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CATHOLICITY AND COMPROMISE ;

OR

“ WHY CANNOT EVANGELICALS BE MORE TOLERANT ? ”

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

THE object of this article is to answer the question, “ Why cannot you Evangelicals display more liberality of mind ? You are not asked to give up the present Prayer Book, nor to read one service from the Revised Book. All that you are asked to do is to face facts. The so-called ‘ Catholic ’ revival has beyond all dispute established itself in the Church of England. It is only natural that this undeniable fact should be recognized in the formularies and public worship of the Church, that all suspicions of disloyalty should be frankly and courageously abandoned. Let those who differ be content to extend toleration to one another. On this condition anarchical extremists can be brought to order, peace and goodwill restored, and a reunited Church can go out to evangelize the world. In the name of charity and of brotherly kindness withdraw your opposition, and allow reality of worship to those who find that they cannot use the present Prayer Book sincerely and honestly in their devotions. In furtherance of this appeal brotherly conferences have been held in the House of Clergy between Evangelicals and High Churchmen : a spirit of conciliation has been exhibited on both sides : agreement on difficult questions has been reached. What then is the meaning of this stubborn opposition ? Do you wish to treat us for all ages to the unhappy narrowness of the sixteenth century ? May we not expect the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century to meet the wants of the present day ? ”

It has been necessary to expand the question with which we started in order to present the issue, as fairly as we can, from the point of view of those who propound it. We live in an age of toleration, toleration which gathers more weight than we always realize from the forces of absolute religious indifference behind it. No appeal is less popular than the appeal to authority. Conformity to established usage is regarded almost as a sin, defiance of custom as a sign of enlightenment. The whole trend of public opinion is on the side of license, of experiment, of appeal to the

standard of practical results. In such an atmosphere defence of a Prayer Book that has been in use for centuries is no easy task. Yet we hope to show solid grounds for our attitude of resistance to proposed changes in the Communion service as the principal point at issue.

Our first answer will be this. The question put to us implies that alteration of services is a matter that concerns the clergy only; it leaves the laity altogether out of account. Nothing is more certain than that the whole demand for Revision of any doctrinal importance would fall to the ground, if the laity were given the power to decide which form of service they would prefer. When first the cry of "Life and Liberty" was sounded, a large part of its popularity was due to the hope which its advocates held out that the laity would have at least increased control of the choice of incumbent and of the ordering of services. The Parochial Church Council was to have powers which in point of fact have never been conferred upon it. It was suggested in the Church Assembly that these powers would be found in the Church Patronage Bill. But they are not there. The main feature of the Bill is the extent to which it transfers a considerable amount of lay patronage to Bishops, and increases the power of Bishops to object to nomination of incumbents on other grounds than those of ritual and doctrine.¹

It is by no mere oversight that these powers are refused to the laity. It is part of the so-called "Catholic" system. So far back as 1852 Archbishop Gray of Capetown, recording an interview with Dr. Pusey, tells us: "found him alarmed at the readiness with which the whole Church was disposed to give power on points of doctrine to laity. Found he did not agree with the view that their assent should be asked on points of doctrine: regarded ancient precedent as complimentary more than as involving privileges." It is to this deeply rooted principle that the laity have no right to be consulted on points of doctrine, rather than to mere self-will, that we may attribute the deliberate defiance of the wishes of congregations by many clergy in regard to ritual or ordering of services. The clergy as intermediaries between God and the laity impose on the latter such observances as God has ordered

¹ Some amendments, since these words were written, confer on the parishioners *qualified* powers of objection to proposed nominees for presentation.

for their benefit, through the Church, that is, through clerical tradition.

Now, whatever doubts may be raised as to the interpretation of our Formularies, one feature of the Reformation is beyond all question. It was a reversal of the relation between clergy and laity. The Book of Common Prayer was not forced on the laity by the clergy, but by the laity on the clergy. The Elizabethan Act of Uniformity abolished all previous uses, and ordered one use and one only throughout the Church. It was opposed by all the Bishops in the House of Lords and carried over their heads. Convocation was not consulted. Again, although the clergy were allowed to prepare the Prayer Book of 1662, Parliament, while accepting the book, was careful to express its right to have altered it. By authority of Parliament the revised book was once more imposed upon the clergy, and those who refused it were ejected. That relation of the two orders has already been seriously disturbed by the events of the last 50 years. It will be entirely destroyed when alternative uses are allowed. Practically, liberty of choice for the clergy will mean to the laity loss of the right, which they secured at the Reformation, to control absolutely the public worship of the Church. It is not mere narrow-mindedness, not illiberal dread of comprehensiveness, not mere conservative dislike of innovation that prompts opposition to the present proposals. They would have had a different reception, if they had been accompanied by provisions safeguarding the rights of the laity. But this does not mean that they would have been acceptable. They would, even so, have introduced strife and confusion into public worship, and "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the Churches." It is forgetfulness of this great principle that has gone so far to destroy the spiritual life of the nation, and to evacuate the great religious revival of the nineteenth century of the greater part of its value.

