

From the Catholic Herald,

TO THE REV. W. H. ODENHEIMER, A. M.
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No. XI.

REV. SIR:—In your American edition of the "Prayer Book," I remark a departure from the edition used in England at present, on two points, which, if words be attended to, would be of great moment. After the consecration of the elements a prayer has been inserted in the American edition, which is headed "The Oblation" from which the Eucharist would appear to be considered as a sacrifice. The Oxford Theologians appeal to this with wonderful complacency as a proof that some of the primitive doctrine was retained in the Protestant Episcopal Church. (1) But while you seem to have made an approach to Catholic doctrine on this point, the other alteration to which I have alluded has an opposite tendency. In the Catechism in the English "Prayer Book," the following question is found:—"What is the inward part (of the Lord's Supper) or thing signified?" To which this answer is given—"The body and blood of Christ, which ARE VERILY AND INDEED taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." The American editors, probably considering this—as it truly is—a very quaint mode of expressing the Protestant doctrine, thought it advisable to alter it, and the answer to the same question runs as follows:—"The body and blood of Christ, which are SPIRITUALLY taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." In thus altering the English Catechism, the American editors certainly deserve the praise of removing an unnecessary mystification of what is in itself very plain. The Protestant doctrine can, I believe, be adequately expressed by saying, that bread and wine are received in the Eucharist in commemoration of the death of Christ, and that valuable spiritual graces are imparted to those who partake of them with a lively faith. To call this reception of spiritual graces, which unite us closely with Christ, the receiving of his body and blood, *verily and indeed*, is a violence to plain words, for which no reasonable justification can be produced. The mysteries of faith, are indeed, necessarily incomprehensible in their nature, but it must be stated clearly what it is that man is required to believe.

The true reason of the wording of the answer in the English Catechism, and of similar phrases yet used by Protestant writers, is not, that such words are necessary or the most proper to convey the doctrine, which the English Church holds;—this, I am confident, will be admitted by any one who attends to the force of the terms, and compares them with the known doctrine of that church. You may speak as you please of the wonderful virtues which exist in the sacrament, but these alone are not sufficient to justify the expression that his body and blood are there really present. You may speak of the union with Christ in the most glowing terms, when this consists merely in the virtue of his passion being

communicated to us, it is not the receiving of his body and blood truly and indeed. If his body be present in the sacrament, truly and indeed, you must defend transubstantiation, or, at least, the Lutheran doctrine, which asserts that the body of Christ and bread are both present at the same time; if it be not thoro, then you should cease to speak of a real presence, or of the body of Christ being received verily and indeed.

According to the Catholic doctrine, the body of Christ may be said to be received in a spiritual manner, as it is not received according to the natural mode of receiving bodies, and in the same sense of the word we can say, that Christ is present in the sacrament in a spiritual manner; but this is not opposed to his being really present. In like manner if corporeal presence be assumed to express the presence of a body according to its natural mode of existing, this word could not be applied to the presence of Christ in the sacrament; but if, as the word implies, it be used to express no more than the presence of a body, then it is a contradiction in terms to say that you admit a real and deny a corporeal presence of any body, even of the body of Christ. A spiritual presence of a body which excludes this, is no presence at all: it is an absurdity. "The truth is," says Hallam, speaking of the Anglican system which its supporters hold up as a medium between the Catholic and Zuinglian doctrines, "there are but two opinions at bottom (the Catholic and the Zuinglian) as to the main point of controversy; nor in the nature of things was it possible there should be more; for what can be predicated of a body in its relation to a given space, but presence or absence?"

The only reason, therefore, that can be assigned why Episcopalians express their doctrine by saying that the body of Christ is really present, is received verily and indeed, is, that they intend to prove that such phrases could be used, without admitting at the same time the doctrine which they evidently convey: The Anglican church expected thus to guard her members against the danger of imbibing the Catholic doctrine, if ever they should themselves examine the writings of the fathers, or meet passages quoted from them in its support. Unitarians act in a similar manner in calling Jesus Christ, God; Son of God, &c. They certainly never would have selected these words to express their doctrines, if they had nothing in view but to express them accurately. But the use of these expressions, good care being taken that they shall be understood in a forced meaning, will destroy the effect that they would otherwise have when met in Scripture, in conveying to an unsophisticated mind, the true doctrine of the divine nature of Christ. And this, say what they will, is the real cause why they use them.

