



# CHRISTIAN LIFE.

*By M. Carpenter-Garnier.*

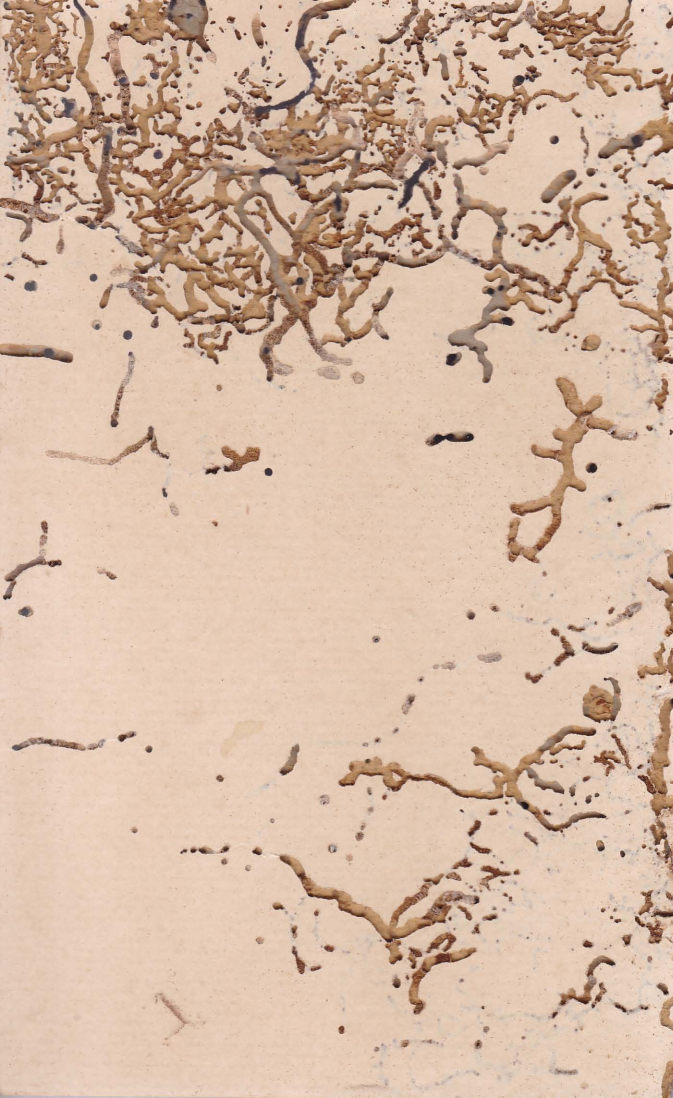
*Bishop of Colombo.*

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TO  
THE MEMBERS OF  
THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION  
IN CEYLON.



## PREFACE.

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This little book is the outcome of a course of instruction in the sacramental life given in Colombo in Lent 1926 and repeated in Kandy during Lent this year. It should be read in connection with "Some First Things", which was published in 1925. Through a mistake the addresses were not taken down at the time, and consequently I have had to reproduce them as best I could during the stress of other work. Perhaps this may serve as some excuse for their many and obvious defects and shortcomings.

Once again my object in giving teaching in the Faith has been to invite the members of my own Communion to consider the wonders of God's dealings with them, and to realise the riches of their inheritance. In some quarters it is common to discredit certain doctrines of the historic Church by referring to them as Anglo-Catholic, and it is thereby suggested that they are no concern of the Church of England. It is my very deep conviction that in the providence of God it is nothing less than the whole Faith of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church

which has been committed to the Anglican Communion. Every member of that Communion, therefore, has a right to the faith and practice of the Church of the ages, just as he has the responsibility of a place within that august Society. Accordingly I address not only those who are known as Anglo-Catholics, but all who are members of the Anglican Communion; and I offer them these considerations concerning the life in grace as within our Anglican tradition and as uniting us with our Catholic brethren throughout the ages. We live in days when we sorely need to avail ourselves of all the resources which Divine Love puts within our reach. It would be nothing less than a tragedy were we to live in ignorance of what God offers us, or to turn away from the divinely appointed means by which His life is to invigorate us

So let us consider afresh some of the mysteries and secrets of power, which are fundamental in our holy Faith. Let us ask ourselves what is Christian life, and enquire once more how it is born and preserved, nourished and sanctified.

M. C.

September, 1927.



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# CHRISTIAN LIFE.

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## I.

### The Nature of the Christian Life.

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Our first task as Christians is to follow Jesus Christ along the way of the Christian life. Now, this is a task full of difficulty, and, inasmuch as we often fail in carrying it out, we need all the help and encouragement that we can find in order that we may persevere. The greatest help of all is that which is provided by God Himself and which comes to us as we practise our religion. Accordingly, I invite you to consider afresh the wonderful resources that He puts at our disposal in His Church. The general subject of this course is the Christian Life. In the short time at my disposal I can only deal with one part of so great a subject, and the aspect of the Christian life that I have chosen to put before you is

not the social aspect, with its many claims and duties and responsibilities, nor is it especially the moral aspect, with all that is involved in the acquirement of the Christian virtues; but I set before you the Christian life on its religious side, our life in the Church, our sacramental life, our life in Christ. We must begin by considering the nature of the Christian life.

1. First of all, is there anything distinctive about it? It is commonly supposed that the Christian life is merely any life that is respectable and kindly, wherever it may be found. It is thought to be life on the natural level, with a certain amount of observance added to it, such as attendance at Church on certain occasions, and a certain degree of self-restraint in conduct. In short, the Christian aim is supposed to be the aim of any good man, no matter to what religion he may belong. Very often the Christian life is thought of as a certain standard of morality and duty, together with the following of a noble example, which as a matter of fact is too far above us to be an inspiration for the ordinary man. In sharp contrast to such teaching as this is the teaching of the New



Testament. Here the Christian life is set before us as something quite unique: it is a new thing which has appeared in the world; it is life in Christ. Indeed, we may summarise all the teaching of the New Testament concerning the Christian life in three words—union with Christ. Here let me quote to you some extracts from the New Testament to show you what I mean. Listen first of all to the words of our Saviour in the 15th Chapter of St. John: a “I am the true Vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather

them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

This same idea of union with our Lord as the meaning of the Christian life is brought out again and again by St. Paul in the Epistles. Look, for example, at the 12th Chapter of his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, where he uses the illustration of the members of a body to show the relations of Christians to our Lord—<sup>b</sup>

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Or, to see the teaching still more plainly, you may read the whole of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and you may notice specially such words as these—<sup>c</sup> "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye

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<sup>b</sup>—1 Cor: XII. 27.

<sup>c</sup>—Eph: II. 1. 4-6. 12. 13.

are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ye were without Christ being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ." This great idea has lived all down the ages since the day it was first developed, and spiritual teachers in every age have taken it and explained it and have shown the wonder of it. They have declared that life in the Christian Church is life in Christ—life lived by the power of Christ, partaking of His grace, His beauty, His holiness. Not only has this teaching been given, but the immense wonder has happened that the Christian life has appeared, and, like flowers in the desert, beautiful characters have sprung up amidst the vices of the world in most unlikely places. Such characters have shown forth Jesus Christ. They have shown that Christian life is truly life lived in the living power of Christ. Thank God for that. I ask you then to face this wonder

afresh. I ask you to realise that the Christian life is something wholly different from the best that the non-Christian world can produce. It is unique; it is frankly supernatural; that is to say, it is lived by the grace of God. It is not a worldly life decorated with a certain amount of Christian observance and ornamented with a certain amount of Christian phraseology; but it is life lived on a different level. It is not merely life raised by culture and refined by education, but it is life transformed by God's intervention. It is a life of venture, of aspiration, and of simple dependence upon God. In short, it is life in union with the living Christ. Because this is not realised, men often reject the Christian standards. They say that they are impossible, and they are right, if these standards are to be reached in our own strength; for they are as far above our natural capacity as would be walking on the water. That indeed is a good illustration of the Christian life. Think, for example, of that wonder on the Lake of Galilee, when St. Peter walked towards our Lord. Peter got out of the boat and did the impossible thing: he stood there on the top of the water



which he had so often sailed and fished. So long as he trusted in our Lord all was well, but when he realised the fierceness of the storm that raged about him he began to sink. As he sank he did the only thing that was of any use—he called out to our Lord to save him. Now, notice what our Lord did to St. Peter. He did not rebuke him for being so rash as to attempt what was naturally impossible, nor did He hold him up by main force and drag him to the boat; but He took him by the hand and put him again on the impossible level, on the top of the water. That I say is an illustration of the Christian life. Trusting in Christ we do that which is naturally impossible, we set out to live a supernatural life; and when we fail through sin or through lack of faith and come to our Lord for salvation, He does not find fault with us for attempting anything so far above our natural capacity, nor does He compel us to be good, so that we cannot fail again; but He sets us again where we were before; He sets us again on the supernatural level of the life of grace.

