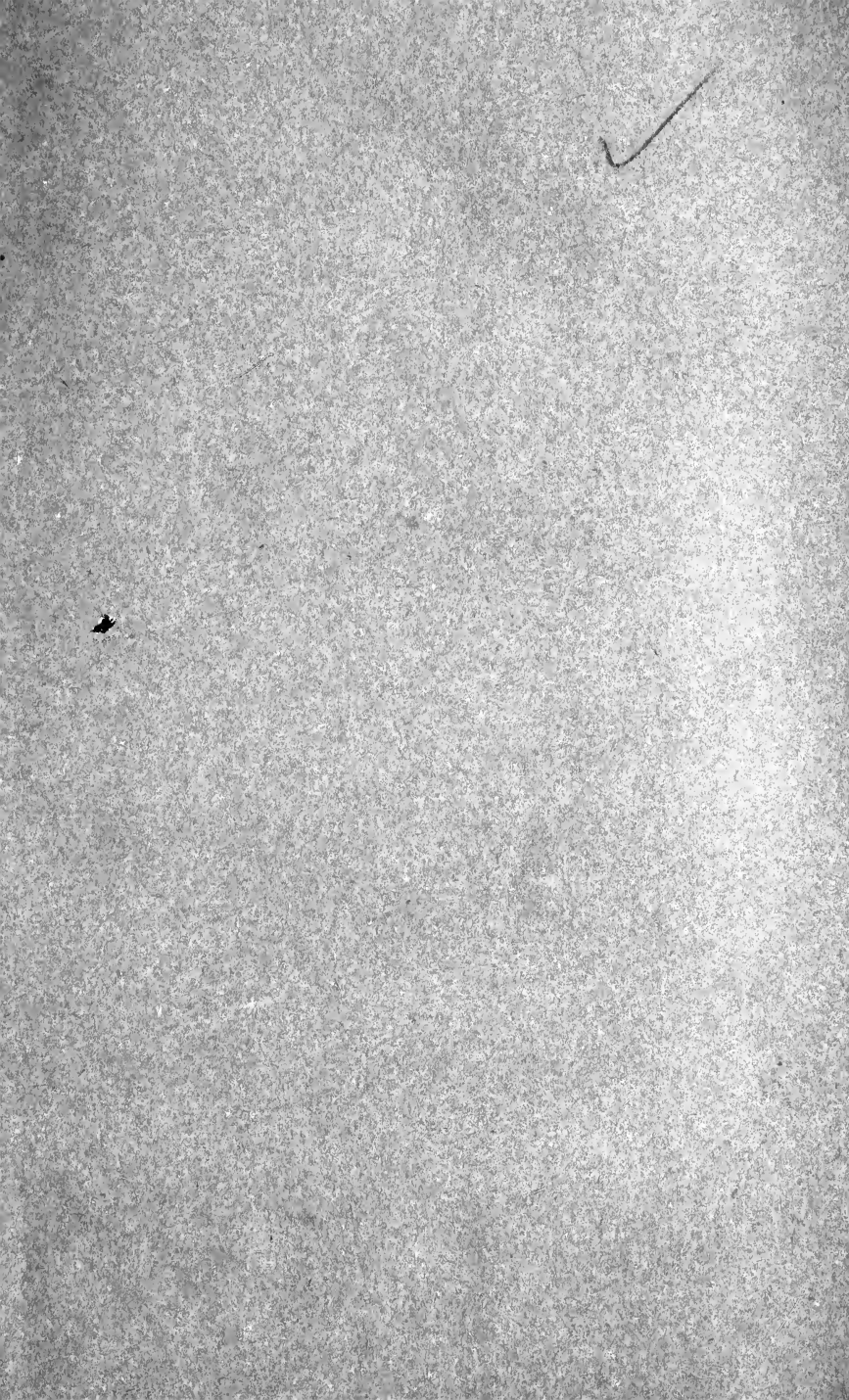