It is not only when treating of the Eucharist that this device has been resorted to by the Anglican branch of the Protestant family; and it is a source of humiliation to perceive that the efforts of many of the Oxford Theologians can be said

to be only carrying out this policy.—Other Protestant sects dispose of the authorities of Christian antiquity by saying that errors were introduced at a very early period; they take refuge in those early centuries from which very few works have come down to us, and endeavor to prove that these are not with us. You cannot afford to do this; you cannot spare the Fathers, for most of your Episcopal claims would disappear, or at least be very much weakened, if their authority had no weight. But while "The Protestant Episcopal Church" testifies respect for Christian antiquity, just so far as to enable her to support her own claims, she expects that when her people meet the strong language in which the fathers express the doctrine of the Eucharist, the sacrifices, and other Catholic verities, they will be able to say that their own church uses the same or similar language, and yet believe no more on those points than other Protestant sects.

This policy which has characterized the "Protestant Episcopal Church" since her birth, I am forced to consider as the true cause of the apparent approach which its American branch has made to primitive doctrine regarding the nature of the Eucharist considered as a sacrifice. In the prayer after the consecration you say, "we . . . celebrate with these thy holy gifts, which we now offer unto thee, the memorial of thy Son hath commanded us to make, &c." The short prayer of which this is a part, and the following one which has been made to precede the communion, whereas in the English prayer book it follows, are the only substitute for the sentiments of praise, of adoration and thanksgiving offered up in the ancient church during this—the most solemn part of the service. And what do these words necessarily signify after all?

None even of those whom you call Ultra-Protestants, will deny that the bread and wine may be offered to God, as we offer him all his gifts. Then, lest the doctrine of sacrifice might be gathered from the incidental mention of an offering, a cloud is raised to obscure it, by the frequent repetition and prominent position, occupied by the assertion of all being done as a memorial, and "in remembrance of the death and passion" of the Saviour. The same sentiment is repeated over and over; when the word "sacrifice" is introduced, it is qualified at once as a "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving;" and to prevent all misconception, it is added, "we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls, our bodies, to be a reasonable holy, and living sacrifice unto thee, &c." All these things, which, absolutely speaking, could be said with truth, accumulated together in this place, have no other effect but to destroy any distinct notion of a special offering of the eucharistic elements which could be denominated a sacrifice in the proper sense of the word, given in the supposition that such could have been gathered from the first clause. By all this a double object is gained; enough is inserted to be able to say, that if from the writings of the Fathers and from the ancient liturgies, it is

clear that the Eucharist was considered as a sacrifice by the early church, something similar is also found in your own liturgy, and enough of other words are added to prevent those who use this book from attaching to the first the natural meaning which they seem to convey.—An impression is thus finally produced that there is no sacrifice at all in the christian church, except in that general extended sense of the word in which all good actions may be called sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise—a which sense no one denies its existence—and this is done by the very words that seem to sanction the ancient Catholic doctrine.

The estimation in which the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is held—is but a natural consequence of what would be called at Oxford, the low doctrine which has prevailed in the Protestant Episcopal Church. The celebration of the holy mysteries always held the most prominent part in the worship of the ancient christian, as it does at the present day in the Catholic church. The singing of psalms or other canticles of praise, the recitation of other prayers, the preaching of the word of God, were always held in the highest estimation; but when the faithful came together to adore, they always felt that the most acceptable act of devotion to God was to assist at "the clean oblation," by which the name of God was made great amongst the nations. You will not find one church before the so-called Reformation, in which, at least, on the Lord's day, the Eucharistic sacrifice was not offered up, at which the people considered it a duty to assist. In the earliest ages, while the fervor of christian piety yet waxed strong, they not only assisted, but partook of the holy communion; when fervor diminished they still assisted, while those only who were more fervent, received the communion; and even on these occasions when none of the laity were bound to approach the holy table, the priest did not omit on that account to celebrate the holy mysteries, in which an offering was presented to God, worthy his acceptance, the value of which was not lost, because none partook of the other advantage that was destined to convey. The mass was celebrated, the people assisted at its celebration, and this they always considered the most important act of christian worship. "In vain," exclaimed St. Cyprian, exhorting the people to more frequent communion, but still evidently supposing that the Eucharistic Sacrifice was offered up every day, even when none of those present communicated.—"In vain is the daily sacrifice; in vain do we stand before the altar, there is no one who partakes." (2)

In the Protestant Episcopal Church all this is forgotten. In the beginning of its career, while some Catholic feeling yet lingered amongst its members, it appears that the practice was not entirely discarded. In the first book of Edward VI., some rubrics imply that there may be communion on every festival; others that it may sometimes be even daily. (3)—But this feeling was soon obliterated.—

(1) Oxford Tracts, No. 81, p. 49.

(2) Horn iii. in Ep. ad Eph.

(3) Oxford Tracts, No. 81, p. 18.