

Plain Sermons by Contributors to 'Tracts for the Times'
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SERMON LXXIX.
HOLY COMMUNION.—
EXCEEDING DANGER IN CARELESS RECEIVING,
DEATH IN NEGLECTING.
Preached on the 9th Sunday after Trinity.

1 COR. x. 3—5.

“They did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: . . . but with many of them GOD was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.”

OUR LORD, while on earth, spake in a very different way to the different classes of those who were impressed by His miracles. Some, although the fewer, HE invited; others, the greater number, HE deterred. Some, who were unwilling to venture to follow HIM, HE called; others, who thronged about HIM, HE alarmed, or laid open to them the secret motives of their coming. When Peter said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD.” JESUS said unto him, “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” St. Peter’s fear was the humility which our LORD exalteth, and HE encouraged him. Zaccheus, a publican and a sinner, who had wronged others, yet now wished to see LORD, if but afar off, HE of HIMSELF came, SALVATION, unto his house. When one whom HE had bid to follow HIM said, “Let me first go and bury my father,” HE severed him with a strong arm from the temptations of his home: “Let the dead bury their dead, hut go thou and preach the kingdom of GOD.” When a Scribe (knowing not himself) said, “Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest,” HE warns him of the hardness of the service: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the SON of MAN hath not where to lay His head.” When *many* believed on HIM, *then* said JESUS to those Jews which believed on HIM, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Their pride was offended at these last words, and so the evil of their own hearts was laid open to them, and they who had “believed in HIM” were perhaps among those who “took up stones to cast at Him.” When “great multitudes went with HIM,” then “turned HE and said, If any man come unto ME, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple; and whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.” When, after the feeding with the loaves, the people took ship and came seeking for HIM, and found HIM, and asked HIM further of the miracle they knew not of, “Rabbi, when earnest Thou hither? JESUS

answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek ME, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth;" and the rest of His discourse on the Holy Eucharist, wherein HE would give them His Flesh to eat, so offended them, that "many of His disciples went back and walked no more with HIM," so that it almost seemed as though HE would be left alone with the twelve. "The twelve" themselves he chose out of a great number. "HE called unto HIM His disciples, and of them HE chose twelve." "HE called unto HIM whom HE would, and they came unto HIM; and among them HE chose the traitor, in part that so "the Scriptures might be fulfilled," in part also as a warning to us, that no nearness to HIM is any safety, unless we be, in that proportion, faithful; nay, that it brings with it the greater danger, and leads to the greater condemnation. Of Judas only, who was so very near our LORD, is it told us, that HE is "gone unto his own place." The end of most other wicked men has been and is veiled from us, or is conveyed less distinctly. Judas, who cast out devils in His Name, who preached HIM, in His Name did many wonderful works, who did eat and drink with HIM, was present at the last Supper, his sentence GOD has revealed before the Day of Judgment, as a warning to us how we approach unto HIM.

The same teaching is conveyed by the whole history of the Old Testament; and because there will ever be the same two classes in the Church,—those who shrink back from holy ordinances and the presence of their LORD, and those who intrude upon them irreverently without having cleansed and prepared their hearts,—our Church follows the example of her LORD, and would, if she might, restrain some, but for a while, that they might reap the greater fruit, and escape the peril; others she bids lay aside their listlessness or timidity, much more their worldly excuses, be in earnest, and approach.

This morning, just before the season came to exhort you again to come to the Holy Communion and to forewarn you to "come holy and clean to so heavenly a feast," by one of those coincidences whereby GOD so often instructs us, the Epistle was read, setting forth the privileges of the Jews and the dangers ensuing on their abuse.