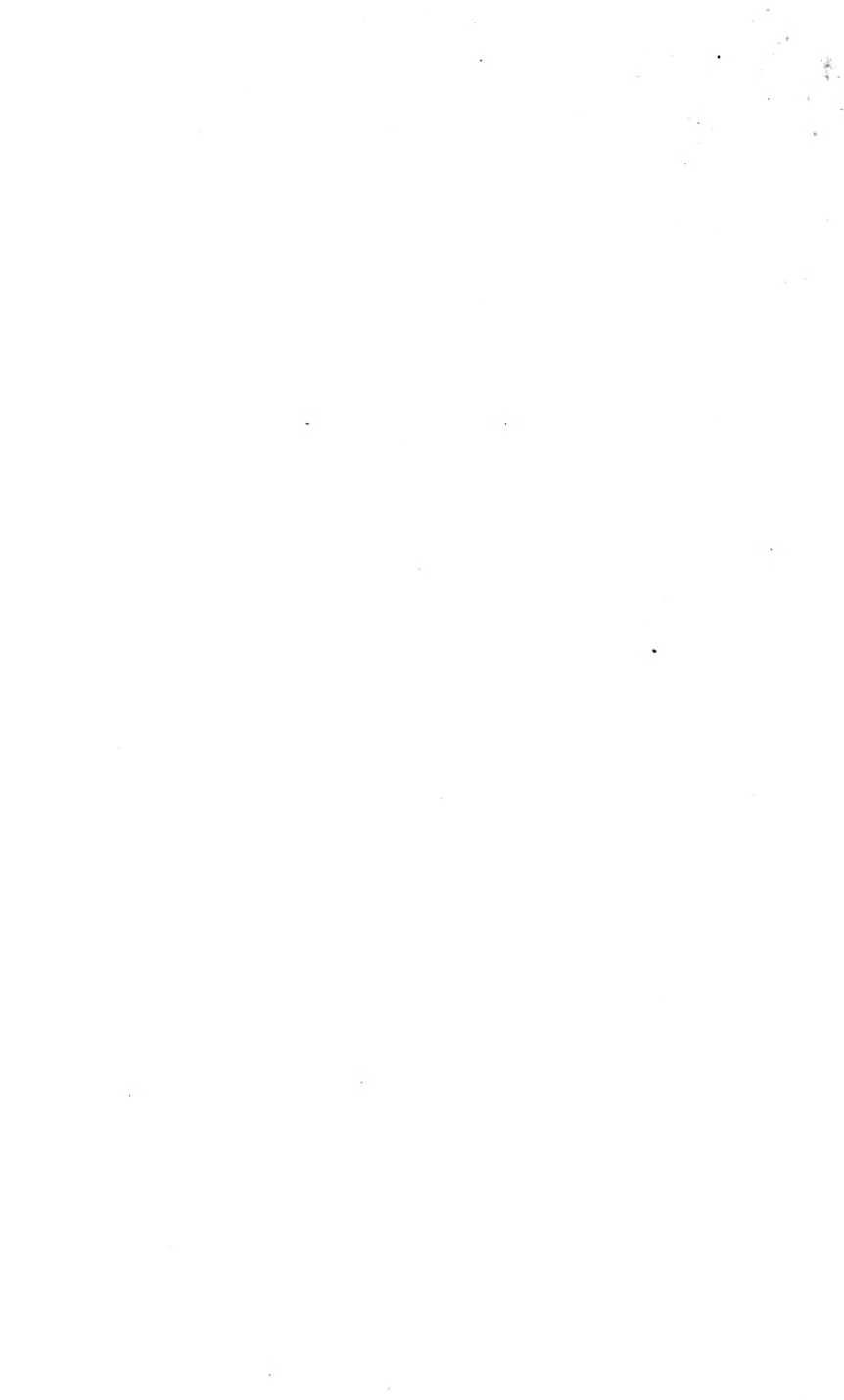




