

**FREEMAN  
PHILIP**

rites and  
ritual

**Philip Freeman**  
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Rites and Ritual / A Plea for Apostolic Doctrine and Worship:*

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# **Philip Freeman**

## **Rites and Ritual / A Plea for Apostolic Doctrine and Worship**

### **PREFACE**

The following pages had been prepared, for the most part, for publication, before it was known that the question of Ritual would be discussed in Convocation, or a Committee of the Lower House appointed, by the direction of the Upper House, to report upon it.

But the suggestions here offered are of so general a character, that it seemed to the writer that they might still without impropriety be put forth as a contribution, of however humble a kind, to the general ventilation of the subject.

It was the writer's hope, as expressed in the original announcement of the Pamphlet, that his Diocesan, the venerable Bishop of Exeter, would have been able to prefix, in an Introduction, his opinion on the leading points, whether of Ritual or Doctrine, involved in the present controversy. And, although that hope has been in part frustrated, he has still been privileged

to embody, in an Appendix, his Lordship's deliberate judgment on some of the weightier matters of Eucharistic Doctrine; and to receive an assurance of his warm interest in the subjects dwelt upon in these pages.

The writer has to apologise for having occasionally referred the reader to a larger work of his own. He begs that this may be understood to be merely a guarantee, that detailed proof is forthcoming on points which could only be cursorily treated of in the present publication.

# rites and ritual, etc

The position of affairs in the English Church, at the present moment, is such as may well call forth from her children such counsel as their affection may prompt, or their experience justify. And, whatever be the intrinsic value, if any, of the suggestions about to be offered here, the writer can at least testify that, though called forth by a particular conjuncture of circumstances, they are not the hasty or immature thoughts of the moment, but rather an outpouring of the anxious musing of years over the condition and prospects of a beloved and honoured Mother.

It will be conjectured, from what has now been said, that the writer is not among the number of those who perceive, in the present condition of the English Church, or in her rate of improvement of late years, any grounds for satisfaction, much less for complacency or congratulation. On the contrary, he very humbly conceives – and his reasons for that opinion shall be given presently – that to the spiritual eye, used to rest either on what the Church of God was *intended to be*, or on what once, for a few centuries, she *was*, there is, in the practical condition of the English Church one defect of so radical a character, and which has eaten so extensively into her entire system, that until this is, at least in a very great measure, remedied, all else is little better than a palliative, and little else than an illusion. There is surely something deeply saddening in the spectacle (if it indeed be so)

of a Church busying herself with "many things" – making much show of practical activity, of self-reparation, of improvement in services and ministries, of extension abroad, – when all the while the "one thing," namely, *soundness and perfectness in Apostolic faith and practice*, is in any serious degree wanting to her. If, while she is manifesting a feverish anxiety about the more or less of Ritual, there is in her Rites (of which Ritual is but the outward clothing) that which demands repair and readjustment on an extensive scale; then it is surely needful to press upon her, in the first instance, the redress of such essentials, before proceeding to speak of the accessories.

And this is what the present writer, with all humility, undertakes to make good. He is indeed far from denying that, "by the good Hand of our God upon us," great things, of a certain kind, have been accomplished in our day.

"Stately thy walls, and holy are the prayers  
That day and night before thine altar rise."

Our churches have grown to be, to a great extent, the perfection of earthly sanctuaries. Our Services are nobler and heartier. Our church music is more worthy of the name. Better still than this, and more to the present purpose, our communicants have increased in numbers, our Communion in frequency. Our clergy, as a rule, are devoted, beyond the example of former times, to their duty, according to their conception

of it. Schools are diligently cared for, and are fairly efficient; foreign missions grow; the home circle of charities is daily widened and rendered more effectual. And this is "progress," or "improvement," undoubtedly. And, were the Church a mere Machine, or a mere System, it would be perfectly reasonable to point with satisfaction to such progress or improvement. But the Church is neither the one nor the other. She is a Divine Body. And what if, while some operations of that Body are being performed with a certain increase of vigour, her very constitution, as divinely organised by God Himself, is being suffered to fall into habitual and chronic unsoundness?

Surely, as it is the first duty of man to do *right*, and only his second to do *good*; – as health is the highest of bodily blessings, so that activity, apart from it, is but spurious and imperfect; – so is it the Church's *first* duty to be *sound*, —*primum valere*, – and only her second to be, if God enables her, active and prosperous.

