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I.—LITERARY.

THE OXFORD MOVEMENT IN THE SOUTHERN
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

The Oxford Movement in the Church of England began about 1833. It was a reaction against liberalism in politics, latitudinarianism in theology, and the government of the Church by the State. It was, at the same time, a return to Mediaeval theology and worship. The doctrines of Apostolical Succession, and the Real Presence—a doctrine not to be distinguished from the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation—were revived. And along with this return to Mediaeval theology, Mediaeval architecture was restored; temples for a stately service were prepared; not teaching halls. Communion tables were replaced by *altars*. And the whole paraphernalia of worship was changed; so that, except for the English tongue and the mustaches of the priests, the visitor could hardly have told whether the worship were that of the English Church or that of her who sitteth on "the seven hills."

It must be admitted that there was some good in the movement. The Erastian theory as to the proper relation of Church and State is wrong. The kingdom of God should not be subordinate to any "world-power." No state should control the Church. And certainly such latitudinarianism in doctrine as that of Bishop Coleuso and others called for a protest. But the return to Mediaeval theology and Mediaeval worship was all wrong.

We have no good ground for doubting the sincerity of many of the apostles of the movement. Unfortunately, more than

sincerity is needed to justify a course in religion. The apostle of a very different Gospel has said of a part of his own life: "For I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." *

It must be admitted, too, that the movement early included men of great talent and commanding influence. John Keble was the singer. John Henry Newman consecrated to the cause all his sweetly persuasive power. And Edward Bouverie Pusey, whose high academic and social position occasioned the party's being called "Pusyites," was the great theologian of the movement.

The party was full of zeal. The Jesuits have hardly excelled the Oxford party in the spirit of propagandism. It has done more for the recent growth of the national church than all other parties combined. And though bitterly opposed at first, it has come to be the dominant party in the Church. Nay, it has captured the Church.

The visitor to England may, it is true, come occasionally on low church congregations. But he will probably enter church after church, where the worship is painfully high. If he sympathize with the Puritan ideal of worship, he will be made uncomfortable, by the sight of an altar, credence-table, altar crosses, altar lights, colored altar cloths, and so forth; by bowings, genuflections, turnings to the East; by irreverent chorister boys and their part in the worship; sometimes by material incense, and by priestly acts all as foreign to the spirit of New Testament worship as the idea of a special priesthood is foreign to that worship.

But we are not dependent on such imperfect observations for the conclusion that the Oxford Movement has triumphed. Clergymen in England speak of it as a fact. Current periodical literature affirms it; and even sober historians record this triumph as a fact on their pages. Dr. John F. Hurst says, "The Oxford reformers made a deep impression on the English Church. . . . There can be no doubt that the immense growth of the national Church within the last fifty years has been due in large measure to the zeal and energy of the High Church clergy: The doctrines of the Tractarians were also widely adopted, and they are now the ruling traditions in the Anglican Church throughout the world." †

* Acts 26:9.

† Short History of the Christian Church, p. 853, Ed. 1896.

The true nature of this movement is seen in the following facts: Within a score of years after the movement started "not less than four hundred clergymen and laymen," including "many of the brightest lights in the English Church," were logically carried into the Church of Rome. The Pope has made renewed efforts to bring the Anglicans into the Papal fold. A large party in the Anglican Church seems to feel that there is no essential difference between themselves and the Papists. Mr. Gladstone, the value of whose writings on religious subjects has been vastly overrated, has been trying on the one hand, to help the Pope to the discovery that the Anglican orders are valid, or on the other to help him to the concessions that they may be regarded and treated as valid. This aged man, whose services to mankind have been so great that one deprecates a word of depreciation against him, actually desires the union of the English and Romish Churches.

The history of the last half century makes indubitably clear, according to Professor Marcus Dodds of Scotland, "That ritualism is not merely the childish age of religion which Paul deplored but that it directly tends to externalize religion, to put ordinances in place of spiritual transactions, sanctimoniousness in place of sanctity, and to breed Phariseism instead of Godliness." *

But it was not our purpose in this article to show the nature of the Oxford Movement so much as to trace its growth.

The movement has affected the Anglican Churches throughout the world. The Protestant Episcopal Church in the U. S. A. has been changed by it hardly less than the mother Church of England. The party had its battle to fight here too. But the materiality, sensuousness and worldliness of the age fought on the side of the new movement. It has conquered here. The Protestant Episcopal Church of to-day is a very different body from what it was fifty years ago. It is marked now by increase of contempt for other evangelical churches; by more of ritualism, more of the Mediaeval view; by High Churchism.