The history of the Exodus, or deliverance from Egypt, which St. Paul here applies, is one of the most striking types in the Old Testament; striking at once from its great likeness to our own history and trials, and from the awfulness of its warning. All, St. Paul says, had been brought safe through the Red Sea; their enemies had been *all* destroyed, themselves saved. All had been rescued from a hard bondage in mire and clay under a hard task-master, and had been brought out by GOD'S mighty hand and outstretched arm. This, St. Paul says, was the image of our Baptism: so then we were *all* therein "delivered from *our* enemies and from the hands of *him* who hated us, that we might serve GOD in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." *All of us* were, by the sacrament of Baptism, figured by the Red Sea, brought out of the bondage of Satan into the glorious liberty of the sons of GOD; the chains of original sin broken; its guilt remitted; our enemies destroyed; ourselves, having passed through the waters of Baptism, "called into a state of salvation." But then a new series of trials began; Israel was still in the wilderness; the land of Canaan, the image of *our* heavenly rest, was at a distance; he

had different trials to overcome in his way; new difficulties to prove him, and the recollection of the enjoyments of sense, which he had in the midst of Egypt's hard bondage, to draw him back: but he had also the pillar and the cloud to guide him, the sense of GOD'S Presence, and the manna, food given him directly by GOD, to sustain him. And with these he was to hold on his way; the Red Sea conducted him over to the manna, the manna was to support him to the promised land, or (according to St. Paul's explanation that the manna was spiritual food) the type of holy Baptism conducted him to the type of the holy Eucharist. All then have been saved by Baptism; all have a spiritual food offered them, which may conduct them on their pilgrimage toward heaven; and yet most of Israel fell short of the type of *our* heaven.

Of much instruction which this likeness might afford, three points may perhaps be more to our especial purpose:—1. The nature of GOD'S Sacraments; 2. the danger of carelessness in receiving them: and yet, 3. their absolute necessity.

1. As to their *nature*. They are given to our faith, and are at once its trials and its reward. Their operation and their mode of working, how they come to have this efficacy, wherein their majesty consists, is unseen. We see only the elements of this world, wherewith GOD worketh; HIMSELF, Who through them worketh in us, the way of His workings, we see not. And to those who are inclined to believe only what they see, this has ever been a trial. Even the right-minded Nicodemus asked beforehand of the one Sacrament, '*How* can these things be?' as the carnal Jews strove among themselves as to the other, '*How* can this man give us His flesh to eat?' It is especially a trial in these our carnal, grovelling days. Scarcely any of us, probably, conceive of our LORD'S Sacraments as we ought, even of those who would fain think most reverentially of them. Among the many, the Sacrament of Baptism is too sadly looked upon as an *outward* rite, almost indifferent. They ask, with Nicodemus, '*How* can these things be?' yet not as he was, perplexed and amazed, but in contempt; they go on to deny that efficacy, the mode whereof they cannot understand. In the holy Eucharist they cannot proceed with such open daring, but they come to the same end. Our Church, with the Holy Scriptures, saith that GOD therein "hath given His SON our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST to be our spiritual food and sustenance," that they who "receive it with a true penitent heart and lively faith," "spiritually eat the Flesh of CHRIST therein, and drink His Blood, dwell in CHRIST and CHRIST in them, are one with CHRIST and CHRIST with them;" that "the Body and Blood of CHRIST are *therein verily* and *indeed* taken and received by the faithful." Man would fain know *how* what is to our sight bread and wine should be also the Body and Blood of his LORD. And so the Church of Rome says, "the bread *can* be no longer bread, except in appearance only:" and this they call Transubstantiation; Luther, that "the human body of CHRIST is with and *under* the form of bread," and calls this Consubstantiation; Calvin (and he has been followed by those who have left the Church,) that since the bread is bread, there can be no Flesh or Blood really present; only when we eat thereof, our souls are lifted up by faith to CHRIST, and so partake of HIM. All these, however different, are carnal, sensual thoughts; and all these errors come from one source, viz. that man would

understand the mysteries of GOD; i. e. he would have the mystery no longer a mystery; he would know “*how*” the things of GOD are, and set aside, more or less disrespectfully, what he cannot understand.

