

APPROACHES TO ROME IN RITUAL AND DOCTRINE.

BY THE RIGHT REV. E. A. KNOX, D.D.

[Read for him in his absence.]

SINCE it was one of the findings of your Conference last year that "this Conference generally approves the proposals in the measure" (N.A. 84), I do not intend to go behind that finding to-day. Let me only say, that while I accept for the present purpose the concentration of our attention on the Communion Services for the whole and for the sick, I do not thereby commit myself to your Finding 4 in 1923.

In approaching the question of Holy Communion, I shall carry all of you with me in the desire to keep its devotional aspect steadily in view, and to state the divergent opinions upon it, as they would be stated by a devout Romanist on the one side, and a devout Churchman on the other; each wishing to communicate to the other his conception of the Sacrament as an ordinance enabling man to hold communion with God. The advantage of this treatment should be that the differences which come to light will not be antiquated and traditional prejudices, but substantial conceptions of the relation between God and man, conceptions which, genuinely entertained, are of necessity character-building, moral and spiritual, not merely ceremonial.

Approaching the subject thus, we find that all—by "all" for the purposes of this paper, I mean Roman Catholics and English Churchmen—are agreed that our Blessed Lord, being about to break off His daily and earthly intercourse with His disciples, assured them that He would not leave them comfortless, but would come to them, and dwell in them by His Holy Spirit. The communion so established would be more intimate and more real than any that they had hitherto enjoyed. For, whereas He had been heretofore an external Master, Teacher and Friend, and Lord, He would henceforth be an inner, truer, higher, and better Self—the communion thus established being as intimate as that between the Father and the Son. So, assuredly, in our Lord's last discourse is interpreted to the disciples the ultimate purpose of the Sacrament which He had at that time ordained. Whatever differences have arisen as to the exact meaning of His words, and as to the method whereby His gift is conveyed to us, about the ultimate purpose, that of fellowship with the Father and Himself through the Holy Spirit, there is, I believe, no dispute. Of that intercourse we must all of us be conscious. For it has been most truly said: "We acknowledge God as above and beyond. But unless we also intuitively enjoy His activity within us, feeling that we are in a measure one with Him in substance, we can have no immediate

knowledge of causality or of God as the source of our existence and of emergent evolution" (*Emergent Evolution*, by Lloyd Morgan —last sentence).

This agreement, however, disappears as soon as we speak of the means by which our Lord purposed to establish it. The Roman Catholic holds that in the Lord's Supper the communicant, whether he be faithful or not, receives not bread and wine, but only the appearance thereof, that which is really received being "the very true Body and Blood of our Lord, which was born in Bethlehem of the most pure Virgin Mary, baptized in the river Jordan, suffered, was buried, rose again, ascended into heaven, sitteth on the right hand of God." It is, in fact, the true Body and Blood that were offered upon the Cross, present not in a gross, material fashion, but as a Spirit is present, externally to, and independently of, the minds of the Priest and the worshippers. The Roman Catholic would go on to say that the gift was conveyed to him from the altar; and that on the altar this Body and Blood were made to be present by the act of consecration, and were duly offered up by the Priest ordained by the Church expressly that he might offer this Sacrifice. Further, he would add that, in virtue of this Sacrifice, God had been made propitious to himself and to all on whose behalf it was offered. Nor would he confine the efficacy of the offering to those who communicated only. The Sacrifice of the Mass is, in fact, the acknowledged centre of Roman Catholic worship. The Church, that is, the Clergy, having the power to offer this Sacrifice; has authority to order the lives, thoughts, and consciences of all her members. Her greatest punishment is to excommunicate the disobedient, and that sentence of excommunication is ratified in eternity. However repellent and foreign to our ideas this teaching may be, we know that it has ministered comfort to many devout souls, and has guided their spiritual life. We do not know its defects, until we have tried, in a sympathetic spirit, to understand the secret of its power. Its great merit is that it inculcates docility and loyal devotion. By its ritual it appeals to imagination, and, bringing heaven down to earth, seems to carry us out of time into eternity. It recognizes the best elements in natural religion, and enlists them in its service. Yet there, assuredly, is its greatest danger. For natural religion teaches that God is a Being Who can be placated, if He is rightly approached. Here, consequently, between us and the intercourse with the Father and the Son, is interposed a religion of external observances. We are brought into relation with God *ex opere operato*.

