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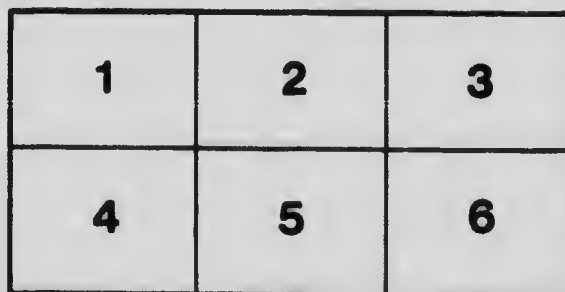
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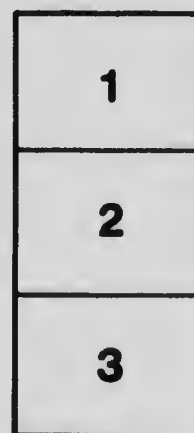
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# TRACTS FOR THE FAITH

EDITOR:

THE REVEREND C. ENSOR SHARP, M.A.

No. 2

## SACRAMENTS

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA  
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# SACRAMENTS

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The Church of England stands or falls on what is known as the Sacramental System. What do we mean by this? We mean that every business or organization that hopes to last must have fixed and definite principles, on which it depends for success, by which it works, and without which it goes to pieces. So a business, in order to ensure success, must be run on business *principles*, so must a farm, a club, or a profession; neglect the principles, and the business, the farm, the club or the profession goes down and down until it is worthless. For these reasons, the Church, if it is to last, succeed and be a living organization, must have principles; it must stick to them, and use them all the time, or it will gradually cease to be of any real use and will die. These *principles* in the case of the Church are called the Sacraments or the Sacramental System.

Some person may say, "I don't agree with you, for the principles of the Church are not Sacraments but faith in Our Lord and nothing else." Well, the Sacraments require faith, are useless without it, demand a very great and lively faith in Our Lord, as the Giver of the Sacraments; but faith in Our Lord without Sacraments is a faith without works, and, as St. James says, "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." If there is a difference of opinion about the question of what are the principles of the Church, how is the matter to be decided? Should you want to find out what *business principles* are, you would take the opinion of the majority of business men, of all business men of all times and all places, and so get a truly "Catholic" or "universal" opinion, and, of course, you would find that a very large number would agree as to what these business principles are. Some opinions would differ, but they would be a small number compared to the majority, and the majority would decide the question. We do the same to find out what are regarded as Church principles. We go to all the Churches, and we find that out of a total of five hundred and sixty-four and a half million Christians, four hundred and forty-two and three-quarter millions, at least, but probably more, assert that they belong to Christian bodies who maintain that the Sacramental System is the necessary principle of the Church, that Sacraments are universally necessary to salvation. All these four hundred and forty-two and three-quarter million people claim to belong to the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic

Church of Christ; in their formularies and practice they all teach the need and use of Sacraments, and sacramental worship is their Sunday use and, for a good many, their week-day use also. If we go back to the centuries before the Reformation, we find that all Christians held this opinion, for it is only in the last four hundred years that we have had such bodies as Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists and the Salvation Army. On the other hand, when men cease to belong to this one Church of Christ, we invariably find but little observance of Sacraments, or else a contempt for them, and so, as a natural consequence, a gradual disuse of them. Their Sunday use, then, is no longer Sacramental worship, but preaching, music and some prayers, and their week-day use, where it exists, is the same. The Churches that regard the Sacraments as the necessary principles of Christianity exceed in number those who do not by three hundred and twenty millions.

