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ART. III.—THE HOUR OF COMMUNION.

WE feel assured that the readers of THE CHURCHMAN will gladly welcome a paper which aims at opening the way for a discussion of this subject in a spirit of historical investigation and honest criticism.

It is a subject of which it may perhaps be said that it has had of late years too much and too little attention directed to it—too little, inasmuch as hasty deductions have sometimes been drawn from premises too lightly investigated—too much, because we believe it will be found, as the result of a more careful inquiry, that in the earliest and purest ages of the Christian Church it was regarded as among things indifferent.

The best known, if not the most noteworthy, utterance in the writings of Christian antiquity on the matter, is found in the oft-quoted Epistle of St. Augustin to Januarius. He regards the prevalent custom of coming to the Communion *fasting* as resting on Apostolic authority, and as due to the teaching or guiding of the Holy Ghost. He says :

Liquido apparet, quando primum acceperunt discipuli Corpus et Sanguinem Domini, non eos accepisse jejunos. Numquid tamen propterea calumniandum est universæ Ecclesiæ quod a jejunis semper accipitur ? Ex hoc enim placuit Spiritui Sancto, ut in honorem tanti Sacramenti in os Christiani prius Dominicum Corpus intraret, quam ceteri cibi. Nam ideo per universum orbem mos iste servatur. Neque enim quia post cibos dedit Dominus, propterea pransi aut cœnati fratres ad illud sacramentum accipiendum convenire debent, aut sicut faciebant quos Apostolus arguit et emendat, mensis suis ista miscere. Namque Salvator, quo vehementius commendaret mysterii illius altitudinem, ultimum hoc voluit altius infigere cordibus et memoriæ discipulorum, a quibus ad passionem digressurus erat. Et ideo non præcepit quo deinceps ordine sumeretur, ut Apostolis, per quos ecclesias dispositurus erat, servaret hunc locum. Nam si hoc ille monuisset, ut post cibos alios semper acciperetur, credo quod eum morem nemo variasset. Cum vero ait Apostolus de hoc Sacramento loquens ; *Propter quod fratres cum convenitis ad manducandum, invicem expectate : Si quis esurit, domi manducet, ut non ad judicium conveniatis* : statim subtexit ; *Cetera autem, cum venero ordinabo*. Unde intelligi datur (quia multum erat, ut in epistola totum illum agendi insinuaret, quem universa per orbem servat Ecclesia), ab ipso ordinatum esse quod nulla morum diversitate variatur.—Epist., Lib. ii., Ep. liv. § 8. Op., tom. ii., c. 126-7. Edit. Ben., Paris, 1679.

Those who know anything of the paramount influence exercised by the writings of St. Augustin on Western Christendom (an influence for which we should be devoutly thankful) will not be disposed to wonder that after such a *dictum* as this from the Bishop of Hippo, a kind of horror should have affected men's minds at the thought of evening and post-prandial Communion, as if there were danger in allowing them of sinning against the Holy Ghost. We feel

sure that pious minds, in our own days, and in our own reformed Communion (following herein the example of some even of the most ultra-Protestant of the Reformers¹), have been affected by this influence, as well as those in the ages which more immediately followed the great African theologian.

And in saying this, we do not mean at all to imply that such a feeling was not older than St. Augustin. It appears to have been growing in the previous centuries.

But with respect to the change of practice as to receiving the Holy Communion (and it is generally acknowledged that a change of practice there was), from the more primitive custom of evening celebration to the later habits which prevailed long before St. Augustin's days, we should remember that, scant as are the materials for investigation in the early part of the second century, we are yet, after the lapse of so many ages, in a better position than St. Augustin was for instituting an inquiry as to the origin and history of this very remarkable change.

Will St. Augustin's theory of an Apostolic origin of the later practice bear the light of closer historical inquiry? If not, can history suggest any other cause that may account for so conspicuous a change in the religious customs prevailing throughout the Christian world?

These are questions on the answers to which very much must depend.

As to the first question, there is, we believe, an entire absence of any trace, in the days of St. Augustin or in any previous days, of anything like a tradition bearing witness to an injunction for such a change having proceeded either from the Apostolic College, or from any number of Apostles, or from any single Apostle. St. Augustin's language does not suggest the idea of his having ever heard of such a tradition. His argument in favour of an Apostolic origin for the change seems to rest entirely on the fact of the new custom being so widely prevalent, and on the words of St. Paul, "the rest will I set in order when I come," as suggestive of some regulation which the Apostle was intending to make, and which *might have been* such an admonition as would account for the change.

And this absence of all tradition on the subject, if it be a fact, must be felt to be a very significant fact.