II. Now we come to the second point. We have seen that Christian life is unique. It is life in Christ. I have called it supernatural, that is life in grace, life lived by grace, the grace of God. Here is a much-used phrase and one which often conveys nothing very definite to our minds. Let us then pause a moment here and try to gain some clear thoughts about it. What do we mean by the grace of God? What is it? How does it come? What is it for? Here is a definition that is sometimes used by way of explanation. "The grace of God is the supernatural gift of God to make us holy and to save our souls." That is quite true, but this definition is not distinctively Christian; for certainly it is by divine grace that all good men live and act all the world over. This was how the Saints of the Old Testament gained their strength and nobility of character. It is by the grace of God that good men live everywhere, no matter to what religion they may belong. But something new came with Jesus Christ: <sup>d</sup> "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came

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d—St. John 1. 17.

by Jesus Christ." Here then is a distinction, for we find there are two kinds of grace. There is grace that is universal and there is grace that is distinctively Christian. Thus we are thrown back upon theological terms to make this distinction clear—actual grace and habitual grace. First, actual grace. By this we mean all the helps and influences and circumstances by which God draws men closer to Himself. It is given in a great variety of ways. For example, through prayer and Bible-reading, through the influence and teaching of others, and through all the varying circumstances of life; while you see its results wherever mankind is struggling towards God. Secondly, there is habitual grace. This came with Jesus Christ and it is the secret of our closest relationship with Him. It is in fact the life of God made available for us through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Let us face this. God sees man in his weakness and his sin, and He makes to him this amazing offer, that he may have his share in the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. This offer comes to us just as and where we are. It is not reserved for saints and especially good people; it is offered freely

and is available for us all. We may all share in it, even though we are the most ordinary people in the world and have little or no genius for religion. Dwell, therefore, upon the wonder of this fact. This grace which we call habitual grace gives us a share in the present life of Jesus Christ. By nature we share in the humanity of the first Adam with all its characteristics; its nobility, its baseness, its strength, its weakness, its goodness and its badness. Now by grace we are offered a share in the life of the second Adam, and with this we may share also its glorious characteristics, its goodness, its purity, its sanctity, its transforming loveliness. Yes, God's grace makes possible nothing less than the transformation of the human character. So we become members of Christ, branches of the true Vine. We are made partakers of grace and of the divine nature. This is really offered to us all and is within our reach day by day. It is assured to us in the Church, through the sacraments. It is offered to all and not one is left out. So all may benefit by it and be drawn to Christ. Thus would Christ redeem us and deliver us from our passions and our



worldliness, and save us from our false values and our unsatisfying aims. He would teach us the meaning of life and make us true men and women.

Now, consider the point we have reached. The Christian life is unique; it is union with Christ. This is possible by the grace of God. The grace of God is not only the power by which God draws all mankind to Himself, but it is God's very life made available through Christ; through sacramental grace we can live in and by the life of Christ.

III. This divine offer we must face. Let us be quite frank with ourselves. Hitherto we have failed to realise or appreciate it as we ought. Either we have plodded on alone and got thoroughly disheartened, or we have given up all aspirations after higher things and settled down to live our life on a poor level. We have said to ourselves that the Christian life is too difficult for us, and accordingly we have been content with respectability and a conventional Christianity, and have been governed by worldly standards. But remember that it was not for this that Christ died! It was not necessary that



the Son of God should shed His blood on the cross in order to make us respectable. There have been respectable people in the world since before the flood. Christ died on the cross to bring something within our reach which without Him was impossible. Christ died to make us holy. Yes, this is actually within our reach—holiness. Have you seriously faced this? Are you looking forward with confidence to the conquest of sin? Do you really believe that holiness is within your reach? For here is the good news which Christ proclaims to all the world, that His life is within our reach. That is the news that we may hear and receive, if only we have hearts and minds that will not refuse it.

IV. Finally, I ask you to think over your relation to this supernatural venture which we call the Christian life. It is so easy to lose heart and to falter and to give up. So then realise the call of Christ that comes to you to live by His grace. You must come face to face with the Christ of to-day, and, as you do so, do not fail to beg for the renewal of trust and hope and desire. Of trust, for, remember that He

knows all. He knows the worst of you, and yet He calls; He says you are worthy of such a vocation. Of hope, for, if He calls you, you may be certain He will never fail you. He knows that you can reach your vocation if you will take Him at His word. Of desire, for this it is which must inspire all effort after holiness. It was desire for Christ which set St. Peter on the top of the water on that dark, stormy night. So it is with us. If it really is desire for Christ that we have in our hearts we shall think the effort worth while in going forward in the Christian life. d“Lord if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee.” Such desire will never fail to be the secret of steady perseverance.



## SUMMARY OF INSTRUCTION.

The nature of the Christian life.

I. It is often supposed that there is nothing distinctive about the Christian life; but in sharp contrast to such an opinion is the teaching of the New Testament, which presents the Christian life as life in Christ. This great wonder we ought to face afresh.

II. Life in Christ is made possible by the grace of God. God's grace is not only power by which He helps all mankind to come to him, but it is God's very life made available for us through Jesus Christ. Through sacramental grace we can live in and by the life of Christ.

III. This divine offer we must face, for it is an offer to transform our lives. Whoever we are, and wherever we may be, our Lord puts holiness within our reach, because He puts His life within our reach.

IV. We are thus called to think over our relation to this supernatural venture, the Christian life. We had better begin by begging our Lord to give us a renewal of trust and hope and desire.

## II

### The Home of the Christian Life.

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The Christian life is unique; it is life in Christ; life lived in the power of the life of God. This fact leads us to a question.

I. Has such a life a home? If so, where is it to be found? If we go to the New Testament we are not left long without an answer to our question. The home of the Christian life is the spirit-bearing body called the Church. In the New Testament there are no unattached Christians. To be a Christian, to have received the spirit, to be a member of the Church, are all interchangeable terms. The first description we get of the Church is to be found in the words, a "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and the prayers". Thus the



Church went out into the world an apostolic body, and Christians were sure that this was the Lord's way. For many centuries there was no question about it. All were agreed that Christ had founded a society in and through which His gifts to mankind were assured and mediated, and that He had committed the care and government of it to His Apostles and their successors. From time to time great crises arose in the Church. In the fourth and fifth centuries there were disputes and contentions about our Lord's nature and person, but in all these controversies there was no question raised about the home of grace. All were agreed that the home of the Christian life was the Catholic Church. Then there was the calamity of the schism between the Church of the East and the Church of the West in the eleventh century. At that time the Eastern Provinces of the Church repudiated the autocratic claims of the Papacy, and communion ceased between the East and the West. But again no question was raised about the home of the Christian life. All were agreed that this was the Catholic Church. Next there came the controversies of the



sixteenth century. Again there was the rejection of the Papal claim, but now a new situation was created. Not only was there a rejection of the claim of the Pope to be the autocratic and absolute ruler of the Church, but also there was the rejection of the Catholic doctrine of the Church. On the Continent of Europe many Christians seceded from the Church and formed their own societies, with an organisation and a ministry set up by themselves. In England, the Provinces of Canterbury and York made their protest against the claims of the Pope, but maintained the ancient faith and structure of the Church. This is the key to the Anglican position. While the Church of England repudiated the autocracy of the Pope it stood deliberately for episcopacy: that is to say, it stood for the inherent authority of the Bishops, which they had received from the Apostles, among whom St. Peter was the Primate but not the Sovereign. Realise then what happened. In the chaos of that period the Church of England stood for the ancient Catholic doctrine of the Church, as against the new Protestant theories, and so maintained its continuity with the

past and preserved its pledge of full sacramental life. Since then much has happened, but to-day we, who are members of the Church of England, stand for that for which we have always stood—the faith of the undivided Church, and as part of it we hold that Christ founded a society, in and through which His gifts to mankind are assured and mediated, and that He committed the care of it to His Apostles and their successors.

II. Now, this really matters. In speaking of this subject I am not merely putting before you the dry-bones of controversy. I am referring to a matter of vital importance. This is often not realised. Men become impatient with the doctrine of the Church. In fact we are witnessing to-day something like a revolt against institutional religion. People say frankly they take no interest in the Church, and it does not matter to what Christian body one belongs. I ask you to face the fact that a great deal is at stake. <sup>b</sup>Take an illustration. Somebody

<sup>b</sup>—For this illustration, and for a good deal of the thought of this Instruction, I am indebted to a sermon preached by Prebendary H. F. B. Mackay in All Saints', Clifton, and printed in the Parish Magazine, April, 1916.

comes to you and tells you that you have inherited a fortune, and that a lakh of rupees is waiting for you in the Mercantile Bank. As you start off in great excitement to claim your heritage, a second person comes to you and says that it is quite true you have inherited this fortune though you will not find it in the Mercantile Bank; you will find it scattered along the Galle Face. When you are in perplexity between your two informants a third comes up to you and says with an engaging smile, "Really it does not matter where your fortune is so long as you have got it." I do not think you will receive this third gentleman with much patience! Now, brethren, we have inherited a fortune beyond anything we can estimate in value, the grace of God, and this fortune of our's matters. Where is it assured to us? Where is it guaranteed? Where is its home? The answer is, the home of the grace of God is the Church of the Creeds, the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church, founded by Jesus Christ, a divine society, which is the assured sphere of the Grace of God. For this we stand with that great company of Christians throughout the world which

has retained the Creeds and preserved the line of Bishops. In support of what I have been saying I will quote the words of a great Archbishop of Canterbury, who died at the beginning of this century, Frederick Temple. Preaching at the Consecration of Truro Cathedral in Cornwall, the Archbishop made the following important statement:—

c “Men talk sometimes as if a Church could be constituted simply by Christians coming together and uniting themselves into one Body for the purpose. Men speak as if Christians came first and the Church after; as if the origin of the Church was in the wills of the individual Christians who composed it. But on the contrary, throughout the teaching of the Apostles we see that it is the Church that comes first, and the members of it afterwards. Men were not brought to Christ and then determined that they would live in a community. Men were not brought to Christ to believe in Him and in His Cross and to recognize the duty of worshipping the Heavenly Father in

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c—Temple in “Twelve Sermons Preached at the Consecration of Truro Cathedral.”



His Name, and then decided that it would be a great help to their religion that they should join one another in that worship, and should be united in the bonds of fellowship for that purpose. In the New Testament, on the contrary, the Kingdom of Heaven is already in existence and men are invited into it. The Church takes its origin not in the will of man, but in the will of Jesus Christ. He sent forth His Apostles: the Apostles received their commission from Him; they were not organs of the congregation, they were ministers of the Lord Himself. He sent them forth to gather all the thousands that they could reach within this Fold; but they came first, and the members came afterwards; and the Church in all its dignity and glory was quite independent of the members that were brought within it. Everywhere men are called in; they do not come in and make the Church by coming. They are called into that which already exists; they are recognized as members when they are within; but their membership depends upon their admission, and not upon their constituting themselves into a body in the sight of the Lord."