For it must not be forgotten that, however devout and faithful the worshipper may be, the Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the elements is entirely independent of his faith. It is a miracle wrought by the act of the Priest, as truly and efficaciously as any miracle wrought by our Lord on earth. His Resurrection, for instance, would have been equally a fact in the order of world history, even if none of His disciples had believed it. So, if the whole congregation were avowed atheists, the act of the Priest

would cause the substance of bread and wine to disappear, and the natural Body and Blood of Christ to take its place. The Sacrifice which the Priest offered, presenting the Crucified Son to the Father, would have been consummated on their behalf, whether they had any spiritual life in them or not, so long as there was a possibility of their having such life. When we try to approach such teaching as this in a devotional spirit, we are overwhelmed by the impression of a superhuman power vested in the Priesthood. Further, we cannot refrain from offering adoring homage to Him Who is the real substance behind the appearances of bread and wine. The Sacrifice, which the Priest proceeds to offer, must be to the penitent believer of efficacy hardly less than the Sacrifice of the Cross. It is one with that great Sacrifice, and no less than that Sacrifice blots out all mortal sin. It makes satisfaction for sin, and removes the penalty that had been due to the sinner. All this merit it professes solely on account of the fact that it is offered by the Priest who has authority from the Church to offer it. The soul of man can rest on a propitiation wrought before his eyes, which is one with the propitiation wrought on Calvary. The believer is assured that he has seen the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sin of the world, and has worshipped at His feet. That worship he very naturally continues to offer; when the reserved Host is in the tabernacle, after the service is over; and, if that is his faith, who can blame him?

I have dwelt, with such fullness as the occasion allows, on the Roman doctrine because we cannot otherwise appreciate the meaning of our Communion Service. Very rightly, that service is not drawn up in the form of negations. Very rightly, when we remember that it was first used by congregations that had grown up under the influences which I have described, it preserved for them all that was consistent with Holy Scripture. There was no wilful desire to shock tender and devout consciences educated and trained by the doctrine of the Mass. At the same time, there was an intention of making a radical change. Cranmer tells us frankly that there were two doctrines which he intended to pull up by the roots, viz. the doctrines of Transubstantiation, i.e. of the Real Presence of Christ's Flesh and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar, and of the Sacrifice and Oblation of Christ made by the Priest for the salvation of the quick and the dead. On what account did he reckon these two doctrines to be so perilous, that, if they were left, they would soon bring back the whole Roman doctrine?

Again, let us try to grasp the devotional essence of the new teaching, and its positive rather than its negative bearings. At the root of it all was the doctrine of justification by faith. "There is no condemnation for them that believe." Its watchword was "that I may be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." We are at once challenged by an idea of righteousness, which leaves no room for merit acquired by the observance of ceremonial law. That had

been the Jewish idea of righteousness as distinct from holiness—to be “blameless as touching the ordinances of the law.” “The righteousness of God” does not, however, exclude simply merit acquired through the ceremonial law. It goes far deeper. It makes of no account before God all merit acquired by observance of the moral law. I need not remind you that this does not mean that the moral law is set aside as worthless. “The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just, and good.” It means that no accumulation of merit, even by obedience to the moral law, can come up to the standard of the righteousness of God. His righteousness is the righteousness of an infinitely pure and holy Being. It is, and for ever must be, out of reach of human attainment. If that righteousness is to be ours, it must be a free gift of God to us—and the message of the Gospel is, that God in Christ has not only reconciled the world to Himself, and blotted out all the transgressions of the souls that have by living faith committed themselves to His pardoning love, but He has also counted them righteous for the merits of the Infinite obedience and righteousness of Christ, Who is one with them, and they with Him.

Forgive me for taking you over such familiar ground. Unless we call it to mind, we cannot really understand how men of genuine piety brought up in the Mediæval Church, and ordained to be priests in it, with the awful power of making the Body and Blood of Christ present on the altar and offering Him up in sacrifice, could ever have turned their backs upon the possession of such an inheritance. No mere juggling with a metaphysical problem, no idle disputation about substance and accidents, could have moved men, who once honestly held such a conception of their office, to set aside teaching that came to them with such high authority, such world-wide acceptance. Nothing short of a new and living gospel would have moved them. That gospel was the gospel of justification by faith—the *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*.

That gospel necessitated a fresh orientation of sacramental teaching. The union between Christ and the believer is not only effected by faith, but is so complete and all-pervading as to leave no room for a sacrifice offered by a priest. It is equally impossible in view of this gospel to speak of “God being made propitious to us” through the acts of a human intermediary. Feeding upon Christ is wholly a spiritual experience, the intercourse between our humanity and His Divine Human Being. The Sacraments are “certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and of God’s goodwill towards us, by the which He doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him.” Whereas all doctrines of real sacrifice imply an imperfect reconciliation with God, Sacraments are overflowings of the grace of God, condescending to our infirmity, and using *material* objects to assure us, through our senses, of His love towards us, and, through that assurance, to further His spiritual work in our inmost spirits. The more we try to turn these material objects into spiritual, whether by transformation or by combination, or

