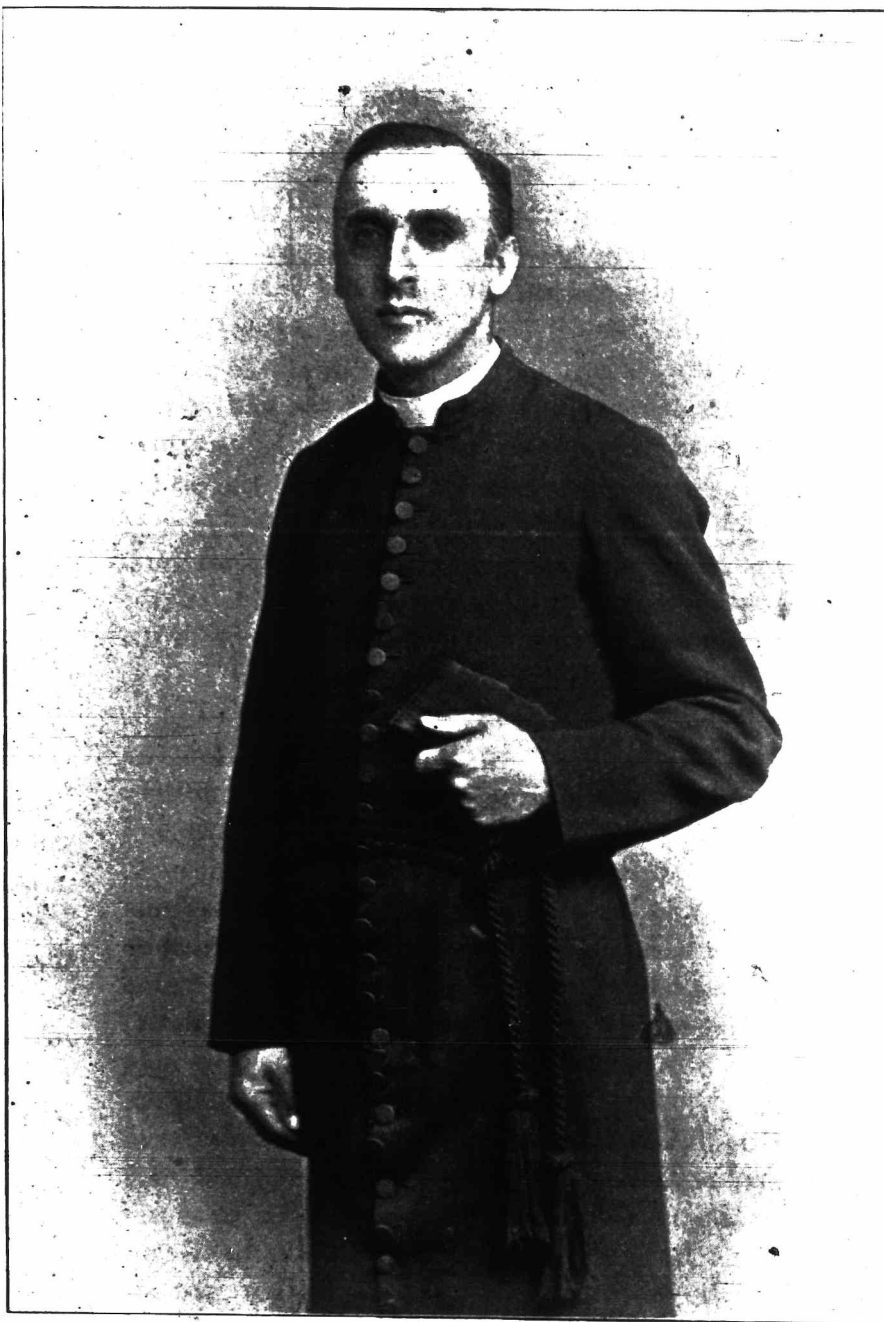


Paraclete—to nurture His children, to teach them, to feed His flock, and to lead them in the paths to heaven which lie along an earthly course. This aim and object is expressed in the sermon which the Church of England has ordered to be delivered as preparation for her daily prayer. To set forth God's most worthy praise, to hear His most Holy Word, and to ask for those things which are necessary for the souls and bodies of her children. To worship, to hear, to ask. Before proceeding further, I appeal to the Church as to the spirit which underlies her laws, orders, services. I quote from the Preface to Book of Common Prayer, which was placed in its present position in 1661, the year of the Restoration, and although having special regard to the times, the country having but just emerged from the great rebellion, and the Church of England from the great persecution, yet is well adapted to all times and circumstances. "It hath been," says the Preface to Book of Common Prayer,—written by one who in those days of religious division "was looked up to with the greatest respect by all parties, Sanderson, Lord Bishop of Lincoln.—"It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first compiling of her public liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting, any variation from it." The truths of Holy Scripture which, received by the teacher of Holy Scripture—the Church—become the doctrines and teachings of the faithful, are not narrow truths. The Church of England, as the faithful exponent of the teachings of Holy Scripture, walks in no narrower path than Holy Scripture has allotted to her. *Art. VI.*—"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation." She arbitrarily curtails no liberty within legitimate authority. She arrogates to herself no title of holding exclusively the whole and only aspects of the truth that may be presented to God's people. She does not stand upon a pinnacle of splendid isolation and declare, "many vary from my ways—no one has the whole truth but I." "In these our doings," *i.e.*, in the abolishing or retaining of ceremonies (see Book of Common Prayer), "we condemn no other nations, nor prescribe anything but to our own people only, for we think it convenient that every country should use such ceremonies as they shall think best to the setting forth of God's honour and glory, and to the reducing of the people to a most perfect and godly living without error and superstition." The mind of the Church is for liberty—in the use of non-essentials—with strict and honest adherence to matters that are self-evidently, or have been declared by herself to be of the nature of *essentials*. It seems, therefore, reasonable to suppose that the body which claims so wide a liberty in non-essentials, in details, in ways and modes, basing the same on definite and defined rules, orders and canons, will desire a wide liberty in such matters also for her children. To express my meaning, I will, under your patience, review a service of the Church. For exemplification—I choose, of course, the service of the Church—the order of administration of the Holy Communion. This is the title by which the

order is known to the Book of Common Prayer. Is it possible that the mind of the Church of England in placing, in 1548, and in retaining in subsequent revisions this title, meant thereby to forever bar the application of the term Eucharist and Sacrifice, as representing aspects of that solemn act from the lips of the teachers of her people? The essentials of the order for the administration of the Holy Communion are very clear, such as the parties to the service—priest and communicants; the use of the *ipsissima verba*, and of the manual acts of the Blessed Lord in His institution; the use of the elements of bread and wine ordained by the Lord Himself; the practical order of decency and harmony, to stand, to kneel, to confess, to praise, to make preparation, when, where and how to receive the blessed Sacrament, the table, the beautiful white cloth, the ancient hymns, the prayers of the universal

