

Correspondence.

All Letters will appear with the names of the writers in full

AN IMPOSTOR.

SIR,—I am sorry to have to warn the public, and especially the clergy against a person calling himself Professor Searles. He represented himself to me as well known to the family of the Bishop of Montreal, at all events to some members in England, and I consequently tried to help him on. I now find that he is an impostor, utterly untrustworthy, and incompetent as an educator.

I am yours faithfully,

R. W. NORMAN, D.C.L.

Montreal, March 5, 1880.

WEST SIMCOE CLERICAL MEETING.

SIR,—Not having quite recovered from a somewhat severe and protracted sickness, I was unable to be present at the late clerical meeting at Creemore; but had I been present I should certainly have offered the most decided opposition to the motion recommending the annual appointment of Rural Deans. That they should be elected by the clergy in the different deaneries seems fair enough, but the only effect of making such election annual would be to convince people of the utter uselessness of the office; and I am sure that, of all others in the Diocese, we of West Simcoe have least reason to do anything tending in this direction. Some years ago, the time of sloth and carelessness, of dreary parson-and-clerk duet services and Puritan teachings, one might care very little for the abolition of this or almost any similar office; but now, in these days of life and earnestness, when the wave of the Catholic revival is spreading over the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific, we want all the legitimate machinery which the Church places within our reach. Let Rural Deans be annually appointed! Why in a Deanery like this it would take a most energetic man a full year to become at all intimately acquainted with the parishes and missions within its bounds; and just as this most necessary work would be accomplished he might be succeeded by another who would have to begin *de novo*. No, if any change be desirable in the length of time for which Rural Deans retain their office let them be appointed every seven, or at least every five years. Then they may be reasonably expected to accomplish some good results before being succeeded by others.

Yours, &c.,

W. WHEATLEY BATES.

St. David's Day, 1880.

EVENING CELEBRATIONS.

SIR,—As many of your correspondents are exercised on this question at present, perhaps the following extract from a convention address of Bishop Doane may be acceptable. His argument, it will be seen, is against Evening Communion on Maundy Thursday, the day of institution, and therefore *a fortiori* against them at any time. As a man of great learning and moderation his words demand attention. He begins by acknowledging that in earlier life, sentimentalism led him to adopt the practice; and then from a sort of consistency he kept it up. Then he says:—
“But, as a Bishop, I must set my face and my advice against it. Upon mere practical grounds it is a mistake. The highly-wrought emotionalism of this service concentrates the religious devotion of all Lent, and culminates it before the time, making Good Friday unreal, and taking the edge of fervour off the Easter Communion. It is, in spirit, entirely opposed to the whole plan of Holy Week, suggested in the Prayer Book, which, except upon the last two days, avoids the commemoration of separate events, or the adoption of any arrangement of time. It savours, rather, of the Romish use, in its melodramatic and sensational tendency, and is imperfect, without the palms and the washed feet. It is entirely unauthorized by rubric, and it is utterly opposed to the spirit and the letter of Catholic usage. The institution was in the evening it is true; but the Jewish Passover, like everything in the old dispensation, began, as it were, over-night. With them, it was ‘the evening and the morning;’ with us, it is the morning, for the day-star has arisen. And the whole authority for what are called night communions, bear not upon the new-fangled notions of the Eucharist on the evening of Maundy Thursday, or on the eve of a secular new-year; turning a vigil into a feast; but upon the very early celebration, following upon the Nativity and the Resurrection, before it is dawn. If people are ready to put themselves out for this sort of night service, *proi skotias eti duses* on Christmas and Easter, I shall be very glad to join them: But the novelty of evening Eucharist is, to speak mildly, a mistake. It is certainly not worth while to be wise above the universal tradition of the Church. The

claim, that the practice violates ancient Canon is, of course, unfounded, for the only Canon on the subject not being (Ecumenical, has no binding obligation. But, as an indication of ancient, universal, and until recently, uniform feeling, it is suggestive, and ought to be authoritative. My distinct advice, and it is a godly admonition, is against the practice. At least, I hope, after this, that it will not spread in the Diocese. Wise old Dr. Babcock said, epigrammatically, the other day, that keeping Maundy-Thursday night with a celebration is to make the Holy Eucharist, not the memorial of the Sacrifice, but a commemoration of an anniversary.”

