

EPISCOPAL CONDEMNATIONS OF RITUALISM

Church Association Tract 15

EPISCOPAL ADDRESS OF THE YEAR 1851.

The following address, condemnatory of Ritualism, was issued by two Archbishops and 22 Bishops, in the year 1851.

We the undersigned Archbishops and Bishops of the Provinces of Canterbury and York, do most earnestly and affectionately commend the following Address to the serious consideration of the Clergy of our respective Dioceses:—

J. B. (<i>Sumner</i>) CANTUAR.	G. (<i>Davys</i>) PETERBOROUGH.
T. (<i>Musgrove</i>) EBOR.	C. (<i>Thirlwall</i>) ST. DAVID'S.
C. J. (<i>Blomfield</i>) LONDON.	H. (<i>Pepys</i>) WORCESTER.
E. (<i>Maltby</i>) DUNELM.	A. T. (<i>Gilbert</i>) CICESTER.
C. R. (<i>Sumner</i>) WINTON.	J. (<i>Lonsdale</i>) LICHFIELD.
J. (<i>Kaye</i>) LINCOLN.	T. (<i>Turton</i>) ELY.
C. (<i>Bethell</i>) BANGOR.	S. (<i>Wilberforce</i>) OXON.
H. (<i>Percy</i>) CARLISLE.	T. V. (<i>Short</i>) ST. ASAPH.
G. (<i>Murray</i>) ROCHESTER.	J. (<i>Graham</i>) CHESTER.
J. H. (<i>Monk</i>) GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.	S. (<i>Hinds</i>) NORWICH.
C. T. (<i>Longley</i>) RIPON.	A. (<i>Ollivant</i>) LLANDAFF.
E. (<i>Denison</i>) SARUM.	Auckland (<i>Lord</i>) SODOR and MAN.

Beloved Brethren,—We have viewed with the deepest anxiety the troubles, suspicions, and discontents which have of late, in some parishes, accompanied the introduction of ritual observances exceeding those in common use amongst us.

We long indulged the hope that, under the influence of charity, forbearance, and a calm estimate of the small importance of such external forms, compared with the blessing of united action in the great spiritual work which is before our Church, these heats and jealousies might by mutual concessions be allayed. But since the evil still exists, and in one most important feature has assumed a new and more dangerous character, we feel that it is our duty to try whether an earnest and united address on our part, may tend, under the blessing of God, to promote the restoration of peace and harmony in the Church.

The principal point in dispute is this—whether, where the letter of the Rubric seems to warrant a measure of ritual observance, which yet, by long and possibly by unbroken practice, has not been carried out, the Clergy are either in conscience required, or absolutely at liberty, to act each upon his own view of the letter of the precept rather than by the rule of common practice. Now, as to this question, we would urge upon you the following considerations:—First, that any change of usages with which the religious feelings of a congregation have become associated is, in itself, so likely to do harm that it is not to be introduced without the greatest caution; secondly, that beyond this, any change which makes it difficult for the congregation at large to join in the service is still more to be avoided; thirdly, that any change which suggests the fear of still further alterations is most injurious; and, fourthly, that, according to the rule laid down in the Book of Common Prayer, where anything is doubted or diversely taken “concerning the manner how to understand, do, and execute the things contained in that book, the parties that so doubt, or diversely take anything, shall always

resort to the Bishop of the diocese, who, by his discretion, shall take order for quieting and appeasing of the same, so that the same order be not contrary to anything contained in that book.”

The fair application of these principles would, we believe, solve most of the difficulties which have arisen. It would prevent all sudden and startling alterations, and it would facilitate the reception of any change which was really lawful and desirable. We would, therefore, first urge upon our Reverend Brethren, with affectionate earnestness, the adoption of such a rule of conduct. We would beseech all who, whether by excess or defect, have broken in upon the uniformity and contributed to relax the authority of our ritual observances, to consider the importance of unity and order, and by common consent to avoid whatever might tend to violate them. In recommending this course as the best under present circumstances, we do not shut our eyes to the evil of even the appearance of any discrepancy existing between the written law and the practice of the Church. But there are many cases where the law may be variously interpreted; and we believe that we are best carrying out her own principles in urging you to have recourse in all such cases to the advice of her chief pastors.

