









U B
THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
THE CENTRE OF IMMUTABLE TRUTH,

A SERMON



PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF

THE PRO-CATHEDRAL OF S. WILFRID'S, YORK

BY

HENRY EDWARD MANNING, D.D.

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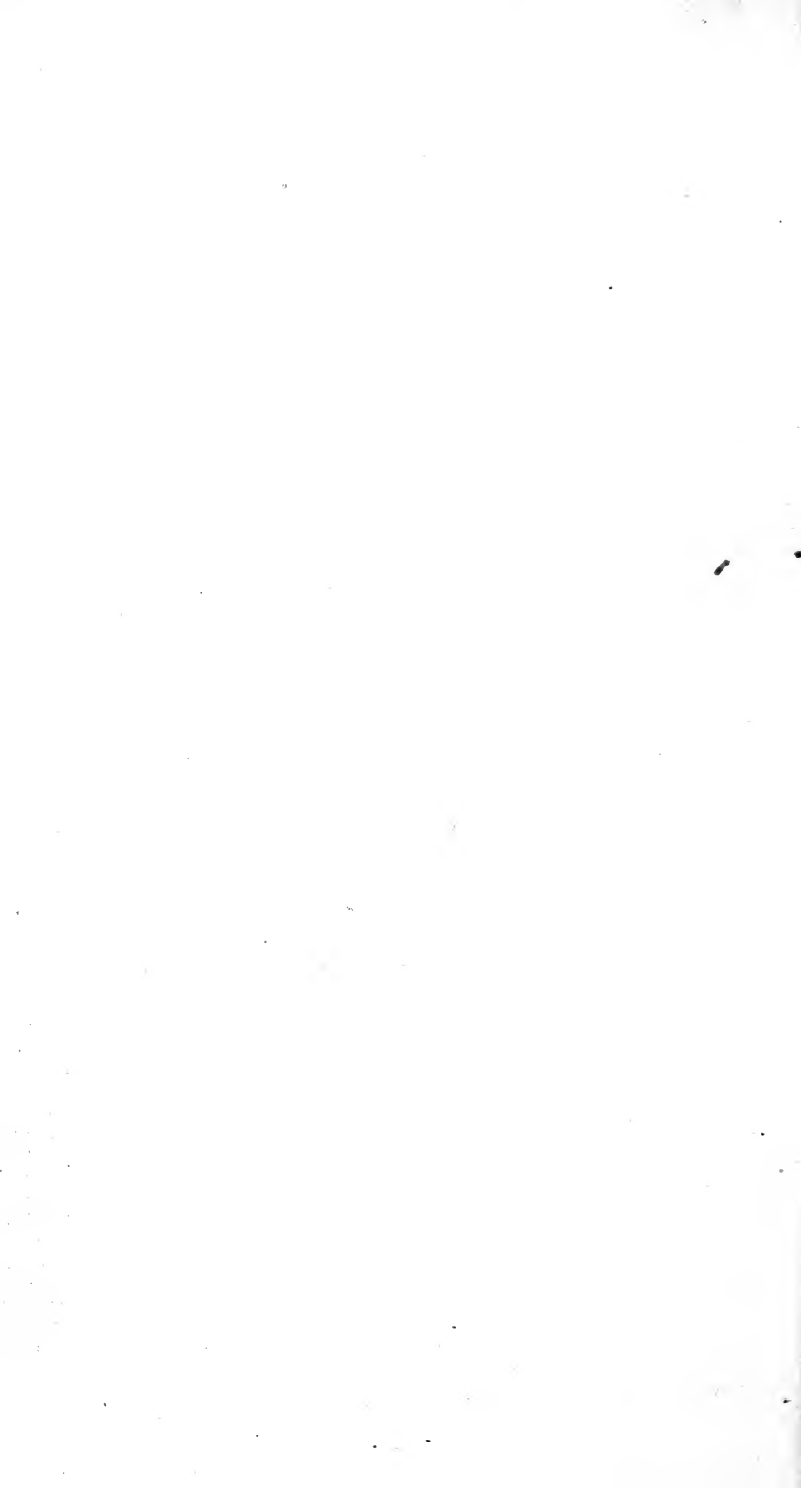
THIS SERMON

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H. E. M.



SERMON.

The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.—S. JOHN I. 12.