On the theory of any Apostolic ordinance on the matter, this silence would be very difficult to account for, even if there

¹ See *e.g.*, Bullinger. "This banquet requireth fasting and empty guests; but yet not so fasting that a man may not taste of somewhat aforehand for his health's sake" (Decades, V., Sermon IX., . 423. P.S. Edit). See also Hutchinson's Works, P.S. Edit., p. 222.

were no occasions on which an appeal to such a tradition might be expected. But, as a matter of fact, there are sayings to be found in the writings of early Christians in which reference to such a tradition would have been natural—we might almost say, would have been called for—if it had existed.¹

But the importance of these passages is brought low by the fact that there are statements of history and there are sayings of Fathers which seem sufficient not only to disprove the knowledge of any such tradition, but to prove (or to go a good way towards proving) that the position of such as hold an Apostolic origin for the change is absolutely untenable.

It is not necessary to lay stress on the acknowledged exceptions to the rule of fasting Communion as generally prevalent. It is of course conceivable that an Apostolic ordinance against evening Communion may have allowed the exception of Maundy Thursday, even as St. Augustin allows it in this same *Épistle*;² though, if there were anything in afternoon Communion repugnant to the true doctrine of the Eucharist, or to any sacred instinct awakened in the Church by such doctrine, the exception is not easy to be accounted for.

But the statement of Socrates concerning the custom of evening and post-cœnal Communion in the Thebaid, and the parts of Egypt about Alexandria,³ must be allowed to present an enormous difficulty in the way of accepting any theory of the Apostolic origin of an injunction forbidding the practice.

It has, indeed, been urged that this remarkable exception serves to "prove the rule."⁴ And it may be very well admitted that it does, by its peculiarity, serve to draw attention to the prevalent rule which it violates. But none the less would it avail, even if the Thebaid had been a far less considerable portion of Christendom than it was, to break the neck of any "quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus" argument. Will anyone believe that a Church which had occupied so prominent a position in the early history of Christianity had in such a matter as this deliberately gone counter to the ordinance of Apostles and the guidance of the Holy Ghost?⁵

¹ See *e.g.*, quotations in Bingham, xv., ch. vii. § 8, vol. v., pp. 298, 299. It will be observed that the Canons of Councils (for the most part) have relation especially to the fasting of Presbyters. The Council in Trullo is the first (A.D. 691 or 692) to claim the authority of tradition (*ἀποστολικαῖς καὶ πατρικαῖς ἐπόμνοι παράδοσει*, c. xxix).

² This was afterwards forbidden by the Council in Trullo, and that on the alleged ground of Apostolic tradition.

³ Socrates, "Hist. Eccles.," v. 22. See Sozomen, "Hist. Eccles.," vii. 19.

⁴ "Evening Communions" (Church Press Co.).

⁵ Mr. Scudamore "Not. Euch.," p. 34, Edit. 2) says, "There was a

Dean Plumtre has remarked :

The practice noticed as an exception to the practice of all other Churches (comp. Augustin, "Epist. ad Jan." i. 5) was probably a relic of the Primitive Church, both as to time and manner, when the Lord's Supper had been, like other suppers, eaten in the evening ; when an evening meeting on "the first day of the week" meant, according to the Jewish mode of speech, the evening of Saturday ; when the thought that "fasting" was a necessary condition of partaking of the Supper of the Lord was not only not present to men's minds, but was absolutely excluded by the Apostle's rule, that men who could not wait patiently when the members of the Church met, should satisfy their hunger beforehand in their own houses (1 Cor. xi. 34).—"Dict. of Christian Antiquities," *voc. Agape*, vol. i., p. 41.

But to turn now to some of the sayings found in the writings of Christian antiquity.

St. Chrysostom was accused of having administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to some after eating. He denies the charge, indeed, distinctly and with indignation. But denying it, he says: "If they still go on to object this . . . let them depose the Lord Himself, Who gave the Communion to His Apostles after supper."¹

considerable exception to the rule in Egypt, but it was regarded as blameworthy."

It is classed by Socrates among the singular customs of certain churches, but without any special note of blame. It must have been known to the Patriarch of Alexandria, and it called forth no patriarchal or synodal condemnation. This is unaccountable on the supposition of its being in contravention of any then known Apostolic or equivalent authority.

The Christians of the Thebaid (which a while later swarmed with hermits) were very little likely to have adopted a less ascetic custom than the rest of Christendom in violation of any Apostolic ordinance. They were likely to have preserved an ancient practice, in spite of changes in all the rest of the world. In Trajan's reign the Gospel had made so little progress in the Thebaid that the sparse Christian population were very little likely to have caused trouble or apprehension to Roman Governors, who may well be supposed to have thought it not worth while to interfere with their evening *agape*. (See Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," ch. xv., vol. ii., pp. 363, 364.)

¹ It is to be observed also that St. Chrysostom had been equally blamed for administering Baptism without fasting. This charge also he denies. He says, "They object against me, 'Thou didst first eat, and then administer Baptism.' If I did so, let me be anathema. . . . But if I had done so, what absurdity had I committed? Let them depose Paul, who baptized the jailor after supper."

