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The Royal Commission and the Vestments.[1]

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THE subject I am asked to consider in this paper is the recommendation made by the recent Royal Commission that Letters of Business should be issued to the Convocations with instructions "to consider the preparation of a new rubric regulating the ornaments (that is to say, the vesture) of the ministers of the Church at the times of their ministration, with a view to its enactment by Parliament." Letters of Business have been issued accordingly, but they instruct the Convocations to consider "the desirability" of this recommendation, and that question is now under consideration in both Provinces.

It is neither necessary, therefore, nor relevant to enter on the endless dispute which has prevailed, and which still prevails, respecting the legal meaning of the existing Ornaments Rubric. The question is whether a new rubric should be prepared, and what that rubric should prescribe; and it may further be safely assumed that the practical question is whether formal authorization should be given to the use of the Vestments prescribed by the first book of Edward VI., or at least to the use of some special Vestment, such, for instance, as a white chasuble, at the administration of the Holy Communion.

Now, in approaching this question, I would urge the consideration, in the first instance, not of the disputed question of the law of the English Church since the Reformation, but of the undoubted action and practice of the English clergy for three hundred years after that time, and of the light which this throws upon the mind of the Church. It is evident that there were strong influences at work at the commencement of Elizabeth's reign, perhaps the influence of the Queen herself, to retain the old Vestments. It is not less evident that it was found impracticable to give effect to those influences, and it cannot reasonably be doubted that what thwarted them was the strong

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and practically predominant feeling that the Vestments were indissolubly associated with the superstitious uses of the Roman Mass. That is the broad result of the vehement contentions on the subject in the reign of Elizabeth. The *Advertizements*, whatever their legal force, are an indisputable witness to the fact that the Vestments could not be legally enforced, and that it was necessary to acquiesce, at all events, in the simple use of the surplice. When the Stuart period commenced, we have similarly the witness of the Canons of 1604 to the fact that the Church did not, or could not, rely on the rubric of Elizabeth to re-introduce the Vestments, but once more acquiesced, formally and officially, in the use of the surplice. Finally, at the Restoration, in the height of Church reaction, at a time when the claims and the ideals of the Church were much enhanced, we again see, independently of what may be the technical meaning of the new Ornaments Rubric, that not a single Bishop or priest so much as attempted to introduce or recommend the Vestments. It is impossible not to recognize that the feeling of the clergy and of the Church was adverse to their re-introduction; and it would seem again unreasonable to attribute this to any other consideration than that it was essential for the Church to assert its opposition to Rome, and that the Vestments were deemed to be too much associated with Roman superstitions. All through that century, and down to the middle of the last, no English divine—we may safely say no English Churchman—would have questioned the statement of the recent Royal Commission that there is "a deep cleavage" between the Church of England and the Church of Rome; and the practical impossibility of restoring the Vestments cannot well be attributed to any other consideration than that their use was precluded by that cleavage. Within the last fifty years they have been re-introduced; but when, and under what circumstances? Not until the principal leader of the Tractarian School had formally denied, in Tract XC., the existence of any deep cleavage between the Churches of England and Rome, and until, in consequence, ritual observances began to be introduced which, in the judgment of the Com-

missioners, "unite to change the outward character of the service from that of the traditional service of the Reformed English Church to that of the traditional service of the Church of Rome." In the face of these facts, can it reasonably be thought practicable to persuade the English people that the re-introduction of the Vestments would not involve an approximation to Romish practice, and a practical encouragement of Romish doctrine? and can it be doubted that their formal authorization by a new rubric would deeply accentuate the division between the Church and the Nonconformists? That was the view of our forefathers for three hundred years; and there is in our own day a fresh consideration which would justly enhance this feeling. The Vestments are the Vestments of the Roman Mass. In former days the Roman Church could not openly celebrate the Mass in England, and the Vestments might therefore, at that time, have seemed to Englishmen simply ancient Vestments. In our days the Roman Mass is freely celebrated among us, and is becoming more and more familiar. The proposal, therefore, in the present day is not simply to introduce ancient Vestments, but to introduce the very Vestments which are the characteristic use of the Roman Church in our midst, and thus to assimilate to the eye, in the most glaring manner, the Communion office of our Church to the Mass of the Church of Rome. What does it matter, in the face of these historic and present considerations, whether the chasuble, for instance, has or has not an inherent sacerdotal significance? It and the other Vestments are the living usage, before our very eyes, of the Mass of the Church of Rome; and that consideration must render their use or toleration impossible to all English Churchmen who believe that the Mass, as celebrated in the Church of Rome, is superstitious in the highest degree.

But there would seem at first less obvious objection to the authorization of some white Vestment, which would probably be a chasuble, to mark the celebration of the Holy Communion as the highest act of the Church's worship. When that sacrament is said, indeed, as it often is, to be the only worship specifically

instituted by our Lord, we must ask, in surprise, did not our Lord institute Baptism? And did He not teach us the Lord's Prayer? But allowing all that may justly be said as to the pre-eminence of the Eucharist in Christian worship, there appear to be very grave considerations, both of an historical and of a practical character, which must be taken into account before consenting to its being distinguished by a special vesture, and so marked off, by a peculiar distinction, from the other services. The first and most important to an English Churchman is that there is no trace of any such usage in the Church of the first centuries. How does Monseigneur Duchesne describe the origin of the Christian service? He says (p. 48) that the Church "took over *en bloc* all the religious services of the Synagogue"; particularly its "four elements, lections, chants, homilies, and prayers," but "added thereto one or two new elements," and, in the result, "the only permanent element, on the whole, which Christianity added to the liturgy of the Synagogue was thus the sacred meal instituted by Jesus Christ as a perpetual commemoration of Himself." He then quotes from Justin Martyr what he calls "the most important" of "the texts of the second or third centuries, in which there is mention made of the Eucharist and of its essential rites"; and he characterizes it, in conclusion, by saying that "of the four elements borrowed from the current usage of the synagogue—namely, the lection, the chant, the homily, and the prayer—the only one of which there is no express mention is the chanting of the psalm." In other words, in this important account of the celebration of the Eucharist in the second century it is in no way whatever separated from those services which the Church took over from the Synagogue, and which correspond to our daily prayers and Litany.