And the Church being, as I have said, a Divine Body – the Body of Christ – it is plain that the first condition of her soundness is *full* as well as vital union with Christ through the appointed medium, the Sacraments. Upon these are absolutely suspended her existence in the first instance, and her preservation and growth afterwards. What then, I would ask, can possibly be of more importance than that these sacred and wonderful ministries should be performed, *in all respects*, according to the Ordinance of Christ, such as he delivered it to the apostles?

And if it be asked, How are we to *know* what it was that

Christ delivered to the apostles on this subject, seeing that Holy Scripture is confessedly brief and unsystematic in its teaching respecting it? the answer manifestly is, By looking at the universal practice of the Church in the time of the apostles, and during the earliest ages after them. We know, with sufficient accuracy, what that practice was. Their customs as to the administration of Baptism are known to us; their Liturgies or Communion Offices are in our hands. And, though diversities of practice, *outside* of certain limits, are found existing in those ages, *within* certain limits there is none.

Now, among the points thus defined for us by universal early usage, is the ordained *frequency of celebration* of both Sacraments. The law of Holy Baptism, viz. that it should be administered once only, was universally received. This is confessed on all hands.

And when we come to the Holy Eucharist, here, too, *the degree of frequency*, as a law and as a *minimum*, of celebration, is defined for us no less certainly. That this was, by universal consent and practice, *weekly*, – namely, on every Lord's Day or Sunday – cannot be gainsaid. That it was on occasion administered more frequently still; that in some churches it became, we will not define how early, even daily; that, according to some, the apostles, at the very first, used it daily, – is beside the present question. The point before us is, that there was no Church throughout the world which failed, for the first three or four hundred years, to have *everywhere a weekly celebration*

*on the Sunday*, and to expect the attendance of all Christians at that ordinance. Of this, I say, there is no doubt. The custom of apostolic days is perfectly clear from Acts xx. 7, and other passages. The testimony of Pliny, at the beginning of the second century, is that the first Christians met "on a stated day" for the Eucharist; while Justin Martyr (an. 150) makes it certain that that day was Sunday. And the testimony of various subsequent writers proves that the practice continued unbroken for three centuries. The Council of Elvira,<sup>1</sup> A.D. 305, first inflicted the penalty of suspension from church privileges on all who failed to be present for three successive Sundays; and we know from our own Archbishop Theodore of Tarsus, A.D. 668, that in the East that rule was still adhered to, though in the West the penalty had ceased to be inflicted.

Now the ground which I venture to take up, as absolutely irrefragable, is that it must needs be of most dangerous consequence to depart from the apostolic and primitive eucharistic practice, in *any* of those things which were ancient and universal, and, as such, we cannot doubt, ordained features of the Ordinance. Thus, we rightly view with the utmost repugnance, and even sickness of heart, the practice of the Western Church in later ages in respect of the Elements; viz. her refusing to the laity, and to all but the Celebrant himself, one half of the Holy Eucharist. We pity or marvel at the flimsy pretences by which the fearful and cruel decree, originating in the bestowal

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<sup>1</sup> Can. 21. It is referred to by Hosius at the Council of Sardica, A.D. 347.

of exclusive privileges upon the higher clergy,<sup>2</sup> is attempted to be justified, and its effects to be explained away. The Western Church, we feel, must answer for that to God as she can. But what right have we, I would ask, to choose, among the essentials of the mysterious Ordinance, one which, as we conceive, *we* may dispense with, while we condemn others who select for themselves another? And yet, what do we? what is our practice? the practice so universally adopted throughout our Church, that the exceptions are few, and but of yesterday; so that those who contend for and practise the contrary are deemed visionary and righteous over much? Alas! our practice may be stated in few and fatally condemnatory words. The number of clergy in England may be roundly stated at 20,000. Now, it was lately affirmed in a Church Review of high standing, that the number who celebrate the Holy Communion weekly in England is 200: that is to say, if this estimate be correct, that *one in a hundred* of our clergy conforms to the apostolic and ecclesiastical law of the first centuries. This statement, it is true, proves to be somewhat of an exaggeration. But to what extent? The real number of churches where there is Holy Communion every Sunday is, by recent returns, about 430.<sup>3</sup> The number of churches in England is at least 12,000. That is to say, that there are in England at this

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<sup>2</sup> See Mabillon, referred to in Introduction to vol. ii. of 'The Principles of Divine Service.' – P. 79, note z.