Then after insisting upon the importance of teaching what the Church of the New Testament really is, and pointing out how in every age it is the home of the Christian life, the Archbishop continues: "It is for this that we insist upon the succession of the ministry, because we find the Church from the very beginning growing out of the ministry. The purpose of that succession is to link the Church of the present, from generation to generation, back, by steps that cannot be mistaken, to the first appointment of the Apostles of the Lord."

That the Archbishop is stating here that which really matters, is surely clear to us all. Moreover, that he is here stating what is the belief of the Church of England is plain from the preface to the Ordination Services in the Prayer Book, the first paragraph of which runs as follows:—

"It is evident unto all men diligently reading the holy Scriptures and ancient authors that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Which Offices were evermore had in such

reverent estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by public Prayer, with imposition of Hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful Authority. And therefore, to the intent that these Orders may be continued, and reverently used and esteemed, in the Church of England; no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon in the Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the said Functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto, according to the Form hereafter following or hath had formerly Episcopal Consecration or Ordination."

Such a position we must maintain. It has cost much in the past, the martyrdom of a King and an Archbishop, the suffering of faithful souls, the distress of many of the best Christians who have ever lived; and so it will always be. It costs us much to-day, and, not least, the distress of being separated from so many who are in love with the Christian ideal.

Why, they say to us, why not have inter-communion and inter-change of ministers? Why stand aloof in this way? Why not join us in a federation of all Christians who are not Roman Catholics? There is difficulty indeed in refusing this invitation of devout Christians; yet to act as if faith and order were not of vital consequence would be to be unfaithful to our trust. Moreover, it would be to fail in making our contribution to the Christian experience and to Christian life in the world to-day. Remember we have a definite contribution to make which we believe we are called by God to make. We can contribute a form of Catholicism which, while it is rooted in and dependent upon the ancient faith and structure of the Church, is yet non-papal, is free to receive and assimilate the assured results of science, philosophy and scholarship, and appeals to the Scriptures as its tests of what is essential to the faith. Such a contribution is of real value, but it can only be made if we are faithful to that which we have received.

III. Remember what lies behind all our controversies. It is the religion of



Jesus Christ. What kind of religion do we need? We need one that brings us into touch with the Christ of to-day, for we stand in need of redemption. We require the touch of Christ to raise us from our worldliness and our sin. We cry out for fellowship, for we are very lonely in the face of our temptations, our sorrows, our trials. Beyond all, we need a way to God that is sure, along which we can press without fear of going astray. Such a religion exists and is offered to us all. It came with Jesus Christ, it has continued with Jesus Christ, it is found in its fulness and completeness in the Church of the Ages. We who give ourselves to the Church's system find the way prepared for us and assured. Here is the sphere and the home where Christ is at work. Here He deals with us and teaches us and offers us His friendship. This is the religion of the Church because it is the religion of Jesus Christ. Sometimes we are accused of loving the Church more than we love our Lord; and yet at the heart of the Church is the living Christ.

d "Christ who loved His spouse the

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d—Ephesians V. 25. Compare Prayer in Marriage Service.

Church and gave Himself for it, loving and cherishing it even as His own flesh." e "Christ purchased the Church with His own blood." No wonder then that we love the Church of Christ. But we do so only because we first love Him.

IV. From time to time there is need to stress particular doctrines of the Christian religion. The time has come now when we must stress the doctrine of the Church. This is a difficult thing to do, There is a tendency to-day to be easy-going in these matters and indefinite in what we believe. We like to think, when we are vague, that we are being broad-minded, and we flatter ourselves that this is the proper temper for modern ways of thought. In this connection it might be well to remember some words of Mr. G. K. Chesterton, f "Nobody understands the nature of the Church or the ringing note of the Creed, descending from antiquity, who does not realise that the whole world once very nearly died of broad-mindedness and the brotherhood of all religions." Secondly, it is difficult to stress

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e—Acts XX, 28.

f—Chesterton "The Everlasting Man". Page 202.

the teaching about the Church because it emphasises our divisions. When we see the Christian lives and devoted service of those of non-episcopal bodies we long for union and fellowship with them and for the healing of our divisions. Yet we cannot honestly suggest that there are no vital differences dividing us. We believe that the Church is a divine institution; therefore we must stand by its faith and structure. Moreover, we believe that in the Church there is a fulness and a richness of sacramental life such as cannot be found elsewhere. Thus we have to maintain our position though it causes us to be misunderstood and even suspected of being unsympathetic with the efforts and the devotion of those whom we deeply respect and admire. But in addition to these difficulties there is yet another. There is the fact that there are many within the Anglican Communion who hold a different view of the Church from that which I have now put before you. These people are influenced, I think unduly, by a Protestant conception of the Church which seems inconsistent with the religion for which we stand. For, I submit,

that when we give full weight to the teaching of Scripture, the witness of history and the statements of our formularies, we cannot do otherwise than stand for the belief that Christ founded a society in and through which His gifts to mankind are assured and mediated; and that He committed the care and government of it to His Apostles and their successors. Yes, certainly, there are difficulties, and it will cost us much to hold fast that which we have received. Yet is it a great privilege and honour to suffer, if need be, for the truth. In His providence God has given us our part to play and a definite place to fill, but we can only fulfil our vocation as we are loyal to the faith, devoted to our principles, and faithful to the trust which we have received from Him.





## SUMMARY OF INSTRUCTION II.

### The Home of the Christian Life.

1. In the New Testament it is clear that the home of the Christian life is the spirit-bearing body called the Church. For many centuries after Pentecost it was agreed by all Christians that Christ had founded a society in and through which His gifts to mankind were assured and mediated, and that He had committed the care and government of it to His Apostles and their successors. It was for this position that the Church of England stood in the sixteenth century when, in repudiating the autocratic claims of the Pope, it deliberately retained episcopacy and the ancient faith of the Church.

II. This belief in the Church is of first-rate importance, for it matters vitally whether or no God's gifts of grace are *assured* and *guaranteed* to us. We have always taken the position that the Church is a divine society and the home of grace, and this position we must maintain at all costs.

III. Behind all controversy is the religion of Jesus Christ. We need to be put into saving relationship with Him and by

His grace brought into union with God. This need is met in the Church, where we are promised, and gain, vital contact with the Christ of to-day.

IV. In face of the common unbelief, it is our duty and our privilege at the present time to stand loyally for that faith in the Church of the Ages, which is declared to be an integral part of the Christian's creed.

NOTE.—There are two things very near to the heart of Jesus Christ—1, that all His disciples should love one another; and therefore every trace of bitterness should be eradicated from our hearts; 2, that all who believe in Him may be united; and therefore we must persevere in patient work and prayer for this end.

### III

## The Birth of the Christian Life.

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I. The Church is the home of the Christian life because at the heart of it there is the Christ of to-day. He is the Saviour of all men, and is carrying on His work in many ways ; but there is a sphere in which we are sure of finding Him, and there are ways by which we know we have contact with Him. It is about some of these ways that I wish to speak to you. Let me begin by reminding you of certain points about our Lord's work.

(1) Christ is dealing with souls to-day as He has always dealt with them. He is dealing with them not in crowds but one by one. He redeems each soul separately, and He offers His grace to each single one. We shall be wise to pause here in order to consider this. Often when we think of the great multitudes throughout the world we are inclined to suppose that God loses sight of us ; we are afraid that we are lost

in the crowd. But this is not so. There are no crowds with God. Each one of us stands out separately and singly as if God had no one else for whom to care, and it is each one separately and singly with whom our Lord deals.

(2) To get God's grace is of vital importance, for it is the only way we know of being right with Him. For this reason it is not left to chance. There are promised channels by which God's grace flows to us, and these channels are called sacraments. It is just as reasonable that this should be so as that you should have a regular system for your supply of water. You might indeed leave your water supply to chance, but you know that the only wise course to follow is to have your house connected with an assured system. So when we think about God's supply of grace to us we find that there is a regular plan by which His grace may come to us, and we realize that this is wholly and entirely reasonable and in accordance with what we know to be fitting.

(3) The Sacraments are outward acts by which God's grace is given



to us, Notice two points about them. They fit in with all that we know about our Lord. Think of the Christ of yesterday. At Bethlehem He was born into this world and came with true human-nature. As we see Him going out to His work we realise that He is living and acting according to a true humanity. Moreover, we see that often He does His work by means of simple, common, outward acts. He heals the leper through the touch of His hand. He uses loaves and fishes for feeding the multitude. He makes clay to put on the blind man's eyes. He brings healing and peace to the sinner's soul by spoken words. The Christ of to-day is the same as the Christ of yesterday, and in His dealings with souls He is making use of the same method. We too who live in the twentieth century may have experience of the touch of Christ. Then, notice also that the sacraments exactly suit our nature. We are not purely spiritual beings; we consist of body as well as soul. There is an outward and there is an inward part to our nature. Even so God meets us. With the outward and the inward part of His sacraments He adapts His manner of working

to suit the outward and the inward part of our life. But someone says, cannot we have a purely spiritual religion? No, I reply; not if you want the Christian religion; for at the heart of our faith there is the tremendous fact that the Word was made flesh, and that fact colours and influences all that we know, all that we believe, all that we practise in the Christian religion.

(4) Thus Christ is at work to-day and thus He offers Himself to us all. He is present in the power of the Holy Ghost. He is still incarnate. He still lives and acts and saves according to a true manhood. He gives to us points of contact with Himself in a way to suit our nature, so that going to the sacraments is truly going to the Christ of to-day. In saying these things I am not for a moment losing sight of the intimate relationship of the soul with Christ in the Spirit. I desire to stress this most emphatically; but I am speaking now of the manner in which we share in sacramental grace, and I have to show you that there is a promised way by which we are to be partakers of the divine life.