The change in Ritualism is admitted by themselves. Let us hear the testimony of one of their most distinguished historians, as to the fact of the change, as well as his justification of the controversy which attended its introduction.

The Rev. Dr. Charles C. Tiffany, Archdeacon of New York, says in speaking of the recent history of the Church :

* See Southwestern Presbyterian, April 23rd, 1896.

“One of the inevitable struggles of the church was to adjust itself to the new development of ritualism, which may perhaps be defined as the effort to symbolize in worship, by a return to pre-Reformation usages, the doctrinal system of the extreme Anglo-Catholic school. The whole legislative action in this respect has been derided as an undignified wrangle over church millinery. That is a very inadequate conception of the controversy. Neither side looked upon it from so frivolous a point of view. Those who claimed the right to hold the doctrinal opinions of this school claimed the right to express and teach them by ritual action. They justified their vestments and ceremonies, hitherto unknown in the church in America, either by the usage arising in the English Church from the construction there of the Ornaments Rubric (though its force and obligations were then the subject of controversy and litigation), or by the lack of legislation in the canons and rubrics of the church in the United States, which had never sanctioned the Ornaments Rubric.

“On the other hand those who were opposed to this individual action of the members of a separate school urged that an opinion permitted to be held in the church was not to be construed as the doctrine of the church, and that the new ceremonies, meant to teach it, were so indistinguishable from the ceremonial which expressed the tenets of the Church of Rome (which this church had, in common with its English mother, rejected as errors), that to permit them was dangerous. They urged, moreover, that it was likely to hopelessly destroy both the moderation and uniformity in worship which had been so characteristic of the communion.

“The ritualistic controversy is therefore not to be described as a childish contention on either hand about matters in themselves insignificant; nor is the movement to be confounded with that growth in esthetic culture so characteristic of this time in all departments of life, and by which both the structures and the services of the church have been so greatly benefitted. Every school of thought within the Church, as well as all sorts and conditions of men without, have felt that influence. High-churchmen led the way, but low-churchmen followed quickly after, until all the features of English cathedral worship, or choral service and vested choristers, as well as of pictures upon the walls and stalls and lecterns in the chancel and crosses on the spire and over the holy table, have

ceased to be indicative of party position. The ceremonial brought in question by the ritualistic controversy was not simply esthetic, but symbolical of a special school of doctrine, which had never before thought to express itself since the Reformation." *

In the last paragraph the Archdeacon is somewhat confused. His perception must have been obscured when he saw esthetics as the sufficient ground of the importation of "all the features of the English Cathedral worship." As a church historian he should have remembered, too, that when all parties of his church received the High-Church ritual they were getting ready to receive High-Church doctrine. They were receiving it virtually. Worship and doctrine sustain causal relations toward one another. No fact is more familiar than this one to every reader of church history. Out of a departure in worship came the doctrine of a special priesthood and the doctrine of transubstantiation. Out of a departure in worship came Mariology and Hagiology. Doctrine and worship are correlated to one another. Alter either and the other will sooner or later be correspondingly affected. Calf-worship vitiates the conception of God as a base conception of God may beget calf-worship. Students of Union Seminary, in Virginia, remember that Dr. Peck was wont, in his day, to frequently emphasize the importance of the connection between worship and doctrine.

Other causes have co-worked with High-church doctrine to bring in High-church worship, and with High-church worship to bring in High-church doctrine. But High-church doctrine is prevailing more and more. The High-church movement had an ally in esthetics as it had in formalism, sensuousness, materiality and worldliness.

We have no war with esthetics. We can delight in a noble painting, noble architecture, and beautiful sensuous effects. We object, however, to the improper intrusion of esthetics into the domain of religion. With the mind rather than the sense man must commune with God. We do not feel, or taste, or smell God. We don't hear him with the physical ear. We don't even see him with the material eye. Nor is there any reason to believe that *Eau de Cologne* on the worshipping woman is more acceptable to God than onions and garlic would be. Nor that the Cologne Cathedral is more acceptable

* A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in U. S. A., pp. 529-'30.

to God than unpainted Douglass church, in the poorest region of Virginia. "God is a spirit and they that worship must worship him in spirit and in truth." * Moreover, God has indicated clearly in his word how he would have himself worshipped in the assemblages of his saints. It is presumptuous, it is will worship; it is contempt of God to set up our own preferred modes of worship.

If esthetics were the cause of such changes they would be wrong. But esthetics has been no more than the ally of the Oxford Movement. And the change has brought this church vastly nearer to the Church of Rome. It now appeals less to the understanding and more to the senses and imagination.