<sup>3</sup> See the 'Churchman's Diary' (Masters). Another return makes the number only 328. See the 'Kalendar of the English Church.'

moment more than *eleven thousand* parishes which, judged by the rule of the apostles, are false to their Lord's dying command in a particular from which He left no dispensation. It will be said, the Holy Eucharist is celebrated in these parishes from time to time, only less *frequently* than of old. But who has told us that we may safely celebrate it less frequently? How can we possibly know but that such infrequency is direfully injurious? Take the analogy of the human body, which ever serves to illustrate so well the nature of the Church's life. Take pulsation, take respiration, or even food. Is not the *frequency* of every one of these mysterious conditions of life as certainly fixed, as their necessity to life at all? Let pulsation or respiration be suspended for a few minutes, or food for a few days, and what follows but death, or trance at the best? And what know we, I ask, of the appointed intervals for the awful *systole* and *diastole* of the Church's heart – of the appointed times of her inbreathing and expiration of the *afflatus* of the Divine Spirit – of the laws regulating the frequency of her mysterious nourishment? What know we, I say, of these things, but what we learn from the wondrous Twelve, who taught us all we know of the kingdom of God?

What may be the exact injury of such intermittent celebration of the Divine Mysteries – of such scanty and self-chosen measures of obedience to the commands of Christ, – I pretend not by these analogies to decide. But surely it may well be that continuous and unbroken weekly Eucharist is as a ring of magic

power, if I may use the comparison, binding in and rendering safe the Church's mysterious life; and that *any* rupture in that continuity is exceedingly dangerous to her.

Or if it be contended, as not unnaturally it may, that this particular circumstance of *frequency*, and of *weekly* recurrence may, notwithstanding the apostolic testimony to its importance, be subject to variation, then I would desire to put the matter from another point of view. One way of judging of the degree of importance to be attached by us to any given religious element or feature, is to observe what degree of divine care Almighty God has bestowed in inculcating it upon the world. Thus, the Unity of God, and again the necessity of sacrifice to atone for sin, or procure admission to His favour, were attested throughout the whole pre-evangelic history by special training, imparted, in the one instance, to the Jews, in the other to all mankind.

But each of these instances of training is even surpassed by that which God was pleased to impart respecting the mysterious Ordinance of the WEEK. Creation, Redemption, Sanctification – the three great phenomena of man's religious history – were all visibly based upon the Week. About the Creation, and its septenary commemoration as a religious ordinance, there is no real doubt whatever. In the Jewish system the sabbath, or week, is the basis upon which the whole structure rests.<sup>4</sup> And when the awful mystery of Redemption itself was to be consummated, it was once more within the limits of a single *week* that the mighty

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<sup>4</sup> See this admirably worked out in Dr. Moberly's Sermons on the Decalogue.

drama was wrought out. From the early morning of Palm Sunday, when our Lord entered Jerusalem as the Lamb of God, Incarnate in order that He might suffer, to the early morning of Easter Day, when He rose from the dead, a measured week, rich in divine incident, ran out. Seven weeks, or a week of weeks, again elapses, and the Spirit is sent down from on high for the completion of the Church. All this indicates some deep mystery of blessedness as attaching to the seven-days period in the matter of man's relations to God. It cannot be alleged, indeed, as an absolute *proof* that the celebration of the Eucharist was also meant to be of weekly recurrence, or that such recurrence would be the proper and indefeasible law of its rightful administration. But it surely renders that conclusion highly probable. For what purpose else, we may ask, was all this training given? Why was the Jewish nation, who were to be the first to receive the Gospel ordinances, and to transmit them to mankind, carefully habituated to a seventh-day rendering up of themselves to God? As regards the general principle involved, it was doubtless because it is good that man should keep with God these "short reckonings," which "make long" and eternal "friends." But besides this, it was, as the ancient Jewish services testify,<sup>5</sup> that they might keep in remembrance *two* very wonderful weeks of divine operation on their behalf, the week of Creation, and the week of their own deliverance out of Egypt. What more likely than that a seventh-day observance was to be perpetuated still, only with reference

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<sup>5</sup> See this proved at large in 'Principles of Divine Service,' vol. ii., pp. 284, *sqq.*

to that antitypical Redemption, which itself also was ordained to take place, as if for this very purpose, within the compass of a week?