But beyond mere attempts to restore an unusual strictness of ritual observance, we have to deal with a distinct and serious evil. A principle has of late been avowed and acted on, which, if admitted, would justify far greater and more uncertain changes. It is this—that as the Church of England is the ancient Catholic Church settled in this land before the Reformation, and was then reformed only by the casting away of certain strictly defined corruptions; therefore, whatever form or usage existed in the Church before its reformation may now be freely introduced and observed unless there can be alleged against it the distinct letter of some formal prohibition.

Now, against any such inference from the undoubted identity of the Church before and after the Reformation we feel bound to enter our clear and unhesitating protest. We believe that at the Reformation the English Church not only rejected certain corruptions, but also without in any degree severing her connexion with the ancient Catholic Church, intended to establish one uniform ritual, according to which her public services should be conducted. But it is manifest that a licence such as is contended for is wholly incompatible with any uniformity of worship whatsoever, and at variance with the universal practice of the Catholic Church, which has never given to the officiating ministers of separate congregations any such large discretion in the selection of ritual observances.

We, therefore, beseech any who may have proposed to themselves the restoration of what, under sanction of this principle, they deemed a lawful system, to consider the dangers which it involves; to see it in its true light, and to take a more just and sober view of the real position of our Church; whilst with equal earnestness we beseech others, who, either by intentional omission or neglect and laxity, may have disturbed the uniformity and weakened the authority of our prescribed ritual, to strengthen the side of order by avoiding all unnecessary deviations from the Church’s rule.

Such harmony of action we are persuaded would, under God’s blessing, go far towards restoring the peace of the Church. This happy result would more clearly exhibit her spiritual character. The mutual relations of her various members would be more distinctly perceived, and our Lay brethren would more readily acknowledge the special trust committed to us as stewards of the mysteries of God “for the edifying of the body of Christ.” They would join with us in asserting, and, if need be, defending for themselves, as much as for us, the true spiritual freedom of the Church. They would unite with us in a more trustful spirit, and therefore with a more ready will, in enlarging her means and strengthening her powers for the great work she has to do amongst the swarming multitudes of great towns at home and of our vast dominions abroad; and that Church, which has so long received from the hands of God such unqualified blessing, might continue to be, yea, and become more and more, “a praise in the earth.”

The late Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Longley) in reply to an Address presented to him by the English Church Union, on the 3rd February, 1866, at Lambeth Palace, said:—

“I cannot but feel that those who have violated a compromise and settlement which has existed for 300 years, and are introducing vestments and ceremonies of very doubtful legality, are really, though I am sure quite unconsciously, doing the work of the worst enemies of the Church I confess I have witnessed, with feelings of deep sorrow, the tone of defiance with which the recently introduced practices have in some instances been supported.”

English Church Union Monthly Circular, 1866, pp. 73, 74.

The same Archbishop, in answer to an Address from the Members of the National Club, 19th February, 1867, said:—

“I am by no means insensible to the dangers which at this moment beset the Church of England from the revival of certain ceremonial observances and the introduction of changes in our Ritual, symbolical of Doctrines at variance with those of our Reformed Church. The answer which I gave to the Address of the English Church Union twelve months ago sufficiently indicates my feeling on this subject, and subsequent events have only tended to confirm the justice of the remarks I then made.

“With an anxious desire to follow after that charity which thinketh no evil, I now find it impossible to evade the conviction that among those who are joining in the present movement for the restoration of Eucharistic vestments, the use of incense and candles in the day time, the offering of the Holy Sacrament as a propitiatory sacrifice, and the elevation of the consecrated elements for the worship of the people, there are many who are resolved, if possible, to obliterate in the formularies and worship of our Church every trace of the Reformation. The publications which are the acknowledged exponents of these opinions, leave no doubt in my mind upon this point, and having had some experience in time past of the tendency of such a movement as this, I have the less difficulty in interpreting its real bearing. Sixteen years ago I had to contend with an attempt of somewhat the same character, at St. Saviour’s, Leeds, where among other innovations the practice of confession after the Roman usage was introduced, and as soon as I proceeded to reprove it by the exercise of discipline, some of the Clergy of that Church shewed themselves in their true colours by seceding to the Church of Rome.”