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A

*John G. Talbot*

FEW THOUGHTS ON EUCHARISTIC  
WORSHIP,

IN

A LETTER TO A FRIEND

OF

THE EXTREME RITUALISTIC SCHOOL.

BY

A PRIEST OF THE DIOCESE OF OXFORD.

London,

RIVINGTONS, WATERLOO PLACE;

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## PREFACE.

THE following letter was written in January last, to a friend for whom I feel more than esteem, solely from a strong conviction of duty, and without a thought of publishing it.

Distrust of my own powers of judgment on matters so deep, led me to submit it to some friends who were better able than myself to form an opinion of the correctness of the views contained in it. I found that these friends, whose learning and untiring and successful labours for the Church of Christ in this land gave me reason to trust their judgment, all shared my fears with regard to the doctrine propounded by a certain school of the present day, and more than one urged me to publish the letter. I have therefore ventured to do so, in the hope that if my fears are well founded, the expression of them may be of some use, and with the earnest desire that, if my views are erroneous, they may not be permitted to do harm.

I have removed from the letter all that was only of personal application to my friend, and some remarks on a matter of minor importance.

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A

## LETTER,

&c.

January 22, 1867.

MY DEAR —,

It has been a great trial to me for a long time past to feel that I could not go along with you and with some others, of whose devotion and earnestness, as well as learning, I have so high an estimation that to have yielded my own opinion to theirs would have been an easy sacrifice, had the difference between us been one of personal judgment only, even on matters of the Faith. But it appears to me that on the points between us, our Spiritual Mother the Church of England, has spoken clearly and unhesitatingly, and that, so far as power to understand is given to me, the Holy Scriptures, and the voice of the Primitive Church (to both which she refers me), entirely support her teaching.

It seems to me also equally clear that the school to which I refer has gone, and is going still further beyond the bounds which she has set; and that in proportion as they transgress her bounds they are falling away from the *Truth*, and returning to *Error* from which she had withdrawn us.

Believing this I feel that, however, in other matters of Faith, I am one with them, I must hold back, no matter what pain it costs me, where I believe them to be in error. In this you will agree with me, though you may think that the error is mine.

Most fully I acknowledge the necessity, in the Church of England, for the example of that severer and more devoted life which you and many of these are leading. It is needed on many grounds:—(1) To bear witness in Christendom to the vitality of that “Reformed Faith” which she professes. (2) To be a marked witness against the worldliness and luxury of the present day. (3) To touch by sympathy—visible sympathy in their privations—our poorer brethren, and so to make our teaching *touch* them as *real* and *trustworthy*.

I was thankful, therefore, when I saw others not only able but willing to walk by this rule of life, and to see this spirit growing in our Church. You may imagine, therefore, that to me it has been a real affliction to witness so many of our more devoted brethren weakening the force of their example by running on (as I believed) into distinct transgressions of the doctrinal limits of our spiritual mother, and consequently into error.

I will mention two chief points on which it seems to me that they err.

(1st) By permitting any, even the simplest, forms of invocation of Saints departed, when the Church of England has said the “invocation of Saints is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.” Art. xxii.

(2nd) In making the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper an *Object of Worship*, when the Church of England says that “the Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them.” Art. xxiii. And again, “The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was not by Christ’s ordinance reserved, carried about, *lifted up*, or *worshipped*.” Art. xxviii.

I will not at present enter at length into these points, but will mention that these transgressions appear to me very deeply to mar the effectiveness for example of your devoted lives.

The Romanist would say, “Your example weighs not with us, for you do not keep within the bounds of your so-called ‘Purer Church;’ you trench upon *our* doctrine, the difference between you and us is no longer one of *Principle*, but only a question of *Degrees*; you will soon go on a little further in the same lines, and then you will be ours.”

The *Worldly* and the *Careless*, beginning to be touched by your Scriptural lives, stop short and say, "Oh! this is Popery!" and in too many cases think no more of what would otherwise have been a living teaching which they could not have resisted.

The *Poor* would either be *led on*, and so into *error* without perceiving it, or might in some cases think that you made up for self-denial in one way by self-indulgence in another.

Feeling this, it has been a sore trial to me to fear that so much goodness was being robbed of its legitimate effect through the malice of our *great enemy* thus tainting it with error.

How lamentable *e. g.* the loss of good effect in the case of the "English Benedictines." There was room, and more than room, for the teaching—more powerful than that of words—of all the self-denial and renunciation of the world which they could compass. It was beginning to enforce its rightful influence, when, to all appearance, the Society came to pieces, and has been the laughing-stock of many who might have been converted by it. This too followed not long after we had received several reports of their services, not *purposefully marking*, but incidentally mentioning their open transgression of the Church of England's limits on the two points which I have named.