II. Remember what it is that our Lord has to do in order to save us. He must deal with human nature as He finds it and He finds it sinful. This is a fact which cannot be explained away, and with which man is powerless to deal. It has often been supposed that sin would disappear with the advance of civilisation; but experience has taught us that this is not so. We know that the worst depravity can exist with the highest civilisation, and the most degraded wickedness can accompany advanced education. Certainly we can do much to improve the conditions of living, and by education we can help to bring enlightenment to our fellow creatures; but by such means we can never really deal with the root of the matter. We can effectively lessen the opportunities for the commission of gross sin, but having done so we must still reckon with such spiritual sins as blasphemy and pride, avarice and hatred. Moreover, it is not merely a question of the sin of individuals; it is a question in which the whole human race is involved. As we look out over the human race and take a broad view of it, we cannot avoid the conviction that there is something wrong with

humanity as a whole. It seems to be out of gear, hampered and hindered in going forward towards its true destiny. As we look back over history we find the same tragic mistakes being made and the same disastrous failures taking place. In view of this, humanity is powerless; it is unable to find a way of redemption and peace. This is the situation. What does our Lord do when He meets it? He takes drastic action. He says, a "Ye must be born again." In effect our Lord says, "The harm has gone too far for mending, you must have a new principle of life. You need a new start, you must be given fresh power. You have been born into a share of the humanity of the first Adam and therefore you have been enfeebled and have been hurt by sin. The evil has gone so far that there is no human remedy for you. There is hope for you, but there is only one hope. You must be born into a share of the humanity of the second Adam; you must be incorporated into a new stock; you must be put into a new stream of life, and placed in such a position that you can draw upon My good-

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ness." For this all-important work our Lord has a plan. There is no doubt about it, and no uncertainty. It must take place at a definite time at a definite place in a definite way. In order that this may be so there must be an outward act which can help our feeble faith and assure us that He is actually dealing with us. This outward act must be made powerful by the Holy Spirit so that in very truth God may deal with our nature. This redeeming act is done in Baptism, in which water is the outward act, and the spiritual operation is a new birth. So we are made partakers of the life of Christ.

III. Next I must ask you to remember certain points. First of all, Baptism is not magic. In Baptism we are not given transformation into holiness but regeneration into a new life. Perhaps the best illustration of it is found in the planting of a seed. There can be no sudden transformation of the seed into a full-grown tree; but with the planting of the seed there is the possibility of new life and, granted the response of the soil, the tree may grow up in all its strength and beauty in good time. So when the seed of new

life is planted in our hearts there is all the possibility of the life of Christ being formed in us; but we must respond, and the nature of our response may be summed up in the two words—Repentance and Faith. In the case of an infant this response is promised for him by those who are to watch over and care for his training. Yet even so the new birth takes place. The first words that are said in the Baptismal Service after the child has been handed back to the God-parent are: "Seeing now that this child is regenerate." The birth has taken place into the heavenly kingdom. The new life has been given. No doubt it may be neglected and forgotten and even misused, but it is there. The life has been born. It has happened once and for all, and therefore it cannot happen again, nor can the soul be as if it had not happened at all. One baptism is sufficient to bring us within the sphere of Christ's salvation, and for that gift of life the soul must answer for all eternity. Secondly, remember that baptism opens the way to great possibilities. In the New Testament we are told again and again that by baptism we are brought in-

to Christ,<sup>b</sup> and therefore all the new capacities are put within our reach. There is the capacity for holiness. In the words of the Catechism, we are given "a new birth unto righteousness." This means that the Christian character is within our reach. We can grow up in the likeness of Christ if we will. This has been proved constantly during the long ages of the Christian experience, and this capacity is doubtless within our reach. Now, it is very important that we should face this. Remember that Christ is in the heart of the baptised unless He is driven out by downright bad sin. It is all the more important to face this because of the prevailing discouragement and lack of hope in face of the Christian standard. We constantly hear men saying that the Christian ideal is too high for them. Notice what this really means. It means that they have no real trust in the grace of God. It means that they have not grasped the wonder of the divine life which has been made available for them by Christ Himself. Think then of Christ's promise and renew your hope. Besides

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<sup>b</sup>—e.g., see Galatians III. 27.



this capacity for holiness there is also the capacity for life in the kingdom of God. Our Lord says, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God—Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." By Baptism we can enter and penetrate and enjoy the kingdom of heaven. This is on a line with what is necessary for the penetration of other spiritual kingdoms, such as music and art. There are some people of whom we have to say that they have no soul or capacity for such things. These kingdoms are closed to them. There are others who have the gift of entrance in a varying degree, and this gift can be developed and trained until it reaches its highest capacity. So it is with the kingdom of heaven. By nature our capacity has been lost. By the grace of God it is restored. We are given the capacity for entering into the kingdom of God and finding ourselves at home there. We are endowed with the seed of faith and are admitted into the divine school where we may learn how to become proficient in the

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things of God. Realise then the tremendous importance of cultivating the gift. How often we find children being cared for with the utmost thoughtfulness in all that concerns their bodies and their minds, but gravely neglected in that part of their nature, the most important of all, with which they might penetrate into the kingdom of God. Thirdly, remember that baptism has its complement, and that is confirmation. By the seven-fold gift of the Holy Spirit, given through the laying-on of the Bishop's hands, the tender growth of the Christian life is fostered and strengthened so that the Christian character may be formed and developed in security. Therefore Confirmation ought not to be deferred. It should be given as early as possible in a child's life, so that when it goes out to engage in warfare against evil it may have all the armour that Christ provides in His Church.

IV. In conclusion, I must refer to a common question and make a suggestion. The question is this, what about those who are not baptised? We shall be wise if we refuse to pass judgment upon them. Let

us leave that to God. So far as we are concerned we know that Baptism is necessary, and we know that the unbaptised are not members of the visible church; but as to their state only God can know what it is. Let us then leave it at that. My suggestion is that you should reconsider the wonder of Baptism. Read right through the Office in the Prayer Book for administering Baptism. Do your utmost to resist the modern tendency to reduce this holy sacrament to a mere form. Remember it is the birth of the Christian life and the way to all the glories of life in Christ.



## SUMMARY OF INSTRUCTION III.

### The Birth of the Christian Life.

I. At the heart of the Church is the Christ of to-day. He is carrying on His work of redemption by drawing souls one by one into right relationship with the Father by His grace. His gifts of grace are assured to us by promised channels called sacraments, and these fit in with all that we know of our Lord's incarnate life and with all that we know of our own nature.

II. Our Lord has to deal with human nature as He finds it, and He finds it sinful. This is a fact which cannot be explained away, and it does not yield to any human remedy. Our Lord Himself declares that if we are to be redeemed from its power we must be born again into the life which He himself will supply. This is our only hope of redemption, and the door of this hope is open to us in Holy Baptism.

III. Baptism gives us not transformation, but regeneration. It brings us within the sphere of salvation, where, if we respond, we can grow up in the likeness of our Lord. It puts within our

reach great possibilities, notably the capacity for holiness and the capacity for life in the kingdom of God. Its complement is Confirmation, whereby strength is given to enable the young Christian life to go on to maturity.

IV. As regards the state of those who are not baptised, we leave this in the hands of God, for only He can know what this is. For ourselves, we ought to reconsider the wonder of Baptism and value it as the birth of the Christian life and the way to all the glories of life in Christ.



#### IV.

### The Restoration of the Christian Life.

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I. Our vocation is to live in union with Jesus Christ. For this, ample provision is made in the Church. The first step towards the realisation of it is Holy Baptism, by which the way is opened for us into the heavenly places and the great possibilities of the Christian Life are brought within our reach. The effect of Baptism is as if the soul is admitted to a circle of light where all the benefits and blessings of Calvary are brought to bear upon it. The Christian aim is to keep within this circle of light. There could be no aim greater than this for the younger members of the Church, that they may live all their life in the light of friendship with God. This aim has often been achieved. Souls have lived from the beginning to the end of their earthly experience in the light of the grace of God. The secret of this achievement is

divine power being met and responded to by a ready will. Consider the blessings of such a state of grace. It represents the triumph of our Lord's redemption of the human race. But for most of us our experience has brought us much sadness. We know only too well how easy it is to get wrong with God, and we have realised the bitterness of sin. Christian teaching tells us that there is such a thing as "sin unto death,"<sup>a</sup> that is to say sin that does to death the divine life of Christ in our souls. The effect of such sin is to press us back out of the circle of light into the surrounding darkness, and thus to place an impediment upon all Christian growth. This, indeed, is the greatest calamity that can happen to any human being. It is very difficult for us to realise that this is so, because of the prevailing tendencies in the world around us. We grow sadly accustomed to conditions in which the Christian ideal is refused or ignored, Christian morality is scorned, and God is neglected or forgotten. As we meet such conditions we are tempted to lower our standard. We find

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a—I John V. 16.

ourselves being infected with the poison of the world's point of view. We need to remember therefore that there is only one way to measure the sinfulness of sin. We have to come face to face with the Cross of Jesus Christ. As we face it we realise afresh that grave sin is nothing less than a refusal and rejection of God, while all sin is contrary to love and every sinful act may be described as an act of unlove. Our supreme need in face of these facts is sorrow for sin. Where there is sorrow there is always hope, for true sorrow brings us to our Saviour and sets us on the way to recovery. But supposing our conscience accuses us of sin and will not be silenced, how can we get right with God? We cannot do so through the mere passing of time. Supposing some white material in your possession becomes stained with black marks, these marks will not be removed after putting away the material in a drawer for several months. They must be dealt with one by one before they can be removed. Nor can we get right by anything which we ourselves can do. Not our good deeds, nor our benefactions, nor our efforts in social service can be of any avail to cleanse our consciences

from the stain of sin. There is only one cure for the soul that is in this state; it must come under the cleansing touch of the Christ of to-day. It needs the personal application to it of divine pardon. Through Holy Baptism we are brought within the sphere of His promises and if we are sorry for sin we can be absolutely certain that our Lord is waiting to cleanse us and purify us completely. We can be certain that perfect contrition will never fail to win the pardon of God. But supposing we are wrong with God and the grace of Baptism has been violated, is there a *promised* way back? We know that Baptism is the *promised* way by which the soul is cleansed from sin and brought into saving relationship with our Lord; but Baptism can take place only once in a lifetime. What then of those sins which happen after Baptism? Is there for sin after Baptism the assurance of cleansing as complete and absolute as that given by Baptism itself? Is there an assured way back into a right relation with God when that relation has been violated and broken by grave sin? The answer to such questions is found in the Church's teaching concerning absolution.