principle; as men who may be trusted to carry out the details of services, the essentials of which are defined according to judgment, and for the highest ends and purposes for which those services were compiled by the Church. The Church has not tied her priests in any red-tape of slavish detail. The depth of a posture—who shall dare to judge his brother in such a matter?—the colour, the shape, the ornamentation of a vestment, the ornaments of a church, cross or finial, scroll or figure, the position of a priest when he prays, reads, preaches or recites. Surely these things lie in the realm of liberty. The Church means them to be in the field of liberty, for she has made no arbitrary and narrow ordinance on such things. When she speaks in such matters her words are wide; she trusts her priests. She says: "The wilful and contemptuous transgression of a common order and discipline, is no small offence before God; but the *keeping* or *omitting* of a ceremony, in itself considered, is but a small thing." I take but one definite example of the liberty whereby the Church in Christ hath made us free—the making of the sign of the cross. The Church distinctly recognizes the propriety of that ceremony, and definitely demands its use on the part of her minister at the baptism and reception into the Church of an infant. If, by the way, there be anything ungodly or unlawful in the use of the sign of the cross, it is a very unfair advantage that is taken of the poor little helpless infant, to do that upon his little person in his helplessness, which, perchance, he is taught as he grows to years of discretion, he should not do upon himself. Unless men are to lose their manhood when they become priests; unless parish priests are to be as the regulars of a monastic house under strict vows of obedience in all details of their life, there must be elasticity permitted in their use of, *inter alia*, the services of the Church. For thus does the Church speak to her priests: "Wherefore consider with yourselves the end of your ministry towards the children of God, towards the Spouse and Body of Christ; and see that you never cease your labour, your care and your diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the



REV. C. E. WHITCOMBE, RECTOR OF ST. MATTHEW'S, HAMILTON.

Church—I need enumerate no more. These are defined. It is not in following these rules and forms in the Church office or order, that any liberty is needed. To obey these rules is *liberty*—liberty from ever recurring tyranny of (I quote from Preface to Book of Common Prayer) "men of factious, peevish, and perverse spirits, who are ever unsatisfied with anything that can be done by any other than themselves." But there are a hundred other matters which will immediately enter into the conduct of a public office or order of service. And for these the Church has made no detailed provision. She has not bound the hands of her priests. Whatever action of suspicion a portion of her laity (I verily believe, maliciously fomented by interested parties) may at times assume towards the priests of the Church of England, the Church herself treats her priests as men of intelligence, of honesty and of

faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you either for error in religion or for viciousness of life." Such a charge does not appear as though the Church regarded her priests as the mere "performers of offices." Does it not imply confidence in their individuality, exhorting each and all to lead the flock committed to them, and leadership entails wide liberty? The Church gives to her priests a commission—a life commission—a trust to hold and to minister for her Master. She, therefore, recognizes that her priest is a *man* worthy of that commission. It cannot be contemplated that he is to be in his care of the flock as a mere sowing machine and a hay rake. I know the cry, my Lord. To allow liberty in the conduct of Divine service, is to open the door for something. Well, if we don't open a door or a window, the priest will smother