With regard to the Holy Sacrament itself, I trust that we really agree in the sense in which we understand the "Real Presence." To the term "Objective," used only in contradiction to the term "Subjective," in defining that "Presence," thereby signifying that the "Presence" is consequent upon the consecration and not merely upon the faith of the receiver, I could of course take no exception; but it seems to me that the so-called "Ritualistic School" go far beyond this in their use of the term. Having laid claim to the correctness of the term for this use, they proceed to deductions from it till they make the Sacrament itself an "Object" of Worship.

For this use of the term "Objective," as well as for the term "Substantially," which is continually coupled with it by this school, I cannot see any sufficient authority.

On such a subject, I have a fear of using new terms in advance of the authorized definitions of our Church,

especially because those definitions have been carefully framed as well to *exclude* that which she believes to be *Error*, as to *include* and *defend* what she believes to be *Truth*.

I have besides another fear of the unqualified use of the term "Objective." It seems to me to point to the source of every description of Idolatry whereby man has offended the Almighty since the Fall, and so to point to a probable (to me it seems more than probable) danger of this school.

Let me endeavour to explain what I mean. Man, since the Fall, has been shut out from the Visible Presence of His Creator, and seems in his "feeling after Him if haply he may find Him," *i. e.* whenever moved to seek communion with God, since that exclusion, to have been endeavouring to attain to some *sensible* approach to Him whom now he was no longer permitted to behold. To this end he has perpetually sought to obtain an *objective* means of, or rather assistance to worship. Hence many of the Idols of the Heathen world; hence the Golden Calf in the wilderness; hence, in part, the repetition of this in Israel at Dan and Bethel; hence the final worship of the Brazen Serpent, &c., &c. We cannot suppose that they worshipped these things as being in themselves God, but as giving them a *sensible* representation of Him; towards which, as an *object*, they might direct their worship, and have in consequence a *sensible* perception of His presence with them.

Now I ask, is not this a fair estimate of their conduct? If it is, I would *first* beg you to remember that this conduct was repeatedly *denounced* and *punished*—was the sin of Idolatry which brought down God's anger so frequently and so signally upon His people.

*Secondly.* Let me ask you to compare this conduct with the *Worship of the Sacrament* in the Church of Rome, culminating in the festival of "Corpus Christi."

*Thirdly.* If there is a likeness between these, is there not also a danger in the theory of the "*Objective Presence*," which calls at least for a limitation of the sense in which the term "Objective" is used?

Take the festival of Corpus Christi at Rome, and compare the procession as it goes round the piazza of St. Peter's, the altar on a raised platform, the Pope kneeling before it; the people, as it passes, kneeling or prostrating themselves. Take this scene and compare it—I will not say

with heathen idol processions—but compare it with the Institution of the Holy Sacrament, with every thing that is said of the Sacrament, with every allusion to its use, in the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament. What likeness is there between the uses? Compare it again with any use of the Holy Eucharist of which we read in the early Fathers; in St. Chrysostom *e. g.* or St. Augustine; or, I believe I may say, in the history of the undivided Church.

Where is the likeness between any thing which they teach, or of which we read *then* and this?

To my power of understanding, the two are as utterly at variance as they well can be. In the one (the modern Roman) use, the Sacrament is an *Object* of Worship; in the other use (the ancient and Catholic), a *Means* of *Communion*, and an *Act* of Worship.

Yet again, so far as I can understand, the culminating act of the Roman Adoration of the Sacrament is but a *legitimate* deduction from an unlimited theory of an Objective Presence, and from the *Worship* which is already claimed for the Sacrament in consequence.

Once so define the Presence that worship of the Sacrament becomes permissible, even necessary<sup>1</sup>, and it then becomes but a question of *degrees*, and no longer one of *principle*, between that belief and the fullest development of the Roman theory, against which the Church of England witnesses.

The Lord grant in mercy that nothing written by me on this most holy subject be unfaithful, or presumptuous, or cause an irreverent thought in any one; and if in ignorance I mis-state any thing, may He of His goodness pardon and correct me.