Now for this habit of mind GOD provided a remedy beforehand in the miracle of the manna. The manna had in itself no power to support life; the carnal of Israel loathed it on that very account. “The children of Israel wept again and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish that we did eat in Egypt freely;—but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes.” “Our soul loatheth this light bread.” And it was for this very purpose that GOD gave it them. “He fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that HE might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, hut by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of GOD doth man live.” GOD would teach them and us thereby not to depend for our support, bodily or spiritual, on what we see, but on HIM; it is HE Who gives strength to the food, to which we should too much trust, for our bodies; and HE, the Same, gives strength to that of our souls, which we should mistrust. The manna had no power of life; and so that it did support life, was owing to a virtue infused into it by GOD; it was indued with powers which the natural substance had not. It was a substance taken out of its natural use, indued with heavenly virtue, furnished with an unseen efficacy; coming from heaven; Divine Power in an earthly form; Angels’ food; supporting men, like the blessed Angels, by the direct agency of GOD in a visible form. If any can say *how* the manna supported life, they may ask *how* is the Bread and Wine our LORD’S Body and Blood.

The frame of mind which GOD by this instruction would form in us, is to believe His word to the letter, and not to ask *how* it is, or doubt, or satisfy our doubts by any carnal explanations of our own, but to believe it, because HE hath said it. Our Church, indeed, with the ancients, holds that every thing herein is spiritual. As our LORD saith, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing;” everything here is spiritual; spiritual food, spiritual feeding, spiritual nourishment, spiritual life, even the Life in GOD and CHRIST Who “is a Spirit,” and “Who shall change our vile bodies that they shall be like unto His glorious Body,” and make them also spiritual. But although spiritual, ye must take heed lest ye make it *falsely* spiritual. As there is a true Spirit, even “the Spirit of truth,” even so there are false spirits, and that which comes from them is falsely spiritual. Every thing, as I said, is *spiritual*, but it is not, therefore, (as is a common error to think) the less, yea, it is the more, *real*; CHRIST giveth us His Body and Blood *spiritually*; HS dwelleth in us *spiritually*; it is with our spirit that HE is united; and it is by that union that we have a spirit; thereby, that we shall be raised up at the last day. Our Church, well knowing all to be spiritual, yet takes our LORD’S promises to the very letter; HE says, “the bread that I give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” HE says, “This is My Body.” He saith again, “He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him;” HE saith even, We “eat” HIM; HE saith elsewhere, of those who love HIM and keep His words, “My Father will love him, and We will come

unto him, and make our abode with him.” What HE saith must be true; “hath HE said, and shall HE not do it? hath HE purposed, and shall HE not make it good?” Let us not measure His infinity by our finiteness, His might by our weakness, what is possible to HIM by what is impossible to us, the boundlessness of His mercy by the narrowness of our thoughts or the poverty of our desires. “The mouth of the LORD hath spoken it,” and, therefore, that which HE giveth us, is in some way His Body, although we see not how; and, in those who receive HIM, HE dwelleth, and the FATHER dwelleth, and the HOLY SPIRIT dwelleth, although we know not *how* GOD can dwell in man. Every thing of GOD must be a mystery to us; the dealings of His Providence, the things which we see around us, ourselves, our own thoughts, sin, evil, misery, sufferings of infants, all are mysteries to us; our only wisdom is to believe all, to receive all HE saith, not disputing about it, nor bandying about “words without knowledge,” nor losing ourselves and GOD’S truth in “strifes of words without profit,” but receiving it, thankfully embracing it, seeking to be sanctified by His truth, so shall HE guide thee into more and more truth, and in the end thou mayest by His teaching understand what, without understanding it, thou didst at first receive; at least, or rather, what is chiefest, thou wilt find thyself blessed in it without understanding it. It is a misery and a sore loss that men would fain bring down the things of GOD which they do not know, into the things of man which they do know, and are pleased to keep “the beggarly elements” of human things, because them they think they understand, rather than the Divine which they understand not. Thus men read that “the Spirit of GOD dwelleth in us, that the HOLY GHOST is *in* them, dwelleth *in* us,” and these, they say, mean that good thoughts and desires are put into their hearts, that ‘people are under the influence of the Spirit.’ This is true again; but the fruit is not the sap; motion is not the life, which gives the power to move. Who bade us so explain or explain away the word of GOD, that when HE says “the HOLY GHOST dwelleth in man,” we should say, this *only* means that ‘the HOLY GHOST enables a man to do good works?’ How does this come up to the other? We see, indeed, that the HOLY GHOST doth dwell in *others*, by the good works which HE enables them to perform; we may know of ourselves that HE dwelleth in us, by our “keeping the commandments” of GOD; and so by a man’s acting, moving, speaking, we may tell that there is life *in* him; that his soul is *in* him; yet acting, moving, speaking, are not the soul’s dwelling in him, but only the fruits and proofs of it; why then should we think that no more is meant by the HOLY GHOST’S dwelling in us, than that we are influenced *by* HIM? We influence each other, act upon one another, yet will no one say that we dwell in one another. Yet this is said in so many different ways, as if to prevent our throwing away our birthrights. Some I have named. And further, “Whosoever shall confess that JESUS is the SON OF GOD, GOD dwelleth in him, and he in GOD.” “If we love one another, GOD dwelleth in us.” “He that keepeth His (CHRIST’S) commandments, dwelleth in HIM, and HE in him.” “And hereby we know that HE abideth in us, by the Spirit Which HE hath given us.” Where, you observe, His abiding in us is a further blessing, which we have by the Spirit Which HE hath given us; it is not simply the working of the Spirit, but something beyond, made known to us by that working. “That

