

the Encyclicals of February and August—to absolute condemnation of the Law (the Pope calls it “a grave offence against our own person”); but what she will, or can, do to thwart it is not evident. “Passive resistance” is spoken of, but how can it be applied? We must wait to see what will happen between now and December, when the new law comes into force.

An English Churchman can only look on with keenest interest. The ultimate triumph of the Law in France would doubtless strengthen the hopes of disestablishers in England; albeit the case of a sound and Scriptural Church organically linked up with all the nation’s history and life, without derogation to the freedom and progressiveness of either, and with no financial dependence of the former on the State, differs in very material respects indeed from that presented on the other side of the Straits of Dover!



Lawful Ritual in the Church of England.

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I HAVE undertaken to say a few words on the Report of the Commission on Ritual from the point of view of an old-fashioned Churchman who has always been loyal to his Prayer-Book. I will confine myself to “significant” breaches of the law. At the outset I will mention several principles which I believe at this crisis ought carefully to be borne in mind. The first is, that if our Church is to maintain her present position as the National Church, established by the State, she must pay some little regard to the opinions and feelings of the nation at large. So far as I have been able to interpret the language of some of the Bishops and clergy examined before the Commission, they seem to imagine that their only concern is with congregations and communicants; so that, in a diocese or parish, all a Bishop or a parish priest has to do is to drive away people from church,

and to put obstacles in the way of their becoming communicants, and thenceforth such persons may be regarded as negligible quantities. This, of course, is never *said*, but so amazing a position certainly appears to be pretty generally *assumed*. If this line of conduct be persisted in, the Church of England will in a short space of time be reduced to the position of an insignificant sect. A second principle which ought not to be lost sight of is that, as the Prayer-Book distinctly and wisely affirms, in the realm of England there must be only "one use." The Report of the Commission seems to look forward to the establishment of various uses, but it does not even attempt to indicate who is to decide what those various uses are to be, though the question is one of paramount importance. The third point, strangely neglected by the Commission, is that the present claim on the part of the individual incumbent to be himself the "Ordinary," and by consequence to be the only person who should be allowed to settle what the ritual in a parish shall be, must be firmly set aside, if peace is to be restored to a distracted Church. The fourth is that there must be no "deviations," as the Report puts it, from the rubric "significant of doctrines not condemned by the Church of England," and, *a fortiori*, no "deviations significant of doctrine condemned" by her. The ritual of the parish churches of the land must be such as symbolizes only those doctrines which are contained in the Creeds, and are capable of being "proved by certain warrant of Holy Scripture." To introduce any other ceremonial is to impose an unfair yoke upon the worshippers.

The breaches of ritual which have significance¹ may be divided into three classes—those which are of little consequence, those which result from differences in the interpretation of the rubric, and those which are plainly symbolical of false doctrine. Of the first class are such practices as the ceremonial Mixing of the Chalice, the Washing of the Altar on Maunday Thursday, the Blessing of Palms, the *Lavabo*, the

¹ I pass by the question of the non-recital of the Athanasian Creed as requiring special treatment.

service of Tenebræ, the use of Lights, portable or otherwise, the *Confiteor* and Last Gospel, the use of Holy Water, the introduction of the *Agnus Dei* and *Benedictus*, and other ceremonies of a like description. These are simply imitations of the Roman or pre-Reformation use for the sake of imitation. There is no other reason whatever for their adoption. Such practices, it is true, often excite even more indignation than innovations of more moment. They give offence, not because they are matters of consequence in themselves, but because they are not. There is no harm, for instance, in the confession of sin which the Roman priest makes to the congregation in the earlier part of the Mass; indeed, it contains a truth very necessary to be remembered. The priest has undoubtedly his failings as well as other people, and it is well that neither he nor his flock should be allowed to forget the fact. But it is ridiculous as well as unnecessary to introduce such a practice into the services of the Anglican Church, when it relates to a matter of which everyone is well aware; and it becomes offensive when the practice has no authority, and when the object of its introduction is simply to assimilate the ritual as much as possible to that of another Church to which nobody present belongs. The Last Gospel, again, is undoubtedly Scripture. Our chief objection to it is that it is Scripture introduced in the wrong place, and for a wrong reason. The same may be said of the *Benedictus* and the *Agnus Dei*. Similarly, if a person chooses to dip his or her fingers in water and make the sign of the Cross on entering church, there is no particular harm in the process, except when, as is very often the case, the ceremony is irreverently and perfunctorily performed. But if the parish priest goes out of his way to provide the means of performing such a rite by placing a "holy water" stoup at the entrance of the church, there can be no doubt that he ought to be promptly brought to book. So, again, there is no harm in lighting candles, or carrying them about the church, except—and the objection is no doubt a serious one—that most sensible people find the practice extremely silly and disturbing.