With this preamble let me say that, if it is right to declare that Christ is so present *there* (on the Altar, or in the priest's hands) in consequence of the consecration that worship should be directed *thither*—then you have only to keep *that* unconsumed upon the Altar, and, as in the Church of Rome, you may claim to have *Him* ever present with you in a sense quite different from His ordinary Omnipresence.

<sup>1</sup> Surely *permission* in such a case as this involves *necessity*. If such is the manner of the Presence in the Sacrament, that adoration of the Sacrament is *permissible* to any one, it must be *incumbent* upon all.

A Blessing, if true, so inestimable, that, for one, I cannot conceive how there should be no teaching declaring it, no directions for the use of it, no allusions even to such a practice in the Holy Scriptures, or, I believe, in the early Church, at least in the first four centuries. Did I know more of the writers of later times, I doubt not that I might add many centuries more. A century would however be sufficient, four centuries over abundant for this proof, carrying us, as they do, far on in the history of the Church.

Again : If this doctrine of the Eucharist is true, why should we stop with keeping the Sacrament unconsumed upon the altar ; why should it not be kept to hallow Christian houses—Christian people ?

Consider, I pray you, to what profanation of the Holy Sacrament this might not lead ; and yet there is no word of the Lord's forbidding it, except that silent word which springs from the entire absence of any word of His, or of His inspired Apostles, commanding or even suggesting the adoration of the Sacrament.

But you may say that *we* need not trouble ourselves about this. The Church of England, at least, forbids such *reservation*. She does : but then she forbids also the worship which led, and yet again would lead to it. And surely she is to be obeyed in one direction equally as in the other.

I would not be misunderstood. With you, I believe most fully that Christ is present in the Holy Communion, "*really and essentially*;" and not the less "*really and essentially*" because in a "*heavenly and spiritual*" manner : indeed, things *spiritual* are far more *real* than things *carnal*.

I believe that Christ Himself is really "given," "taken," and "received" by the faithful in the Lord's Supper through the consecrated elements. I believe that in the whole Service, and especially in the act of consecration, there is the "showing" forth of the Lord's death until He comes.

There is the solemn sacrificial presentation before the Father in heaven of the memorial of His Son's death for us. Nay, more ; since time is nothing with God ("a thousand years as one day, and one day as a thousand years"), so, doubtless, when this commemorative sacrifice is made on earth, it pleads in heaven as fresh and as powerfully as on the day when the great Sacrifice itself was made upon the

Cross. Doubtless, too, it is mystically united with the actual presentation of the "Lamb as it had been slain" before the throne in heaven, which is revealed to us in the Apocalypse.

Believing this, I must and do believe, with you, that Christ should *then be specially worshipped*: but that this worship should be rendered to Him without idea of *locality*.

Present in heaven, at the right hand of the Almighty Father, in His human nature, wherein He ascended; present by virtue and power of His Godhead in heaven and on earth,—in heaven visibly, on earth invisibly; present in His congregations, according to His promise, "There am I;" present in the Sacrament for absolute union with Himself, "I am the Bread of Life. . . . As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." To be worshipped therefore with all devotion of heart, with all intention of mind, with prostration of body, and with every adjunct of grandeur and reverence which man, guided by the spiritual wisdom of the Church, can offer. But worshipped without idea of *locality*, as present, though undefinably so,—not as seated here or there,—no more as seated, so to say, in the Sacrament than in the worthy receiver.

The same Word which said, "This is My Body," and "This is My Blood," said also, "Take, *Eat*," and "*Drink* ye all of this;" but did not say, "Worship this:" neither is mention made in His Scriptures of any worship *of* or *towards* it.

St. Augustine, full as he is of the actual communion of Christ to the faithful receiver, as where he says, "Let him (the receiver) be *incorporated*," "Let him live to God *by God*," and bursts forth into expressions of rapture towards the Holy Sacrament, does not venture, as some have now done, to say, "My Lord, and my God!" but simply, "O, Sacrament of piety! O, sign of unity! O, bond of charity!"

