

THE HOLY EUCHARIST A COMFORT TO THE  
PENITENT.

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A SERMON

PREACHED

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF CHRIST, IN OXFORD,

ON THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

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BY THE

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“ The true understanding of this fruition and union, which is betwixt the body and the head, betwixt the true believers and Christ, the ancient Catholic Fathers both perceiving themselves, and commending to their people, were not afraid to call this Supper, some of them, the salve of immortality and sovereign preservative against death; other, a deifical communion; other, the sweet dainties of our Saviour, the pledge of eternal health, the defence of faith, the hope of the resurrection; other, the food of immortality, the healthful grace, and the conservatory to everlasting life. All which sayings both of the holy Scripture and godly men, truly attributed to this celestial banquet and feast, if we would often call to mind, O how would they inflame our hearts to desire the participation of these mysteries, and oftentimes to covet after this bread, continually to thirst for this food!” *Homilies, 1st Part of the Sermon on the Sacrament.*

## PREFACE.

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It is with pain that the following Sermon is published. For it is impossible for any one not to foresee one portion of its effects; what floods, namely, of blasphemy against holy truth will be poured forth by the infidel or heretical or secular and anti-religious papers with which our Church and country is at this time afflicted. It is like casting with one's own hands, that which is most sacred to be outraged and profaned. Still there seem to be higher duties, which require even this. The Gospel must be a savour unto life or a savour unto death; from the first, it has been blasphemed, wherever it has been preached. It has been blasphemed by Jews, Pagans, and each class of heretics as they arose; the Arians used blasphemous jests, taught the people blasphemous ballads, and profaned the Holy Eucharist; increase of scoffers and blasphemers is among the tokens of the last days; and yet the two witnesses are to bear testimony, though in sackcloth. The more the truth prevails, the madder must the world become; the blasphemies with which holy truth is now assailed, are but a token of its victories.

The first duty of a Minister of Christ is to His little ones; for their sakes, lest any be perplexed in consequence of all which has been lately said, this Sermon is published; and for them the following explanation is intended.

Nothing, throughout the whole Sermon, was further from my thoughts than controversy. I had, on such occasions as my office afforded, commenced a course of Sermons on the

comforts provided by the Gospel for the penitent amid the consciousness of sin, with the view to meet the charge of sternness, involved by the exhibition of one side of Catholic truth ; in this course, the sacred subject of the Holy Eucharist, of necessity, came in its order ; and it was my wish (however I may have been hindered by sudden indisposition from developing my meaning as I wished) to point out its comforting character to the penitent in two ways ; 1st) indirectly, because it is the Body and Blood of his Lord, and is the channel of His Blessed Presence to the soul, 2ndly) because in Holy Scripture the mention of remission of sins is connected with it.

In essaying to teach this, I could not but forget controversy ; having, in the commencement, warned against irreverent disputings, I lived for the time in holy Scripture and its deepest expositors, the Fathers, and was careful to use rather their language than my own, lest, on so high a subject, I should seem to speak over-boldly. Conscious of my own entire adherence to the formularies of my Church, and having already repeatedly expressed myself on this subject, and in the very outset of this Sermon conveyed at once, that I believed the elements to “ remain in their natural substances,” and that I did not attempt to define the *mode* of the Mystery that they were also the Body and Blood of Christ<sup>a</sup>, I had no fear of being misunderstood.

Once more to repeat my meaning, in order to relieve any difficulties which might (if so be) be entertained by pious minds, trained in an opposed and defective system of teaching, before whom the Sermon may now be brought. My own views were cast, (so to speak) in the mould of the minds of Bp. Andrewes<sup>b</sup> and Abp. Bramhall<sup>b</sup>, which I regarded as the type of the teaching of our Church. From them originally, and with them, I learnt to receive in their

<sup>a</sup> p. 7.

<sup>b</sup> See Appendix.

literal sense, our Blessed Lord's solemn words, "This is My Body," and from them, while I believe the consecrated elements to become, by virtue of His consecrating Words, truly and really, yet spiritually and in an ineffable way, His Body and Blood, I learnt also to withhold my thoughts as to the *mode* of this great Mystery, but "as a Mystery" to "adore it<sup>b</sup>." With the Fathers then, and our own great Divines, (explaining, as I believe, the true meaning of our Church<sup>c</sup>;) I could not but speak of the consecrated elements, as being, what, since He has so called them, I believe them to become, His Body and Blood; and I feared not, that, using their language, I should, when speaking of Divine and "spiritual" things, be thought to mean otherwise than "spiritually," or having disclaimed all thoughts as to the *mode* of their being, that any should suppose I meant a *mode* which our Church disallows.

It remains only to say, that the notes (with a few exceptions) are such as, amid hurry and severe indisposition, I could, when my Sermon was demanded, put together, with the view at once of shewing those who were to pronounce upon it, that I had not used high language, of my own mind, and that they might not unconsciously blame the Fathers, while they thought they were blaming myself only. They spread over the wider space, because,

<sup>b</sup> Bp. Andrews, *ib*.

<sup>c</sup> As shewn by the use of the Ancient words, "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ," (rejected in Edw. VI. 2d Book.) the Rubric for "the *reverent* eating and drinking" of the consecrated elements which remain, and the Article, which, while declaring that "the Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a spiritual and heavenly manner," by the use of the words "given" and "taken," shews that it calls That "the Body of Christ" which is "given" by the minister, "taken" by the people. (See Knox's Remains, ii. p. 170.) In like way, the Catechism teaches that "The Body and Blood of Christ are *verily and indeed taken* and received of the faithful, in the Lord's Supper." The very strength of the words of the Rubric denying "the *Coporal* Presence of Christ's *natural* Flesh and Blood" in itself implies (as we know of those who inserted that Rubric) that they believed every thing short of this.