Our next objection to the contemplated doctrinal changes is that they must be regarded as a deliberate and far-reaching effort to obtain the sanction of the nation for the Counter-Reformation. This is so serious a charge that we must explain more exactly what we mean by it. What we definitely mean to assert is that there has long been a party within the Church whose deliberate policy and desire is to restore the Church of England to the Roman

obedience, and that Prayer Book revision is being used by them as an instrument for that purpose. What is far more serious is that, while the Bishops individually are, except perhaps in a few instances, not members of that party, nor committed to that policy, their failure to exercise the disciplinary powers that they possess has greatly facilitated its progress. That failure has made the complete success of the party appear to it to be only a question of time, if Parliamentary consent is given to the proposals relating to the Holy Communion. A brief examination of the recent history of our Church will abundantly establish this contention, though it will not be possible in the compass of a short article to indicate more than the outlines and chief stages of that history.

The first stage was the effort of Dr. Pusey to reduce to a minimum the more unpopular doctrines of the Church of Rome—unpopular, that is, to Englishmen. He appealed to Newman, to the Archbishop of Paris and to others, that the Church of Rome in the Vatican Council of 1870 should distinguish between doctrines commonly taught but not essential, and those that were absolutely binding on the conscience of believers. The latter, he hoped, might be accepted by Anglicans. He laboured also to obtain some new definition of transubstantiation. There were even suggestions that the Bishop of Brechin should be summoned to the Council, and that Pusey should go with him as his theologian. Rome with Manning as her prompter replied by adding to her creed the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. "Manning," says a historian of the Council, "was enamoured of the idea of authority as the slave is of liberty." The Pope became the Church.

After Dr. Pusey's death Lord Halifax eagerly promoted an attempt to obtain from Rome recognition of the validity of Anglican Orders. Rome replied with an unqualified negative. Anglican orders were pronounced invalid not on disputable historical grounds, but because it was obvious that we did not consecrate priests to offer the Mass. The two English Archbishops attempted to cover the retreat of this unhappy venture—but how? By quoting our Communion service as though the very changes now proposed to be introduced into the Canon were already there. It was a reply that carried conviction only to those who were already convinced. The idea that Rome would give us even such recognition as she accords to the orthodox Greek Church was dissipated.

Then followed the bitter outbursts of this party against the whole of the Reformation. The Church of England should repent of it in sackcloth and ashes. The Prayer Book which had been almost the idol of the old Tractarians was vilified. The most distinctively Roman usages, Reservation of the Sacrament for adoration, use of images and reverence to them, substitution of Mass for mattins, came quickly one upon another. The declaration against these practices in the Report of the Royal Commission of 1906 was treated with contempt. Even Bishop Gore denied the existence of any line of deep cleavage between our Church and the Roman.

On the other hand, it should be noted (1) that the promoters of this movement consider that the Appeal of the last Lambeth Conference sets them free to accept Roman Catholic orders while continuing to be clergy of our Church, and (2) that "conversations" with Roman Catholic authorities, sanctioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury and vigorously defended by several Bishops, have been conducted—with what precise object or result we do not yet know.

In this summary it has been impossible to do more than call attention to certain salient facts. The significance of those facts will be denied. The loyalty of the High Church party to our Church will be reaffirmed. The connivance of our Bishops with what would be regarded politically as a "conspiracy" will be indignantly repudiated—and that in all sincerity. But it is quite possible for a nation and its rulers—equally so for a Church and its authorities—to pursue a policy which plays into the hands of conspirators, while themselves ignorant of the conspiracy, or shutting their eyes to it. But they must not be surprised that those who regard the conspiracy as treacherous and disastrous obstinately oppose all that tends to favour it, and distrust promises of resistance hereafter at points where they see that resistance is untenable. Mr. Asquith, when he placed Trade Unions above the law, was really responsible for consequences which he neither desired nor foresaw.

Here we are brought to our third great ground of opposition to revision of the Communion service, that is, the solidarity of the so-called "Catholic" system. There is no question that the attraction of that system lies in certain features of religious life

which it seems to produce. We say "seems," because the features of saintly life, of self-sacrificing devotion, of unquestionable communion with God, and of fruitfulness in good works are not the monopoly of any one religious system. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and the saints of God are drawn not only into communion with Him, but into communion with one another, and by such communion form distinctive types of piety, aiming each communion at its own ideal. The ideal of the "Catholic" system is "obedience to a divinely constituted and specifically identified authority." Obviously this ideal has attraction for those who occupy some position of authority in the hierarchy. A Catholic Bishop receives ready obedience from Catholic clergy, and Catholic clergy from the Catholic laity. The result is the formation of a compact body which has the same kind of advantages for aggression that discipline confers on an army. The defects of the Catholic system, when it secures obedience without either piety or morality, must be studied in countries where it is unchecked by Protestantism.