WE are closing a great Festival; I do not mean to-day alone, but these eight days of joy in all the world. The Octave of Corpus Christi ends here indeed with a fitting and proportionate solemnity—the enthroning of Jesus for the first time in this beautiful and majestic Sanctuary. We end it, therefore, with a double joy. But in all these eight days past there has been a festival of gladness throughout the Catholic unity. From sunrise to sunset there has been a stir of joy and of triumph in all the Church of God. As in the great Easter solemnities, when the mighty Basilica of S. Peter is arrayed in the splendours of illumination, a light springs of a sudden from the summit of the Cross, and flows down in streams, kindling in a moment the whole outline of the structure in the majesty and amplitude of its glory; so the other day, when the Vicar of Jesus Christ bore in his hands the Eucharistical Presence of the Word Incarnate with more than bridal and royal procession, he set the whole Church in motion, and everywhere the same procession of the Bridegroom and of the King came forth in every land. Not in the Holy City alone, where the Word made Flesh reigns still in

the fulness of His Sovereignty, nor in the remnant of his patrimony which the spoiler has not as yet rent from him; but in poor Naples, once so joyous, now so afflicted; in Florence, the beautiful city, now deeply tormented; and in Milan, the home of S. Charles, a special saint and guardian of the Blessed Sacrament—in Milan, now sorely vexed by civil and ecclesiastical contentions; in Turin, the sanctuary of a resplendent miracle of the Blessed Sacrament, now stained by a contemptuous ingratitude, even there in these days the disciples have followed Jesus in the beauty and splendour of His Presence; much more in the plains of Italy and the green sides of the Apennines, and the sunny valleys of the Tyrol; in Catholic France, and still more Catholic Spain; in poor Poland, bleeding under the weapons of the persecutor; and in the far West, where brothers are shedding brothers' blood, and brave men are falling as grain in the reaping, or rather as beasts at the shambles, till heaven is sick and earth is weary of slaughter—in all the world, wheresoever Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament, there in these days His disciples have followed Him, as when they walked with Him through the cornfields and the cities of Judæa and of Galilee.

Corpus Christi is a second Feast of the Nativity: a Christmas festival in the summer-tide, when the snows are gone and flowers cover the earth.

And whence comes all this joy but from the Divine fact which S. John declares, 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory?' Morning by morning, in the Holy Mass, the Church recites this great charter of its incorporation and of

its existence. Morning by morning it bears witness to the Divine, permanent, and immutable presence of Jesus in the glory of grace and truth. In the Blessed Sacrament is the Incarnation perpetually present, manifested to faith, and I may say to sense, and applied to us by the same Divine power by which it was accomplished.

The Word—that is, the eternal Wisdom or Intelligence of the Father, coequal, coeternal, consubstantial, personal, the only-begotten Son, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God in all the infinity of the Divine perfections—was made Flesh; assumed, that is, our manhood with body and soul into the unity of His Divine person, and the flesh and manhood became the flesh and manhood of God, the root and productive principle of the new creation of God. From the natural body of Jesus springs forth the Eucharistical or Sacramental, by which we are renewed in soul and body; and next the mystical body or the Church, in which the Head is united by a vital and substantial union with His members, namely, the one holy and only Church of Jesus Christ—the tabernacle in which He dwells according to the word of the evangelist. He made His tabernacle both in our humanity and in the midst of us; and in this visible tabernacle, ever expanding in all the world, perpetual throughout all ages, He dwells under the canopy of the heavenly court, manifesting His glory in the Seven Sacraments of His grace, and in the infallible doctrines of the Faith.

And this brings me to a truth which falls in naturally with our thoughts to-day. I mean the perpetuity

of the presence of the Incarnate Word in the Blessed Sacrament, as the basis and the centre of an order of Divine facts and operations in the world. They spring from it, rest upon it, and are united to it, so that where the Blessed Sacrament is, they are—where it is not, they cannot be. For example, in the natural order, the creation is the basis, and its perpetuity is the centre, so to speak, of the whole order of natural facts and operations, springing from the omnipotence of God, whereby this world was created and is always preserved. These facts and operations rest upon creation as their basis, spring from it, and observe its laws. Men believe in them because they are sensible and palpable. They believe them to be permanent and immutable. They believe in the laws, powers, operations, activities of nature—in the succession of day and night, of seasons, tides, and growths; but they are so immersed in sense that they cannot realise, and will not believe, that there is a higher order of Divine facts and of supernatural operations, more permanent, more immutable, more unerring, of which Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the creative and sustaining centre. And to this we will turn our thoughts for awhile.

The Blessed Sacrament, then, is Jesus personally present in the midst of us, seen by faith, received in substance, known by consciousness, and adored in His glory.

1. And, first, it is Jesus present, both God and Man, in all the fulness of His incarnate person. As God, He was always present in the world. 'All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything

made that was made.’* ‘By Him all things consist,’† that is, hold together, cohere in the permanence of their existence. From the beginning of the creation the Word pervaded all things by His essence, presence, and power. He was, therefore, personally present, but not as the Incarnate Word is present now. His presence in the Blessed Sacrament is the fruit of His incarnation, and His incarnation is a presence distinct in kind from His presence before ‘the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us.’‡ It is the perpetuity of the same presence as that with which His disciples were familiar in the three years that He conversed with them, and in the forty days after He rose from the dead.

When He said, ‘I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you,’ they understood Him to promise that He, the very same Who spoke with them, would return to them.

