

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

building, at a distance of 700 miles from the ocean, two sea-going ships, to be floated down the Obi and round the North Cape to England. It seems to be agreed that an Englishman ought to be resident on the Obi, in the interests of the trade, which only awaits further development. Baron Nordenskjöld's work will have an influence.

Of the great rivers of Siberia, the intelligence given in the volumes before us, as we have said, is opportune. We should gladly quote some description of the esteemed author's boating and sailing adventures, and his criticisms on tarantass travelling; but our space is exhausted. The chapters on the Russian Church require a separate notice, and we must pass by passages in the chapters on the Exiles, which we had marked for extract. The descriptions are never dull; and we reach his closing chapter with regret. At Vladivostock, as everywhere else, he was received with kindness; a warm reception was accorded him by the Governor; and as there was no regular service for Japan he was promised a passage on board of a Russian man-of-war. As he was borne away from the Siberian shore, it was a source of gratitude that he had been permitted to place within reach of at least every prisoner and hospital patient in Siberia a portion of the Word of God. Such journeys as his, we may add, conducted in such a spirit, tend in many ways to promote international charitableness and concord, and are for the glory of God.

These attractive volumes are well printed; they contain many interesting illustrations and two good maps. There are useful Appendices; and an excellent list of books on Siberia. The work is dedicated to Earl Cairns.



#### ART. VI.—EVENING COMMUNION.

SINCE the interesting and exhaustive article by "Presbyter" on the subject of Evening Communion was written, the question of their lawfulness and propriety has been discussed by many correspondents in the *Guardian*, and Bishop Thorold has in his Primary Charge stated his opinion in favour of Evening Communion with his usual wisdom and gentleness.

Not very much remains to be written on the subject, but by the Editor's desire I will endeavour, without repeating what has been already written, to state the views upon it of an Evangelical Layman.

In my younger days the Holy Communion was administered only once a month, after the full morning service. The warn-

ing Exhortation had been read at full length on the previous Sunday, and a week-day address had been given to the communicants. "Sacrament Sunday" was a marked day, prepared for by instruction, by prayer and meditation. Self-examination and repentance were enjoined, and ample time was given for them. To partake of the Lord's Supper was made, especially to the young, a serious and solemn matter.

At the present time, in a large number of churches, there is "weekly celebration," and on many Sundays there is celebration in the early morning as well as at the midday service; and in not a few churches a celebration also takes place in the afternoon or evening of one or two Sundays in each month. One result is, that the Exhortation is commonly not read at all, or the reading is limited to the announcement of the intended administration, and the godly counsel and admonition are omitted. Nor is the omission made up for by special week-day addresses. In one sense the Holy Communion is made more of, in that it is put forward more prominently as *a* (sometimes almost as *the*) means of grace. But, on the other hand, communicating is taken much more as a matter of course, and what is gained in frequency is apt to be lost in solemnity.

However—bearing in mind and guarding against the danger that familiarity even with the holiest services may possibly breed contempt, and the temptation to regard the rite as of spiritual efficacy in itself, by a mere *opus operatum*—we may take it that on the whole it is a good thing that those who understand and feel their need of this means of grace are enabled to partake more frequently of the heavenly food, while those to whom as yet communicating has been a duty rather than a privilege, are deprived of the excuse which might have been pleaded when the opportunity of partaking was rare, or the time inconvenient.

But herein is a marvellous thing! Those members of our Church to whom the increased frequency of celebrations is mainly owing, and who most exalt the Sacraments as means of grace, object in the strongest language to the Lord's Supper being partaken of at Supper-time! One would have supposed that they would have rejoiced to offer the means of grace afforded by the sacred feast at any time of the day or night at which a congregation was desirous to avail themselves of this strengthening and refreshing of their souls; but, No! Evening Communion is (in the language of some of them) "a profanation" or "a blasphemy," and even such a man as Bishop Maclagan considers them "contrary to the mind of the Church as guided by the Holy Spirit;" and Dean Goulburn "has a strong instinct against them," and only regrets that he cannot justify his aversion "on grounds of reason."

