Address for Ceylon Conference, January 7th, 1908.

Expectancy in prayer.

Ps. v. 3. “I will direct my prayer unto Thee and will look up.”

Isaiah. xlix. 23. “They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.”

Ps. lixi. 5. “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.”

Ps. cxxx. 6. “My soul waiteth for the Lord; more than they that watch for the morning” &c.

On the first day of our Conference our thoughts were directed to the faithfulness of God.

It is a subject that is brought before us again and again in His word. e.g.

Deut. vii. 9. “Know therefore, that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, that keepeth covenant” &c. Heb. x. 23. “He is faithful that promised” 2 Thess. iii. 3. “The Lord is faithful” &c. 2 Tim. ii. 13. “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself.”

What surer basis could His people have for faith? What should give them so much confidence in prayer?

While He says “They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.” “Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.” “Ask, and it shall be given you.”

And while He says again, by the Lord Jesus Christ, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away.—Surely He invites His people in the strongest possible way to draw largely upon the inexhaustible treasures of His grace and to put His promises to the test.

This we all admit. We who are gathered here are no strangers to His faithfulness; we have found it (probably) throughout our whole life. We are men and women of prayer. We know the belief, comfort and strength that result from coming constantly to our Heavenly Father and laying before Him all that concerns us—whether known or unknown and we can all tell of numberless answers that have been vouchsafed to our prayers, even “exceeding abundantly above all that we asked or thought.”

But can we say that we have the spirit of firm expectancy, expressed in the words, “my expectation is from Him” and “I will look up.” Are we watching for answers to our prayers as eagerly and confidently as the men on watch, be he sentinel or jailor, looks forward to the “dawn of morning”? Or may we not have to confess that there is but little of such definite expectation in our hearts?

In this lies the great difference between believing and unbelieving prayer.

That such a lack exists is only too clearly evidenced by the fact that after we have prayed for some particular blessing, and indications are granted that God has heard and is answering, we sometimes (if not frequently) have to confess to feeling a certain amount of surprise, instead of recognising at once only what we have been looking for. While—if our minds were filled with expectancy we should be alive to the smallest of such tokens and should hail them at once with joy and thankfulness, so that our hearts would be overflowed with praise by which we should “glorify God, at the same time that we realised that “the joy of the Lord was our strength.”

Will it not be well for us to ask ourselves this morning, if there is not something of this lack in us and if it does not affect our work in this land.

We minister to professing Christians or we take the message of salvation to Heathens and Mohammedans.

We believe that God’s word is quick, and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. iv. 12) that it is “like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces (Jer. 23. 29.) but the seed appears to fall upon such very unpromising soil, that we almost doubt whether it can spring up and bear fruit, instead of resting upon the promise of our God who is faithful” —“My word shall not return unto Me void. . . but it shall prosper” &c (Is. 55. 11.)

May not this lack of expectation on our part—begotten of unbelief—have much to do with the comparatively small results that follow from our work? There are many instances in the Homeland which tend to prove, that the most-expectant ministry is the most fruitful,—that the man who most constantly looks for conversions amongst his flock is the man who most often has the joy of seeing them.

“That there is no limit to God’s power we fully believe; we call to mind the words “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” He who touched the heart of Saul of Tarsus when he was “a persecutor and injurious” can touch the heart of the most indifferent, or of the most bitter opponent—of this we are well-assured. But does the assurance enkindle within us definite and confident expectation? Are we daily reminding God of His promises—are we strengthening our own faith by keeping them in mind? and—while we see before us some mighty system of Heathenism, and realise how it accords with the sinful inclinations and desires, as well as with the pride of man—do we re-assure ourselves when almost desponding under a sense of our own utter weakness and insufficiency, by remembering (1 Cor. i. 27.) “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.”

Do we not need, brothers and sisters, to brace ourselves up more to the attitude of expectation?

I am convinced we do, and that we shall not see the desire of our hearts until we have set ourselves to do this.