The spectacle of "winking tapers" in full daylight, symbolical of a light which no man can see, and disclosing nothing to the eye but smoke and to the nostrils but an ill odour, is one with which most rational people would prefer to dispense, especially as the only reason for its reintroduction into our worship is that it is borrowed from an alien Church. Nor does it seem desirable that a church should be made almost as dark as Erebus, as is sometimes the case, in order that those inside the church may be able to see that the tapers are really burning. If people, again, like to be foolish enough to wash altars with wine and water, there is no reason they should not be indulged in their tastes, provided they do it in private, and do not annoy their fellow-countrymen, and make themselves ridiculous in their eyes by performing so unnecessary an operation on the altar—or altars—of their parish church. Then, as to Tenebræ: Dr. Wickham Legg has lately given himself a great deal of superfluous trouble to prove that this service is older than the Commissioners have supposed; that the extinguishing of the lights is a later addition; and that the rest of the service is quite innocent, and even Scriptural. But does he really suppose that anyone would have taken the trouble to introduce the service into our churches but for the joy of saying Matins by anticipation, as so many monks do, at four o'clock in the evening, of putting extinguishers on the candles one by one, and of watching the smoke slowly disappear? I have seen the practice at St. Peter's, at Rome, and was not impressed. Nor, I am convinced, would any Englishman, not being a Ritualistic *faddist*, find himself otherwise than bored, or, at the best, mildly amused, by this medieval ceremony, which has long since degenerated into a pastime. To comment gravely on these fopperies and follies seems to me, I confess, very like breaking flies on the wheel. The only serious thing about the matter is that hundreds of clergy of the Church of England can be found capable of wasting their own and other people's time in puerilities so obvious and self-condemned, and of taking so great pains to make themselves ridiculous. If they had the least idea of the

scorn with which men of such immature minds are regarded by every Christian man and woman who has a soul above trifles and no craving for novelties, they would, I am convinced, desist from so unprofitable an occupation as the introduction of these childish customs into the worship of God.

The second class of innovations, those which arise from differences in the interpretation of the rubric, demand a quite different treatment. A large number of the clergy who have introduced the vestments were not, as I have reason to know full well, actuated in restoring them by any intention of teaching any particular doctrine regarding the Presence in the Eucharist. They believed that such garments were prescribed by the Ornaments Rubric; they wished to make a distinction between the Eucharist and the other services of the Church by using special vestments for the former; and they imagined that by restoring the use of the Eucharistic vestments they were emphasizing the continuity of the Unreformed and the Reformed Church. But they ought to have remembered that the individual incumbent had hardly the equipment necessary to decide so knotty a point as the legality or illegality of these vestures, and they ought to have thought "once, twice, and thrice" before presuming to settle it for themselves and their congregations. The prolonged encounter between one of the most renowned Ritualistic champions, "Father" Frere, and the members of the Commission, and the admissions which the former was unwillingly compelled to make, show that the question of the legality of the Ornaments Rubric is one which by no means lies in a nutshell. And any attempt at legalization of these vestments, now that the English Church Union has boldly declared that they will be regarded as symbolic of a doctrine which is not that of the Church of England, will, I am persuaded, break up that Church. I should not, personally, object to a solution of the difficulty by permitting the use for the present of the Eucharistic vestment in churches where they have already been introduced, provided that the chasuble be of white linen—in which case it would hardly be distinguishable from a surplice—and that its use be introduced into no

other church without the express sanction of the Bishop. But I am sensible of the difficulty involved even in a compromise such as this, and I am quite sure that persistence in the use of the gorgeous parti-coloured vestments which are now far too widely used will give a foreign appearance to the service in the eyes of English folk, and will tend to prevent our Church from remaining the Church of the English people. The Roman and medieval movement, whatever its partisans may say or imagine, has run its course, and a strong and swift reaction is at hand. Among the laity it has displayed itself by many very unmistakable signs. If the bulk of the clergy continue to be unaware of the fact, it will soon force itself upon them in no very pleasant fashion.