In this point of view, the Christian Eucharist is the gathering up of the memories of that wonderful week, called of old the "Great Week," the "Week of Weeks." That such was its purpose might be gathered even from the accustomed Day, no doubt appointed by Christ Himself, for its celebration. This is not, as might perhaps have been expected, the Thursday, the day of the Institution; not a day in the middle of the week, but at the close of one week and the beginning of another: that so it may look back on the marvels of the Great Week, ever renewed in memory, and with deepest thankfulness commemorate them. The original time of celebration in apostolic days was at first, as it should seem, on the evening of the old Sabbath; that is, according to the then reckoning, on the overnight commencement, or eve, of the Sunday, on which the whole mystery was consummated by the Resurrection. In the account of the celebration at Troas, we find it to have been, from particular causes, already past midnight when the celebration took place. By the time of Pliny, in the first century, it had passed on to the morning hour of Sunday, where it has continued ever since. Surely it is manifest that, in the Divine Intention, the Church ought to pass week by week, in solemn memory and mysterious sympathy, through the great series of redeeming events, and crown her contemplation of them by the great act of Oblation and Reception, which

Christ himself ordained for high memorial of these events, and to convey the graces and powers flowing out of them. This is indeed to keep up a "*continual remembrance* of the Sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." A weekly Eucharist is really a *continual* Eucharist, because it makes our whole life to be nothing else than a living over again and again, with perpetual application to our own practice, of those events and memories which are the staple of the Ordinance. In this respect the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, viewed as crowning the week, possesses a fitness, because a close following in the steps of Christ, in his Incarnation and Passion, his Death and Burial and Resurrection, which no other day can lay claim to. This fitness, of course, reaches its height on Easter-Day, but is also realized in a very high degree on our

### **"Easter Day in every week."**

Nor are there wanting more positive and distinct intimations of the Will of God in this matter, over and above the general presumptions which have been adduced hitherto.

It is always a somewhat delicate task to gather from the provisions of the Old Law sure and certain conclusions as to the destined ones of the New; because some of the former were, as the event proved, to be entirely abrogated, or however absorbed, while others were to abide to the end, only with new powers. Thus, the multitude of slain sacrifices was to disappear, being

absorbed and done away in the One Slain Sacrifice. But the bread and wine of the Elder Economy were to survive, with added powers, in the New. We cannot, therefore, assume with certainty that the seventh-day recurrence of any feast of the Old Law, however close its resemblance to the Eucharist in other respects, enforces of necessity a like seventh-day recurrence of the Christian Ordinance. But thus much may be observed, as a law pervading the transference of the old ways of service to the new system, that there was to be no going back, or falling short, in this point of frequency, but an equality at the lowest, and even some advance in that respect. Thus, the great Continual Sacrifice of the Tabernacle and Temple, consisting in the renewal, morning and evening, of a lamb as a burnt offering, has passed on into the *really* continual, and not merely *renewed*, Offering and Presentation in Heaven of the true Lamb once for all slain. The eucharistic or peace-offerings, again, personal or congregational, which bear so close an analogy to the Holy Eucharist, were only offered and partaken of, as an absolute rule, three times in the year, though they might be, and were, offered and eaten more frequently. So that the frequency of the Christian Eucharist, once a week as a *minimum*, was a clear advance upon this. – But there was another Ordinance very closely resembling the Eucharist. This was the Shewbread. The materials of it were bread and wine; it was offered and eaten as a memorial of the one continual sacrifice, and as a means of presenting before God the Church of that day, the twelve tribes of Israel. The analogy,