Catholic discipline, like army discipline, is not a body of rules or doctrines from which each soldier may pick and choose what is most to his taste. There may be times when the soldier is off duty, there may be for the Catholic beliefs and duties which are not *de fide*. But for both alike, on all points that are essential to his service, in army or in Church as the case may be, the system must be accepted as a whole. Partial obedience is mere mutiny. To what extent this is true is still imperfectly realized by those who call themselves Anglo-Catholics. We venture to present them with a reminder. In 1899 Archbishop Ireland had gone to Rome from America to explain to his Holiness the attitude of the American Bishops towards the Temporal Power of the Papacy, with the result that the Archbishop had to fly from Rome almost for his life, and to renounce absolutely all that he had hitherto tried to maintain. But this was not enough. The Jesuit review, *Civita Catholica*, pointed the moral as follows:

"The practical lesson all ought to draw from the Papal Encyclical is that Catholic principles do not change by lapse of time, or by difference of country, or through new discoveries, or from motives of expediency. They remain the principles that Christ taught, that the Church proclaimed, that the Popes and Councils defined, that the Saints held, and that the Doctors defended. They must

be taken as they are or left. Whoso accepts them in all their fulness and rigidity is Catholic ; whosoever hesitates, oscillates, adapts himself to his times or compromises, may call himself by what name he will, but before God and the Church he is a rebel and a traitor."

This position is not really as unreasonable as it sounds in our ears, if we are careful to remember that the Catholic type of piety depends on unquestioning self-surrender to authority. The authority which claims such self-surrender must claim to be Divine, and, so far as it is exercised, must partake of Divine immutability. Our so-called Anglo-Catholics would fain substitute for this immutable authority the idea of a corporate Catholic consciousness, which makes room for some flexibility. But even they maintain that "the value of religious experience is confined to those who accept at least the general outlines of the Catholic conception of religion : the experience of those who reject it is worthless precisely to the extent to which they reject it." From which naturally follows the assertion in the Jesuit organ quoted above.

Now what is at the base of these, to us, so monstrous pretensions ? It is neither more nor less than the belief that our Lord has constituted priests to offer the Mass. The whole Roman system is neither more nor less than the development of this one principle. We say the development—not necessarily the logical development. If it were a mere question of logic, syllogisms might be constructed, authorities selected, to show why we accept the Mass, and forbid adoration : why we permit, but do not enforce, auricular confession and so forth. The development is far more than a logical development. It is the extension of the principle of the obedience which the laity owe to the priesthood, on certain lines. The experience of centuries, exercised over vast masses of humanity, has shown these lines to be conducive to the type of religion at which the Catholic system aims. Our resistance to the Mass is not a mere question of temperament, of *dislike* of robes, or lights, or incense. It is a refusal to surrender to an authority which is not Divine the trust which God has committed to us. That trust is the rendering of direct and personal obedience to Himself, as He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the Scriptures. We believe that we cannot compromise over the Mass without betrayal of this trust. We

dare not allow a Priesthood of human appointment to take charge of our souls. For us our Blessed Lord is the one and only Priest of Divine appointment.

A final word must be said in reply to the question why a form of the Prayer of Consecration, not differing substantially from those in use in the Scottish Episcopal, U.S.A. Protestant Episcopal, and South African Churches has not wrought the damage among them that we fear in England. The answer is very simple. So long as there is no party in those Churches corresponding to our advanced party, or so long as that party, if it exists, is withheld by prudential considerations, the movement towards Roman obedience will not exist, or will be controlled. But, when circumstances permit that party to raise its head in any of those Churches, the presence in their Prayer Books of the prayer implying sacrifice through the consecrated elements, without communion or apart from it, will greatly facilitate their efforts. They will appear as the *party which is developing the true principles of the Church*. In England the possession of endowments makes the clergy independent, to a great extent, of the laity. Protected by their endowments and their privileges they can work for the recovery of what they call Catholic doctrine, and work all the more easily when Bishops preside at their congresses, walk in their open-air processions, and bless their crucifixes and images. There are words which the Bishop of Lichfield has sanctioned in the Lichfield Communicants' Manual, which in our Articles are condemned as "blasphemous." Those words are: "This sacrifice which in honour of Thy Name I have presented before Thee for the salvation of the faithful whether living or departed . . . and also for our sins and offences do Thou now most mercifully regard." The proposed changes in our Prayer of Consecration would secure at least some cover of sanction for these words by the authority of the Church. To obtain that cover is the reason the new form of prayer is desired. These are the special conditions of our Church which call for special watchfulness, and oblige all faithful Churchmen to resist to the uttermost any changes or alterations which would strengthen the hands of the Romanising party that is openly and avowedly remaining in the Church in order to undo altogether the work of the Reformation.