, none kept out. This Church (as the prophet saith) openeth her knees to every passenger, furnisheth a table to the multitude, and drink offerings to the numbers; she keepeth open house to all comers—bread and wine and welcome. Neither is she more dainty of her stolen waters than of her hid bread, of her adulterate baptism, than of her Sheshak supper, not denying baptism to the seed even of whores and witches; she receiveth them all into

1 It was the theory of the early Independents that only the children of Christian parents should receive baptism. We have learnt a larger truth, and believe that all who are born into the world for which Christ died are Christ's subjects. If they afterwards revolt against Him they are "rebels" against their true King, not merely "aliens" from the Divine commonwealth.

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her covenant (which is not with God, but with death and hell), giving them her peace, selling them her wares, &c. This is their communion of saints, their holy fellowship; thus are they bound and enchained together in open sacrilege, idolatry, impiety, even all estates, prince, priests, and people, and (as the prophet saith) even wreathed together as in a strong cable of iniquity, and folded one within another as thorns in a hedge, or rather, wrapped and plighted together as thorns to the fire of God's wrathful judgments.<sup>1</sup>

In a later paragraph he describes—and other testimony lends too strong a support to the description “the general excess, pride, superfluity, covetousness, rapine, cruelty, deceit, malice, debate, inordinate affections, unbridled lusts, dissoluteness, disobedience, &c., which are found most rife, even in all estates and degrees among them.” “Neither,” he adds, in his passionate way, “hath all kinds of sin and wickedness more universally reigned in any nation at any time than here at this present in this land, where all are received into the Church, all made members of Christ.” But—

All these sins, and many more abominations (which a Christian heart abhorreth but to think or speak of), are amongst them winked at, tolerated, excused, covered and cured with the gospel preached and their holy sacraments. *All this people, with all these manners, were in one day, with the blast of Queen Elizabeths trumpet, of ignorant papists and gross idolaters, made faithful Christians and true professors?*

<sup>1</sup> Henry Barrowe, “Briefe Discoverie of the False Church” [1590], p. 9. Barrowe's scriptural quotations are of course from translations in use before the appearance of our present Authorized Version.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

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This was where the English Congregationalists began. A scheme of polity closely corresponding in its essential principles to Congregationalism had been drawn up by Lambert in the early days of the Reformation. It was in harmony with very much that Luther had taught, but was put aside because the great Reformer did not think that a sufficient number of devout men were to be found in the parishes of the Protestant States of Germany to work it. The same objection might have been offered to the scheme of Robert Browne and Henry Barrowe. But they were prepared to meet it. To them a "false Church" was worse than no Church at all. They believed that there was infinite peril to the spiritual life of men in suppressing the awful difference between those who have received the life of God and those who have not. In the organization of the Church they thought that it was Christ's intention to gather into societies those who were on His side in His tragic and glorious struggle with human sin. To receive men into the Church, whether they were on Christ's side or not, was to destroy the very idea of the Church, and to thwart the purposes for which the Church was founded. The Christian Church, by its very existence—so they believed—is a perpetual testimony to the immense difference between the present position in relation to God of those who have submitted to Christ's authority and of those who are resisting it, and a perpetual warning to mankind that, apart from penitence and faith, they cannot enter into

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the Kingdom of Heaven. This testimony and this warning are suppressed when men of all kinds are freely received into Church communion. There were other reasons, derived from the functions which, in the judgment of the early Congregationalists, the Church has to discharge, that rendered it necessary that those who are received into the Christian Church should be Christians; but what moved them to the pro founder t and most intense indignation was the manner in which the promiscuous communion of the English Church concealed the difference between the lost and the saved. I may attempt hereafter to illustrate the other parts of their theory; but at present I wish to detain attention on their fundamental principle.

The members of a Christian Church should be Christians: this, I say, was the *fons et origo* of the whole Congregational movement. Beginning with this principle, Robert Browne and his successors formed "gathered churches." The English nation was not, in their judgment, a Church; for a man was not a Christian merely because he was born within the four seas and under the sovereignty of Queen Elizabeth. The population of an English diocese was not a Church; for a man was not a Christian merely because he happened to be born in the counties placed under the ecclesiastical supervision of the Bishop of London or the Bishop of Norwich. The population of an English parish was not a Church; for a man was not a Christian merely

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because he happened to be born within the boundaries of a district placed in charge of a parish priest. To baptize the people of a parish did not make them Christians; to preach to them did not make them Christians; to give them access to the Lord's Supper did not make them Christians. And therefore—as against some of the Presbyterian Puritans—they contended that a parish was not made a Church by the presence of a zealous “preaching minister,” who taught the people pure doctrine, exhorted them to righteousness, and administered the sacraments in a form according to Christ's will. The only course for those who wished to be loyal to Christ was to bring together, here and there, those men and women who had resolved, as God should help them, to do His will, and who were relying on Christ for eternal redemption. These small and obscure groups met at night in private houses, or early in the morning in the open fields; they crept, one by one, down to the waterside, and found their way into ships lying in the river; when they were imprisoned, they organized a Church within the prison walls, for the “separate system” had not yet been introduced into our methods of criminal punishment, and in *Bride well* and the *Clink* the martyrs of Congregationalism could often hold their Church meetings and celebrate their worship with less fear of interruption than any where else in the kingdom.

“The members of a Christian Church should be Christians.” It does not follow that any particular

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method should be adopted for testing their Christianity. I suppose that on the day of Pentecost, and for many years later, every man that offered himself for baptism and declared his faith in Christ was baptized, and became at once a member of the Christian Church. No "test" was imposed by the Church on its members, except the requirement that the applicant for baptism and Church membership, after listening to Christian preaching, should declare himself a believer in Jesus of Nazareth. The "test" came from another quarter. In Jerusalem, the reality and vigour of the faith of a Jew were sufficiently shown by his readiness to acknowledge as the national Messiah the Teacher whose blood had been clamoured for by the mob, who had been condemned as a blasphemer by the Sanhedrim, and who, in mockery of the ancient Jewish hope, had been crucified by Pilate as the "King of the Jews." In the great cities of the pagan world, the reality and vigour of a heathen man's faith were shown by his willingness to break with the social traditions and customs and with the religion of his race, in order to become an adherent of a sect which had sprung up among an obscure people, whose national independence had been crushed, and who were regarded with general suspicion and hatred.

Even with these "tests" the Church was not kept pure. Some men who had no real faith were swept into the Church on the tide of strong popular excitement. Some men came into it with the hope of

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making money by using the generosity of the new sect for their own personal advantage. Some seem to have come into it at the impulse of mere curiosity to learn what the movement meant—what were its esoteric doctrines and practices; and what were the spells by which the wonderful works of its leaders were wrought. And some who found life cold, cheerless, and desolate were attracted by the warmth and gladness of the Christian brotherhood; they came into the Church to find a home.

But while all the most powerful forces of society were hostile to the new faith, the Church had a right to assume that every man who professed to believe in Christ was loyal to Christ at heart, and was resolved to keep His commandments. If, in any case, flagrant inconsistencies demonstrated that the assumption was unfounded, it became the duty of the Church to exercise discipline, and to separate itself from the man whose conduct proved that the will of Christ was not the law of his life.

By what methods any Christian Church should endeavour, in our own times, to assert the principle that the members of a Christian Church should be Christians, is a question which may be answered variously in various parts of the country, and by Churches surrounded by varying social conditions. It is not of the substance of Congregationalism that any particular set of rules should regulate the admission of members. If any Church is convinced that, without further inquiry, it can accept with

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unreserved confidence the expression of a desire for membership as a proof of living faith in Christ, that Church has a perfect right to receive all comers. If to another Church experience has made it certain that something more than this is necessary to prevent many persons from entering the Church, who have neither an intellectual nor a moral apprehension of what is meant by loyalty to Christ, some regulations become necessary to avert the peril. The principle is clear. Particular rules are not of the substance of the Congregational polity. Rules must change with changing circumstances. But the *Idea* is constant. Where it is forgotten or suppressed, Congregationalism is lost. A Christian Church should consist of Christians. Whatever really commands the confidence of generous and trustful men in a man's Christian integrity is a sufficient reason for admitting him to membership. What is not sufficient to command this confidence is not a sufficient reason for admitting him to membership.

Firm fidelity to this principle is indispensable to the fulfilment of the impulse which created the Church. That it was the intention of Christ that those who received Him should be organized into societies is apparent; but the actual formation of the Pentecostal Church seems to have been the free result of the native instincts of the Christian heart. The new life which was in men drew them together. They worshipped together, they met day after day for their common meals, they lived in each other's



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company, because they could not help it. And wherever the new life sprang up it urgently sought communion with those who shared it. Long after the fervours of the day of Pentecost had cooled, converts from heathenism, who needed apostolic teaching on some very rudimentary questions of morals, were "taught of God to love one another."<sup>1</sup> That those who are in the Church are brothers and sisters in Christ is as necessary an element of the idea of the Church as that they are all, in the high Christian sense, the children of God. If the idea of brotherhood is to be fulfilled, there must be a cordial conviction in those who are in the Church already that those who join them have received the remission of sins, and are regenerate of the Holy Ghost. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren";<sup>2</sup>—this mutual affection is the joy and strength of a Christian Church. But unless there is a serious and reasonable assurance that those in the Church are really "brethren," the very inspiration of the affection which gives to the fellowship of the Church its deep and perfect happiness is lost. If the doors are kept wide open for every one to enter that pleases, there are many cases in which the Church would cease to be a home and become an hotel.

In asking from those who wish to enter a Church some assurance that they are the friends and servants of Christ there is nothing that can be reasonably

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 9. <sup>1</sup> John iii. 14.

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described as priestly assumption. Where the Church is small and the population few the whole Church will know whether the applicant is the kind of man they can recognize as their brother in Christ. Where the population is large the testimony of any wise and earnest member of the Church to whom the applicant is known will be sufficient to secure confidence in the stranger. Parents may speak for their children; friends for their friends. It is contrary to Congregational tradition that the words of the minister alone should introduce the new member to fellowship. If there is priestly assumption, it is the assumption of the priesthood which belongs to the commonalty of the Church.

If it is urged in reply that neither the minister nor the private members of a Church can search the hearts of men and be sure that they have discovered the signs of a Divine life; and that a Divine life may be present where no human penetration can recognize it; the reply, as the assertion of an abstract principle, must of course be admitted. But the apostles clearly believed that practically we may know whether other men are our brothers in Christ or not. We may make mistakes. We may give our confidence where it is not deserved, we may withhold it where it ought to be given; but if we are to love men better because they love Christ, it must be possible to know—not infallibly, but sufficiently for practical purposes—whether or not they love Him. The impeachment of our right to form any judgment

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on the Christian character of other men dissolves the obligation of every precept which requires us to love men because they are Christians.

In some congregations it has ceased to be customary to keep what is called a "Church roll." A "Church roll" is not of the essence of Congregationalism. I doubt whether the names of the members of the Church at Jerusalem, or at Corinth, were entered in a book. But it was perfectly well known who were in the Church. The "widows" among the Hellenists and the widows among the Hebrew Christians at Jerusalem were punctually cared for after the appointment of the "seven," though in all probability no Church secretary had their names on a list of members. Outsiders were not the charge of the charity of the Church; but those who were within had claims which the Church was zealous to satisfy. At Corinth the man who had committed shameful immorality was known to be a member of the Christian community, whether a "roll" was kept or not; and he was removed by the act of the Church, although there may have been no need to insert the resolution in any Church "minutes." Church "rolls," Church "minutes," and all such things are merely convenient arrangements suggested by our modern habits of life; their value, their necessity, is to be determined by the question whether they assist us in fulfilling the idea of the Church, whether in some cases they are practically necessary in order that the Idea of the Church may be fulfilled. If no Church

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“roll” is kept because it is not certain, whether any particular person is in the Church or outside, and if the “roll” is dispensed with because no one wishes to determine whether any person is in the Church or outside, then, as it seems to me, the Idea of the Church is imperilled, if it is not already lost. When a man is in the Church I take it for granted that he is my ally in the great endeavour to get the will of God done on earth as it is in heaven; I regard him with confidence and brotherly affection. But if Church membership is intentionally left vague and indefinite, so that I never know whether a man is in the Church or not, I am thrown back on my personal knowledge of individual men; and the large, free, and cordial sense of comradeship which ought to unite all who are in the same Church is paralyzed, and their mutual affection is checked and cooled.

The Congregational polity has its roots in a very definite religious faith. It cannot be justified where that faith is surrendered. To perpetuate the polity when the faith is lost is an impossible task. The infinite significance of conversion, of faith in Christ, of the remission of sins, of regeneration, is the real foundation on which Congregationalism is built. It is true that in the writings of the early defenders of Congregational principles there is very much of mere ecclesiastical antiquarianism. They appealed to apostolic practice as though this could decide the controversy between themselves and Presbyterianism, between themselves and Anglican Episcopacy. Many

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of the scriptural arguments by which they defended their position were as untenable as many of the scriptural arguments by which their position was assailed. But the real struggle was not about the meaning and force of texts, or about the authority of precedents. The fervour, the tenacity, the endurance of the men who first founded Congregational Churches in England came from their conviction that the controversy involved great spiritual issues. It was for the immense and immeasurable difference between those who are on Christ's side and those who are not that they were contending. It was the august dignity of those whose life is supernatural and divine that kindled their imagination and gave them heroic endurance. They were asserting the infinite reality of the Christian redemption, the blessedness and glory which are the inheritance of those who submit to the authority of Christ and trust in His love, the guilt, the spiritual incapacity, and the menacing future of those who reject Him. It was these great issues which made them believe that for the sake of Congregationalism it was worth while not only to submit to the severest personal losses, to spend year after year in unwholesome prisons, and to die as traitors to the queen, but also to risk the division of the national unity and the diminution of the national strength at a time of great national peril. Apart from the supreme spiritual ends for which they laboured and suffered, Congregationalism is hardly worth perpetuating.

## V

CONGREGATIONALISM—II<sup>1</sup>

“THE Age of the Puritans is not extinct only and gone away from us, but it is as if fallen beyond the capabilities of Memory herself; it is grown unintelligible, what we may call incredible. Its earnest Purport awakens now no resonance in our frivolous hearts. We understand not even in imagination, one of a thousand of us, what it ever could have meant. It seems delirious, delusive; the sound of it has become tedious as a tale of past stupidities. Not the body of heroic Puritanism only, which was bound to die, but the soul of it also, which was and should have been, and yet shall be immortal, has for the present passed away.”<sup>2</sup>

Six and thirty years have passed away since the great critic, historian, and moralist whom we have recently lost wrote these words; and it is more than doubtful whether in the interval Puritanism has

<sup>1</sup> *British Quarterly Review*, April, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle, “Cromwell’s Letters and Speeches,” vol. i. p. 11.

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become at all more "Intelligible" to most Englishmen. The Puritan conceptions of God and of the universe, of the life and destiny of man, of the Christian Church, of worship, of national government, of the true ends for which Churches and nations exist, are still "incredible" to us. Those conceptions can indeed never, in their old form, recover their old supremacy over the hearts and lives of men; but Mr. Carlyle is right when he says that the "soul" of Puritanism is immortal; the energetic faith of those great times will return, and then very much of the Puritan controversy that seems to us frivolous will be recognized as having, at least for the Puritan age, an immense importance, and very much of what seems sheer fanaticism and madness will be recognized as "truth and soberness." Festus was incompetent to judge whether Paul was mad or not; we ought to be very cautious when we attempt to judge how much was rational, how much was irrational, in the contention of the Puritans.

But there were Puritans and Puritans. The early Separatists, Robert Browne, Henry Barrowe, John Greenwood, and their allies, assaulted Cartwright and the Presbyterians with a vehemence as fierce as that with which Cartwright and the Presbyterians assaulted Whitgift and the High Commission. Looking back upon the controversies of the Elizabethan times, we are able to see that the Presbyterians and the Separatists were really fighting under the same flag, that at heart they held the same principles; but these

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principles received in the writings and “gathered Churches” of the Separatists so intense and audacious an expression that the moderate men were filled with dismay and horror. If, as Mr. Carlyle says, the main movement of Puritanism has become “unintelligible,” “incredible,” “delirious,” it may be assumed that Congregationalism, which is one of the extreme developments of Puritan principles, must be separated by impassable gulfs from modern thought and modern faith.

The root-principle of Congregationalism, which I have already endeavoured to illustrate,<sup>1</sup> ought not, indeed, to be remote from the modern Christian mind, for it has a place in the recognized theology of all Evangelical Churches. The religious communities which were originated by the Evangelical Revival of the last century, and the religious communities which received from the Revival fresh inspiration and vigour, have, during the last hundred years, reasserted with great seriousness and awe the infinite contrast between those who are loyal to Christ and those who are not, between the lost and the saved. The emphasis with which Congregationalism maintains that the members of Christian Churches should be Christians is, therefore, intelligible to all Evangelicals; and the struggle in which Congregationalists have been engaged for three hundred years, in their endeavour to express in the constitution of the Church the infinite significance of conversion, of faith

<sup>1</sup> pp. 178 foll.



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in Christ, of regeneration, ought to secure for them the hearty sympathy of all who care for Evangelical theology. Indeed this polemic involves something of even greater importance than Evangelical theology. It is a declaration that the religious difference between those who submit to the authority of Christ and those who revolt against it is immeasurable; it is an endeavour to bring home to men the reality of sin and of righteousness; and, to say everything in a word, it is the translation into polity of the great spiritual law, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."<sup>1</sup> The Idea of the Church—that "august society of saints"—is outraged when the dead and the living, the lost and the saved, those who are living in the light of the Divine joy, and those on whom "the wrath of God" abides, are received into communion together.

And—passing from the Idea of the Church to its Functions,—these also require that, as far as this can be secured, all that are in the Church should be loyal to Christ's authority, and should have received the illumination of the Spirit of Christ. It is at this point that Congregationalism breaks openly with more moderate Puritanism. Henry Barrowe expresses one of the decisive and characteristic elements of the Congregational theory in the following words—

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 36.

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It is manifest that all the members of the Church *have a like interest in Christ, in his Word, in the Faith*; that they altogether make one bodie unto him; that *all the affaires of the Church* belong to that bodie together. All the actions of the Church, as prayers, censures, sacramentes, faith, &c., be the actions of them all jointly, and of everie one of them severally; although the bodie, unto diverse actions, use such members as it knoweth most fit to the same.<sup>1</sup>

The essence of the whole controversy between Congregationalism and those forms of Church polity with which it is most frequently brought into collision, lies in what is affirmed in this passage.

Every Christian Church is a living organism. Its separate members have their separate functions. Some are appointed to teach; some may be appointed to exhort; some to take charge of the temporal affairs of the community. It has its rulers, and its rulers claim obedience. But if it is true that "all the members of the Church have a like interest in Christ, in His Word, in the Faith"; if it is true that all the affairs of the Church are the affairs of all its members, then Barrowe is right in the inference which he draws from this principle later on, when he says—

Now, then, seeing everie member hath interest in the publike actions of the Church, and together shall beare blame for the defaltes of the same; and seeing all our communion must be in the truth, and that we are not to be drawn by anie into anie willing or knowen transgression of Gods law; who can denie but every particular member hath power, yea and ought to examine the manner of administring the sacramentes, as also

<sup>1</sup> "A Briefe Discoverie of the False Church by the Lords unworthy servant and witnes in bondes." Henry Barrowe: 1590, p. 35.

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the estate, disorder, or transgressions of the whole Church, yea, and not to joine in any knowen transgression with them, but rather to call them all to repentance, &c., and if he find them obstinate and hardened in their sinne, rather to leave their fellowship, than to partake with them in wickednes?<sup>1</sup>

With words like these before us, it is not difficult to understand the alarm, the indignation, the terror, created by the early Congregationalists. Their theory seemed to menace the Church with universal anarchy. And it must be acknowledged that the form in which the responsibilities and duties of private members of the Church were sometimes stated justified grave apprehension. Every individual Christian seemed to be invested with the attributes of an infallible critic of doctrine, polity, and administration. It seemed as if it were every man's duty to insist that his own judgment should be a law to the Church. The duty of recognizing in others the same access to the mind and will of Christ that a man claims for himself was not stated with sufficient clearness and force. Nor was it remembered that, though Christian men "have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things," moral idiosyncrasies, and differences of intellectual power and of intellectual discipline will always affect the manner in which different men who are equally loyal to Christ will suppose that the law of Christ is to be fulfilled in practice.

<sup>1</sup> "A Briefe Discoverie of the False Church by the Lords unworthy servant and witnes in bondes." Henry Barrowe: 1590, pp. 35, 36.

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But to make any impression on sluggish and hostile minds, it is necessary to say one thing at a time, and to say it without surrounding it with the limitations which would obscure its meaning and fetter its force. The issue which was raised by Congregationalism is of supreme importance: Has Christ placed the affairs of His Church in charge of Church officers or in charge of all Christians? It was the contention of the Congregationalists that the corruptions of Christendom had arisen from the surrender and suppression of the functions of the Christian commonalty.

The people, upon a superstitious reverence and preposterous estimation unto their teachers and elders, resigned up all things, even their dutie, interest, libertie, prerogative into their handes; suffering them to alter and dispose of all things after their owne lustes; without inquirie or controlment. Whereupon, the true patterne of Christes Testament, so highly and with so great charge incommended by the Apostles unto the fidelitie of the whole Church, was soone neglected and cast aside, especially by these evil workmen, these governours, who some of them affecting the pre-eminence sought to draw an absolute power into their owne handes, perverting those offices of more labour and care into swelling titles of fleshly pompe and worldly dignitie.<sup>1</sup>

To effect a complete and permanent Reformation, it was necessary to recall the Christian commonalty to the discharge of the duties which they had at first neglected through their own indifference, and which according to Barrowe, they had afterwards lost

<sup>1</sup> "A Briefe Discoverie of the False Church by the Lords unworthy servant and witnes in bondes." Henry Barrowe: 1590 p. 3.

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through the ambition of the priesthood. It was of the *duties* rather than the *rights* of the Christian commonalty that the early Congregationalists were thinking. It was necessary to recover "rights" in order to discharge "duties"; about the rights apart from the duties they were very indifferent. The whole method and tone of the controversy differed widely from very much that we have become familiar with in recent times. Men were not invited to become Congregationalists, because Congregationalism gave them the power to choose their own ministers, and to control, according to their own tastes and wishes, the conduct of worship and all the affairs of the Church. Nobody would have cared enough for Congregationalism to be imprisoned for it, to be hanged for it, if this had been the meaning of the movement. Men were told that Christ had trusted His truth and His laws to the fidelity of all who loved Him; that no Christian man could escape the responsibility which this trust imposed; and that at whatever cost and in the face of whatever peril, the responsibility must be discharged. They were invited to separate themselves from the national Establishment that they might be loyal to the trust they had received from Christ, and that they might so escape His final condemnation. Only in "gathered Churches," consisting of devout and spiritual members, could the Christian commonalty fulfil the functions to which they were divinely called. That these Churches should have "rulers" was part of the will of Christ, and both Browne and

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Barrowe insisted on the duty of honouring and obeying them; that they should have “teachers” was also part of the will of Christ, and it is the duty of the taught to listen with respect and consideration to those who teach them: but the ultimate responsibility for the whole life of the Church lies with the Church itself, not with the ministers alone. Whatever powers may be entrusted to pastor, teacher, elders, deacons, the Church can never surrender its own supreme authority; for the retention of this authority is necessary to the discharge of its duties. It must take guarantees that those whom it appoints to office shall be loyal to their trust; if they are persistently disloyal, it must have the power of removing them. The Church—the whole Church—is responsible for the persons who are received into membership and retained in membership; for the order of worship; for the substance, at least, of the teaching which is given to the Church itself, and which is given in the name of the Church to people outside.

In this region, as many will think, Congregationalism becomes “unintelligible,” “incredible,” “delirious.” That tradesmen, mechanics, farmers, ploughmen, and serving-men, women harassed with household cares, or earning their living as household servants, or in workshops and factories, should be charged with such responsibilities, and should be regarded as having any competence to meet them will to many people seem preposterous. What can such persons know of the deep mysteries of theology? How can

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they be expected to form an intelligent judgment on conflicting doctrines of the Trinity and of the Person of Christ, on conflicting theories of the Atonement, on the controversies concerning Augustinianism—controversies extending over fourteen centuries, and dividing saints from saints, theologians from theologians? What can they know about the researches and the principles which must determine questions relating to the canon and to the inspiration of the sacred books? How can they be trusted to arrive at just conclusions concerning the sacraments, concerning the true polity of the Church, concerning the modes of worship which are most in harmony with the genius of the Christian revelation and most conducive to the spiritual strength of the Christian Church? In the administration of discipline, is it reasonable to expect that such persons will have an adequate knowledge of the ethical principles of Christ, will be competent to discern the true application of those principles to the complex affairs of human life, will be able to escape from the personal antipathies and personal prejudices which would disturb their impartiality and destroy the moral authority of their decisions? Can such persons be even trusted with the election of their own religious teachers and rulers? Are they competent to judge of the intellectual and spiritual qualifications of a pastor or preacher? Will they not think very little of the sagacity, of the knowledge, of the just discrimination, of the steadfast integrity, of the deep devoutness necessary to the office, and will

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they not be caught by the charm of a pleasant manner, by vivacity, by fluency, by many other superficial attractions which are quite separable from the real elements of efficiency? Is it not certain that a Church polity which assumes in the ordinary members of a Church intellectual and moral resources which very few of them can possess, will lead to confusion, scandal, and disaster?

Our principal reply to these objections is a very simple one. We take the New Testament seriously. We believe that those whom Christ redeems from "this present evil world" and translates into His kingdom receive a Divine life and a Divine light, and are taught of God. The measures of spiritual illumination and of spiritual strength given to different men vary. Shining in the same heaven, "star differeth from star in glory." But a man's rank in the Divine kingdom is not determined by his social obscurity or distinction, or by the extent of his secular knowledge, or by the degree of his general intellectual culture. The serving-man may know more of the mind of God than the scholar; the man who works at the forge than the man who fills a professor's chair; and the maid may have a keener and truer spiritual vision than the mistress. It is often said that the Christian Church is a perpetual witness for democracy, and that in the presence of the harsh and often iniquitous gradations of rank in secular society, it illustrates the true equality of mankind. There is truth in this assertion, but not



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the whole truth. The Church does not merely refuse” to recognize and confirm the inequalities of the world; it often reverses them. There are gradations of rank in the Divine kingdom as well as in secular states, but it often happens that, in passing from the inferior to the nobler order, “the first become last and the last first.”

Congregationalism affirms that any system of Church polity that does not recognize the wonderful endowments conferred on the Christian commonalty must be contrary to the mind of Christ. The early advocates of our theory often failed to make the real meaning of their position clear. They pleaded apostolic precedents, as though all apostolic precedents had the authority of a formal law. They appealed to “texts” when they should have appealed to principles. They seemed to fetter the Church to the customs of the primitive age, when they were really claiming the very largest freedom. But we must judge them by the spirit of their writings rather than the letter; we must remember what were the methods of controversy in their times; we must let the profound and far-reaching principles asserted on one page control the formal argument developed on the next. If we sweep away what may have seemed to themselves the strongest supports of their position, dismiss all their curious appeals to Jewish history, reject their quotations from Jewish prophets as exegetically unsound, or, if exegetically sound, wholly irrelevant, refuse to acknowledge that

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the organization of the Churches of Galatia and the Church at Corinth is the type to which modern Churches are bound to conform, their contention loses nothing of its real strength. Their main plea becomes stronger when separated from the ingenuities and subtleties which divert attention from the real issue.

Are we to take the New Testament seriously? This is the question which settles a large part of the controversy. What account are we to give of those who have believed in Christ and who are regenerate of the Holy Ghost? About the blessedness and dignity which they are all to possess on the other side of death, we can say little. For it doth not yet appear what they will be, when through one millennium after another, their righteousness, wisdom, and power will receive perpetual development under the kindlier conditions of the world to come; and the immense possibilities of their wonderful destiny should make us regard with reverence and awe the obscurest of men who have received the life of God. But are they now the sons of God? Is it true that they dwell in Christ and that Christ dwells in them, that they have "the mind of Christ," that they have received "the spirit of wisdom and revelation," that they are confederate with Christ in His prolonged contest with the sins and sufferings of mankind? Is it true that every Christian man not priests alone, not ministers alone, but every Christian man, whether peasant or prince, gentle or simple, whether

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rich in secular learning or destitute of it—is charged to defend and perpetuate “the faith once delivered to the saints,” and to do his best to get the will of God done on earth as it is in heaven? Congregationalism answers these questions in the affirmative, attributes to every Christian man amazing prerogatives and powers, insists that these are the ground of grave duties, requires the polity of the Church to be so constructed that every Christian man shall be charged with the responsibility of taking part in the maintenance and defence of the truth of Christ and in the assertion of His authority. In other words, according to the Congregational theory, the affairs of the Church are the affairs of every member of the Church; and to entrust the exclusive charge of doctrine, discipline, and worship to a sacerdotal or ministerial order is to suppress the functions and to paralyze the strength of the Christian commonalty.

The direct illumination of the Holy Spirit does not release men from the duty of learning the will of Christ from the discourses delivered by Him during His earthly life and from the writings of His apostles; nor does it release them from the duty of availing themselves of those permanent ministries which He has instituted for the increase of the spiritual knowledge of His people and the discipline of their righteousness. It is obvious that in a Congregational Church it is of the first importance to secure for all the members the amplest instruction in Christian faith and duty. It is not enough that they know the

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rudiments of the gospel. They have something more to do than to save their own souls. In Churches which entrust the clergy with all the functions of government, it may be sufficient if the Christian intelligence of the clergy is adequately disciplined. In Churches which divide these functions between the clergy and representative laymen, it may be sufficient if, in addition to the clergy, a fair number of laymen have acquired a considerable knowledge of the contents of the Christian revelation; for the ordinary members of the Church, though comparatively uninstructed, may have the sense to recognize and to elect the men who are competent to discharge duties which are beyond their own strength. But Congregationalism makes heavy demands on the Christian commonalty, and these demands will never be met unless all the members of a Church are well taught. The Evangelical Revival of the last century, while it conferred on Congregational Churches blessings of immeasurable value, disturbed the true Congregational tradition; it led us to think that our work was done when we had prevailed upon men to repent of sin and to trust in the mercy of God revealed through Christ for eternal redemption. Our wiser fathers thought that when this Divine triumph was achieved their own work had only begun. It would be an exaggeration of the truth to say that we have reversed the parts which in their judgment belong to God and to the Church in the salvation of mankind; but it might be almost said that the early Congre-

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gationalists left the conversion of men very much in God's hands, and made it the chief duty of the Church to discipline and perfect the Christian life of those who were already Christians: we have thought that for the conversion of men the Church is largely responsible, and we have left them in God's hands for the development of Christian power and righteousness.

One of Robert Browne's books is an illustration of the importance which he attached to full and exact Christian knowledge. He calls it "A Booke which sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians; and, how unlike they are unto Turkes and Papistes and Heathen folke. Also, the pointes and partes of all Divinitie, that is, of the revealed will and worde of God, are declared by their severall Definitions and Divisions in order as followeth."<sup>1</sup> It is something very different from the brief and simple "Manuals" of Congregational principles which some ministers are in the habit of placing in the hands of all candidates for Church fellowship. Browne's treatise contains a system of divinity, of ethics, and of ecclesiastical polity; and from point to point he carries on a polemic with Romish and Anglican error and corruption. He begins with the doctrine of the Trinity, the glorious perfections of God, and His authority; goes on to the fall of man and its consequences; then passes to the divinity of our Lord, His atonement, and the doctrine of redemption. He

<sup>1</sup> Imprinted by Richard Painter, 1582: Middleburgh.