And on the night of the first day of the week, after He arose from the dead, He came, when the doors were shut, suspending the laws of nature, and stood in the midst, and said unto them, ‘See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself, for a spirit hath not flesh and bone, as you see Me to have.’§ It is I, the very same Whom you have known, the same Lord and Master with Whom you have eaten, and drunk, and conversed; Whose words you have heard, Whose miracles you have witnessed; Whom you have seen to multiply the bread in the wilderness, and to walk upon the water; on Whose bosom John lay at supper,

* S. John i. 3.

† Coloss. i. 17.

‡ S. John i. 14.

§ S. Luke xxiv. 39.

and Whom you have loved as your brother, kinsman, and friend. It is I, Who am come to you again in all My personal identity, and in all the tenderness of My Divine and human sympathy. It was in this sense the disciples understood His words, when before His ascension He said, 'Behold I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world.'* They understood Him to promise to them a true and personal presence, which should restore all they had before possessed of nearness to them both as God and Man. Therefore it is that He said, 'It is expedient for you that I go;' for the coming of the Paraclete has brought with it the universal presence of Jesus, not in one place alone, but in all the Church, and not transiently and for a moment, but abiding unto the end of the world. It is this which has formed the centre of the visible Church on earth. Jesus manifested, I may say, in the Blessed Sacrament: Jesus dwelling in the Tabernacle over whose Divine Presence the visible Church rises in its majesty and beauty throughout the world, as the glorious minster at our side rose here, the shrine and ciborium of the Incarnate Word. In all the world the same Sacramental Presence is the centre of the same ritual of Divine worship. Before it day and night hangs the light in witness of its perpetuity. Before Him all who pass bow down; about His presence stand seven orders of ministers, to serve in degrees of approach to His person. The presence of Jesus offering Himself for us is the Holy Mass. The Holy Mass is the worship of the Universal Church.

* S. Matthew xxviii. 20.

All springs from it, or relates to it—the centre and the source of all. Such is His personal presence.

2. I have said He is seen by faith. S. John says: ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes.’* They saw Jesus—we see Him not; but in what did they see more than we? They saw Jesus, and Jesus is God. They saw, therefore, God manifest in the stature and configuration of our manhood. They saw the manhood, but the Godhead they could not see. They saw His Divine works; they saw His glory—the glory of His transfiguration, of His resurrection, of His ascension. But the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father is the essential glory of the eternal Son: His co-equality, His infinite perfections—of love, of wisdom, of goodness, and of power; but these glories no eye of flesh and blood could see. What they saw, we see, with one distinction. We see His presence, and the glory of His grace and truth; we see His works of supernatural power, and the perpetual operations of His love. Nay, I may go further. There are three faculties of sight—sense, reason, and faith; each has its sphere. Sense, unless misdirected, is infallible in its reports. Reason elevates and corrects sense, and has a nobler sphere and range of its own, a higher realm and a wider jurisdiction. But faith is above both, elevates both, corrects both, and is supreme and infallible in a sphere which is Divine and eternal. The Jews who saw Jesus by sense, knew that He was man, and believed Him to be ‘the carpenter, whose mother and sisters we know.’† They wondered at

* 1 S. John i. 1.

† S. Mark vi. 3.

His words, saying, 'Whence hath this man letters, having never learned?'* Sense carried them no further. Nicodemus, by reason, knew Him to be 'a teacher sent from God, for no man could do the miracles' he did, 'except God were with him.'† This was a dictate of reason, and an interpretation of facts subject to sense, by which they were elevated to a higher truth. Peter knew Him to be not only man and a teacher sent from God, but to the dictates of sense and reason he added the illumination of faith, which elevated both. When Jesus asked him, 'Whom say ye that I, the Son of Man, am?' Peter answered, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered, 'Flesh and blood' (that is, the knowledge which comes by sense and reason) 'hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.'‡ The illumination of faith has elevated thee to this knowledge.

In like manner we know the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Sense reports to us that what we see has the aspect of bread; reason tells us that everything has its proper substance. But the sense cannot penetrate beyond the aspect. It has no cognisance of what lies beneath or beyond. Reason alone can pass the boundaries of sense. Such is the dictate and report of sense and reason upon the unconsecrated Host. But the same reason illuminated by faith knows the Incarnate Word, and His revelation, and His promises of presence and of power. It knows that Jesus has ordained the perpetuity of His own Priesthood, and of His own Divine action whereby the

* S. John vii. 15. † S. John iii. 2. ‡ S. Matt. xvi. 17.