the love wherewith THOU hast loved them, may be in them, *and I* in them;” so then, though “he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in GOD and GOD in him;” and “the love of GOD dwelleth in” men, yet doth not the love of GOD dwell in man, apart from GOD, Who is love; our LORD saith not only “the love, wherewith Thou hast loved them,” dwelleth in them, but also, “*and I* in them;” so that a further indwelling of CHRIST is spoken of, than what men would understand by “the love of GOD shed abroad in their hearts.” “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the HOLY GHOST *in you*.” So now Scripture in so many places declareth, that *in* faithful Christians GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON, and GOD THE HOLY GHOST dwell; they are said to be thus *inhabited* by the THREE PERSONS of the Blessed Trinity, to be the Temple of the HOLY GHOST *in* them; GOD is in them, dwelleth *in* them, abideth *in* them, taketh His abode *in* them; and that, with the same words as it is said, that the FATHER dwelleth in the SON; nay, our LORD names this indwelling of His FATHER in HIM to assure us of the reality of the indwelling of the HOLY TRINITY in the faithful Christian. Well might it be said to us, “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Scriptures have spoken! Whence this backwardness to believe the height and depth of the riches of GOD’S goodness in CHRIST? Why should it be incredible that the SON OF GOD, Who became incarnate, and dwelt in human flesh, shall enlarge this gift and dwell really in those who are true members of His Body? Why that in these holy Mysteries HE should impart HIMSELF to the believer, and dwell in him? Why, alas! but that men are afraid of the greatness of the gifts entrusted to them? They would fain grovel on the earth, and these would lift them to heaven; they would fain follow their own wills and their own pleasures, live an easy, unconstrained life, and so they shrink from hearing of a gift within them, which they must needs stir up; sinful man cannot endure the presence of GOD, and they have not made up their minds to part with all their sins, follies, and weaknesses; the holiness of the temple of GOD affrights them; they had rather live in a common house, in which they might follow in some manner their own ways, than in the Church of GOD, in which they must keep under their thoughts, restrain their actions, speak lowly, act reverently and with awe. They would rather—not be left altogether to themselves, but still—avoid the awful majesty of being temples of GOD, which they must not dishonour nor defile; they would not wholly part with their sins, and so, with the men of Gadara, they would have the LORD “depart from their coasts;” and thus parting with the truth and True GOD, and turning unto fables, they would make themselves an idol, which, if it cannot help, can neither hear, nor see, nor avenge. Men would of themselves part with the love and favour of GOD, if they would part with the fear of Him also; or, (which they would best have) they would part with all the glories of His promises, and all the perils joined with them, hoping to escape hell, yet unconcerned about the unspeakable greatness of heaven.