therefore, is perfect; especially in that no part of the offering was consumed by fire, but the whole of that which was offered was also eaten, exactly as in the Eucharist. That this particular Ordinance was to survive, accordingly, with the least possible amount of transformation, in the Gospel economy, was foretold, apparently, by Malachi. For to this we may most safely refer his prediction, that "in every place incense should be offered, and a pure offering;" the terms "pure offering," and "incense," being especially applied to this rite; and the subject treated of being the negligence of the priests, to whom this ordinance was confined. *How often*, then, was this offering presented and partaken of? weekly – neither more nor less; namely, on the Sabbath morning; it having been placed on the Table of Shewbread the Sabbath before, and being now consecrated, or offered, by burning, upon the altar of incense, the frankincense which had been placed on the top of the loaves for that purpose. This "Weekly Celebration and Communion," then, as it may rightly be called, certifies to us, on the principle above laid down, that the Christian Eucharist, its very counterpart or continuation, was to be weekly as a *minimum*. The same analogy would suggest, what we know to have been the case from very early times, that the Christian rite was not, like the Jewish, to be *limited* to a weekly performance. In this respect, as well as in the extension of the rite to all Christians, now become "Priests unto God," the antitype was to rise, on occasion at least, above the type; even to the degree, at high seasons, or under special circumstances, of a daily celebration. And the fact that the

bread and wine offered on each Sabbath had already lain there a week, gives much countenance to the view advocated above, that the Christian rite is, on the Lord's Day, retrospective, inclusive of the memories of the preceding week. For the idea manifestly was that, in the twelve loaves, the twelve tribes lay in a mystery all the week long, with all their actions, before the Divine Majesty.

But we may, with much probability, go one step further, and say that Our Lord himself, in the very words of the Institution, gave no obscure intimation that the law of recurrence of the Ordinance was to be that which is here contended for. Among those words there is one, though but one, which bears upon the question of frequency. It is, "Do this, *as oft as ye drink*, for My memorial" (Ἵσακις ἀν πινητε]). What is the allusion here? Had the Jews any custom at that time of "drinking" wine in solemn religious "memorial" of national mercies; for which this greater "Memorial," of world-wide meaning, was henceforth to be substituted? and if so, how often did that rite recur, and what law would thus be suggested or prescribed for the New "Memorial"?

Now, that they had such a rite<sup>6</sup> at that time, is rendered infinitely probable by the fact that they have such a one at this day; and of such a structure, and involving such reference to the ancient system of sacrifice, as though actually going on, that it is inconceivable but that it must have existed before the destruction of the temple, and abolition of the law. It consisted

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<sup>6</sup> See 'Principles of Divine Service,' vol. ii., pp. 284-298.

of offering and consecrating, at the Synagogue Service, *on the eve of every Sabbath*, a cup of wine, which was then drunk of, first by the consecrator, and then by the orphan children there present: – a touching rite, signifying (as appears by the prayers accompanying it) the fatherless condition of the nation when in Egypt, and God's mercy in bringing them out of it, to drink of the fruit of the vine in their own land. There were also prayers for the acceptance of the great continual sacrifice of the nation, then lying on the altar in the temple; for peace; for grace to keep the commandments. In all respects, therefore, this rite bore a very close resemblance, in its own sphere, to that which our Lord was instituting: He, too, having offered a cup of wine, presenting thereby the Sacrifice of His Blood, and enjoined that it should be then and ever after drunk of in thankful memorial and all-powerful pleading of that sacrificial deliverance. And there was yet another Sabbath-eve rite, nearly akin to this one, only that it was a domestic rite, and performed *at supper*, and with *bread* as well as wine; features which, of course, assimilated this latter form of the rite still more closely to what our Lord was doing.

Let it be supposed then, – and it seems to be incontestable, if the existence of the rites at that time may be safely assumed, – that to these rites our Lord alluded, both generally in the whole Institution (though of course he referred to many other and greater rites too), and specially in the words – "As oft as ye drink." We then have from Himself a plain intimation as to the degree of frequency of Celebration. Such an intimation

would, apart from subsequent instructions during the Forty Days, account for the "First day of the week" being mentioned for celebration, as if a fixed habit, in the Acts of the Apostles.

These things considered then; – the deep mystery for good attaching, from the very Creation downwards, to the seventh-day recurrence of religious ordinances; the special fitness of such a law of recurrence in the case of the Holy Eucharist, because it is the summing up of a Divine Week's Work of Redemption and Salvation; the sharply defined presignification, by means of the Law and the Prophets, the shewbread and Malachi, of a seventh-day rite of universal obligation, and blessedness yet to come; lastly, and chief of all, the brief but pregnant command of Our Lord Himself, gathered with the utmost probability from the very words of the Institution; and all this, not left to our inference, but actually countersigned by the unvarying practice of the Church throughout the world for three hundred years: – all this considered, I conceive that we have very strong grounds indeed for affirming the proper obligation of this law of recurrence, and for earnestly desiring that it might please the Great Head of the Church to put it into the mind of this branch of it to return, with all her heart, to the discharge of this most bounden duty.