bread and wine pass by elevation from the order of nature, in which sense and reason dwell and reign, to the order of Divine power, which is above nature, wherein faith alone is supreme. It is a dictate of the reason illuminated by faith to believe that what the sense still sees under the same aspect is, after the words of Jesus have been spoken, no longer what they seem, but what they are Divinely declared to be. Reason elevated and corrected by faith knows them to be Jesus personally present in all the fulness of His Godhead and His manhood, under a veil, or aspect, which is visible to the sense, as the vesture He wore, which was not Himself, and yet the pledge of His presence, and the channel of virtue which went out of Him to heal them who touched so much as the hem of His garment. It is true, indeed, that we do not see the visible form of Jesus, His sacred countenance, His majestic stature, the glory of His manhood. 'In cruce latebat sola Deitas, at hic latet simul et humanitas.' While He was upon earth His Godhead lay hid, but His manhood was visible; here both lie hid, and only His vesture is revealed. When our sense and reason tell us the Blessed Sacrament is visible, then the same reason by the light of faith tells us Jesus is present, and we behold His glory, as the Only-Begotten of the Father, the Fountain of all grace, the perpetual and Divine Teacher of infallible Truth.

3. But Jesus not only manifests Himself to our faith. He also gives Himself to us as our food. And we receive Him by His substance.

There are two intellectual worlds, always in presence

of each other, and always in conflict: two schools of thought, two teachers contending and irreconcilable, two tendencies, and two pathways, which diverge from one another, and lead directly to or from the Truth as it is in Jesus. These two worlds or schools I may call the World of Substances and the World of Shadows. The Revelation of God teaches us that His omnipotence has called into existence two creations, the old and the new, and that He is always in contact, so to speak, with the works which His omnipotence has made. From this contact arise five Divine facts: the Creation, the Incarnation, the Holy Eucharist, the Mystical Body, the Resurrection of the Flesh. These are all of them works and actions of the Divine Omnipotence. The first four are permanent and present to us. They are as truths in a series related to each other. The last four are connected by a special relation. The last three proceed from the second, and are its product and its fruit. Now, the Blessed Sacrament unites them together, presupposes or prepares for them—it is the presence and application of the Incarnation: and the pledge of the resurrection of the body. The Blessed Sacrament is therefore the clasp upon this chain of Divine truths, and the mystical Body of the Church is the circle which encompasses and perpetuates them in the world. The creation of a substantial nature in the beginning, the Incarnation by the union of two substances in one person, the substantial presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the participation of His substance by His members in the mystical Body, and the substantial resurrection of our bodies from

the grave: all these are truths of the same order, resting upon the revelation of God, and taught by the Master of the school of Spirit and of truth, of reality and of substance, that is by Jesus, the Eternal Truth, and by the Holy Ghost, who dwells in His Church, and teaches through it by His Divine and infallible voice. Such, then, is the one school, or the Holy Catholic Church.

The other school has always existed by its side, sometimes has sprung up within it, but has been always cast out. In the beginning, the Docetæ denied the substantial reality of the manhood of Jesus, and taught that it was a phantasm, an apparition, a heavenly vision, not flesh and blood taken of His immaculate Mother. In the so-called Reformation of the Church, there were those who denied the substantial presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, and taught that it is not a reality, but a memorial, a sign, or a figure. Having denied the Sacramental Body of Jesus, it was but consequent that they should deny also His mystical Body, that they should deny the visible perpetuity and visible unity of His Church, and teach that it is a body spiritual, invisible, impalpable, withdrawn from sense, hovering in a world unseen. It is no wonder that of their posterity should have arisen those who deny the Incarnation by denying the Godhead of Jesus. What are these but the Docetæ of these latter days, as the Docetæ were the Sacramentarians of the first century?

In their train has come a more consequent and hardy unbelief. And men now deny the first truth

and the last in the series—the Resurrection as impossible, the Creation as incredible, finally, the existence of God as undemonstrable. And so men are led away into bondage, into the world of shadows, of unreality, of unbelief. This school reigns more or less over all who are out of the unity of the Church, because, losing the unerring guidance of the Divine teacher, they have none but human guides to lead them, and human criticism upon Revelation as their basis and rule of faith.

When, then, the Son of God in prophecy said, ‘A Body thou hast fitted’ or prepared ‘for Me,’* He spoke of His natural body of the substance of our humanity. When in the guest-chamber ‘He took bread and blessed it, and said, This is My body,’ He spoke likewise of the same natural and substantial body which He took of His immaculate Mother. He did not say, ‘This is the shadow of My body, and if not, it is the substance.’ He did not say, ‘This is the figure of My body,’ though even so He would have declared it to be the substance, as when the Holy Ghost declared the Son to be ‘the Figure of the substance’ † of the Father. For in the world of Divine realities all things are true, not illusory—real, not phantastic.