Lord Maculay said of the Church of England of his own day, "In general it may be said that she appeals more to the understanding, and less to the senses and the imagination than the Church of Rome, and that she appeals less to the understanding, and more to the senses and imagination, than the Protestant Churches of Scotland, France, and Switzerland." † The Anglican Churches of our day on both sides of the Atlantic have gotten still nearer to Rome.

The Oxford movement has affected other churches than the Episcopal. Presbyterian churches for example have been influenced in two directions by it. They have despised it in part; and, in part, apparently they have admired and imitated it. The admiration and imitation appears, indeed, only in sporadic cases. But these cases have been neither few nor inconspicuous. The imitations are not thoroughgoing, of course. Perhaps the parties are rarely conscious of being imitators, at all, of the Puseyites. But they have begun to travel the Oxford road. Sometimes the wheels that carry them are wheels of doctrine. Generally, they are wheels of esthetics, wheels of poverty of spiritual life, sensuousness and worldliness. They desire ritual, forms, something to please, to catch and to hold the senses while the spirit goes wandering. It is with them a partial return to Mediaeval worship, or to Mediaeval worship and theology both. They may give it another name but the thing is a Mediaeval thing. It matters not that certain churches—even Presbyterian Churches—retained more or less of the ritual itched for, after the Refor-

* John 4:24.

† History of England, Vol. I., p. 59, Ed. Belford, Clarke & Co., Chicago and New York, 1885.

mation. It matters not that they have done so till to-day. The thing is Mediaeval or old catholic.

Says a writer in the New York Observer of February last, "The tendency of religious life among people refined in thought and manner is towards a religion of vague emotions and away from the religion of clear statement and definite belief. It is of the essence of Protestantism to grip the faith clearly and firmly, to find an intellectual basis for its emotional experiences.

"The revival of ritualism brings all thoughtful christians face to face with the dilemma that saintly Horatius Bonar never wearied of pointing out. With all the earnestness of which he was capable, he maintained that the cross and the crucifix could never agree. Either ritualism will banish Christ or Christ will banish ritualism. The rulers of the Jews were thorough ritualists, and their ritualism crucified Christ. Ritualism still crucifies Christ. It conceals the cross in temples where truth is lost in the blaze of candles, pomp of dress, and strains of melodious music. If ritualism comes to the front, the cross must go into the background. That fact should determine the attitude of every follower of Christ to the revival of ritualism."*

The thing, we repeat, is Mediaeval, or Old Catholic. It is not Protestant. It is not New Testament. It hath its source in Rome or Greece; even as Dr. Bridges truly asserts that the Genevan gown, even if Genevan, hath "its tail in Rome."

American Presbyterians had in the main shaken it off. Are they to take Mediaeval Christianity up again?

Sporadic beginnings have been made, north and south. Secular as well as religious newspapers have acquainted all with the fact.

In the Southwestern Presbyterian of July 23rd, 1896, the editor says :

"We noted not long since that the Hymnal of the Northern Presbyterian Church contains ample provision for a ritual service, and that the Business Manager assured us that while not published in every edition it was in great demand. We observe, too, that the Saratoga Assembly refused to utter one word of disapproval of the many changes in worship for fear of militating against Christian liberty. These facts would seem alarming symptoms of a widespread disposition to "en-

* See Southwestern Presbyterian. April 23rd, 1896.

rich our barren Presbyterian service" by importations from ritualistic communions. It would seem that the same inclination is found in the Congregational churches of New England. It has called forth a very strong article on "The Pulpit and the Church Service," published in the "Advance" by Prof. C. M. Mead, of Hartford Theological Seminary. Any of our readers disposed to wink at such changes will be profited by the following extract :

There are these two well-defined and different types of religious service—one in which the ritual is the chief thing, the other, in which the preaching of the gospel is the chief thing. And the two cannot be united. There are those who are fond of an elaborate liturgy ; to whom the weekly or even daily, repetition of the same prayers is charming ; who find an exquisite esthetic delight in genuflections and bowings and intonings and crossings and candles and rich vestments, etc. The charm is largely intensified by the consciousness that the forms are ancient, are common to a large body of Christians, and are prescribed by a high ecclesiastical authority. Those who like these things can get them where they are indigenous ; and "they have their reward." But the attempt to ingraft ritualistic forms upon our Congregational services has resulted, as might have been expected, only in a mongrel hodge-podge, esthetically offensive and spiritually unedifying, which cannot long continue as it is, but must either tend more and more towards a full-fledged ritualism or must be replaced again by the simple, dignified, Apostolic, puritanic service, in which the central thing is the word of God expounded and applied to the thoughtful mind and the awakened conscience. Which is preferable ought not to be doubtful."