I have preferred, in what has been said, to place this duty on the lofty ground of zeal for the integrity of the great Mystery of our religion, and of reverence for the commands of Christ, and the practice of His Apostles, rather than on the lower ones of expediency and advantage. And in this light I would earnestly

desire that it may be primarily regarded. The *only* question for any branch of God's Church ought to be, What is commanded? What did God Almighty intend, and types foreshadow, and Christ enjoin, and the Apostles practise? Whatever *that* was, it must be right for us to aim at, and to strive for it with all our hearts.

Yet I would not have it supposed but that there is every reason to hope for the largest measures of blessing, and of spiritual results, from a return to this practice. I will mention one very great scandal, the very canker and weakness of our whole parochial system, which has a fair likelihood of being removed by this means. Next to the infrequency of our Communions, the fewness of our communicants, – that is, in fact, of our *bonâ fide* members of the Church, – is our greatest and most inveterate evil. When this fewness is allowed its due significance, we must see and confess that the nominally Christian condition of this country is but an illusion and an untruth after all. Judged by our own Church's rule (which is the rule of Christ Himself), our *communicants*, and they only, are our people. The rest may call themselves what they will; or we may for euphony call them "our flocks," or God's people. But one thing is certain, that in those apostolic or early days to which we ever appeal, and rightly, as our standard, they would have been held to be reprobates, and no faithful members of Christ's body at all. Such then is our condition: – a miserable handful, even among those who are nominally members of the Church, having any claim to the title

in reality. Now, how are these wanderers to be brought back? these abortive or moribund Christians to be induced to accept the gift of life, through the indispensable Sacrament? Surely, for the most part, even in the same way as converts are brought in, one by one, in heathen lands. Public ministrations, sermons, services, will not do it. It is a personal effort, a personal rendering up of self, that is needed; and it is only by seizing and pressing, in private intercourse, the chance occasions of speech, the day of sorrow, or of conviction of sin, that we can induce men to make this effort. But, unhappily, when they are prepared to make it, in the vast majority of our parishes, the "Communion Sunday" is too often a far-off event: and before it arrives the favourable impression and disposition has passed away. While, on the other hand, the ever-ready rite secures the communicant. In saying this, I am not merely theorizing, but describing what I have found to take place within my own experience. It has been found that in this way nearly one-third of the entire population of a parish may be brought in a few years to Holy Communion. Surely some may be induced to try the effect, were it with this view only, of the restoration of Weekly Celebration.

I am well aware, indeed, of the difficulties which, in many cases, stand in the way of such a restoration, and on these I would venture to say a few words.

In the first place, then, the state of things which prevails among us, and of which I have above ventured to speak in such strong language of deprecation, is one which we of

this generation have not made, but inherited. It is not we, God be thanked, that have diminished, but rather, in almost all cases, increased, the frequency of our celebrations. The guilt of this evil custom is shared by the whole Church of fifteen hundred years past; and therefore we must not be surprised if very great difficulties are found in correcting it. The history of the desuetude, which we behold and deplore, is simply this. For nearly three centuries, scarcely any breach was made in the Church's Eucharistic practice. Not only was there universal weekly celebration, but universal weekly reception also; with only such abatement, doubtless, as either discipline or unavoidable hindrance entailed. But the ninth of the so-called Apostolic canons, belonging probably to the third century, speaks of some "who came in to hear the Scriptures, but did not remain for the prayer (*i. e.* the Communion service) and holy reception." All such were to be suspended from Communion, as "bringing disorder into the Church," *i. e.* apparently (with reference to 2 Thess. iii. 6), as "walking disorderly, and not after the tradition received from the Apostles." By about A.D. 305, the Council of Elvira, as cited above, orders suspension after absence from the Church *three successive* Sundays: a curious indication of "monthly Communion" having been an early, as it continues to this day a favourite, form of declension from primitive practice. But by St. Chrysostom's time (c. 400) so rapidly had the evil increased, that he speaks of some who received but twice a year; and even of there being on occasion