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then states the doctrines of grace, election, and effectual calling; then discusses the constitution of the Church, and the doctrine of the sacraments; and then the standing and privileges of Christians. After a brief account of Jewish ceremonies, he defines and illustrates what he describes as the general duties of religion and holiness repentance, faith, the honouring of God, obedience to God. Then he gives an account of "special duties" to be discharged for the name and kingdom of God public worship and the keeping of the sabbath. He then passes to social duties; states what he conceives to be the duties and qualifications of rulers including those who hold office in the Church, civil governors, husbands, parents; he discusses the grounds of their authority and the obligations which their authority imposes on them. He further states what he conceives to be the duties of "inferiors," and insists with great resoluteness on the esteem, honour, and submission which are due to those who "have the rule over them." He then deals with our obligations to persons to whom we are not bound by definite relations to good men, to the miserable. The book closes with an account of what he describes as strictly personal duties, and he treats of chastity, industry, providence, justice, fidelity, equity, truth, simplicity, and "secrecy";<sup>1</sup> he denounces slander and covetousness.

<sup>1</sup> He dwells on the duty of keeping "secret things" secret. I suppose that even in the Congregational Churches of the heroic times, trouble sometimes came from thoughtless gossip and the betrayal of confidence.

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What is specially interesting about this curious book is the arrangement of the matter. As the book lies open before you, the column which occupies the left half of the left-hand page consists of questions and answers on the subjects I have enumerated. These are given in plain language, and printed in a bold, clear type. In the right-hand column of the same page there are questions and answers, exhibiting the errors or corruptions which are opposed to the truths and virtues which are stated in the first column. The questions and answers in the first column are to be studied and mastered by all. The questions and answers in the second column "simple people may pass over"; they are intended to arm those who are fairly intelligent but uneducated, against the erroneous doctrines and the erroneous ethics of "Turkes and Papistes and Heathen Folke." On the right-hand page, in small type, Browne develops his system scholastically, in formal definitions. The treatise was obviously meant to be a text-book for the Congregational Churches, and it is very certain that those who mastered it would have a fulness and definiteness of religious and ethical thought which are not very common in our days. The book brings vividly home to us the judgment of the early Congregationalists on the kind and extent of knowledge which should be acquired by every member of a Christian Church.

I have not yet exhausted the illustration of the spiritual audacity of Congregationalism. In Robert

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Browne's book, of which I have just given an account, there are two definitions which are worth considering. He says—

*The Church* planted or gathered, is a companie or number of Christians or beleevers, which, by a willing covenant made with their God, are under the government of God and Christ, and keep his lawes in one holie communion. ...<sup>1</sup> The *kingdome of Christ* is his office of government, whereby he useth the obedience of his people to keepe his lawes and comatndements to their salvation and welfare.<sup>2</sup>

In the passages which precede and follow those which I have quoted, there is a mystical identification of Christ with the Church, and with all the acts of the Church. His theory is that by "a willing covenant made with their God" the members of a Christian Church accept the Divine will as their absolute law. In worship, faith, polity, and administration they acknowledge no other authority than the law of Christ. And through them the authority of Christ is to be visibly maintained. The union between Christ and them is so intimate that, to use the technical language of the times, the Church has part in the prophetic, the priestly, and the regal offices of its Head.<sup>3</sup> Christ teaches through the lips of the doctors of the Church; intercedes in the intercession of all its members; and when the assembled Church pronounces its solemn decisions, its acts of govern-

<sup>1</sup> R. Browne: *op. cit.* § 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, § 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, especially §§ 55–58.



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ment are the acts of its Lord. What is bound on earth is bound in heaven, and what is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven.

In other words, every Christian Church is a supernatural society. It is the permanent home of God. It is consecrated by the "Real Presence" of Christ. The awful splendour which dwelt in the Holy of Holies was but the symbol and prophecy of a more august manifestation of God in the Church. When its members are assembled together in Christ's name they have not merely the written records of His earthly ministry to guide, instruct, console, and animate them; Christ Himself is among them. Nor does He stand apart from them, isolated in His Divine majesty. The decisions of the Church are sanctioned by His authority. Its prayers are made His own, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."<sup>1</sup>

It was for this lofty conception of the functions of the Church that the early Congregationalists endured imprisonment, exile, and death. Poor men and poor women were inspired by it with the courage of heroes and the endurance of martyrs. They, too, had seen "the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven,"<sup>2</sup> with its gates of pearl, its foundations of precious stones, and the nations of the saved walking in its golden streets. It was a glorious vision, worth suffering for, worth dying for.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxi. 2.

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Yes, it may be said, but only a vision, and a vision which, to use Mr. Carlyle's language again, was "incredible" and "delirious." It is well for the human race, however, that there are men to whom visions, seen in the diviner hours of life, are truer than all the common experiences of common days. Congregationalism, as conceived by its founders, was an ideal polity. Those of us who inherit their principles and traditions are willing to acknowledge that it remains an ideal polity. It can become actual only when the members of Christian Churches touch the height of that perfection to which the Divine will calls them, and achieve that perfect union with Christ which is the final triumph of faith and the ultimate condition of righteousness. Other systems of polity recognize and provide for the infirmities and follies and perversities of Christian men. Congregationalism assumes that they are altogether loyal to the thought and will of Christ; it trusts with a complete and unreserved confidence to the power and supremacy of the Spirit of Christ in the Church of Christ. In the actual condition of Christendom systems which take guarantees against human passion and human error may "work" better; but to some of us the idealism of Congregationalism has a fascination and charm. The way is left open for the perfect fulfilment of the Divine idea. Guarantees which repress the outbreak of evil passions may also repress the free movement of the divinest forces. A "strong" government may

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be necessary to curb and check revolt, but it is likely to impair the energy which is possible only to a free people.

As a matter of fact, where the true conception of Christian life and fellowship is seriously violated, Congregationalism often shows itself capable of providing informal remedies for evils which its principles and ideal constitution decline to recognize as possible. Just as under the freest secular governments the usual guarantees of liberty are formally suspended in times of national disturbance, so there are informal modifications introduced into the actual administration of Congregational Churches when the members are unfaithful to the ideal of saintliness; and the natural results of their unfaithfulness are, to some extent, averted. The organization adjusts itself to the life. But the main lines of the polity are preserved, and when better days come, the Church is able to resume all its functions. Sometimes, indeed, violent explosions occur; but they do not seem to me either more violent or more destructive than the catastrophes which occasionally occur in Churches which are more careful to provide against the perils which arise from the imperfections of human nature.

It is usual for Congregationalists to claim for their ecclesiastical ancestors a chief place in that protracted and complicated struggle which has secured for the English people their civil and religious freedom, and which will never be brought to a close until it has

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Secured for them complete religious equality. The claim can be sustained by decisive proofs. But we make a grave mistake if we attribute to the Elizabethan Congregationalists the theory of individual rights which underlies most of the modern arguments against the interference of the State with religious faith and worship. Nor does this theory appear to have been discovered by the Congregationalists of the first half of the seventeenth century.

The real character of the early Congregational struggle against the Crown cannot be understood unless we remember the Congregational conception of the Church. As we have seen, Browne, Barrowe, Greenwood, Penry, and their brethren believed that a Church is a society instituted by the authority of Christ and actually governed by His will. Christ alone has the right to determine who shall be received into the society, and who shall be excluded from it. Christ alone has the right to determine its polity and its modes of worship. When "by one blast of Queen Elizabeth's trumpet" all Englishmen were made members of the national Church, and were required under penalty to attend its services, the complaint of the Congregationalists was not that the queen had trampled on the personal rights and violated the freedom of the English people, but that she had usurped the authority of Christ. "No prince can make any a member of the Church." When she imposed on the nation a system of Church government and a form of worship, still they did not

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complain that she interfered with their personal freedom. They maintained that she was interfering with the prerogatives of Christ, who alone had the right to settle the government of the Church, and the modes in which it should conduct its worship. It was their contention that Christ did not use queens and parliaments as the organs of His will in these high matters, but those “Christians or believers who,” to quote words I have quoted before, “by a willing covenant made with their God, are under the government of God and Christ,” and whose “obedience” Christ “useth ... to keep His laws and commandments.”

They confessed that by God’s appointment Cæsar—the civil magistrate—had authority “to rule the commonwealth in all outward justice, and to maintain the right, welfare and honour thereof, with outwarde power, bodily punishments, and civill forcing of men.”<sup>1</sup> Some of them were extravagant in their concessions to the Crown, and went so far as practically to surrender all the securities of personal liberty. But while as a religious duty they rendered to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, they were equally resolute in refusing to render to Cæsar the things which are God’s.

In more recent times the struggle with the Crown and the Church took a new form. It became a contest for individual rights—for what we call “civil and religious liberty.” The later contest, if it takes

<sup>1</sup> R. Browne: *op. cit.* § 117.

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for its motto the words of Christ which I have just quoted, must read them as though they were written, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar s, but keep for yourselves the things which are your own." The question as to the limits of the authority of the State over individual citizens is plainly a very different question from that which interested the founders of English Congregationalism. They were not contending for the rights of men, but for the rights of Christ.

The controversy in its more recent form is sometimes described in another way, a way which approximates more closely to the original character of the struggle. It is described as a movement for the separation of Church and State. The description is not very exact and is open to some objections; but, speaking roughly, it is a fairly true account of the object of the early English Congregationalists as well as of our own. We want the State to keep within its own province, and to leave the Church to govern itself.

But it is contended that a complete separation of the two powers is impossible, that there are points at which their respective jurisdictions necessarily touch each other; this we may admit, and the questions raised by the conflict of authorities are sometimes intricate and extremely difficult to solve. It is also contended that Congregational Churches, in their doctrine, discipline, and worship, are just as really under the control of the State as the Anglican

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clergy; and a case recently decided in the Court of Vice-Chancellor Hall is quoted in support of this contention. In discussing the Huddersfield Chapel case there will be an opportunity for considering some questions which may seem of more immediate interest than the lofty principles which I have endeavoured to illustrate in this essay.

In 1873 Mr. Stannard became assistant to Mr. Skinner, the pastor of the Church meeting in Ramsden Street chapel, Huddersfield. In January, 1875, he became co-pastor. At that time a majority of the trustees of the building were not satisfied that Mr. Stannard's preaching was in harmony with the doctrines defined in a schedule to the trust-deed. Mr. Skinner resigned in April, 1877, and then Mr. Stannard was retained to supply the pulpit, although on account of difficulties arising out of the terms of the trust-deed he was not appointed to the pastorate. In January, 1880, some of these difficulties had been removed and he was elected pastor. A majority of the trustees were still confident that his preaching was not in harmony with the doctrinal schedule of the deed, and instituted legal proceedings to eject him from the use of the building. In the suit they relied principally on a letter written by Mr. Stannard on his election to the pastorate, in which he stated the qualifications with which he received the several articles of the schedule. In the judgment of the Vice-Chancellor the action of the majority of the trustees was sustained by the provisions of the deed,

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and Mr. Stannard was therefore declared to be no longer minister of Ramsden Street chapel.

The judgment has given occasion to some very wild, incoherent, and unintelligent writing. In an article on the case in a provincial newspaper there is the following amusing passage—

Very disagreeable is it for high-souled Nonconformists that certain religious doctrines and forms of worship should be enforced among them by the strong secular arm of the law of the land. Fain would they deny that such is the case, and represent that such is the fate only of enthralled Churchmen. But unfortunately instances are of continual occurrence when the law interferes in the religious affairs of even the most stalwart Liberationists, and prescribes or prohibits, directs or deprives, in a manner wholly at variance with the volumes of Liberationist tall talk. Denominational organs may strive to suppress reports of the frequent law-suits concerning Dissenting chapels and doctrines and trust-deeds; but there are many Dissenters who read some better journal than the sectarian paper, and they become painfully aware that their leaders and instructors who profess to enlighten them are sedulously endeavouring to keep them in the dark and to deceive and mislead them. The Dissenters of Huddersfield have just been taught that they are under law, and that their chapel and its affairs are under "State patronage and control," from which the Liberation Society has never yet made any effort to liberate them, as all its energies have been directed to meddling with the private affairs of the Church instead.

The *Times* had an article—less extravagant, of course—but betraying in the very terms it uses a very natural misconception of the facts and principles involved in the suit. It began with these sentences—

It seems to be supposed by some ardent Ritualists that, if only the Church were disestablished, they would be able to live in perfect peace, and could for all time do exactly as.



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each one liked, without having the fear of Lord Penzance or any secular authority before their eyes. We would advise those who harbour this delusion to study a decision by Vice-Chancellor Hall which we report to-day. It will show that a religious body may have not the remotest connection with the State, may embody the very dissidence of Dissent, and yet not escape interference at the hands of the law. No section of Nonconformists probably more desired to hold aloof from contact with secular Courts than the body of "Protestant Dissenters of the Congregational denomination, otherwise called Independents," whose doctrines have been the subject of discussion for seven days in Vice-Chancellor Hall's court. The early fathers of that Church would have marvelled much had they been told that they would one day find it necessary to resort to a court of equity for aid, and invite the judges of the land to construe their articles or say what were their true doctrines. The force of circumstances, however, has brought about this strange result.<sup>1</sup>

It was certain that the suit would give occasion to a great deal of writing of this sort. The prosecution and imprisonment of Mr. Pelham Dale and Mr. Enraght had produced a very restless feeling in many Churchmen. The prosecutions appeared, at least, to be vivid illustrations of the fact that the State has charge of the doctrine, ritual, and discipline of the Anglican Church, and it was to be expected that when the trustees of Ramsden Street chapel appealed to the Vice-Chancellor to eject Mr. Stannard, we should be told that Nonconformists are in precisely the same position as Churchmen, and that the State has charge of the doctrine, ritual, and discipline of Congregationalists. A very few minutes reflection will enable any one to discover that there are the

<sup>1</sup> The *Times*, February 2, 1881, p. 9.

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widest possible differences between the case of the ejected Nonconformist minister and the case of the two imprisoned clergymen.

The issue raised by the Huddersfield suit was extremely simple. Rather more than thirty years ago certain persons in Huddersfield secured a piece of ground with the intention of erecting a chapel upon it. A chapel was erected. The people who subscribed the money, or the committee appointed to carry out their wishes, placed the building in trust. Thirty years ago, as I have heard, there was a great dread in Huddersfield of the movement which has received its name from the venerable James Morison of Glasgow. The vehement antagonism to Calvinistic theology and the eager evangelistic zeal of the Morisonians had created a considerable number of congregations in Scotland, and from time to time adventurous representatives of the movement made raids across the border. Yorkshire Congregationalists, or some of them, regarded the creed of the zealous Scotchmen with dismay. And so it happened that the founders of the Ramsden Street chapel resolved that to the end of time no Arminian heresy should be preached in its pulpit. In a schedule to the trust-deed the chief doctrines of the Calvinistic theology were defined with a rigour unusual among Congregationalists in recent years, and the pastor of the Church assembling in the building was required on his appointment, to state in writing his acceptance of these definitions.

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Whether it is expedient or just that such definitions of doctrine should be introduced into the schedule of a trust-deed and the acceptance of them by the minister made the condition of his use of the building, whether a deed so constructed is in harmony with the principles and genius of Congregationalism, are questions which I will consider later; but it is notorious that most people who give money for the erection of a place of worship suppose that they are acting within their rights when they ask for securities of this kind. They argue that, since the building is erected by their money, they have a moral right to prevent it from being used for the propagation of religious opinions which they abhor; and they think that the best way to secure it for the purposes they want to promote is to define a set of doctrines in the trust-deed.

English law sanctions this claim; and the question which the Vice-Chancellor had to determine was whether Mr. Stannard had satisfied the conditions which the builders of the chapel had insisted should be fulfilled by every minister that used it. This was the only question which the Vice-Chancellor would touch. It was the only question which he had a right to touch. There was a natural endeavour on the part of Mr. Stannard's counsel to raise other issues. He referred to what Dr. Allon is alleged to believe on one doctrine, and to what Mr. Baldwin Brown is alleged to believe on another. My own departures from Calvinistic traditions were not for-

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gotten. It was also argued that Congregationalists were unfriendly to the imposition of definite creeds either on ministers or Churches. The whole speech was an attempt to attribute to the Vice-Chancellor the functions of an ecclesiastical judge. He was asked to determine the limits of Congregational orthodoxy. But he very properly declined to assume any such responsibility. He put all these topics aside. He was not an ecclesiastical judge, but a judge in Chancery. He declared that he had not to determine any question affecting Congregational doctrine, but only to interpret the provisions of a deed.<sup>1</sup> He said virtually that certain persons had contributed their money to erect a building in Ramsden Street, that the law allowed them to settle the terms on which it should be used, that they had agreed that before any minister was appointed to be the regular and legal occupant of the pulpit he should declare in writing his assent to certain doctrines, that the letter which Mr. Stannard wrote did not satisfy the conditions imposed by the persons who erected the building, and that, therefore, Mr. Stannard must retire. Whether the doctrines of Mr. Stannard were true or false, consistent or inconsistent with his position as a Congregational minister, were questions in which the Court of Chancery had no concern.

In two important respects the case of Mr. Stannard is wholly different from the case of Mr. Pelham Dale and Mr. Enraght.

<sup>1</sup> The *Times*, February 2, 1881.

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It is clear, in the first place, that the State had nothing to do with settling the doctrines to be preached by the minister of Ramsden Street chapel. Those doctrines were never submitted to the approval of Parliament or the Crown. It was not the law of the land which laid down the creed for the minister at Huddersfield. The law has simply said that when people build a chapel they are at liberty to determine what use should be made of it; and a civil court has enforced the use which they agreed upon.

The articles which have troubled Mr. Stannard were contained in a schedule to a trust-deed drawn up by private persons to determine the uses of property created by themselves. But the doctrine, the ritual, and the discipline of the Church of England have been settled by the schedule of an Act of Parliament. Mr. Stannard is told that he cannot use a certain building unless he fulfils the conditions imposed by the persons who voluntarily contributed money to erect it. But Mr. Enraght and Mr. Pelham Dale are told that they must obey certain regulations which the Crown and Parliament have resolved shall control the conduct of public worship in the National Church.

There is another and, perhaps, still more striking difference between the two cases. Under the Public Worship Regulation Act Mr. Pelham Dale and Mr. Enraght will be deprived of their benefices at the end of three years if they do not discontinue the ritual

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which has been pronounced illegal. If they receive other appointments the law will still require them to abstain from those acts which the Courts have condemned. If the members of Mr. Enraght's congregation built him a new church they would have no power—if he and they remained in the national Establishment—to give Mr. Enraght liberty to conduct the worship as he and they might desire. Convocation cannot give him this liberty. All the bishops on the bench cannot give it him. We contend that he and his people are in bondage to the civil power; for only the Crown and Parliament can give them freedom to worship according to their own convictions of how God ought to be worshipped. He and his congregation might worship as they pleased if they became Nonconformists. This is surely a decisive proof that while in the national Church they are in fetters, and that only by leaving it can they become free. Mr. Stannard and his friends are not in chains. All that the Vice-Chancellor has determined is that Mr. Stannard cannot use, to propagate one set of doctrines, a particular building which was erected by private persons for the use of men who would propagate another set of doctrines. Mr. Stannard and his friends can build another chapel and, if they please, can so frame the trust-deed that not only shall Mr. Stannard be perfectly free, but that thirty years hence the building may be used by a Comtist, a Buddhist, or a Mormon. Mr. Stannard will be just as truly a Congregational

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minister in the new building as he was in the old building. I say "just as truly," for it is no part of my present business to determine whether his alleged divergencies from Congregational traditions are sufficiently grave to render it improper to describe him as a Congregationalist. The Vice-Chancellor took care to make it clear that he had no authority to determine what doctrines might be taught by a Congregational minister; but it has been the special business of Lord Penzance, since he was removed from the Divorce Court, to determine what ritual may be celebrated by an English clergyman.

The *Times*, in the article I have quoted, says—

The majority of the trustees wished the Rev. Mr. Stannard to resign or retire, inasmuch as he had ceased to conform to the creed of *the Church*. He resisted on the ground that he had not exceeded the bounds of lawful freedom, and that he had the approbation of the bulk of his congregation; and a *Vice-Chancellor had to be called in to settle the difference*.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing could be more inaccurate. The Vice-Chancellor was not called in to decide whether Mr. Stannard conformed to the creed of the Church or whether he had kept within the bounds of lawful freedom. There is every reason to believe that when the action was raised, the creed of Mr. Stannard was perfectly satisfactory to the great majority of the Church—that is, of the society of communicants meeting in Ramsden Street. What the Church believed, and whether Mr. Stannard conformed to

\* The *Times*, February 2, 1881.

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that belief, were not the subjects in dispute. The whole question was about the theological articles in a trust-deed which settled the uses to be made of a particular building erected by private funds, and about Mr. Stannard's acceptance or rejection of these articles. In the case of the ritualistic clergymen, the question turned on the law of the Church itself—the way in which Mr. Pelham Dale and Mr. Enraght are required by the Crown and Parliament to celebrate their worship. Their position is a very difficult one. With their views of the Episcopal Church, which in this country permits supreme authority in matters of faith, ritual, and discipline to be exerted by the civil power, they cannot separate from the Church without being guilty of schism; they cannot remain in it without being bound by their consciences to break the law.

The Ramsden Street suit may be of some service to Nonconformists if it compels them to reconsider their recent customs in relation to trust-deeds. That men have a right to control and limit the uses of property for ten thousand years after their death—if the world should last so long—is a very curious yet very common hallucination. What greater right has one generation than another to declare how anything that the world contains shall be used to the end of time? The world belongs to the living, not to the dead. The men who lived three hundred years ago, two hundred years ago, a hundred years ago, had no more exclusive property in the world than their



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predecessors; they had no more exclusive property in it than their posterity.

If some devout old heathen living in Saxon times had built a temple to Woden, and settled the rents of two hundred acres of land to maintain perpetual worship in honour of his idol, does any sane person imagine that his settlement would receive or deserve the slightest respect? We should say that he had had his turn, but that ours had come now. While he was alive he could build a temple for any god that he chose to serve, and use the rents of his estate to maintain the priests; but the piece of land on which the temple was built, and the estate which was settled to maintain the worship, could not belong to him after he was dead. And when the land ceased to belong to him his right to control it ceased. For the encouragement of foundations intended to promote the public benefit, it is expedient to empower men to determine for a brief period how property shall be used which they devote to public purposes; but an indefinite power of settlement for public uses is as inexpedient as an indefinite power of settlement for private uses; it is as inconsistent with the rights of every fresh generation; it should never be conceded. The powers granted to the Education Commissioners and the Charity Commissioners to revise and modify trusts are in harmony with justice and the true interests of the nation. For men to claim the right to determine that a building which they erect for religious purposes should be used to the end of time for the

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maintenance of a particular system of theology, is to claim that one generation has the right to bar the free use of the world by the generations which follow it.

But further: doctrinal schedules to trust-deeds are inconsistent with the traditions of the best times of Congregationalism, and with one of the fundamental principles of the Congregational polity. A very competent authority on the historical question has stated that—

As far as published accounts go, the Trust-deeds of the Independent chapels built within the twenty years following the passing of the Toleration Act, did not contain any provisions as to the doctrines to be preached in them; and what is more singular, the Trinitarian seceders from Presbyterian congregations were not more precise and careful with reference to the chapels which they founded.<sup>1</sup>

The Church of which I am minister was founded in the middle of the last century by a Trinitarian secession from a congregation which had elected an Arian minister; but the seceders made no attempt to secure by a doctrinal schedule the permanent use of their new building for Trinitarian purposes. Mr. James thinks this “singular.” It seems to me that any other course would have been an apostasy from the principles and traditions of Independency. It was not till the end of the last century and the beginning of this, when the traditions of Independency had been almost submerged under the flood of the Evangelical

<sup>1</sup> T. S. James, “History of the Litigation and Legislation respecting Presbyterian Chapels and Charities,” p. 62.

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Revival, that doctrinal schedules began to be common. The "Revival" was eager to save individual men. It knew little or nothing about the dignity, the power, the sacredness of the Church.

The Congregational theory is that the living Church of every generation is in union with the living Christ, the Lord and Teacher of men; is the organ of His thought and the instrument of His will; that it receives the illumination of His Spirit; that it is the perpetual trustee and defender of His truth. A doctrinal trust-deed is an attempt to protect by the guarantee of secular law that truth which, according to Congregationalism, is entrusted to the keeping of the Christian Church.

Theological definitions and a doctrinal schedule must consist of theological definitions—are the product of the human intellect exercising its faculties on the contents of Holy Scripture and of the spiritual life of the Church. These definitions vary from age to age, even when the truths which they are intended to express remain the same; and it is impossible to review the history of Christendom without seeing that in different Churches and in different centuries devout and saintly men have greatly differed in the measures of their knowledge of the mind of Christ. Provinces of truth which were the home of Christian thought in one century have been deserted in the next. Regions almost unknown in one age, except to adventurous travellers, have been occupied and settled by whole communities in another. There is no reason for us to

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suppose that we have completely mastered the whole territory of Divine laws and facts accessible to the Church through Christ. There is no reason for us to suppose that our definitions of the truth which we have mastered are so perfect that they will be tolerable to Christian men a hundred years hence. We know Christ: His righteousness, power, and love have been revealed to us; but the accuracy of our intellectual account of Him is not guaranteed by the clearness of our spiritual vision and the depth and fulness of our spiritual joy.

The Church is not infallible; but, if loyal to Christ, its knowledge of Him will become richer and deeper from century to century; and it is the theory of Congregationalism that the Church should be left absolutely free to listen to Christ's teaching and to accept it. With fresh discoveries of the Divine thought, the mere scientific definitions of truths long known to the Church may require modification.

In the preface to the well-known Declaration of Faith and Order, agreed upon by about two hundred delegates at the Savoy in 1658, there is a passage which shows the true spirit of the Congregationalists of the Commonwealth—of Owen, Caryl, Greenhill, Nye, Bridge; all of whom were on the committee which drew up the document—

Confessions when made by a company of professors of Christianity jointly meeting to that end—the most genuine and natural use of such is, that under the same form of words they express the substance of the same common salvation, or unity of their faith, whereby speaking the same things they

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show themselves “perfectly joined in the same mind and in the same judgment.” *And accordingly such a transaction is to be looked upon but as a meet or fit medium or means whereby to express that their “common faith and salvation”; and no way to be made use of as an imposition upon any. Whatever is of force or constraint in matters of this nature, causeth them to degenerate from the name and nature of Confessions; and turns them, from being Confessions of Faith, into exactions and impositions of Faith.*<sup>1</sup>

The imposition of a doctrinal system as a condition of Church communion or ministerial office is, therefore, altogether abhorrent to the genius of Congregationalism; and even a doctrinal schedule limiting the use of a particular building to those who could accept the recited articles would have seemed to our ecclesiastical ancestors a presumptuous and perilous attempt to limit the prerogatives of the living Church. Or rather, they would have regarded it as a disloyal, and even profane, attempt to prevent the Church from listening to the voice of Christ.

It may be urged, no doubt, that when a Church has come to the conclusion that the doctrines imposed upon its minister by the provisions of a trust-deed are inconsistent with the mind of Christ, it can easily relinquish the use of the building in which it has been accustomed to meet and erect another. But in many cases this would involve grave injustice; for the Church which is called to this duty may have spent very much more in enlarging and improving the building than was spent in its original erection by

<sup>1</sup> In “Historical Memorials relating to the Independents or Congregationalists.” By Benjamin Hanbury: vol. iii. p. 517.

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those who drew up the trust-deed. In many cases the erection of a new building would involve the gravest waste and inconvenience; for the existing place of worship may be enough to meet the necessities of the population, and to build another would be to incur a useless expenditure. In all cases there will be pain in forsaking the familiar walls consecrated by the pathetic and sacred associations which make the rudest building within which a Church has been accustomed to meet, dear to its members. I contend that those who erect buildings for worship have no right to inflict these evils upon their children or their children's children. And any Church which accepts the use of a building erected by persons without faith in the Living Presence of Christ with His People, or who suppose that this presence is not so sure a guarantee that the Church will continue loyal to the truth as they can construct for themselves in a doctrinal schedule to a trust-deed, must not be surprised if, sooner or later, it gets into trouble.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The question of Doctrinal Trusts for charities, colleges, and other institutions which are without the guarantee of a church, would have to be discussed on other grounds than those relied upon in this essay.

## VI

MR. MATTHEW ARNOLD AND THE  
NONCONFORMISTS<sup>1</sup>

MR. ARNOLD has recently shown so much solicitude for the moral and spiritual welfare of the Nonconformists, that I trust he will not think it a sign of sectarian presumption and conceit if I express the regret that he has not written a book for our exclusive benefit. As he told us several months ago, he is no enemy of ours, though at times he rebukes us sharply; what he aims at is our "perfection." But if his estimate of us is just, the errors into which we have fallen are so fatal, our faults are so grave, and our separation from the National Church is so serious an obstacle to the free development of our Christian thought and life, that he can hardly render us the service on which he has set his heart, unless he devotes himself to his kindly task a little more seriously. In his essay on "St

<sup>1</sup> *The Contemporary Review*, July, 1870.

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Paul and Protestantism,"<sup>1</sup> though he intended to address himself specially to the Puritans, he has raised innumerable questions in which Puritans have no separate interest. Any one of them would have been large enough for a volume—for half a dozen volumes. He reconstructs the theology of St. Paul; presents us with a perfectly original and very surprising account of the ultimate principle which constitutes the foundation of the English Church; speculates on the science of theological method, and on the relations between theology and philosophy; and, in the course of a very few paragraphs, lands us in the very melancholy conclusion that the creeds and formularies of all Churches—the Nicene Creed, and the Westminster Confession, the decrees of the Council of Trent, and the Thirty-nine Articles—are all equally worthless, as being the results of premature attempts to solve problems which are likely to remain insoluble for several centuries to come. It is disheartening to a Nonconformist to find his own small affairs overshadowed and suppressed by such vast discussions as these.

Nor is it easy to separate what Mr. Arnold has said about English Dissent from those bold speculations of his which affect the dogmatic creed of all Christendom. This, he will probably reply, is not his fault. It is, no doubt, impossible to touch any

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul and Protestantism; with an Introduction on Puritanism and the Church of England," by Matthew Arnold, 1870. The references throughout are to the First Edition,



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question relating to the spiritual life of a Church or even of an individual man, without assuming or appealing to principles which determine our whole conception of the history and destiny of our race, and of its relations to truth and to God. So far as I can, however, I intend to limit myself in this paper to what Mr. Arnold has said about Puritanism and Nonconformity.

Mr. Arnold tells us that his one qualification for his attempt to reconstruct the theology of St. Paul, and so to rescue the great Apostle from the hands of the Puritans, is that belief of his "so much contested by our countrymen, of the primary needfulness of seeing things as they really are, and of the greater importance of ideas than of the machinery which exists for them."<sup>1</sup> He would probably say that this is his chief qualification for criticising the history, traditions, policy, creed, and institutions of the Nonconformists. Like most other Englishmen, we are in danger, he thinks, of following staunchly, but mechanically, certain stock notions and habits, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly, which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically.<sup>2</sup> He wishes to assist us to turn "a stream of fresh and free thought" upon our theory of religious establishments, which appears to him to have become a mere fetish, and upon our theological dogmas, to which we seem to be holding

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul and Protestantism," p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 70.

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with a blind and superstitious fidelity. For himself he is resolved to look at the Nonconformist Churches—their life, their practices, their creed—with his own eyes, to see them “as they really are”; and he has frankly told the world what he has discovered.