How did the Church come to this opinion that Sacraments are the necessary principle? Some people seem to think that Sacraments have been invented by men and then forced upon the Church by the clergy, and that, therefore, like all man-made things, they can be surpassed by some new or better invention. That this is untrue is shown by the fact that Sacraments are the natural satisfaction of the natural longing of all peoples through all the ages; that this natural longing is part of the inmost being and oldest instincts of our human race; that the idea of Sacraments is found everywhere, they are therefore "universal" or "catholic"; that finally the universal longing must have been planted in humanity by the Creator of humanity—God Himself. Sacraments are so necessary that God teaches them to us through the life of vegetation, animals, man and Christ; but the fulness of the revelation grew in proportion as people grew able to understand it, and so, when the fulness of time was come, the full gift was offered for man's acceptance or rejection, as man was then by the process of evolution able to absorb the highest meaning and the noblest use of them. This meaning and use reached its highest point in the Incarnation or Birth of Christ, for in that act God uses His Son, Who is the perfect conception of a Sacrament. If we do not accept the Sacraments we do not accept Christ, for the Life of Our Lord is the *perfection* of a Sacrament; for there we see a human body—which we call a material body because it could be seen and touched—could suffer and die, and yet at the same time this material body contained the Divine Godhead which could neither be seen nor touched, but which was infinitely more real and eternal than the body of Our Lord. So Our Lord's Body was the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace indwelling in it, the

Being and Person of God, and that is the definition of a Sacrament.

In Our Lord's Incarnation God uses human nature as a means to exalt humanity and through our natural bodies, which are perishing, which are visible, and which are the outward and visible sign, He conveys to us invisible, spiritual grace or help, namely, our union with Himself, and our nourishment by His Body and Blood. God is changeless, and so it is not surprising to find three changeless marks in the Church, which is His Body, for the order of Bishops, Priests and Deacons reflects the changelessness of the constitution of the Church, the Creed the changelessness of Belief, and the Sacraments the changelessness of Worship and Grace, which means Divine help, and it is for that reason that the Church holds the dogma or statement that salvation or safety is in the Church, as it is there only and there always that we get the Sacraments, that we are taught to love in them, and that we get the properly authorized persons to administer them. Because Sacraments are the natural satisfaction of the *natural man*, they make religion effective for the *average man*, and the average man represents the majority of our human race, and that which will appeal to and help the average man, therefore, bears the mark of an efficiency that is great and good. One of the most brilliant men of our time realized this, although he did not approve of it, and he said with regret, "the natural man is a born Catholic." Religion which can and will help us must accept the natural longings and qualities of our human life and work through these universal longings and qualities for our uplift and perfection. The religion of the Sacramental Principle recognizes that we live in a world of Sacraments, that is, in a world where the seen is always bringing to us the unseen and making us believe in its existence. The larger number of the things that we can see and touch are for ever associated with things that we know are real, although we can never see them or touch them. Such things, for instance, as the tree and its life, or a dog and its affection, obedience and self-sacrifice, or a man with his mind, his heart and his soul, and, finally, God dwelling in a human body in the Incarnation. All these are living proofs of the fact that God uses *things* that perish and decay to convey to us gifts that do not perish or decay, so though the tree die, yet its life goes on in its seedlings. This is, in short, the Sacramental System, and we find its highest development naturally in Sacraments of Grace or Divine Help, wherein, as in Holy Baptism, the water, which we see, conveys to us the new birth in Christ which we cannot see, or as the visible Bread and Wine in the Holy Eucharist convey to us the unseen Body and Blood of Our Lord, and so