by clothing them with some new virtue of their own, the more surely do we destroy their sacramental value.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Reformation gave us back the Sacraments, and specially the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It found the laity communicating only once a year. It restored the rule of communion at least thrice a year, and opened the way for more frequent communion. The Mass had held the laity spell-bound in the nave in the presence of a stupendous miracle. The communion either brought the Holy Table down to them, or invited them into the chancel. Whereas, hitherto, there had been no communion except after sacrifice, by our service there was no sort of sacrifice except after communion. The devout worshipper was warned to prepare himself by diligent self-examination. Epistle, gospel, sermon, and solemn exhortation called out his faith, and stirred him to make ready for entrance after confession and absolution into the Holy of Holies. There he met his ascended Lord, and was made partaker of the banquet of His Flesh and Blood. Then returning as it were to earth, he joined with the priests in the consecration of the elements, and partaking of the consecrated Bread and Wine, feasted once more, with quickened faith, on the Body and Blood of the Lord and gave thanks for the remembrance of His death. So, united with his Lord and with his brethren at the Holy Table, he offered His sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, "the fruit of lips giving thanks unto His Name." His partaking of that sacred Food was "only after an heavenly and spiritual manner," yet, for that very reason, it was all the more real. The "means whereby the Body of Christ was received and eaten was faith." Without faith there was "no partaking of Christ."

Such is the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion according to our service and formularies. The ritual accords with the simplicity of the doctrine. We kneel to receive the Bread and Wine, but by the act of kneeling no adoration is intended nor ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental Bread and Wine there bodily received, or unto any Corporal Presence of Christ's Natural Flesh and Blood. All the old ornaments of the Church, the incense, the sacring-bell, the lights and the tabernacle are gone. The sacrificial ornaments of the minister have disappeared. He no longer elevates the consecrated elements for adoration. They are not gazed upon, nor carried about. They are not reserved, but reverently used for their ordained purpose. Above all, the congregation is a congregation of communicants, and the service is essentially and wholly from first to last a Communion Service. In the old Missals you will find after the Mass the words "*Sequitur communio*," without a single prayer or ceremony provided, ministered, at all events sometimes, by priests wearing cottas. Our service is the service of *communio*. The Mass has disappeared, except for a few fragments of prayers, and the Epistle and Gospel. The two services in their aim and structure are mutually exclusive. The very foundations of our relation to God, on which they rest, are mutually exclusive also.

Now, it is proposed to authorize for use in every parish in England an alternative service, or, as some prefer to call it, "a permissible deviation." At first we were assured, and the statement has been repeated in the Press, at Diocesan and Ruridecanal Conferences, and in the National Assembly itself, that no alteration of doctrine is intended. The purpose is described as that of giving emphasis to a side of sacramental teaching common both to the primitive Church and to a large body of Anglican divinity. By a slight alteration of the order of two or three prayers the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist is to be developed for the benefit of those who prefer to make use of the alternative. For those who prefer it, the old service will remain unchanged. Strong appeals are made to us in the name of brotherly love, of Christian charity, and of mutual toleration, to consent to these proposals. The appeals have been very effective. I reckon that at least one-third of the Evangelical clergy have given way to them, and among these many who hold most prominent positions among us. Those who have not given way to the appeals are described as "harsh," as "misrepresenting the truth," as "unfair," as "intolerant and even arrogant." Their policy is called a "dog in the manger" policy, and their Churchmanship is labelled as "erroneous and as defective."

But time and discussion have put a new complexion on the proposals. It now appears that we are being asked to give the sanction of the Church—not to the teaching of Bull, or Jeremy Taylor, or Thorndike, or John Johnson, but to teaching which, in a penal suit, where the Court put the most favourable construction that it could on the words of the defendant, was found to be capable of an interpretation not definitely excluded by the formularies of the Church, an interpretation which the defendant did not intend. With that teaching is to be combined the use of vestments and incense, of elevation of the consecrated elements, and of genuflexion, for all of which, if they had been before the Court, the defendant would have been condemned. This service will, it is well known, be used in churches where fasting communion is inculcated, and non-fasting communion practically forbidden. It will be the chief Sunday service, and, while it closely resembles the Mass, no definite instruction or statement is promised us, to distinguish it from the Mass. The doctrine of the Mass is clear. The doctrine of Holy Communion as stated in our Articles and Service is evidently contrary to the doctrine of the Mass, and even contradictory. The doctrine of the Caroline divines as to Eucharistic Sacrifice is also clearly distinguishable from the Mass. They teach that the *Communion*—let that word be marked—they knew nothing of non-communicating Eucharists—is a pleading before God of the Sacrifice of the Cross, and that the consecrated elements acquire by consecration a new power or virtue. They know of the Spiritual Presence as a presence only to the spirits of faithful communicants.