To Mr. Arnold the Evangelical Nonconformists are the true heirs and representatives of the Puritans. The Nonconformist Churches are the Puritan Churches. He discusses the grounds on which our theological and ecclesiastical ancestors separated from the National Church, and the grounds on which the separation is perpetuated. The theory which he has formed of us and of our history is definite and intelligible. I will give it as far as I can in his own felicitous language. He believes that the main title on which Puritan Churches rest their right of existing is the aim of setting forth purely and integrally the “three notable tenets of predestination, original sin, and justification.”<sup>1</sup>

“With historic Churches, like those of England or Rome, it is otherwise; these doctrines may be in them, may be a part of their traditions, their theological stock; but certainly no one will say that either of these Churches was made for the express purpose of upholding these three theological doctrines, jointly or severally.”<sup>2</sup> But it was precisely for the sake of these dogmas that the Puritan Churches were founded; and now that the dogmas—at least in the form in which the Puritan theologians stated them—

<sup>1</sup> “St. Paul and Protestantism,” p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

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are no longer credible, "Protestant Dissent has to execute an entire change of front and to present us with a new reason for existing."<sup>1</sup> It is admitted that the Evangelical party in the Church of England holds the same scheme of doctrine as the Puritans; "but the Evangelicals have not added to the first error of holding this unsound body of opinions, the second error of separating for them."<sup>2</sup> Nonconformist Churches are built on dogma; and to build on dogma is to build on sand. The Church exists for the culture of perfection, and rests on "the foundation of God, which standeth sure, having this seal—*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*"

This is Mr. Arnold's account of Nonconformists. That to most Nonconformists it has all the novelty of a discovery, that we never had the slightest suspicion that we and our Churches exist simply for the purpose of upholding the doctrines of predestination, original sin, and justification by faith, will be to him no proof that his theory is unsound. He thinks that he understands us better than we understand ourselves, and will ask us for some account of ourselves and of our ecclesiastical position which shall be truer than his own to history and fact. Claiming no authority to speak for any one but myself, I will attempt to satisfy him. I think it can be shown that he has altogether missed the true "idea" of Puritanism; that he has misread our history;

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul and Protestantism," Preface, p. xv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vi.

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and that his capital charge against us—that of separating for opinions—rests either upon a misapprehension of facts, or upon a principle destructive of all morality.

I shall have something to say further on about Mr. Arnold's new explanation of the controversy between Puritanism and the Church of England—Mr. Arnold's history is, if anything, more original than his philosophy—but it may be well to consider at starting the "error" by which we are discriminated from the Evangelicals of the English Church. They remain in the Establishment; this is their virtue. We have left it; this is our offence. But our only reason for leaving it was that we could not remain in it honestly. Are we to be blamed for this? There were Nonconformists before the Act of Uniformity, but modern Nonconformity dates from St. Bartholomew's day, 1662. It is notorious that the "Two Thousand" did not secede from the National Establishment; they were "ejected" from it. Their Calvinism was not more rigid than that of the men who drew up the Articles. Nor were they very zealous for any particular form of ecclesiastical polity. The majority of them had been Presbyterians; they were willing to accept Episcopalianism; most of them soon became, in practice if not in theory, Independents. They had no desire, as Mr. Arnold suggests, to invent new organizations for enforcing more purely and thoroughly any schemes of theological doctrine. What they wanted was to remain where they were, and to continue to minister to the

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congregations they loved; but they were resolved not to lie either to man or God, and it was this resolution which forced them to a separation. They did not believe that every baptized child is regenerated of the Holy Ghost, and therefore they refused to say over every child they baptized, "We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for Thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into Thy Holy Church." They interpreted the service for the Visitation of the Sick as compelling them to address to the impenitent as well as the penitent, the words, "I absolve thee from all thy sins; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; they refused to say such words as these to men whose sins, as they feared, God had not pardoned; and they doubted whether such authority as these words imply had been entrusted by Christ to His ministers. They believed that there are some men who at death pass into outer darkness, and suffer eternal destruction; and when they were asked to say at the mouth of every grave, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed," they answered that it was impossible for them to say this honestly. Nor could they truthfully declare "their unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the Book intituled of Common Prayer."

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The modern Evangelicals, who are favourably contrasted by Mr. Arnold with the Nonconformists, hold that same body of opinions—sound or unsound—which seemed to the ejected, and which seems to us, inconsistent with the services of the Prayer-book. In this, the “first error,” of which we are guilty, they have their full share; in the “second error,” of refusing to use the services, we stand alone. I do not mean to censure Evangelicals for using the formularies which appear to us inconsistent with the creed which they and we hold in common. I am quite sure that vast numbers of them have discovered some subtle method, satisfactory to themselves, of reconciling their formularies and their faith. But are our fathers to be very severely blamed for not being equally subtle for not seeing how they could honestly thank God for the spiritual regeneration of all baptized infants, though they believed that all baptized infants were not spiritually regenerate? Was it a crime to suffer the loss of home and income, and honourable place and great opportunities for doing the work for which they most cared, rather than thank God for the eternal salvation of people who, as they feared, might be eternally lost? It seems to me that the principle which, Mr. Arnold tells us, lies at the foundation of the National Church, *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*, lies at the foundation of Nonconformity.

Mr. Arnold admits that separation from a Church

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“on plain points of morals” is right and reasonable, “for these involve the very essence of the Christian Gospel”;<sup>1</sup> but he does not appear to think that it would be immoral for Dr. Gunning to celebrate the service of the Mass, or for Mr. Spurgeon to baptize infants, or for Mr. Martineau to profess his unfeigned assent and consent to the Athanasian Creed. For the true elucidation and final solution of questions about the Real Presence, about Baptism, about the Trinity, he argues that “time and favourable developing conditions are necessary,”<sup>2</sup> and no such conditions have as yet been fulfilled since the apostolic age. The controversy between the Nominalists and the Realists has not yet been determined; and since that controversy has very much to do with the doctrine of Transubstantiation, the Pope is precipitate in insisting on the adoration of the Host. But if Dr. Cumming, with all his present convictions, had happened to have been born in the Church of Rome, he would be just as precipitate in refusing to adore; it would be his duty to remain in the Church, and so to leave “the way least closed to the admission of true developments of speculative thought when the time is come for them”;<sup>3</sup> for the Church does not rest on opinions, and “the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*”

Mr. Spurgeon may believe that it is a lie to say

<sup>1</sup> “St. Paul and Protestantism,” p 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

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that every baptized infant is regenerate. He may believe that to baptize infants at all is contrary to the will of Christ, and to the practice of the apostles; but "the happy moment" for solving these questions has not yet arrived; the science of historical criticism is as yet hardly constituted, and none of us can be quite sure what the will of Christ was on such a matter as this, or about any of the practices of the apostolic Church. Mr. Spurgeon's opinions, therefore, are no "valid reason for breaking unity," he ought to use the baptismal service as it stands, and to remember that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*"

The orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture; it is a development of what is revealed concerning God in our sacred books; it is, moreover, a philosophical development, and therefore "of a kind which the Church has never yet had the conditions for making adequately." This may seem to Mr. Martineau a very valid reason for not accepting Athanasianism; but to Mr. Arnold it seems a reason for not rejecting Athanasianism, and he would, therefore, if I understand him aright, recommend Mr. Martineau not to remain "shut up in sectarian ideas" of his own, but to return to the National Church, join in the worship of Christ as God because practice, not doctrine, is of the essence of the Gospel, and "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal.—*Let every*



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*one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."*

It is only just to Mr. Arnold to say that he has expressly told us that "the object of this essay is not religious edification."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps Mr. Arnold might reply that all that he means by his theory of development is, that as yet no man can be quite sure that he has discovered the very truth of God, and that therefore Churches should be very careful of imposing creeds and enforcing the use of doctrinal formularies. But if this is his meaning, his homily should be addressed to the Church of England, not to the Nonconformists. Its "first error" was in holding with presumptuous confidence the absolute truth of the dogmas contained in its services; its "second error" was in resolving that the Puritans should either use the services or leave the Church.

But may not Mr. Arnold be right after all in his main thesis? Though the Nonconformists came out of the Church in 1662 simply because they could not remain there and yet remain on "*the foundation of God, which standeth sure, having this seal—Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity,*" the "ejectment" may have only liberated an impulse which the wholesome influence and discipline of the Establishment had repressed. From the first, the true instinct of Puritanism may have been to separate for the sake of the "three notable

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul and Protestantism," p. 134.

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tenets." Its characteristic spirit so it may be argued could find adequate expression only in Churches resting on a basis of dogma, instead of a basis of Christian morals. That the Puritans were forced into Nonconformity by the rigid imposition of formularies which they could not use honestly, was an accident; for the free development of Puritanism, separate Churches, founded not for the culture of Christian perfection, but for the maintainance of the doctrines of election, original sin, and justification by faith, were a necessity. To Mr. Arnold, at least, it appears that modern Nonconformity can give no better or more rational explanation of its existence.

There is some excuse for his error; though the excuse should avail him less than any other man. Nonconformists themselves have often declared that it is their special function to maintain the true theology of the Reformation. Such statements have been sufficiently common both in popular meetings and in ecclesiastical assemblies. But if the speakers had been pressed for an explanation, very few of them would have admitted that their Churches had no surer, deeper foundation than the Westminster Confession. They never meant that their Churches were mere theological schools. Or even if some Nonconformists have honestly believed that Calvinistic dogma constitutes part, at least, of the very foundation of a Nonconformist Church, Mr. Arnold has no right to believe it on their bare authority. He is no Philistine, and he ought to maintain a

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“watchful jealousy” against the mistakes into which it is so natural for Philistines to be betrayed. Is it not our great peril—the very peril to deliver us from which he has been raised up—that we are always forgetting the difference between the mere machinery of religious life and its inner spirit and power? Should he not, therefore, have received with great suspicion any account that we may have given of ourselves? It was more likely to be wrong than right. When orators and controversialists exulted in the unswerving loyalty of the Independents and Baptists to the Calvinistic creed, ought he not to have said to himself, “Perhaps these men are wrong after all, and the true ‘idea’ of Nonconformity, and of the Puritanism from which it sprung, may be something very different from what they suppose”? Neither individual men, nor nations, nor Churches, are always distinctly conscious of the true significance and value of their position and history. “We know not” what we are, any better than “what we shall be.” It is only as the characteristic life and principles of any spiritual movement are manifested under a great variety of conditions, and in a long succession of prosperous and disastrous circumstances, that any trustworthy theory of it becomes possible.

Looking back, then, upon the last three centuries of English ecclesiastical history, what is it that constitutes the unity, originality, and power of that great movement which Mr. Arnold has tried to interpret?

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It is an historical blunder to suppose that the characteristic element of Puritanism has been any exceptional zeal for Calvinistic doctrine. Goodwin, the illustrious Arminian of the Commonwealth, was as good a Puritan every whit as John Owen. In Elizabeth's reign Calvinistic doctrine was dominant in the English Church, but the Puritans were subjected to pains and penalties. Whitgift, their chief enemy, approved the Lambeth Articles, in which the Calvinistic theology is expressed in its most offensive form. With a fine and true instinct, Mr. Arnold recognizes the old Puritan spirit in the various communities of Methodists, who have always denounced the Calvinistic dogmas as a blasphemous libel on the character of God. The Methodists are Puritans, he says, because of their excessive zeal for the doctrine of justification by faith. But this is the explanation of a mere Philistine, who mistakes "machinery" for "ideas"; and it is an explanation with which a moderately enlightened Philistine would not be quite satisfied. For surely the antagonism between Methodism and Calvinism on such capital doctrines as predestination, a limited atonement, and the perseverance of the saints, more than annuls what at first sight appears to be a merely accidental agreement on the doctrine of justification by faith.

Puritanism can hardly have its roots in any theological creed, for there have been Arminian Puritans and Calvinistic Puritans; the Puritans have been persecuted by Arminian Conformists, and they have

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been persecuted by Calvinistic Conformists; and on the controversy between Arminians and Calvinists, the living representatives of Puritanism are widely divided. The only doctrine not included in the Confessions of all the great Churches of Christendom in which the Puritans seem to have agreed—and they have not been perfectly agreed in that—is the doctrine of justification by faith.

I believe that the ultimate secret of Puritanism is to be found in the intensity and vividness with which it has apprehended the immediate relationship of the regenerate soul to God. To the ideal Puritan, God is “nigh at hand.” He has seen God, and is wholly possessed with a sense of the Divine greatness, holiness, and love. For him old things have already passed away, and all things have become new. His salvation is not remote; he is already reconciled to God, and his citizenship is in heaven. He is akin to God through a supernatural birth, and is a partaker of the Divine nature. All interference between himself and God, he resents. He can speak to God face to face.

This consciousness of the intimacy of the soul’s present relationship to God underlies the Calvinistic Puritanism which destroyed the Church of England in the seventeenth century, and the Arminian Puritanism which was expelled from it in the eighteenth. It is this which explains that zeal for the Calvinistic discipline which divided so sharply the Elizabethan Puritans from the Conformists, though both were equally zealous for Calvinistic doctrine; and it is this

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which is the spiritual root of Independency. The true function of Puritanism in the religious life of this country has not been to set forth "certain Protestant doctrines"; but to assert and vindicate the reality, the greatness, the completeness of the redemption that is in Christ, and the nearness of God to the soul of man.

It is not surprising that Mr. Arnold should have misinterpreted English Puritanism, for he has failed to apprehend the true spirit and scope of a still greater movement. He appears to suppose that the only ground and justification of what it is becoming fashionable to describe as the Protestant schism of the sixteenth century, lay in the moral corruptions of the Church of Rome. Separation for opinions on points of discipline and dogma would in his judgment have been neither right nor reasonable. "The sale of indulgences, if deliberately instituted and persisted in by the main body of the Church, afforded a valid reason for breaking unity; the doctrine of purgatory, or the Real Presence, did not."<sup>1</sup> But though Luther's moral indignation at the sale of indulgences was the accidental cause of his ultimate breach with Rome, the supreme force of Protestantism was spiritual, not ethical. For centuries the religious life of Christendom had been stifled and crushed. A vast mechanical system of "means of grace" came between the soul and the Fountain of mercy, life, and blessedness. Of immediate access to God men were taught to despair.

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul and Protestantism," p. 47.

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Between Him and them there were sacraments, priests, and a constantly increasing crowd of interceding saints. The free grace of God had been so obscured by the portentous dogmas which the Church had developed from the simpler faith of earlier times, that salvation could never be anything more than a probability. The penitent could never be sure that he had finally done with his sin. Penances in this world were to be followed by purgatory in the next. Nor was it possible to learn the thought and will of God at first-hand. It was not to the individual soul that God spoke; no man could hear the Divine voice for himself. The teaching of Christ and the supernatural illumination of the Holy Ghost, belonged to "the Church," and men were told to listen not to God, but to councils and popes.

Luther broke through all this. He declared that God was near enough to man to be spoken to without the intervention of saint or priest. Sacraments had their significance and worth; but the grace of God came directly into the soul of man. Men were not to depend on external rites for the pardon of sins and for the nourishment and strength of the supernatural life. From God's own lips every man who desired absolution might have it, and have it at once. Between the penitent child and his Father no elder brother, be he saint or angel, can be permitted to come. No intercession is needed to move the Father's heart to mercy—no good work to placate

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His anger. Let the prodigal who has wasted his substance in riotous living come home, and while he is yet afar off the Father will see him, and go out to meet him, and at once the best robe shall be put upon him, and there shall be a ring for his finger and shoes for his feet, and the house shall be filled with music and dancing. Do you want salvation? this was the Gospel which Luther preached to Europe,—you may learn from God Himself how you are to be saved. The parables of Christ, and the Epistles of St. Paul, and the supernatural teaching of the Holy Ghost are within every man's reach. *God is nigh at hand, and not afar off.* Every man may speak to God for himself. God's mercy is so large and free, that all He asks for from those who desire to be saved is that they should have the courage and faith to leave themselves in His hands.

The doctrine of justification by faith, as Luther preached it, was no mere dogma. It was the assertion of a most vital spiritual fact. To receive it was to pass out of bondage into freedom, and out of darkness into light. Its power lay in this, that it represented God as appealing directly to every human heart, and appealing to it for absolute trust. At a stroke it swept away priests, and popes, and councils, and saints, and penances, and purgatory, and left the soul alone with God. The terms in which the doctrine was defined may be very open to criticism. The human analogies by which it was illustrated may be very imperfect. The theological



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method of those days, common to the Reformers and to the Romanists, may have led theologians to draw out from the doctrine technical inferences which the moral sense vehemently rejects, and which the spirit pronounces absolutely unreal. But the world knew what Luther and the Reformers meant; Rome knew what they meant; and the real controversy was not about the form in which the fact was to be stated, but about the fact itself. I am very willing to leave Luther's "machinery" to Mr. Arnold's criticism, if he thinks it worth his while to criticise it; but Luther's "idea" seems to me to have been even a more valid ground of separation from Rome, when Rome rejected it, than Luther's moral wrath at the sale of indulgences. To make it possible once more for the human soul to stand face to face with God was a work worth doing at any cost. It is the very greatest work that any religious reformer can attempt. To accomplish it is indeed the true aim of every religious reformation.

When the Reformers began to construct a scientific expression of the vital spiritual truths which had been committed to their trust, it was almost inevitable that they should revert to the doctrines of Augustine. The dogmatic system which appeared to them to obscure the vision of God, was but another form of Pelagianism. The spirit of Pelagianism, as well as its creed, had taken possession of the Church. The work of the great African doctor had to be done over again. Between themselves and him, the

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Reformers felt that there was the most perfect spiritual sympathy. His inspiration was essentially the same as their own. The mystical theology might have afforded a still more perfect expression than Augustinianism of the transcendent facts which they desired to vindicate; and a few of the less conspicuous Reformers became Mystics; but mysticism does not take kindly to the rigid definitions and the severe logical method which the scholastic training and habits of the Reformers compelled them to introduce into their theological system. The Augustinian theory was their only choice; and it was no slight controversial advantage for them to be able to appeal to the authority of one of the most illustrious of the fathers.

The Puritans strove hard, according to the light which was in them, to complete the work of the Reformation. They accepted the Calvinistic theology, and appear to have found in it a complete and satisfactory interpretation of the most appalling and the most glorious experiences and discoveries of the spiritual life. To many of us, in these clays, Calvinism may be incredible. It seems very easy to demonstrate that its theory of moral inability annihilates moral obligation; that its dogma of imputed righteousness renders the solemnities of the final Judgment an unmeaning pageant; that its confident assertion of the perseverance of the saints must take the edge off the most urgent exhortations contained in the New Testament to spiritual

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vigilance and the repression of the lusts of the flesh; that its eternal decrees of election and reprobation must paralyze all human energy by reducing human effort to absolute insignificance; and that its unqualified and daring representations of the Divine sovereignty, and its reference of all good and evil to the Divine will, are destructive of the moral character of God, and render it irrational and impossible to claim for Him the love, and trust, and reverence of the human heart on the ground of His moral perfections. Calvinism so most of us are accustomed to think cuts away the roots both of morality and religion. And yet the Calvinistic Puritans, with their dogma of moral inability, were stern and vehement in their denunciation of sin; with their doctrine of imputed righteousness and the perseverance of the saints, they wrought out their own salvation with fear and trembling; with a theory of the universe which represents the whole course of events as predetermined by the eternal counsels of God, they were men of an iron will and of inexhaustible energy; and with a conception of God which surrounds His moral character with impenetrable mystery and a darkness that might be felt, they were not only filled with awe when they confessed His majesty and greatness, but they loved Him with a passionate affection.

The paradox is not inexplicable. Calvinism may be approached from two precisely opposite points. It is the theological form of the philosophy of

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necessity. Let a man come to the conclusion that the will is determined by the forces which act upon it, and that every volition is the result of the sum of the motives which preceded it, and the logical result of his theory will be the denial of the reality of moral distinctions and a blind surrender of human destiny to the irresistible laws by which its development is controlled. If he adopts any form of Christian theology, he will call these laws the Divine decrees, and will imagine that he is a Calvinist. But the Puritans did not arrive at the Calvinistic theology through the philosophy of necessity. They began, not with Man but with God. Their philosophy was an accident; they learnt it from others; but their theology was their own. With their clear and immediate vision of God, their own nature and the nature of every man appeared to them altogether corrupt, a thing to be despised, and loathed, and cursed. Remembering their own unregenerate days, when their "carnal mind" was "enmity against God," the very virtues and good works of the unregenerate seemed to them deserving of no praise; "yea rather," they said, "for that they are not done as God hath commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin." That a nature so infected with evil could have come in its present condition immediately from the hands of God they did not believe, and they explained "the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam" by ascribing

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it to Adam's sin. Through that offence "man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and therefore in every person born into this world it [the infection of our nature—Original Sin] deserveth God's wrath and damnation." To the philosophy of necessity the utter inability of man to escape from the law of his nature is a reason for denying human responsibility; but to Calvinism, filled with the vision of God, man's inability to keep God's commandments is the supreme crime. The moral instincts, quickened into intense activity by the immediate presence of the personal God, refuse to be suppressed for the sake of preserving the coherence of a theological system. They insist on asserting human responsibility and guilt. The logical faculty, working under the control of a method in which moral ideas can find no legitimate place, is forced to yield, and the result is hideous confusion.

It is a common saying that all men are Calvinists when they pray. In the presence of God the regenerate soul claims nothing for itself. His infinite mercy pardoned its sin. Its perverse reluctance to receive salvation was overborne by His grace. The supernatural life is His free gift. It confidently relies on His compassions which fail not and His mercy which endureth for ever, to preserve it from apostasy. Calvinism, with its noble incapacity to escape from the glory of the Divine presence, endeavoured to translate

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these intuitions of the soul into the language and forms of a mechanical philosophy. The doctrines of election, of irresistible grace, and of the perseverance of the saints, are but the best logical expressions it could find for the deepest truth of all philosophy and of all religion. Our highest life is a life in God. It is not we who live, but God that "liveth in us." Some day we may reach that "happy moment" in the intellectual history of the human race in which all the conditions will be fulfilled for the adequate scientific expression of this truth. But it is the great merit of Calvinism that however ignominiously it may have failed in a scientific task reserved for other centuries, it strove with sublime faith and magnificent courage and energy to assert the truth itself; and in asserting it Calvinism gave a fresh inspiration to the religious life of Europe.

Mr. Arnold says that "what essentially characterizes a religious teacher, and gives him his permanent worth and vitality, is after all, just the scientific value of his teaching, its correspondence with important facts, and the light it throws upon them."<sup>1</sup> Whether this proposition is true or false depends upon what he means by it. Does "the scientific value" of any religious teaching depend upon its "machinery" or upon its "ideas," upon its intuitions of Divine and spiritual truths or upon its expression of them? The Calvinism of the Westminster Assembly, with its "machinery of covenants, conditions, bargains, and

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul and Protestantism," p. 71.

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parties—contractors,”<sup>1</sup> I was trying to make men feel and believe that God is “nigh at hand”; it succeeded in making men feel and believe it. Notwithstanding its clumsy formularies, with which alone a shallow scientific and philosophical criticism occupies itself, Calvinism brought men face to face with God Himself, taught them to find their life in Him, to trust with immovable confidence in His mercy, and to suffer gladly the loss of all things rather than wilfully break any of His commandments. The formularies were powerless to destroy the supernatural virtue of the truth which lay behind them. It was for the truth that the Puritans cared; the formularies were dear only for its sake.

I have already said that Mr. Arnold has the penetration to recognize the essential unity of Methodism and Calvinistic Puritanism, notwithstanding striking divergencies of theological opinion. In his vindication of that unity, he touches for a moment the ultimate principle of the whole Puritan movement. He says that—

The foremost place, which in the Calvinistic scheme belongs to the doctrine of predestination, belongs in the Methodist scheme to the doctrine of justification by faith. ... This doctrine, like the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, involves a whole history of God's proceedings, *and gives, also, first, and almost sole place to what God does, with disregard to what man does. It has thus an essential affinity with Calvinism.* ... The word *solifidian* points precisely to that which is common to both Calvinism and Methodism, and which has made both these

<sup>1</sup> “St. Paul and Protestantism,” p. 81.

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halves of Puritanism so popular—their *sensational side*, as it may be called, *their laying all stress on what God wondrously gives and works for us, not on what we bring or do for ourselves.*<sup>1</sup>

It is hardly accurate, I think, to say that justification by faith occupies a position in Methodist theology quite analogous to that which is occupied by predestination in the theology of Calvinism. The theological characteristic of Methodism is, perhaps, the emphasis with which it has insisted on the necessity and the instantaneousness of the new birth. But in the present discussion this question is unimportant. Mr. Arnold might, however, have given us a very different account of Puritanism had he followed the clue on which he laid his hand when he tried to discover the hidden spirit which makes the Arminian Methodist one with the Calvinistic Puritan. His essay would have taken altogether a different form had he seen clearly that the great and constant endeavour of Puritanism has been to proclaim and exalt “what God wondrously gives and works for us,” disregarding “what we bring or do for ourselves.” This would have been a spiritual, not a mechanical interpretation of the movement, and it might have led him to the conclusion that the essential and permanent element of Puritanism is not zeal for the “three notable tenets,” nor a blind attachment to any system of church order, but a vivid and intense sense of God’s nearness to the regenerate soul.

The theology of Methodism, like the theology of

<sup>1</sup> “St. Paul and Protestantism,” pp. 84, 85, 86.



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the Calvinistic Puritans, begins not with men, not with the Church, but with God. Like Calvinism, its basis is theological, not philosophical. It affirms the freedom of the will; but this is an accident, or holds at most merely a secondary position. Had Methodism commenced with the freedom of the will, it is doubtful whether it would have reached its great doctrines of the new birth, assurance, and sinless perfection. It began with God; but Wesley was happily free to accept some other conception of God's ways to man than that which had been forced upon Augustine and Calvin. Wesley's religious life had received a powerful stimulus from the mysticism of William Law and of the Moravians. The triumph of Calvinism at the Synod of Dort, early in the seventeenth century, had proved fatal to its power over Continental Protestantism, and his intercourse with Continental Protestants had very much to do with the development of his theological system. In England itself, Calvinism was sinking rapidly into decay even among the spiritual descendants of the Puritans. It was not the Anglican divines alone who had contributed to its fall. Goodwin's "Redemption Redeemed" had not been written in vain. It had become possible for a man whose vision of God was as clear and as immediate as that of any of the Puritans, to adopt an Arminian theology. But Wesley's Arminianism was penetrated and transfigured by the Puritan spirit. He can never claim enough for God. With him, as with the Puritans, God is all. He concedes that man has

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power to resist Divine grace, but only because the concession is necessary to explain why it is that the infinite love, of which he has so bright and rapturous a vision, does not rescue all men from sin and destruction. But when grace has once subdued the stubborn soul to penitence and inspired trust—for with Wesley, as with Calvin, it is God who seeks man, not man who seeks God—its triumphs are illimitable. Between the soul and God there is at once the most intimate union. It is made partaker of the Divine nature, and it is not wonderful if the sudden influx of a supernatural life floods the soul with unutterable joy. The change is so great, that for its reality to remain doubtful appeared to Wesley almost impossible. Immediate inspiration is among the prerogatives of the regenerate, and they receive the witness of the Spirit that they are the sons of God. All sin may not be expelled from the soul in the moment of regeneration, but to deny the possibility of perfect sanctification would be to dishonour the Holy Ghost. The regenerate man may, even in this world, be filled with God, and be perfectly restored to the image of God's holiness. Methodism takes little account of what man does for his own redemption. Like Calvinistic Puritanism, it has seen God, and all its hope is in Him.

That the passion of the Puritans for plainness and severe simplicity in the external forms of worship, and for "the Geneva discipline," had its deepest root in the same spiritual experiences as their theology, appears to me incontestable, NO doubt they were intolerant

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of everything that seemed to them to belong to Romanism. They dreaded altars because they dreaded the Mass. They feared that priestly vestments might perpetuate the infection of the priestly spirit. Diocesan bishops might grow into patriarchs and popes. They fought against what roused their suspicion and their hostility in the English Church, with the same weapons with which Luther and Calvin, and the English reformers, had fought against Rome. They appealed to the Scriptures. Texts were quoted with uncritical recklessness; but on neither side was there any intelligent appreciation of the value and limits of Scriptural precedents or precepts in a controversy like this. Passages from Leviticus and from the Books of Kings, and the boldest images of the Apocalypse, were tossed about in astonishing profusion and with inexhaustible energy. Whatever came to hand was good enough to fling at an opponent. Hooker appears to stand almost alone in his manner of conducting the argument.

But the struggle had a moral and spiritual meaning. It was not to be decided by texts. The policy of the Conformists was controlled by the exigencies of their position, by their solicitude to make sure of the ground which the Reformation had already won, by their sagacious estimate of the strong hold which the ancient forms still retained on the imagination and the sentiment of the great masses of the people. The spell of the ancient worship and stately organization of the Church was still unbroken. Their own hearts

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confessed its power. The practical task which they had in hand—the task of maintaining and defending Protestant doctrine, and of subduing to something like order the religious confusion and irregularities caused by the violent separation from Rome—was enough for their strength. They did not wish to provoke unnecessary difficulties, and they therefore endeavoured to avoid all unnecessary changes in the ceremonial of the Church and its government. They determined to accept and retain whatever was not flagrantly inconsistent with the Protestant faith. The Puritans were men of a different temperament. They were disposed to treat very lightly the suggestions of expediency and the common infirmities of human nature. For them, what they believed to be the Divine voice had absolute authority, and in the organization of the Church it was their great endeavour “to make reason and the will of God prevail.” Concessions to unreasoning superstition, they could not tolerate; and they believed that mere human inventions had no place in a Divine kingdom. The Church was the very palace and temple of God; He had founded it; He dwelt in it; it was treason to Him to allow any authority but His to determine the most insignificant details of its polity or worship. In the Church, the Puritan wanted to stand face to face with God. The instinct which impelled him to acknowledge God always and everywhere, his abiding conviction that between the regenerate soul and God nothing should be permitted to inter-

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fere, made him impatient of rites which appeared to him to corrupt the simplicity of spiritual worship, and of ecclesiastical authorities which could claim no direct Divine sanction. No doubt he was blindly prejudiced against the most innocent ceremonies and symbols which perpetuated the remembrance of the days of darkness. No doubt he was the victim of the Protestant habit of appealing to the letter of Scripture for the decision of all controversies. But the instinct which governed the Puritan movement for a reformation of discipline and worship, and which revealed itself, after the manner of the age, in vehement and violent hostility against diocesan episcopacy, altars, vestments, the use of the ring in marriage, and the sign of the cross in baptism, painted windows, and other legacies from the old Romish days, was a real spiritual force; and was striving, often perhaps very blindly, to translate into a visible and organic form, a great spiritual "idea."

What this "idea" was may be best understood by considering the Church government and the modes of religious worship of the Independents, among whom Mr. Arnold would probably admit that the characteristic spirit of Puritanism has received its most complete expression.

The Independents believe that a man's conscious surrender of himself to Christ is an act of transcendent significance. It is the critical moment in the history of the soul. It secures the gift of that supernatural life which the Lord Jesus Christ came

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to confer upon the human race, and as soon as this life is received a man passes into the kingdom of God. His moral habits may be faulty. His knowledge of spiritual truth may be very elementary. There may be little fervour or intensity in his spiritual affections. But the difference between himself and other men is infinite. He has received the Holy Ghost, and has become partaker of the Divine nature.

For the development and perfect realization of this life it is necessary—or if not unconditionally necessary, it is something more than expedient—that there should be free fellowship between himself and those who have received the same supernatural gift. He and they have a common life. He is one not only with God but with them. In the absence of any mechanical bonds of union, and of all external signs of mutual recognition, and of all acts of common worship, the union is real and indestructible. But it requires expression, if the spiritual life is to attain all its possibilities of vigour and joy. God is hardly less solicitous to restore us to each other than to restore us to Himself, and He has made the nobler and more gracious forms of spiritual experience and perfection almost as dependent upon the influences and gifts which reach us through our brethren as upon those which come directly from His own hand. Churches exist by virtue of this law.