But; my Brethren, it cannot be; “whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear,” we are encompassed, within and without, with glorious gifts; we cannot be as the heathen; we cannot strip the Sacraments of their greatness, and make them an easy, costless way of salvation, which shall help us lightly on, and if misused, or little used, not

much injure us; as if this Holy Sacrament should remind us of CHRIST, and be, as a remembrancer, useful, and instruct us of GOD'S mercies, and that then, comforted by GOD'S mercy, we might return to the same round of worldly thoughts, self-indulgence, and unsteady, wavering, halting, walk with GOD as before. No, my Brethren, (and this is the second point I would advert to) GOD would teach us by the Epistle, that His gifts are great, but so are His chastisements on their neglect and abuse. The people of Israel, HE tells us, are "our ensamples," patterns, likenesses, as in their blessings so in their punishments. All they had were figures and shadows of what we have; their sacrifices likenesses of our great Sacrifice; their passage in the Red Sea, miraculous as it was, but an outline of our Baptism; their miraculous feeding on the manna, and their miraculous supply of water from the flinty rock, of our miraculous feeding on the Body and Blood of CHRIST; only they had the shadow, we the living, real, truth; but so likewise is their chastisement but a shadow of that of unfaithful Christians, the death of the body of the death of the soul; the first death of the second death; the death of time of the death for ever and ever; the serpents whereby they perished, of devils, of the never-dying worm. There is then no safety in simply receiving this spiritual food; for so the Apostle expressly says, they "ate that spiritual food," which was an image of ours, "but with many of them GOD was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness." For every sin, they perished by thousands. And yet what sins? Some of them indeed grievous in man's sight; and yet, which are not committed by many who have been "baptized into CHRIST?" They were idolaters; so, St. Paul says, is every covetous person, so is every one who loves the creature more than the CREATOR, who for any of the gifts of GOD forgets GOD, who allows the cares and business and pleasures of this life, to withdraw his soul from GOD. "They tempted CHRIST, and were destroyed of serpents." Wherewith tempted they HIM? Alas! by asking of man, what they should have asked of GOD, by asking Moses to bring them water out of the rock, by being dissatisfied with GOD'S Providence over them, His dealings with them, by wishing they had been left to themselves, their slavery, and their self-indulgence. "Neither lust ye after evil things, as they also lusted." After what lusted they? After food which they had had in Egypt, and which now GOD gave them not, and "the wrath of GOD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote them with a very great plague."

I speak not of this to lessen the sins of Israel; they were great and grievous sins, and were greatly and grievously punished; but that we may in them the rather see our own state; many of their sins were not what we should have thought such great sins, had not GOD by their punishment set His seal upon them, and stamped them as such; yet in them and in their punishment He would have us see the character of our sins and our punishment; and both as images only, as the sun upon the waters gives an image of itself, though far weaker than itself; we can bear to look on the one, not on the other; we can hardly bear to look on temporal death, who could dare to look upon the eternal?

We are set in the midst of many and great dangers; there are many paths to hell; one only, and that a narrow one, to Heaven: we have many and great gifts; and these

gifts, by misusing or not using them, may become our destruction; we are GOD'S chosen people, yea we ourselves in our Church, have received blessings greater than those of any other part of the Church Catholic throughout the world. If we fail in the use thereof, we may, in the history of the Jews, see our own. GOD, by His Apostle, bids us see it therein. Israel was distinguished above all other nations, both by GOD'S mercies and His chastisements. In the wilderness, they were fed with spiritual meat, refreshed with spiritual drink; their every want supplied; their very feet tenderly guarded that they should not swell with their marches; their clothes miraculously preserved; "their shoes waxed not old these forty years;" their wishes heard as soon as formed; the LORD their GOD bare them as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that they went; and yet all but two perished before they came to the good land which was promised them. GOD seemed, as it were, to "lift" them "up," that HE might "cast" them "down." And so it was in their whole history. They dwelt alone both in light and in darkness; in the light of GOD'S countenance, and the darkness of His displeasure. Mercy misused becomes severity; blessings neglected a curse. HIMSELF forewarned them, "as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought." Every blessing which HE promised them, HE threatened to turn, one by one, into a curse, to give them the opposite curses to it; one by one HE recounts their blessings, and then one by one HE sets against them the fearful array of curses for which they were to be exchanged; the peculiar people is become a by-word and a proverb for their misery and desolation; "because they served not the LORD their GOD with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things; therefore they should serve their enemies which the LORD their GOD sent against them, in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things;" Zion "the perfection of beauty," the habitation of His Name, the place where His honour dwelt, "was cast down from heaven upon earth;" and their sufferings above those of every other nation, are a type of the Day of Judgment. HE Who wept over her, as MAN, as GOD, destroyed her; HE, man's SAVIOUR, INTERCESSOR, Who gave HIMSELF for the life of the world, will condemn the world; HE who giveth HIMSELF for our spiritual life, will condemn those who "will not come unto HIM, that they might have life," or who having received the life, will not retain it.