things without life are to us the Sacramental signs of Eternal Life. Secondly, because Sacraments are the natural satisfaction of the natural man, they will also teach the reality and the necessity of what is called the "Corporate Life." The corporate life means our social life, that is, the life that we live in the association of our homes and with other people. This living in our family and with other people by association for work, pleasure and benefit ought to follow the pattern of the life of our human bodies ("corpus" is the Latin for "body"); and so corporate is that which has the "human body" for its pattern. In our body we have at least a thousand things, counting bones, nerves, muscles, veins, glands, tissues and so on—some great, some small, some beautiful and some not—but they all work for the body as a whole thing. None of these parts can live by itself, none lives for itself; if one part suffers the whole body suffers; if one part rejoices the whole body rejoices, and that body is nearest to perfection in which every nerve and muscle is at its best for the whole body. So the ideal corporate life is where each individual is doing his bit, doing it well, doing it with a view to the uplift and help of all humanity, where each individual realizes that he and his gifts find their best condition in recognizing the corporate life as far more important than the individual life, that selfishness is a sin, that the selfish use of others is a sin, that the willing sacrifice of the individual for the good of the corporate life is the highest glory of our God-given humanity. So Our Lord died for us all. This social instinct is a universal thing, for man everywhere is a social being, and society, which is another name for the corporate life, is not a thing added on by man's invention. He has had the social instinct ever since there was a man, a woman and their baby; so the family is a corporate life, the tribe is, the nation is, and, above all, the Church of God is. Of this last form of the corporate life the Sacraments are the origin, the strength, the food and the assurance that the society is eternal as long as God, the Giver of Sacramental grace, is. The provision of Sacraments witnesses to God's interest in the corporate life, to His recognition of its glory, its claims and its eternity, and the Sacraments, by laying stress on the corporate life, point to the glory of the corporate life of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, in which there are Three Persons, but One God; point also to the perfection of this Divine association of Three Persons for life, work and benefit; and, in a lesser sense, Sacraments, for the same reason, emphasize the glory of the triune life of the father, mother and child; especially when these three persons in their family association work for the fellowship of all men in God as the inspiration for life, work and benefit.

That the Sacraments should be applied to the furtherance of the corporate life is not strange, for the corporate life as well as the Sacraments alike come from God, their Creator. We see this teaching of the corporate life in all the works of creation that have the essence of the sacramental idea—that is, in vegetation, animal life and human life. In all these the individual is comparatively insignificant, as, for instance, one blade of grass, one animal, one man; but in the corporate life they become vastly significant, as, for instance, a hundred acres of grass, a vast herd of cattle, or a host of men, and in their corporate life their teaching of the sacramental idea is very impressive, when millions of blades of grass proclaim the idea, and thousands of men are living witnesses to it. The true value of the individual is exactly what he is worth to the corporate body, and, therefore, the entry of any new life into the corporate life is a most important act, whether it be a garden, a flock, a guild, a union or the Church. We find a universal recognition of this fact in the care used in the choice of seed for vegetation, of parentage for the breeding of animals and of eugenics for human nature. We cannot, then, but be deeply impressed by the importance God attaches to the entry of a new life into the corporate life of the Church, His Son's Body. For that He has instituted one of the two Great Sacraments of the Gospel, viz., Holy Baptism. Here, indeed, is a wonderful thing—the parentage of the new life is to be God Himself, for the baptized becomes a child of God and an inheritor of the corporate life of the kingdom of heaven. In these days, when we are often tempted to undervalue or disregard the meaning of baptism and to think of it as of less importance than Holy Communion, we should remember that without this entry into the corporate life the child could not partake of the life, benefits and work of the corporate life, which are eventually to come to it through the grace of the Holy Eucharist. Next in importance to the birth or entrance into the corporate life is the training and nurture of the new life, especially when that life is entering upon the fulness of its capacity, apt for impression, yet handicapped by the still unsettled and fluctuating will, facing increase of temptation and the uncontrolled buoyancy of life. Therefore Confirmation comes as the strengthening and equipping with light and knowledge for the battle of life.

Again, the Sacraments are not for saints only, but especially for sinners, and this is a great thought, for it strikes a personal need in all of us. We are a sinful folk, and the world has long recognized that very many of our sins come to us through our bodies. Our body is a continual and deadly source of sin owing to the claims of our senses, and this is a question which has in-