I am, Sir,

Yours truly,

W. C. BRADSHAW.

Peterboro', March 1st, 1880.

SIR,—I have just read two letters on the above subject in your issue of the 5th inst., to which with your permission I will refer. We are told in one letter that Evening Communion is contrary to the teaching and practice of the Church in all ages, that they are now therefore, an innovation and that they directly tend to the desecration of the highest rite of our Holy religion.

I am not an advocate for Evening Communion, but I do not think any one should say that either was not in accordance with the practice of the Primitive Church.

The Rev. T. C. Robertson in his history of the Christian Church (a text book, I presume, in most of our theological colleges) Book i. chap. 8. tells us. “In the Apostolic age the administration of the Eucharist took place in the evening after the pattern of its original institution.”

On the following page he adds, “after a time the administration of the Eucharist was transferred (and probably with a view of disarming the jealousies of ‘the heathen’) from the evening to the morning when ‘it was added to the service which had before been usual.’” In vol. i. part ii. chap. 4. of MacLaine's Mosheim's Church History we are told that in the time of Origen (3rd century) “the time of celebrating ‘the Lord's Supper was considerably varied arising from their different circumstances and founded upon reasons of prudence and necessity. In some Churches, it was celebrated in the morning; in others, at noon; and in others in the evening. The sacred feasts, which accompanied this venerable institution, preceded its celebration in some Churches, and followed it in others.” I cannot think with these passages before us that we are justified in saying that Evening Communion is contrary to the practice of the Church in all ages, and that at the present day they are any more an innovation than morning Communion. I do not think that Evening Communion is inexpedient for the consideration suggested by the abuses rebuked in 1 Cor. 11, but I do not feel justified in using any stronger language unless it was actually taking the place of the mid-day celebration. It is well known that in many country parishes, the clergyman must either administer the Holy Communion at mid-day and in the afternoon (at 8 o'clock) or refuse his people altogether this spiritual food. I think there are but few of your readers who will agree with me in this, that when there can be but one celebration on a festival in any Church, that it should take place, if possible, at mid-day when the largest congregation is present. If additional opportunities of Communion be required to meet the wants of a large town or city, they should be regarded as *additions to, and not substitutes for* the mid-day celebration. Your readers are told that it is the practice in some places to have this additional service in the evening and at other places in the morning. The service at either time is no doubt edifying to those who attend it, and it is undoubtedly convenient to those who cannot attend the more usual hours, and these are good reasons for continuing them. The history of early and fasting Communion seems to be this:—Directly the Church was extended beyond Jerusalem the Christians formed themselves into distinct congregations for their own peculiar worship. In a very short time this developed itself, in accordance with the principles and doctrines of the Christian faith, in the form of Liturgies. Every Lord's day at least, the Holy Communion was celebrated by those admitted to the Church's membership (to the exclusion of Catechumens and casual visitors). When in times of persecution it became necessary, as a matter of safety, for these assemblies to be kept secret, we read of the Christians attending their services before day-break. Those who resorted to these services would naturally do so before partaking of food at their homes, and fasting Communion would become a general custom. Being once established there was a feeling of propriety in giving to the spiritual food of the soul precedence over the material food of the body. It was also felt that there was greater freedom of mind and impressibility of heart at these early services, all of which tended to consolidate the custom, even after the necessity which gave rise to it had ceased.