The idea of a Church requires that it should be constituted of regenerate men, for the purpose of united worship and free spiritual communion. The

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true condition of membership is not profession of any human creed, or of any rule of moral discipline, but possession of supernatural life. When an Independent Church receives a man into membership, it acknowledges, therefore, his regeneration of God. It has a right to ask him for nothing beyond the evidence which ascertains the reality of this inward fact; it will imperil the realization of its "idea" if it is content with less. The right of excluding from the society is inseparable from the right of admitting into it.

A Church so constituted fulfils, according to the faith of the Independents, Christ's conception of an assembly of His disciples gathered in His name, and may therefore confidently rely on the promise that "He will be in the midst of them." No recognition or assistance from without is necessary for the validity of its ecclesiastical acts, the efficacy of its sacraments, or the acceptableness of its worship. It is enough that He, the Lord of the Church, is with His disciples, and that they have received the Holy Ghost. As no society can exist without officers, and as the supernatural gifts of the Spirit for the instruction and edification of the Church are conferred on men according to the Divine will, the Church appoints to office those who appear to be divinely qualified to fulfil the various functions and ministreries necessary to the developmen of its life. It finds such men either among its own members or among the members of kindred societies. That the right of appointing a

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man to be its spiritual teacher should vest in a patron, and be a marketable commodity, that it should be the privilege of any Minister of State, appears too monstrous to require discussion. The Church has the special presence of Christ and the immediate inspiration of the Spirit; the interference of any external and merely secular power is a violation of its prerogatives, to be resisted at any peril.

On the same grounds Independency refuses to acknowledge the authority of diocesan bishops and of Presbyterian synods and general assemblies. The supernatural qualifications of ministers come direct from the Holy Ghost, and may be recognized by those in whom the Holy Ghost dwells. The intervention of Episcopal ordination, or of synodical authority, as though it were necessary either to confer ministerial gifts or to secure the Church from mistakes in ministerial appointments, is rejected as being a direct or implicit denial of the immediate intercourse between the Church and Christ, and of the direct action of the Spirit. Independents are in the habit of inviting the ministers and members of neighbouring Churches to be present at the ordination of a minister, but their presence is not necessary to make the ordination valid.

Churches in the same county associate for mutual counsel, and for co-operation in various good works, but the "Association" has no ecclesiastical authority. It cannot appoint or remove a minister, or interfere in the internal discipline of any of the associated



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Churches. The Congregational Union of England and Wales is equally powerless. It is an Assembly for the discussion of questions in which Congregational Churches are interested, but the utmost care has been taken to prevent it from becoming a Court of Appeal. The principle of the Independent polity is the characteristic principle of Puritanism. Independency is an attempt to give form and expression to a vivid sense of God's nearness to every regenerate soul.

It is an obvious consequence of this principle that Independents should repudiate the fancy that buildings erected for public worship have any peculiar sanctity. The revival during the last thirty years of a taste for ecclesiastical architecture has affected the style of their chapels; the old square "meeting-houses" are everywhere disappearing; their new "churches"—many of them, at least—have spires and transepts, and chancels, and apses, and windows bright with angels, and gorgeous with saints; but it is a mistake to suppose that there is any meaning in it all. There are some Independents who find a sentimental gratification in trying to make the buildings in which they worship as nearly like, as they can, the venerable churches around which cluster the solemn and pathetic associations of centuries; there are some who have an honest love and admiration for the beauty and grandeur of which Gothic is capable; and there are others who think they show their freedom from prejudice against

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the Establishment, and their brotherly kindness for Episcopalians, by copying their architecture; there are others again and these, perhaps, are the most numerous—who accept Gothic because, as yet, architects seem to want either the courage or the genius to erect a building that would be really suitable for Independent preaching and worship; there are none, so far as I know, who have renounced the old Puritan contempt for the consecration of stone and mortar.

The hymns which are found in all Nonconformist hymn-books, and which are sung at the opening of all Nonconformist chapels,—hymns in which chapels are called “temples,” and are dedicated to God, His presence being solemnly invoked, and the building presented as an offering to Himself,—are never meant to be rigidly interpreted. It is quite understood that the “machinery” of Judaism, of which the hymn writers are thankful to avail themselves, is obsolete. The true Independent conviction is as strong as ever, that God’s presence is promised, not to consecrated places, but to consecrated persons.

It is often alleged by Independents themselves that there is nothing in their ecclesiastical principles to prevent them from using a liturgy,—the liturgy of the Church of England, or a liturgy composed by themselves, or compiled from the prayers of the saints of all Churches and all ages. This is true in a certain sense. But it would be a departure from our traditions, and from the spirit of the movement from which we have sprung. It belongs to the

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“idea” of Independency that we are as near to God to-day as were any of the saints of former centuries. The Holy Ghost rests upon us and “helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

And if it is suggested that there may be a true, and deep, and inspired yearning for fellowship with God, and for all spiritual blessings, where the “gift” which is necessary for expressing the devotional life of others is not conferred, the reply is obvious; the “gift” may not be possessed by the head of every Christian household, and this may be a reason for tolerating the use of a prayer-book in the family. But to admit the possibility of its not being present in a Church to despair of its recovery if it has been lost—is a surrender of the Independent idea of the Church. “Gifts” of teaching and “gifts” of prayer and intercession appear to be necessary to a Church which claims to stand in the immediate presence of God, and to be filled with the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. That, as a rule, there will be more to appeal to refined religious sentiment in a liturgy than in free prayer that a liturgy is more likely to be more stately and impressive, is no argument to a true Independent for a change in his mode of worship. When he prays he is thinking of God and speaking to God. His desire is to be absorbed in that high intercourse. He regards with jealousy and distrust whatever would invest worship with any charm for

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those elements of our nature which are not purely spiritual. To care for what men may think of the form in which the soul is expressing its reverence for the majesty and holiness of God, and imploring His mercy, appears an indignity to God Himself. To try to give delight to a cultivated taste while he ought to be struggling for deliverance from sin and eternal destruction, would destroy the simplicity and energy of the supreme act of the soul. It is no concern of his whether men who are not as intent as himself upon glory, honour, and immortality are charmed or repelled.

I am not vindicating the traditional severity and plainness of the religious services of the Independents—severity and plainness which are rapidly disappearing—but trying to explain how it was that they rejected the noble liturgy which had been enriched by the penitence, the trust, the sorrow, and the gladness of the saints of many ages and many lands. They were sure that the Spirit who had dwelt in the great doctors and martyrs of the Church, dwelt in themselves. And if they were unable to confess their sin, invoke the Divine grace, and give thanks for the Divine goodness in forms of devotion which even the unregenerate might admire for their solemnity and beauty, this was a matter which Puritans and Independents regarded with perfect indifference.

Those who charge Puritanism with caring more for the “machinery” of the religious life than for the “ideas,” misunderstand and misrepresent it. It

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rejected the theology of Rome for Calvinism, because in Calvinism it found a truer and a fuller expression of its great discovery, that the strength and glory of man come from the immediate inspiration of God. It accepted the Arminianism of John Wesley, because Wesleyan Arminianism is a vindication, under other forms, of the same vital spiritual truth. It was restless under the restraints of Episcopacy, and the rites and ceremonies which Episcopacy had inherited from the Mediaeval Church, because they seemed to interfere with the direct access of God to the soul. If it has found its highest ecclesiastical expression in the polity of the Independents, and if, disregarding all the suggestions of restheticism and religious "sentiment," it has created among us what may be an unreasonable preference for extreme simplicity and bareness in the circumstances of public worship, its justification is to be found in this,—that in the Independent polity there is less of mere "machinery" than in any other form of Church government—the Church stands almost unclothed in the presence of God,—and in its services the soul is left to the solitary aid of the Spirit, and is unsustained in its acts of prayer, of thanksgiving, and of adoration by the resources of Art, or by the more legitimate stimulus which it might derive from the devotion and genius of the saints of other generations.

To investigate the validity of Mr. Arnold's statement, that the Puritans were guilty of attempting to narrow the doctrinal freedom of the English Church,

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an attempt which the Church in the spirit of charity resisted, would require more space than I can command in this essay. "Everybody knows," he says, "how far Nonconformity is due to the Church of England's rigour in imposing an explicit declaration of adherence to her formularies. But only a few, who have searched out the matter, know how far Nonconformity is due, also, to the Church of England's invincible reluctance to narrow her large and loose formularies to the strict Calvinistic sense dear to Puritanism."<sup>1</sup> That the Puritans were very zealous for Calvinistic doctrine is admitted. That they were very likely to desire that these doctrines should be maintained and defended by all those instruments of secular and ecclesiastical authority in which the members of an Episcopal and Established Church were, once at least, in danger of placing a blind reliance, may be admitted too. But some stronger proof of Mr. Arnold's charge is necessary than that which is contained in his essay.

"From the very commencement the Church, as regards doctrine, was for opening; Puritanism was for narrowing."<sup>2</sup> This is the charge. How is it sustained?

We are reminded that though the Lambeth Articles of 1595 exhibit Calvinism as potent in the Church of England itself, and among the bishops of the Church, Calvinism could not establish itself there. The Lambeth Articles were recalled and suppressed,

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul and Protestantism," p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

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and Archbishop Whitgift was threatened with the penalties of a *præmunire* for having published them. The Articles consisted of nine propositions:—

(1) God hath from eternity predestinated certain persons to life, and hath reprobated certain persons unto death.

(2) The moving or efficient cause of predestination unto life is not the foresight of faith, or of perseverance, or of good works, or of anything that is in the persons predestinated, but the alone will of God's good pleasure.

(3) The predestinate are a predetermined and certain number, which can neither be lessened nor increased.

(4) Such as are not predestinated to salvation shall inevitably be condemned on account of their sins.

(5) The true, lively, and justifying faith, and the Spirit of God justifying, is not extinguished, doth not utterly fail, doth not vanish away in the elect, either finally or totally.

(6) A true believer, that is, one endued with justifying faith, is certified, by the full assurance of faith, that his sins are forgiven, and that he shall be everlastingly saved by Christ.

(7) Saving grace is not allowed, is not imparted, is not granted to all men, by which they may be saved if they will.

(8) No man is able to come to Christ unless it be given him, and unless the Father draw him; and all men are not drawn by the Father that they may come to His Son.

(9) It is not in the will and power of every man to be saved.<sup>1</sup>

But are the Puritans to be held responsible for this terrible Calvinistic manifesto? Was it the production of a knot of sour and rigid fanatics, who, although they may have accidentally found a refuge in the Church—for which, from the commencement of its history, Mr. Arnold has claimed the credit of generous doctrinal toleration—had no sympathy with her large

<sup>1</sup> Fuller's "Church History" (edited by J. S. Brewer), vol. v. pp. 219 foll.

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and catholic spirit? The Lambeth Articles were drawn up by a Conference at Lambeth, assembled by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and consisting of the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Bangor, Tindal, the Dean of Ely, Dr. Whitaker, the Queen's Divinity Professor, and other learned men from Cambridge. They were framed in opposition to the teaching of William Barrett, a fellow of Caius College, who had preached against predestination, and who appears to have been forced to make a public recantation.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Whitgift, as is well known, hated Puritanism, and did his best to extirpate it. His severity inspired Lord Burleigh with indignation. The "oath *ex officio*," which was tendered by the Archbishop to such of the clergy as were suspected of Puritanical tendencies, was described by the Treasurer as "so curiously penned, so full of branches and circumstances, as he thought the inquisitors of Spain used not so many questions to comprehend and to trap their preys."<sup>1</sup> And yet Mr. Arnold produces a series of doctrinal Articles drawn up by Whitgift as proof that "from the very commencement, as regards doctrine, the Church was for opening, Puritanism was for narrowing."

It is true that at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, when Arminianism was beginning to find its way into the Church of England, the Puritans pro-

<sup>1</sup> Strype's "Life and Acts of Archbishop Whitgift," book iii., 157; vol. i. pp. 310, 311. Cf. Fuller, "Church History" (edited by J. S. Brewer), vol. v. pp. 107-115.



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posed that the Lambeth Articles might be inserted in the Book of Articles, and that the bishops resisted. But if any value is to be attached to the imperfect reports which we have of that Conference, the whole pressure of the Puritan demand was for relaxation in the stringency of regulations touching rites and ceremonies. The suggestion that the Thirty-nine Articles should be “explained in places obscure, and enlarged where some things are defective,” and that “the nine assertions orthodoxal ... concluded upon at Lambeth”<sup>1</sup> should be added to them, appears to have been made only to be dropped. However this may have been, the worst that can be said about the Puritan demands at the Hampton Court Conference is that the Puritans were guilty of forgetting their old grudge against Whitgift, and of accepting the scheme of their inveterate enemy for narrowing the doctrine of the Church.

The complaints of the Committee appointed by the House of Lords in 1641 amount to little more than this, that the Calvinistic doctrines which the Articles of the Church were plainly intended to maintain were being preached against by many of the clergy. Opinions were held by Laud and his party which Whitgift would have punished with the utmost severity. In condemning them the Puritan Committee showed no greater zeal for “the two cardinal doctrines of predestination and justification by faith” than their enemies had shown before them. The

<sup>1</sup> Fuller, “Church History,” vol. v. p. 275.

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alterations in the Prayer-book which the Committee suggested would not have made the formularies more Calvinistic, but less Romish.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Arnold thinks, of course, that the Church has much to blame herself for in the Act of Uniformity. "Blame she deserves, and she has had it plentifully; but what has not been enough perceived is, that really the conviction of her own moderation, openness, and latitude, as far as regards doctrine, seems to have filled her mind during her dealings with the Puritans; and that her impatience with them was in great measure impatience at seeing these so ill-appreciated

<sup>1</sup> Cardwell gives the following summary of the changes which the Committee proposed:—

They advised that the Psalms, sentences, epistles, and Gospels should be printed according to the new translation; that fewer lessons should be taken from the Apocrypha; that the words "with my body I thee worship," should be made more intelligible; that the immersion of the infant at the time of baptism should not be required in case of extremity; that some saints which they called legends should be excluded from the calendar; that the "Benedicite" should be omitted; that the words "which only workest great marvels" should be admitted; that "deadly sins" as used in the Litany, should be altered to "grievous sins;" that the words "sanctify the flood Jordan," and "in sure and certain hope of resurrection," in the two forms of baptism and burial, should be altered to "sanctify the element of water," and "knowing assuredly that the dead shall rise again." To these and other changes of a like nature they added the following more difficult concessions: "That the rubric with regard to vestments should be altered; that a rubric be added to explain that the kneeling at the communion was solely in reference to the prayer contained in the words, preserve thy body and soul; that the cross in baptism should be explained or discontinued; that the words in the form of con-

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by them.”<sup>1</sup> His account of the Savoy Conference in 1661 leaves the impression on one’s mind that in his belief the Puritans left the Church, not merely because other men insisted that they should use formularies which they could not use honestly, but also because they did not succeed in so narrowing the formularies that other men, with an equal right to be in the Church with themselves, would be unable to use them honestly; that the struggle of Baxter and his party was, therefore, not merely to obtain freedom for themselves, but also to impose bondage on others. To sustain this original representation of the transactions immediately preceding the ejection, no better proof is given than that the Puritans complained that “the Confession is very defective, not clearly expressing original sin.” This is surely very inadequate ground on which to rest so grave a charge. The doctrine or the fact which the Puritans desired to recognize in the Confession may be true or false,

firmation, declaring that infants baptized are undoubtedly saved, should be omitted; and that the form of absolution provided for the sick should be made declaratory instead of being authoritative.” These concessions, surrendering by implication some of the most solemn convictions of a great portion of the clergy, on the authority of the Church, the nature of the two sacraments, and the sanctity of the priesthood, would meet with the most strenuous opposition, and tend to increase the causes of discontent, instead of abating them. (E. Cardwell, “A History of Conferences connected with the revision of the Book of Common Prayer; from the year 1558 to the year 1690,” pp. 270–277.)

<sup>1</sup> “St. Paul and Protestantism,” p. 19.

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but it was not the characteristic tenet of a party. None of their enemies, so far as I know, denied it; it was expressed in the Articles with all the vigour and decisiveness which they could desire, and no man who signed the Articles could have objected on doctrinal grounds to Baxter's proposal to insert it in the Confession. The real nature of the proposal would have been explained had Mr. Arnold given the whole of the paragraph from the "Exceptions against the Book of Common Prayer," in which it occurs, which reads thus: "The Confession is very defective, not clearly expressing original sin, nor sufficiently enumerating actual sins, with their aggravations, but consisting only of generals; whereas *confession, being the exercise of repentance, ought to be more particular.*"<sup>1</sup> The same ground of exception is taken in a subsequent paragraph against "the whole body of the Common Prayer." The Puritans contended that "it consisteth very much of mere generals, as 'to have our prayers heard, to be kept from all evil, and from all enemies and all adversity, that we might do God's will,' without any mention of the particulars in which these generals exist."<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of the Conference, Bishop Cosins offered a paper drawn up by "some considerable person," and intended to lead to a reconciliation. In their answers to the proposals contained in this

<sup>1</sup> "The Exceptions against the Book of Common Prayer," E. Cardwell, *op. cit.*, chap. vii. p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

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Eirenicon, Baxter and his friends made this statement: "Though we find by your papers and conferences that in your own personal doctrines there is something that we take to be against the Word of God, and perceive that we understand not the doctrine of the Church in all things alike; yet we find nothing contrary to the Word of God in that which is indeed the doctrine of the Church, as it comprehendeth the matters of faith, distinct from matters of discipline, ceremonies, and modes of worship."<sup>1</sup> From this it appears that to the doctrine of the Church the Puritans made no objection. It is remarkable that in many of the trust-deeds of early Presbyterian chapels it is provided that the doctrine preached in them should be in harmony with the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England; and in the "Heads of Agreement," drawn up in 1691, as the basis of a union between the Presbyterians and Independents, it is declared to be sufficient if a Church acknowledges the Divine origin of the Scriptures, and accepts the doctrinal part of the Articles, or the Westminster or Savoy Confessions.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that those "who have searched out

<sup>1</sup> In "Baxter's Life and Times" [Reliquæ Baxterianæ], by M. Sylvester, lib. i. part ii. p. 341.

<sup>2</sup> "Heads of Agreement, assented to by the united ministers in and about London, formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational." Also reprinted in Cotton Mather's "Christi Magnalia Americana," book v. part ii., App., pp. 59-61. See also J. Stoughton, "Religion in England" [Church of the Revolution], vol. v. pp. 293, 294.

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the matter” may be able to allege more substantial evidence of the contrast between the catholic moderation of the Church and the narrowness of Puritanism than Mr. Arnold has thought it worth while to adduce; but to persons like myself, who have not made it their special business to study the unfamiliar aspects of the Puritan controversy, Mr. Arnold’s discovery appears to be very inconsistent with facts. Neither Puritans nor Conformists—this has been the general impression—could claim much credit for their generous treatment of theological adversaries.

There may seem to be better ground for Mr. Arnold’s allegation that the free development of religious thought is possible only in a National Establishment, and that the separatist Churches are by their very position rigidly bound to the theological system and formularies of their founders.

But it should never be forgotten that the Independents have from the first protested against the imposition of creeds and articles of faith, and that one of the very earliest and noblest of them declared, in words which are familiar to all English Congregationalists, the inalienable right and duty of the Church of every age to listen for itself to the Divine teaching. John Robinson, preaching in 1620 to the Independents who were about to leave Delft Haven to found the Puritan colonies of New England “charged us,” writes Winslow, “to follow him no farther than he followed Christ; and if God should reveal anything to us by any other instrument of His, to be as ready

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to receive it as ever we were to receive any truth by his ministry: for he was very confident that the *Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of His holy Word.* ... Here also he put us in mind of our Church covenant, at least that part of it whereby we promise and covenant with God and one with another to receive whatsoever light or truth shall be made known to us from His written Word; but, withal, exhorted us to take heed what we received for truth, and well to examine and compare it and weigh it with other scriptures of truth before we received it. For, saith he, it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-Christian darkness, and that full perfection of knowledge should break forth at once.”<sup>1</sup> John Robinson was not alone in his assertion of the principle of “development,” and his repudiation of all human authority that might thrust itself between the soul and the Fountain of all truth. In 1658 the ministers and delegates of the Independent Churches met at the Savoy, and drew up the well-known Savoy “Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational Churches in England.” In the preface they say, “Such a transaction” [as a Confession of faith] “is to be looked upon but as meet or fit medium or means whereby to express their ‘common faith and salva-

<sup>1</sup> In Alexander Young’s “Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth from 1602 to 1625,” p. 396. On the authenticity of Robinson’s discourse, see Robert Ashton, “The Works of John Robinson, Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers,” vol. i. Preface, pp. xlv., xlvi.

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tion,' and no way to be made use of as an imposition upon any. Whatever is of force or constraint in matters of this nature of Confessions causeth them to degenerate from the name and nature, and turns them, from being Confessions of faith, into exactions and impositions of faith."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Thomas Smith James, in his curious and learned "History of the Litigation and Legislation respecting Presbyterian Chapels and Charities," makes the following pertinent comment on this passage:—

They declare that they published and recorded in the face of Christendom, "the faith and order which they owned and practised" for the information of their fellow Christians, and not for any practical use for themselves. That such a document was necessary to defend them from the attacks of the enemies of their religious and political opinions may be learnt from the calumnies against them noticed by Mosheim and Rapin. If they had followed the example of all other bodies they would have legislated for their infant Churches under the notion of giving definiteness and permanence to their opinions; but they trusted their Churches, and the truths they held, to the blessing and protection of God, being satisfied that they were according to His will, and they disregarded the devices and safeguards which human affection and foresight could supply. It should be remembered that the declaration copied above is to be found in a synopsis of Calvinistic doctrine, published in the middle of the seventeenth century, by men on the one hand supported by the party then in power, and on the other fully convinced that the belief of great part of what they stated was necessary to salvation, and that no part of it could even be doubted without peril to the soul. The non-use of creeds by such men is a very different matter from the rejection of them by persons who hold

<sup>1</sup> In B. Hanbury's "Historical Memorials relating to the Independents," vol. iii. p. 517.



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that there are no essential and fundamental doctrines of Christianity. With the latter it is a matter of course; with the former it is a proof of the highest wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

It is also a singular fact that, so far as published accounts go, the trust-deeds of the Independent chapels founded during the twenty years following the Toleration Act—a period within which the Independents were of course very active in chapel-building—did not contain any provisions as to the doctrines to be preached in them. Mr. James thinks that this shows that the Independents “trusted to the rule of law, that the simplest form of trust for the benefit of a particular denomination is tantamount to a detailed statement of the principles and practices by which it is characterized.”<sup>2</sup> I agree with him that the absence of doctrinal provision from the trust-deeds does not prove that the Independents of those times regarded definite theological doctrine with indifference; this is contradicted by their whole history. But is not the true explanation to be found in their traditional hostility to the authoritative imposition of human creeds? I believe that they held, with John Robinson, that “the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of His holy Word.”

It was in this spirit that the men who seceded in the middle of the last century from the Presbyterian congregation in Birmingham on the election of an Arian minister, and founded the Independent Church

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Smith James, *op. cit.* pp. 30, 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63,

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which still worships in Carr's Lane, made no attempt to secure the orthodoxy of their successors by inserting any doctrinal safeguards in the trust-deed of their new "meeting-house." For the maintenance of what they believed to be the truth of the Gospel, the instincts and traditions of the Independents have led them to rely not on parchments and courts of equity, but on the promise of Christ that the Spirit of Truth should abide in the Church for ever. The practice which has grown up among us, and become almost universal within the last sixty or seventy years, of appending a doctrinal schedule to the deeds of our chapels, is a departure from the habits of our fathers. It should, however, be understood that this schedule, except in cases in which the deeds have been drawn up by solicitors absolutely ignorant of our principles and usages, never touches the "Church" directly; it simply provides that the trustees are not to permit the *building* to be used for the propagation of doctrines contrary to those determined by the trust. The provision is defended on the principle that people who contribute money to create a property have a right to control to the end of time the purposes to which it shall be devoted. The principle is as bad as any principle can be; and the particular application of the principle is a violation of the fundamental idea of Independency. No true Independent will desire to impose any pecuniary penalties on a Church for the defence of his own conception of Christian doctrine. That doctrinal trust-deeds

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should have been adopted by Independent Churches is a proof, I think, that Independency has lost something of the ardour of its "first love" for perfect religious freedom.

But doctrinal trust-deeds are not of the essence of Independency. They are hardly less contrary to its spirit than authoritative Confessions and Creeds. Our principles and traditions require us to leave the theological development of our Churches unrestrained by any human tests, formularies, or articles of faith; and practically that development is absolutely free.

Can equal freedom be claimed for the religious thought of the English Church? Its Articles it might dispense with. I am not sure that their authority has not already disappeared under the influence of what I think is described in law-books as the law of obsolescence. But every religious community must have some bond of union, and in the Establishment this bond is the enforced use of the services of the Book of Common Prayer—services which have great merits, but which perpetuate the theological conceptions of centuries which have vanished away. Every fresh movement of thought in the English Church has to accommodate itself, as best it can, to the formularies. The new wine must be put into the old bottles. The new doctrine must express itself in the old technicalities. The first task of every man who believes that God has revealed to him any truth which has not already

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vindicated for itself a secure position in the Establishment, is to show how it can be made to agree with the Services; or, if he finds this difficult, he takes refuge in the Articles. Dr. Newman has to write Tract Ninety, and Dean Goode his treatise on Baptism. The sensitive spirit of Rowland Williams was stung to the quick, not so much because men thought that his free criticism of Holy Scripture was illegitimate in itself, as because they charged him with a dishonest violation of the obligations of subscription.

What real "development" of theological thought has there been in the Establishment since its separation from Rome? There has been a succession of theological movements, but they have never found their highest expression in the English Church itself. Calvinism was triumphant for two generations; but in the Church its growth was repressed, and it had to leave the Church to reveal its true spiritual genius, and to obtain a visible embodiment of its essential principle. The High Church movement in the reign of Charles I. was brought to a premature end by the Puritan revolt against the bishops and the throne; but it reappeared in 1833, and for a time seemed likely to take complete possession of the Church. What was its fate? It had no room for growth in the Establishment. It found itself "cribbed, cabin'd, and confin'd" by the Articles, and by what it regarded as the poverty of the Services. To breathe free air, the true chiefs of the Anglo-Catholic

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party, those in whom the spirit of the movement was strongest, went over to Rome. Methodism was born in the English Church, but it hardly began to feel its limbs before it discovered that they were fettered; and for the “development” of Methodism, the Methodists had to become Nonconformists. Will Mr. Arnold explain this paradox? The Church, he alleges, is eminently favourable to the free development of theological thought and religious life, and yet every fresh growth, whether of thought or life, appears to want air, and sunlight, and soil, and room to expand, so long as it remains in the Church; and just when it promises to flower, it either dies off, or has to be transplanted.

He may say that the very function of the Church is to regulate the excesses of religious movements, and by its moderation to discipline their strength to practical religious uses. But this is to remove the whole question to another ground—a ground on which a Nonconformist need not fear to continue the discussion. If, however, the plea is to be maintained that in the English National Church the principle of development has fairer play than among the Nonconformists, it requires explanation how that principle is recognized in a system which refuses to grant to any new religious forces freedom to create an organization and a ritual in which they might reveal the fulness of their strength. For perfect development every living “seed” must have its “own body.” This condition of growth the English Church

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refuses to any new ideas or impulses which may struggle to assert themselves within the limits of the communion. It cannot be said that there has been in the English Church a continuous unfolding of any great theological and spiritual ideas. Not a single movement of religious thought has had time to work itself fairly out. No sooner has any spiritual impulse begun to make itself felt than there has been a reaction against it. The history of the Church has not been a history of development, but of revolutions.

It has not been so with Nonconformity. Whatever life there has been in the Churches outside the Establishment has had freedom to grow. For good or for evil, the intellectual tendencies and spiritual forces which have revealed themselves among us have been able to assert themselves without restraint. Within a few years after the ejection, "the irresistible breath of the Zeit-Geist" began to make itself felt in a very large number of the Presbyterian Churches in England, and under the disastrous guidance of the unspiritual philosophy of Locke, they made a rapid descent, first into Arianism, and then into Socinianism. The Independents, for the most part, continued faithful to Calvinism; but since among them Calvinism was not a mere system of dogmas, but the expression of a vital faith, it gradually alleviated the severity of its doctrinal definitions, and, without losing its characteristic life, embodied itself in new intellectual forms. The

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transformation was assisted by the writings of theologians who are almost unknown to the divines of the Established Church, but who exerted in their day a very powerful influence on the thought of the Nonconformists. Pre-eminent among them are Andrew Fuller and Dr. Edward Williams. Within the present century it has gone on still more rapidly, and received a powerful impulse from the controversies which thirty or forty years ago divided the Presbyterians of the United States. Methodism developed a new type of Arminianism, and created for itself a new ecclesiastical organization—admirable, notwithstanding all its imperfections, for the union of extraordinary elasticity with the solidity and strength derived from an almost imperial centralization of authority a system equally effective for defence and for aggression.

The modern Nonconformist “idea”—I venture to call it so with all deference to Mr. Arnold—touching the true relations between the Church and the State, is not an afterthought suggested to us by the necessity of discovering some new ground for our ecclesiastical position, now that what he supposes to have been the old ground is melting away under our feet. Nor does our proposal to disestablish the English Church originate, as he seems to think, in any feeling of discomfort, like that of the fox who had lost his own tail, and who proposed to put all the other foxes in the same boat by a general cutting off of tails. Our conviction that there should be a

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clear separation between the organization of the State and the organization of the Church, and that the separation would make the Church less worldly and the State more Christian, is a genuine spiritual "development." It is one of the growths of our freedom. Men must be virtuous before they create theories of virtue. Science had already begun to work on the inductive method before Bacon could write the "Novum Organum." The early Nonconformists believed in religious establishments. Had we remained in the Church, we might have continued to believe in them too; and the "idea" of ecclesiastical freedom which has now taken possession of Nonconformity might never have been revealed to us. Many Churchmen are beginning to receive it; but we think that this is partly owing to the illustration it has had in our own history—an illustration which, though necessarily incomplete, and on a very inconsiderable scale, has contributed something to the wealth of the common thought of Christendom. For two centuries our Churches have been free from the control of politicians; we have not been dependent on the will of Parliament for any modifications we have desired in the form of our worship and in our ecclesiastical polity; we have had to rely for the support of our religious institutions on the unforced contributions of those who love Christ and desire the salvation of men; and we have come to learn that there is a strength and blessedness in liberty of which our fathers never dreamed.



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The more entertaining passages in Mr. Arnold's recent animadversions on us, which I had marked for notice, must be dismissed with a word. The two main types of Nonconformist provincialism of which he speaks—the "bitter type" and the "smug type"—are they quite unknown among the adherents of the English Church who belong to the same social rank as ourselves? I quite admit that what Joubert says of the Romish services—"*Les cérémonies du Catholicisme plient à la politesse,*" an aphorism verified in the manners of the common people of all Catholic countries—is true in a measure of the ritual of the English Church; but is not something of the alleged difference between ourselves and Churchmen due to the fact that Nonconformity is strongest among the rough and vigorous people of the great towns who live together in masses, and whose social habits are not controlled by intercourse with those who inherit the traditions of many generations of culture? And if in villages and small towns there is something more of self-assertion and hardness in the Dissenter than in the Churchman, is not this also partly due to the long exclusion of Dissenters from all free intercourse with the "gentry," who have had the advantage of a university education, of foreign travel, and of the refining influence of the recreations and intellectual pursuits which are at the command of leisure and wealth?

The "watchful jealousy"<sup>1</sup> of the Establishment

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul and Protestantism," Preface, p. xxii.

