

THE EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS,

(A) What it means. A gathering of Roman Catholics from all quarters to emphasize the Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the Holy Communion,

(B) Its value to the Roman Church.

(1) Spectacular: Great numbers and much display of ceremony and appearance of devotion. Crowds lining the street will be filmed and the display screened in the various Newsreels, Newspaper publicity.

(2) Impressive: Young Roman Catholics especially are impressed with the large numbers who hold what they have been taught to regard as "the Catholic Faith." The careless Romanist is arrested by the display and led to return to the practice of his religion.

(3) Propagandists made of the occasion to argue "Surely so many learned and godly men and women as the Cardinals, Archbishops, Priests, Monks, and Nuns cannot be mistaken." Much will be said also as to the faith of the Early Church. ee

(C) Our Attitude as members of the Reformed Church.

(1) Toleration: We claim the right of free speech and free procession within well defined limits; we must accord these rights to those who differ from us.

(2) Abstention: Recognizing that the Procession will have publicity value for what we regard as a mistaken religious attitude we ought to take particular care that the crowds in the streets represent accurately the proportion of Roman Catholics in the community only augmented by the unusual number of visitors. This is a duty which is in danger of being overlooked.

(3) Informed Judgement: It is essential that we should know the grounds on which the Eucharistic Congress is based and the reasons why we refuse to admit them.

(D) How may our Judgement be informed? By a study of Roman Catholic teaching and a comparison of it with (a) Holy Scripture (b) Primitive Church Writings (c) Scholastic and Reformed Presentations.

(E) The Ground on which a Eucharistic Procession is held. This is set out as follows by the Council of Trent: Session 13, Canon 5 "If anyone saith, that, in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored with the worship, even external of latria; and is, consequently, neither to be venerated with a special festive solemnity, nor to be solemnly borne about in processions, according to the laudable and universal rite and custom of holy churches; or, is not to be proposed publicly to the people to be adored, and that the adorers thereof are idolaters; let him be Anathema!"

(F) Points requiring elucidation. (a) "Christ in the sacrament". This is explained in Session 13, Canon 3, as follows: "In the Eucharist, before being used, there is the Author Himself of all sanctity, i.e., the veritable Body of our Lord, and His veritable blood together with His Soul and divinity, are under the species of bread and wine". "Species" is here a transliteration of the Latin word meaning "outward appearance."

(b) "Eucharist." The word means "thanksgiving" but Roman Catholic divines relate it to the alternative word "He blessed" used of the action of our Lord at the Last Supper. Then they relate that action to the consecration of the bread and wine: teaching that consecration effects a change in the elements of bread and wine. They lay emphasis on Consecration rather than on Receptacle.

(c) "Latria": Roman Catholic divines separate religious worship into three distinct grades, Latria which is due to God alone; Hyperdulia offered to the Blessed Virgin and the humanness of our Lord; and Dulia offered to the saints.

(d) Processions. In consequence of this determination it is regarded as lawful and profitable to carry the sacrament in public processions. So that the Eucharistic Congress has as its root, a particular doctrine

of Holy Communion,

(G) The Scriptural Evidence.

(a) As to Christ in the Sacrament, There is no such explicit statement in Scripture as that quoted above from the Council of Trent. It is an inference (i) from the words "This is my body" (ii) from the words "the communion of the body of Christ" in I Cor. 10:16 (iii) from the words "not discerning the Lord's body" in I Cor. 11:29. The inference is not justified. (1) Our Lord avoids the use of the verb signifying "to become" or "to be changed into" which is rendered 69 times "made" in the New Testament, e.g. "stones be made bread"; "all things were made by Him"; "The word was made flesh"; "the water which was made wine." (2) Similarly, the word "communion" is used of the liberal gifts of the Corinthians in II Cor. 9:13 and of the contribution of Macedonia and Achaia for the poor saints at Jerusalem, Rom. 15:26. In both places Monsignor Knox gives the meaning of "having a share in". No one denies that the united participation in bread and wine, rightly understood, secures a common participation in the body and blood of Christ. But such a participation is spiritual not an actual mastication of flesh. (3) The word "discerning" is used in Matt. 16:3 of determining the character of the weather from the sky, so cannot exclude a symbolical or representative meaning.

(b) The word "Eucharist." The word is used very generally in N.T. of any act of thanksgiving. It was used early to describe the Holy Communion, Ignatius so employs it in the famous passage, "The Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Christ" (Ep. to Smyrnaeans VI). This is possibly the earliest instance of its use. It means, however, "Thank-offering" including prayer, thanksgiving, alms, and offered bread and wine.

(c) Latria. We reject the distinctions and prefer to employ the more intelligible division into "Religious" and "civil worship". Willett long ago showed that the distinction between Latria and Dulia is not consonant with the usage of the words in Scripture. The LXX has "latriation" in Lev. 23:7. "Ye shall do no service work." "Douleuein" is used of the service of God in Gal. 4:8. "ye did service to them that by nature were no gods (Syopsis Papismi, Vol. 4. p. 157) But it is worth noting that the reverence demanded to the consecrated wafer is, by common consent, worship identical with that offered to God. If we reject the idea of "Christ in the Sacrament" in the sense above explained, to offer any external act of reverence in this connection is to commit idolatry.

(4) Processions. We hold that our Lord commanded to "Take, eat." It is participation in a meal not acts of public ceremonial that fitly accords with our Lord's command. It is as often as we eat that we show the Lord's death till He come. Public processions of the consecrated elements are nowhere enjoined. The whole idea of coming together to eat, so strongly emphasized in I Cor., III, negatives any such public display or ceremonial. The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England unite in asserting: "Worshipping the elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about for adoration, and the reserving them for any pretended religious use, are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament, and to the institution of Christ."