It has been said, that if we believe Christ's words, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood," it follows, by logical induction, that Christ *in* it, and therefore *upon the Altar*, or *in the priest's hands*, is to be worshipped. To my mind it seems presumptuous and profane to attempt to reduce the doctrine of a divine mystery to the laws of human logic; a profanation and presumption likely to be punished by falling into grievous error.

Here in fact seems to be our *point of divergence*. Alike we believe the fulness and reality of our Lord's words—alike we believe that the Lord Jesus gives Himself *in* and *through* the Holy Sacrament to the worthy receiver; but here I believe the Church of England bids me stop, as nothing is revealed to us beyond. You go on, and draw logical inductions from these words, and then found doctrine upon those inductions. This course seems at first natural and right, but it soon legitimately leads to doctrine and acts of worship utterly unauthorized by the Holy Scriptures or the practice and teaching of the early Church, and in the end to consequences completely at variance with them.

Once apply the Laws of Logic to prove that Christ is thus to be worshipped *in* the Sacrament, and you cannot *reasonably* stop there, but must allow every other induction which could thus in words be drawn. Thus it seems to me that you might sanction every thing concerning this Sacrament against which the Church of England witnesses, and there is no saying to what profanities even you might be led.

Again, it seems to me that in proportion as the *worship* of the Blessed Sacrament prevails, the estimation and practice of *Communion* fails. We know that this has been the case in the Church of Rome to a very great extent, where "to be present at," "to assist at," "to hear" mass, has so much taken the place (to my mind terribly so) of receiving the Holy Communion. It seems almost to amount to man presuming to say that he can advise better than His Divine Master. *He* says, "Take, eat," and man says, as it were, "Come and behold;" *He* says, "*Drink ye* all of this," and man there (at Rome) says, "*all* shall not drink of it;" *He* says, "Do this as oft as ye shall *drink* it," and they make an *often beholding* take the place of an *often receiving*, and *receive* but seldom. In fact, making the *worship* of Christ *in* the Sacrament the *great thing*, the *Communion* of Christ the *lesser*. Yet, what is the view set before us in Holy Scripture, and confirmed by the voice of the early Church? *Communion*. In St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, in passage after passage, where allusion is made to the Holy Sacrament, the prominent thought is *Communion*. It seems, therefore, to me a matter ominous of no good, that this great revival of



the adoration of the Sacrament in the Church of England is accompanied with so much stress being laid upon being *present* at the celebration, even when feeling unfit to receive.

Then again, the disposition to make two sorts of celebration, a *Low* one for *Communion*, and a *High* one for *Worship*; drawing a distinction never made in Holy Scripture, nor, as far as I have ascertained, in the Early Church,—a distinction very likely to lead to the frequenting of the latter and to the neglect of the former.

Besides, I fear much that when the revival of more gorgeous (in a good sense), and so more reverent and seemly worship of God in His services, especially in this, is accompanied with that which to many minds, and thoughtful minds too, is a clear transgression of our Church's teaching, the restoration of a ceremonial more worthy of her teaching and of Him whom she worships will be much hindered; and that great works, and powerful means of raising our people's minds, and bringing them to realize the Majesty of God, and the glories of His Worship in Heaven,—yea, and great truths themselves,—will be jeopardized by this inflowing of error.

Already, I am afraid that I have tried your patience, and yet on one other point I must add a little. You appear to lay much stress,—and it seems to follow, as a matter of necessity, from your own view (or rather that of your school) of the Presence,—on the assertion that the wicked receive *Christ* in the Sacrament as well as the faithful. You say “that every Communicant takes from the Priest verily and indeed the *same food*, that the wicked receive *Him* to their great condemnation.” In this you seem to define beyond what the Church of England has ventured to define, and in a line contrary to the tendency of what she does say, *viz.*: “The wicked . . . although they do . . . press with their teeth the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of *Christ*” (Art. xxix.); and to be so far contrary to St. Augustine himself, who says, “And therefore who dwelleth not in Christ, and in whom Christ dwelleth not, without doubt *doth neither eat His Flesh, nor drink His Blood*, but rather doth unto judgment to himself *eat and drink the Sacrament of so great a thing*” (on St. John vi. p. 412 of the “Library of the Fathers”). You will see

by reference to the quotation that the words which I have transcribed are of undoubted authority; some of those quoted by the Article are doubtfully his, but they are only to the same purpose, and are, for doctrine, redundant after the above.