In the posthumous Charge of Archbishop Longley, these words occur:—

“Now, it is far from my intention to impute to all those who have taken this ill-advised step of adopting the sacrificial vestments any sympathy with Roman error; but I am constrained to avow that there are plain indications in some of the publications which have been issued as manifestoes of the opinions of that section of our Church, that some of its professed members—yea, even of her ministers, think themselves at liberty to hold the doctrines of the Church of Rome in relation to the Sacrifice of the Mass, and yet retain their position within the pale of the Anglican Church with the avowed purpose of eliminating from its formularies every trace of the Reformation, as regards its protest against Romish error. The language they hold with respect to it is entirely incompatible with loyalty to the Church to which they profess to belong. They call it ‘a Communion deeply tainted with Protestant heresy;’ ‘Our duty,’ they say, ‘is the expulsion of the evil, not flight from it.’ It is no want of charity, therefore, to declare that they remain with us in order that they may substitute the Mass for the Communion; the obvious aim of our Reformers having been to substitute the Communion for the Mass.”

Extract from Remarks made by the present Primate (Dr. Tait) to the Archdeacons and Rural Deans, who assembled in his Library at Addington, October 4th, 1871:—

“No one can take up a newspaper or travel in a railway carriage without being confronted with the fact that the laity of England are alarmed by seeing that there are some of the clergy who are bent on restoring the Mass and the distinctively Roman doctrines which this country rejected at the Reformation. . . . It could not be denied that there were some churches in the country where the Romish Mass, which our Reformers died to resist, was sought to be restored, and he must ask,—Can the Bishop’s authority stand still while the affections of the people are being alienated by practices intended to undo all the benefits which the Reformation had conferred upon this country? We hear, it

is true, a plea for liberty in the Church; and such a plea must not be treated lightly. Liberty we must not lose, but it must be liberty within the limits of the law. If the Bishop is called upon by a proper authority, it is evident that he must act, and it may be that he may find it necessary to act of his own accord. In judging of what is lawful in the Church, he must remember that he is a Bishop of the Church of England and not of that of Rome”— *Times*, Oct. 10, 1871.

The Archbishop of York (Dr. Thomson) in his reply to a Lay Deputation in 1860, used the following words:—

“The use of strange vestments and ceremonies, which neither we nor our fathers have seen, has often been spoken of as childishness and frivolity. I have never been able to regard it from its ridiculous side. I believe it has gone along with a deliberate intention to alter the doctrinal position of the Church of England, by introducing into our services, ornaments, vessels, and gestures, which are not prescribed in our order of Common Prayer, and which not being prescribed, are, in effect, excluded from it.”

The late Bishop of Carlisle (Dr. Waldegrave) in a Pastoral Letter to the Clergy of his Diocese, in 1866, wrote:—

“There can be no longer any doubt that there exists at this moment within the pale of the Church of England an organized combination, the object of which is the re-instatement amongst us of those distinctive observances and doctrines of the Church of Rome, which were cast forth at the time of the blessed Reformation.

“The Sacrifice of the Mass, with all its attendant vestments, lights, censings, and prostrations;— Auricular Confession, with all its consequent sacerdotal influences, loosening family ties of God’s institution, and working through fraternities and sisterhoods of man’s invention,—these and other essentially Popish teachings and practices are now inculcated and defended by men who have subscribed to the formularies, and who retain their position as ministers of the Protestant Establishment of our land. With these formularies themselves an actual dissatisfaction is no longer denied; while the endeavour is made to supplement what is held to be defective, if not to neutralize what is considered to be erroneous, by the introduction of hymns of ominous doctrinal import, in unaccustomed, but highly significant places in the celebration of Divine worship. Nay, more than this, services are held, over and above the usual Daily Prayer and Communion Office, for which there is no legal warranty whatsoever, and in which the Homeward tendencies of the devotee meet with more satisfaction than he could otherwise attain within our borders. Nor are there wanting plain indications that even Mariolatry itself is regarded as that to which a close approximation may very desirably be made. Of the issue of all this there can be little question. . . . If things go on as they do at present, who shall say that a fearful reaction, similar to that of the latter half of the 17th century, shall not, even before these things come to pass, shake to their foundations both the Church and the Throne of these Realms?” (pp.1 to 3.)