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with which he reproaches us—whose fault is it? When farmers are refused a renewal of their leases because they are Nonconformists, when the day-school is closed against a child on Monday because it was at the Methodist Sunday School the day before, when in the settlement of great properties it is provided that no site shall be sold or let for a Dissenting chapel, and that if a tenant permits his premises to be used for a Dissenting service his lease shall be void, can Mr. Arnold wonder that we are “watchful”? Does he think that the uniform conduct of the clergy has been calculated to encourage an unsuspecting confidence in their fairness and generosity? Have we not had reasons enough for maintaining a “watchful jealousy” against the growth of their power? If sometimes we speak roughly and harshly, and bear ourselves ungraciously, does all the blame lie with us? It might be more creditable to ourselves and more agreeable to others if we could always “writhe with grace and groan with melody”; but our critics should remember the infirmity of human nature.

Nor does it seem to us quite true, as Mr. Arnold seems to imply, that all “strife, jealousy, and self-assertion” come from breaking with the Church.<sup>1</sup> The literature of the controversies which have disturbed the Church itself as long as we have known it, does not appear to us to be more distinguished for “mildness and sweet reasonableness” than the

1 “St. Paul and Protestantism,” Preface, p. xxi.

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pamphlets of the Liberation Society. Prosecutions for heresy and for the introduction of unauthorized innovations into the services of the Church, do not confirm Mr. Arnold's theory that if we had only remained in the Establishment, the religious peace of the country might never have been disturbed. In the *Record* and in the *Church Times*, the evangelical asserts his "ordinary self," and the ritualist asserts his "ordinary self," with quite as much vigour as the Dissenting Philistine displays in the *Nonconformist* or the *English Independent*.

Mr. Arnold thinks that it is a special failing of the mind of a Dissenter that it is "pleased at hearing no opinion but its own, by having all disputed opinions taken for granted in its own favour, by being urged to no return upon itself, no development."<sup>1</sup> But surely this is a vice of nature for which the Establishment has discovered no specific. The evangelical Churchman drives by the Church of the ritualist on Sunday morning and travels four or five miles to hear a clergyman appointed by Simeon's trustees, and the ritualist trudges into a neighbouring parish to delight himself in the "People's Hymnal," in vestments and in a fervent, passionate sermon on Penance, thinking with bitter contempt of the Protestant baldness of the service and the Protestant coldness of the sermon in the church which stands within a stone's-throw from his own door.

Mr. Arnold's representations of us are too much

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul and Protestantism," Preface, p. xxx.

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like the engravings in some of the cheap illustrated papers. The blocks are kept ready for all emergencies. A few slight touches will make them available for a railway accident in France or a similar catastrophe in America, for a yacht race at New York or at the Isle of Wight, for the "Derby" or for the "Grand Prix" at Paris. He has not given us descriptions of the characteristic vices of Nonconformity—perhaps I could assist him with a few confidential hints about these if he wishes to try his hand at work of this kind again—he has only amused us with a collection of clever but unfinished sketches of faults and follies common to men of all Churches and Creeds.

Let us part good friends. Mr. Arnold bears a name which Nonconformists regard with affection and veneration. From his own writings we have received intellectual stimulus and delight, for which we are grateful to him. Nor is this all. Every man who is striving to know at first hand the truth which most concerns the higher life of the soul is the friend and ally of all who, with whatever resources and whatever success, are attempting the same great task. We can but bid each other God-speed.

## VII

THE DOCTRINE OF THE REAL  
PRESENCE AND OF THE LORD'S  
SUPPER,<sup>1</sup>

## I.

TOWARDS the close of the ninth century Charles the Bald, not yet invested with the imperial purple, being troubled that the faith of his subjects should be imperilled by controversies on the Eucharist, requested several theologians, famous for their sanctity and learning, to define for himself and his people the ancient Catholic doctrine touching that Sacrament. It was in response to this appeal that Ratramnus wrote his celebrated treatise, "De Corpore et Sanguine Domini." He tells Charles that nothing "can be more worthy of a prince than to take care that he himself is Catholic in his judgment concerning the mysteries of Him who hath deigned to commit to him his kingly throne, and to endure

<sup>1</sup> "Ecclesia: Church Problems considered in a Series of Essays." First Series, 1870.

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not that his subjects should think diversely concerning the Body of Christ, in the which it is certain that the whole sum of Christian redemption doth consist.”<sup>1</sup>

Just a thousand years have passed away, and England is agitated by conflicting opinions concerning the same mystery; but the process of settlement is changed. Royal zeal for the faith does not in these days ask for the opinions of theologians; hostile theologians appear before royal councils, and plead hard for a favourable verdict. If the creed of the Church is to be determined by authority, the old way may appear to some more reasonable than the new. For the king to ask a theologian to write a treatise is a more obvious method of arriving at the truth than for the Church to ask the Privy Council to pronounce a judgment.

It is obvious, however, that even the more modest form of royal interference with ecclesiastical and theological controversies is not quite free from peril. With the very best intentions the king may, through ignorance, consult theologians infected with heresy, and so be led astray. This, according to Bellarmine, was the ill-fortune of Charles. The great Romish controversialist, enumerating the dark succession of those who have denied the true faith concerning the Eucharist, begins with the followers of Simon Magus and Menander; then, passing over seven centuries,

<sup>1</sup> Ratramnus, “De Corpore et Sanguine Domini,” § 1; Migne, “Patrologia,” vol. cxxi. p. 127.

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he names Scotus: "Non ille Doctor subtilis sed alius antiquior, qui tempore Caroli magni circa annum Domini DCCC. scripsit."<sup>1</sup> "The third was Bertramus, in the time of Charles the Fat, about the year 886, whose book is still in existence. He again raised the controversy whether that same Body of Christ which was born of the Virgin Mary is present in the Eucharist. Paschasius, Abbot of Corbie, who flourished at that period, refuted this error with great learning."<sup>2</sup>

This, however, is not quite a fair statement of the origin of the dispute. The great Eucharistic controversy in the Western Church, which commenced a little after the middle of the ninth century, was originated not by Ratramnus, but by Paschasius. It was Paschasius who gave the great impulse to that theological movement which culminated three centuries and a half later in the establishment of the doctrine of Transubstantiation as the creed of Western Christendom. The strength and definiteness of his language in affirming that the

<sup>1</sup> "De Sacramento Eucharist.," lib. i. cap. i. [In his "Disputationes de Controversiis Christiana? Fidei."] Later scholars have arrived at the conclusion that the treatise attributed by Bellarmine to the heterodox Scotus, which was supposed to be lost, is really the treatise which was written by Ratramnus.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Bellarmine seems to be inaccurate again in placing the treatise of Bertramus—probably Ratramnus—so late. He appears to have written, as has been said above, not under the reign of Charles the Fat, but under the reign of Charles the Bald; not in 886, but in 870.

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 visible Elements cease to be Bread and Wine after consecration,<sup>1</sup> startled the common people, and provoked sharp rejoinders from eminent theologians. He was condemned strongly by Rabanus Maurus, the illustrious Archbishop of Mayence. Frudegard, a monk, who at first received the new doctrine, was convinced that it was erroneous by the writings of Augustine, and, in a treatise on the controversy, quoted against Paschasius the great doctor of the African Church.

But Ratramnus was his chief opponent. While Paschasius Radbertus was the first, according to Bellarmine, "who wrote copiously and systematically on the truth of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Eucharist,"<sup>2</sup> Ratramnus stands conspicuous among the earliest protesters against the most serious of all the corruptions of the simplicity of the Apostolic faith. These two stand at the head of two unbroken lines of hostile theologians, who for a thousand years have divided the mind of the Christian nations of Western Europe. Never for any considerable period has the great controversy ceased since they began it. In generation after generation, in century after century, the fierce feuds which they kindled have

<sup>1</sup> "Omnia enim quascumque voluit [Dominus] fecit in caelo et in terra, et quia voluit, licet in figura panis et vini hic sit, tamen omnino nihil aliud quam caro Christi et sanguis post consecrationem credenda sunt." Paschasius, "De Corp. et Sang. Dom.," i. § 2. Migne, "Patrologia," vol. cxx. p. 1,269. Quoted by Bellarmine, *op. cit.* ii. 24. See also his language in his "Epistola ad Frudegardum," Migne, *ibid.*, pp. 1,351 foil.

<sup>2</sup> Bellarmine, *op. cit.* ii. 34.



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broken out afresh. Through protracted and bloody wars, and through prosperous years of peace, while famous dynasties have been achieving glory and sinking into shame, while nations, then hardly known, have been struggling out of barbarism into the foremost ranks of greatness and power, and while the splendour of illustrious kingdoms and commonwealths has been fading away,—while new literatures, new sciences, new systems of philosophy, new types of civilization have been gradually taking possession of the world,—that old controversy, which a thousand years ago Charles the Bald asked Ratramnus to settle for him, has kept alive, has continued to excite, to divide, to infuriate mankind, and at this moment it seems likely to agitate Christendom for many ages to come.

The value of the treatise of Ratramnus it is not easy to exaggerate; and those passages, which to an ordinary Protestant reader are most perplexing, are of special importance. Again and again he uses language which appears to favour a theory hardly to be distinguished from the theory of the Council of Lateran and the Council of Trent, language identical with that which is constantly quoted from the Fathers in support of the doctrine of Transubstantiation; but there are formal statements and striking lines of argument which demonstrate that in his time such language might be used by a writer who regarded that doctrine as a flagrant heresy, and in the very act of controverting it. He says that—

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The bread which is offered, though taken from the fruits of the earth, is by consecration changed into Christ's Body; and the wine, though it hath flowed from the Vine, yet by the consecration in this divine mystery is made the Blood of Christ not indeed visibly, but, as this doctor (St. Isidore) saith, by the invisible operation of the Spirit of God.<sup>1</sup>

This might be appealed to as an acknowledgment of a supernatural change of the substance of the Elements while the sensible accidents remain unchanged.

But later in the treatise he says—

It is further to be considered, that in that Bread, not the Body of Christ alone is figured, but also that of the people who believe in Him. Wherefore it is made of many grains of corn, as the Body of faithful people is made up of many, that believe through the word of Christ. For which reason, as that Bread is taken to be the Body of Christ in a mystery, so likewise are the members of the people that believe in Christ signified in a mystery. And as that Bread is called the Body of believers not corporally, but spiritually; so also we must understand the Body of Christ not corporally, but spiritually.<sup>2</sup>

The allusion is obviously to 1 Cor. x. 17 ("We being many are one loaf"), and Ratramnus maintains that if the consecrated Loaf is the Body of Christ, it is also, and in the same sense, the Church of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> "The Book of Ratramnus on the Body and Blood of the Lord," 42. The quotations are made from the translation of the treatise appended to "The True Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist," by the Rev. J. Taylor, M.A.; London, 1855. The original treatise is republished in Migne, "Patrologia," vol. cxxi. pp. 124-170.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 73, 74.

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He is so strongly impressed with the force of this argument that he is unwilling to dismiss it, and in the next paragraph he repeats it in another form—

So, too, with the wine, which is called the Blood of Christ, water is ordered to be mixed, nor is the one allowed to be offered without the other; because as the head cannot be without the body, nor the body without the head, so neither can the people be without Christ, nor Christ without the people. Moreover, the water in that [part of the] Sacrament beareth the image of the people. *If, therefore, that wine, when consecrated by the office of the Minister, is corporally changed into the Blood of Christ, the water also, which is mixed with it, must necessarily be corporally changed into the blood of the faithful people.* For where the consecration is one, there followeth also one operation; and where the cause is the same, the mystery which followeth is the same also. But we see no change made in the water, as to bodily substance; and, therefore, there is no change in the wine. Whatever in the water signifieth the people of Christ, is taken spiritually; whatever, therefore, in the wine representeth the Blood of Christ must be taken spiritually too.<sup>1</sup>

He recognizes no distinction between the manner in which baptism originates the Divine life in the soul and the manner in which the Eucharist sustains it; there is no substantial change in the water of the font, nor is there any substantial change in the Elements of the Supper. He argues that, according to St. Paul, the Jews in the desert received the Body and the Blood of Christ in the manna and in the water that came from the Rock, just as we receive

<sup>1</sup> "The Book of Ratramnus on the Body and Blood of the Lord," § 75.

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the Body and the Blood of Christ in the Bread and the Wine.

The substance of the Elements, he teaches, is unchanged by consecration. They were Bread and Wine before; they remain Bread and Wine still. And yet they are the Body of Christ. How is this? He replies that we are not to believe that “two things co-exist diverse between themselves, namely Body and Spirit”; referring to what he had said about “the spiritual Body and the spiritual Blood of Christ” existing “under the veil of corporeal Bread and Wine”—

But *one and the same thing* hath in one respect the nature of bread and wine, in another is the Body and Blood of Christ. As far as they are corporally handled, they are in their nature corporeal creatures; but in their power, and as they are spiritually made, they are the mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

This looks like a clear preference of the theory which is so vigorously rejected by modern Ritualists, that the presence of Christ in the Elements of the Eucharist is “virtual,” not personal.

He interprets Augustine as teaching—

that Sacraments are one thing, and the things of which they are Sacraments another. For the Body in which Christ suffered, and the Blood which flowed from His side, are the things themselves; whilst the mysteries of these things are the Sacraments of the Body and Blood of Christ, which are celebrated in memory of the Lord’s passion.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “The Book of Ratramnus on the Body and Blood of the Lord,” § xvi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, § xxxvi.

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The Elements, he continues, still resting on the authority of Augustine, are called the Body and Blood of Christ, just as the days which commemorate His Passion and Resurrection are spoken of as though they were the actual days on which Christ suffered and rose again. "We say, to-day, or to-morrow, or the next day is the Passion or the Resurrection of the Lord, though the very days on which these things were done have for many days passed away."<sup>1</sup>

He appeals to St. Isidore as teaching that the Lord's Passion was once accomplished, but that "the memory of it is represented in sacred and solemn rites."<sup>2</sup>

He quotes a remarkable passage in which a parallel is drawn between Jewish sacrifices and the Christian Eucharist—

In those carnal victims there was a signification of the Flesh of Christ, which He without sin was to offer for our sins, and of that Blood, which for the remission of our sins He was to pour forth. Whilst in this sacrifice there is the thanksgiving and commemoration of the Flesh of Christ, which He hath offered for us, and of the Blood, which He hath shed for us. ... In those sacrifices, therefore, what was to be given us was figuratively signified; but in this sacrifice, what has already been given is evidently shewn.<sup>3</sup>

Quoting from the prayers offered at the celebration of the Eucharist, in which the Sacrament is spoken

<sup>1</sup> "The Book of Ratramnus on the Body and Blood of the Lord," xxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xli.; cf. xl.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xc.

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of as a pledge of eternal life, and as the celebration “in figure” of great spiritual blessings, he maintains that the Elements and the spiritual blessings themselves “differ as much from each other as a pledge doth from that thing of which it is given to us as a pledge; as much as an image doth from that thing of which it is the image; as much as the figure doth from the truth.”

His closing words contain a summary statement of the doctrine maintained throughout the treatise—

We are taught (he says) both by our Saviour, and by St. Paul the Apostle, that this bread and cup, which are placed on the altar, are placed there in figure or in memory of the Lord’s death, that they may recall to our present remembrance that which was done in times past, so that being put in remembrance of His passion, we may by it be made partakers of the heavenly gift, whereby we have been freed from death; knowing well that when we shall arrive at the vision of Christ, we shall have no need of such like instruments, to remind us what His boundless mercy hath endured for us. For we shall then see Him face to face, we shall not be reminded by the outward admonition of temporal things, but by the contemplation of Truth itself shall see how we ought to render thanks to the Author of our salvation.

Yet let it not be thought, from my saying this, that in the mystery of the Sacrament, the Body and Blood of the Lord are not received by the faithful, for faith receiveth that which it believeth, not that which the eye beholdeth. It is spiritual meat, and spiritual drink; spiritually doth it feed the soul, and giveth life, which shall satisfy for ever, as our Saviour saith Himself, when commending to us this mystery, “It is the Spirit which quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “The Book of Ratramnus on the Body and Blood of the Lord,” §§ c., ci.

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No Protestant could desire a more explicit protest against the present Roman theory. The doctrine of Ratramnus is far more hostile to the Tridentine definition than the doctrine of Luther. And yet Ratramnus lived six hundred years before Luther was born, and writes like a man who is upholding the traditional doctrine of the Church against the innovations of heresy.<sup>1</sup>

Though the theological tendencies of the age were strongly in favour of the new theory, it had to fight hard for victory. Early in the eleventh century it was opposed, though with less clearness and definiteness, and with frequent vacillation and perilous concessions, by Bcrengarius. He maintained that the presence of Christ in the Elements was spiritual, not substantial; that in Holy Scripture the Elements are spoken of as Bread and Wine, even after the act of consecration; and that it is contrary to the order of nature that the accidents should remain after the substance has been changed. Like his predecessors,

<sup>1</sup> Ratramnus deserves to be remembered with eternal gratitude and honour by English Protestants. Ridley took this little treatise with him into the country in 1545, and through reading it was convinced that the Roman theory of Transubstantiation was a heresy and an innovation. He communicated his discovery to Cranmer in 1546, and they examined the doctrine together. The examination resulted in Cranmer's rejection of the Roman theory. Ridley, when standing before the Commissioners at Oxford in 1555, after eulogizing the learning, godliness, and argumentative power of Ratramnus, added, "This man was the first who pulled me by the ear and forced me from the common error of the Roman Church to a more diligent search of Scripture and ecclesiastical writers on this question."

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he relied very much on the authority of Augustine. Throughout the Western Church his views commanded considerable support. He had powerful opponents, but he had also powerful friends,—Hildebrand among the number, who, even after he ascended the Papal throne, did his best to shelter Berengarius from his foes.

Even in the twelfth century, so orthodox a theologian as Peter Lombard wrote, “Si quaeritur qualis est illa conversio, an formalis, an substantial, vel alterius generis, definire non sufficio.”<sup>1</sup> Abelard declared that the controversy as to whether the Bread was merely a symbol or the substance of the Body of Christ, had not yet terminated.<sup>2</sup> But the doctrine of Paschasius was steadily making way. Hildebert of Mans, is said to have introduced into the technical language of the Church the portentous noun *Transubstantiatio*, and Stephen, Bishop of Autun, the verb *Transubstantiare*. And at last, the word and the thing were invested with the authority of the Western Church at the Council of Lateran, A.D. 1215.<sup>3</sup> After a struggle of three centuries

<sup>1</sup> I have not been able to trace this quotation. But similar opinions are expressed in Peter Lombard's "Collectanea in Epist. D. Pauli," § 99, c.; e.g., "Modum conversionis ignorare non erubescimus fateri." Migne, "Patrologia," vol. cxcii., p. 1,644; and cf. vol. cxcii., p. 1,096. [Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> Neander, "History of Christian Dogmas" [Bohn], vol. ii. p. 531.

<sup>3</sup> The 12th General Council; the 4th Lateran Council. C. J. Hefele, "Conciliengeschichte," Bd. v., pp. 878 foll., "Transubstantiatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem, potestate divina."



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and a half, the triumph of Paschasius was complete.

It is not affirmed that before the ninth century there had been no approach to the doctrine which has now for more than six hundred years been an article of faith in the Roman Church. Towards the end of the seventh century Anastasius,<sup>1</sup> a monk of Mount Sinai, in his Ὁδηγός, taught the doctrine of Transubstantiation in a form far grosser than that which it assumed in the writings of Paschasius. In a dialogue between an orthodox believer and a heretic, who denied that the Body of our Lord, previous to His resurrection, was subject to the ordinary changes and accidents which belong to human nature, Anastasius puts into the mouth of the representative of the true faith a singular challenge. Tell me, he says, since you believe that the Body of Christ from the moment of its union with the Divinity is incorruptible as the Divinity itself, whether the Sacrifice of the most holy Body and Blood of Christ, which you offer and partake, is the real Body and Blood of the Son of God, or common bread such as is sold in the market, and a mere type of the Body of Christ, like the sacrifice of the goat offered by the Jews? God forbid, replies the other, that we should say that

<sup>1</sup> Three of this name [Anastasius Sinaita] are mentioned by ecclesiastical writers. Two of them, who were bishops of Antioch, seem to have been confused with the author of the Ὁδηγός, who was a priest and monk of the monastery on Mount Sinai.

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the Holy Communion is the mere type of the Body of Christ, or mere bread; we truly receive the very Body and Blood of Christ, the Son of God, who was born of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, ever virgin. To this the orthodox believer assents, and replies, Come, then, since Christ Himself testifies that what we, the faithful, receive, is really His own Body and Blood, bring to us a portion of the Elements consecrated in your churches, since they are orthodox beyond all others, and let us place the holy Body and Blood of Christ in a vessel with all honour and reverence. If in a few days it undergoes no corruption, or change, or alteration, it will be clear that you are right in affirming that Christ, from the very moment of the Incarnation, was incorruptible; but if it is corrupted or changed, you must acknowledge, either, that what you receive in the Eucharist is not the true Body of Christ, but a type and mere bread, and that because of your perverted faith the Holy Spirit has not descended upon it; or that the Body of Christ, before the resurrection, was subject to corruption, being sacrificed, delivered to death, wounded, pierced (or broken), and eaten; for, he goes on to say, an incorruptible body is subject to none of these things, as appears from the example of the incorruptible nature of angels and souls.<sup>1</sup>

This challenge rests on the hypothesis, that what

<sup>1</sup> Anastasii Sinaitæ Ὁδῆος, cap. xxiii. (Disceptatio Gaianitæ et orthodoxi habitæ Alexandria). Migne, "Patrologia Graeco-Latina," vol. lxxxix., pp. 297, 298.

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is given in the Eucharist is the earthly Body of Christ, and that the consecrated Elements, and the Body and Blood of Christ, are so completely the same, that the very accidents of the one are the accidents of the other.

That in the eighth century, a very strong form of the doctrine of the Real Presence was prevalent in the Eastern Church, appears from certain singular phases of the controversy on the worship of images.

It must also be acknowledged that from the writings of the Fathers, even of the first five centuries, the advocates of the doctrine of Transubstantiation are able to produce a formidable catena of quotations. And although these quotations may be met, and their force destroyed, by quotations as numerous and as striking on the other side, it is only fair to admit, that long before the doctrine assumed a definite and scientific form, the language in which many distinguished theologians spoke of the Eucharist, and the feelings with which it was generally regarded by devout men, foreshadowed the rise of some such heresy as that which was at last developed by Paschasius. What were the real opinions of the great saints and theologians of the early Church on this Sacrament, has been a subject of dispute for a thousand years. While it is impossible to produce any treatise belonging to the first eight centuries, in which the doctrine of Transubstantiation is definitely stated and defended, and while innumerable passages

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may be alleged from the writings of the most illustrious of the Fathers, which seem to be inconsistent with it, controversialists on the other side may answer that the quotations from the Fathers, on which the opponents of Transubstantiation rely, are only analogous to those Arianizing passages on the Trinity which occur in the most orthodox writers before the Council of Nicsea; that every article of the creed has existed in solution in the mind of the Church before it has been defined, and that until the definition has been arrived at, uniform exactness of statement is not to be looked for; that the spirit with which the Church of the centuries before Paschasius regarded the Eucharist finds its only true dogmatic ground in his theory of the change effected in the Elements by consecration; and that the final determination of the doctrine by the Council of Lateran was, therefore, but the formal expression of what was manifestly the implicit faith of preceding ages.

For those who desire to pursue this perplexing question, controversial theologians have prepared ample materials. Scarcely a sentence written by any ecclesiastical writer, from Ignatius to Bernard, which could be supposed to lend any support to either side, has escaped the keen and zealous scrutiny of controversialists. Wearisome folios attest the industry and ardour with which Romanists and Protestants alike have endeavoured to sustain their respective positions by the suffrages of the ancient Church. Most Protestants will perhaps be satisfied with seeing that the

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Fathers can be quoted with at least as much plausibility on their own side as on the side of their opponents; with remembering that nothing is easier than to mistake the rhetoric of religious emotion for the expression of dogmatic faith; that when the doctrine of Transubstantiation was first systematically stated, it met with severe opposition; and that it did not receive the formal sanction of a general council till the commencement of the thirteenth century. But it will be necessary to return to the question of patristic authority in discussing the theory of the "Real Presence."

Even after the decision of the Council of Lateran,—the Great Council, as the canonists call it,—solitary theologians, popular reformers, and restless communities of devout men in various parts of Europe, continued to maintain an audible protest—a protest which had to be silenced and suppressed by other and sharper weapons than quotations from Scripture or the Fathers. Within a period considerably less than that, during which the doctrine of Paschasius had been fighting its way to whatever sanction it could receive from a General Council of the West, nearly half the West renounced it; and by the intense hostility which this doctrine provoked among Protestants, the great quarrel, which ended in the eternal renunciation of the authority of the Roman See by the races sprung from the German stock, was greatly embittered.

Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, and all the

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Churches usually classed by ecclesiastical historians under the pleasant title of "Separatists," have been unanimous in rejecting it.

And this, it may be retorted, is the extreme limit of their unanimity. They agree, not to profess a solitary doctrine, but simply to reject an article of faith which is unanimously held by a Church which outnumbered them all.

But is it quite certain that the Church of Rome is unanimous on this doctrine? That all her members declare that their faith is expressed by the decrees of the Council of Trent is no proof of their unanimity. Tractarians and Evangelicals, men who deny that infants are spiritually regenerated in baptism, and men who believe it, declare that their faith is expressed in the Anglican Office; but their profession of faith in the same words does not prove their acceptance of the same theory.

To those who are awed by the grand and imposing conception of a Church including within its communion men of every variety of race and of every type of civilization, and proclaiming that through all the storms of excitement through which the human intellect has passed, its authority has secured for its members perfect unity and rest in the great articles of the Christian faith, it may be of some use to exhibit the "variations" of Roman theologians on the mystery of the Eucharist.

That differences of opinion of some kind existed

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in the Council of Trent itself on this subject is well known; but it is alleged that these differences related not to the fact that in the Eucharist the Elements are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, but to the mode of the change; the differences were, however, sufficiently serious to give the Council considerable trouble, and an apparent reconciliation was secured at last only by an evasion of the questions in dispute. When it was found hopeless to bring the Franciscans and Dominicans to a genuine agreement as to what Transubstantiation really is, "it was determined," says Father Paul, "in the general Congregation to use as few words as was possible, and to make an expression so universal as might be accommodated to the meaning of both parties."

On the question whether or not Christ offered to the Father a propitiatory sacrifice when He celebrated the Last Supper, it seemed equally impossible to obtain unanimity, and it was therefore "recommended that the decree should indeed declare that Christ offered Himself to the Father, at that last supper, under the species of bread and wine, but that no mention should be made of the nature of that offering, seeing that the opinions of the prelates did not agree regarding it."<sup>1</sup> The recommendation was eventually adopted. But skilfully as the decrees were framed, it would not, perhaps, be too bold to

<sup>1</sup> J. Waterworth's "Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent": Preliminary Essay, p. clxxxix.

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affirm that the definition of the Council of Trent expresses a theory which no Roman theologian of eminence has ever accepted.

The Tridentine doctrine is<sup>1</sup> that the substance of the Bread by a supernatural change becomes the substance of the Body of our Lord, and the substance of the Wine the substance of His Blood, the accidents of the Elements remaining unchanged.

But do Roman theologians believe this? Or, if any do, has this opinion been common in their Church? The general theory is that the substance of the Elements disappears,—whether it is annihilated or not is undetermined—and that the substance of the Body of Christ simply *takes its place*. There is no *conversio* here. “If,” said an old Puritan Morning Lecturer, “the water in the water-pots of Cana had been drawn off after they had been filled, and if they had been filled again with wine from a neighbouring cellar, there would have been no change of the water into wine.” This is the first great

<sup>1</sup> “And because that Christ, our Redeemer, declared that which He offered under the species of bread to be truly His own body, therefore has it ever been a firm belief in the Church of God—and this holy Synod doth now declare it anew—that, by the consecration of the bread and of the wine, a conversion is made (*conversionem fieri*) of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood, which conversion (*quæ conversio*) is, by the holy Catholic Church, suitably and properly called Transubstantiation.”—Waterworth’s “Decrees and Canons of the Council of Trent,” sess. xiii, cap. iv. p. 78,



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difficulty of the Roman theologians; it is hardly possible for them to escape the admission that the substance of the Bread, instead of being changed into the substance of the Body of Christ, as the Council of Trent affirms, simply gives place to it.

If it be contended that the substance of the Bread is actually changed into the substance of the Body, a very grave question emerges; for when one substance is changed into another, it is plain that both must be affected by the process; but the warning of Albertus Magnus, that it is not safe to affirm that the change effected by consecration affects in any way the Body of Christ, has had sufficient authority to make theologians cautious of any theory that appeared to violate it.

The supreme perplexity in which the theory involves its adherents comes from this,—that the Body of Christ exists before the consecration of the Elements, and it is profanity to suppose that it undergoes any change. Since it is pre-existent, consecration cannot create it; all that it can do is to cause it be *there*—under the species of Bread and Wine. But then arise innumerable questions. The place of the Body of Christ is in heaven. When it comes to be under the accidents of the Elements, does it pass through the space between heaven and the altar? If not, was it present under the accidents of the Elements before Transubstantiation? Again, if consecration does nothing more than cause the Body of Christ to be where it was

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not before, the words, declarative or effective of the mystery, should not be, "*This is My Body*," but, "*Here is My Body*." But Transubstantiation should have for its "term" a substance; and this is to make it "terminate" simply in a Presence. These are not the suggestions of Protestant hostility; they are difficulties originating with Roman theologians themselves, and difficulties which have suggested their conflicting theories of the mystery. Perhaps the most ingenious theory of all is, that Transubstantiation is an action which *would* produce the Body and Blood of Christ if they did not already exist; that as they already exist, they cannot be, properly speaking, produced; but that Transubstantiation produces them *so far* as they can be produced.<sup>1</sup>

But there are differences of another kind to perplex those who think to find in the theology of Rome the determination of all their perplexities. What was the form of consecration used by our Lord Himself in celebrating the Supper?

<sup>1</sup> Albertinus, in his great work, "De Sacramento Eucharistiæ" (lib. i. cap. viii. pp. 35-44), gives an account of nine or ten different Romish theories of the change effected by consecration—theories which are, in fact, for the most part different *doctrines*. The rocks on which most of them split are indicated in the text. It would be difficult, happily, to find language in English that would express these theories at all accurately. They are interesting as showing what real differences exist under the show of unity, and especially as proving that the doctrine affirmed by the Council of Trent—that there is an actual conversion of the substance of the Bread into the substance of the Body of Christ—is uniformly evaded.

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To this there are at least seven replies: (i) He consecrated without using any words at all, and Transubstantiation was already effected before He said, "This is My body." (2) He consecrated when He "blessed" in words of which we are ignorant. (3) He consecrated with the words, "This is My Body," but the words were used twice, first in consecrating and again in distributing. (4) He consecrated with the words, "This is My Body," and the Evangelists have not given us the exact order of the Rite in connecting these words with the distribution. (5) He consecrated with the words, "This is My Body," and they were so spoken as to cover the three acts of blessing, breaking, and distributing. (6) He consecrated not when He blessed, but when He said, "This is My Body"—in the act of distribution. (7) He consecrated when He "blessed" the Elements and said, "This is My Body," the action being one and indivisible, though the Evangelists could not escape speaking as if the one followed the other. There is a further dispute as to whether the words, "Shed for the remission of sins," form part of the consecrating formula for the Cup.