The Editor of the *Guardian* concludes a Review of the Bishop of Rochester's defence of Evening Communion (contained in his Charge) thus:—

To introduce such manifest and flagrant innovations as Evening Communion is surely a deplorable mistake. . . . Of all the ecclesiastical exorbitances of these days there is certainly not one that has less basis in law, custom, or authority. We should ourselves add also, that there is none less recommended by Christian expediency or propriety than this one of Evening Communion.

I observe further that those who object most vehemently to Evening Communion are to be found among those who insist upon Early Celebrations; one of the writers in the *Guardian* going so far as to say, "I should like to see the 1 P.M. Communion forbidden, except to the aged and sickly. Let all healthy people be expected to come at a very early hour."

It is my purpose to endeavour to show that there is no real objection upon any of the grounds alleged against Evening Communion, and that if any time of the day be open to objection it is the early morning. Evening Communion is called an innovation and an exorbitance (whatever that may mean). But upon the practice of the Church of England, early Morning Celebrations are an equal innovation; and, for the matter of that, so are Evening Services: for until this century few churches were lighted, gas was not invented, and the habits of people were earlier than now.

He would, however, be a bold man who dared to call that an innovation in the Church of Christ which is but a reverting to the original institution of our Lord Himself, and to the original practice of the Apostles, so far as it can be traced in the few passages of the New Testament which allude to the Holy Communion at all. Even Dr. Lee will not deny that it was at supper—the evening meal—and not at breakfast, that our Lord first administered this sacrament.

When He was taken up, His followers, regardless of time and place, brake bread together whenever or wherever they met at a common meal, and on the only occasions (at Corinth and Troas) of which the time is specified it was the evening.

But we are told that the Apostles only "tolerated this practice;" and it is alleged that at some unknown period, certainly not less than a century after Apostolic times, the early Church abandoned it, and adopted Morning Communion instead. This, however, is disputed; but I confess that I am not very careful to answer such an allegation. It seems to me that the Christians of the second and third centuries were not one whit better able than Christians of the present day to determine what is scriptural and in accordance with

the will of God. Christians now, as then, may ask for and obtain the guidance of the Holy Spirit: and if we contrast the scarce manuscripts, the difficulty of intercourse between scholars, and the want of critical training, which characterized the second, third, and later centuries with the present position of Christian theosophy and biblical knowledge, we may fairly claim for ourselves far greater advantages in the way of arriving at a right solution of difficult theological questions than were possessed by these men of olden time. They had, indeed, tradition to guide them, which we have not; but the worthlessness of tradition as a guide is shown by the example of the Scribes and Pharisees. Nay, the first Christian tradition is recorded in St. John's Gospel (chap. xxi. 23), and it was all wrong.

And as for doctrine and practice—even in the days of the Apostles—heresies and schisms were always arising. The epistle of St. Paul to the Church at Corinth, and the messages of our Lord delivered by St. John to the seven churches in Proconsular Asia sufficiently prove this assertion. And thenceforward Early Church History is a record of heresy and schism. Why, then, with the Scriptures as our guide, should we look to the Churches of the third century as our example?

Next we are met by the assertion that Evening Communion is unlawful in the Church of England. This assertion is based upon a dictum of Dr. Joseph Phillimore, who is said to have advised Bishop Wilberforce to that effect. But most people know by this time how easy it is in doubtful (and especially theological) questions to obtain an opinion of counsel on either side. The *Guardian* kindly supplies arguments to support this opinion. They are singularly weak. The first is, that up to A.D. 1662 those proceeding to communicate were "to signify their names to the curate over-night, or else in the morning before the beginning of morning prayer, or else immediately after. This notice (writes the editor) obviously assumes that the celebration will follow morning prayer." Certainly, and therefore a celebration before morning prayer—i.e., an "early celebration"—is, upon the *Guardian's* own showing, clearly illegal; but it is begging the question to say that the celebration must follow morning prayer immediately, and not take place some hours later. On the contrary, the natural inference from the fact that notice to the curate might be deferred until "immediately after" morning prayer, is that some interval was to elapse before the celebration, so as to give the curate time "to call and advertise" any "notorious evil doer" from whom he had received notice. But anyhow this rubric was repealed in 1662, and is not now the law. The second argument is based upon the *Reformatio Legum*, which the *Guardian* says, "escaped narrowly, though perhaps happily, from becoming the law of the land!" Illegal! because a Bill