Absolution is the touch of Christ whereby the penitent soul is cleansed. It is as if the penitent were laid at the feet of Our Lord and received from Him His word of cheer, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." What more blessed state could there be for any soul than this, to be thus brought back into a state of light and grace with God through the personal action of Jesus Christ upon its life?

II. Let us then consider the gift of absolution. This is a very gracious gift of God, but often it has been the centre of bitter controversy. Many questions are constantly asked about it, and frequently the practice of seeking absolution has been attacked. Perhaps I can deal with this subject most effectively at this point by means of questions and answers. Accordingly I will imagine that an inquirer has come to seek information on this subject, and that I am to deal with his difficulties.

Q. I have heard you speak of the gift of absolution. Will you tell me how it can be obtained?

A. To obtain the gift of absolution we make confession of our sins. To do

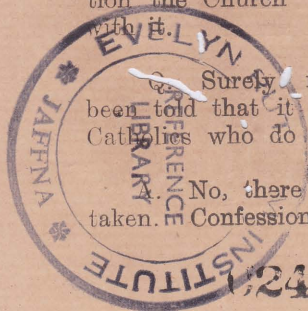
this we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and then examine our conscience. When we have found out how we have sinned we confess our sins to God in the presence of a priest, and we receive from him, if he is satisfied with our penitence, the personal gift of absolution, which cleanses our souls from guilt.

Q. But I could never hold with that, and I feel quite sure that my relations would never approve of it!

A. I must point out to you that what really matters is not what you like nor what appeals to your friends, but what is really true. You must consider whether absolution is true or not. Meanwhile I must remind you that even if you do not hold with confession and absolution the Church of England does hold with it.

Q. Surely not. I have always been told that it is only the Roman Catholics who do such things.

A. No, there you are really mistaken. Confession and absolution have



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been used by Christians all down the ages ever since our Lord gave His commission to His Church. Remember what He said, <sup>b</sup> "As my Father hath sent Me even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained."

Following upon that great commission to His Church there has been the consistent use of this means of grace by the Apostolic Church throughout the centuries and what the Catholic Church has always taught the Church of England has retained. Here let me refer you to the title page of the Prayer Book. "The book of Common Prayer and administration of the Sacraments and other rites and ceremonies of the Church according to the use of the Church of England." So we have the whole Church and a part of the Church. I repeat the Church of England retains what the whole Church has ever taught and practised.

Q. But I confess to God and not to a man.

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b—St. John XX. 21-23.

A. Let me try and explain what I mean about this by an illustration. c Imagine two young men in the days of our Lord's earthly ministry walking together one day and talking of what they had heard Christ saying to the people. As they talk they make up their minds that they must try and carry out His teaching. Then in the course of their walk they see our Lord not far from them sitting under a palm tree, and one says to the other that he is going up to Christ and is going to confess his sins to Him, because he wants to hear our Lord say to him what He said to some one else a few days before, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." But his companion says he does not think he can do this, but he will go to the other palm tree over yonder, quite by himself, and there he will confess his sins to God alone. So they go their different ways, one to the palm tree where Jesus is and the other to the palm tree alone, and they both confess their sins as fully as they can. Now, it is easy

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c—Many years ago I heard Prebendary Mac-kay use this illustration in All Saints, Magaret St. I have used it frequently since then, and now at length make this tardy acknowledgement.



to see which of the two did the braver thing, for there is no doubt it is harder to confess one's sins in the presence of another than to confess them by oneself. But not only did the youth who went to Christ do the braver thing, he also did the better thing, because he went to the authority upon the earth whom God had appointed to deal with sin. <sup>d</sup> "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

Possibly you hardly see at present how this illustration will help you. It helps in this way. Our Lord deliberately handed over this authority for dealing with sin to His Church when He gave the commission to His Apostles to which I have already referred. Thus the Church is the authority upon earth for dealing with sin, and when we confess our sins in the presence of the Church we are able to receive the gift of absolution which our Lord has committed to her. Since it would mean great confusion if every member of the Church was free to administer this authority, certain persons have always been appointed to do this

on behalf of the whole body. Those appointed in this way were first the Apostles and then those who have succeeded the Apostles. Now the authority is passed on to the Priests by the Bishops at their Ordination.

Q. But do you mean to say the Church of England teaches that the Clergy have authority to give this gift of absolution?

A. Yes, certainly; and I would remind you that every time you go to Morning or Evening Prayer you may hear a statement to this effect, "He hath given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people being penitent the absolution and remission of their sins."

Q. But when is this authority given?

A. It is as I say conferred at the Ordination of Priests. You will find this in the Ordinal in the Prayer Book. At the moment of Ordination when the Bishop's hands are laid upon the head

of the Deacon being ordained Priest, the Bishop says these words, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of God, and of His holy sacraments; In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Q. But surely the Prayer Book says nothing whatever about private Confession? Is not the authority of which you have now spoken only for giving the general absolutions in Church?

A. In answer to that question let me ask you first of all in what other way could sins be 'retained' except after a particular confession of them? Indeed how else could the great gift of absolution be given for personal sins unless by confession of his sins the penitent shows that he has the right disposition for receiving it? But as to the

teaching of the Prayer Book about private confession I would refer you to the service for the Visitation of the Sick. Here you will read, "Here shall the sick person be moved to a special Confession of his sins, if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which Confession, the Priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences, and by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." I am sure that you would wish to hear these words when the time comes for you to die; but supposing you have ever been present at a death-bed you will know that it would be exceedingly difficult for you to make any great spiritual effort at that time. Therefore you would indeed be wise, while you are still strong and healthy, to find your way to confession and absolution, so that you may the



more readily receive this priceless gift in your time of need.

Q. You may be right in what you say, but there is still a point that I do not understand. Why should I go to a Priest? Why may I not receive this gift in some other way?

A. The answer to this question will be found as you consider our Lord's plan in His Church. You will find that He has given us a way by which His gifts of grace are assured to us through His ministers. You would never dream of trying to baptise yourself. You go to a Priest for Holy Baptism, and it seems to you the most natural thing in the world that you should do so. For the great gift of Holy Communion you go to a Priest without question, because he is the proper minister of this great sacrament. When it comes to Confirmation you go, again without question, to the Bishop for the laying on of hands whereby the gift is conferred on you. It is in a line with this manner of receiving God's gifts that you go to seek absolution from a Priest and do not try

to absolve yourself. This is the promised way in which His great gift is assured.

Q. But now you are doing exactly what I thought you people always do; you are making it compulsory!

A. Now, stop and think about this. If you consider calmly and quietly you will realise that it is extremely difficult to compel anyone to go to a Sacrament. How would you set about forcing someone to take action of this kind against his will? Possibly confession might be made compulsory by withholding Communion unless the Communicant went to confession beforehand; but that is the very thing that the Church of England does not do. The Church of England stresses the need of a quiet conscience, shows the way by which relief for a troubled conscience may be found, and then leaves the responsibility of action upon the individual. There are a great number of people who receive Communion every year without ever going to confession. Many of these are entirely conscientious and we can do nothing but respect their sincerity

and good faith. But at the same time there is no doubt that there are a great many people amongst us who are sadly in need of confession and absolution, and who will never make one single inch of progress in the spiritual life until they have received the grace of absolution.

Q. But is it not a great deal of trouble to take? Would it not be all right if I am really sorry?

A. Certainly perfect contrition is always powerful with God; but at the same time there is a great deal to be said for laying our case before someone else. We are seldom the best judges of our own spiritual state, and, as regards the trouble, we have to remember the awful majesty of God, before Whom even the angels must veil their faces in humble adoration.

Q. But my sins are my own affair. They are not the concern of anybody else. I must answer to God only for what I have done wrong.

A. I remind you that the Christian life is not a private matter between ourselves and God, but it is life in a brotherhood. By your sins you have hurt the whole body and lowered its standard. It is your duty to make reparation to the whole body, and one effective way of doing this is by being determined to have no secrets from the Church, but to be frank in disclosing all that is in your heart.

Q. But I so often hear this practice spoken against. People say that going to confession weakens a man's moral fibre. What do you say to that?

A. I remind you that going to confession is going to a point of contact with the Christ of to-day. To come into vital contact with the living Christ can never weaken you. Sin weakens your moral fibre, but penitence strengthens you. Absolution releases you from the grip of sin and sets you free to start afresh and go forward along the way of spiritual progress. Those of us who have had experience of confession



and absolution for many years are convinced there is no other practice in the world to be compared with it for dealing with sin. Nothing so directly gets to the root of the matter. It is a sure remedy for sin, and is the surest way to hope and recovery that has been put within the reach of sinful man.

III. We will now leave our questions and conclude this subject by coming face to face with two facts. The first fact is that of our sins. We know that they are a pressing fact and that we are in the gravest danger on this account. Above all, there is the danger of not dealing with them honestly owing to drifting along towards a state of carelessness. Moreover the past must be dealt with. The most important matter in all the world is that we should be certain of God's forgiveness. When we kneel at the Altar for our Communion, I repeat that we must be certain of forgiveness, certain beyond any question or possibility of doubt.

The second fact is the fact of Jesus Christ. Our Lord offers us this price-

less gift of pardon. Remember what it cost Him to make this offer possible. As we look upon Him to-day we see the marks of the nails upon His Hands and Feet. To accept what He offers may mean suffering on our part, but we need not be surprised if this is so. Above all, we ought not to shrink from anything that it may cost us to receive His pardon when we remember what it cost Him to gain our redemption. As we consider this we can offer to Him the pain of our penitence as our expression of gratitude and worship.



