ON EUCHARISTICAL ADORATION: WITH CONSIDERATIONS SUGGESTED BY A LATE PASTORAL LETTER (1858) ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649014262

On eucharistical adoration: with considerations suggested by a late pastoral letter (1858) on the doctrine of the most holy Eucharist by John Keble

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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JOHN KEBLE

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ON

EUCHARISTICAL ADORATION.

THIRD EDITION.

WITH CONSIDERATIONS

SUGGESTED BY A

LATE PASTORAL LETTER (1858) ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST.

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN KEBLE, M.A.,

VICAR OF HURSLEY.

"It pleased God the Word to unite the created Flesh which is of Us without blemish unto Himself: therefore It is adored, with God the Word, inasmuch as He hath deified It."—*Anon. ap. Chrys.*, ed. Sav., vi. 962.

"Grant, O Lord, that in reading Thy Holy Word, I may never prefer my private sentiments before those of the Church in the purely ancient times of Christianity."—Bishop Wilson, *Sacra Privata*, p. 135, ed. 1853.

Oxford and London:
JAMES PARKER AND CO.
1867.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE second of the following Treatises having in a manner grown out of the first, it has seemed well to publish the two in one volume; which thus contains the matured views of the Author—the most decided expression of his thoughts—on the subject of the Holy Eucharist.

℣. O Lord Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

℟. Preserve us from being carried about with divers and strange doctrines.

Almighty, everliving Father, Who hast promised unto Thy faithful people life by Thine Incarnate Son, even as He liveth by Thee; Grant unto us all, and especially to our Bishops and Pastors, and to those whom Thy Providence hath in any wise entrusted with the treasure of Thy holy doctrine amongst us, Thy good Spirit, always so to believe and understand, to feel and firmly to hold, to speak and to think, concerning the Mystery of the Communion of Thy Son's Body and Blood, as shall be well-pleasing to Thee, and profitable to our souls; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the same Spirit, One God, world without end. *Amen.*

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

I WISH here to say a few words, by way of explaining why this little book re-appears with only such slight changes, as will be found on comparing the present with the First Edition.

Besides correcting a few oversights,—more, however, and less excusable than I could have wished,—those changes are mostly confined to that portion of the work which deals with the intention of the final revisers of the Prayer-book; on which point, as far as I have gone hitherto, all additional researches have tended only to strengthen our case.

I could not be without misgivings, when I found that some of those, whom I am bound on all accounts deeply to respect, thought the treatise incorrect in reasoning, and (what indeed I should most exceedingly deprecate) its conclusions, if not its general spirit, alien to those of the English Church.

I have therefore re-considered it to the best of my leisure and ability; and can only hope that it is not mere self-deceit which makes me feel unable to plead guilty to either of these very serious charges.

It has been said that the two first chapters of the Essay are irrelevant,—that they proceed on an *ignoratio elenchi*,—because they do not, it is conceived, of themselves prove, that our Lord's Person is to be adored as present in the Eucharist by a Real Presence of His Body and Blood,—the Inward Part of that Sacrament. Waiving the question how far the negative is correct, the places there alleged will not,

I imagine, seem irrelevant, if taken together they constitute a reasonable presumption in favour of that Presence, and the worship resulting from it: just as the fact, that everywhere in the Holy Scriptures we are encouraged to pay all honour and devotion to our Lord, and nowhere warned against excess in so doing, would constitute a strong presumption in favour of His proper Godhead, though there were no express texts to assert it; and is a strong reason for interpreting doubtful texts and ambiguous sayings of the Church in the higher rather than in the lower sense concerning Him. This is, indeed, all that those two first chapters profess[a]; and if they do carry us so far, I cannot allow that they are irrelevant to the main argument; which, in this aspect, may be stated thus:—

If the general presumption from Scripture and from Natural Piety be in favour of Eucharistical Adoration, then doubtful passages in Scripture, in Fathers and Liturgies, and in our own Formularies, should be construed in that sense. But such presumption does exist, unquestionably, to a very great amount. Therefore such should be our rule of interpretation.

Proceeding to Christian Antiquity, the treatise alleges certain undeniable facts. 1. Writers of high credit in the fourth and fifth centuries affirm it to have been the custom of the whole Church in their time to worship in the Eucharist the Flesh which Christ took of the Virgin Mary. 2. They mention it as a primitive universal tradition. 3. They account for it by the Incarnation, and by the Real Spiritual Presence in the Sacrament. 4. The Christian world, during the whole time of which that worship is affirmed, had with one voice, both in Church and out of Church, been declaring its faith in such a Presence as no man could believe without adoring[b]. (This I do not profess to demonstrate, but accept

[a] See the last section of chap. ii.

[b] At least in heart; for I have stated in the outset of the argument, and I hope it will be borne in mind all along, that nothing external is necessarily implied; nothing indeed

it as demonstrated by Dr. Pusey and others.) So that the historical statement is just what one might expect from the doctrinal: and there is nothing in antiquity to contradict either of them; and very much, as we have seen, both in Scripture and in man's natural heart, to bespeak our favourable acceptance of them.

It is thought, however, that men may safely disregard the historical evidence to the fact of Eucharistical Adoration, (α.) because, as here exhibited, it is comprised in only four or five passages; or, (β.) because these passages are referred to by Roman Catholics for the same purpose: and as to the doctrinal statements of the first five centuries, concurring as they do entirely with the historical testimonies, it is by some replied, (γ.) that the Fathers and Liturgies teach a Virtual Presence but Real Absence of the Body and Blood of Christ: by others, not so many, (δ.) that there is indeed full testimony to the Presence, but that the worship does not follow, seeing that His Body and Blood may be present apart from His Divine Person. (ε.) Cases (and they are very numerous) to which neither of these statements can be made to apply, are presently disposed of with the remark, That the Ancients were writing rhetorically, not theologically, and would have expressed themselves otherwise had they been aware of the errors which should one day arise in the Church. On each of these solutions I will say a few words, just to indicate why they do not appear satisfactory.

(α.) To a public matter of fact, such as the custom of Adoration, four or five contemporary witnesses, circumstanced as those Fathers were, would be held by most historians amply sufficient; unless there were strong counter evidence, or an overpowering degree of intrinsic improba-

new or strange, nor more than pious Church people (unless they have been embarrassed by theories) habitually practise, though it may be with something of ignorance or indistinctness. No need to start back, as if one were teaching some new thing, instead of only helping Christians to approve to their own judgments what they have always felt devoutly in their hearts.