interested and puzzled the thinker and the prophet. The body is a centre of temptation and a drawback to the progress of humanity in the good as well as in the wicked because of its passions, desires and claims, and the difficulty is made greater because these passions, desires and claims are God-given, and have a just right to consideration and to satisfaction; but, at the same time, they can be, and often are, opposed to spirituality and the Will of God. In some religions, the solution of this difficulty has been to live a life of stern asceticism, denying the body everything except the smallest necessities of food and rest, avoiding all that makes for bodily comfort, ease and luxury; in others, people are taught that the body is thoroughly evil and must be ignored altogether, or even destroyed. Both these solutions have been unsuccessful, and both are opposed to the mind of God. The idea of Sacraments asserts that the body is good in itself, and that the control of the body is not to be by way of punishment or destruction, but by sanctification or "making holy," which enables it to dedicate its gifts and powers to the glory of God and the benefit of the corporate life. So Our Lord shows in the Incarnation that the body can be the means and pledge of salvation, or "safety from sin," to the human race. This is why in Holy Baptism our bodies are buried and raised with Christ in order, not that they may be destroyed, but that they may be dead unto sin and raised in a new spiritual life unto holiness. This is why in the Holy Eucharist the Body and Blood of Christ are given to us that "our bodies may be made clean by His Body," that so they may be fit for the Resurrection and Ascension and capable of the heavenly life, and it is well worth thinking that this point is so important that in Communion we are told as we receive it, "*The Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life*" and "*The Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.*" In this the Sacraments develop the only true solution for the dangers arising from the physical and carnal powers of mankind. This exaltation of the body makes for the best kind of effort in man, gives him power for conflict, a worthy object in controlling and using his lawful passions and desires, and so inwardly and outwardly—that is, in both soul and body—he becomes a more valuable member of the corporate life, and, therefore, happier, more contented and possessing his soul in peace.

Once more, the stress laid upon the corporate life by the teaching of Sacraments is a protection against the danger common to many religious people of getting away by themselves into a paradise apart from the common burdens, problems and suffer-

ing of the ordinary lives of their fellowmen, and so wishing to make the Church consist of themselves and those who are like-minded with themselves. We see this result strongly emphasized in religious bodies that neglect and despise the Sacraments, and they forget that Our Lord said that the kingdom of God is like a net cast into the sea that gathered of good and bad, and that the final separation of good and bad is not in the Church on earth, but in the Great Day of Judgment. Sacraments have also the advantage of *authority*, which, rightly understood, is a means of healthy growth and saneness. They demand that men in ordering their lives should pay regard first to their past, that is, to the story of their creation, their fall and their redemption; and, secondly, to the welfare of their fellowmen, and such a demand is nothing less than to recognize authority. The value of authority in providing for the healthy development of humanity is a fact recognized not only by the Church but by all statesmen through all periods of history, and finds its beginning in the discipline and authority of the home life, which was accepted by Our Lord when He went down to Nazareth and was "subject unto His parents." This authority is neither tyrannical nor infallible, for it must be in a sense flexible if it is to hold universally and, after all, the authority of the Church is the voice of the corporate life, or the unanimous expression of those who are in agreement. We may reject Sacraments, but if accepted, it must be on the authority and sanction of Christ Himself and of His Body, the Church, guided by the indwelling authority of the Holy Spirit, which Christ sent down to guide her into all truth. Therefore they have a unique authority with an unqualified claim to our obedience, because if we accept them we admit them to be Divine and beyond dispute.

Yet again, Sacraments are a great help to the unlearned, the ignorant and people of very limited mental power, for the existence of *things* having a religious object, and *things* that are closely connected with the capacity of seeing and touching, are not only a help, but also a great comfort to those who have little or no power of abstract thought or prolonged comprehension of the unseen. Such persons cannot by faith and mental power visualize the grace of the Sacraments, but it is possible for them to see the Water, the Bread and the Wine, and to believe that these are the means of the grace and presence of Christ. The cause whereby such people are thus handicapped in spiritual capacity may be their natural temperament, their continued neglect of spiritual things, or the inroads made in their spiritual life by their constant association in their daily living with things that are material and afford little indication of spirituality. Take, for instance, the case of a man who makes

boxes nearly every day of his life and then contrast it with the man who ploughs the land, sees the vegetation and the sunrise and sunset all the days of his life. God in nature is very much nearer to the latter. This use of *things* as a step to faith and a means of salvation is sanctioned by Our Lord in His healing of the woman with the issue of blood, who was cured by touching His garment, and is still continued by the use of Water in Baptism, and Bread and Wine in Communion.