which would have made it so was thrown out on the second reading by a narrow majority! Illegal! because it was made so by an Act repealed two hundred years ago! Could any argument be weaker, or show the hopelessness of the case more conclusively? None but a drowning reasoner would catch at such straws as these.

But even though Evening Communion may neither be unscriptural, nor be condemned by the Primitive Church, nor be illegal, yet, say their opponents, they are "deplorable," "inexpedient and improper," and "liable to obvious abuses." They should be done away with, and any fancied inconvenience may be met by having early and earlier celebrations. Better not to communicate at all than to do so in the evening. (I quote or paraphrase various utterances of several writers in the *Guardian*.) The question is thus made one between Evening and Early-morning Communion. This antagonism is not the work of those who advocate Evening Communion. We claim the right to meet the requirements of any who ask for this spiritual refreshment at the times when they (through circumstances generally beyond their own control) can most conveniently come to the Lord's Table for it, or find most benefit from it. We neither seek to force the evening celebration upon any one, nor hesitate to provide administrations at earlier times of the day. And we claim the liberty to act thus, although other Churchmen may think differently. But when the Early and Fasting Communion is set up as *the* right and proper thing, as the panacea for the wants of those who cannot partake at the mid-day celebration, we are constrained to challenge this vaunted superiority, and to test the comparative merits of the two systems.

The question whether celebration in the early morning will meet the reasonable needs of those who now partake of the Lord's Supper in the evening, is one of fact, to be decided by experience; and having no experience of my own to give, I pass it by with the remark that there is ample evidence to the contrary in the stated experiences of Bishop Jenne, and Messrs. Davies and Billing, and many other clergymen.

But it is urged—Early Communion is so much better than Evening. The former involve self-denial and early rising, the latter show indolence and self-indulgence. The heart and mind are in a fit state in the early morning, of earnestness, recollectedness and seriousness,—but these qualities cannot be maintained throughout the day: in the evening the emotions are more active, but the mind is heated, excited, and wearied, and the heart is unfit to discern the Lord's body; and last, though by no means least, the early celebration involves a Fasting Communion, while he who partakes in the evening, mixes the sacred

elements in his stomach with earthly food—a profanation to be abhorred!

I join issue with these assertions and arguments, and I do so, fully believing that the subjective qualifications in the communicant are the most important element in the worthy partaking of the Lord's Supper.

As to the self-denial of early rising—that varies with people's constitutions and circumstances. What right have we to judge one another in such matters? One person rises late and retires early to rest each day of the week, and can easily get up at seven or six on Sunday morning; but shall he be a law to his brother who, toiling hard for six days, rejoices on the seventh in the rest to his wearied body and mind which a tender Father has given him; and who, if he rose unrefreshed by too short sleep, would be totally unfit for spiritual service? Dr. Hook (no self-indulgent man) used to say that going out early in the morning gave him a headache and made him useless for the day. The object of communicating is to promote, not self-denial for its own sake, but such union with Christ as will produce loving self-denial for the good of others.

Again, the experience of many will show that forced early rising, private prayer hurried over, and a hasty walk to church, in order to be in time for early communion, are by no means so conducive to the state of heart and mind desired, as the evening service attended after the work and bustle of the day are over, when the wearied soul at last has leisure, and can lay aside for the night all worldly cares and anxieties (except so far as they are made the subject of prayer), and devote itself to the enjoyment of Him on whom all that care has just been cast.