## SUMMARY OF INSTRUCTION IV.

### THE RESTORATION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

I. As Christians our vocation is to live in that union with Christ to which we are admitted in Holy Baptism; but most of us know through bitter experience that it is only too easy to get wrong with God through falling into sin. It is hard for us to realise the wickedness of sin on account of the prevailing tendencies in the world around us; but the Cross reminds us that it is nothing less than a refusal of God. The evils in our life cannot be cured by the passing of time nor by anything that we can do, but by the cleansing touch of Christ. The promised way back to union with our Lord, when this union is forfeited, is by absolution.

II. The gift of absolution is the gracious gift of God, whereby He cleanses the penitent soul from the guilt of sin through the personal application of the merits of Christ. We considered the teaching of the Church about confession and absolution by way of questions and answers, in the course of which reference

was made to the teaching given in the Prayer Book, in the General Absolutions, the Ordinal, the Visitation of the Sick, and of the experience of those who have sought God in this way.

III. In conclusion we faced two facts—The fact of our sins and the need of decisive action; the fact of Jesus Christ and His offer of pardon made possible through His suffering.



## V.

### The Attitude of the Christian Life.

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We have considered the nature of the Christian life, its home, its birth, its restoration.

Christian life is unique, because it is life in Christ. It is different from all life lived apart from Christ and stands in contrast to it.

In the New Testament this distinction is made quite clear. Life in grace is represented as something different from life in the world. Those who are brought into Christ enter into a new experience, where fresh hopes and capacities and powers are placed within their reach. Christians are indeed "a new creation".

They are introduced into a new world, and find themselves both called

and empowered to live according to principles and ideals such as they did not know before. In the first ages of the Church this distinction was maintained. The two kinds of life stood in contrast to one another as white and black; they were obviously separate and belonged to different systems of thought and conduct. But with the coming of worldliness into the life of the Church the distinction became blurred, and instead of the marked contrast of black and white, the general tone of life in the Church may be described as having become grey. Yet in point of fact the contrast still holds good. The Christian is still inevitably different from the non-Christian, since for good or for ill, he has been marked with the mark of Christ. Now, notice the consequence of this. The life which has been touched by Christ must be turned in a particular direction. This brings us to our next subject, the attitude of the Christian life. For this there can be only one possibility—it must be turned towards God. God must be its centre, God its secret, its guiding motive, its unifying principle.

Let us examine this. We are spiritual beings endowed with reason. Therefore our actions must be controlled by some motive and directed towards a particular goal. We are bound to have a centre for our existence towards which we move. If this centre is not God it will be self, or perhaps some other creature. For some time we may go through a period of indecision. We may be swayed this way or that, having no clear aim and taking no direct course. Now we go one way and now another. Now we are moved by this motive and now by that, and the result is misery and confusion. From this confusion our Lord would deliver us. He would bring the distraction of this multiplicity to the peace of unity. As Christians only one aim is reasonable, and that is God and His service. To accept this as our aim does not mean we shall quickly attain to it, nor does it mean that we must suddenly be transformed into saints. On the contrary, it will involve a long struggle, and will mean that we must be ready for severe trials to our patience and our courage in face of much inconsistency.

But the really important point is that we shall have an aim, and to possess a clear and definite aim in life makes all the difference, just as on a stormy sea there is all the difference in the world between drifting along aimlessly and steering a steady course towards a port. Thus the Christian goes through the world with his life turned Godward. That is his general intention. His aim is to include all that comes in his way in this Godward movement. Here in fact is the main difference between the Christian and the worldly life. The Christian is definitely seeking God, as he goes through life, as his ultimate goal and purpose. He is determined to see that nothing shall be left outside this intention, but that all shall be included within it. In the way of doing this there are terrific difficulties, but the aim of his perseverance is to learn obedience to God and to serve Him, no matter how long it takes him to achieve his purpose. At the back of all his thoughts and words and actions there is this deeply-rooted conviction that he is for God, and that therefore he must serve God with the whole of his life.



•II. This attitude of life must be deliberately cultivated, for it can only be gained by practice. To begin with, we have to regard our life as a whole and turn it Godward. Our tendency is to live our life in sections and keep one section for our ordinary life in the world and another, usually the much smaller one, for our religion; moreover we keep these sections apart so that there is no obvious connection between them. But consider the truth. All life is the concern of God. Therefore there must be no reservation with Him. Life must be ordered with this in mind. The whole of it has come from God and the whole of it must be turned to God. We have to realise that there could be no wickedness greater than to order one's life without reference to God. Such neglect of God represents the worst thing that we can do. Our temptation is to ignore this fact and test our life by worldly standards. We are content with respectability and with conformity with the standards of this world. Yet the first and great commandment given to us by God is that we should love Him with all the heart

and mind and soul and strength. Therefore we must examine our aim. God claims the whole of life and He will be content with nothing less than the whole. This it is that we must give to Him. This attitude must be cultivated by definite acts of prayer and worship. People sometimes suggest that this is unnecessary; they say that they offer their prayer in their work and their worship in the beauties of nature. At best this is a misapprehension, and commonly it is an excuse for neglecting God. We are creatures who live under the conditions of time and space, and we know by experience that unless we act definitely we drift and do nothing. We need careful acts of prayer and definite acts of worship. Otherwise we shall neither pray nor worship in any real sense. Moreover we can only gain proficiency in these things by practice and we learn to appreciate the truth of them by expressing it. A teacher will always enter more fully into his subject as he continues to teach it. The very fact that he has to try and impart knowledge to others will help him himself to grasp

with ever clearer conviction the subject he has to put before others. So, by continually expressing the truth of our faith we are gradually able to move nearer to a real appreciation of it. Prayer and worship are the expression of our obligation to Almighty God. By definite acts we express our duty to Him; by definite acts we acknowledge our aim and redirect our life. If such acts are neglected the inevitable result is that we forget our obligation, and God fades out of our life. This worship must be not only individual, but corporate. Religion is not a private affair between the soul and God, but an activity which brings us into relation with other souls. We are Christians because we are members of the Church, which is the mystical Body of Christ. As members of that body we must offer our worship. A lonely individualism is contrary to brotherhood and departs from the ideal of the New Testament.

III. I said just now that prayer and worship are the expression of the Godward attitude. Let us consider this in greater detail. (1) First of all with

regard to our prayers. These must be the expression of our movement towards God. God is at once the object and the chief motive of our prayer. Consequently in the first place prayer must be the offering of homage to Him. About this we must be very careful in practice. Our tendency is to be self-centred. We are inclined to go to our prayers simply to get what we need for ourselves. Our temptation is to pray when it is easy or urgent to pray, and to give it up if we become discouraged or even if we gain what we want. This is not Christian prayer. The standard of true prayer is given to us by our Lord in His perfect pattern, whereby He teaches us to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." In these words our Lord teaches us to put God first and pray simply for His honour and glory before we give any thought to our own desires. We must pray in order to give our homage and love to God. You should examine this carefully. You should make quite sure that this is really and



truly the object that you have set before you. If you begin each fresh day in this way, gradually the Godward motive will prevail in your life. (2) Next think of this Godward attitude in relation with our worship. In public worship we take our part in the corporate expression of the Church's attitude towards God. As members of the Body of Christ we offer homage to God, and approach Him in adoration. This Godward movement is most characteristically expressed in the Holy Eucharist. This great offering is Christ's gift to us, which He has commanded us to continue, and it is therefore the core and essence of all worship. Remember why He gave it to us. It was not in the first place that He might feed us with heavenly food though this is an integral part of the Sacrament; but it was given first that we might have the means of bringing His memorial before God.

b "Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?" "For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice

of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby". The reason for this is that the Atonement is central in our Faith, and must ever be maintained at the heart of all that we believe and do. The Cross, with its fulfilment in the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Coming of the Holy Spirit, is the one and only way to God, and the one and only perfect offering of worship. It is the consummate expression of love, for on the Cross Love triumphs over selfishness, and remains utterly steadfast and devoted to the very end. And it offers fullest homage to God and makes completest satisfaction for sin, since it honours His Holiness and utterly repudiates wickedness. It both opens the way to God and at the same time is the perfect act of adoration. Therefore, as in a body we turn Godward, it is the Cross that we are to plead; the Cross, representing now not a dead Christ, but a living Christ who yet is ever "the Lamb as it had been slain". For such pleading Our Lord has given us the way. We are to offer to Almighty God His

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Body broken and His Blood poured forth, that is to say, we are to bring to God the perfectly surrendered life of Christ, and plead that perfect sacrifice of His again and again. We are to do this repeatedly just because Calvary is consummated in the Risen and Glorified Life, and is therefore entirely complete and adequate. We repeat the offering not to add to it but because it is the one and only offering we have which is wholly acceptable and efficacious.

The manner in which the offering is to be made is very simple; it follows the method and plan of the Incarnation. We have noticed several times how constantly God makes use of simple common outward things for the carrying out of His purposes; how the material is the vehicle and way of expression of the spiritual. So it is here. We are to make use of bread and wine when we come to plead His Sacrifice. These common things we are to bring to Him, and in the power of the Holy Ghost He is ready to consecrate them, so that they become His Body and Blood. His plan is to effect this consecration by means

of the Priests of His Church. His Priests are to act for Him. They are to say His words and do His acts, and through them the Holy Spirit makes the gifts what He wills them to be. So we are to offer the Christian Sacrifice to the Eternal Father, and bring Calvary to-day before the Throne of Grace. And notice that in doing this we are not alone. We are associated with all our Christian brothers throughout the world in this Godward movement. For there is only one sacrifice; and the effect of the million different altars in different parts of the world is not to make a million different offerings, but only to plead the one Offering. It is one action whereby the one Church offers and pleads the one Sacrifice.