Nor will it do for Roman controversialists to reproach Protestants with their want of agreement in the interpretation of the words of institution. English readers are familiar with the keen chapters in Jeremy Taylor's famous treatise, in which he illustrates the chaotic confusion of Romish divines on

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this very point.<sup>1</sup> The eloquent bishop evidently uses not only his own vast reading to overwhelm his adversaries, but also the treasures of erudition accumulated by Albertinus, who seems to have found his supreme joy in demonstrating the want of harmony among the theologians of the infallible Church. The account given by Albertinus of the various interpretations of *Hoc*, in the sentence, *Hoc est corpus meum*, occupies twenty folio columns of tolerably compact Latin; and yet he does not profess to give all the interpretations that have been suggested, "but only those which are more common, and which, on account of the eminence, or number of those who have adopted them, may be thought the more probable."<sup>2</sup>

Passing over the more subtle distinctions between interpretation and interpretation, that the reader may not be driven quite insane,<sup>3</sup> the meanings

1 The Real Presence and Spiritual of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament proved against the doctrine of Transubstantiation, by Jeremy Taylor, D.D. (In Edward Cardwell's "Enchiridion Theologicum Anti-Romanum," vol. i. p. 515 foil.)

2 Albertinus, "De Sacr. Eucharist.," lib. i. cap. viii. p. 35.

3 The following extract, which Albertinus gives from Catharinus at the commencement of this chapter (lib. i. cap. viii. p. 35), is too pathetically humorous not to be quoted; translation would destroy its flavour: "Lector consideret laborem et angustias usque (pene dixerim) ad necem fere omnium scribentium, dum rogati quid significet pronomen illud, *Hoc*, tot et tanta scribunt et adeo varia ut valeant ad insaniam redigere Lectorem nimium considerantem.

"B. Thomas multorum responsiones recitat, et omnes reprehendit. Ponit suam, quam posteriores Scotus et Petrus Aureolus

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assigned to this perplexing pronoun by Roman divines may be reduced to six. It denotes—(1) Nothing. (2) The accidents of the Bread. (3) The Bread—either (a) the substance and accidents together; or (b) the substance of the Bread apart from the accidents; or (c) the substance of the Bread, not *qua* the substance of the Bread, but *qua* substance in general. (4) That individual existence which ultimately becomes the Body of Christ. (5) That which is contained under the accidents of the Bread (*quod alii vacant* individuum vagum, alii substantiam vage et indeterminate spectatam). (6) The Body of Christ.

The meanings assigned to *est* must vary with those assigned to *Hoc*. The principal meanings are four. *Est* stands for—(1) “is changed into,” “has become; (2) “shall be;” (3) “contains;” or else (4) it is the simple copula affirming the identity of subject and predicate; though it is difficult to understand how this should be, since that identity is not consummated when *est* is uttered.

Of course, there are also various interpretations of the word *corpus*; but to state these is hardly possible without a freer use of scholastic technicalities than the nature and object of this Essay would permit.

*reprehendunt, et quilibet tandem suam adjecit. Et Scotus quidem tot verba effundit, et tot elicit conclusiones, ut si quis valeat legere legentis patientiam admirer, et nihilominus in tanto multiloquio suam narrans ita trepidat ut se nondum securum ostendat.*—Catharinus, Tract 2, “De Verbis quibus Conficitur,” &c.

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There are further differences of opinion in reference to the proof of the doctrine. When the controversy concerning the withholding of the cup from the laity was at its height, it became common for Roman controversialists to maintain that the discourse in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, which makes it as necessary to "drink the blood" as to "eat the flesh" of the Son of Man, did not refer to the Lord's Supper, but to spiritual communion. The discourse, however, lent itself too easily to the theory of Transubstantiation to be finally surrendered; and when the storm about communion in both kinds had some what sunk, the direct reference of this discourse to the Eucharist was re-asserted.

The indefatigable Albertinus gives a terrible list of popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and doctors of theology who were committed to the heretical interpretation of this great passage.<sup>1</sup> Bellarmine's

i Adversarii pro solita sua quam indesinenter mentiuntur, unitate hic etiam inter se dissident. Multi enim inter illos (quorum Salmero, Bellarminus, et Vasques recensent nonnullos, nos vero plures enumerabimus) imprudenter admodum a Maldonato temeritatis ac imprudentiæ stigmatè notati, negativam nobiscum tuentur. Pontifices duo, Innocentius tertius et Pius secundus: Cardinales quatuor, Bonaventura, de Alliaco, Cusanus, Cajetanus: Archiepiscopi duo, Richardus Armachanus et Guerrierius Granatensis: Episcopi quinque, Stephanus Eduensis, Durandus Mimatensis, Gulielmus Altisiodorensis, Lindanus Ruremundensis, Jansenius Gandavensis, quem et alicubi sequitur Tannerus, licet inconstanter: plerique Theologiæ Doctores ac Professores concionatoresque celeberrimi, Alexander de Hales, Richardus de Mediavilla, Joannes Gerson, Joannes de Ragusio, Gabriel Biel, Thomas Waldensis, Auctor

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apology for the aberrations of these distinguished men is deliciously characteristic. "There are, however, a few [Catholics]," he says, "who, that they might more easily reply to the followers of Huss and Luther in their attempt to defend communion in both kinds from this chapter, taught that the chapter does not refer to the Sacramental eating and drinking of the Body and Blood of the Lord. ... There is, however, a great difference between the Catholics and the heretics, although they seem to agree; for the Catholics embraced that opinion with the very best intention, that they might more easily maintain the truth; the heretics, that they might more easily attack it."<sup>1</sup> That both Catholics and heretics ought to be more anxious about finding the true interpretation of our Lord's discourse than about employing it for controversial

libri, cujus titulus, "Tractatus contra perfidiam quorundam Bohemorum," Joannes Maria Verratus, Tilmannus Sebebergensis, Joannes Eccius, Joannes Major, Astesanus, Conradus, Joannes Ferus, Conradus Sasgerus, Joannes Hesselius, Ruardus Tapperus, Palatius, qui illam sibi arridere dicit, et novissime Nicolaus Rigaltius. ... Cæteri qui in magno quoque sunt numero, affirmativam amplectuntur, nonnulli etiam tanta pertinacia ac animi ferocitate, ut Rossensis ausus fuerit scribere, Salmerone et Stapletono non improbantibus, *Se non dubitare eum dicere desertum et rejectum atque reprobatum a Deo, qui diutius contenderit aut non esse veram Christi carnem et sanguinem in Eucharistia, aut verba Joannis in 6 capite ad eandem Eucharistiam nequaquam spectare.*" Albertinus, *op. cit.* lib. i. cap. xxx. pp. 209, 210. Those who wish to verify the authorities appealed to, will find, in Albertinus, references under every name in this formidable list.

<sup>1</sup> Bellarmine, "De Sac. Euch.," lib. i. cap. v. § 4.

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purposes, does not seem to have occurred to this eminent theologian.

But what is most startling of all is, that in the Missal itself there are unambiguous traces of incoherent and contradictory theories of the Service. If anything in the Roman Church can be regarded as settled, it is that the mystery of Transubstantiation is effected when the priest pronounces the words, "Hoc est enim corpus meum"; before these words are spoken the Bread is mere Bread; it is when these have passed the lips of the priest that the "whole substance of the Bread is changed into the substance of the Body of the Lord." And yet before these words are uttered the Host is offered to God by the priest as a propitiatory Sacrifice, with the prayer, "Accept, O Holy Father, Almighty and Eternal God, this unspotted Host, which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer unto Thee, my living and true God, for my innumerable sins, offences, and negligences, and for all here present; as also for all faithful Christians, both living and dead, that it may avail them unto life everlasting." A prayer, similar in effect, though much less definite, is presented at the oblation of the chalice, and before the awful words have changed the mingled Water and Wine into the Blood of Christ.

These prayers would never have had their present place in the office, if the office had been originally constructed under the control of the Tridentine theory. In the celebration of the Mass itself—the



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central act of Romish worship—there are indications that the Tridentine theory is an innovation.

It admits of proof, therefore, that the apparent unanimity of the Romish Church on this dogma is only apparent. Every kind of variation of opinion that can invalidate the claim to unanimity may be shown to have existed in the Romish Church, in relation to this Sacrament. Romish theologians are not agreed as to what Transubstantiation really is. They differ on the question whether, in the original celebration of the Supper, the mysterious change in the elements was effected by the words which are declared to effect it now. They differ in the interpretation of those words. They differ as to the Scripture proof upon which the dogma rests. And the whole theory is utterly destroyed by the very Eucharistic office which has been recited by Romish priests for centuries, and is recited still in every Romish church throughout Christendom.

To discuss the arguments which are alleged in support of this doctrine is no part of the purpose of the present Essay. Any discussion would be incomplete that did not include the investigation of the claims of the Romish Church to require the acceptance of articles of faith which cannot be proved from Holy Scripture. In reply to an opponent, who maintained that no express Scriptural authority could be quoted which, apart from the decisions of the Church, could demonstrate the doctrine of Transubstantiation, Bel-

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larmine admits that "perhaps this is not altogether improbable; for, although the Scripture which we have already alleged may seem to us sufficiently clear to convince any man who is not utterly perverse, yet this may perhaps be justly doubted, since very learned and subtle men, such as Scotus, think differently."<sup>1</sup>

It is something to have shown that this doctrine, so far from having been received by the Church from the earliest Christian antiquity, provoked strong hostility when it was first explicitly taught; and that the Roman Church has been distracted by conflicting opinions on the manner in which the doctrine should be scientifically defined, and on every point connected with it.

## II.

With those theologians of the English Church who contend for a doctrine of the Eucharist which theologically is separated by the very finest lines from that which is professed by Romanists, the controversy is more manageable. In the earlier stages of the Oxford movement, it was not very easy to understand exactly what was meant by those who advocated the theory of the "Real Presence." This difficulty has disappeared. There is probably no essential difference between the doctrine which was maintained in the "Tracts for the Times" rather

<sup>1</sup> Bellarmine, "De Sac. Euch.," lib. iii. cap. xxiii. § 10.

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more than thirty years ago, and the doctrine which is maintained in the recent "Tracts for the Day." The sacramental theory of Dr. Littledale and Mr. Orby Shipley is fundamentally the same as that of Dr. Pusey. But the whole manner of recent Ritualists is singularly different from that of the old Tractarians. The hesitation and indistinctness with which the doctrine used to be stated have gone. The theory, to use an image of Burke's, is no longer "in the gristle"; its bones are firmly set. Even Archdeacon Wilberforce, in his "Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist," was less trenchant than the men who are writing now. There was an intellectual awe in the earlier writers, when they approached this discussion, which their successors appear to have lost. It is not meant that Ritualistic theologians are wanting in reverence for what they acknowledge to be a wonderful and fearful mystery; but their reverence does not interfere with their intellectual freedom and vigour in expressing and defending their faith. The awful cloud which once filled the whole temple, so that human weakness could not minister even in its outer courts, has gathered into the inner sanctuary; and the common daylight, in which men can see clearly and work freely, is shining elsewhere.

What is meant by the doctrine of the "Real Presence," may be seen from the following passages, extracted from an essay in the "Tracts for the Day," edited by Mr. Orby Shipley—

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What was done in the Incarnation is renewed in the Sacrament; not in the same manner, but in a certain resemblance and proportion.<sup>1</sup>

... There is in both cases a real Union between the earthly and the Heavenly;—in the Incarnation between the Eternal WORD and Man's nature, in the Eucharist between the Person of CHRIST and the Elements of Bread and Wine; so that it may be said that there is a renewal or continuation of the Incarnation.<sup>2</sup>

In order to this union of the Flesh of CHRIST with ours, He first incarnates Himself in the hands of the Priest; that is, at the moment of Consecration, CHRIST unites Himself, Body, Soul, and Divinity, in an ineffable manner, with the Elements of Bread and Wine; and so near does this approach to the union of the Divine and the Human in the Incarnation, that Bishop Andrewes calls it "a kind of hypostatical union of the Sign and the Thing signified, so united together as are the two natures of Christ."<sup>3</sup>

By the Real Presence of CHRIST is not meant a Presence by Divine Power, or Spiritual Grace; but the Presence of His very, true Body—not any thing different from the Body which He had on earth, and which He took up into heaven—not any thing to which the name or properties of His Body are merely ascribed in a Sacramental sense; but that very Body, which He took of the substance of the Virgin Mary His Mother, which was "crucified, dead, and buried," and ascended far above all heavens.<sup>4</sup>

In the Eucharist, the conjunction of the Elements with the Body and Blood is permanent: that is to say, it remains as long as the outward Species remain.<sup>5</sup>

It is a Miracle as great as any of those recorded in Scripture.<sup>6</sup>

1 "Tracts for the Day": Essays on Theological Subjects by various authors: edited by the Rev. Orby Shipley, p. 232 [or No. 5, "The Real Presence," p. 16].

2 Ibid., p. 232 [Ibid., p. 16].

3 Ibid., pp. 232, 233 [Ibid., pp. 16, 17].

4 Ibid., p. 245 [Ibid., p. 29].

5 Ibid., p. 237 [Ibid., p. 21].

6 Ibid., p. 248 [Ibid., p. 32].

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It is the complement of the Incarnation, which began in the Union of God with Man's nature, and culminates in the Union of individual men with God. ... The Doctrines are mutually dependent. There could have been no Eucharist but for the Incarnation. There could have been no receiving of CHRIST's Body in any sense, unless He had assumed a real Body. And the Incarnation would have been of no benefit to us, individually, but for Sacramental Communion, by which "we are made One with CHRIST, and CHRIST with us." Hence the Eucharist is frequently called the "Extension of the Incarnation."<sup>1</sup>

If CHRIST is not Present, as the Substance of our Offering, we have nothing to present to GOD but the material things, "the outward Signs," which can no more make us acceptable than the legal victims which could never take away sin. ... CHRIST is truly, really, and substantially Present under the Form of Bread and Wine; and we offer, not these visible productions of the earth, but Him as our Propitiation before GOD.<sup>2</sup>

Whole CHRIST, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, is then Present [at the moment of consecration]; and shall we not Worship Him with adoring faith, and the deepest prostration of our spirits?<sup>3</sup>

The adoration of CHRIST in the Sacrament is not a thing to be merely tolerated. It takes the rank of a Christian duty, according to the famous saying of S. Augustine.<sup>4</sup>

The Ritualistic doctrine cannot be charged with any want of decision and definiteness. The Bread and the Wine become the Body and the Blood of Christ; they are changed into the very Body which He took of the Virgin Mary, and the glory of which saints and angels behold in heaven. A miracle great as that of the Incarnation is accomplished in

<sup>1</sup> "Tracts for the Day," p. 232 [No. 5, p. 16].

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262 [*Ibid.*, p. 46].

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278 [*Ibid.*, p. 62].

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280 [*Ibid.*, p. 64].

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every celebration of the Eucharist,—a miracle in some respects far more wonderful than that of which it is said to be the “extension.” For the possibility of the Incarnation has been thought to lie in this, that man was made in the “image of God”; that human nature should be taken into personal union with God was, therefore, contemplated and provided for in the original creation of our race; but no such “image” of Christ can be supposed to exist in the Bread which has been made by human hands, and baked in an oven, or in the Wine which comes from the cellars of Bordeaux or Cadiz. The Elements so assumed into personal union with our Lord—made one with His Body, Soul, and Divinity—are offered to God as a Propitiatory Sacrifice. They are worshipped. Christ—the living, personal, glorified Christ—being indissolubly united with the Elements, He is received not only by “worthy” communicants, but by the unworthy; so that every tide-waiter who took the Sacrament to qualify for office, and went away from the altar to celebrate his appointment with a drunken carouse, received Christ.

The foundations of proof on which this stupendous structure is built ought to be sure and strong. The miracle is without a parallel. It is alleged, indeed, that Christ by “a simple act of volition converted water into wine,” and that “the same power can now turn Wine into His own Blood, to fulfil the purposes of His love in the Blessed Sacrament.” But the

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miracle at Cana has no analogy to that of the Altar. The water when changed into wine ceased to be water; if we had been told that it remained water still, and that though it had really become wine, all its original properties and effects remained, there would have been some remote similarity between that miracle and this. To make the analogy somewhat closer, it would be necessary to add, that the water, still remaining water, did not merely become wine, but became the very wine which had been provided at the beginning of the feast, and which had been already drunk by the guests; for the Bread becomes the Body of Christ, which has already been “received” by millions of communicants for more than eighteen hundred years. The resemblance between the two miracles would still be most distant; to lessen the remaining differences between them, we should require to be assured that the water—still remaining water—was changed not only into the wine which the guests had just drunk, but into wine which was lying at that moment in the cellars of the Roman Emperor in the imperial city, and that yet it was in the waterpots at Cana ready to be consumed by the Galilean peasants assembled to celebrate the marriage of their friends; for the Body of our Lord is in Heaven, and yet it is into that Body that the consecrated Bread is said to be changed. Even if this astounding addition were made to the story, much would remain to be added before the analogy could be of any real service in assisting us to accept the “mystery”; for the great wonder of all is that the

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Bread—remaining Bread—is made one with a living Person; if the miracle at Cana is to present any resemblance to the miracle of the Real Presence, we must further imagine that the water—remaining water—became the Body or Blood of Christ—that He Himself was not only sitting with the guests but was contained in the waterpots, and was drunk by the master of the feast.

Let no one reply, that the fact of the Real Presence is not impeached by showing that innumerable and preposterous inconsistencies result from the attempt to treat what is altogether supernatural and spiritual as though it were included in the natural order. There is no intention to imply that the preceding paragraph has any force at all against the doctrine itself; but when the miracle of Cana is appealed to as though it could lend some support to a Mystery with which it has not the remotest analogy, it is perfectly fair to show that the appeal is illegitimate. If in doing this, it is hardly possible to avoid the appearance of at tempting to throw an air of absurdity over what, if true, should be regarded with the most devout reverence, the responsibility must rest with those who weaken their own case in the attempt to strengthen it. It is an offence against taste and piety to ridicule the faith of good men; but the respect due to honest religious convictions cannot be claimed for the sophisms on which these convictions are sometimes rested.

There is another line of remark by which the advocates of this doctrine endeavour to lessen the natural



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recoil of the intellect from the mystery. That our Lord had “a solid, tangible Body,” that He was “no phantasm,” is, of course, earnestly maintained. But it is alleged that “there were inherent in His very Body, powers, Supernatural and Divine, which set Him above the laws of Human Nature, only that it was His Will to restrain their exercise, except in special cases.”<sup>1</sup> Some of the illustrations given of these “special cases” are simply instances in which Christ exerted His miraculous power over external nature. That Christ walked on the sea, suggests no difficulty to any mind that believes Him to be the Creator and Ruler of the material universe. But the advocates of the Real Presence allege miracles of another kind—miracles which do not merely imply the suspension or overruling of what are called natural laws, but miracles which cannot be believed except in defiance of all the laws of the human understanding itself; and these are the miracles which—if they could be shown to have taken place—would be of some use in relation to this mysterious doctrine.

It is said, for instance, that our Lord “could move from one place to another without passing over the intervening space.”<sup>2</sup> Where are we told this? “The disciples,” the writer adds, “left Him on the land, and straightway He was with them on the sea; and, without perceptible motion, the ship was immediately at the land whither they went.”<sup>3</sup> There are some

<sup>1</sup> “Tracts for the Day,” p. 254 [No. 5, p. 38].

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254 [*Ibid.*, p. 38].

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254 [*Ibid.*, p. 38].

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curious and very gratuitous additions here to the story as given by the evangelists. The writer, by inserting the word "straightway," which does not appear in the Gospels, appears to wish it to be understood that our Lord came from the land where the disciples had left Him to the ship, "without passing over the intervening space"; but St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. John, all tell us that the disciples saw Jesus "walking upon the sea," and St. John speaks of Him as "drawing nigh unto the ship," all of which expressions certainly imply that in coming to the disciples He did "pass over the intervening space." Where the writer learnt that the ship, as soon as our Lord entered it, reached the land "without perceptible motion," he does not inform us; the three evangelists who narrate the miracle say nothing of the kind. If this is supposed to be implied in the statement of St. John, "that immediately the ship was at the land whither they went," the "hidden powers" of our Lord's Body, which enabled it to "move from one place to another without passing over the intervening space," must be transferred to the ship itself and to all the people that were in it, which would be a somewhat startling hypothesis.

Then, again, it is said that though after the Resurrection "He still had 'flesh and bones,' palpable to touch, solid matter offered no resistance to His passage through it."<sup>1</sup> The only proof given rests on an untenable arrangement of the events of the morning of the Resurrection, and an untenable interpretation of

<sup>1</sup> "Tracts for the Day," p. 255 [No. 5, p. 39].

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the narrative given by St. John of our Lord's appearance to the disciples in the evening:—"On Easter morning His Re-animated Body had issued from the Sepulchre without rending the rock or bursting the sealed stone; and in the evening, He suddenly stood in the midst of the Disciples without entering through the barred doors."<sup>1</sup> This is to create superfluous wonders in the Gospel, in order to shade of the startling contrast between the alleged miracle effected by the Eucharistic consecration and all miracles besides. There is no proof that the stone remained sealed after our Lord had left the Sepulchre, or that he entered the room in which the Disciples were met while the doors were barred.

If the Elements become the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the miracle is absolutely unique, in all its circumstances and attributes. Every attempt to alleviate the difficulties in which it is involved by alleging analogous wonders is futile. Nothing analogous can be found. The Mystery stands alone.

The Anglican theologians who maintain the doctrine of the Real Presence are, on the whole, less fortunate than the Romish theologians who maintain the doctrine of Transubstantiation. If the Anglicans are relieved from the necessity of defending the philosophical theory with which the Romish creed is entangled, they are deprived of the great and formid-

<sup>1</sup> "Tracts for the Day," p. 255 [No. 5, p. 39].

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able stronghold to which, when hard pressed, a Roman controversialist is always able to retreat.

There is nothing absolutely and obviously absurd in affirming that the Church of Rome has authority in matters of faith. The claim is false, but it may be seriously defended by thoughtful and learned men without exposing themselves to the ridicule of the human race. That the decrees of the Council of Lateran express the mind of that Church to which our Lord promised the permanent guidance of the Spirit of Truth, though an assertion which will hardly bear looking at in the light of the history of the Council, may yet be supported by a very fair show of argument. But that the Church of England, whatever that Church may be—the English Crown and Parliament, the Bishops, the Clergy, Convocation, the English people, or those of them who have been baptized by the Anglican clergy, or those of them who have been confirmed by the Anglican Bishops, or those of them who regularly receive the communion at the Anglican altars—that the English Church, whose members no man can define and of whose authentic organs and true rulers no man can be sure, should be appealed to as having any shadow of power to determine a disputed doctrine, is so extravagant an hypothesis, that it may be doubted whether the most devoted of her sons would wittingly commit himself to maintain it. And if in a moment of heroic devotion any Anglican theologian should rashly demand for the Catechism of his Church, her Articles, and her Offices, a submission

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such as that which Rome claims for the decrees of Popes and Councils, there is this further difficulty, that it seems uncertain whether the documents of the Church of England teach the Real Presence or not. The ambiguous testimony of a Church destitute of authority, is the sandiest of foundations on which to rest a great Mystery like this.

Indeed, the *proof* of the doctrine is never really sought in the documents of the English Church itself; all that is seriously meant by the ingenious and very effective arguments of such writers as Mr. Cobb<sup>1</sup> is this: it being assumed, or proved on other grounds, that the doctrine is true, it can be shown that the documents of the English Church, so far from contradicting it, actually teach it; and, therefore, those who profess to be faithful ministers of that Church are bound to teach it too. The argument, though on some points very difficult to refute, is considerably enfeebled by the fact that probably three-fourths of the clergy and laity of the English Church, from the time of Elizabeth to our own, have read the documents in a different sense.

Nor can the Anglican theologians derive much strength for their doctrine from that vague appeal to the "Catholic Church" and to "Catholic opinion," which is so common in their writings. What do they mean by the "Church"? Where are we to find the authoritative organs of "Catholic opinion"? They

<sup>1</sup> Gerard Francis Cobb: "The Kiss of Peace"—a very keen and able pamphlet.

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cannot mean to appeal to Christendom as it actually exists, to Rome, which declares that their "orders" are invalid, and their very "consecration" of the Elements an idle form, to Constantinople, which refuses to acknowledge their definition of the doctrine of the Trinity, and from which they are separated by a double schism, by the original quarrel which divided the whole of the West from the whole of the East, and by the later quarrel which has divided the English Church from the remainder of the West. They cannot mean to appeal to the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of continental Europe, or to the "Separatist" Churches by which they are surrounded in this island; this would be to abandon all their characteristic claims, It must be to the Church of the early centuries that they appeal. But then they are met by this grave difficulty, that in no creed and in no council, the authority of which is acknowledged by the English Church, has the doctrine of the Real Presence any place.

The way in which this difficulty is met by the writer of the tract already quoted, shows how insuperable it is.

It has been observed, he says, sometimes with surprise, or by way of objection, that the Doctrine of the Eucharist has no place among the Articles of Faith in the Creed. That, however, can scarcely be admitted, seeing the Doctrine of the Incarnation is distinctly asserted in the shortest of our Creeds, and set forth with elaborate definition in the Nicene and Athanasian, as the fundamental Truth of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Tracts for the Day," edited by the Rev. Orby Shipley, p. 259 [No. 5, p. 43].

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By what subtlety of logic it can be shown that because a creed affirms that the Eternal Word became man in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, it also affirms that the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist become the Body and Blood of Christ, and are thus made one with His Soul and Divinity, may perhaps excite the curiosity of “uncatholic” theologians.

There appears to be a very wide gulf between these two articles of faith. It seems very possible to believe the first without believing the second. Thousands of devout and learned men have never felt that the doctrine of the Incarnation rendered the doctrine of the Real Presence inevitable. Stripping away the mere accessories from the argument by which the nexus between these great Mysteries is demonstrated, the whole proof amounts to this—

Every one who admits that the restoration of Human Nature was the end of the Incarnation, must see that the Real Presence of CHRIST’S Body and Blood, as well as the necessity of receiving them, is involved in that Doctrine, *since nothing else can make us the better for the SON of GOD having assumed our nature—nothing but that which unites us to Him, in Whom is the fulness of Grace and Blessing.*<sup>1</sup>

This is to prove one assertion which requires demonstration by making another which is equally in need of it. That “nothing else” than the Real Presence “can make us the better” for the Incarnation, is certainly a very bold proposition a proposi-

<sup>1</sup> “Tracts for the Day,” p. 260 [No. 5, p. 44].

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tion of a kind which most people will think rather more difficult to prove than the Real Presence itself. To show that the Elements of the Eucharist become the Body and Blood of Christ is a trifling task, compared with that of showing that *by no other means than this* is it possible for God to grant to men the blessings which He intended to flow from the Incarnation. If this startling proposition must be proved in order to secure the authority of the creeds for the doctrine of the Real Presence, it will be wise for its advocates to do their best to establish their case without that authority.

If creeds and councils fail, the writings of the Fathers are left. In these it is maintained that the voice of "the Church" may be distinctly heard. Dr. Pusey, in his "Doctrine of the Real Presence," gives a catena of ancient authorities for the Doctrine, extending from the time of the Apostles to A.D. 451 (the Fourth General Council).

After occupying about two hundred pages with proofs that the Fathers did not teach Transubstantiation, he occupies four hundred more with what are intended to be proofs that they did teach the Doctrine held by himself and those Anglican theologians of whom he is deservedly the beloved and venerated leader. Many of the passages alleged against the creed of the Romanists will seem to some readers the best reply to those which are alleged in support of his own. He quotes, for instance, the famous passage of St. Augustine: "If sacraments



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had not some likeness to the things whereof they are sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all; but *from this likeness* they also receive the names of the things themselves.”<sup>1</sup> That the mere “*likeness*” of the Elements to the Body and Blood of Christ should be given by Augustine as the reason why they are called the Body and Blood of Christ, appears hardly reconcilable with the hypothesis that he believed that in any sense they actually become the Body and Blood of Christ. Dr. Pusey shows that there are a vast number of passages in which the Fathers speak of the Elements as types, antitypes, figures, symbols, images of Christ or of His Body and Blood; but every such passage is a reason for interpreting passages which seem to affirm a Real Objective Presence, as simply the exaggerated expression of excited faith and vehement love. If but once in the course of a long poem a man says that the portrait of his mother is before him, the most fervent declarations of filial devotion to her, the most passionate exclamations in which he says he sees her smile, hears her voice, finds rest in her love, the most earnest appeals to her for counsel and consolation, must be interpreted under the control of the solitary statement that it is her *portrait* on which he is gazing—not herself. It may be inferred from the manner of his appeals to her, that he believes that his

<sup>1</sup> E. B. Pusey, “Doctrine of the Real Presence,” p. 94. Augustine, Ep. xcvi. § 9, ad Bonif. [Migne, “Patrologia,” vol. xxxiii. p. 364.]

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mother's spiritual presence is with him, and that though she has passed away she is watching over her child still; the picture may have given vividness and intensity to his ordinary belief in her guardian care; imagination may have risen into faith; but when once he has spoken of a "portrait," no reader in his senses will suppose that there is anything more than a portrait present to him, or that he believes that the canvas and the colours have by "transubstantiation" or "union," or any other mysterious change become anything different from what they seem.

Moreover, if the expressions which are quoted from the Fathers on behalf of the Real Presence are to have the meaning attributed to them, if they imply a definite Sacramental doctrine, and if they are to be regarded as illustrating the mind of the "Church," then the "Church" may be shown to have believed in very many other mysteries, for which neither Dr. Pusey nor the writer of the Tract edited by Mr. Shipley asks our faith.

The following passage from Bingham should teach us to be cautious in our interpretation of the language of the Fathers, or to distrust their authority, or both—

I observe concerning the effects of this consecration, that the very same change was supposed to be wrought by it in the waters of baptism, as by the consecration of bread and wine in the eucharist. For they supposed not only the presence of the Spirit, but also the mystical presence of Christ's blood, to be here after consecration. Julius Firmicus, speaking of baptism,

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bids men here “seek for the pure waters, the undefiled fountain, where the blood of Christ, after many spots and defilements, would whiten them by the Holy Ghost.” Gregory Nazianzen and Basil say upon this account, “That a greater than the temple, a greater than Solomon, a greater than Jonas is here,” meaning Christ by His mystical presence and the power of His blood. St. Austin says, “Baptism (or baptismal water) is red, when once it is consecrated by the blood of Christ; and this was prefigured by the waters of the Red Sea.” Prosper is bold to say, “That in baptism we are dipped in blood; and therefore martyrs are twice dipped in blood, first in the blood of Christ at baptism, and then in their own blood at martyrdom.” St. Jerom uses the same bold metaphor, explaining those words of Isaiah, ‘Wash ye, make ye clean’ [i. 16], “Be ye baptised in my blood by the laver of regeneration.” And again, speaking of the Ethiopian eunuch, he says, “He was baptized in the blood of Christ, about whom he was reading.”

After the same manner, Cæsarius says, “The soul goes into the living waters, consecrated and made red by the blood of Christ.” And Isidore says, “What is the Red Sea, but baptism consecrated in the blood of Christ?” Others tell us that we are hereby made partakers of the body and blood of Christ, and eat His flesh, according to what is said in St. John’s Gospel [vi. 53], “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.” Upon which words Fulgentius founds the necessity of baptism, “Forasmuch as it may be perceived by any considering man, that the flesh of Christ is eaten and His blood drunk in the laver of regeneration.” Hence Cyril of Alexandria says, “We are partakers of the spiritual lamb in baptism”: and Chrysostom, “That we thereby put on Christ, not only His Divinity, or only His humanity, that is, His flesh—but both together.” And Nazianzen, “That in baptism we are anointed and protected by the precious blood of Christ, as Israel was by the blood upon the door-posts in the night.” St. Chrysostom says again, “That they that are baptized put on a royal garment—a purple dipped in the blood of the Lord.” Philo-Carpathius says, “The spouse of Christ, His Church, receives in baptism the seal of Christ, being washed in the fountain of His most holy blood.” Optatus, as we have heard before, says, “Christ comes down by the

invocation, and joins Himself to the waters of baptism." Nay, Chrysostom, in one of his bold rhetorical flights, scruples not to tell a man that is baptized, "That he immediately embraces his Lord in his arms, that he is united to His body—nay, compounded, or consubstantiated with that body which sits above, whither the devil has no access." Some tell us, as Isidore, "That the water of baptism is the water that flowed out of Christ's side at His passion"; and others, as Laurentius Novariensis, "That it is water mixed with the sacred blood of the Son of God."