If it be true, as is alleged by Mr. Ball, that an ordinary Christian man, a member of a family, cannot, except in the early morning, keep himself quiet and recollected so as to be able to communicate worthily, of what practical benefit is the early communion of which the aroma, so to speak, passes off so quickly? I should rather have thought that, just as a week-day service is so refreshing, *because* it comes in the midst of the week's worries, so it is best to use the means provided for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, at the time when we most feel our need, and when no distractions of this world will immediately follow to undo the good effect.

Mr. Blenkinsop holds up for our imitation the example of Roman Catholics who attend early mass while we are asleep. I was once urged by a pervert to follow his steps on this very ground. "We get our religious duties done very early," said he, "and may then spend the rest of the Sunday as we please." Are there not now many in our own Church who go to early service with the same motive? I have known some; and as to the

alleged excitement and abuses attending Evening Communion, it is sufficient to remark that, though our opponents argue *à priori*, that these offences must come, all the clergy, from Dean Howson to Mr. Billing, who speak of facts, testify that they have not come.

We have, however, an account in the Epistle to the Corinthians of similar abuses, and of the Apostle's remedy for them. Certain abuses had arisen among the converts at Corinth from the fact that they came to the Evening Communion hungry, and in an excited state; and St. Paul prevented a recurrence of these evils, not by telling the Christians to change the hour to the early morning, but by directing them to satisfy their hunger at home, and then, when they were no longer fasting, to partake of the Lord's Supper with the Church. It is noteworthy that in his rebuke to the erring converts for their ill-behaviour, he lays special stress upon the fact "received of the Lord" Himself, that *in the night* He took bread, and *after supper* He took the cup.

And now I come to the last and most serious point of all. The bitterest opponents of Evening Communion do not attribute to them any superstitious uses. Can as much be said for Early Celebrations? Is it not the fact that many of those who insist upon them, really do so because they insist upon Fasting Communion. The human form, they teach, into which the sacred elements are introduced, must be void of earthly food. Yet immediately after the sacred feast is over, long before the bread and wine can be digested, they eat any quantity of other food. The association of ideas which such teaching involves is, to my mind, more lowering to the Sacrament even than Transubstantiation.

Bishop Maclagan's words on this painful subject will have more weight than mine. They are taken from his Primary Charge:—

"To suppose that there can be any such relations between the spiritual gift received in the Holy Sacrament and the food received into our mouths as to make it possible that one should be affected by the other, is surely to degrade to an extent which is simply unmeasurable the real presence of our Blessed Lord."

Yet this degrading connection of ideas is in the minds of many avowedly associated with Fasting Communion: and such a superstitious use would have gone far to justify Evangelical Churchmen, if they had resisted the innovation of Early Celebrations. They have not done so; they have cordially availed themselves of the additional opportunity thus afforded of giving to every member of Christ the blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood.

I ask my High Church friends to imitate their good example.

SYDNEY GEDGE.



I append the extract from Bishop Thorold's Charge alluded to above, cordially concurring in what his Lordship says so well:—