What then? shall we refrain, because there is danger? Neither can this be. Awful as are GOD'S gifts in His Sacraments, we must receive them or perish. In this also, (which was the third point,) Israel is set forth as a pattern for us. It is not at our choice to receive GOD'S gifts or no. Israel was *compelled* to avail himself of his.

When in Egypt, they said, as they afterwards taunted their lawgiver, "let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." They wished to be left in their state of slavery; they wished not this contest, apparently so unequal, with their old masters; they feared that it might bring them into worse difficulties; the flesh-pots of Egypt reconciled them to their bondage; they were in body and mind degraded; they did not wish to be free, nor to face new and unknown dangers. Yet GOD brought them out nor would it have availed them to

refuse the means HE gave them; if they did not pass the Red Sea, they perished; the “enemy” overtook them who “said I will pursue, I will overtake, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them;” if they refused the manna, they would starve; if the water from the rock, they perished with thirst.

And so of ourselves, we should have lain helpless in the bondage of sin, and in sin must have perished; we could have had neither wish nor power to extricate ourselves; but GOD “sent His servants into the highways and hedges, and compelled us to come in.” HE has given that awful warning, “except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD,” and so by the charity of parents and the Church, we were for the time brought into that kingdom, by the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. When brought in, and of maturer age, HE says to us, “Except ye eat the Flesh of the SON OF MAN, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.” Although all shall not be saved who partake of the Holy Sacraments, there is no revealed method of salvation without them; no salvation from original or actual sin, (and this parents should in these days well remember) without Baptism; without the Holy Eucharist, no life.

We have no choice left, but to make GOD our choice; we cannot go back; it would be the very sin for which many of Israel were destroyed, who would fain go back to Egypt, when GOD had brought them out thence; we must have great gifts, and there is danger in not using, as well as in abusing them; “the servant, who hid his LORD’S money in a napkin, was cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth;” for every means of grace we shall have to give account before GOD, for those men have neglected, as for those they have used; for the Communion offered on the next LORD’S day, whether we partake of it, how we partake of it, what use we make of the gift therein bestowed upon us. I dare not say that there is no danger in approaching unduly this holy mystery; there is; GOD hath so willed, that with His gifts there should be danger: there is danger in every way but *one*; we are beset by dangers in life and in death; and there is throughout one only path of safety, the path of GOD’S commandments. It is a strait and narrow path, and we dare not make it broad. There *is* peril, great peril in profaning these holy mysteries, that GOD may cut off such an one at once, as HE did Uzzah for touching His ark, or the Corinthians; there is danger to one, who prepares himself to receive them, and then straightway returns to his old habits, and forgets what GOD has done for his soul, and all His benefits, lest GOD should leave him to himself, and since he will not retain His gifts, for the future not give him the gifts he set at nought; there is danger to those who receive it frequently, if they slacken their diligence in cleansing themselves, lest the Sacrament become an ordinary thing; there is danger in not receiving whenever a person by any means can, because it is despising GOD’S gift, and provoking HIM to withdraw it, and give you over to a cold, unloving, careless temper: there is danger in every way of receiving It unduly; and in not receiving It at all, there is starvation and death of the soul. There is danger in every way but *one*; and that is, keeping your hearts diligently; preparing yourselves, when you can, carefully; praying to GOD fervently, to give you that holy frame of mind, which HE will accept; receiving His gifts, whenever

they are offered to you, humbly and thankfully; and bringing forth fruit enduringly and increasingly.