Others tell us, "That the water is transmuted or changed in its nature by the Holy Ghost, to a sort of divine and ineffable power." So Cyril of Alexandria, who frequently uses the word *μεταστοιχείωσις*, *transelementation*, both when he speaks of the water in baptism and the bread and wine in the eucharist, or of any other changes that are wrought in the mysteries of the Christian religion. Cyril of Jerusalem and Gregory Nyssen have the same observation upon the change that is wrought in the oil, after consecration, which they make to be the same with that of the bread and wine in the eucharist. 'Beware,' says Cyril, 'that you take not this ointment to be bare ointment; for as the bread in the eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, is not mere bread, but the body of Christ; so this holy ointment, after invocation, is not bare or common ointment, but it is a gift of God, that makes Christ and the Holy Spirit to be present in the action.' In like manner, Gregory Nyssen makes the same change to be in the mystical oil, and in the altar itself, and in the ministers by ordination, and in the waters of baptism, as in the bread and wine in the eucharist after consecration. 'Do not contemn,' says he, 'the divine laver, nor despise it as a common thing, because of the use of water: for great and wonderful things are wrought by it. This altar, before which we stand, is but common stone in its own nature, differing nothing from other stones, wherewith our walls are built; but after it is consecrated to the service of God, and has received a benediction, it is a holy table, an immaculate altar, not to be touched by any but the priests, and that with the greatest reverence. The bread also is at first but common bread, but when once it is sanctified by the holy mystery, it is made and called the body of Christ. So the mystical oil, and

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so the wine, though they be things of little value before the benediction, yet, after their sanctification by the Spirit, they both of them work wonders. The same power of the word makes a priest become honourable and venerable, when he is separated from the community of the vulgar by a new benediction. For he, who before was only one of the common people, is now immediately made a ruler and president, a teacher of piety, and a minister of the secret mysteries; and all these things he does without any change in his body or shape; for to all outward appearance he is the same that he was, but the change is in his invisible soul, by an invisible power and grace." Pope Leo goes one step further and tells us, "That baptism makes a change not only in the water, but in the man that receives it; for thereby Christ receives him, and he receives Christ, and he is not the same after baptism that he was before, but the body of him that is regenerated is made the flesh of Him that was crucified."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the essayist himself is distinctly conscious of the difficulty of bringing the language of the Fathers within the limits of any tenable theory. His own faith is that in the Eucharist there is a "bloodless or unbloody sacrifice," but he states, truly enough, that "the language peculiar to the actual fact—the shedding of the Victim's blood—is used by ancient writers as commonly as the mention of the Eucharist itself, and CHRIST is said to be sacrificed, immolated, slain upon the Altar, and lying there while the Priest stands over the sacrifice and prays."<sup>2</sup> He explains this by the closeness of the relation between the Eucharist and the original sacrifice of our Lord, and

<sup>1</sup> J. Bingham, "Antiquities of the Christian Church," lib. xi. cap 10. "Of the Consecration of the Water in Baptism."

<sup>2</sup> "Tracts for the Day," p. 271 [No. 5, p. 55],

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by the fact that the Eucharist is regarded "as a representative act," "showing forth the Lord's death"; but the explanation leaves the case just where it was before; the Fathers, in speaking of the Lord's Supper, use habitually the rhetoric of impassioned devotion; and the mere quotation of sentences in which they speak of the consecrated Elements as being Christ's Body and Blood, is valueless. An investigation of their writings, different in kind from that which is common in controversy, is necessary to arrive at their real meaning. Nothing, indeed, can be more certain than that devout men, holding the very simplest sacramental theory, may be carried, by the strong current of religious emotion, into the use of the language for which, if coldly interpreted, their theory affords no justification. Such vehemence of diction, such extravagance, as some will call it, may be only an evidence that their true opinions are too well known for them to have any fear of being misunderstood.

A singular illustration of this is afforded by a letter which recently appeared in a well-known and very vigorous Ritualist journal. The writer, after quoting several extracts from the New Congregational Hymn-book, adds, "If such language as this does not express the doctrine of the Real Objective Presence, I confess I am at a loss to conceive what could express it. And what a marvellous harmony is produced from such widely-different singers as Doddridge, Watts, Conder, Keble, and Thomas Aquinas! all of whom

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are here represented. I envy the Independents their authorized hymnal. Our prose prayer-book is but half what we require.”<sup>1</sup> The writer is hardly accurate in speaking of this hymn-book as the “authorized” hymnal of the Independents; it was compiled by a committee of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, but the committee alone are responsible for it. Practically, however, he is right. The book is used without scruple by a large number—perhaps by the majority of the Congregational Churches of this country. But it is perfectly well known that these Churches will not tolerate any suggestion of a supernatural change in the Elements. They are, for the most part, Zwinglians of the purest type. The language of the Congregational hymn-book is an instance in which the paradox is illustrated, that the men who are known to be most hostile to a theory are the men who may use most fearlessly, when under strong emotion, language which, interpreted strictly, must be held to sustain it. That the compilers of the Congregational hymn-book should use, with perfect freedom, hymns written by Congregationalists, by Anglicans, by Romanists, in which the “Real Presence,” and perhaps something more than the “Real Presence,” may seem to be recognized, makes it more than possible that the strong language of some of the Fathers is perfectly consistent with their having held a theory as simple and bare as that which is generally received by modern Indepen-

<sup>1</sup> *Church Times*, January 29, 1869.

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dents. The Independents use language which is supposed to express the Anglican “doctrine of a Real Objective Presence,” after that doctrine has been the subject of fierce controversy, and has been consciously and deliberately rejected by themselves and their ecclesiastical ancestors for three centuries. This may seem very surprising; but it shows how very unsafe it is to infer, from similar language used by the Fathers before the Eucharistic controversy had arisen, that on this doctrine they were Anglicans.

The appeal, then, must be to our Lord Himself and to His Apostles. This is conceded by Archdeacon Wilberforce, who says that—

An inquiry into the nature of the Holy Eucharist must be founded upon Scripture, and upon that passage of Scripture by which this solemn Rite was authorized as well as explained. The authority of Him by whom they were spoken, the interest of the occasion on which they were employed, the sententious weight of the expressions themselves—all give to the *words of institution* an importance which few other passages even of Holy Scripture can claim.<sup>1</sup>

It is, of course, contented by those who believe in the Real Presence that our Lord’s words, “This is My Body,” decide the controversy in their favour. The Bread does not cease to be Bread, but when duly consecrated by the priest it becomes what it became when Christ Himself uttered the words; it remains Bread, but it is also the Body of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> “The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist,” by Robert Isaac Wilberforce (Third Edition), p. 6.



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“The word *is* expresses the *identity* of the Subject and Predicate,”<sup>1</sup> and those who deny this interpretation are regarded as guilty of refusing to accept what our Lord asserted in the most explicit and unambiguous language.

But even if this interpretation of our Lord’s words were admitted, is it quite clear that it would necessarily follow that the amazing miracle wrought by Himself is wrought through age after age by every priest in Christendom? In that case we should have expected that Christ would have told the Apostles that the wonder which He had accomplished would be accomplished by them, and by all to whom they transmitted priestly powers. He told them that they were to break bread and to eat it, and that they were to drink wine, but these acts were to be “in remembrance” of Him. There is nothing to suggest that by repeating Christ’s words they were to change the common gifts of the Divine hand into a Living and Divine Person. What they were to “eat” was “bread,” what they were to “drink” was “wine”; even if He had meant them to understand that the Bread in His own hands had become His Body, and that the Wine had become His Blood, it would not follow that He also meant that the same transformation would be effected when He had left them. That the celebration was to be “in remembrance” of Him, would certainly give them quite another impression.

But those who contend so strenuously for what they

<sup>1</sup> “The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist,” p. 98.

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maintain to be the only possible interpretation of the “copula,” and who will listen to no evasion of its literal meaning, are obliged to desert their own principle. The words of our Lord, when He took the Cup, as reported by St. Luke and St. Paul, altogether refuse to submit to the treatment which is forced upon the words pronounced over the Bread. “This Cup is the new testament in My Blood.”<sup>1</sup> If the Bread is miraculously changed into the Body of Christ, why is not the Cup miraculously changed into the testament or covenant? On what grounds can those theologians, who insist so strenuously upon the most literal interpretation of the one sentence, claim the right to introduce a double metaphor into the other? There is nothing more inconceivable in the change of a silver or golden cup into a “covenant,” than there is in the change of a piece of bread into the Body of Christ. Those who think that the Cup is to be interpreted as meaning the Wine which is in it, and the “covenant” as meaning the Blood by which the covenant was consecrated, are somewhat inconsistent in complaining that there is irreverence, rationalism, unbelief, in venturing to think that the word “is” may affirm something different from “identity.”

Nor does this exhaust the inconsistencies of the advocates of the literal interpretation. “Is,” they say, must mean “is,” and nothing else. The “Cup” does not mean the “Cup; the “new covenant” does

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 20; I Cor. xi. 25.

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not mean the “new covenant”; common-sense and the most obvious laws of language drive them to impose on these words other meanings; but the copula “is” affirms the “identity” of the subject and predicate. Here they take their stand; and they refuse to listen to any “evasion” of the obvious meaning of the word.

The subject is “this”; the predicate is “My Body.” Do they mean to affirm that there is “identity” between these two things? “Our Lord,” says Archdeacon Wilberforce, “does not speak of Bread at large, or Wine in general, but of *this*—*i.e.*, of that which was consecrated or set apart.” Conscious, however, that this very definite statement might involve the theory in serious difficulties, he adds

No doubt His words had a further application; their ultimate reference was to “the inward part,” or thing signified, which was the real object under consideration; but they had also an *indirect* relation to “the outward and visible sign.”<sup>1</sup>

The believers in the Real Presence appear to find as great a difficulty with *Hoc* as the believers in Transubstantiation.<sup>2</sup> Archdeacon Wilberforce vacil-

<sup>1</sup> Robert Isaac Wilberforce: “The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist,” p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> The writer of the Tract already quoted (“Tracts for the Day,” No. 5.) distinctly rejects the reference of “*This*” to the Bread. “He was Present under the sacramental ‘Forms,’ and gave Himself to His Disciples, saying, ‘Take eat; *This*’—not this Bread, for the pronoun does not refer to Bread, but to Something Which the Bread had become, and Which our LORD held in His hand—this compound Whole consisting of the

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lates between the interpretation which refers it to the Bread, and the interpretation which refers it to the Body of Christ. On the whole, however, he appears to think that "this" denotes the Bread. The direct reference to the Body of Christ is implicitly rejected by him on a later page; for he says the identity between the subject and the predicate is not a "common case of physical identity, as when we handle portions of the visible creation, and say, 'this is iron,' or 'this is earth.'"<sup>1</sup> To describe the identity predicated in the cases alleged, as "physical" is not, perhaps, very philosophical, but the meaning is clear; and the Archdeacon intended to say that when we hold a certain substance in our hands and say, "this is iron," we use the copula in a different sense from that in which Christ used it when holding the Bread in His hand, He said, "This *is* My Body."

Nor is it possible for the advocates of the Real Presence to contend that in these two expressions the copula has the same power, unless they deny that "this" denotes the Bread. The Bread, they acknowledge, remains Bread. It may be mysteriously

Sign and the Thing signified, as the Form of Consecration enables us to recognize: "This is My Body" (p. 257, or No. 5, p. 41). This might have passed, perhaps, if St. Luke and St. Paul had not told us that when our Lord took the cup, He said, "This *Cup* is the new testament in My Blood." Since the subject of the second sentence is the Cup, it is difficult to see why the subject of the first sentence should be anything else than the Bread.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Isaac Wilberforce: "The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist," p. 99.

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united with the Body of Christ, but the Bread is one thing and the Body of Christ is another. The two may be as intimately one as the Humanity and the Divinity of our Lord; but to affirm the “identity” of the Humanity and the Divinity would be a flagrant heresy. Some other interpretation of the copula must be discovered.

Archdeacon Wilberforce’s solution of the difficulty is as curious as anything that can be found among the innumerable curiosities of theological controversy. He begins by maintaining that the copula affirms the “identity” of the subject and the predicate. He discovers that this is not “a common case of physical identity.” He concludes that “since the relation between the subject and the predicate in our Lord’s words of institution cannot be resolved into any more general idea, it can derive its name only from itself, and the union can be described as nothing else than a *sacramental identity*.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, the Archdeacon informs us that the identity which exists between the Bread and the Body of Christ in the Sacrament, is—the identity which exists between the Bread and the Body of Christ in the Sacrament. This cannot be disputed; but most readers would be grateful for fuller information. Nor will it do for the advocates of this doctrine to reply, “It is a mystery.” They profess to have a theory. If they believe that the “identity” of the subject and predicate in the words of institution cannot be denied without serious

<sup>1</sup> “The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist,” p. 99.

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peril to the life of the Church, they are bound to tell mankind what they mean by this "identity."

It is very curious, too, that while those who believe in the Real Presence are disposed to be very severe upon other people for giving to the word "is" the meaning "represents" or "resembles"—a meaning which it very commonly bears—they themselves are obliged to assign to it a meaning which it bears nowhere else in Holy Scripture, and which it never bears in profane literature. "Wherein then," asked the Archdeacon, "does the identity consist? It is plainly a peculiar principle—*sui generis*; which, being without parallel in the world around, is entitled to a specific appellation."<sup>1</sup>

It is also curious, that in his account of this unique "identity," the Archdeacon speaks of the "union" between the Bread and the Body of the Lord. He says, "The ancient writers speak of the *union* as mystical, or secret."<sup>2</sup> But to predicate "union" is to deny "identity."

How then are we to interpret our Lord's words? We have just been told that they mean, this Bread and My Body are *identical*, but in a certain unique sense, which cannot be defined. And now we are told that they mean this Bread and My Body are, in a "mystical or secret" way, *united*. The two propositions are perfectly different. And whatever force there may be in objecting to the Protestant in-

<sup>1</sup> "The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist," p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

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terpretation that “is” does not mean “represents” or “resembles,” there is certainly much greater force in the objection to Dr. Wilberforce’s interpretation that “is” does not mean “united with.”

There is another difficulty involved in the “literal” interpretation. If the Bread became our Lord’s Body at the Last Supper, and the Wine His Blood, His Body must have been “broken,” and His Blood “shed,” before His crucifixion. Nothing can be more explicit than our Lord’s words—“This is My Body which is *broken* for you,”—“This Cup is the new testament in My Blood, *shed* for many for the remission of sins.” To insist on interpreting the copula literally, and to refuse to accept the “literal interpretation” of the whole of the predicate, is flagrantly inconsistent. The “literal” interpretation requires us to believe that the atonement was consummated before our Lord hung on the cross; that He was slain before the “wicked hands” of His enemies touched Him; and that He died for the sins of the world before His agony in the garden, and His condemnation in the judgment-hall.

And what is the Body which is now “present” in the consecrated Bread, and the Blood which is now “present” in the consecrated Wine? Those who contend so earnestly for the “literal” interpretation, ought to reply that it is the “broken” Body, and the Blood “shed” to atone for the sins of mankind. This is what our Lord states in the words of institution. This is plainly suggested by the appointment of two

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separate Elements for the Body and the Blood. This is not, however, what the advocates of the "literal" interpretation believe. They insist that it is the glorified humanity of our Lord which is given to communicants in the Eucharistic Elements.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to see how they can deny that, according to their theory, the Body given to the faithful now is very different from the Body given to the Apostles by our Lord Himself, unless they are prepared to maintain that He was not only crucified, but glorified, the day before His Passion, four days before His Resurrection and six weeks before His Ascension into heaven.

These are illustrations of the confusion into which we are plunged by the "literal" interpretation of the words of institution. "*This*" does not denote the Bread, when our Lord says, "This is My Body"; but it must denote the Cup, when He says, "This Cup is the new testament in My Blood." Or if in both cases the pronoun denotes the visible sign, then "is" does not mean "is," but means something which cannot be defined, or else means "is united with." In both cases, the "Body broken for you" does not mean the

<sup>1</sup> "Our LORD's glorified Body, in virtue of its union with DEITY, may be released altogether from relation to place, as He showed, while on earth, that it could be when He pleased. Its only relation to locality is that mysterious one formed by its Sacramental conjunction with the outward Sign in the Eucharist."—"Tracts for the Day," pp. 256, 257 [or No. 5, pp. 40, 41]. The transition from the "may be" of the first sentence to the "is" of the second, is very characteristic.



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broken Body; and the “Blood shed for the remission of sins” does not mean the shed Blood.

The great discourse of our Lord s, recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John’s Gospel, is also relied upon as an absolute demonstration of the doctrine of the Real Presence. Before, however, any use can be made of that discourse in support of the mystery, it is obviously necessary to show that the discourse was intended to refer to the Eucharist. It has been very naturally objected, that the discourse was delivered before the Sacrament was instituted; and although this objection, taken alone, has no conclusive force, it is sufficiently grave to require an answer. Arch-deacon Wilberforce attempts a reply. Referring to the objection, he says—

It proceeds on an entire forgetfulness of the peculiar character and purpose of St. John’s Gospel. When the beloved Apostle addressed himself to gather up the fragments which remained, after his brethren had fallen asleep, it is obvious that his design was to illustrate those great doctrines which he perceived to be the characteristic features of the Christian Faith. These doctrines are especially three; the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity—the beginning and basis of all knowledge; the doctrine of our Blessed Lord’s Incarnation—the medium whereby divine gifts were imparted to man’s nature; the doctrine of the Church and the Sacraments—the instruments, that is, whereby those treasures which have been stored up in the Humanity of the Son of God are to be communicated to His brethren.<sup>1</sup>

If it was part of the “design” of St. John’s Gospel to “illustrate” the doctrine of the Eucharist, it is, to

<sup>1</sup> Robert Isaac Wilberforce: “Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist,” p. 155.

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say the least, very astonishing that he alone of the four Evangelists passes over the institution of the Rite in absolute silence.

Again Dn Wilberforce asks—

Why should we be surprised, then, to find allusion [*i.e.*, in St. John's Gospel] to that doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, which was the central point in the worship of Christians? And was it not rather to be expected that St. John would have added a caution that this custom was not referred to, if our Lord's words had no reference to a practice, which from the first occupied so large a part in the thoughts and attention of Christians?<sup>1</sup>

Certainly there would be no reason to be "surprised" by an "allusion to the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist" in St. John's Gospel. Dr. Wilberforce is perfectly aware that the "surprise" has been occasioned by the fact that St. John appears to say nothing about it. As for the "caution" which he thinks might have been expected in this sixth chapter, —would it not have been, on his hypothesis, quite as reasonable to expect that St. John would have said explicitly that the interpretation imposed on our Lord's words, by the people of Capernaum, was substantially right, and that His Flesh is really eaten and His Blood really drunk in the Lord's Supper? And if the discourse referred to the Eucharist, and was intended to teach that our Lord's actual "Flesh" is given to the faithful, such a statement was eminently necessary after the declaration of our Lord "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing:

<sup>1</sup> "Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist," p. 157.

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*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.*"<sup>1</sup>

The grounds for supposing that our Lord was speaking of the Eucharist in this discourse, are supposed to be "greatly strengthened" by the alleged "prediction respecting the efficacy of Christian Baptism" in the conversation with Nicodemus.

One difference, of course, existed between the cases—for whereas the Holy Eucharist was an ordinance wholly without precedent, Baptism, on the other hand, had been usual among the Jews. Nicodemus, therefore, expresses no wonder at the mention of water, though he was at a loss to understand how he could be born again: whereas Our Lord's statement that He would give them His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink, surprised the Jews even more than His declaration that He Himself was the channel through which they were to receive heavenly graces. But as to the full nature and import of these holy rites, it is manifest that one was as little understood antecedently to the institution of Christian Baptism, as the other was before the Last Supper.<sup>2</sup>

The inference which is drawn from this is, that—

There can, therefore, be no presumption drawn against the application of this Chapter to the institution of the Lord's Supper, from the time when the doctrine was delivered, which would not equally militate against the application of the third chapter to the Sacrament of Baptism: an application which is, notwithstanding, universally allowed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Isaac Wilberforce: "Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist," pp. 157, 158.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158; quoted from "Three Sermons on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," by William [Cleave], Lord Bishop of Chester: Oxford, 1801, p. 25. The same argument for the

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Passing over the extremely broad and unfounded statement that it is “universally allowed” that in His conversation with Nicodemus, our Lord referred to a Baptism not yet instituted—a statement which involves the conclusion that the Apostles never received the Baptism which is necessary to enter the Kingdom of Heaven—there is a much broader “difference” between “the cases” than the Arch-deacon recognizes. What ground would there have been for finding in the conversation with Nicodemus the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, if our Lord had said nothing about “water,” and had insisted only on the necessity of being born of the Spirit? Just as little ground is there for finding in the discourse, recorded in the sixth chapter, the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, for our Lord says nothing about the Bread and the Wine.

No doubt the Fathers use the words of this discourse when they are speaking of the Eucharist; for our Lord is affirming the very facts and laws, as far as they can be affirmed in human language, which the Eucharist expresses far more effectively. But that the discourse and the Rite illustrate and affirm the same spiritual mysteries, is no proof that the discourse directly refers to the Rite. And that the Fathers *apply* the language of the discourse to the Rite, is no proof that they believed that the discourse directly refers to the Rite.

reference of John vi. is given by Bellarmine: “De Sac. Euchar.,” lib. i. cap. v.

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The declaration of Augustine is very distinct, "Credere in eum hoc est manducare panem vivum. Qui credit in eum manducat."<sup>1</sup>

Authority failing, the authority of Scripture, and the authority of the undivided Church ascertained in the creeds and decrees of the early Councils or in the writings of the early Fathers,—is there any process of theological argument by which this doctrine can be deduced from great truths universally admitted by Christian men? Can it be built upon the stable foundations of that common faith which underlies all the divisions of Christendom?

The attempt is made in the Tract which has been already quoted. Union with God is the perfection and glory of man's nature. For this great destiny man was originally created. He was taught to look beyond the bliss of Eden, to a nearness to God surpassing his conception. Even after the Fall, this sublime hope was not altogether extinguished. It shone with fitful brightness amidst the darkness of Paganism, and explains the fascination of all Pantheistic dreams of the ultimate absorption of the individual soul in the ocean of the Divine immensity. Man has sometimes striven hard to achieve the blessedness for which God made him; but by no self-originated force could he ever rise into union with God.

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, "In Joannis Evangelium Tractatus," xxvi. cap. i. Migne, "Patrologia," vol. xxxv. p. 1,607. Quoted by Jeremy Taylor in "The Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Sacrament," iii. 14; E. Cardwell's "Enchiridion," vol. i. p. 544.

At no time, either before the Fall or after it, could this Union have been effected by the exercise of man's natural powers. No improvement or elevation of his faculties, no degree of moral excellence, could lead to an end so wholly Supernatural. They might be the conditions required for its attainment, or the qualifications fitting for it, but the Gift itself must come from an external source. If man was to be united to GOD, the Divine Nature must, in some way, have come in contact with his; the unspeakable Gift must have been communicated, not acquired, the result of free grace, not the price of man's work.<sup>1</sup>

These are the general premisses on which the argument is based, and they will be accepted, and accepted heartily, by the profoundest and most spiritual theologians of all Churches.

It is also contended that the great end of the Christian Redemption, is not simply to restore man to his original righteousness, but to that transcendent union with God which would have crowned and consummated the persistent fidelity of the father of our race. God assumed human nature, that man might be made partaker of the Divine nature. The Incarnation has for its ultimate purpose the exaltation of all regenerate souls into mysterious and eternal union with God.

In all this there will be a very general agreement with the writer of the Tract. Nor will many refuse to go with him a step farther. He says—

As the Incarnate SON did not contract any relation to individuals of the human race by His assumption of their

<sup>1</sup> "Tracts for the Day," pp. 218, 219 [or No. 5, pp. 2, 3].

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common Nature, the glory He conferred upon it was only the exaltation of Humanity at large. Something more was needed to bring these transcendent Blessings home to every single person of the Redeemed race. It was necessary that the SAVIOUR should contract a Personal relation to each of them. ... As we inherit the evil and the loss from the First [Adam] by participation in his nature, so we must derive the Restoration and the Blessing from the Second by participating in His Nature. *There must consequently be means, by which this wondrous communication may be effected; and whatever these means are, they must necessarily be Supernatural;* for by Supernatural Means alone can we partake in that Nature of our Incarnate LORD, which He hath exalted to the Throne of God in Heaven.<sup>1</sup>

It is unnecessary to criticize the theological assumptions in this extract, on which grave controversies have arisen; the main truth that “by supernatural means alone” can we be made partakers of the glorified nature of our Lord is indisputable.

Thus far, the argument has been elaborated with great care. It is perfectly coherent. It is instinct with life. But at this point all that can be called argument ceases. The path is wholly lost. The track ends; we are on the open hillside at once, and with a precipice at our feet. Between the position to which the writer has brought us safely enough, that through “supernatural means alone” can human nature attain union with God in Christ, and the position that these “supernatural means” are the Sacraments, there is a wide gulf. He passes across it himself on the wings of bold assertion, but there is no Bridge of Logic by which we can follow

<sup>1</sup> “Tracts for the Day,” p. 225 [or No. 5. p. 9].

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him. There is not even the show of argument; and it is impossible, therefore, to give a refutation.

On his own principles, however, it may be shown that there is no necessary connection between the conceded truth, up to which he has worked his way with so much thoughtful labour, and the conclusion which is in dispute.

It is admitted that "it is not we who ascend up into heaven to bring CHRIST down from above. It is He who must come and unite Himself to us."<sup>1</sup> But why should not the same Divine power which, according to the theory of the Real Presence, unites the Person of Christ with the consecrated Bread and Wine, act immediately on the soul of the communicant? Why are the Eucharistic Elements the necessary vehicle of its operation? "It has been said that CHRIST incarnates Himself in each worthy communicant, because He unites His Sacred Flesh to ours, and in a real and true sense makes Himself One with us."<sup>2</sup> This language is perilous; the framers of the Athanasian Creed would have recognized in it the seeds of heresy; but conceding the truth of what it is intended to affirm, why is it necessary that He should "first incarnate Himself in the hands of the priest"?<sup>3</sup> The Divine action on the soul may surely be direct and immediate.

<sup>1</sup> "Tracts for the Day," p. 227 [No. 5, p. 11].

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 232 [Ibid., p. 16].

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 232 [Ibid., p. 16]. There is a reason alleged, but it is not a reason; it is only an attempt to show the spiritual expediency of this antecedent "impanation," for it is



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When Ritualistic writers tells us that to deny their theory of the Real Presence, is to degrade the Lord's Supper into the celebration of "an absent Lord," and to deprive the Service of all spiritual and supernatural power, they forget their own teaching on the efficacy of Baptism. Both the Sacraments are alleged to "unite us to the very Person of Christ Himself." "In Baptism we are made members of CHRIST; parts of His Sacred Body, even as if our flesh and bones were made continue with His. ... We become Children of God and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven."<sup>1</sup> "Baptism unites us to CHRIST through the power of the HOLY SPIRIT."<sup>2</sup>

But in the Water of Baptism there is no "Real Presence"; and yet the Rite is effectual. What propriety, then, can there be in such fervid language as the following—

No phantom body was given for our Salvation, and no figure can convey to us the Life of Jesus. ... The very necessities of the case the needs of man and the purpose

inaccurate to call it an "incarnation." "Lest this [the incarnation in the worthy communicant] should be thought to indicate only a subjective Union, consequent upon the ardent faith and devotion of the receiver, there is an antecedent Union altogether external to the communicant himself, upon which the other is dependent." And yet, although the reception of the *res Sacramenti* is made independent of the faith of the communicant, the reception of the *virtus Sacramenti* is made dependent upon it. The "subjective" peril is, therefore, not eliminated.

<sup>1</sup> "Tracts for the Day," pp. 230, 231 [No. 5, pp. 14, 15].

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234 [*Ibid.*, p. 18].

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of the Eucharist as carrying out the ends of the Incarnation—require the Real Presence of CHRIST with the Means He has appointed for supplying those needs, and carrying out those purposes.<sup>1</sup>

Is there, according to the Ritualistic theory of Baptism, anything of the character of a “phantom” in that Rite? Is it a mere “figure,” because there is “no personal conjunction between the Water and the Spirit”? If the power of the Holy Ghost in the one Sacrament is exerted immediately on the soul of the recipient, why should it not be exerted in the other Sacrament in the same way? Does the writer of the Tract believe that men become less truly one with-Christ in Baptism than in the Eucharist? If he does, let him tell us what solitary blessing is withheld in the first Sacrament which is given in the second. Are we not in his belief made members through Baptism, of the regenerate race of which Christ is the Head? And must not this distinction and blessedness come to us through that Sacred Humanity, which is the channel of all grace and glory? If we are made partakers of the nature of Christ in Baptism, for which the “Real Presence” is not claimed, why is that “Presence” necessary in the Eucharist, in order that the Life already conferred may be strengthened and perfected? All the scornful words which are flung at the theory which refuses to recognize the union of Christ with the Bread and the Wine of the Eucharist, may be flung back by any

<sup>1</sup> “Tracts for the Day,” pp. 244, 245 [No. 5, pp. 28, 29].

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one who chooses to do it, at the theory which refuses to recognize any union of the Holy Ghost with the Water of Baptism.

The consequences which are drawn from this doctrine it is unnecessary to discuss. If Christ is Personally Present in the Elements, it is a duty to bow before the consecrated Bread and Wine with wonder and reverence and awe. To the cold imagination of an English Nonconformist, the burning of incense and the lighting of candles may appear ignoble expressions of devout worship; but if it seems to any man that by these acts the transcendent mystery is more vividly recognized and more reverentially honoured, there is nothing to be said; and the history of Anglicanism during the last thirty years appears to demonstrate, that though the Tractarians were wiser than the Ritualists, in the caution with which they discussed this doctrine in their writings, the Ritualists are wiser than the Anglicans in their visible recognition of it in their worship. The theory is imperilled by exposing it too freely to the common light of the intellect; it is strengthened by surrounding it with whatever appeals to the imagination and the heart.

### III.

The theory of the Lord's Supper, commonly held by modern Evangelical Nonconformists, appears to be very different from that which was held by

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their theological and ecclesiastical ancestors. The "Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational Churches in England, agreed upon by their Elders and Messengers in their Meeting at the Savoy, October 12th, 1658," contains propositions on the Sacraments which would probably excite the suspicion and alarm of most of the Churches represented in the present "Congregational Union of England and Wales." The articles on the two Sacraments are almost identical with those in the Westminster Confession. They protest very firmly against Transubstantiation and the doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, but give no sanction to the theory which seems to be generally accepted by modern Independents, and which represents Baptism and the Lord's Supper as having been instituted simply to perpetuate the memory of historical facts, to illustrate spiritual truths, to make an impression on the hearts of those who celebrate the Rites or who witness their celebration, and to afford an authorized symbolic expression of faith in Christ and brotherly love.<sup>1</sup>

There are statements in the Savoy Declaration which the writer of this Essay would decline to accept; against the restriction which provides that neither Baptism nor the Lord's Supper "may be

<sup>1</sup> A Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational Churches in England. In "Historical Memorials relating to the Independents or Congregationalists." by Benjamin Hanbury, vol. iii. pp. 543, 544; Articles xxix., xxx.