How shall we do it? Must it not by having our eyes more opened to see Jesus Christ our Lord upon the throne, by having our ears opened afresh to His declaration linked with the great command to evangelize the world —“all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”—and to the promise of the Father to the Son “More of Me and I shall give Thee the heathen for thine inheritance &c.

Have we entered sufficiently into the meaning of our Lord’s words to His disciples (John xvi. 23, 24.) when He was teaching them what would be the result...
of His return to the Father's right hand, after He had made reconciliation for iniquity and brought our everlasting righteousness" (Deut. ix. 24) — in other words when He had made the all-sufficient atonement for sin— "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you? Have we grasped the force of "in my name"— have we observed how much prominence Jesus Christ Himself gives to the thought,—alluding to it again in v. 26, and reminding His disciples that this would be quite a new privilege and experience—one that they had known nothing of "hitherto"!

We do realise—and it is our liberty and joy, that we have now—"Boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. x. 19) "Boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of Him" (Eph. iii. 12,) but (let us ask ourselves) "Do we sufficiently enter into the "power with God" we possess in being permitted to present our petitions in "the Name which is above every Name"—the Name which is always sweet music in the Father's ears, because it is the Name of the dearly beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased?

"Jesus we know and He is on the Throne." Let us truly lay hold of this great fact, and that which we read in 1 John v. 14, 15, will follow.

"This is the confidence" &c.—We know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

Cotta Notes.

On Monday April 6th the Lord Bishop of the Diocese visited Upper Welikada and Talangama for confirmations. There were 47 candidates at the two centres. The Bishop arrived at Upper Welikada at 3 p.m. and after the service kindly laid the foundation stone of the new vernacular school which is being built by the generosity of two Sinhalese friends, and is to be known as St. Stephen's School. From Upper Welikada the Bishop drove on to Talangama, where he was received by the church officers and a few others who read him an address. The confirmation service was at 5 p.m. and the rain although heavy at times did not seriously interfere either with the arrival or the departure of the candidates.

On Thursday April 9th, there was another confirmation service at Cotta when 16 candidates were presented by the Rev. W. Ryde and 6 by the Rev. G. S. Amarasekara. After breakfasting at the mission bungalow the Bishop drove on to Mampe where about 10 candidates were to be presented by the Rev. J. H. Wikramanayake.

May the new confirmees prove a real strength to the church of Christ in the Cotta District, and may they and all older members give earnest heed to the Bishop's words with regard to the need of "daily increasing in the Holy Spirit more and more," yielding to His influence every part of the being specially the mind and thoughts.

Mampe.

Don Charles Jayasingha was called "home" on the 20th March 1908 at the age of 65 years. He died without any pain or sickness. He was a village Christian of simple but strong faith. He lived an exemplary Christian life, and the Buddhists bear witness to his holy walk. He was regular in attending the means of grace. In the absence of the pastor Mr J.A. Kulethunga officiated at the funeral which took place on the following day.

The death has to be chronicled of Mary Ellen Abeyeratne which took place on the 22nd March. Her husband the late Mr. D. C. E. A. Abeyeratne predeceased her on the 16th July 1906. He had served C. M. S. as a school master for nearly 26 years.

Her funeral which took place on the following day was conducted by the Rev. J. H. Wikramanayake, and was well attended. Much sympathy is felt with their two daughters.

Opium Traffic.

Readers of the Gleaner are asked to thank God for the decision of the Government to close the sixty five licensed opium shops in Ceylon, and to continue in prayer that this may be carried into effect without delay.

"The rulers of China have at last been roused to action in trying to repress the evil; but with the people in a great part of Southern China nearly "rotten with opium (as Archibald Colquhoun described them in "Across Cheyse") it will take Chinese Governors some generations of perseverance in the anti-opium crusade, to achieve the same position as has been attained by the Japanese. We have the very best authority for saying that if the present system were allowed to continue in Ceylon, the fate of the Sinhalese a generation hence, would be nearly parallel to that of the Chinamen in the Canton provinces. Indeed at the rate at which the customers of the local opium shops have increased during the past few years, it is clear that with ten, nay five years more of the "licensed opium shops" a most terrible spread of the evil and all its enervating consequences would be realized in this island."