GOD has set dangers on all sides, that we may not shrink back, but may go onward in the one path, which leadeth unto HIM. The wilderness shutteth us in: the sea is before, and the enemy behind: but GOD will place His pillar of fire between the enemy and us, and the sea shall part, and that which was our enemy, shall be our safeguard; a narrow path it is, but the sea which would devour us, should be a wall on the right hand and on the left to fence us in from straying, and protect us against the enemy, and so will HE conduct us to the promised land. We might have shrunk, (who would not have shrunk?) from coming to the all-holy Mysteries, but that our SAVIOUR saith, "Except ye eat the flesh of the SON OF MAN and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." Come then we must; and so, though with trembling hearts and faint steps, mistrusting ourselves, but trusting in GOD, we will come. We should mistrust our own weakness, but we should not mistrust GOD'S strength. HE invites, Who willeth not the sinner's death, Who warneth us that HE may not strike, Who correcteth that HE may not destroy: HE Who hath appointed us this narrow path, will keep therein those who will be kept: HE Who has made this Heavenly food needful for life, is able to keep us, if we commit ourselves to HIM: HE Who giveth us His SON to dwell in us, how shall HE not cleanse us wholly, if we will be cleansed? HE Who by giving us that Heavenly Body, keepeth us members of that body whereof HE is the Head, how shall HE not keep those members of HIMSELF? How should Satan have power over the members of CHRIST? HE will make each communion a means to enable you to receive the next more devoutly and profitably; HE will increase your longing after that heavenly feast; make you more and more members of HIM of Whom you partake, more fruitful branches of that Vine, Whose richness HE pours into you, richer in faith, stronger amid temptation, more victorious against Satan and yourselves, and will carry you on "from strength to strength, until you appear before" HIM, the GOD of gods, and He remove you from His table here, to His glorious presence in Heaven, from faith to sight, from longing to bliss, from spiritual union to see HIM eye to eye, from these broken and occasional refreshments to be for ever with HIM your LORD. Only come hither with hearty repentance, with lively faith, with real charity, with thankful remembrance of His Death, with stedfast purpose to amend, and as thou drawest near, and art about to partake of the heavenly food, cast thyself more wholly upon GOD, pray HIM to deepen all that HE would have in thee, and take away all HE would not have, pray HIM to increase thy longing, thy sense of need, thy emptiness and His exceeding fulness, and HE will fill thee, HE will give thee all thou needest, HE will give thee HIMSELF.

I have dwelt upon the awfulness of the communion, not to deter any from partaking of it, but that *all* may be more careful *how* they partake of it. In every congregation there are some, it is to be feared, who, partaking of it as they do, receive it to their hurt; as there are others who are afraid to come, whom their minister would gladly see approach; yea, whom their LORD would welcome to His table. To abstain because a man will not part with an evil habit, were but willfully to prefer darkness to

light; let such an one purpose stedfastly to break off what is evil in him, and come for strength to do it: or if any be after all perplexed, the Church has appointed him one, his minister in this place, whom he should consult.

None is excluded, who excludeth not himself; “holy things are for the holy;” and whoso will not be holy, must depart; men must part with their sins or with CHRIST; if they came, they could not taste the LORD’S Supper; they are drinking the cup of Satan, and *cannot* partake of the cup of CHRIST; their souls are the dwelling-place of Satan, and must be purged by hearty repentance, else *could* they not be temples of the HOLY GHOST. They could only “press with their teeth” the elements of the Body and Blood of CHRIST, to their own damnation. But to all who are faithful, to all who are truly penitent, or earnestly desire to be so,—to all who loathe their sins, or wish to loathe them, to all who desire to be partakers of the holiness of GOD, to have strength against temptation, might to do GOD’S will, life, light, glory, joy, peace, immortality, the love of GOD, the grace of CHRIST, the communion of the HOLY GHOST, the Church says come,—come ‘*taste* and see that the LORD is gracious,” “come unto” CHRIST “all that travail, and are heavy laden, and HE will refresh you.”