So, again, when He said, ‘He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him.’ ‡ I, that is, as you have known Me, though in a manner you know not as yet. ‘My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed.’ § But it is neither indeed, unless it be both, in substance and reality. Again, ‘As the living Father hath sent Me and I live

* Heb. x. 5. † Heb. i. 3. ‡ S. John vi. 55, 56. § Ibid.

by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.* That is, as I, the Eternal Son, as God live by consubstantial unity with the Godhead of the Father, so he that eateth Me shall live by consubstantial union with My humanity.† To deny the first part of these words is Arianism; to deny the last is to mutilate the sense and the sequence of the Divine reasoning. The life of God is in the substance of God, the life of man is in the substance of man. To explain it any other way is to deny its reality and truth. By the substance of Jesus communicated to us we become 'of His flesh and of His bone,' ‡ and have thereby in us the pledge of a resurrection in the substance of the body to eternal life. These truths, as I have said, are in series—they hang upon the same thread of the Divine veracity: the substantial Incarnation, the substantial presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the substantial regeneration of soul and body by the union of the members with their Head, the substantial resurrection of the flesh. Break this line anywhere, and all these truths, sooner or later, disappear into the world of shadows and unrealities, of words and figures, which, driven beyond the frontiers of the Church of God, hovers around the suburbs, but can never enter within its unity or endure its light.

4. But the presence which is seen by faith is known by a supernatural consciousness, which includes all the powers of the soul. We are conscious of truths which we cannot demonstrate,

* S. John vi. 55, 56. † S. Hilary: Lib. viii. De Trinitate.

‡ Ephes. v. 30.

which are before all reasoning, from which all reasoning springs, and to which all reasoning in the end bears witness. We are conscious of our own existence and of the existence of God; I do not mean originally, but after these truths are known to us, by whatsoever means they are known. We are conscious of those truths which are the most intuitive or most immediately known, and this consciousness signifies a higher, deeper, and surer kind of knowledge. When I say, then, that we know the presence of Jesus by a consciousness, I mean that, in addition to all the knowledge that sense, and reason, and faith bestow upon us, we have also a knowledge which springs from hope and from love, from communion with Him and experience of His grace and power. It is against this that the masters of false philosophy set themselves with much derision, and yet it is self-evidently true. We may be conscious of what we know, we may know what we cannot comprehend. Comprehension is not the condition of knowledge. To comprehend anything, I must be able to circumscribe it in a definition, and to fix its boundaries in my thoughts. But the highest truths refuse this treatment, and pass beyond the horizon of a finite intelligence. And yet they are not only true, but are the most necessary truths, of which not only there can be no doubt, but are themselves the first principles and necessary conditions of a whole order of truths. They are transcendent because they pass beyond the comprehension of our finite intelligence; but they are transcendent because they are Divine, and because Divine are true. For instance, who can comprehend eternity, immensity,

infinity, self-existence? and yet God is all these, and the knowledge of God is the foundation of a whole world of subordinate truths, both in nature and in grace. These truths pass beyond our horizon as the path of the planets, or the vaster and incalculable sweep of a comet; yet we know these, and apprehend, and contemplate them with the fixed certainty of the highest knowledge. We may apprehend what we cannot comprehend, as in eternity we shall see God as He is, but not wholly, for the beatific vision is finite, but the object and source of bliss is infinite.

So it may be said of the Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The Council of Trent, with the wonderful and unerring precision with which the Church deals with philosophy when it is in contact with the dogmas of faith, declares, 'that our Saviour sits always at the right hand of the Father in heaven, according to the natural manner of existence, but that He is in many places sacramentally present with us, by His substance, by that mode of existence which, although it can scarcely be expressed in words, nevertheless, by the intellect illuminated by faith, may be apprehended as possible with God.'*

And what is this but what we read in the Gospel, when Jesus walked, in another form, with Cleophas and his fellow to Emmaus? They at first knew Him not, and yet their hearts burned within them. They knew Him afterwards, and were conscious of His presence. And when the disciples sat around Him in the morning light, by the Sea of Tiberias, He conversed

* Concil. Trid. Sess. xii. c. 1.

with them, and distributed to them the broiled fish and the bread which He had miraculously prepared. They knew Him. John had known Him from the first, and Peter had cast himself into the sea to go to Him. Nevertheless, their sense was dazed, and their reason was overcome by the nearness of God. 'And no man durst ask Him, Who art Thou?'—why should they?—'knowing that it was the Lord.' A consciousness, above all sense and reasoning, filled them with a certainty too great for words, surpassing even the bounds of intelligence: and yet infallible, and all-sufficing.

5. And lastly, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is adored in the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father; God of God, Light of Light, true God of the true God, 'The Word made Flesh dwells among us, and we behold His glory,' and, beholding, we adore Him in the glory of His kingdom. This is the test by which faith is discerned from unbelief. We worship Him here, as the disciples worshipped Him upon the mountain in Galilee. But the teachers and the disciples of the world of shadows deny that any adoration is intended or to be given to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Either they believe that He is present, or that He is not; if He be, He is to be worshipped—if He be not, then where is their faith? But error convicts itself, when it would convict us. It says Catholics worship the Host, but the Host is bread; therefore Catholics worship bread, which is idolatry. But this proves that they who would convict us are convicted themselves, of not believing either in the presence of Jesus, or in His Word. They who believe in the

presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, must adore Him in it; they who do not adore Him in it, cannot believe that He is there. The Catholic Church, which by Divine faith knows and teaches the mystery of His presence, adores Him there in all the world. It has adored Him from the beginning, it adores Him now, it will adore Him till He comes again, and sacraments shall pass away into vision. In this adoration is contained the whole power of grace and truth, whereby we are sanctified, for Jesus on the altar is the centre of all the sacraments and supernatural graces which flow from Him throughout the Church: and the worship we offer to Him is the Divine worship of God, in prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving, and oblation of ourselves in body, soul, and spirit, as to our Creator and Redeemer, our Teacher and Master, our Brother, Kinsman, and Friend. This worship admits us to a singular intimacy. We speak with Him as a friend to a friend, face to face, opening our hearts to His Sacred Heart, and conversing with God as with one who knows all we are by personal experience and human sympathy, and is infinitely pitiful and Divinely tender in His love.

All other sacraments are transient, and pass with the action by which they are effected; but the Sacrament of the Altar is permanent, and sets before us the Incarnate Word as the object of prolonged contemplation. S. Paul says that 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'* These words

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

have a special fulfilment in the Holy Sacrament. 'We behold His glory,' both as God and Man—His sanctity, justice, love, pity, and long-suffering, as God; His humility, generosity, patience, compassion, as Man. He is the pattern of all perfection set before us, that by contemplation we may learn what the letter of no law can teach us—the perfections of the Sacred Heart; that from it we may draw our motives as well as our measures of love to God and man; and that by contemplating it we may be conformed to it, and by gazing on it we may grow into the same likeness. 'For we, beholding this glory of the Lord with open face, are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord.'* This has assimilated to itself the members of His mystical body, and made them like Himself. The life of Jesus is impressed upon His servants. His saints reflect Him, each one in his way and measure, and their conformity arises from a double power of assimilation, from contemplation and communion:—contemplation, by which He illuminates and informs His servants with His own mind and example; communion, by which He dwells in them, pervades them with His substance, changes them into the likeness of His Sacred Heart and of His deified human will, accomplishing within them that which by faith they contemplate in Himself. All this is contained in the adoration which is offered to Jesus, ever present in the fulness of His Divine Personality, the King, the Lawgiver, the Teacher of His Church. In ten thousand sanctuaries Jesus offers Himself

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

day by day to His Eternal Father, and His disciples adore Him with a service which rests not, day or night, with a living consciousness of the Divine power and glory of His presence.

Such, then, is the centre of the supernatural order of grace and truth—the Church on earth. It is also the fountain of all its jurisdiction and all its Divine action upon mankind. It may be therefore truly said that where Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament, there is present all that God has ordained for the salvation of men. The Blessed Sacrament, then, binds together the whole order of Divine facts by which we are redeemed. The incarnation of the Eternal Son, His exaltation to be the Head of His Church, the constitution and organisation of His mystical Body, the coming and inhabitation of the Holy Ghost united by an indissoluble and eternal union to that Body, the institution of the Seven Sacraments—all these are works of omnipotence, and, as I have said, Divine facts permanent in the world, and imperishable because sustained by the same power from which they flow. They constitute an order, because they are related to each other, some proceeding from others, the lower depending on the higher in the disposition of God's wisdom and power. Being an order, they constitute a perfect whole, an unity in itself. They are sustained by resting upon their centre, the presence of the Incarnate Word, and they are incorporated and enshrined in the Church, which is one visible, undivided and universal, the sanctuary of God among men.

Wheresoever, then, this Divine order is, there is the whole dispensation of grace through Jesus Christ, with all His Sacraments, jurisdiction, and authority.

There is also His whole and perfect revelation, 'the truth as it is in Jesus,' without addition, diminution, or change of a jot, or of a tittle. For what is truth, or the dogma of faith, but the outline, or delineation of these Divine facts, first each one severally, next all collectively, in the order and unity by which God has combined them together? What are the doctrines of faith but the delineation of the presence of Jesus, and all that flows from it, first on the intelligence of the whole mystical Body with the pencil of light by which the Holy Ghost traced the mysteries of the kingdom of God upon the minds of the Apostles? The Divine facts are the substance, doctrine is but the reflection, or the conformity of the human reason to the Divine by the intervention of these facts of almighty power. It is not the reason which creates dogma, any more than the eye which creates the image upon the surface of the water. It is the creation of God which reflects itself upon both the water and the eye. We see what God has created, and by a power which God alone can bestow. So with the dogma of faith. What is the doctrine of the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, of the mystical Body, of the Church reigning in heaven, or purifying beyond the grave, or suffering upon earth, and consequently of the Communion of Saints, their intercession and invocation, of the Seven Sacraments, including the jurisdiction over souls, the power of absolution, and the like—what are all these but the outlines and reflections of an order of Divine facts,

springing from the Incarnation, permanent and imperishable, in which are verified the words of the Evangelist, 'We beheld His glory, the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?'

