

Sacrament, appointed for spiritual growth, and as the instrument of Christ's indwelling, is, though not literally expressed in this passage, clearly implied. And it should be observed that the Divine allegory quite precludes the supposition that without faith in the recipient, the Holy Supper will avail any thing for sanctification and growth in grace. The vine-stock may push upwards its sap in strong current, at the first outburst of the genial spring; but what will that avail the branch, which does not hold closely to the tree, which is half broken off from the stem, and the fracture filled up with dust, or corroded by insects? Christ may offer Himself to us in the Lord's Supper; but if the soul cleaves not to Him, if the avenues of the heart are not open towards Him, how can he enter?

Finally; it is particularly important in speaking of Christ's communication with us by Ordinances, to recognize the exact position which the Ordinance holds so as not to estimate it unduly, or erect it into the place which is due only to the Lord of the Ordinance. Be it clearly understood, then, that no Ordinance (not even the Holy Communion itself) is otherwise valuable than as a channel or vehicle of communication with the Church's Lord. They are all (even the highest and holiest) so many tubes, through which the sap of grace rises from the vine-stock into the branches. For which reason, in advocating the devout use of Ordinances, we do not in the slightest degree derogate from our Lord's honour, nor direct the eye of the mind to another point of sight than Him. It is not to be imagined for a moment that a man by prayers, and fastings, and meditations, and Sacraments, lays in a stock of holiness, which becomes to him so much realized spiritual gain, upon which he may draw in case a spiritual bankruptcy should threaten him at the hour of death or the day of judgment. Away with such ideas, which are a modern form of Pharisaism! These Ordinances are precious and blessed for no other reason than that they bring us into relation, by His own institution of them, with the great Head of the Church, and except we stand in such relation, and except such relation is from time to time renewed, and cemented, and strengthened, there is no life in us. Of faith itself the same remark might be made. There is no intrinsic merit in trusting to Christ, just as there is no intrinsic merit in praying and communicating; but faith is the ordained inward means, as Prayers and Sacraments are

the ordained outward means, of communication with the One Source of Life and Sanctity.

An illustration may sometimes serve a good turn in keeping truth distinctly before the mind. I therefore offer the following illustration of the mutual relations between Christ, our faith, and Christian Ordinances. A woman, like the Samaritan in the Gospel, comes with a pitcher to draw water at a well. Her object is to reach and procure the water; and she does this by letting down the pitcher into the well, and drawing it up again. It is at once understood that the pitcher is not the same thing as the muscular action, by which it is let down and drawn up. Both must contribute to the result; for without either pitcher or muscular action no water could be obtained; but the pitcher is external to the person, the muscular action is a movement of the person. It also clearly seen that neither pitcher nor muscular action are water,—that the arm might put itself forth for ever, and the pitcher be let down continually, but that if it were a dry pit into which the vessel were lowered, no refreshment could be had thereby. The figure is easy of application. Christ is the Well of the Water of Life, from Whom alone can be drawn those streams of Grace, which refresh, and quicken, and fertilize the soul. It is by faith that the soul reaches out after this living water; faith is the soul's muscular action, by which the water is drawn up and brought into use. But faith needs as an implement those means which Christ has appointed, and particularly the mean of means, which He instituted for the conveyance of himself to faithful souls. These means are the pitcher in which the water is conveyed. Faith is not a Christ; neither are Sacraments a Christ; but faith (under all circumstances) and Sacraments, where they may be had, are necessary to the appropriation and enjoyment of Christ.

Oh for more faith, more of the principle which cleaves closely in trust, and affiance, and self-surrender, to the Lord! It is not in the use of means, generally speaking, that religious persons are deficient; but it is in that believing use of them, which recognizes Him as the only Source of Grace and Life, and having done His will with simplicity, assures itself of the blessing. O True Vine, let us cleave to Thee with such a faith, so that the virtue which is in Thee may pass into our souls, and that we may bring forth much fruit, to the glory of God the Father! Amen.