If any one feel himself insecure, doubtful about his state, wish himself otherwise, but doubt about his own stedfastness, wish to move onward towards Heaven, but know not how, wish to serve GOD more faithfully, and to have hope in his death, let him come; let him not wait as if he must be fitter to come; ‘GOD filleth the hungry, and the rich HE sendeth empty away;” we come here, not with the riches of our own works, but with our emptiness, and desiring of HIM the riches of His grace: HE asketh but a penitent earnest heart, conscious of its own weakness and desiring His strength; it is HE Who calleth thee; bind thyself fast to HIM; shrink not; confess to HIM thy unworthiness, and desire, if so be, to “touch but the hem of His garment, HE will make thee whole;” mistrust thyself, and trust HIM; ask of HIM faith, and HE will it give thee, and to thy faith HE will give thee the pledge of everlasting life, which is in His SON, HE will give thee the wedding-garment for His feast: how shouldest thou not be duly prepared, whom HE, Who inviteth thee, will, if thou ask, prepare? “Whoso cometh unto ME,” HE says, “I will in no wise cast out.”

The more unworthy any of us feels himself, yea though he be more “Unworthy than others, he is the less unworthy because he feels so. GOD “dwelleth in the lowly and contrite heart.” ‘HE Who deigned,” to use the words of a prayer of a good Bishop,¹ “HE Who deigned to be lain in the manger of the senseless brute beasts; HE Who disdained not to be received in the house of Simon the Leper, nor rejected the woman who was a sinner approaching HIM and touching HIM, nor abhorred her polluted lips, nor the thief on the cross confessing HIM;” HE will not disdain the decayed and leprous mansion of our soul, if we hut confess with our whole hearts that “we are unworthy that HE should come under our roofs, and that there is no fit place there where HE may rest His head.” HE

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came to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers, to cast out devils, to make the lame to walk, to raise the dead, to bind up the broken-hearted; and if we be in earnest with our confession, HE will make each Communion a means to lighten the burthen of our sins, bind up our wounds, unbind the grave-clothes of the death of sin wherewith we have anew bound ourselves, give us strength to walk, cast out Satan to whom each sin anew enslaves; HE will, by His indwelling SPIRIT, again “restore to us the help of His salvation, and stablish us with His free SPIRIT.”

We have yet a week left to prepare us. Let those who can, withdraw themselves more from the things of the world, avoid such employments as would engross them, especially as it draws towards its close, think more on GOD, His awfulness, His Majesty, His goodness, and the Judgment-Day; and let those whose duties are more fixed, at least strive to turn their thoughts to GOD and into themselves, in the intervals or even in the midst of their worldly callings; let them do what they can, and GOD is a gracious Master, Who accepteth according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not. And then come in full assurance of faith, with a “fearful,” humble “admiration of that heaven” which is opened to you. Come trusting in GOD, that HE Who giveth thee His SON will with HIM freely give thee all things. Approach as if thou wert coming to thy SAVIOUR’S side, to drink from it that “Blood which was shed for you and for many for the remission of sins;” and after thou hast received It, beware how thou again profane thyself, whom GOD has so hallowed. CHRIST maketh thee, like Saul, a new man, and giveth thee another heart: beware lest, like Saul, thou return to thy former state, lest the Evil Spirit, who has been cast out, “take seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and dwell within thee, and thy last state be worse than the first.” “Sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee:” guard diligently that holy thing committed to thee: return home, like the shepherds who had seen the SAVIOUR, CHRIST the LORD —glorifying and praising GOD for all the things which they had seen and heard—be very jealous over thyself, and every inlet and approach of sin—over every thing, which had any thing to do with any of thy former sins—over any little acts or thoughts of covetousness or worldliness, or excess, or lightness of mind, or jesting, or thoughtlessness; for it may be that Satan, if he see thee strengthened thus mightily in the armour of GOD, will not at once assail thee violently, but will tempt thee to lay aside thy armour piece by piece, until he shall have “made thee naked to thy shame before thy enemies,” and slay thee. But as thou art strengthened, walk strongly—“resist the devil, and he will flee from thee”—“draw nigh unto GOD, and He will draw nigh unto thee”—thou canst not again become what thou wast before, thou must be better or worse—go on in the strength of that heavenly food unto the Mount of God; so shall our LORD’S words be fulfilled in thee, “Whoso eateth MY flesh and drinketh MY Blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Now unto SON the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, THREE PERSONS and ONE SON—unto SON, Who is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto HIM be glory in the Church by CHRIST JESUS throughout all ages, world without end.