It would be superfluous to multiply clippings ; and it would be invidious to name instances.

One gentleman, however, has embeded his views in a historical work which is likely to be widely spread. No reasonable complaint could be made of a fair criticism of those views. We refer to Dr. Robert Ellis Thompson, the historian of the Presbyterians in the American Church History Series.

He advocates what to a Presbyterian should seem an extreme opinion regarding the efficacy of the sacraments. He is shown in all his writings on the worship of the church to be disposed to give too large a place to esthetics in worship, and to magnify the value of ritualism and ceremonies.

When speaking of the innovations in worship which have set the Directory of 1788 aside, he says :

"In other cases we see a free use of spontaneous symbolism, not always in the best taste, but a witness to the growing need of appeal to the imagination, no less than to the understandings and emotions in worship. For no worship is really adequate to human needs whose methods leave any province of our manifold human nature out of account. God has made us the most complex of his creatures, and calls for a response to his goodness from every side of our human nature."*

But to get the proper impression one must read at length in this volume. The spirit and tone are those of the culturist and esthetic, and of a virtual Oxfordist, though in the tadpole or chrysalis state.

There is a mournful feature of this running after Mediaevalism on the part of Presbyterians; and Southern Presbyterians, we will say, as we wish to apply the following remarks to our own body.

1. We have a constitution which embraces a Directory of Worship. The Constituting Assembly of 1861 adopted the following resolution which was offered by Dr. J. H. Thornwell :

"That this Assembly declare, in conformity with the unanimous decision of our Presbyteries, that the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Government, the Book of Discipline, and the Directory of Worship, which together make up the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, are the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, only substituting the term 'Confederate States' for 'United States.'"†

The history of the revision of the Directory which was "enacted as a part of the Constitution"‡ by the Assembly of 1894, shows that the Directory is still formally regarded as a part of the Constitution of the Church.

This Constitution is of the nature of the covenant between the different parts of the whole church. Those parts, pastors and congregations, who introduce into their worship things against the very *nature* and *genius* of the worship of the Direc-

* American Church History, Vol. VI., Presbyterians, Thompson, p. 235.

† Min. Gen. Assembly, 1861, p. 7.

‡ Min. Gen. Assembly, 1894, pp. 209-210.

tory, violate the Constitution and are guilty of covenant breaking.

2. They are virtually independent in the matter of worship. They pay no regard to the wishes of other congregations. They pay no regard to the compacts with other congregations and so violate unity one the most beautiful characteristics of true Presbyterianism.*

It is altogether insufficient for brethren who have taken this course to attempt to justify themselves by alleging that scant respect has long been paid to the Directory of worship. Past sins do not make proper present sins. We may feel compassion for the Artful Dodger that his antecedents have not been good; but we by no means concede that it is right for him to be a pickpocket.

Our Presbyteries have a perfect right to remonstrate with such brethren and to take other such measures as are necessary to secure the observance of the Constitution.

If brethren believe that more of Mediaevalism is desirable in the worship, theology and life of the church, they should first of all agitate through the press for the changes which they desire. They should move the whole body and have the Constitution of the church changed. Then they could worship in their preferred modes without the sin of schism or breach of covenant.

Some brother says, "We don't desire Mediaevalism; but greater conformity to the New Testament worship than our Directory warrants." By all means let us have it. We would have it, too, if possible. We would thus please God. But let us first of all be sure we have it. Let the brother show that our Directory is defective; that it comes short of giving the the New Testament scheme of worship. Let him carry the whole church along with him, all the while trying to live in harmony with it. Or if the church be immovable and he be certain that he has the truth, and that that truth is of sufficient importance, let him declare that in order to witness to the whole truth he must leave her. Let him stand like an honest man by his covenants, till the need come, then dissolve the covenants.

* The reader is advised to read in Peck's Miscellanies, Vol. I, the article on "Liturgies, Instrumental Music and Architecture," for a powerful exhibition of the real nature of innovations in worship, by the individual congregations.

But let brethren take care not to get farther away from the New Testament form of worship. The "richer services" have in the past sent men away with soul hunger. While the senses and imagination have been charmed, the heart has remained hungry and cold. "The universal priesthood is closely connected with a simple cultus; the Episcopal hierarchy with a rich and imposing ceremonial."

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