

drink of that cup." The reference to St. Paul's exhortation is to that passage in his Epistle to the Corinthians where he reproves them for their irreverence in coming to the Lord's Supper, and their gross and sinful view of the whole affair. So let us be careful how we approach this holy place, this bush burning, yet not consumed, where the ground is holy because God draws near to us, and where, if we will, we can hear His voice speaking to us in those comfortable words which is the privilege of Christ's ministers to declare to His waiting people. Let us diligently try and examine ourselves; let us pray that He to whom all hearts are open, all desires are known, and from whom no secrets are hid, may cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Him, and worthily magnify His holy name by our life and example! It is our bounden duty and service to try and see ourselves as God sees us; to tear down every curtain of the soul and every covering of the mind and heart that we may not hide ourselves behind any of the refuges of lies which our own hands have made.

Let each one of us say, as we come to this consecrated place, "Try me, oh God! and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

Surely, if we do but enter into the spirit of this hallowed service of our Prayer Book, if we realize the meaning of each part of it, we cannot but go away from this house of God the better, the holier, and the more thoroughly courageous Christians to do God's will and to know of His love to us in Jesus Christ.

Let not this service be a mere form to you, a beautiful rite, a Churchly ceremony. If you would go away with a blessing, enter into its meaning, pray its prayers, listen to its admonitions, rejoice in its thanksgivings, look into your heart as well as the bread and wine. Try and examine yourself as under the burning glass rays of God's white light, and then this will indeed be to you a helpful communion with Christ alone.

"Sweet, awful hour, the only sound  
One gentle footstep gliding round,  
Offering by turn on Jesus' part  
The cross to every hand and heart.

"Refresh us, Lord, to hold it fast,  
And when Thy veil is drawn at last,  
Let us depart where shadows cease,  
With words of blessing and of peace."

#### THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD.

BY CHARLES MAKESON.

The great thought which is suggested to us in these words is the thought of The Church, the great home of souls, the great spiritual company which stretches on from this life to that which is to come; the society into which we have all been baptized; the body which supplies us with spiritual food and refreshment as we journey on our way from earth to heaven, and in whose faith we shall—perhaps soon, perhaps not until after many days—be laid to rest in the chamber of the grave. If, then, the Church has so much to do with us here, and has so much to do with us hereafter, if it is the blessed company of which we are all made members, it is surely a subject which may well have an interest for us and give us matter for meditation to-night. And the way in which St. Paul describes it is as "the Church of the Living God." It may, perhaps, have seemed to some that the Church is a new creation, a thing of to-day; but this is a great mistake. From the hour when God spoke with Adam and

Eve in the Garden of Eden the Church has existed—at first in the family of our first parents; then in the few souls saved in the ark, which has ever since been accepted as its type; then in the chosen nation, the Jewish people; and, finally, in these last days in the world, until it can be said with truth that even in the darkest corner of the earth the Church's banner has been unfurled, the Standard of the Cross has been uplifted, and the witness to her faith has been sealed with the blood of her martyrs and her saints. Yes, the Church is as old as family life. It can trace back its beginning to the beginning of man's history on earth. It has grown with his growth, and has expanded with a noble expansion to meet his wants. It is the great universal brotherhood with Christ for its Leader after whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. And all this is true of the Church, because it is not human, but divine; because, in a word, it is the Church of the Living God; and as in God alone can the soul of man find true satisfaction, because, like God Himself, it is eternal, so the Church, which was set up in the world as the true home of souls, the Father's house, has no limit of nation or race, but embraces all in the arms of the everlasting Father's love. Of this God-like growth and power there is no surer illustration than in the way in which the Church has, as it were, adapted itself to the ages of the world, and has met in a marvellous manner the varied temperaments of men; it has, like St. Paul, been "all things to all men;" it has satisfied the yearnings of the learned and the cultured in its noble cathedrals and its glorious services, while for the simple and unlettered—nay, even for the savage in the far-off island of the Pacific—it has the same message of love, the same word of hope, the same thought of the home beyond to lead us on, the same example of the pure and spotless life of the Divine Master for all to follow. This growth of the Church reminds us in fact of that old tale which children love to hear us tell of the fairy tent which a young prince brought, hidden in a walnut-shell, to his father. Placed in the council-chamber, it grew until it encanopied the king and his ministers; placed in the courtyard, it filled the space till all the household stood beneath its shade; brought out into the great plain where all the king's army was arrayed, it spread the mighty awning till it gave shelter to the host. And so it has been and ever must be with the Church of the Living God:

"Crowns and thrones may perish,  
Kingdoms wax and wane,  
But the Church of Jesus  
Constant shall remain."