Ceylon Observer, Tuesday, April 21st, 1908.

Latest Notes.

The Rev. J. Ilsley and Miss Ilsley arrived by the "Kleist" on May 23rd.

The Rev. A. E. Dibben arrived by the "Orient" on May 25th. A congregational 'At Home' was held on the following day in the Boys' Brigade Hall to welcome him.

Miss Leslie-Melville and Mrs. and Miss Poole left by the "Warwickshire" on May 26th.

The Rev. H. P. Napier-Clavering has taken up duties as Acting Principal of Trinity College, Kandy.

Mr. J. W. Ferrier arrived by the "Ormuz" on June 4th.

We very much regret to record the death of the Rev. Charles Chelliah Handy B. A. Head Master of St. John's College, Jaffna.

Evening Communion by the Late Dean Farrar.

Reprinted from the Rock Newspaper for February 3rd 1903.

It never has been, and never will be, my custom to enter into Ecclesiastical frays, or to volunteer my opinion on controverted subjects. But since a strong wish has been expressed on the part of many that I should say what I think on the subject of Evening
Communion, I accept the express request of the Editor of the Rock that I would do so in his columns.

It may serve to show that I am in no sense of the word a bigoted or prejudiced partisan on the subject if I mention my own practice, and the reason why I adopted it.

When I was appointed Rector of St. Margaret's, more than sixteen years ago, I had never been at an Evening Communion. I found the custom existing monthly in my church. It had been introduced and established by my predecessor, Canon Conway, whom I myself never saw, but who was universally regarded by all who knew him as a most saintly servant of God. I found that some, for whom I had a personal regard, disliked the introduction of Evening Communions, and in deference to their wishes I proposed to drop them. Not because I thought them intrinsically objectionable, not because I believe in the importance of Fasting Communion (which I regard as often due to a superstitious, meaningless and unauthorised materialism, founded on perverted notions of the true nature of a Sacrament), but solely because I did not consider them essential, and because they were supposed to be a badge of party. Not knowing how dear Evening Communions were to some, and anxious to give no needless cause of offence to others by the adoption of a comparatively recent custom, I said that perhaps they had better cease. But I had no sooner said this than I was met with most earnest remonstrances from men of beautiful character and deep piety, who pointed out to me that these opportunities had become very precious to the best class of our many poor parishioners. One parishioner especially—a clergyman, and a most useful man—pledged with me with almost passionate earnestness not to deprive some of those, whose needs lay nearest my heart, of a privilege which they had learnt to value, and which they found to be a source of rich blessing and comfort. It was impossible, in a matter of perfect legality and Christian freedom, to resist these appeals. I should not myself have established Evening Communions; but as I found them existing I could not pain and injure the sincere Christian souls to whom they were dear. There is, therefore, an Evening Communion at St. Margaret's whenever there is a fifth Sunday in the month. There was one last Sunday. There were 128 communicants besides those who had been present at the early Morning Communion which I established immediately I became Rector. There was scarcely one of these who did not belong to the ranks of the poor and humble. A clergyman who happened to be present on this occasion, and had never been at an Evening Communion before in his life, expressed his sense of the deep solemnity which marked the administration of the Sacrament, and of the joy which he felt at having witnessed it.

Let me now consider briefly some of the objections which have been taken to Evening Communion:

The first facts by which we are confronted when we consider those objections ought to be absolutely fatal to them all, and cut at the very root of their validity.

I. First, the opponents of the practice are compelled to admit that it has been declared to be legal by the highest authorities appointed to interpret the Church's formularies—the very authorities to which, as the late Archbishop of Canterbury convincingly showed in St. Margaret's Church, any and every religious community in this realm of England is compelled ultimately to appeal. The Act of 1872 establishes that it is indisputably permissible for every clergyman to have Evening Communions if he pleases. Such being the case, any Archbishop or Bishop who on his own authority attempts to put them down is acting illegally; and if he does this by exercising unfair pressure upon his clergy at their institution against their will, he is going beyond his just powers, and could without question be successfully resisted.