* This it is which accounts for the immutability of the dogma of faith in the midst of an intellectual world of flux and change, where nothing holds its form for half a generation, or half the life-time of a man.

Take for example the changeless identity of the faith which S. Paulinus and S. Wilfrid preached in York: the supremacy of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Seven Sacraments, the sacrifice of the altar, the communion and intercession of the saints, the expiation of purgatory, the honour due to the Mother of God. S. Bede, in the century after, recites all these as the faith of the Anglo-Saxon people. Pass over nine hundred years; these same doctrines lived on in the hearts and mouths of the Catholics of England—for them they contended and were martyred. Pass over three hundred years again; they are the doctrines which the successor of S. Paulinus and S. Wilfrid preaches still to the remnant of their children. Whence comes this marvellous and supernatural immutability of dogma? From the perpetual and supernatural immutability of the order of Divine facts which these doctrines only delineate and express. The shadow cannot vary when the substance which shapes it is changeless and the light which casts it never wavers. The Divine facts are immutable, and their outline is cast upon the intelligence of the Church by 'the Father of

* S. John i. 14.

lights, in Whom is no variableness nor shadow of vicissitude.'*

Even in the great Greek schism, which has rent itself from obedience to the Vicar of Christ, and after its schism laboured to justify it by errors which border upon heresy, even there all the conditions of truth and grace remain. In a moment, as once already in the Council of Florence, if it would but renounce its national pride, its schism and the contentious, if not heretical errors, it has elaborated, it might be restored as a whole to Catholic unity. It has valid orders, and the presence of Jesus, and the whole order of Divine facts and truths, less only by its schism and its errors. But it is recoverable, and one day may rise again as from the dead. Not so those bodies which have lost the perpetual presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and mutilated the order of Divine facts and the organisation of the mystical body: for them corporate reunion is impossible. They are in dissolution, and must be recreated by the same Divine power. Their members may be saved one by one, as men picked off from a raft, or from a reef, but the ship is gone. Its whole structure is dissolved. There remains no body, or frame to be recovered from the wreck.

For where the Blessed Sacrament is not, all dies. As when the sun departs all things sicken and decay, and when life is gone the body returns to its dust; so with any province or member of the Church. There was a time when the truth and grace which went out from York, spread throughout the whole of Northern

* S. James i. 17.

England, and bound it together in a perfect unity of faith and communion, of Christian intelligence and Christian charity. There was but one jurisdiction reigning over all the children of S. Wilfrid, guiding them by a Divine voice of changeless faith, and sanctifying them by the Seven Sacraments of grace. But then this grand old minster was the majestic tabernacle of the Word made Flesh. Jesus dwelt there in the Divine Mystery of the Holy Eucharist. His presence radiated on every side, quickening, sustaining, upholding the perpetual unity of His mystical Body. Then came a change, slight, indeed, to sense, but in the sight of God, fraught with inexhaustible consequences of supernatural loss. Does any one know the name of the man who removed the Blessed Sacrament from York Minster? Is it written in history? or is it blotted out from the knowledge of men, and known only to God and His holy angels? Who did it, and when it was done, I cannot say. Was it in the morning, or in the evening? Can we hope that some holy Priest, in sorrow, yielding to the violence of the storm then falling upon the Church, out of love to his Divine Master, removed His Eucharistical presence to save it from profanation; or was it some sacrilegious hand that dragged Him from His throne, as of old He was dragged from Gethsemane to Calvary? We cannot know. It was a terrible deed; and that name, if it be recorded, has a terrible brand upon it. But a change which held both on earth and in heaven had been accomplished. The city of York went on the day after as the day before. But the Light of Life has gone out

of it. Men were busy as not knowing or not believing what was done, and what would follow from the deed. There was no holy sacrifice offered in the Minster. The Scriptures were read there, but there was no Divine Teacher to interpret them. The Magnificat was chanted still, but it rolled along the empty roof, for Jesus was no longer on the altar. So it is to this day. There is no light, no tabernacle, no altar, nor can be till Jesus shall return thither. It stands like the open sepulchre, and we may believe that angels are there, ever saying, 'He is not here. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid.'*

But this is not all. The change, so imperceptible to sense, in the supernatural order is potent and irresistible. The centre of the order of grace was taken away, and the whole had lost its unity and its coherence. Separation from the visible Body of Christ is separation from the presence and assistance of the Holy Ghost who inhabits it. There is no influx of His Divine and infallible light into the intelligence of a body which breaks from the unity of the Church. There is no Divine voice speaking through it as His organ of immutable truth. Straightway it began to dissolve and go to pieces. The sinews relaxed and lost their tenacity, the joints and bands of the mystical Body parted asunder. For three hundred years it has been returning into its dust. In the day when the Blessed Sacrament was carried out of York Minster, the whole population of England was contained within the unity of the one Body. Now

* S. Matt. xxviii. 6.

hardly one half remains to the Church which taught the fatal lesson of separation. From generation to generation, by a succession of crumbling secessions, divisions, and subdivisions, the flock it could not retain when the Blessed Sacrament is no longer upon the altar, has wandered from it and dispersed.

