

Gloom and sadness are foreign to its spirit. Serious it is, and solemn too, but exultant and triumphant. It symbolizes coming joy and perfect deliverance. It brings before us not simply past sacrifice, but future glory. Let it look toward hope. The conscientious disciple approaches it timidly. He remembers what Paul says about partaking unworthily. He recalls his personal imperfection and sin. At this moment he will bear encouragement. He may be reminded that his sins are blotted out. He may be assured that Christ will welcome him lovingly at the table. All the joyous thoughts associated with the saving work of the Redeemer may be rehearsed, that the sacrament, while losing none of its impressiveness, may be attractive.

3. It will not be inconsistent with the above if the service is habitually turned toward a healthy self-examination—not a stern introspection, not a morbid self-analysis, but a devout meditation upon the condition and the needs of the religious life.

Of all the published sermons of Dr. Bushnell, there is but one which might fairly be termed weak. It is the one entitled "Self-Examination Examined," in which he sets out to show that there is no biblical warrant for self-examination. One almost feels disposed to ask whether Dr. Bushnell ever read the Psalms of David, the searching exhortations of the prophets, the probing interrogations of Paul, and the loving admonitions and condemnations of our Lord Himself. The man must be possessed of heroic obtuseness who can read God's Word and not be prompted at every page to search and to examine the recesses of his soul, and Dr. Bushnell, as any one who has read his biography well knows, happily contradicted his sermon by a life in which he almost daily illustrated those quaint words of George Herbert:

"By all means use sometimes to be alone;
Salute thyself; see what thy soul doth wear;
Dare to look in thy chest—for 'tis thy own—
And tumble up and down what thou find'st
there."

The preparatory service is a peculiarly favorable time for self-examination, because it furnishes salutary correctives of the possible evils of "seeing what the soul doth wear." Compelling the final thought toward the free and full salvation, it relieves the strain of a too exacting self-dissection. If a sensitive nature tends toward spiritual self-consciousness or is in peril of depression, the ever-recurring significance of the sacrament revives the drooping hope, and prompts at once to humility and steadfast assurance. Certainly a rigid introspection cannot be named as a foible of modern Christians. Should it not be stimulated rather than discouraged? And what time is more propitious than the hour when the saints come face to face with this supreme privilege of commemorating the dying love of Christ? The apostle seems so to think, for he says: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

4. And this leads to the complementary thought that at this service Christ, and not self, should be the central object of meditation. Every sentiment here gathers around a personal Redeemer. Whatever the topic, or whether there be no nominal topic, the service is to be so directed that, at its close, all eyes shall be turned toward the cross. The attitude of the disciples is to be, in a noble sense, that of the soldiers, of whom it is recorded, "and sitting down, they watched Him there." This by no means implies monotony of thought or of subject at these preparatory meetings, but that Christ is to dominate them all. Many planets may have various orbits while revolving about a central sun. If the writer may draw on his own experience for illustration, such themes as the following have been found profitable: "The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes Interpreted Spiritually;" "Christ and His Disciples separate from the World;" "Adorn the Doctrine;" "I have Called you Friends;" "The Hidden Life;" "Whose I am and whom I Serve;"