II. Secondly, no question will be asked more urgently by every member of a Reformed Church than this:—Is there a word in Scripture unfavourable to Evening Communions? The answer is again absolute and indisputable. Not one single syllable unfavourable to them can be quoted from the entire New Testament. It is sometimes pretended that they were the cause of the scandals in the Corinthian Church. Anyone, by consulting 1 Cor. xi. 20-34, may see for himself that this pretence is a transparent fiction. The scandals did not arise in the Lord's Supper, but solely from the fact that the Lord's Supper—so far were the Apostles from dreaming of the necessity of Fasting Communion—were accompanied by gluttony and intemperance on the part of some recent converts from the license of Paganism.

III. Thirdly, is there any Scriptural authority in favour of the practice? Everyone is aware that the only certain Communion mentioned at all in the New Testament were Evening Communions. Our Lord's first appointment of this Holy Institution was in the evening, and after a meal. The only other occasion mentioned in which He is said to have partaken of an Eucharistic meal—namely, with the two disciples at Emmaus—was also in the evening, when "the day was far spent." The Eucharistic feasts in the churches established by St. Paul were invariably held in the evening, and were unfasting. The Communion which he held at Troas was in the dead of night, at the close of a long day. This was after the Corinthian scandals, so that the pretence that he abolished Evening Communions when he visited Corinth to "set in order" certain things, falls at once to the ground. The attempts to argue that the Lord's Supper and the Communion at Troas were in the early morning are too Jesuitical to need notice.

IV. Fourthly, is primitive custom—the only custom which, in matters of perfect liberty, we can have any pretence to regard as authoritative—against it? The very reverse is the case. So absolutely was Evening Communion the rule in the Primitive Church that in all languages the Lord's Supper is to this day called by names which imply the fact. The Latin cena were evening meals, like supper in English. In French it is called the Sainte Cène, in German the Abendmahl. In the first two centuries there is not a spark of evidence to show that the Lord's Supper was not constantly administered in the evening. In the third century it is clear from Tertullian and Cyprian that there were both Evening and Morning Communions. Even at the end of the fourth century, and at the beginning of the fifth, there was no rule against an Evening Eucharist. The candles which St. Jerome asseverates to have only been lit in usum nocturni luminis may point to Evening Eucharists in his day, and we know as a matter of fact that in the days of St. Augustine, who died A.D. 430, Evening Communions still continued to be held in various churches, and at
particular seasons. Obviously, therefore, no question of principle was involved, and Evening Communions had never been forbidden.

Scripture, then, and primitive antiquity are absolutely in favour of the custom, and it cannot be right to play fast-and-loose with this argument. We are told that we ought to have a Mixed Chalice because Christ used one at the Lord’s Supper. Now, I hold it to be by no means certain that He did. But if He did, why are we to imitate what is local and accidental in one single instance while we depart from His example in every other? He administered to the Apostles as they were seated; we receive the Eucharist kneeling. He repeated the words of administration but once—"Take ye," "eat ye," "drink ye"—we repeat them to each communicant. He established this Sacrament at night and after a meal, and we are told by some that it is positively sinful to receive it unfasting or in the evening? That I do not exaggerate in saying this, is known. The Church Times openly declares that the party it represents does regard it as a positive sin. Not long ago a venerable and holy clergyman went into St. Alban’s, Holborn. As he entered a tract was handed to him, called "The Greatest Sin of the Age." Will it be believed by any sober man that in this pamphlet the "greatest sin of the age" is Evening Communion? A well-known Canon, a leading High Churchman, properly rebuked this outrageous "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." The clergyman, whose church he was taking a mission, preached a sermon in which he described unfasting communion as "a mortal sin." After the sermon the Canon said to him, "I cannot possibly go on with your mission. I have committed a mortal sin." "What was it?" asked the horrified vicar. "I drank some water this morning before I came to the Communion." Can any words be too strong to denounce such priestly invention of artificial, ecclesiastical offences? In laughing them to utter scorn, it is sufficient for any layman to refer to the Sixth Article, which is the Magna Charta of the Reformed Church of England, and which says that what is not to be read in Scripture, nor can be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