Εἰ δὲ ἄπαξ καὶ τοῦτό μοι λέγουσι, καὶ φιλονεικοῦσι, καθελέτωσαν καὶ τὸν Παῦλον, ὃς μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι ὀλόκληρον τὸν οἶκον ἐβάπτισε· καθελέτωσαν καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Κύριον, ὃς μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι τοῖς ἀποστόλοις τὴν κοινωνίαν ἔδωκε.—"Epist. ad Cyriacum," Edit. Bened., Paris, 1721 ; tom. iii., p. 668.

It is to be well observed that St. Chrysostom regards the administra-

Could St. Chrysostom have written such words as these, if he had had the faintest suspicion of the practice having been forbidden by Apostolic authority?

Besides this, we have a homily of St. Chrysostom addressed to the people of Antioch, in which, supposing his hearers to come sometimes (however unwillingly) to Communion after eating and drinking, he expressed no horror at such conduct, but speaks of the care that should be taken to preserve moderation and sobriety in such circumstances; and he adds a warning to those who turned away from the Lord's Table because they were not fasting in these words—*οὐ δὲ κατάγνωσιν εἶναι νομίζων τὸ μὴ νηστεύσαι καὶ ἕτερον προστιθῆς ἔγκλημα πολλῶ μείζον καὶ χालεπώτερον τὸ μὴ τῆς ἱερῆς ταύτης μετασχεῖν τραπέζης*;—Edit. Bened., 1718, tom. ii., pp. 97, 98.

Certainly these are not the words of one who regarded fasting Communion to be of Apostolic ordering.

Again, to go back to the middle of the third century, St. Cyprian rebukes the Aquarians for this, that they used for their Communion water only in the morning, though they used also wine in the evening. But in his rebuke is not a word of censure for their practice of administering the Communion at all in the evening.¹ Is it possible that St. Cyprian

tion of Baptism and the administration of the Holy Communion after supper as standing on the same ground. And then the following words will be found very important: *Εἰ δὲ καὶ ἔφαγον καὶ ἐβάπτισα, οὐδὲν ἄκαιρον τῶν πραγμάτων ἐποίησα . . . λέγουσιν ὅτι ἔφαγον καὶ ἐβάπτισα καθελίωσαν οὖν Παῦλον, ὅτι, μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνῆσαι ἔχαρισάτο τῷ δεσμοφύλακι τὸ βάπτισμα. τολμῶ λέγειν, καθελίωσαν καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Χριστὸν, ὅτι μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνον τοῖς μαθηταῖς τὴν κοινωνίαν ἔχαρισάτο.*—“Hom. ante Exilium” (Edit. Bened., Paris, 1721; tom. iii., p. 418). Note.—This part of the homily is considered by the Benedictine editor of doubtful authenticity. Whoever the writer may be, he is expressing the opinion of St. Chrysostom as contained in the letter to Cyriacus, which Montfaucon receives as genuine.

¹ Bingham, in reference to this, remarks very well, “He would not so easily have passed over the practice of the Aquarians, in celebrating in the evening, had there been no instances of the like practices in the Church; but as it was customary in Egypt to celebrate the Eucharist on Saturday, after dinner, and in Afric one day in a year after supper; all he pleads for upon this point is only this, that the general custom of the Church to celebrate the Eucharist in the morning only, was not against the rule of Christ, though He gave it in the evening after supper: because Christ had a particular reason for what He did, which He did not intend should oblige the Church. Christ offered in the evening to signify the evening or end of the world; but we offer in the morning to celebrate our Saviour's resurrection. And he gives another reason why they did not celebrate in the evening generally as in the morning, because the people could not so well all come together in the evening as in the morning.”—Ant., b. xv., ch. vii., § 8.

could have taken no notice of this if he had known of any Apostolic rule against such a usage?

But, perhaps, the most important witnesses in this matter will be found in documents which have only recently become available as evidence in this case. Whatever date may be assigned to the "Teaching of the Apostles" (*i.e.*, within possible limits), and whatever value may be assigned to this discovery of Bryennius—and we incline to think that, some years to come, its value will not be rated so high as at present—there can be scarcely a doubt that it represents a state of things in the Church, or some portion of it, in which post-prandial or post-cœnal Communion was the ordinary rule and practice.

It has been suggested, indeed, that the words *Μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἐμπλησθῆναι*¹ may possibly be interpreted metaphorically, as when St. Paul says, "Be filled with the Spirit." But such an interpretation must be acknowledged to be highly forced. And Dean Howson,² who made it, adds, "It is more natural to us to see here the *agape*, the combination of a common meal with the Eucharist. 'Cœna communis nondum separata ab agape,' says Hilgenfeld." That such is the true meaning of the *Διδαχή* can hardly, we think, admit of a doubt.³ But if this is so, the evidence is unmistakably clear, and indissolubly cogent. We are looking at a scene of post-Apostolic times, and we see the Eucharist partaken of by Christians after being filled with a repast (or as a part of a repast), and a repast which none will maintain to have been the meal of the morning. Certainly at this date no known Apostolic ordinance had enjoined early or fasting Communion; nor had any instinct of reverence taught Christians to shun a post-prandial Eucharist.