But our fellowship goes deeper and further than this. God the Holy Ghost not only transforms the bread and the wine so that they become the Body and Blood of Christ; He also uplifts them and makes them one with the offering in the heavenly places. In the<sup>d</sup> Revelation



of St. John the Divine at the heart of the heavenly worship is represented our Lord as the Lamb that has been sacrificed. Round about this living Sacrifice is gathered the whole company of the redeemed, and through the Lamb adoration is offered to the Eternal and Infinite God. It is this Sacrifice which our Lord is continually pleading by His Incarnate Presence in Heaven. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us". He appears even now in the presence of God for us". And it is this same Sacrifice which we plead here upon earth. Just as there is but one offering made to God by the Church throughout the world; so it is still the oneness of offering of which we are to think when we bring our sacrifice into relation with the worship of Heaven. We are not to think of one Sacrifice in Heaven and a multitude of separate sacrifices upon earth: but we are to confess one only Sacrifice, the adorable Offering of Christ our Lord, pleaded continually in the courts of Heaven, pleaded again and

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e—Hobrews VII. 25; IX. 24; and the whole Epistle.

again on the altars of the Church in the great Sacrament of His love.

See then the dignity and wonder of this worship, in which we are privileged to take our part. We come to God at Christ's command to plead His perfectly surrendered life, and as we come we are caught up in the great stream of worship and praise which flows to Him continually from His Church in Heaven and earth. Though we are limited by time and space, and dull of perception and earthbound and unspiritual, yet we find that the barriers between Heaven and earth have fallen away, and we are on the very threshold of Heaven itself. We are with the saints; we are with the angels. It is with angels and arch-angels and with all the company of Heaven" that "we laud and magnify God's glorious Name." The heavenly song is put into our lips; we are in the heavenly places. Here we are at one with all the faithful; with all who love His Sacrifice in every corner of the world; with the beloved dead beyond the veil; with Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors,

Virgins who gloriously bore their witness to Him upon earth and now reign with Him in triumph. And here at the heart of the worship, the focus of our adoration and the way of access to the Father, is the Christ of To-day. We are near Him; we are with Him. He draws us into Himself, and allows us to be identified with Him as He holds up His glorious Sacrifice, and sets that one only sufficient offering forward for the glory of the Father and for the salvation of man.

Small wonder then that we insist that here is the heart of all worship; small wonder that we proclaim this to be the essential act of homage and service which we must render to Almighty God. For here is the centre of all charity; here is the spring of all devoted service; from this source flows all else that is done for God, all that is devised for the welfare of man; here we offer ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice to God, in union with the Sacrifice of His dear Son. So the Church stands facing Godward, pleading

Christ for the glory of the Father and the redemption of man.

"f In the great Sacrifice the Church offers the Body and Blood of our Lord. The offering of His Body and Blood is the pleading of His whole human life. His conception by His virgin mother, His life as a child living but not yet born, His birth and infancy and childhood and youth and manhood, His ministry and passion and death, the stay of His body in the tomb and of His soul in the unseen world, His resurrection; His sojourning on earth in His risen life, His ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father on high all these have their place in the prayers with which the pleading is made. And this majestic sacrifice is offered for the manifold needs of mankind. It is offered for saints and sinners, for the faithful and the tempted and the backsliding and the apostate, for the work of the Church all over the world, for nations and statesmen and kings and subjects, for societies and individuals, for the needs of

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f - "The Faith of an English Catholic" - Darwell Stone - (Longmans) p. 43 -



capital and of labour, for family and household and friends, for the living and the dead. In it joy and sorrow, toil and conflict and rest, health and sickness and death, are gathered up into the one offering of Christ. The priest at the altar, and the people of God in the congregation, make the truth of the familiar words their own: "Mindful of Thy venerable passion I approach Thine altar, sinner though I be, to offer Thee the sacrifice which thou hast instituted and commanded to be offered in commemoration of Thee for our salvation. Receive it, I pray, O God most high for Thy Holy Church, and for the people whom Thou hast purchased with Thy blood..... I offer, O Lord, if Thou wilt deign mercifully to behold, the trials of the poor, the perils of nations, the groans of prisoners, the sadness of orphans, the needs of travellers, the want of the weak, the disheartenment of the sick, the failing of the old, the aspirations of the young, the vows of virgins, the sorrows of widows."

*Note :—*

There exists a good deal of misunderstanding about the teaching of the Church with regard to the Eucharistic pleading of our Saviour's Sacrifice.

And there are some amongst us who declare that the Holy Communion is no more than a bare memorial of Our Lord's death, and that no offering of His Sacrifice is there made. In these circumstances the following note will be of interest.

In the year 1896 a Papal Bull was issued, in which it was denied that Anglican Orders were valid.

To this Bull the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York made a formal reply, which they addressed to all the Bishops of Christendom.

In the course of this reply the Archbishops declared decisively that the Church of England has always claimed

to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice according to the mind and intention of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

They made this claim in the following terms:—

“But we answer, as regards the passage quoted by the Pope, that we make provision with the greatest reverence for the consecration of the Holy Eucharist, and commit it only to properly ordained priests, and to no other ministers of the Church. Further we truly teach the doctrine of Eucharistic Sacrifice, and do not believe it to be a “nude commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross”, an opinion which seems to be attributed to us by the quotation made from that council.” (i.e., of Trent)

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## SUMMARY OF INSTRUCTION V.

### The attitude of the Christian Life.

I. The life of the Christian must be turned towards God as to its one true goal. This is the one aim that is reasonable and it must determine life's general intention and direction.

II. This attitude has to be cultivated first by learning to acknowledge God's claim on life as a whole, and, secondly, by practising definite acts of prayer and worship.

III. Prayer and worship are the expression of the Godward attitude. In our prayers we tend to be self-centred, but the Lord's Prayer teaches us the true balance. We must seek first to give our homage and love to God. At the heart of Christian worship is the Eucharist, in which we plead the perfectly surrendered life of our Lord. Through simple means we offer before the Father Christ's perfect sacrifice and make it at once our corporate act of homage to Him and our ground of appeal for all mankind.



## VI.

### The Food of the Christian Life.

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1. It cannot too often be repeated that our aim as Christians is union with Christ. This union was first effected at our Baptism when we were given our share in His life. This wonder of union with Christ is at the heart of the Christian religion. It is strengthened in Confirmation. It is restored and preserved by Absolution. It is treasured by thought, by prayer and by devotion. But how can it be nourished and how can it be developed? This brings us to the consideration of a great secret which is hidden from the world, but a secret which is the joy, the hope and the inspiration of the true Christian. The life of Christ in us is fed by Christ Himself. Christ Himself, the Living Bread, is the food of the soul. It is this mystery which we are to consider to-day.

Let me remind you first of all the sequel to the feeding of the five thousand

of which we read in the 6th Chapter of St. John. On the day after the miracle the multitude flocked to our Lord again, since they had had their hunger appeased and their wonder aroused. Our Lord at once began to tell them that they must not be too much concerned about the food of the body, but must begin to care about another kind of food which would endure for ever, <sup>a</sup>“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you.” He then proceeded to elaborate the statement and to tell them of their need of spiritual food. Into this instruction He incorporated this great mystery that He Himself was to be the food of the soul. Let me quote you His words, <sup>b</sup>“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus

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a—St. John VI. 27.

b—St. John VI. 51 f.

said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Notice that this teaching of our Blessed Lord was misunderstood and opposed by many who heard Him. In face of this opposition He did not explain away His words, nor did He water down His teaching. All He did was to make more clear and strong the words that He had spoken. We read at the end of that Chapter, c "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are

sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." But if this is the teaching our Blessed Lord gave about spiritual food, what was to be the manner by which it was to be imparted? For this our Lord had a plan. It was not left to chance, but once again the method of the Incarnation was used. That is to say our Lord made use of simple outward things for the purpose of bringing to man great spiritual and hidden realities. Thus bearing this in mind we are not at all surprised to read these words in the Gospel of St. Luke, <sup>d</sup>"He took bread; and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Now put these two passages of Scripture together and our Lord's teaching is as follows:—You all need spiritual food. I Myself am that food; and I will come to you under the forms of bread and wine.

Next we have to remember that our Lord made provision for the continuance

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d—St. Luke XXII. 19 f.



of this heavenly food. At His command the Church is continually to bring the bread and the wine to Him in an ordered and solemn manner. Each time He will consecrate the elements so that they become what He intends them to be, His Body and His Blood. This is to happen by means of a duly ordained Priesthood. Thus when the Priest, who represents our Lord, consecrates the bread and wine they become what they were not before; they become the Body and Blood of Christ. In considering this we are at the heart of a mystery, and the fewer words we speak the better. But this we confess in common with the teaching and experience of the Catholic Church throughout the ages: We believe that in the Blessed Sacrament under the humble forms of bread and wine is the Lord Jesus, the Christ of to-day. We believe that the consecrated elements do actually make accessible the glorified life of Christ Himself, and that the gift in Holy Communion is nothing less than Jesus Christ. This is the teaching of the Catechism in our Prayer Book: "What is the inward part or thing signified in the Lord's Supper?" "The Body and Blood of Christ which are verily and indeed

taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." We can only take and receive that which is already there. We can take our Lord's Body and Blood in our Communion because these Gifts are there to be given to us. This is the plain teaching that St. Paul gives us in the <sup>e</sup> first Epistle to the Corinthians; <sup>f</sup> "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" <sup>g</sup> "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my

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<sup>e</sup>—Scholars tell us that the record given in this epistle of the institution of the Holy Communion is the earliest record in point of time that we possess.

<sup>f</sup>—1 Cor. X. 15 16.

<sup>g</sup>—1 Cor. XI 23 f.

blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation (i.e. judgment) to himself not discerning the Lord's body."