none at all to communicate. But this seems to have been but local, since we find the Council of Antioch, A.D. 341, reiterating the Apostolic canon: and even three centuries later, the old rule of suspension for three absences was still in force in the East; as Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury in 668, testifies of the *Greek Church*, from which he came. But even in the East the decline was rapid. The Apostolical usage, confirmed by the ninth canon, was admitted to be binding; but obedience to it was given up as hopeless. Nay, even the laxer rule of Elvira was stretched by Canonists,<sup>7</sup> so as to recognise *attendance without reception* as sufficient. In the West the habit was all along laxer still than in the East. At Rome, as Theodore tells us, no penalty was inflicted for failing to communicate for three Sundays; but the more devout still received every Sunday and Saint's-day in the time of St. Bede; whereas in England, as St. Bede tells us, even the more religious laity did not *presume* to communicate – so utterly had the Apostolic idea of Communion perished – except at Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter. Some attempt was made in Spain and France<sup>8</sup> in the sixth century to revive the pure Apostolic rule. But meanwhile the Council of Agde, held

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<sup>7</sup> So Balsamon, in the twelfth century: "Though some desire by means of this Canon to oblige those who come to Church to receive the Sacraments against their will, yet we do not; for we decide that the faithful are to stay to the end of the Divine Sacrifice; but we do not force them to communicate." – See Scudamore, 'Communion of the Faithful,' p. 58. Yet later writers acknowledged the true meaning of the Canon, though they thus condemned the existing practice of the Church. – Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Council of Lugo, A.D. 572; of Maçon, A.D. 585.

in 506, discloses the actual state of things by prescribing, as the condition of Church membership, *three* receptions in the year – at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.<sup>9</sup> The recognition of this miserable pittance of grace, as sufficient for membership in Christ, was rapidly propagated through East and West; and remains, unhappily, as the *litera scripta* of two out of the three great branches of the Church – the Eastern and the English – to this day. In the Roman Church, ever since the Fourth Lateran Council in 1214, but *one* reception a year is enjoined under penalty; viz. at Easter. The English Church, however, never accepted the Lateran decree; but by Canons of Salisbury (about 1270), and of Lambeth (1378), re-affirmed the thrice-a-year rule. By the time of the Reformation, however, as is evident from the rubric attached to the Communion Office in Edward VI.'s First Book, reception once a year had become the recognised minimum in this country also. Meanwhile the miserable practice grew up, as a result of the lack of communicants, of the priest celebrating a so-called "Communion," on occasion at least, alone. It is probable that in the earlier days, as *e. g.* of St. Chrysostom, there were always clergy to receive; the "parochial" system of that time being to congregate several clergy at one cure. But in the ninth century, solitary celebrations existed extensively, and were forbidden,<sup>10</sup> in the West. Not, however, to much purpose. It

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<sup>9</sup> "Sæculares qui natale Domini, pascha et pentecosten non communicaverint, catholici non credantur nec inter catholicos habeantur." – Concil. Agath., c. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Council of Paris (829).

soon became the rule, rather than the exception, for the priest to celebrate alone; and thus it continued until the Reformation. The Council of Trent contented itself with feebly wishing things were otherwise; and justified the abuse on the ground of vicarious celebration and spiritual communion.

It was in her gallant and noble protest, single-handed, against this vast and desolating perversion of the Ordinance of Christ, that the English Church, far from her own desire, and only borne down by the accumulated abuse of ages, lapsed into that unhappy desuetude of the Weekly Celebration, which prevails so widely to this hour. In her First Revised Communion Office she provided that, in order "that the receiving of the Sacrament may be most agreeable *to the Institution thereof, and to the usage of the Primitive Church*, some one, at the least, of that house in every parish, to whom it appertaineth to offer [at the Offertory] for the charges of the Communion, or some other whom they shall provide, shall receive the Communion with the Priest."<sup>11</sup> It is added, that "on *week-days* he shall *forbear to celebrate except he have some that will communicate with him.*" Another rubric provided, that "on *Wednesdays and Fridays*" (which had traditionally<sup>12</sup> been the great week-days for celebration in this country), "though there might be none to communicate with the

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<sup>11</sup> Rubric at the end of the Communion Service, 1549.