And this evidence is strongly confirmed by the witness which has just been made available by the learning of the Bishop of Durham. We say "just made available," because the words we are about to quote from the Epistle of St. Ignatius belong to a recension which some (especially since the publication of the "Corpus Ignatianum") have regarded as of doubtful authority, but which is now established as the genuine writing

¹ The "Constitutiones Apostolicæ," which stand to the *Διδαχή* in somewhat the same relation as the interpolated Ignatius to the genuine (Professor Harnack regards both these interpolations as coming from the same hand), paraphrases the words by *Μετὰ δὲ τὴν μετάληψιν*. See Swainson's "Greek Liturgies," postscript, p. xlix.

² CHURCHMAN, Aug., 1884, p. 331.

³ "The Communion and the *agape*," says Dr. P. Schaff, in his edition of the "Didache," "were then inseparably connected, the *agape* preceding, the Communion completing, the Christian Passover."—"The Oldest Church Manual," p. 60, 1885.

of the Martyr.¹ "It is not lawful," says St. Ignatius, "apart from the Bishop, either to baptize or to hold an *agape*" (οὔτε βαπτίζειν οὔτε ἀγάπην ποιεῖν).

Observe the things which are here forbidden to be done without the Bishop's sanction.

The one is to administer the sacrament of Baptism. What should we expect the other to be? Assuredly to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.² How is it expressed? By the words ἀγάπην ποιεῖν.

Now we can very well understand how a special pleader, *θέσιν διαφυλάττων*, might insist on the fact that there is here no distinct mention of the Eucharist at all; that the words may very well be understood of simply keeping a love-feast. But if we are so to interpret St. Ignatius, we are driven to the conclusion that he did not think it necessary to prohibit the celebration of the Eucharist apart from the Bishop, while he did feel it needful to forbid a social meal. Is not this a *reductio ad absurdum*?

And the only alternative is to suppose that ἀγάπην ποιεῖν included the partaking of the Supper of the Lord. In other words, we are driven to the conclusion that at the date of the martyrdom of St. Ignatius, the Eucharist still formed part of the ἀγάπη as it had done, we know, in the Apostolic age.³

¹ Professor Harnack, while in some points differing from the Bishop, writes (in *Expositor*, Jan., 1886, pp. 9, 10): "He (Bishop Lightfoot) has discussed the longer Greek recension and the Curetonian Epistles, and has shown that the former was fabricated in the fourth century, and that the latter is a harmless collection made about the year 400, or somewhat earlier. The demonstration is so complete that it is no longer necessary to spend words on the question. . . . After repeated investigation, the genuineness of the Epistles seems to me certain, and I hold the hypothesis of their spuriousness to be untenable."

² The Ignatian interpolator accordingly substitutes οὔτε προσφέρειν οὔτε θυσίαν προσκομίζειν οὔτε δοχὴν ἐπιτελεῖν.—See Bishop Lightfoot's note, vol. i., p. 387.

³ We venture to quote the following from Bishop Lightfoot: "In the Apostolic age the Eucharist formed part of the *agape*. The original form of the Lord's Supper, as it was first instituted by Christ, was thus in a manner kept up. This appears from 1 Cor. xi. 17, *seq.* (comp. Acts xx. 7), from which passage we infer that the celebration of the Eucharist came, as it naturally would, at a late stage in the entertainment. In after times, however, the *agape* was held at a separate time from the Eucharist. Had this change taken place before Ignatius wrote? I think not. The words οὔτε βαπτίζειν οὔτε ἀγάπην ποιεῖν seem to describe the two most important functions in which the Bishop could bear a part, so that the ἀγάπη must include the Eucharist. Indeed, there would be an incongruity in this juxtaposition, as Zahn truly says (I. v. A., p. 348), unless the other great sacrament were intended.—See, e.g., Tertull., 'De Virg. Vel.,' 9: 'Non permittitur mulieri in ecclesiâ loqui, sed nec docere nec tinguere nec offerre;'

Early and fasting Communion were not yet the rule of the Christian Church. The date of this writing of St. Ignatius was probably within the first twenty years of the second century.¹ And it will be allowed that this mere *obiter dictum* of his carries with it great weight as evidence, tending to show that an Apostolic rule for receiving the Holy Communion only in the morning, and only before any other food, there could hardly have been.