The *new* doctrine no one has defined, except in terms very

hard to distinguish from the Roman. Archbishops Temple and Maclagan set out to make it quite plain, but they failed signally to do so. Naturally they could not accept the Roman doctrine, but neither did they expressly deny it, for they would have disappointed those whose cause they were advocating. Rome said: "Your priests are not priests. They do not offer our sacrifice." It was no answer to say: "They offer some other sacrifice." There is a passage in the reply of the R.C. Bishops to the Archbishops which is singularly apposite to our present purpose. They say (p. 70): "Cardinal Newman contrasts the traditional Anglican doctrine with the recent doctrine of the extreme High Church section of your Communion; and since the days when he wrote the numbers of this party have grown considerably. We have no desire to question, any more than the Cardinal does, that many of these believe in a true Objective Presence, a true Sacrifice, and a true Sacrificial Priesthood. On the contrary, we acknowledge willingly that their books, and still more their practice, bear indisputable testimony that they do. For we see that they lay stress on the Sacramental Presence, on non-communicant attendance (another name for hearing Mass), and on priestly power, while Cranmer and your divines, together with the not inconsiderable number of their modern representatives, lay stress on the idolatry of Eucharistic adoration, and on the injury done to the perfect oblation on the Cross by the practice of private masses. We sympathize with this returning attraction for the Catholic doctrines."

That reply throughout is worthy of careful perusal to-day, for it defines plainly the essentials of the doctrine of the Mass, and the incompatibility of that doctrine with the sacrificial teaching of the Caroline divines. Those divines would have added the incompatibility also of that doctrine with the sacrificial teaching of the primitive Church. It is not surprising that some of our Evangelical clergy, especially those who have been influenced by modernism, should have been attracted by the idea of making room in an alternative Prayer Book for communion services supposed to be more accordant either with the high Anglican views of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or with modernist ideas of sin and atonement. There is no terror among some Evangelicals more marked than the terror of being accounted "narrow-minded." Their fear has prejudiced them even against public discussion of the National Assembly proposals. They have dreaded the arousing of sectarian passions. It must now be admitted that public discussion has been of the utmost value, since it has led one who holds the comparatively moderate position of the Bishop of Ripon to his recent avowal. The Bishop has definitely set aside Jeremy Taylor's definition of the Spiritual Presence in the Sacrament in favour of that of Mr. Bennett of Frome, as a measure of the comprehensiveness of the Church of England. The teaching of Bennett of Frome is not to be reconciled with the teaching of Cranmer. The two are mutually exclusive. Clergy who honestly hold Cranmer's teaching will find themselves tolerated as defective and

erroneous teachers in a Church which has made room for the doctrine of a real, objective Presence of our Lord in the elements, quite independently of any Presence to the spirits of communicants.

If it is alleged that both views are to be found among the clergy to-day, and that the Church ought to recognize facts and make provision for them, the answer to this allegation is simple enough. An established Church has to accept all that is involved in establishment, including the decisions of the established Courts of Law. Acquiescence is not the same thing as entertainment. Still less is it the same thing as the inculcation of doctrine. Ceremonial is the outward and effective means by which doctrine is taught to the unlearned with the authority of the Church. A Church which has altered its Communion Service, and sanctioned ritual, previously forbidden, intended to convey the doctrine of the Mass, has passed from acquiescence to active co-operation. It is this co-operation in teaching the Roman doctrine of the Mass by provision of a new service and sanctioning use of Mass vestments, co-operation which makes these lawful in every congregation, and places every congregation at the mercy of the Priest—it is this *active co-operation* in proclaiming what we believe to be untrue, that is filling the hearts of many of the clergy and laity with absolute dismay. It seems to them that the old Church which they and their fathers have loved and served is turning her back upon them; as if warning were being given that they were only being tolerated in the hope that they may be converted before the time comes for their ejection. For a Church which accepts the Mass, with all that it involves, must eventually close its doors against those who refuse to recognize the claim of its Priesthood to offer the Mass as a sacrifice for the living and the dead.

Messrs. Constable & Co. have published *Ponjola*, by Cynthia Stockley, in a popular edition at 3s. 6d. net. This story of Rhodesian life gives a vivid picture of its romance and its vigour, but more particularly of its sordid and pathetic aspects. The motto of the book is in its closing words, "When He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold." The narrative shows how great a curse the drinking habit is to the mining community.

The Women's Protestant Union send us *In the Desert* (2s. 6d.), by Miss Deborah Alcock, and *A Storm against the Wall* (1s. 6d.), by E. M. Wagstaff Smith. The former is an excellent story of persecution in the Cevennes after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and helps us to see what the Huguenots suffered in France. The latter is a tale of Ireland, in which the machinations of a Roman priest and his friends are described. All ends well after a daring rescue from a trawler. We wish that the works of Miss Alcock were more widely read to-day, as she is careful in her quotation from historical documents, and has a true sense of perspective in her choice of incidents. We are inclined to be forgetful of the trials undergone in the past by the brave Protestant groups in Latin lands.