To my mind St. Augustine's words, and those of the Church of England, which are the same, define this point of the mystery, not indeed clearly or logically, but as closely as it is safe for man to venture when dealing with so great a mystery, at a point where God's own Word says only "They eat and drink their own damnation (or condemnation), not discerning the Lord's Body."

There is another consideration which calls, as it seems to me, for careful thought from this Extreme Party of so-called High Churchmen, *viz.* this following:—

Whether the Tempter rob us of our salvation through worldliness, viciousness, ungodliness, or spiritual presumption, under whatever forms they may manifest themselves, is, I suppose, no matter to him, save as he may most satiate his malice by blighting the fairest promises. Would it not, therefore, be well for this school to consider whether they are sufficiently alive to the spiritual dangers which beset their path. When persons, through God's grace, have very much given up the things of the *world* and the *flesh*, they have not thereby removed themselves from the reach of temptation, they have not only to guard against the re-entrance of the things which they have given up, and to fight against whatever remains of their old weakness or failings in these respects; they are still surrounded by temptations; they are still "soldiers" in the fight, not "beholders" from the heights; their position is changed, not their work; their position may be more honourable, but it may be one of even greater danger.

The World and the Flesh so far overcome, the devil will doubtless strive with redoubled energy to overthrow them and their work by *spiritual* temptations. Whence have sprung very many of the heresies of old, and almost all the corruptions of the Church's doctrine which have brought on the present divided state of Christendom?

Heresies of old were often originated by men of great repute at first for sanctity, gained by their austere and apparently devoted lives. Those which the Church of England

calls, and I believe to be, the *corruptions* of Rome, have mostly arisen step by step, from the meditations, or ecstatic imaginings, or supposed visions of men and women leading the specially called "spiritual life." Common-place Christians (if I may be allowed the term, not meaning thereby indifferent persons,) though they may have followed, have seldom originated either heresy or corruption.

From persons freed so much from the claims of the World and the Flesh, I can imagine it to require a great spiritual effort not to allow the mind to travel on and on, searching the unrevealed depths of mysteries. There is, however, a danger in this mental exercise; we may get beyond our depth, and fall into the sin of presumption. There is a danger also in it, lest we unconsciously make up to ourselves for self-restraint in the body, by self-indulgence in the spirit.

Mortifying must it be when the spirit sees that which appears to be fresh light gleaming in upon some hitherto dark point—sees that which has been hidden in mystery gradually, as it were, unveil itself—then to say, "No; this is beyond my power, this is not given me to know *now*. Stay, my thoughts, where bounds are given thee, and turn to some simple duty." Yet there are times when this must be done. If you ask, How are we to know these times? how are we to know our bounds? who is to check us? I answer. The Church, our Spiritual Mother. The Church wherein God's Providence has given us our New Birth, and every other gift of grace. The Church of England until, if ever, the voice of the Church Catholic can be heard again. And here, my brother, though I cannot say with you that the Church of England does *not* take her stand upon the purer faith which she professes, since I believe that *without this* she could not stand; and that, except as a witness *for this* she has no right to her present position in Christendom; yet I do hold with you that "she has a claim upon our allegiance" (and a greater claim perhaps than we can measure), "as being the one only Christian body having mission from Christ to this land."

Truly then she has a claim to our submission, not only to what she directs as to practice, but to that also which she teaches as doctrine. Let me then beg you to weigh her words on the two great subjects to which I drew your attention in the beginning of this letter, and to consider if the

later teaching and practices of the so-called "Ritualistic School" can be said to show a reverent submission to her voice, or whether they do not in many details rather show a desire to strain her lines of limit to the utmost which they will bear without breaking—to see what can be *got out of*, or *in spite of*, her words, instead of a desire to know her mind, and to obey.

Earnestly desiring God's blessing on your devotion to His service, and His guidance for each of us on these and all other points, not only for our own salvation, but for that also of those who are given to be influenced in any way by what we do or teach,

Believe me, in Him,

Yours affectionately,

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THE END.