On Evening Communion I must not be silent, for in 100 churches in the diocese the returns show them to be celebrated, while, in the metropolis generally, they appear to have increased from 65 in 1869, to 267 in 1880, a circumstance which would not readily be accepted as significant of a corresponding augmentation in the clergy of the Evangelical school. Four years cannot make me forget that at St. Giles's I instituted the practice, and at St. Pancras continued it, with an entire conviction both of its suitableness and necessity. But this shall not diminish my anxiety, if possible, to get behind the grave prejudice that clearly exists against it in the minds of brethren whom I deeply respect; and while vindicating the liberty wherewith I believe we may suitably claim to be free in this matter, to appreciate and to consider their difficulties. Is it illegal? I take it to be in this respect precisely on a footing with early Communion, neither more nor less. Perhaps the Prayer Book contemplates neither. Is it un-Catholic and inconsistent with antiquity? The Blessed Lord Himself instituted it in the evening. For the three first centuries, until it became abused, it was certainly celebrated occasionally at that hour. But were this argument ten times stronger than it is, it is not worth a feather's weight in the face of the undoubted liberty of the English Church to decree rites and ceremonies for herself as and when she thinks proper. Nay, I would eagerly fling all the traditions and decrees of the mediæval time into the Dead Sea sooner than rob one humble soul for which Christ died of the Blessed Sacrament of His Body. Is it inconsistent with that clearness and devoutness of spirit, which the recent partaking of food might be supposed to endanger? Precisely as much so as a mid-day Communion. The poor have no experience of late dinners. Is it irreverent or slovenly? If it be, it is the clergyman's fault. I have never found it so. But is it *necessary*? From an experience of twenty-four years, emphatically I say *it is*, and while fully appreciating the important experience of those who think otherwise, I claim hearing for my own. The mother of a young family, the busy household servant (especially where there is only one), the working man often late marketing on Saturday night, and who needs his Sabbath rest for body as well as soul, the medical man, and where she is wanted at home, even the Sunday School teacher, these value and require Evening Communion, since not only is it often the only time possible, but it is the time when the day's labour is over and the evening rest is come. If in some cases it might be an exaggeration to say that any other hour is *always* impossible (yet those who know the selfishness of ungodly employers, will confess that occasionally it may be), an Evening Communion will often make the difference between an ordinance received once a month and once a year. While I would never press Evening Communion, nor even hastily introduce it without cause, God forbid that I should discourage it where the people value it, and the attendance is sufficient. At St. Pancras I was careful always to have an early celebration on the same day, so as to dis-

appoint none who valued the ordinance weekly. This avoided a stumbling-block. Let us give freedom and take it, protecting ourselves, and considering our brethren.

---

## Reviews.

---

*The Great Problem; or, Christianity as it is.* By a STUDENT OF SCIENCE  
Pp. 445. London: The Religious Tract Society.

THIS anonymous volume is the work of a master-mind. It contains a closely reasoned argument for the truth of Christianity—an argument which cannot fail to satisfy the candid inquirer. The reader is led along, step by step, from principles to facts, from facts to proofs, from proofs to results, until he feels his feet planted on a rock of certainty from which he can never be moved.

The writer of this notice having carefully read through the volume, pencil in hand, to score remarkable passages, discovered on looking back that almost every page had been more or less lined with marks of assent and admiration. It is a matter of extreme thankfulness that in this age of doubt and unbelief a writer so peculiarly suited for the task has been led to contend thus earnestly and successfully for the "Truth once for all delivered to the saints." We can put at the end of this Christian solution of the Great Problem, as at the end of a proposition of Euclid—*Quod erat demonstrandum.*

A summary survey of the author's argument may well be given.

Part I. is named "Principles:" and the necessity of attention is laid down. Christianity exists. It is as much a fact as the solar system. It must be accounted for. It is worthy of consideration. (The inquiry cannot be met with the assumption that Christianity is incredible.) It claims the position of a department of true science, or knowledge of a really accurate and available kind. It is marked by certain external features and characteristics.

Part II. contains the "Facts" connected with Christianity. 1. The *Book*—The New Testament is the most wonderful Book in the world. The Book of Christianity is the King of books. 2. The *Man*. Jesus of Nazareth, as portrayed in the New Testament, is a Man by Himself.—The First of Mankind. 3. The *Society*. The Church, with all its imperfections and drawbacks is the greatest society ever yet known. 4. The *Cross*. Nothing in Christianity is so peculiarly Christian as the death of its Founder; which might have been expected to involve the destruction of His religion. But out of His death came irresistible life.

Part III. is styled "Theories." What is Faith's solution of the Great Problem? It is found in the central article of the Creed—that "Jesus rose again from the dead." This is the true essence of the Christian explanation of the Great Problem of Christianity. The author then meets the objections of prejudiced unbelief. "The argument from experience cannot prove a thing to be impossible merely because nothing of the same kind can be shown to have happened before." Our area of observation and knowledge of facts is exceedingly limited.

Part IV. gives the "Proofs" of the Resurrection of Christ, comprising Circumstantial evidence, Direct evidence, and Decisive evidence. For the consideration of these well-argued and striking chapters we must send the reader to the book itself, only observing that he who wishes to