<sup>12</sup> Thus, in the Sarum Use, separate Epistles and Gospels are provided for those days throughout Advent, Epiphany, and Easter, till Whitsuntide; for Wednesdays only throughout the Trinity period.

priest, yet on those days" (after the Litany ended) "he should put on a plain albe or surplice, with a cope, and say all things at the altar appointed to be said at the celebration, until after the Offertory." And this rule was extended to "all other days," meaning apparently customary high holydays, occurring in the week, "whensoever the people were customably assembled to pray in the church, and none disposed to communicate with the priest."

Thus was a solemn protest made, and not in word only, as in other parts of the Church, but by outward deed, against the unpardonable and fatal neglect of the people to avail themselves of the ordinance of Christ. On *Sundays* only (so the rubric seems to mean) a peculiar provision was made, so that there should, without fail, be attendants at the celebration. But on week-days, on which there was no such Divine obligation to celebrate, the Church would carry her protest still further. While vesting her ministers, as if ready, for their parts, for the rite, she would refuse to volunteer a mode of celebration, for which there was no precedent in the early and pure days of Christianity.

Such appears to have been the intention of the First Book of Edward VI. The expedient of performing the Communion Service up to a certain point only, on Wednesdays and Fridays, was manifestly adopted from the ancient Church of Alexandria, where, as Socrates has recorded, exactly this usage prevailed on those days. In the Second Book of Edward VI. (revised, be it remembered, in part by members of the same Committee of

Divines as the First was, and professing the same doctrine),<sup>13</sup> the provision for the compulsory attendance of each household in turn was laid aside, probably as being found impracticable. And now at length the step was taken, to which sound principles of action had in reality pointed all along; and it was ordained that, if the people, appealed to as they had been, and would continue still to be, persisted on any given Sunday in excommunicating themselves, they should even be permitted to do so. The great unreality of a Communion, which was no Communion according to the Ordinance of Christ, should be done away. The minister should still be ready on all Sundays and holydays at the altar; but it would be left, awfully left, for the people to say whether Christ's ordinance should have place, or whether its continuity should be violated, and its benefits so far forfeited.

And who will deny that such a course was, though a choice of evils, the right one? What had the other practice done, but lull the Church of God into a fatal satisfaction with a state of things as widely different from primitive Eucharist and primitive Christianity, as any one thing can well be from another? And if those other sad results have followed, which we behold before our eyes, let not the blame be laid on the age which has inherited, but on the ages which had accumulated and transmitted, such an inveterate habit of neglect to receive the Holy Communion. Be it remembered, too, that (as has been well pointed out of late)

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<sup>13</sup> See 'Principles of Divine Service,' Introd. to Part II., p. 123-129. Mr. Perry ('Declaration on Kneeling') arrives at the same conclusion.

the period of the Great Rebellion caused an entire suspension of the Church's proper rites. "The Sacrament was laid aside, in those distracting times, in many parishes in the kingdom, for near twenty years." (Bishop Patrick.) "This solemn part of religion was almost quite forgotten; the Remembrance of Christ's Death was soon lost among Christians." (Archbishop Tillotson.) "The Sacrament was laid aside, in Cromwell's days, in most parishes in the nation. In many churches there was no *speaking* of the Sacrament for fifteen or sixteen years; till it was feared the Lord's Supper would come to be ranked among those superstitious ceremonies that must be abolished." (Dr. Durell.) These testimonies considered, the real wonder would be if there had *not* been found very great difficulty in bringing back, at the time of the Restoration, the primitive habit of Weekly Celebration. And now that we have added two hundred years more of neglect, we have to face the mighty difficulty of awakening a whole nation, of clergy and laity alike, to a due sense of our very grievous departure from that Apostolic model, to which professedly we appeal as our standard of duty.

And the task would seem to be hopeless, were it not, 1st, that a great and powerful movement tending to this result has already for many years been going forward; and, 2nd, that there is reason for believing that vast numbers of the clergy are really anxious to restore the primitive practice, and are only held back by difficulties, either real or imagined. Of this latter fact it is in my power to speak with some confidence; since I have been

frequently urged, by no inconsiderable number of my brethren, to set forth, as I have now very imperfectly endeavoured to do, the grounds for such a restoration.

What then, supposing the clergy to be really anxious for it, are the difficulties in the way? The first and most obvious is that of finding a sufficient number of Communicants. This is to be overcome in a great measure by careful heed to that pregnant charge given to the clergy at their Ordination, "So to sanctify the lives of *them and theirs*, and to *fashion them after the Rule and Doctrine of Christ*

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