It would appear, then, that we are driven by a considerable combination of evidence to seek elsewhere for a cause to account for such a remarkable phenomenon as the general change in this matter of the practice of almost the Universal Church. Can any such cause be suggested? We think it can. We believe it may, with considerable probability, be found in the edict of a Roman Emperor. "What!" it will be asked, "could a heathen potentate's command avail to alter the custom of the Christian Church, and that in the matter of their most sacred ordinance? Is it conceivable that Christians of old time would not rather have suffered death than submit to receive orders from a Roman Emperor concerning the observances of their holy mysteries?" We answer—Doubtless in any matter which pertained to what was of sacred obligation, faithful Christians would have shed their blood rather than disobey the injunction of their Lord; but in a matter which they regarded as indifferent, there was no reason why they should not have altered their practice in obedience to the laws of the empire under which they lived. Their religious disobedience in matters which pertained to the faith of the Christian Church was made impressive by their willing obedience in matters non-essential, in accordance with the Apostolic injunction, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work" (Titus iii. 1).

And, indeed, it seems to us somewhat strange that so little account has been taken of the evidence which we have of an edict which seems fairly to satisfy the requirements of the problem, and which (as far as we have the means of judging, and speaking generally) appears also to synchronize with the change to be accounted for.

In the letter² from the younger Pliny to Trajan the Emperor, relating to the Christians, he states:

Adfirmabant hanc fuisse summam vel culpæ suæ vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire carmenque Christo quas

'De Exh. Cast.' 7: '*Et offers et tinguis et sacerdos es tibi solus.*'—Vol. ii., Sect. I., p. 313; see also vol. i., p. 386.

¹ See Lightfoot, vol. ii., Sect. I., p. 470; vol. i., p. 30.

² Written probably A.D. 112. See Lightfoot, i. 56.

deo dicere secum invicem, seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent: quibus peractis morem sibi discedendi fuisse, rursus que [coeundi] ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et innoxium: quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum, quo, secundum mandata tua, hetærias esse vetueram.

The Emperor Trajan had a special dislike to clubs or guilds. He regarded them as having a dangerous political tendency. His exceeding sensitiveness in this particular is strikingly exhibited in a letter to Pliny, who had asked permission to organize a guild of workmen—to consist of not more than one hundred and fifty men—to be used only for the purpose of being ready to act as a fire-brigade. Trajan, in reply, says: "We must remember that this province, and especially those cities, are harassed by party associations of that kind. Whatever name we may give them, and whatever may be the purpose, those who have been brought together will form themselves into clubs all the same."

Again: the people of Amisa had presented a petition to Pliny respecting certain convivial gatherings, where there was a subscription supper. The city of Amisa was one to be dealt with, exceptionally, as being a free city under a special treaty. Their petition was sent by Pliny to the Emperor. And the Emperor's reply is to this effect: "As regards the Amisenes, whose petition you attached to your letter, if they are allowed by their laws, which they enjoy by virtue of the treaty, to hold a subscription supper (benefit club), it is competent for us to abstain from preventing their holding it; and this the more easily, if they employ such a contribution not for making disturbances or for unlawful gatherings, but to support the needs of the poorer members. *In all the other cities, which are subject to our laws, anything of the kind must be prohibited.*"

The reader is requested to give due attention to the sentence in *italics*. Its importance, in its bearing on the subject before us, is obvious.

Bishop Lightfoot, whose translation we have transcribed,¹ adds: "The letters [*i.e.*, the letters of Pliny] relating to the Christians follow almost immediately after this correspondence about Amisa; and Pliny not unnaturally, when this new emergency arose, viewed it in the light of the Emperor's previous instructions."

It was doubtless in reference to this direction of Trajan that Pliny writes concerning the Christians, "They asserted . . . it was their practice . . . to meet together again for a meal . . . But even from this they had desisted after my

¹ "Apostolic Fathers," vol. i., pp. 19, 20.

edict, in which, in pursuance of your commands, I had forbidden the existence of clubs (*hetærias*)."

"Lawful religions," writes Bishop Lightfoot, "held a license from the state for worship or for sacrifice, and thus these gatherings were exempted from the operation of the laws against clubs. Christianity enjoyed no such privilege. The first form in which any Christian body was recognised by the law was as a benefit-club, with special view to the interment of the dead." This fact appears to have been brought into prominence by De Rossi ("*Roma Sotterranea*").¹

It seems inevitable, therefore, that the love-feasts of the Christians would fall under the imperial prohibition. And we have the direct evidence of Pliny that, as regards those under his jurisdiction, Christians declared that they had ceased to hold them after the promulgation of his edict.

The *agape* then was, we may suppose, from this time temporarily laid aside. But what as regards the Eucharist which had formed part of it? *That* they could not lay aside. But if it was not an essential part of the ordinance that it should be held in the evening; it might very well be celebrated as part of their early morning service.²

Is there anything very unnatural in the supposition that this change was made at this time in the region which came under the *proprætorship* of Pliny, and that the same cause was operative in the same direction sooner or later in other provinces of the empire?