This mystery of the Blessed Sacrament is the work of the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Ghost transforms the natural gifts of bread and wine, and as He transforms them He uplifts them so that they become the supernatural gifts of Christ's Body and Blood. Thus we are given a way in which Christ is wholly accessible to us. We are given a manner of union with Him which is certain, definite and assured. We believe that the Christ of to-day is really present in the Blessed Sacrament, and that He is present as He is now. It is the presence of the risen, ascended, glorified Lord. We are in the heavenly places, and are face to face with the living

Jesus. True He is present in humble forms, but none the less He is the Lord of glory, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. It is not any other Christ than the Christ of to-day Whom we worship and adore. It is not a Christ Who is outside our experience and Who belongs to a by-gone age; but it is the Christ Who is our Lord, our Redeemer and our King, Who is our life, our food and our hope. This Christ is present according to His own word. Let us notice that. He is not present because of our goodness or our faith. It is not necessary for us to work ourselves up into an emotional state or a state of extraordinary piety before His presence can be vouchsafed to us; but He is present according to His own word in the manner which He has ordained, in a way external to ourselves. In the power of the Holy Spirit, by virtue of the consecration, Christ our Lord is present on the altar under the humble forms of bread and wine. How this happens is a great mystery and we are not bound by any exact definition. It is the fact of the presence upon which we lay the stress.



At this point I anticipate a difficulty. Perhaps someone says, "I do not understand what you say about the presence of Christ in the Holy Communion. Surely He is present everywhere. Why do you then stress this particular manner?" It is quite true that our Lord as God is present everywhere and wherever we go we may adore Him, but He has taken our manhood and still in the heavenly places He is true man. We believe that He is not everywhere present in His Humanity now any more than He was after His resurrection. During the great forty days He was present in His sacred Humanity where He willed to be, for example, on the road to Emmaus, in the Upper Room, by the Lake of Galilee. So it is to-day. As God He is present everywhere, but as Man we believe that the natural presence of His Manhood is in heaven. But by an act of divine power it is the presence of Christ in His Manhood that is vouchsafed to us in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar in a way given to us by Himself. He feeds us not only with divine life but with His incarnate life. It is as both God and Man that He comes to us. He places at our disposal His perfect Humanity and

thus imparts to us His divine nature in a way that our humanity can assimilate. If we believe this we shall understand the ancient practice of reserving the Blessed Sacrament continually in our Churches. We believe that our Blessed Lord in this holy Sacrament is the food of the soul, and that He wills ever to be at hand to give Himself to His children in their need. Thus the Blessed Sacrament is reserved for the purposes of redemption. It should be available for the sick, and for the whole who are unavoidably prevented by some urgent cause from being present at the usual times of Communion. But wherever the Blessed Sacrament is reserved there It must always be regarded as the fount of Communion. We are to think of Him always as the Living Bread Who loves to be amongst His children, and as we live with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament so we are to learn that not only are we to receive Him from time to time, but we are to live by Him. Since our Lord is present in the Blessed Sacrament He must ever be adored. In venerating the Blessed Sacrament we are venerating Jesus Christ. If we believe this then no power on earth can stop our adoration, for

indeed we can do no otherwise than adore Him if we believe He is truly present.

II. Now let us consider our relation to the Holy Communion. Our aim must be to give the greatest honour we can to Jesus Christ. For this we must be careful both about our preparation and our thanksgiving. I must lay stress on this because of the prevailing carelessness. It is to be feared that there are many Communicants to-day who make their Communion with quite inadequate preparation and with no articulate thanksgiving. We ought then to promise our Lord first of all that we will never go to our Communion without careful preparation. This preparation need not be long, but it must be sincere. We must be sure that nothing separates us from Him, and that we have an honest intention of serving Him. The secret of a good preparation is to want our Lord and to think first of Him. Our preparation will involve the whole of our being, body, mind and spirit. Consider first the preparation of the body and the mind. It is a good thing to try and avoid being late the night before our Communion, in order that we may be as



fresh as possible for this great act of worship. We ought to go, so far as we can, out of stillness and silence, and it is a good rule not to engage in ordinary conversation until after our Communion. We should remember that all down the ages it has been the custom of Catholic Christians to observe the fast before Communion from the previous midnight. It is a fact that this fast has been observed with very great strictness from early days. As long ago as the year 400 St. Augustine, the great teacher of the Western Church, wrote as follows: "It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost that in honour of so great a Sacrament the Body of our Lord should enter the mouth of a Christian before food; and it is for this reason that the custom referred to is observed throughout the whole world." It is to be hoped that obedience to this rule will be more and more generally given amongst us for the same reason as that given by St. Augustine. Secondly, the preparation of the spirit. We must come with faith. We must trust our Lord that He will truly give us this great gift of Himself, and we must bear in mind that without this trust He will not be able to do any mighty



work in us. It is true that the presence of our Lord is there independently of our faith, but it is only by faith that we can assimilate the gift, and benefit by His presence. To faith we must add penitence. We must come in grace. As we kneel at the altar we must be certain of being forgiven. The greatest horror in the world must be the horror of a bad Communion. Now, a bad Communion is quite a definite thing. It is a Communion made in downright bad sin, without repentance. God save us from so great a calamity. It is that we may be saved from so great a disaster that <sup>h</sup> the Prayer Book lays stress upon the importance of going to our Communion with a quiet conscience. Obviously the conscience must be quiet in the right way, that is to say, it must be quiet because it is free from the guilt of downright bad sin. There is such a thing as the conscience being quiet because it is asleep, or because it has become so dulled by sin that it cannot realise its guilt. What is absolutely essential for us all is that we should kneel at the altar in grace, with the soul made ready

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<sup>h</sup>—Exhortation in Holy Communion.

for God by the pardon of Jesus Christ. But remember that we must aim at inviting our Lord not merely into an empty chamber but into one that is furnished with care and devotion. Thus we need to come with earnest prayer for all the virtues which He will love to see. Especially we ought to pray before every Communion for contrition and for a true desire for our Lord. In such a way we shall be able by His grace to do Him honour.

But we must not be content even with a good preparation. We must pay very special attention to thanksgiving. Remember that to us in our Communion comes the supreme treasure of heaven and earth. Therefore we ought to spend many minutes in devout thanksgiving, and cultivate a sense of wonder and joy that Christ has so far condescended as to make His home in our hearts. The natural outcome of a thankful spirit is that we shall pay great attention to regular Communion, and shall have our rule for communicating with great care and increasing frequency.

III. In conclusion let us think quite simply of our Communion. Going to Communion is going to Jesus Christ. That is to say it is going to One who knows us perfectly. As we go to Him He understands all our difficulties and enters with complete sympathy into all the experiences of our every-day life. The gift He gives us is nothing less than Himself, and in giving Himself to us He puts within our reach all His perfections. The wonder is that that offer always holds good. He never holds back from us. He never sends us away. It is we who tend to hold back, for we say and say quite rightly that we are not fit to go to Him. The fact is that no one is worthy of Holy Communion. This we acknowledge in the Prayer of Humble Access. "We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy Table." Yet He can make us worthy. Remember that Holy Communion is not a reward for the good, but it is food for sinners. It is provision for the way for the pilgrim as he toils and stumbles along the stony, uphill path. To us in all our toils Christ comes as our food. That is what we need. It is quite true that He is King of Kings, and yet He is homely.



He enters into our common things and He comes not to sit on a throne in our hearts but to work. He turns our hearts into His workshop, and there He labours to make us better. Now I ask you, what are you doing about your Communion? Have you got a careful rule? If not, make one without delay. Above all, aim at increasing your Communion, and remember that for frequent Communion nothing is required of you which is outside your reach. i "What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper? To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life, have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death; and be in charity with all men." That is to say, all that is essential for a good Communion is to be in grace and to have an honest intention to follow Christ. As you think this over, do not forget what I have already said; we need our Communion frequently not because we are good enough, but because we are so bad. As we realise our need of our Lord we



shall be able more and more to live in the power to **His life.**

In these addresses I have asked you to think of the inner meaning and significance of the Christian life; and I have put before you certain assured ways and means by which God grants this life to us. It was my task to show that in His Church there are available for all its members mighty resources and supernatural powers to enable even the weakest of us to acquire, and actually to attain to, life in Christ. In carrying out this task the last thing in the world I want to do is to suggest that God is tied to His ordinary means of grace, or that He cannot or does not grant grace, rich and abounding, in other ways. Wherever we see signs of His grace, and response to His love, we must be happy and thankful. But the fullest and most generous recognition of God's gifts of widespread blessing, and of man's response in Christian life and service, is still not incompatible with the belief that there is yet an assured home of grace and divinely appointed means by which the soul of man may penetrate most deeply

into the Kingdom of Heaven, and experience most completely the fulness of life in Him Who is "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person."

If then you have followed this course, at least at the end of it give yourself to prayer that you may find all that God offers you of life in Christ, and to this prayer for yourself add of your charity one for me whose responsibility it has been to put this teaching before you.



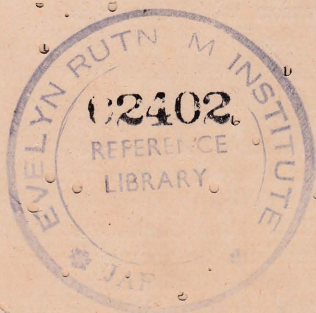
## SUMMARY OF INSTRUCTION VI.

I. The life of union with Christ is to be nourished and developed by the Heavenly Food which He Himself gives us.

This is the teaching in the Gospels; and in the Holy Communion He has provided the means by which we may receive His Body and Blood. In the mystery of the Eucharist we believe that Christ is truly present under the humble forms of bread and wine in a manner external to ourselves, and that His glorified life is actually accessible to us. Thus we adore Him in the Blessed Sacrament, and feed upon the life of Incarnate God.

II. Our aim in making our Communions must be to give our Lord all the honour of which we are capable. To this end we must make careful preparation of body, mind, and spirit, and pay special attention to thanksgiving.

III. When we go to Communion we go to our Lord, Who comes to enter into our life as it is. We must seek to increase our Communions, and rely upon Him more and more; for in face of our great need we dare not do otherwise than make the most careful use of so great a gift.





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