The Bishop of Llandaff (Dr. Ollivant), in acknowledging a declaration against Ritualism, signed by upwards of sixteen hundred laymen of Monmouthshire, in June, 1868, said:—

“That in his opinion the Sacramental theory which it is the avowed object of the Ritualistic movement to uphold, is neither the doctrine of the Church of England nor of the Catholic Church of the very earliest age. With regard to ‘practices,’ the Bishop said that, although he deemed many of them to be in themselves matters of entire indifference, and though he thought a narrow-minded exclusiveness or a disregard of decency and order in the conduct of Divine worship was as much to be deprecated on the one hand as superfluous ceremonialism on the other, he believed a great responsibility rested upon the clergy if, by the indulgence of their own self-will, they give needless offence.”— *St. James’s Chronicle*, 8 June, 1868.

The Bishop of Bath and Wells (Lord Arthur Charles Hervey), in his Charge, delivered in 1871, says:—

“It appears to me that a great effort is being made at the present time to set the plain teaching of the Church of England concerning the Lord’s Supper aside as insufficient, and to substitute for it a doctrine identical with that of the Church of Rome, identical in all but the metaphysical explanation by which it is justified. A physical change in the elements by which they become the natural Body and Blood of Christ locally present on the Altar, in the Hand and in the Mouth, and so proper objects of adoration; a real sacrifice or offering up of Christ as a Propitiation; the true Priestly character and powers of the celebrant; the proper altar, and all the adjuncts of true sacrificial worship, seem to me to be taught in our new school. In other words, on that central doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass which Cranmer declared to be the root of all Romish error, a great effort is being made to supersede the doctrine of the Reformed Anglican Church, and to restore that of the Church of Rome. . . . When I add that there are societies of English Churchmen whose professed object it is to bring about a reunion with Rome, and to unprotestantize the Anglican Church, that it is understood that a considerable section are on the very eve of a schismatical separation from the Church of England, in order to be free from all interference with their religious tastes and tendencies, and that the Church of Rome has stronger hope of the return of England to her allegiance to the Pope now, than she has had at any time since the Reformation, and makes the conversion of England the subject of her unceasing prayers, I think I have said enough to show that there is a considerable change in the attitude of the Church of England towards Rome, and no inconsiderable danger arising to her from that quarter.” (pp. 11 to 13).

The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol (Dr. Ellicott), in his Annual Pastoral Letter (1871), wrote:—

“Now, without saying any needlessly unkind word, I must express the opinion that it is the duty of us all cheerfully and *ex animo* to obey the law when authoritatively expounded. If, unfortunately, in any way conscience points to another course, then it is the plain duty of all who feel themselves thus directed, to resign the position they hold by law. All honest men will sympathise with them in such a course, and will offer no obstruction whatever to their doing their Master’s work in such other way as the change of circumstances may necessitate. To remain among us in the hope of effecting changes of basis for our Reformed Church, or of furthering a disestablishment, which is now less likely to take place than it was two years ago, and, as far as we can judge, is remote—thus to remain, and remaining to have to stoop to subterfuges and evasions, is morally worse for themselves, and worse for the Church at large, than honest and sorrowful separation.

“At any rate, this is perfectly certain, that there is a feeling in the country everywhere beginning to show itself that will necessitate early decision, whether cheerfully to obey, or conscientiously to relinquish posts that can no longer properly be held.”

The Bishop of London (Dr. Jackson), in his Charge, delivered in Nov. 1871, used these words:—

“But when we find the ‘Catholic revival,’ so called, asserted as the antithesis, and antidote to the Reformation, which is deplored as a misfortune if not sin; when its work is admitted, and indeed avowed to be to undo what was then done; when Holy Scripture is disparaged as the rule of Faith unless as supplemented and explained by “Catholic teaching,” and the Thirty-nine Articles are complained of as an unfair burden, put aside as obsolete, or interpreted in a sense which, if their words can be wrested into bearing, is undoubtedly not that which they were intended to bear; when the doctrines of those who drew them up are disclaimed as uncatholic and condemned as heretical; when language is used, popularly and without qualification, on the subject of the Holy Eucharist, which, whether capable or not of being absolved, under qualification, of contradiction to our formularies, is not only declared by Protestants but claimed by Romanists to be identical with Transubstantiation; when seven Sacraments are again taught, and Confession with absolution is enjoined, not as an occasional remedy for exceptional doubts and sorrows, but as the ordinary rule of a holy life, and the needful preparation for Holy Communion; when Prayers for the dead are recommended and Purgatory more than hinted at; when the *cultus* of the Virgin and the invocation of Saints are introduced into books of devotion, which are framed on the Romish model, and adapted to