There is no evidence of any early Communion before this date. After the reign of Trajan, we believe it will be found that although the *agape*³ has by no means disappeared from view (it was but natural that under succeeding Emperors it should have its revival),⁴ the Eucharist has become (though not without exception) the service of the morning.⁵

And if this be so, then it will be admitted that some considerable amount of evidence has been adduced to show that the practice of early and fasting Communion came into the

¹ See Lightfoot, vol. i., p. 20.

² That the separation of the Eucharist from the *agape* resulted from the edict of Trajan is the view advocated by Professor Harnack. Probst supposes that the separation had been made earlier. "But he assumes," says Bishop Lightfoot, "without any evidence, that the change took place in St. Paul's time, in consequence of the Apostle's denunciations of the irregularities at Corinth."—See Lightfoot, vol. i., p. 52.

³ Tertullian's description of the *agape* gives no place for the Eucharist (*Apol.*, c. xxxix.), which, in Justin Martyr's time, had become a separate Service.

⁴ It seems to have had power to survive even the prohibition of Councils.

⁵ When, on stationary days, it was deferred till 3 p.m., it was still, in the African Church, always received fasting. *Conc. Carth. III.*, c. xxix.

Christian Church, not of Apostolic ordering, but in part, at least, of Christian obedience to imperial regulation.¹

There are, no doubt, difficulties—some of them sufficiently obvious, and some of them apparently serious—in the way of accepting this theory.

There is, first, the entire absence of any support for the theory from the writings of Christian antiquity. The evidence in its favour, such as it is, comes altogether from without—there is none from within the Christian Church. We look in vain for any statement made by any Christian writer of that age bearing any sort of witness to this imperial command as influencing the practice of the Church. And equally vain is the search (we believe) for any trace of any tradition in succeeding generations such as will give any support to the statement of Pliny. And certainly some trace of such a tradition might have been looked for; its absence undoubtedly seems strange.

In answer, however, to this objection, it may be pleaded that there is an entire absence of *any* reliable tradition of any other cause to account for the change. Some reason for the change there must have been. It may be very strange—it is a curious fact, that we have no account whatever of the change from the internal history of the Church. It is not more strange and unaccountable—it is, perhaps, rather somewhat less strange—that there should be such a silence concerning it from *this* cause than from any other cause that may be assigned.

Another difficulty arises from the way in which, afterwards, a religious character attached itself to the observance of the new rule. There is no question that before long, whatever account may be given of the change, the new practice assumed in the eyes of Christians an appearance of propriety and sacredness, such as is more easily accounted for on the supposition of its having a Christian than a heathen origin. This objection should have due weight given to it. We will only venture to express an opinion that it will lose weight in proportion as we become conversant with the way in which feelings varied and changes grew, and habits of mind developed, and tendencies to asceticism multiplied, and approaches to superstition increased, as years rolled on, even in the early ages of the Christian Church.²

¹ Other circumstances may doubtless have concurred to bring about the change. Bishop Lightfoot considers it a reasonable inference, from Pliny's language, that the severance was due to those charges of immorality brought against the Christian festivals in the age of Trajan, and to the persecutions ensuing thereupon. Vol. i., p. 386.

² Even if, rejecting altogether the testimony of Pliny, we suppose that the growing tendencies of the Church, which enjoined fasting for the

A far more serious difficulty remains. If we are to rely on Pliny's statement, the Christians asserted that as the result of his edict, their love-feasts had already been discontinued. But Ignatius, if we accept the date usually assigned to his martyrdom, writing towards the close of the reign of Trajan, uses language which, as we have already seen, must be understood to connect the Eucharist with the *agape*.

This is a difficulty. But it must be remembered that the date of Ignatius's writing is, after all, very uncertain. It *may* have been before the issue of Trajan's edict. And even if it were after that date, it is quite open to us to suppose that the influence of the edict had not yet been felt in the parts with which Ignatius was conversant. It is clear that (to use the words of Bishop Lightfoot) "in some parts of Asia Minor, and probably at Antioch, the two (the *agape* and the Eucharist) were still connected when Ignatius wrote" (i., p. 52).

And this supposition will harmonize with the suggestion we have already made that the mandate of the Emperor with reference to *hetæricæ*, would affect the different parts of the empire, not probably all at once, but gradually, and as circumstances might make its operation to be tardy or expedited.¹

But at all events the difficulty will not be anyway removed or lessened by supposing, as has been supposed by some learned men, that the separation of the Eucharist from the *agape*, and its removal to the early service, had been effected before the imperial prohibition. There seems to us little to support this supposition, and something considerable to be urged against it.² But what we are concerned with now is to

sacrament of Baptism, are sufficient to account for the general spread of the requirement that the Eucharist also should be received fasting, which would necessitate its separation from the *agape*; and that this alone was the cause of the change of practice in the Church, it must still (we think) be acknowledged to be a post-Apostolic innovation, which crept in with no real Church authority. Even at the date of the *Διδαχὴ* fasting was enjoined before baptism.