But apart from these external proofs which we can all lay hold of and understand as evidence that the Church to which we belong is in very truth the Church of the Living God, no creation of men, but God's own family, in which, as His children, we all have a place,—we have, in the words of our Lord, frequent references to the growth of this divine body, showing that the work which it has accomplished is that which He willed it should do. He told of it in the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, growing like the tent in the fairy tale, from a very small beginning; while, as a proof that He meant us to regard it as His own kingdom, He likened it to the estate of the ruler who went into a far country, leaving others to represent him, but at the last coming again, as He will surely come at the last day to gather in His own, to reward the faithful servants, and to bid them enter into the joy of their Lord. And then, as we have one Lord, the true Head of the Church, to whom we owe allegiance as the soldier to his captain, the patriot to his sovereign, so we have one faith, a faith which is, thank God! enshrined in His own gracious Word,—the faith once delivered to the saints, to the holy men, that is, not only of the Christian but

of the Jewish Church; the faith which apostles and prophets set forth in words, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and which found its crown and completion in the teaching of the Saviour-God. This faith we have in its shortest form in what we call the Apostles' Creed; and it is one of the happiest thoughts for those who call themselves Christians that however much the Church in different parts of the world may be divided, it still holds fast this simple, yet glorious creed. Think of this, as you say this creed in your services in church, or as you repeat it in your own homes, and thank God that this great proof of the oneness of the Church is still left to us. Let it not become a mere form of words repeated with parrot-like preciseness, but let it come forth from thankful hearts and glad minds, like a hymn of praise, as it really is, going up as grateful incense to the throne of God, who loves to hear His children proclaim their trust in Him. Do not think it is a matter of no importance what you believe, or how you believe it. St. Paul did not think so. When he wrote his letters to the young bishop Timothy, he said: "Hold fast that form of sound words which thou hast heard of me—that good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." And then, as it to show how anxious he was that this same true faith should be handed on to the Church in after ages, he added a solemn charge to Timothy in these words: "And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." It was in fulfilment of these, and of many like words, that, as years went on and the Church enlarged her borders by sending out missionaries all over the world, due care was taken that all her ministers should be ordained, as we term it, and thus should receive from the hands of bishops, who could trace back their succession to the Apostles, the divine authority and Commission which the Apostles received directly from our Lord Himself. Thus, in its great outlines, and in its main features, the faith of the Church is still one, its ministry is still held from the hands of Christ Himself, and we can sing, in the words of the hymn which we just used—

"What the saints established,  
That I hold true;  
What the saints believed,  
That believe I too."

But there is another mark of the Church of the Living God which we must not forget to mention: not only is there One Lord and One Faith, but there is One Baptism. Every kingdom, every army, every society must have its rules, must have its one mode of admission for its members, which gives them the right to its privileges, and enrolls them in the fellowship which it represents. Just as in England a foreigner has to take definite steps to become what is called naturalized, or, in other words, to secure the rights of a British subject; just as the citizenship of the City of London is only given to those who have been admitted by certain forms and have given certain pledges; just as in the friendly societies which are established on all sides the members are enrolled according to a prescribed scheme, so it is in the case of the divine kingdom, the citizenship of the heavenly Jerusalem, the membership of that great brotherhood, the enrollment in that true friendly society of the whole human race, which is founded on the principle of love to God and love for man. In this society, too, the same principle is at work, and baptism is the means of our entrance—the gate through which we pass into the fold of God's Church, where the Good Shepherd stands with outstretched arms ready to receive us and make us His forever. Nor is this all which these words mean, for they carry with them the idea of the system and order which follow naturally in the divine kingdom