and distributed among persons of all ages, ranks, and occupations; when, finally, we are told, that in order to stabilitate the conquests over Protestantism and to re-Catholicise the Church of England, it still remains 'to make confession the ordinary custom of the masses, and to teach them to use Eucharistic worship, to establish the claim to Catholic Ritual in the highest form, to restore the Religious Life' (meaning the life of the Cloister), 'to say Mass daily, and to practise reservation for the sick;' when this movement is thus developed in its results or explained by its supporters, it is not possible that it could be received by Bishops of the Reformed Church of England with anything but disapprobation, warning, and sorrowful rebuke, unless they were unfaithful indeed to their office, their vows, and their Master the Lord Jesus Christ. There are, as we have seen, causes at work which tend to limit practically and enfeeble the authority of the Episcopate; but fidelity to the distinctive principles, doctrines, and discipline of the Church of England is not one of these. It is no source of weakness; it is a ground and necessary condition of strength." (pp. 51 to 53.)

The Bishop of Norwich (Dr. Pelham), in a letter addressed to the Church Association, dated 14th July, 1873, says:—

"I desire to express my entire sympathy with the anxiety of the memorialists in reference to the revival in our Church of doctrines and ceremonies, for which no warrant is to be found in the Word of God, which are a departure from the teaching and practice of the primitive Church and which our Church repudiated at the Reformation.

"I fully admit my responsibility as a Minister and a Bishop of the Church of England to use the authority and influence of my office to prevent and discourage the teaching of such doctrines and the use of such ceremonies, and to uphold the authority of the law, especially in such matters as have been the subject of legal decision, in all cases in which complaint is duly made and sufficient evidence is afforded."

The late Bishop of Winchester (Wilberforce), in the debate in the House of Lords on the 15th July, 1873, said:—

"I hate and abhor the attempt to Romanize the Church of England."

The Bishop of St. David's (Dr. Thirlwall) in his Charge, 1872, says:—

"The development which has been proceeding before our eyes during the last ten years has culminated in an approximation to Romish doctrine and ritual so close as to render the remaining interval hardly perceptible to common observers. Whether those who lead the van in this movement regard the position which they have taken up as one in which they could finally rest, or as a step toward an ulterior object, it would be useless to inquire. But they do not profess to be satisfied with the present amount of innovation, or to regard it as anything more than a beginning and an instalment. They make no secret of their desire and intention, so far as lies in their power, to bring about a complete transformation of the Church of England into the likeness of the Church of Rome in every particular, short of immediate submission to the Pope.

"After this it must be our own fault if we are not on our guard. But when the same persons put in 'a plea for Toleration,' I do not know how to illustrate the character of such a proposal more aptly than by the image suggested by one of themselves, in the words I was just now quoting, of 'two great camps.' It is as if one of these camps should send to the other some such message as this: 'We are on our march to take possession of your camp, and to make you our prisoners; but all we desire is that you should let us alone, and should not attempt to put any hindrance in our way.'"

The Bishop of Durham (Dr. Baring), in his answer to a Memorial from Morpeth, dated 3rd June, 1873, uses these words:—

"I do not doubt but that the Church Association by its prosecutions has accomplished a good and important work; it has vindicated the Protestant character of our Prayer-book, and has obtained a clear interpretation of the law of the Church upon several disputed points from the highest Court of Appeal. Although these decisions were at variance with their own judgment and wishes, many conscientious clergymen at once gave up their previous practices, that they might set an example of obedience to the law, and of loyalty to the Church of which they were ministers. But the very instances in which the Church Association obtained a favourable judgment have exhibited indisputable evidence that where there existed disloyalty to the Church of England and a yearning towards the doctrine and ritual of the Church of Rome, the practices condemned have, with some trivial change, been persisted in; and that no amount of legal proceedings will make the foolish, or the traitor to his Church, loyal, or the Jesuit honest."