And what has happened visibly in its external divisions of communion, has wrought invisibly in the internal aberrations of its doctrines: the order of Divine facts being broken through, and the substance shattered, the shadow betrayed its ruin. What reflection does the Anglican Church leave upon the intelligence of the people? If dogma be the intellectual conception of Divine realities, what dogma is to be found where the Divine realities of the Sacramental Body and mystical Body of Jesus, His Presence, His Sacrifice, His Seven Sacraments, His infallible and perpetual Voice, are denied?

But into this I will not enter. I have no will, on such a day as this, to speak controversially. One word is all I will say. The reformers of the Church of England took for the basis of their religion, not the perpetual and infallible teaching of the Spirit of Jesus in His Church, but the Bible. A written Book was erected in the place of the living Teacher, so as to exclude His supreme living voice. Anglican Christianity was to be based upon the Bible. But it is precisely this basis that Anglicans have ruined under their own feet—so sure is it that the Incarnate Word in the Tabernacle and the Written Word in the Scriptures cannot be put asunder. They come and they go together.

But it is more than time to make an end.

Let it be, then, your chief work to propagate the knowledge and love of the Blessed Sacrament, not only for the sanctification of the faithful, but for the conversion of those who have been robbed of the presence of Jesus. The people, that is the poor, of England, were innocent of the great offence. They did not remove Jesus from the altar. They were disinherited of their true birthright in His presence. They did not pull down His throne. They rose in arms, and especially in Northern England, for the faith of the Blessed Sacrament.* I believe there is no surer instrument of their return to the unity of grace and truth than the manifestation of the love of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. It is a way of controversy altogether uncontroversial. It has no sharp accents, or contentious tones, or wrangling arguments. It bears witness by its own light, and preaches by its Divine silence.

Moreover, it is a witness for truth which contains all truth. It preaches the Incarnation, the unity, perpetuity, imperishableness, and Divine immutability of the Church and of the Faith; communion with Jesus, communion with the living and the dead, with the whole Church on earth, with the saints in heaven.

And besides this, it draws with its own sweetness, and holds by its own attraction. It convinces the intellect by its own light, and persuades the will by its own power of love; thereby winning the soul in

* In the Pilgrimage of Grace the people from the borders of Scotland to the Humber bound themselves by oath to maintain their religion. Their standards were Christ Crucified and the Chalice with the Host.—Lingard's *History of England*, vol. vi. pp. 254, 255.

all its faculties, the whole man to the obedience of faith. He who believes in the presence of Jesus in the Tabernacle cannot long doubt that His mystical Body is one, visible, indivisible, and infallible; that its voice is the voice of Jesus, Divine and changeless in every age; and believing this he cannot linger long upon the threshold of the only Church of God among men. Thus the unity of the true Fold and of the Truth as it is in Jesus, would spread once more in England evenly and irresistibly as a circle on the waters.

But if you would make other men to know and love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, you must first be disciples of the Blessed Sacrament yourselves. You must know and love Jesus, then, with an especial fidelity. Make it the support of your supernatural life in Sacramental communion as often as you may: in spiritual communion as often as you can—in daily visits to the presence of Jesus, kneeling in prayer, or sitting in silence at His feet, as often and as long as the works and hindrances of life will permit. Such was the source of the power and sanctity of S. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, whose Festival we have begun to commemorate in the second vespers of to-day. When she was a child, before she was admitted to Holy Communion, she used to follow her mother to the steps of the altar, and creep close to her side as she received the Bread of Life, because, as she said, she was thereby nearer to the Presence of Jesus. And through her life of supernatural sanctity in the cloister, she used to venerate her sisters as they returned from Communion, calling them the living

Tabernacles of Jesus. This habit of faith would make us to be disciples of the Blessed Sacrament, and would make it to be the support of our life. And then our relation to Him would be the measure and the motive of our actions. We should begin every day with Him in the morning, and go out from His presence to our daily work; and in the evening return to His side again before we lie down to rest. And so His words would be fulfilled in us, 'A little time and ye shall not see Me; and again a little time and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.'* He is gone to the Father, and yet He is here, and we see Him and behold His glory; but in a little while we shall see Him as He is. Here He is veiled, but the veil grows finer year by year; a sense of nearness, a consciousness of relation to Him, grows so lively and so sensible, that it turns all the balance of the heart away from the world and from self to Him, our only Lord, 'Whom not having seen you love, in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe, and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable,'† waiting for the time when the veil shall melt away and you shall see Him face to face.

* S. John xvi. 16.

† 1 S. Pet. i. 8.