The Archbishop of York says that our Lord not only instituted the Holy Communion in the evening, but also “during supper, in an upper room, and in a private house”; and that “it would be interesting to know how far it is proposed to go in following this precedent.” The answer is surely simple. The upper room and the private house furnish us with the sanction we require when we too celebrate the Communion in upper rooms and private houses by the beds of the sick. But these were accidents only, since at the Lord’s Supper the upper room and the private house represented the only possible church. They were, therefore, treated as accidents from the earliest days, but the Unfasting Communion and the Evening Communion continued, as we have seen, for centuries. Neither the hour nor the fact of having taken or not taken food, were regarded as belonging, in the very slightest degree, to the essence of the institutions.

But if the Bible is wholly for those who hold the permissibility of Evening Communions, is the Prayer-book against them? It is sufficient to answer that they have been declared legal, and therefore that there can be no word in the Prayer-book opposed to them, as there is no word in the Prayer-book which gives even the most invented sanctity of Fasting Communion. In fact, if the Prayer-book did not contemplate Evening Communion—and on that subject opinions differ—it certainly still less contemplated our present early Morning Communion. It seems to assume that the Eucharist will be administered after Morning Prayer; and as Morning Prayer was usually at eleven o’clock, it evidently did not suppose that fasting was necessary for due participation.

And this is a sufficient answer to those who say that Evening Communion is “an innovation” in the English Church. It is even less of an innovation than early Morning Communion, which is universally adopted by the very persons who denounce the rashness of the other practice. The simple fact is that both arose from a desire for edification without any special or authoritative sanction of the Church. Dean Hole thinks that he has settled the controversy when he asks, “By whom was Evening Communion introduced into the Church of England, and by whose authority?” The same question might be asked about the use of hymns before and after the sermon, and equally admit of no answer but this—that innocent, profitable, and legal customs are constantly arising—as it is most desirable that they should arise—from the spontaneous tendencies of the general body of believers without any formal sanction in their favour. A Church is a living body, not a mummy. If Dean Hole thinks that he has so triumphantly succeeded in condemning the practice of Evening Communion because no decision of the Church has formally sanctioned them, logic requires to abandon dozens of other practices against which the objection would be equally valid if it had any force at all.

And if it be alleged, “Oh, but from the fifth century till the Reformation there have been no Evening Communions,” that, even if it were true, would be in itself a matter of no importance whatever if it is certain (as it is) that in the first five centuries, and before the Dark Ages, and before sacerdotal abuses and superstitions poured in upon the Church like a flood, they existed and were never suppressed. If they were the rule in the days of the Apostles and in the first two centuries, the authority and the prescription or antiquity in their favour would outweigh the customs of any later ages. If they had no other authority than that of our Lord, every Christian might not only blamelessly say, with the learned and able Bishop Jeune, “Then let my Lord’s exception be my rule,” but “Let my Lord’s rule be my rule.”

But we are assured that the “common sense” of the Church has set them aside.

This is one of the assertions which will not stand a moment’s examination. The “common sense” of the Church has done nothing of the kind. It dropped them partially when, and because, they became extremely perilous. It was civil danger, not Christian dogma, which drew them to early Communions. Similarly, whenever the conditions of society, the absence of light, the absence of police, or any other national circumstances or customs make Evening Communions dangerous, or unseemly, they have been rightly discouraged. None of these hindrances now exist. Evening Communions in our day are just as seemly, just as safe, just as solemn as late Evening Services which, at one period, were just as rare.

(To be continued)