Extract from the Charge of the Bishop of Peterborough (Dr. Magee), 1872.

"Naturally, and necessarily, too, the Reformation which disowned and rejected many both of these doctrines and practices, is the object of their bitterest dislike—a dislike which no words of theirs seems strong enough to express. No one can deny—the most advanced members of the party do not themselves care to deny—that it is, in its latest development, marked by a close and even a servile imitation of all the minutest details of Roman Catholic ceremonials; a hankering after Romish theology and Romish forms of private devotion; an almost childish affectation of all the most Romish modes of thought and forms of expression; in short, as they themselves express it, by a 'deferential' 'latinising' of our Church; and to such an extent that one might not unfairly suppose that the one aim of such persons is to make themselves, in all respects, as like Romish priests as possible, and their greatest happiness is to be mistaken for such; and that the accusation which they would most keenly resent would be, that they were capable of supposing that on any point whatever on which the Church of England differ from that of Rome, she can by any possibility be in the right.

"The calmness with which this demand is made for what is termed the right of the Catholic priesthood, but which is simply a license never so much as heard of before in any Church in Christendom, would be almost ludicrous were it not most seriously mischievous.

A youthful priest—let us suppose—who has but recently passed an examination for holy orders, in which he may not perhaps have displayed any very profound acquaintance with theology or Church history, finds himself the fortunate possessor of a living, into which he has been inducted on the express condition that he assents to, and will use, the form prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer and none other, except so far as it may be ordered by lawful authority.' No sooner has he been duly inducted, than he proceeds to set up in his church the Roman mass in all its minutest details, of which lights, vestments, and incense are but a small part; he duly performs all the genuflexions, crossings, and prostrations prescribed in the last edition of his *Directorium*, or his *Ritual for the Altar*, adding to these, from time to time, such 'beautiful symbolisms,' as may either occur to his own mind, or may have been recommended by some correspondent in his Church newspaper, as the last 'correct thing' in Ritualism. His parishioners, naturally indignant at this deliberate Romanising of their Church and their services—in which they, perhaps not altogether erroneously, believe that they have some rights, legal and ecclesiastical—remonstrate with him. He informs them, in reply, that he is a priest of the Holy Catholic Church, and that as such, it is his privilege to teach and direct them in all things, and their privilege to obey him. They complain to the Bishop, who, on writing to the incumbent to inquire into the truth of their complaints, receives in reply the information that all that has been complained of is quite true; that the writer does not intend to alter his proceedings in the very least particular, whatever his Bishop may say to the contrary; that as to his promise 'reverently to obey his ordinary,' that only means, that he is to obey such directions as the Bishop can enforce in a court of law; and that, at any rate, whatever obedience over and above this he might be disposed to pay to a really 'Catholic-minded' and 'properly-appointed Bishop,' he cannot possibly pay to one who is only 'the nominee of the Prime Minister,' and has neither 'the learning nor the piety,' nor 'the Catholic sympathies,' which alone would justify the obedience of a truly Catholic priest. Does his Bishop, in reply, remind him that he is not asking him to obey his directions only, but to obey the plain and clear law of the Church of England, his answer is either that the Church of England has not expressly forbidden the practices in question, and that he is entitled to do or say anything in public service which is not expressly forbidden; or, if this cannot be alleged, he asserts that these practices have been

forbidden only in the Court of the Metropolitan, whose judgment he cannot possibly acknowledge, inasmuch as he sits there accompanied by a lay assessor,' or else by the Committee of the Privy Council, whose decisions are for him simply so much waste paper. . . . Finally, if his Bishop, having exhausted every effort of remonstrance, counsel, and even of entreaty, proceed at last to enforce the law and discipline of the Church of which he is a chief pastor, he is met by an indignant cry of tyranny and persecution, and fierce accusations of attempting to stamp out the liberties of the Catholic priesthood; followed, probably, by a denunciation of the hateful union between Church and State, by virtue of which, nevertheless, and of the legal status it gives him, this much-aggrieved priest alone possesses the legal power to defy his Bishop.

“Our Church cannot safely tolerate, she ought not to tolerate for a single day, those ‘wilful and contemptuous transgressions’ of her order and discipline which spring from hatred of her essential principles and disloyal denial of her claims on the obedience of her own children.”