



Conducted by
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"I have had so many disappointments and frustrations in the Church of Christ that I have lost some of the enthusiasm which I once had. Perhaps it would help me and others if you could please say what the Church has meant to you in your life".

THIS is a cry from the heart that I can well understand. I, too, have known frustration and disappointment and I am quite sure that many others have also, but personally I came to the conclusion some time ago that I would not let these satan-inspired attitudes stand between me and the undoubted blessings which can and do exist in the Body of Christ, the Church. Consequently, I am not looking for the faults in others, but in myself; I am looking for ways to get involved rather than seeking avenues to escape involvement; I am looking for the good points in my fellow-Christians rather than the things with which I can tear them down; I suppose I could say that I am trying to walk in the footsteps of my Master. Let me then try to analyse what the Church has meant to me, because I am quite sure that by doing so I shall help not only the questioner but also myself.

New Horizons

I remember sailing from West Africa to Bombay. Each morning I would look out from the ship and the horizon would be exactly the same; sky and water. Then one morning the horizon was entirely new; land had appeared, and as the ship drew steadily closer so the new and exciting contours of the land became clearer; new people, new buildings, new cultures, made a startling and exciting change from the seemingly endless horizon of sea and water.

Isn't this how we felt when we first came into Christ? I know this is how I felt. I had wandered around in the arid wilderness of sin, my horizons limited by worldliness. Suddenly, when I was added to the Church, all of that changed. As Paul taught the Corinthians, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). A completely new way of life was opened up to me; new people, new ideals, new objectives, unlimited horizons. I not only accepted the fact of living, as previously, but also began to grapple with the reasons for living. The Bible, instead of being looked upon as an archaic book for ageing clergymen, became to me, as in fact it is, the living Word. Jesus became a reality.

What I would say to you dear questioner, is this; those new and challenging horizons are, always present when we are in Christ. They are perceived only dimly when they are befogged by attitudes which we ourselves adopt and which are to our spiritual detriment. Have you lost the capacity to love? Then think about Jesus and remember how His love transcended every demonstration of love which the world had seen. DO you feel 'let down' by your brethren? Well, don't write them off and ignore them; talk with them, and rather than having a feeling of distrust you may find something which will explain many things which puzzle you. Do you feel that your conception of the Christian objective has not been met? Then remember, this

rendered. It is a lesson of supreme importance to 'learn not to go beyond the things which are written' (1 Corinth. 4:6. R.V.).

Apart from the written word none, whatever his scholarship attainments, and position, knows what is acceptable to the Lord. If we are at liberty to go beyond that Word, and introduce into worship things not found there, where is the stopping place? The whole Papal system is the result of speaking where the Bible is silent. It is according to the mind of man, not the mind of God.

The Table

On this table were placed twelve loaves, called shewbread, or presencebread, which were 'for a memorial', Aaron and his sons, the priests, were commanded to eat it in the holy place (Leviticus 24:9). The highest authority, the Lord Jesus, said it was not lawful for even David to eat it, 'but only for the priests' (Matt. 12:4).

That table was a type of the Lord's table, which is inside the Lord's Church, On that table, every Lord's Day, bread for a memorial is placed, 'This do', said the Lord Jesus, 'in remembrance of me'. He did not give liberty to do something else which might better please human eyes and ears. This bread speaks of Him who is the Bread of Life sent down from heaven, and which was sacrificed for us. By faith, not in any material, corporeal, sense, we feed on Him.

'On Thee we feast, Thou living bread,
And here would feed upon Thee still;
Here drink of Thee, Thou fountain-head,
Whose streams each thirsting soul can fill'

The Lord's Table, inside the Lord's Church is for the Lord's priests, which under the better covenant are all those who have entered by the door, and have not climbed in some other way. The Lord Himself has set up the only door of entrance: 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'

All societies have their initiatory rites, and conditions of membership. We do not say, 'I can be a member of that society and ignore its rites and conditions'. It is only concerning the Divine Society, the Church of the living God, that men claim the right to membership without complying with Divine terms of admission. When infant baptism was first introduced it was seen that baptism made them members of the Church, and as such, they were entitled to the privileges of the Church. They tried to give them the Lord's Supper, they gave them the fruit of the vine, but they were too young to take the bread. One false move leads to another. So Confirmation by onlaying of a bishop's hands, when they come to riper years, was made the passport to the Lord's Table. Article XXV of the Church of England names Confirmation, among other things, and says: these 'are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel . . . for they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God'. So they belong to those things of which the Lord Jesus said: 'In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men'.

It is written: 'Upon the first day of the week . . . the disciples came together to break bread' (Acts 20:7). Paul and his colleagues had been in Troas some days but they did not, as some now do, feel at liberty to attend to the Lord's Supper on any other than the Lord's Day, they waited for that day. Then, it was the disciples who came together to attend to that feast. The Lord planned how disciples were to be made (Matt. 28:18-20). Remove the line of demarcation from where the Lord has placed it, and there is no legitimate stopping place.

The Altar of Incense

This was placed 'before the veil' that separated 'the holy place' from the 'holiest of all'; 'and Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning . . . and at even . . . a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations' (Exodus 30:1-10). David pleaded: 'Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice' (Psalm 141:2). We read in the book of Revelation of 'golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints' (5:8). That altar of incense was a type of the golden altar of prayer. Aaron offering incense was a type of our great High Priest, the 'one mediator between God and men.'

cost. Can we recapture the vision? Not if we allow ourselves to be distracted by the wiles of Satan. But if we can fix our eyes on the blazing glory of God, then that Light, I am convinced, will warm, enrich, and motivate us to greater heights, than we have hitherto believed possible. I suppose, in the end, it is a matter of confidence in God.