Sacraments are also a protection against the snares and danger of what we call subjective religion. The person whose religion is entirely subjective finds all his religious interests and experiences in his own feelings and his own heart, and he neither wants nor desires anything outside of himself. He protests that he need not go to Church, nor receive the Sacraments, because he can have all the effects of these by himself in his own room, or out in the fields. Such religion has many dangers: it tends to intense selfishness; it is a religion of moods, of fancies and of sentiment. Consequently, it suffers from the natural alteration of feelings and of surroundings, and it may easily change into apathy, relaxation of all moral effort, followed by a reaction of life which eventually drops religion entirely. People of this type are those who say that they can only pray when they feel like it, and that then their prayers are wonderful; that they can only make their Communion when they feel like it, and that to do it under other circumstances seems to them unworthy of the Sacrament and, therefore, wrong. So their religion is all shut up in themselves, and it is only natural that these feelings should grow weaker, for they have no Sacramental Grace to feed on, and the world, the flesh and the devil combined are stronger than we are by ourselves, but weaker than we are when we are reinforced by the God-given grace in the Sacraments. Now, Sacraments guard us against this by insisting that we must go outside of ourselves for most of the spiritual help that we get. Sacraments are things with which we have nothing to do in the way of producing them, or giving them their power and grace. All that we can do to them, or with them, is either to accept or reject them. They come straight from God to us, they depend upon God, not upon us; they remain the same in character and effect whether we are thrilled and emotionally stirred by receiving them, or whether we with dull, cold and humble faith take them obediently for our soul's health. For instance, the *food* of the Holy Eucharist comes to us, and for it we are dependent upon God; the Communion, as a *meal*, requires that others should share, and it, therefore, makes us dependent upon brotherhood; the *origin* of the Holy Eucharist is the Death and Passion of Christ, and bids us remember that we are dependent

upon the love of God for our highest religious act and feeling; and the *breaking* of the Bread shows that the essence of life depends upon action, especially action for others, and not upon feeling, emotion, rapture or sentiment; the *gift* to us of the Body and Blood of Our Lord shows that all spiritual life and happiness is dependent upon the acceptance by us of all that God is into ourselves and our daily life. The man with a purely subjective religion gets all that he possesses of religious feeling, ardour, imagination, emotion out of himself; the man with the objective or sacramental religion, which is the opposite of subjective, gets all that he has of sentiment and emotion out of the Sacraments that he receives, and, at the same time, knows that at each Communion he gets these from the reception of Christ into himself, and is, therefore, sure that such feelings are God-given and not man-made. The man of subjective religion protests that in the Sacraments and in Church services we are taking great spiritual things and turning them into earthly methods and material objects, that we are taking the glorious Body and Blood of Our Lord and making it into Bread and Wine. This is not so, for the Bread and Wine are still bread and wine. only they become the veils or coverings of the Body and Blood that are present in them; and, further, they show exactly the opposite, for they teach us that common material things can by the Incarnation be exalted into means of uniting us with God. The Sacraments do not materialize spiritual things, but spiritualize the material things of this world, whether the material be the Water, the Bread, the Wine or our own material bodies which are spiritualized by the indwelling Christ. More than that, Sacraments show practical or logical results that are far beyond the power of any human invention. For the Water, the Bread and the Wine are not only means of grace given unto us, but they are sermons explaining to us what the Sacraments do for our spiritual life and how they do it. The Water, as we all know, has a cleansing effect upon the natural human body, and the spiritual effect of the Sacrament is, therefore, to be understood as the washing away of sin in the water of regeneration, which means the new birth. Bread we know is the source of our continuance in life, of our capacity for labour, helpfulness and endurance; Wine represents gladness, as it is the life of the vine, and it also represents to us healing and refreshment; so we are to understand that the spiritual effects of this Sacrament are the source of our continuance in the Divine Life, the strengthening of our spiritual capacity for spiritual tasks, such as prayer, for spiritual help to others, and for enduring unto the end, while, at the same time, they produce in us joy, gladness and refreshment, and healing of both soul and body.