For over 800 years however, the practice of early and fasting Communion has been abandoned; but

now an attempt is being made to revive the practice. As long as it is regarded in the light of a pious and reverent custom and adopted by individuals at their own discretion as a matter of self-discipline and an aid to devotion, and as long as it does not interfere with the mid-day celebration, which from the structure of our Prayer Book is the one the Reformers evidently intended to establish, and which the great bulk of our communicants still prefer attending, no one should feel disposed to object. But when an attempt is being made to impose the practice as a matter of obligation on the conscience of the communicant and to engraft it as an additional rule upon the fasting observance enjoined by the Church it is quite a different thing. I think that most of the readers of your valuable paper, will agree with me when I call this an innovation unauthorized by our present Prayer Book and unwarranted by Holy Scripture.

In one of the two letters which appeared in your issue of the 5th inst., we are told that Evening Communion is contrary to the directions of the Prayer Book which directs that the sermon shall be preached before the offertory, which at the time the Prayer Book was compiled was a thing unknown. I am quite willing to leave this to those who advocate Evening Communion to answer; but I take this opportunity to call the attention of those who have early celebrations to an important omission in their service. I mean the omission of the ante-Communion service and sermon or homily which should always precede the offertory. Is not this also contrary to the directions in the Prayer Book.

Again in not a few parish Churches in this country there are frequent early celebrations for the sake of a favoured few, while the mid-day Communion service is omitted except once a month, although the great bulk of the communicants would gladly remain to communicate every Sunday. This is a serious matter to many communicants, especially to the aged and infirm who cannot attend fasting and to others who cannot come early.

Let me conclude with an observation of Mr. Keble in a letter addressed by him to the *Literary Churchman* in Oct. 65. “I allude particularly,” he says, “to the disparaging tone sometimes used in speaking of mid-day Communion, with small consideration, as it seems to me, for the aged and infirm and others who cannot come early. ‘In regard to Communion after a meal,’ his counsel is, to ‘follow the rule of charity and every man to be satisfied with his own conscience, not judging other men's minds or consciences where ‘as he hath no warrant of God's word to the same.”

I am yours, &c.,

W. REID CLARK.

PRAYER BEFORE SERMON.

SIR,—A correspondent writes to you under date of 26th of Feb., on the subject of a prayer before the sermon. There can be no doubt that a clergyman wearing the livery of the English branch of the Church Catholic, have no right, legal or moral, to deliberately contravene the Book of Common Prayer, the Canons generally, and especially those very portions of the Canons, as per example Articles II and III of Canon 86, which he has *ex animo* subscribed under his sign manual. The Church does not allow so-called extempore prayer during the celebration of the Sacraments or public services. A good and sufficient reason, amongst very many others, against the forbidden use may be found in the words of a very ancient council: “Lest through ignorance and carelessness anything contrary to the faith should be vented or uttered before God or offered up to Him in the Church.”

At the Savoy Conference in 1661, when the Calvinistic party in the Church made their last effort to “puritanize” the Prayer Book, relying in their effort on the Presbyterian “bringing up” of King James, the Presbyterians said that, “The gift of prayer being one special qualification for the ministry, they desire the Liturgy may not be so strictly imposed, as totally to exclude the exercise of that faculty in public worship; and that in consequence of this, it may be left to the discretion of the minister to omit part of the stated service as occasion shall require.”

The Episcopalians replied, “Their proposal touching the gift of prayer makes the Liturgy in effect wholly insignificant. For what else can be the consequence if every minister may put in or leave out at discretion? As for the gift, or rather the spirit of prayer, it consists in the inward graces of the Holy Spirit, and not in extempore expressions: such unprecedented effusions are only the effect of natural parts; of a voluble tongue, and uncommon assurance. But if there is any such gift as is really pretended, this extraordinary qualification must be subjected to the order of the Church.”

We should bear in mind that when the Puritans had complete control of the Church they enforced uniformity to the utmost of their power and punished with severe pains and penalties those who did not conform to their rules of discipline.