

vincing evidence that Christ was what He professed to be. The true Christian has "the witness in himself"; but besides this the whole course of history ever since our Lord's time has confirmed His claim to our allegiance. The fulfilment of prophecy (with reference, for instance, to the Jews), the triumph of His Kingdom over every successive attempt to crush it out of existence, its extension to every part of the world, the wonderful fact that Christ appeals successfully, not to men of one race only, but to all, that love of Him even in our own day can transform a bloodthirsty savage into an evangelist and a martyr, that every advance in our scientific knowledge of God's universe throws new light upon the teaching of His Word—all this and much more constitutes a mass of evidence which, already almost unlimited, is growing from day to day. Under these circumstances it is sad indeed to see men, with the full light of the Gospel shining around them, turning away to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of Buddhism over the pathless quagmires of despair. *Populus vult decipi*, perhaps; but let us not add *decipiatur*. If we can only lead them to realize their own ignorance of both Christianity and Buddhism, perhaps those who now announce themselves as renegades from the Christian faith may some day aid us heart and soul in leading the adherents of him who has been styled the "Light of Asia" to walk as children of the "Light of the World."

"O Father, touch the East, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born."



Vestments: An Appeal to Facts.

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THE Vestments: What are they? What do they mean? Why do some people want to introduce them? Why do some people object to their introduction? To many a thoughtful person, who remembers the last command of the Master, it

seems an appalling waste of time to occupy thought, care, energy, attention, paper and ink, in turning aside from this one overmastering duty that lies at the doors of the whole Church of Christ, and to spend even a moment on the question whether a clergyman should wear an oval garment or a round one; whether he should be content with one official garment or take into use half a dozen different articles of ecclesiastical wearing apparel.

Alas! that we must spend time on a business, in itself so futile, because of that which lies beneath the usage, and that which these garments are intended to teach and to symbolize. Take another example. There is nothing in a piece of black bunting in itself; and there is nothing in a death's-head and cross-bones of themselves. Yet let a ship run up to its masthead a flag of black with a death's-head and cross-bones imposed on it, and I suppose that ship would be captured, and its crew condemned as pirates, by any man-of-war and by any court of justice in the civilized world. Yes; there is some meaning in things meaningless in themselves, when men have agreed to make them the recognized symbols of piracy, or of patriotism, or of piety, or of priestcraft. Thus it is that a meaning has come to be attached to certain garments called "The Vestments," and that the question of their introduction is not a mere matter of unmeaning millinery, but one of vital import to the Church that uses them. So it comes about that we are compelled to turn aside from the grand calling left us by the Master, in order to meet the assaults from within the camp, and to repel what we cannot but regard as deadly peril within the borders of the Church itself.

First, then, what are the Vestments? In the full list of them, they are certain garments which used to be worn in our Church, before the Reformation purged it from the errors of Rome. They were more particularly those which were worn at the celebration of the Mass, as the Holy Communion was then called, and which were regarded as indicating the sacrificial character of that service and its ministrant. It was understood

that by those vestments they asserted that in this service the wearer was offering up to God a sacrifice of propitiation for the sins of the living and the dead; that this was the means of obtaining for the participants the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross; and, practically speaking, that they could not be otherwise obtained.

When at the Reformation these false and unscriptural doctrines were discarded, it was natural that the vestments which symbolized them should be discarded also. And they were so effectually discarded that for 300 years no clergyman of the Church of England wore them, as the records of history and the confession of every historian agree in affirming. True, at the first sight there might appear some intention of preserving the use of these vestments in the language of the first rubric in our Prayer-Book, were it not that those who compiled the rubric, and the Bishops who enforced obedience to it for centuries, never wore the vestments, never required their use, and absolutely forbade it. There can be no reasonable doubt that the rubric was not intended to enjoin, allow, or compel the use of the vestments, from the first writing down to the last revision of that rubric. No; when the doctrines of Rome were laid aside at the Reformation, the vestments that symbolized those doctrines were cast aside also, without a single doubt or hesitation during 300 years.

What, then, has led to the desire and attempt to reintroduce them into the services of our Church? In the early middle of last century a school of teachers arose in the Church, which sought to revive some of those doctrines that had been discarded 300 years before. By slow degrees, and in successive stages, first one and then another of the false and unscriptural theories which had beclouded the spiritual horizon during the dark ages were brought in. Doctrines assimilated to, and presently indistinguishable from, those of the Romish Mass began to be asserted and taught by clergymen of the Church of England. Despite the fact that they had every one publicly asserted their belief in the Article which declares the Romish doctrine of

Masses to be "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits," they began to teach it as part of what a Christian should believe for his soul's welfare and growth. And very soon it began to be seen that the reintroduction of the discarded vestments would be a simple and effectual way of enforcing the doctrines which those vestments implied. Thus the trouble began, and has increased and advanced ever since. They are to-day in use in hundreds of our churches, and almost everywhere with the intention of instilling Romish views of the Lord's Supper.

Now at last we have come to a new and serious pass. Certain of the chief authorities of our Church have reached a strange conclusion. They have suggested a compromise with the users of the vestments. Despite the fact that the highest legal courts have decided that the vestments are absolutely illegal; despite the fact that these garments have been entirely excluded from use for 300 years; despite the fact that those who use them for the most part own that they use them to symbolize the teaching of the Mass which our Articles condemn; still, these Church authorities are proposing a compromise on the subject. They are suggesting that we should make it lawful to wear either all or one single one of these Romish garments—namely, the chasuble—although that is the very one which the Church of Rome marks off as a sacerdotal garment. For at the ordination of their priests, in the act of giving this garment, the Roman Bishop says: "Accipe vestem sacerdotalem"—"Receive the sacerdotal vestment."