¹ It seems not altogether improbable that in some places the first effect of the edict may have been to break up the larger gatherings of the *agape* into more private meetings for the same purpose. And it is not perhaps an impossible supposition that this practice, in part, may have led to the admonition of Ignatius that they should not be held apart from the Bishop. In some provinces the Emperor may not have thought it necessary to issue any instructions on the subject.

² It rests on the words of Pliny: "Se sacramento obstringere," etc. But there is nothing in any ancient liturgy to which the description of Pliny could apply. If his *sacramentum* is to be understood as "a sacrament," it could hardly be any other than the sacrament of Baptism. But it is probable that Pliny did not use the word in any ecclesiastical sense. And it must be remembered he is only repeating what had been re-

observe that it leaves this difficulty exactly where it was. We have to reconcile the assertion of Christians, as reported by Pliny, that the *agape* was held no more, with the language of Ignatius, which evidently implies that those to whom he was writing were accustomed to hold their *agape* still. How the language of Pliny is to be reconciled with the language of Ignatius is more than we can presume with any confidence to determine. But certainly that reconciliation will not be expedited by supposing that the Supper of the Lord had before this ceased to form a part of the *agape*. And the connection in which the words of Ignatius stand, serves at least very strongly to suggest that no such separation was so much as known to him.

We are not aware that any other objections of any weight can be urged against the view we have ventured to maintain.

It is too much, doubtless, to expect that we shall carry all our readers with us in all the particulars of our argument. Nor would we ourselves desire to speak too confidently on matters over which the light is dim—too dim for any to see clearly—and on which, therefore, all conclusions must be more or less conjectures.¹ But this much, we venture to submit, may be regarded as pretty certain, that the rule of early and fasting Communion is as destitute of any kind of Apostolic support as it is of any synodal² authority in the primitive Christian Church.

And now, in conclusion, we will venture to take with us this deduction, to add force to a very cogent Scriptural argument.³

ported to him, and what he may probably have very imperfectly understood. See also the well-considered statement of Canon Robertson, "Hist.," vol. i., p. 18.

¹ Many will probably think (perhaps with good reason) that too much prominence has been given to *one* cause of the separation between the *agape* and the Holy Communion. The profound silence of the early Church leaves room for the suggestion of *various* causes. The effects of persecution, rendering the meetings for the *agape* impossible; the strange growth of asceticism, which peopled the deserts with men whose religion largely consisted in fasting—these and other causes must doubtless, at any rate, have conduced to make the change easy and natural. And when the change was once effected, these causes would certainly have operated in the way of making the practice of early Communion to be permanent. But we are disposed to question whether these causes alone are sufficient to account for so remarkable a change being effected *about the same time* so generally throughout the empire.

² The Third Council of Carthage which enjoined fasting Communion was held A.D. 397.

³ If, with Bishop Lightfoot and others, we should be induced to think the Eucharist had been removed to the morning service before the edict of Trajan by reason of persecution and the stigma of "Thyestean banquets," there will be nothing deducted from the force of this argument.

Irreverent abuses, nay, serious profanation did occur in the Corinthian Church in the days of Apostles, in connection with evening Communion. We have in Scripture a severe Apostolic rebuke of the behaviour of some members of that church at their evening gatherings to receive the Supper of the Lord. But we know that, so far as Scripture is concerned, these abuses were not corrected by any injunction that Holy Communion should be received early and fasting. And we certainly think that it is something like a derogation from the high prerogative of Holy Scripture to suppose, that under such circumstances evening Communion should not have been clearly and absolutely prohibited in Holy Scripture, if the mind of the Spirit had been that evening Communion were in themselves reprehensible, or even to be generally avoided on account of the risk of irreverence.

But still it was, perhaps, possible for those who regard evening Communion as always and of necessity evil to suppose that there were some wise reasons unknown to us on account of which the Apostle refrained from expressing his full mind on the subject in his letter, intending to prohibit the practice on his arrival at Corinth; and that he was preparing them for such further ordering when he wrote, "The rest will I set in order when I come."

Against such a theory there are, indeed, objections of enormous weight. To say nothing of the unnatural force which it seems to put on the Apostle's words,¹ how could we reconcile such an intention of the Apostle with the fact that after this, evening Communion was his own Apostolic practice?²

But now looking back at the language of Scripture from the

¹ It would make *τὰ λοιπά* mean, or at least include in its meaning, other and different, and in some points contrary, directions concerning the same matter.