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dispensed by any but a minister of the Word lawfully called," he vehemently protests; but it appears to him that the general conception of the character and purpose of the Sacraments, professed by those who met at the Savoy, is very much truer and nobler than that which he imagines is ordinarily taught by modern Congregationalists.

The Sacramental theory of modern Congregationalists has been injuriously affected by their position and history. They have had to maintain a severe and protracted struggle against the errors which the Church of England has inherited from Rome errors which, notwithstanding all ambiguities, are strongly supported by the Anglican Catechism and Baptismal Office, and which are not altogether absent from the Communion Service. Whatever conception of the Sacraments appears to lend the very slightest sanction to these errors, they have come to regard with alarm. To retreat as far as possible from Roman superstition has appeared their only safety. But a theology developed under the influence of incessant anxiety to avoid giving any real or apparent advantage to hostile theories will certainly be impoverished; and the Nonconformist doctrine of the Lord's Supper has been seriously injured by the controversial interests which have controlled its formation.

It is instructive to observe how very little has been written by Nonconformist authors in illustration and defence of any positive doctrine on the Eucharist,

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They have written against the Romish theory. They have written against the Anglican theory. But no considerable treatise explaining and vindicating their own position, was produced by any of the great Independents of the Commonwealth; nor has any such treatise been produced by their successors. Dr. Halley, in his extremely able series of "Lectures on the Sacraments," has given almost all his strength to the controversies on Baptism. The five lectures on the Lord's Supper, although exhibiting a very definite doctrine, and containing a considerable amount of free and independent thinking, are the least valuable part of the book. Dr. Wardlaw, in his voluminous "Systematic Theology," does not devote a single lecture to either of the Sacraments, and contents himself with an incidental attack on the doctrine of Transubstantiation towards the close of a lecture on the second commandment. In Dr. Pye-Smith's "First Lines of Christian Theology,"—a work of inestimable value to the theological student,—the section on Baptism occupies fifteen pages, and the section on the Lord's Supper occupies four.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Pye-Smith defines a Sacrament as "a divine institution, of universal obligation, for conveying to

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this, I have observed that the Editor (Rev. W. Farrer) has a note to the effect, that he has incorporated with the section on Baptism the substance of a separate MS. on the meaning of βαπτίζειν and the proper mode of Baptism, and some Notes of a Sermon on Rom. vi. 4; but this does not make any substantial change in the accuracy of what is stated above; for it may be supposed that there was nothing which could be 'incorporated' with the section on the Lord's Supper.

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the mind and feelings of men, by some sensible substance and symbolical action, an impressive idea of the most essential blessings of redemption by the Messiah.”<sup>1</sup> This definition, which represents the Ordinance as being mainly *didactic*, receives a very important extension in a subsequent paragraph, where it is said that Sacraments “are signs *confirmatory* of divine truths and promises; and instructive, especially,” it is added, “to men of inferior cultivation”<sup>2</sup>—a qualification which suggests the amazing theory that their utility, and therefore the obligation to celebrate them, will be gradually diminished by the diffusion of education.

The Lord’s Supper is defined to be—

“I. *A religious festival*: generically resembling the sacrifice feast of the heathens (derived, no doubt, from a pure fountain of primeval Divine instruction), and of the worshippers of the true God.

“II. *Instituted by Christ* ...

“III. *Commemorative* ... [in the sense apparently of being a permanent and ‘irrefragable evidence’ of the fact that Christ died and rose again].

“IV. *Significant, ex institute*: of

“(1) The spiritual life by the death of Christ produced and sustained.

“(2) Union to Christ, in receiving Him as Sovereign, Saviour, and Teacher—rejecting all false

<sup>1</sup> “First Lines of Christian Theology,” by John Pye-Smith, D.D.; edited by W. Farrer, LL.B., p. 654.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 655.

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religions,—acknowledging His people as our brethren—binding ourselves by solemn covenant-engagements.”<sup>1</sup>

It is very possible that in the oral lectures, of which the “First Lines” are but the syllabus, Dr. Pye-Smith developed his conception of the Lord’s Supper as a religious festival, so as to include that *confirmation* of Divine truths and promises which he asserts to be one of the purposes for which Sacraments were instituted. But his general theory appears to be in harmony with the common Nonconformist opinion, that the design of the Lord’s Supper is to perpetuate a symbolic declaration of the truth of certain doctrines and of the reality of certain historical facts, and to give expression to the faith, devotion, and mutual affection of the communicants. There can be little doubt that modern Congregationalists, in their extreme dread of high sacramental doctrines, have drifted into pure Zwinglianism; it is possible that some of them have drifted farther still.

The most startling illustration of their present position is afforded by the contrast between the “Declaration of the Faith, Order, and Discipline of the Congregational or Independent Dissenters,” adopted in 1833 by the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and the “Declaration,” already referred to, adopted at the Savoy in 1658.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> “First Lines of Christian Theology,” pp. 674, 675.

<sup>2</sup> “Historical Memorials relating to the Independents or Congregationalists,” by Benjamin Hanbury, pp. 597–600.



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modern document is not in any sense a creed. It is imposed on no Church. It is signed by no minister. It has nothing to do with “terms of Communion.” It claims, however, to be an historical statement of what the founders of the Union believed to be the common faith of English Congregationalists. The “Declaration” appears to affirm a theory of the Rite which excludes even the didactic conception of it, and leaves absolutely nothing in the Service but the expression of the subjective religious life of those who take part in it—it is “to be celebrated by Christian Churches as a token of faith in the Saviour and of brotherly love.”<sup>1</sup>

Contrast with this the theory of the Savoy Declaration—

“Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by Christ to represent Him and His benefits, [*not to represent our faith and love.*] ... There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation or fundamental<sup>2</sup> union between the sign and the thing signified. ... The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; [*but there is grace conferred; and to “exhibit” does not mean merely “to show,” but “to administer,” or “impart;”*] neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon

<sup>1</sup> Hanbury’s “Memorials,” p. 599. “Principles of Religion,” xviii.

<sup>2</sup> This is the word given in the Declaration, as printed in Hanbury’s “Memorials,” p. 543. The Westminster Confession reads “Sacramental.”

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the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, [*but there is efficacy—of which the modern “Declaration” says nothing,*] but upon the work of the Spirit, and the Word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.”<sup>1</sup>

Again: “Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein He was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of His body and blood, called the Lord’s supper, to be observed in His churches unto the end of the world;” [*Why? “As a token of faith in the Saviour, and of brotherly love”?* No, but] “for the perpetual remembrance and showing forth of the sacrifice of Himself in His death, the sealing of all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto Him, and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him and with each other. ... Worthy receivers outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all benefits of His death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread or wine, yet as really but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to the outward senses.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hanbury’s “Memorials,” p. 543. Article xxviii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 544. Article xxx.

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No doubt there are very many Congregationalists who retain the substance of the Savoy theory, though they reject some of its details, and seldom use the technical phraseology in which it is expressed. It is still more certain that there are tens of thousands of Congregationalists, the actual attitude of whose souls at the Lord's Supper can be vindicated only by a theory very different from that of the later "Declaration": their chief thought is not of professing their own "faith in the Saviour," and their "brotherly love"; they go to the table to receive, not to give. The spirit refuses to be restrained within the limits of a theory so narrow and bare. The heart is wiser than the intellect. And yet the poverty of the theory is mischievous.

It may indeed be suggested that what has been quoted from the modern document is a definition of the purpose for which the Rite is to be "celebrated," and that the eminent and devout men who drew up the "Declaration" would have greatly enlarged and enriched their account of the Sacrament, if they had proceeded to define the purposes for which it was "instituted." But the fact is, that whenever modern Congregationalists have attempted to develop a Sacramental theory, they have given almost exclusive prominence to the subjective view; and the result is, that both the Sacraments are in danger of being regarded as the unnecessary and incongruous encumbrances of a spiritual faith. If Baptism is nothing more than a ceremony in which children are

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“dedicated” to God, the “dedication” may be quite as solemn and sincere without water as with. If the Lord’s Supper is nothing more than a ceremony in which Christian men express their faith in Christ, and their love for each other, there are a thousand other modes in which this faith and this love may be expressed quite as emphatically as by eating Bread together and drinking Wine.

The root of the error lies in the habit of regarding Sacraments as forms of worship, and methods for expressing religious thought and feeling. What propriety is there in Baptism, if it is only a mode of professing faith in Christ? To recite a creed would be a much more significant act. That faith in Christ may be a condition of Baptism is quite possible; but that Baptism is in itself a profession of faith is inconceivable. Nor is it so regarded even by those who refuse to administer the Rite except to believers. They require the profession to be made before they administer the Rite. Baptism, moreover, is the act—not of the man whose faith is professed—but of another; the man himself only submits to it; if it were a profession of faith, the candidate should baptize himself. Or, if Baptism is nothing more than an act by which parents solemnly dedicate their children to God, why do not the parents themselves administer the Ordinance? The true instinct, even of those whose theory is wrong, has preserved them from the practices which would be the only consistent illustrations of the theory.

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And what is the explanation of the conviction, deeply rooted in the minds of all Nonconformists, that there are but two Sacraments, and that the Church has no power to add to their number? If they are merely visible expressions of the religious thought and life—if Baptism is a symbolic act representing nothing more than the desire of parents to devote their children to God, or the personal trust of a believer in the Lord Jesus—if the Lord's Supper is a Service representing nothing more than the faith and mutual love of the communicants—why should not other significant Rites be instituted to represent other religious acts and affections? New hymns are written and sung. New prayers are offered. New creeds are drawn up. Why should we not have new Sacraments too? We are free to express our religious life to the ear in new forms; why are we not free to express it in new forms to the eye? Why should any restraint be laid upon the multiplication of visible forms of worship, which is not laid upon the multiplication of audible forms of worship?

So long as the "subjective" conception of the Sacraments receives exclusive attention, the perplexity with which they are regarded by some devout and thoughtful persons is perfectly natural. No adequate and satisfactory explanation can be given of the purpose for which they were instituted. The religion of Christ would be complete without them. They have a technical and artificial appearance, which is inconsistent with the freedom and spiritu-

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ality of the Christian Faith. If they are only expressions of religious thought and feeling, the Sacraments may be dispensed with, for we can express religious thought and feeling quite as naturally and effectively in other ways; or if they are observed, they will be observed in blind obedience to a positive enactment, not with that full and free consent of the whole soul which is the characteristic of Christian service.

Nor is the "didactic" theory, or the "impressive" theory much more satisfactory, though they are both considerably nearer to the truth than that which has just been discussed. Strip the Sacraments of their essential character, as *acts originating with God*, not with man, and can it be honestly said that they are very effective methods either of instruction or impression? Does not the conversation with Nicodemus, recorded by St. John, teach the necessity of Regeneration—if *that* be the truth illustrated in the Rite—much more clearly than Baptism? And are not the sufferings and love of the Lord Jesus Christ much more vividly and "impressively" set before us in the narrative of the crucifixion, as given by any one of the Evangelists, than in the broken Bread and the Wine of the Eucharist? Even a hymn or a painting may produce a profounder "impression," and a sermon or a book convey clearer "instruction," than either of the Sacraments, if they are regarded simply as vehicles of instruction or instruments of impression.

It is impossible to conceive how the superstitious corruptions of both Ordinances, which began to

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appear in very early times, could have arisen at all, if the original conception of them gave exclusive prominence either to the "subjective," the "didactic," or the "impressive" element. No error can grow without a root. The very weeds reveal the quality of the soil. The Docetic denial of the humanity of our Lord is an unanswerable proof that the early Church could not have believed that He was merely a man. The immorality of the Corinthian Church, sheltering itself under the cover of Christian liberty, would have been impossible, if St. Paul had taught that we are justified by works. The argument drawn from the excesses of the same Church in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, against the Romish and Anglican theories of the Eucharist, is decisive. It is inconceivable that such excesses could have been committed by a Church, which had been taught that the consecrated Bread is supernaturally changed into the Body of Christ, and the consecrated Wine into His Blood.

It is, however, equally inconceivable that the Sacramental errors, which began to appear early in the second century, could have been developed from any such theory as that which is taught in the Congregational "Declaration of Faith and Order." That theory affords no soil in which superstitious reverence for the Eucharist can take root; and this is a proof that it could not have been the theory held by the Apostles. The Apostolic conception of the Lord's Supper did not render impossible the irregularities of the Church

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at Corinth, and must therefore have been very different from that of the Council of Trent and the Anglican Ritualists; it did not render impossible the mysticism of Ignatius and Justin, and must therefore have been very different from that of the "Declaration of Faith and Order." In the original conception of the Service, as given in the New Testament itself, the Corinthian excesses and the Ignatian mysticism have their common origin and explanation.

## IV.

The Lord's Supper was not instituted by the Church in honour of Christ; it was instituted by Christ Himself. This fact alone suggests, though it does not prove, that its primary object could not have been to express the subjective religious life of the Church. He asked His disciples to eat Bread and drink Wine "in remembrance" of Himself. The lowest and poorest interpretation of these words will lead us to regard the Service as an expression of His intense love for His disciples, which made Him thirst to be remembered by them after His death. Not their love for Him, but His love for them, lies at the root of the Sacrament. But He could not have thought that they would actually forget Him; nor was it the purpose of the Eucharist to prevent the memory of Christ from disappearing from the mind of the Church. We must look somewhat deeper for His meaning.



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On the evening preceding the crucifixion the strength and tenderness of His affection for His disciples were revealed as they had never been revealed before. It was the last time that He and they were to be together before His death. The relations which had existed between Him and them during the two or three years of His public ministry were coming to an end; when renewed, they would be renewed in another form. The "great depths" of His heart were "broken up." His human friends had been true to Him; He had been solaced by their affection; they were to endure in coming years sorrow, shame, and death in His service; and He clung to them with a love which was passionate, though calm. He and they had been living together; they had sat together in many synagogues; they had walked together over the hills of Galilee; they had slept under the same roofs; they had been weary together, hungry together, thirsty together; they had eaten and drunk together; His sorrows had been theirs, and His joys. Would they, when He had ascended into heaven, feel that He had passed out of their reach, and that it was presumptuous for them to think of maintaining anything of the intimacy and freedom of their earthly intercourse with Him?

He cannot endure the thought of this. To whatever glory He was destined, He wishes those who had been His friends on earth to think of themselves as His friends still, and not merely as His servants. He does not desire them to forget the months and

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years during which He had appeared to be almost one of themselves. He asks to be “remembered” by them, not in connection with the great displays of His supernatural power—His walking on the sea, His stilling the storm, His raising the dead—but in connection with that evening of sorrow, weakness, and love. That He should institute a religious Service in which they were to “do” what they had done in the upper chamber, where He washed their feet and supped with them, was plainly a declaration on His part that vast as was the distance which was soon to separate them, the freedom of their mutual affection was to be permanent. They were still to sit at His table, and from that table He would never be absent. When Christ had ascended to the right hand of God, and the full glory of His Divine nature had been revealed to the Apostles, it is certain that they could never have thought of the Lord’s Supper as being nothing more than a Service in which they might express their affection for Him and for each other; it was an enduring witness to them that the same trustful and generous love, which Christ had shown them when He was on earth, dwelt in His heart still—He was as near to them as He had ever been.

Nor was the Eucharist a revelation of the love of Christ to the Apostles only. Rightly interpreting His mind, which was perhaps more fully disclosed to them after the Resurrection, whoever became a Christian was invited to sit down with them at the table of

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the Lord. They did not claim for themselves any exclusive privilege or blessedness. Their own relations to Christ were not closer than those of the humblest and obscurest of their converts. Their Master's love for them was not different in kind from His love for men who might have cried, "Crucify Him," when Pilate was willing to let Him go, but who afterwards repented and confessed that He was the Christ of God. None of the "friends" of Christ were to be excluded from His table; and when they were there, all the transient and accidental differences which might separate them elsewhere disappeared. To acknowledge any distinction between rich and poor, between those who have just received the pardon of Christ for a protracted life of shameful sin, and those who have served Him with courageous fidelity from their very youth, would be a violation of the whole spirit of the Service. It is the Lord's table, not man's, and at His table all the guests are equal. To preserve any privilege or prerogative for church officers—to deny the Cup to the "laity"—to make the sanctity of the Service dependent upon the presence of any but Christ this was what the Apostles never dreamt of. "The Cup of blessing which *we*"—all of us—"bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ?"<sup>1</sup> The Service brings the soul into a Presence in which the greatness of Apostles themselves disappears.

Nor does lapse of time or distance from the original

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

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scene of its celebration impair its power. Even we who live in these remote lands and ages are as near to Christ as those who were with Him on the night before His death. We, too, sit at the table. The Bread is broken for us. The Cup passes from their hands to ours. The words of infinite and pathetic affection which came that night, not merely from our Lord's lips, but from the very depths of His soul, are addressed to us as well as to the Apostles. We, too, are "not servants, but friends."<sup>1</sup>

How much this Service actually did to develop the idea and the spirit of brotherhood in the early Church cannot be estimated. No preaching could have been so effective. Men knew that Christ Himself invited them to sit at His table, and hostilities of race, national jealousies, envy and contempt arising from social distinctions, all vanished. They were all His guests and "friends"; Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, master and slave, forgot the differences by which they were separated in their common blessedness and their common glory.

The celebration of the Supper was a time for gladness. When Christ Himself and His Apostles broke Bread and drank Wine in the upper chamber, there was fear, there was gloom, there was perplexity in every heart but His; and though in His heart there was peace, the darkness which might be felt was already deepening around Him. But when He had risen from the dead, His promise was fulfilled,

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 15.

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and their “sorrow” was “turned into joy.” “Then was their mouth filled with laughter and their tongue with singing.”<sup>1</sup> The awful gloom, the mystery, the dread, with which for centuries the Service has been invested, were unknown. There was overflowing thankfulness and delight that what had seemed to be the ruin of the world had proved its salvation, and that what had appeared to be the defeat of Christ had proved His most glorious victory. The Supper was regarded—and properly regarded—as a festival; those who celebrated it were radiant with joy and triumph. It was this conception of it which rendered possible the excesses of the Corinthian Christians.

But there is another conception of the Rite, which the Corinthian Churches had forgotten, and of which they had to be sharply and sternly reminded. “The Cup of blessing which we bless” is “the communion of the Blood of Christ”; “the Bread which we break” is “the communion of the Body of Christ.” St. Paul reminds them of this, when He is rebuking them for abusing their Christian liberty by attending feasts in honour of idols; they “cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of devils.”<sup>2</sup> In condemning their excesses in the celebration of the Eucharist itself, he recalls to their memory the words of institution; and on these words he rests his denunciation of their profanity, and his threatenings of the penalties with which it would be avenged—penalties from which some of them had already

<sup>1</sup> Psa. cxxvi, 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. x. 21.

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suffered. It is necessary, therefore, to return to the consideration of what the words of institution mean.

That when our Lord took Bread and brake it, and said, "Take, eat: *this* is My Body which is broken for you," He was understood to mean that the Bread had in any sense become His Body, is as inconceivable, as that He was understood to mean that the Cup had in any sense become the New Covenant, when He said, "This cup is the New Covenant in My Blood."<sup>1</sup> That St. Peter, who, in his reverence for Christ, had just before hesitated to permit Him to wash his feet, should have taken the Bread and eaten it without a word, if he had thought that it had been changed into the Body of Christ, is incredible. But such an interpretation of our Lord's language could never have occurred to the Apostles. There He sat before them. His Body was not broken. His Blood was not shed. Every sense bore testimony that the Bread was Bread, and that the Wine was Wine. That the substance of either had been changed while its accidents remained, or that as the result of consecration either had become something else though it remained what it was before, could never have occurred to the peasants and fishermen to whom our Lord's words were addressed.

All this, however, it may be said, is bare assertion, and different minds will have different impressions

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 30.

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of how the Apostles were likely to interpret our Lord's declaration, and of how they were likely to receive any startling truth. But it is further to be observed, that there is no trace in the Acts of the Apostles of any astonishment being created among Christians themselves, or among their enemies, by this transcendent mystery. The Apostles are brought before public tribunals, Jewish and Pagan, but they are never questioned about a practice which misapprehension and slander were certain to transform into a revolting crime. A generation or two later—as soon, that is, as mysticism introduced into the language of the Church those expressions on which the believers in Transubstantiation and the Real Presence rely—dark suspicions arose; malignity and ignorance gave the grossest interpretation to what the Christians said about eating the Body and drinking the Blood of One who had died for them. But in the history of the earlier years of the Church, no such misapprehensions appear.

It is also certain that, had the words of our Lord been understood by the Apostles as predicating a supernatural change in the Eucharistic Elements, either the doctrine of Transubstantiation or the doctrine of the Real Presence would have been taught by the writers of the post-Apostolic age with a distinctness and definiteness which neither Roman Catholic nor Ritualistic controversialists would venture to claim for the few and meagre passages which they quote in support of their

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respective theories. This was not a fact which, after it had been once asserted, was likely to be ever forgotten. If the Bread which the Churches ate at least every Lord's Day, had been believed by the Apostles to be the actual Body of Christ, the mystery would have been asserted and re-asserted by the early Christian writers in a manner which would have left us in no uncertainty about their faith. There would have been no vacillation. Every statement that referred to the Rite would have been unambiguous and firm.

But what is still more conclusive against both the Romish and Ritualistic interpretation of our Lord's words, is the fact that in the New Testament the Bread is called Bread even after consecration. The Ritualists rely very much on this argument in their controversy with Romanists; and they support it by showing that the Fathers speak of the continued existence of the Elements in their natural substance. They do not see that the argument is almost as fatal against their own theory as against the theory of Rome. Is it conceivable that the early Church could have spoken of the consecrated Element as Bread, if they had believed that, though its natural substance remained, it had become the Body of the Lord? Surely the invisible Presence would have so transfigured its mere material vesture, that the existence of the visible substance would have ceased to be recognized. It was the common habit of the Apostolic Churches to speak of coming together



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“to break Bread”; no such expression could have arisen, or, if it had arisen, could have lasted, had it been the common belief that the Bread in any sense actually became Christ—His very Body with which His Soul and Divinity are inseparably united.

And when St. Paul was moved to anger and sorrow by the excesses of the Corinthian Christians, the doctrine of the Real Presence, had he believed it, would certainly have impressed its form on his condemnation of their sin. “As often,” he says, “as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come.”<sup>1</sup> Why did he not strike them with horror by telling them that, in the Supper which they profaned, they received the Body and the Blood of Christ? “Whosoever,” he continued, “shall eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.”<sup>2</sup> Why did he speak of the Bread at all, if what they ate had become something infinitely more awful than the mere sign of Christ’s Body? Why did he speak of the “Cup of the Lord,” if what they drank had become something infinitely more awful than the mere sign of His Blood? To answer, that though the Elements had become the Body and Blood of Christ, they remained Bread and Wine still, is no reply to this argument. At such a crisis, had the Apostle believed in the mysterious and supernatural union of the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xi. 27.

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material symbols with the Person of Christ—"a kind of hypostatical union of the sign and the thing signified, so united together as are the two natures of Christ,"<sup>1</sup>—it is inconceivable that the tremendous weapon against profanity which this faith supplies should not have been used. He believed that the consecrated Bread was Bread, and nothing more. He believed that the consecrated Wine was Wine, and nothing more.

The weakness of the extreme Protestant position lies in this that to interpret our Lord's words when He instituted the Service, as meaning "This Bread *represents* my Body," leaves upon the mind an impression of dissatisfaction. That the Bread was broken and distributed to the Apostles with a simply "didactic" purpose that the whole Rite is only a visible memorial of the death of Christ is a theory which has never yet been able to lay a firm hold on the mind of any considerable section of the Church. The Service is felt to be an "act," not simply a "picture-lesson." To invest it with the nature of an act, it has been spoken of by Congregationalists as "a *token* of faith in the Saviour, and of brotherly love," as though the Rite had been founded by the Church as an expression of its own life, instead of having been founded by our Lord Himself.

That the Bread is a symbol of Christ's Body, and only a symbol, is true; that the Wine is a symbol of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in "Tracts for the Day," p. 233 [No. 5, p. 17].

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Christ's Blood, and only a symbol, is true. But it does not follow that when our Lord said, "This is My Body," and "This is the New Covenant in My Blood," He meant to declare the symbolic character of the Elements.

Our Lord "took Bread," because Bread is the chief support of our natural life, and is, therefore, the fittest symbol of that which supports our spiritual life. "He brake it," because it was by the crucifixion of His Body that He was to become the Life of the world. But when He said, "Take, eat, this is My Body," He meant to do something more than merely explain what he had been doing. He meant that He gave Himself to His disciples in giving them the symbols of Himself. He, therefore, names the Divine gift, and not merely the material symbols of the gift.

The Lord's Supper is something more than a scenic representation of the breaking of Christ's Body and the shedding of His Blood. In our reception of the Elements there is something more than a scenic representation of the truth that through His death the life of our souls is sustained. It does not correspond to a coronation acted in a theatre, but to the crowning of a king in Westminster Abbey.

Turretin states the truth concerning both the Sacraments with his usual clearness and force, when he declares them to be, "Non signa mere *theoretica*, quæ nihil aliud faciunt quam rem repræsentare et

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significare, cujus signa sunt; sed *practica*, quæ non tantum significant, sed et obsignant et re ipsa exhibent. Nam etsi signa sint theoretice significantia, ... in hac tamen significatione theoretica non subsistunt, sed habent præterea significationem practicam, tum obsignativam, tum exhibitivam suo modo et sensu rei significatæ, ut clavis traditio habet significationem practicam immissionis in possessionem eamque obsignat et exhibet.”<sup>1</sup>

Had the Rite been simply *theoretic*, to use Turretin’s word, our Lord would doubtless have said to the Apostles, “This *represents* My Body.” But as He meant to give them, in a symbolic act, all that His death secured for them, He said, when He distributed the Bread, “This *is* My Body.” What He gave them with His hands was nothing; He was not thinking of that. He was thinking of the diviner gift.

There ought to be no difficulty in understanding that though the material Elements are only symbols, the act of Christ when He places these Elements in our hands is a spiritual reality. A key, to use Turretin’s illustration, which has done good service in this controversy, is a very natural symbol of possession; but when the commander of a city hands the keys of the gates to the general of a besieging army, he does something more than perform a mere “didactic” ceremony; by the

<sup>1</sup> Franc. Turr. Inst. Theol., Loc. xix. de Sacram., Quics. iii. § 4.

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surrender of the visible symbol, he surrenders the city itself. A book is a natural symbol of the occupations and duties of the head of a religious house, and a staff of the duties of a bishop or shepherd of the flock; but when a book is placed in the hands of a man elected abbot, and a staff in the hands of a man elected bishop, the act is not intended simply to give the abbot and the bishop symbolic instructions as to their future duties; it is intended actually to convey to them, by a visible and impressive ceremony, the duties and responsibilities of their office.

It is this aspect of the Service which seems to be obscured by the extreme Protestant theory. In the eagerness with which Protestant controversialists have maintained that the Bread and Wine are only symbols, it has been forgotten that if they are symbols, they symbolize something. Such exaggerated attention has been concentrated on the visible signs, the truth has been reiterated with such earnestness that the signs are only signs, that we have come to think that the Service has no spiritual value. It is time that we remembered Who it was that instituted the Rite, and what He Himself said when He distributed the Elements.

If it had been instituted by ourselves to commemorate Christ, the whole Service and not the Elements alone, would have been merely symbolic. To recur to the old illustration: if a soldier in the ranks of a besieging army hands a key to his

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own general, the act is symbolic as well as the *key*. It is simply the expression of the confidence and hope of a man having no authority to surrender the city, that the city will soon be taken. It is a mere dramatic ceremony. We can imagine circumstances in which it would be very effective—circumstances in which it would stir the courage and fire the ardour of those who had become weary of the siege; but its whole value and force would lie in its effect upon the imagination and emotions of those who witnessed it. But when the governor of the city does the same thing, the act is a mere dramatic ceremony—no longer. Its value does not lie in the impressiveness and scenic solemnity with which it may be accompanied. It represents a real transfer of power. And so when Christ gives us Bread, and says, “This is My Body,” it is not a mere dramatic ceremony—deriving all its worth from its “didactic” meaning or its “impressive” power. His Body is actually given. “The Bread which we break” is “the Communion of the Body of Christ. “The Cup of blessing which we bless” is “the Communion of the Blood of Christ.” The Elements are the key surrendering possession of the city; the book conferring his dignity on the abbot; the staff transferring authority to the bishop; the ring ratifying the vow of marriage; the “seal,” to use the language of our fathers, of the covenant of grace.

With this conception of the Service, it is possible to account for the mysticism and superstition which

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gathered about it in very early times. It justifies all the various expressions used of the Rite in the New Testament. It gives an adequate meaning to the words of institution. It rescues the great Christian Ordinance from the merely technical character with which it is regarded by many Protestants, and inspires it with life and power. It is a protection against the superstitions of Rome.

To state what may be properly called the *doctrine* of the Eucharist, to interpret the mysteries it reveals to all devout souls, is impossible. Perhaps if it were possible to develop in formal propositions the spiritual truths which underlie the appropriation of the Elements to their wonderful purpose, one great use of the Rite would disappear. It is partly because these truths cannot be expressed in propositions that they are expressed in symbols. Who can explain what is meant by the Death of Christ becoming the Life of all who receive Him? Who can define the relation existing between the Christian soul and its Lord? The Bread broken, distributed, eaten, tells us what is left untold after theological science has exhausted all its resources.

There is one obvious element of significance in the use of Wine as the symbol of that Blood, by which the New Covenant is established between God and man, which has been almost lost. For centuries the Eucharist has been celebrated not only with awe but with anguish. The most devout and saintly souls

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have thought that it became them to receive the symbols of their Saviour's Passion with bitter sorrow and humiliation. And nothing can be more natural. The Service recalls the torture, shame, and woe which Christ endured for our salvation—the nails, the crown of thorns, the thirst, the intense desolation, the awful descent into the darkness of death. But did not our Lord anticipate the distress, and the keen self-reproach which the remembrance of His sufferings would be certain to awaken; and does He not ask us to forget the agony by which He reconciled us to God, in the joy of reconciliation? What else is the meaning of the Cup? By His own appointment, the very symbol of all earthly gladness stands for the Blood which was “shed for the remission of sins.” If He had meant us to “afflict our souls” at the Supper, He would surely have given us the “bitter herbs” of the old Passover. But it is a Festival to which He invites us, and with pathetic anxiety that the strong tide of “joy for pardoned guilt” should rise in our hearts like a flood, and prevent us from yielding to the natural impulse which leads us to “mourn that we pierced the Lord,” He gives us Wine.

And though the Bread is broken and the Wine poured out in remembrance of His death, we rejoice that He is “alive for evermore.” We meet “around a table, not a tomb.” Anglican theologians derive an immense, but illegitimate, advantage from the way in which their theory is commonly described. It is implied that all other Protestant theories deny the



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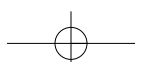
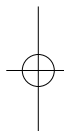
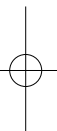
“Real Presence” of Christ in the supreme Rite of the Christian Faith. This implication we passionately resent. Christ is present at His table, though not in the Bread and Wine which are placed upon it. He is there—as a Host with His guests. We do not meet to think of an “absent” Lord, or to commemorate a dead Saviour. We receive the Bread from His own hands, and with it all that the Bread symbolizes. We drink the Cup in His presence, and rejoice that we are His friends—that through His Blood we have received “remission of sins,” and that we “have peace with God” through Him. He is nearer to us now than He was to those who heard from His lips the words of institution. It was “expedient” for us that He should go away; for He has come again, and by the power of His Spirit we abide in Him and He in us. In being made partakers of Christ, we are “made partakers of the Divine nature,” and become for ever one with God.

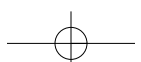
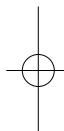
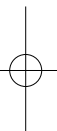
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