Lastly, Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, which is the Lord's own appointed service, are our great means of *worship*. The first law of worship is fairly evident—that every man must worship God, in this life, as a duty, happiness and a perfection of development; while, in the life to come, worship is the sole source of joy and service. Is it a law that man must worship? It is, if we believe in God, for what other way is there of being in communion with Him? We cannot treat Him with the familiarity of ordinary friendship, we have no ground of common meeting except to contemplate His wonders: that means *worship*. If we meet in our daily life someone who is immeasurably above us in genius, goodness or power, we do not, if we are sensible, treat him with less than the respect that his powers of mind and goodness demand. So surely it should be the same on an infinitely higher scale with God. Man may despise, disobey or neglect God, but we must allow that man's duty to God is to worship Him. Worship is so much a necessity of life that we all worship something or somebody all the days of our life; it may be self, or somebody else, or money, or vice, but we cannot get away from the obligation and necessity.

The second law of worship is that it must be offered in the right way, and this is also fairly evident. There is also less excuse for the breaking of this law, because God has Himself ordered the manner of His worship by giving us the Sacraments, and gives us gifts that are beyond all human imagination if we worship Him in the way that He commands, that He has chosen, and in which He takes a part on every occasion both as the Person worshipped and the Person worshipping. The right way to worship Him is in the Holy Eucharist—His own service—and this worship means a great deal more than we are wont to realize, for it requires of us purity, love in every item of our daily life and a constant intention and effort to rise in the scale of holiness. All this means prayer, repentance, absolution or forgiveness and a constant supply of heavenly grace. All these necessities of worship are by the goodness of God provided for us freely by Himself, and the neglect of them is, therefore, a sin both of commonsense and of ingratitude. We may not, and often do not, think of this, or of our responsibility in regard to them, but they are provided for us in the Church of God, and one of the terrible surprises of the Day of Judgment will be our condemnation, not for the commission of what we call actual sin, but for the omission to use the means of grace.

As the first law of worship is in effect the first commandment, so the second law is the second commandment, and the third law is the third commandment. The third law of worship is, therefore, that a man can offer no worship to God unless he is

in a right disposition, and it is covered by the words: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." To offer to assist at the worship of God while in a state in which unrepented sin is regarded with calm indifference is in itself a deadly sin. Man has shown unconsciously his profound recognition of this by preferring to attend such services of the Church as do not lay upon him this possibility in its worst form. One of the reasons that people prefer Morning Service to Holy Communion is that they have not got the reverence for it that they have for Holy Communion, that there is no sense of awe about it, that there is no statement that the unworthy participant in it is furthering his own damnation. To go to Communion unfit they feel is a dangerous thing, requires too much of them; but Matins is easy and pleasant. Now, if a man cannot worship at Holy Communion without proper preparation, why should he think that he can, as he calls it, worship at Matins without it? But he does. So there is nothing more foolish as well as wrong than to talk of one man being a communicant and another as not being one, or of asking how many communicants there are in a certain Church and then asking for the number of the congregation as a separate thing. The Church does not, and cannot, contemplate any member except as a communicant; her children are baptized, confirmed and then admitted to Communion, and only then are they considered to be full members of her body. The fear of frequent communion, and the dislike of attendance at the Holy Communion, are the dim consciousness that such a service demands a preparation of holiness which the average person is unwilling to give, chiefly because people do not realize, and are not taught, that the Church provides all the requisite means of fitness for her worship. People who are in a state of conscious deadly sin are in a state of condemnation before God, and are not really fit to say their prayers, to go to Matins, or to go to Communion or to die, and this last may happen at any moment. This sounds terrible, and so it is, but we dare not deny that which is true.

St. Matthew xxviii., 19: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." St. Luke xxii., 19: "This do in remembrance of Me."

C. ENSOR SHARP.

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