² It is, with some probability, inferred indeed from Acts xx. that at Troas the Apostle held the *agape* after administering the Holy Communion; whereas the language of 1 Cor. xi. has (with good reason) led many learned men to conclude that *there* the Eucharist had followed the *agape*. (See Suicer, *in voc.* *Ἀγάπη*; and Bingham, xv. 7, § 7.) But it is impossible to escape the evidence that at Troas the brethren came together in the evening for the purpose of Communion. It has been argued, indeed, that "as St. Paul's sermon continued till midnight, he did not communicate till some time after" (Rodwell's "Are Evening Communion Scriptural?"); so that this was a *very early* Communion. But will it be maintained that when the brethren came together to break bread they knew that the Apostle's discourse would last till the morning? or that St. Paul purposely prolonged his sermon that the Communion might come after midnight? On the connexion of the *agape* with the Eucharist and the practice of Apostolic times, see Döllinger's "First Age of the Church," pp. 228-300.

standpoint to which (as it seems to us) we have attained—the assurance that the practice of evening Communion was never prohibited by the Apostle St. Paul, nor by other Apostolic authority—how are we to reconcile it with any adequate view of the sufficiency of Holy Scripture or of any divine guidance for the Apostles, that the practice of evening Communion was allowed—and after evil resulting was continued to be allowed—was never reproved, never forbidden (not even temporarily when it led to profanation)—on the hypothesis that now evening Communion ought always to be reproved, and never to be allowed in the Christian Church?

The feeling—the sentiment of St. Augustin and his days, was by St. Augustin made to rest upon—it was felt (and, we think, it is felt) that it needs to be supported by—Apostolic authority; and Apostolic authority is found utterly to fail it.

In Apostolic times we see Apostles sanctioning evening Communion by their own practice. We see an Apostle dealing severely with evils that have connected themselves with the practice; and we find him still not only allowing the practice, but not even suggesting that in consequence of the evil attending it might be well to discontinue it.

In Apostolic and sub-Apostolic times, we have no reason to believe that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with all its awful sacredness and all its high significance, was usually received otherwise than (in some sense) as a supper, at supper-time.

And if it be so that the Christian Church was moved, or mainly moved, to deviate in this matter from Apostolic precedent, not by any sense of religious fitness, but by willing accommodation of its practice in things indifferent to the authority of the empire, or to circumstances which made evening assemblies to be dangerous, then certainly there is something to be said in favour—now that he that letteth hath ceased to let—of a reformed Church—a Church reformed on the principle of acknowledging the supremacy of Scripture, and going back to follow the example of the earliest and purest ages of Christianity, returning in this matter—or at least allowing the return—to what was undoubtedly the rule of the Christian Church in the days of Apostles and of Apostolic traditions.

We should be deeply grieved to be, and we should be sorry even to seem to be, advocates of anything tending to irreverence, or of anything that might derogate from the dignity of these holy mysteries. And we gladly acknowledge that the dislike of evening Communion is in many minds associated only with a fear of its possibly leading to a less sacred estimation of the Eucharist, and has no necessary connection with the dangerous and materialistic view of the sacrament which

has of late years been brought into this Church of England. Nevertheless, we believe that the practice of Apostolic times and the revival of that practice in our own times bears a very important testimony against these innovating doctrines.

And we can hardly think that a charge of irreverence can justly be brought against a custom which Apostolic practice has certainly sanctioned, and which in the Scriptures of the New Testament is nowhere disallowed.

N. DIMOCK.



ART. IV.—CLERGY PENSIONS.

THE subject of pensions for the clergy has been so long under discussion that it is a relief to have it at last presented to the Church in a practical form, by the promoters of the "CLERGY PENSIONS INSTITUTION." And for this we are mainly indebted to the Rev. C. J. Robinson, Rector of West Hackney, and Mr. John Duncan, F.I.A..

Now that the "Form of Application for Admission" to membership has gone out to every clergyman in England and Wales, it may be worth while to sum up the arguments in favour of the establishment of such a scheme, and to explain the nature and object of this Institution, which proposes to deal with the question at once.

Briefly, the "Clergy Pensions Institution" is a scheme for increasing the endowments of the Church of England, with a view to providing for her clergy the benefit which is secured to officers in the Army and Navy, by the system of retirement on half-pay. The Church of England has no funds at her disposal at the present time for this purpose. Neither the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, nor the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty, have any monies out of which they could legally grant pensions. Existing endowments are inadequate. If the incomes of the beneficed clergy were equalized they would only provide an average gross income of less than £250 a year. A thousand benefices offer an annual income under £100, and three thousand under £200. The incomes of the beneficed clergy are further reduced by the payment of a very large proportion of the stipends of seven thousand assistant curates; by a diminution of about 20 per cent. (or one-fifth) in the value of tithe rent-charge since 1880; and by the difficulty of letting glebe farms, and the low rent at which it is now alone possible to let them at all. Then there are but fourteen thousand benefices, and the clergy number twenty-four thousand. Of the beneficed clergy many have new