It is true that these authorities in our Church do not propose to make the vestment a matter of compulsion, but only of option; the clergy shall be permitted, but not commanded, to wear it. But what would be the effect of such a permission? Some serious results would certainly follow. For though it has also been suggested that with the permission there should also be an addition to the rubric, stating that the garment had no doctrinal meaning, who would believe or accept that statement? Either the vestment means nothing at all—and then it is sheer folly to propose it, and a shameful waste of time to distract our Church

about a thing that is confessedly meaningless—or, as the Church of Rome has for centuries taught, and as the strong ritualist of to-day maintains, it has a very distinct and Romish meaning, and because of that meaning the latter wishes to wear it.

What, then, will be gained by making the vestment legal and permissible? Would the strong ritualist be satisfied, and consent at once to drop all the other unlawful garments and offices, because this is offered to him? Not for a moment. The vestments as a whole, and not one only out of them all, are what he uses and what he demands. If it is offered with a rubric stating that it has no meaning, he will not have the permission or the rubric. If it is offered as lawful with no additions, he will say naturally: "That is one step in my direction, and with a little more pressure I shall get all the rest."

Then how would this permissible use affect that large proportion of the members of our Church, who have no desire or intention of going back to or reviving the discarded false teachings of the Church of Rome? With one voice they declare that they do not want, and will not accept, and decline to consent to, the reintroduction of garments, one or more, that are used to signify doctrines repudiated by our Church as unscriptural and unprimitive, and that never came into this use until the darkness of the Middle Ages had fallen upon Christendom.

Why in the world should we consent to give a little place in our Church to the trappings of Rome that for 300 years were absolutely excluded from it? Do our authorities suppose that it will act as a sop to Cerberus, and keep him quiet for the future? Cerberus says he won't keep quiet until he has the whole of his demands granted. Do our authorities suppose that if they get this one garment legalized as an optional thing the offenders will drop all the other unlawful things they are now practising? They cannot but know that nothing will be dropped. The men who use the vestments say so, and we fully believe them. Why pretend that this will be a counsel of peace?

Suppose that you own a property, the title-deeds of which have been in your family for 350 years. Suppose that a neighbour has made his way into a five-acre field of yours, and has appropriated it to his own use. You apply to the magistrate for a remedy, and he suggests a compromise. "Give the poor fellow one acre of your field, and ask him to hand back the remaining four. In any case I do not intend to enforce your claim, though I admit it to be lawful, either to the four acres or to the five." What would you say then? You would say that you thought that the magistrate was set to execute the law, not to suggest compromises with law-breakers. Next, you would suggest that if there were any meaning at all in the compromise, at least the magistrate should enforce the return of the four acres, and insure you against any future depredations of your neighbour. As, however, he has stated that he means to enforce nothing, you will neither accept the compromise nor withdraw one jot of your claim to the whole field.

There can be no satisfactory solution of our troubles by a suggestion of a compromise which has no promise of finality in any case, nor in the offer of one part to a man who professes that he will have all or nothing; least of all, in a compromise founded on the pretence that the offered concession has no meaning. We have heard that story before, and do not want it again. The late Archbishop Benson decided that the so-called eastward position at the consecration of the elements was lawful on the express ground that that attitude had no doctrinal meaning. Every ritualist maintained that it was only for the doctrinal meaning that he adopted the attitude. Everybody except the Archbishop knew that they so used and so meant it. But the fiat has gone forth, and the ritualist scored a win under the flag of "no meaning." Now it is proposed that he shall score another under the same flag. "There is no doctrinal meaning in this vestment, therefore let us make it permissible." I would suggest that we learn a lesson from an old Arabian fable. The camel came to his master's tent and asked permission to put his nose inside because of the cold.

Permission granted, he asked if he might not put his head in also. Granted again, he begged to put his fore-feet in. Granted once more, he wanted to have his body in, and the master declined. But it was too late; the camel had got his footing, and declined to go out; so he occupied the whole tent, and his master was transferred to the outside. A good old Latin proverb says: "Principiis obsta"—"Resist the first steps"; and we shall be wise to act on its advice, if we do not want to fight a losing battle for the steps that may follow.

I would sum up our position by saying that every loyal member of our Church, which Archbishop Benson rightly called Catholic, Apostolic, Reformed, and Protestant, will be wise to stand firm on these points following:

1. That our Church for 300 years never allowed or wore these vestments, and does not mean to resume them now.
2. That our Church presumably knew the meaning of the rubrics she drew up; and having drawn up the first rubric, never took it as authorizing or meaning the use of the vestments. Therefore we do not believe that they were meant to be used, and we object to their use now, knowing what they signified of old and still signify to-day.
3. That the proposal to make one garment permissible on the ground that "it has no meaning" will meet no difficulty, insure no peace, stop no breach of the law, and put no stop to the present troubles.
4. That the proposed compromise is delusive in its promise of peace, futile as a method for moderating ritual excesses, subversive of the doctrines of our Church as set forth in the Articles, and repulsive to all those who cordially accept and believe those Articles.