Another custom of the second class is non-communicating attendance. The Ritualists are perfectly right in saying that no order is found in the present Prayer-Book commanding or even sanctioning the withdrawal of any of the congregation. But it is scarcely honest on their part to conceal the fact, of which Mr. Drury did not fail to remind them, that there *was* such a command in the Prayer-Book of 1552, and that it was removed from that of 1662 simply because, as Bishop Wren, one of the revisers, expressly says, it had attained its object. I can perfectly well remember the time when the withdrawal of non-communicants was the universal practice; and unless we are to sanction the—as it seems to me—indecent sight of a number of Christians gathered together at the highest service of the Christian Church, of which the greater part refuse to obey the directions of their Lord, it would be far more edifying to follow the godly custom of the Reformed Church of England, which bids those who for any reason feel unable to communicate on that particular occasion, reduce themselves to the level of the catechumens, and retire from a service the chief object of which they feel themselves unable to fulfil. To celebrate Holy *Communion* before a congregation the majority of which refuses to communicate is to me, as to many others, to travesty that holiest of services.

Of rites of the last class it is hardly necessary to speak. For any clergyman of the Church of England to introduce any ceremony into its worship symbolical of doctrines his Church has denounced is an act of bad faith of which no man ought to be guilty. But there are three ceremonies which come under none of the heads I have mentioned. A word or two in reference to them may not be out of place. The first is the use of incense. This use may, it is true, be defended on the ground that it is beautifully symbolic, and that it has some support from Scripture. On the other hand, its supporters have been forced to admit that it was not used in the services of the Christian Church for at least four centuries, and that when it was at last introduced it was not on symbolic grounds. The second is the wearing of the mitre, or biretta, *during service*. The practice received no attention from the Commission, but I must confess that to me it appears to be the most offensive to public feeling at the present day of any practice which the Ritual movement has introduced. The offspring of an age when priestly pretensions were carried to their highest point, on the ground that every priest had power to "create his Creator," it is calculated, when the fact of its being worn during service becomes more widely known than it is at present, to raise the hostility and contempt of the more intelligent laity to its highest pitch. The habit of remaining covered when other people are expected to be uncovered is a distinct claim on the part of the former to a vast superiority over the latter—or else it is exactly the reverse. St. Paul bases the right of the man to be uncovered during Divine service on the ground that he is "the image and glory of God." From this point of view the custom of being covered during Divine service either implies that those who adopt it are not men, but women; or that, being men, they, and they alone in the congregation, are *not* "the image and glory of God." They may take either horn of the dilemma they please. It matters not to me which they prefer. Their symbolism is equally false in either case. Neither are the antecedents of the head-covering to which they fly to assert their pre-eminence

particularly savoury. The earliest reference to it which I at this moment call to mind is Juvenal's "picta lupa barbara mitra." The head-dress was regarded as a mark of effeminacy by Greeks and Romans alike. Of all the fopperies and follies in which the "Catholic movement" has indulged itself, this reintroduction of the custom of wearing the mitre during service is the most fatuous—is, indeed, suggestive of something like downright lunacy. The other practice to which I wish to refer is what I cannot otherwise describe than as the half "right about face" when passing in front of the altar which one sees at Ritualistic churches. This is another practice which at once rouses the cynical contempt of those who venture to think for themselves. As the late Prebendary Sadler once said of it, it is "either too little or too much." If such attempts to localize the Divine Presence are permitted at all, they should assume the form of lowly prostrations. If these are not adopted, there should be nothing beyond the reverence of the spirit. The practice, as it at present exists, has at least the merit of ingenuity ; it manages to combine the objections to its presence and to its absence ; but it has the serious disadvantage of making those who resort to it, little as they know it, ridiculous in the eyes of the average man. Whether this is the best way of attracting such men to church, I will leave to my readers to decide.

One word in conclusion. It will be seen by what I have written that I believe there are two points on which, more than any others, immediate and decided action is necessary. The first is to put a peremptory stop to the present autocracy of the parish priest ; the other, to provide a prompt and easy means of compelling him to obey the law. He must be made to feel that as long as he holds office in a National Church, he is responsible not merely to the Bishop, nor to the congregation, nor even to the parishioners, but to the nation at large ; and, like every other national official, he must be capable of being removed from his office in case of dereliction of duty by the automatic and impersonal action of the law, and the law alone.