As to Vestments, the recent work of the Jesuit Father Braun, which has been lately commended to our confidence by Dr. Wickham Legg in the *Guardian*, says (p. 767): "It is now generally agreed that in the first three centuries of the Christian Church no sacred vesture was in use, distinct, either in form or

ornamentation, from unliturgical dress." But this recently-published work of Father Braun enables us to carry this consideration a great deal further. The chasuble, which was simply the ordinary cloak of a Roman gentleman, came into use in ministerial dress in the sixth century; though even in the year 530 we have evidence, he says, that there was no formal or substantial difference between liturgical and lay dress; and at the end of it, Gregory the Great, and his father, Gordianus, a Senator, are represented as both wearing the chasuble, the pallium alone distinguishing the Pope from the layman. But a further statement by Father Braun on this subject is still more important. Even when the chasuble was established as a liturgical dress, there was still, for two or three centuries, no use of it, or of any other Vestment, as a special Eucharistic dress. He tells us (p. 169) that the chasuble, even in Carolingian times, "had not yet become an exclusively priestly garment, nor even an exclusively liturgical Vestment; still less had it become an exclusively Mass Vestment." It only became so after the middle of the ninth century, "and until that time priests and Bishops constantly appear in it in imagery, no matter what liturgical action they were engaged in." It is particularly interesting to ourselves that he adds that a clear reference "to the change which was completed in the eleventh century respecting the use of the chasuble" is found in a letter from Lanfranc to the Archbishop of Rouen, in which the question is discussed whether the chasuble should be worn at the consecration of a church. It is evident, says Father Braun, "that we are at a time when explanations are commencing as to when the chasuble should be used and when not, and that the chasuble is already often regarded as a special Mass Vestment" (pp. 169-171).

Thus the evidence of this eminent Roman Catholic authority establishes the fact that it was not until between the ninth and eleventh century that a distinctive vesture was adopted, even in the Roman Church, for the Holy Communion. Down to the ninth century, at all events, and beyond it, ministerial

Vestments, whatever might be worn, were worn at all services alike, whether Eucharistic or not. But what was the character of that period? It was the very period at which those superstitions respecting the Holy Communion were finally taking root, which ended, in the thirteenth century, in the full development of the Roman doctrine respecting the Mass, and simultaneously, as Father Braun tells us, in the final settlement of the Roman Mass Vestments. It was, he says (p. 779), between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries that the chasuble and the stole came to be disused by subdeacons, and the chasuble became the specific Mass Vestment (*Messgewand*).

Two considerations, as has been suggested, historical and practical, come out of these facts, thus authenticated in the present year by a learned Roman Catholic authority. The historical one is that any proposal for adopting a special Vestment for the celebration of the Holy Communion is inconsistent with the practice of the Christian Church, not merely for the first three centuries, not merely for the first six centuries, but for the first nine centuries, and that the first precedent for it is found in what is confessedly the darkest century of all in the history of the Church. Can a Church which, like the English Church, prides itself on being faithful to the example of the primitive Church, adopt such a proposal without fatal inconsistency? The practical consideration arises out of the evidence of subsequent history as to the consequences which have ensued in the Roman Church from this violation of primitive practice, in the special position thus given to the Mass. I prefer to describe it in the statement which an eminent man of learning among the High Churchmen, the late Archdeacon Freeman, quotes (vol. i., p. 161) from one whom he calls a peculiarly well-informed writer, in the *Christian Remembrancer* of October, 1850. The writer says: "Of one thing it seems proper to remind the reader . . . that you may go, we do not say from church to church, but from Cathedral to Cathedral, of Central Europe and never hear—never have a chance of hearing—Matins, save at high festivals. . . . Anywhere, to find in a

village church a priest who daily recited his Matins publicly would be a phenomenon." He further quotes from the late Mr. Beresford Hope the following description of the development of Roman worship:

"The result has been a singular system of compromise. On the one hand, the Mass and the observances growing from it—*Benediction* in particular—have almost exclusively occupied the churches; Vespers alone, as an authoritative service, out of the various divisions of the Divine office, struggling for recognition. On the other hand, an irregular bundle of vernacular forms of worship—litanies, methodistical hymns, and modern prayers, etc.—have accumulated, and are encouraged by authority as the playthings, so to speak, of the laity, who, it is assumed, cannot compass anything better; while the old and venerable *Officium Divinum*, the Breviary services, are remanded to the more private use of the clergy."

Are there not too many indications of a tendency in this direction among ourselves?

In a word, the exaltation of the Eucharist in the Roman Church, marked by the assignment to it in the Dark Ages of a special Eucharistic Vestment—a Vestment not at that time more marked in character than a white chasuble would be in the present day—has led to the disparagement of the ancient Divine offices of the Church, and, consequently, to the grievous impoverishment of general, and particularly of lay, devotion. It cannot be considered surprising that a practice unknown to the Church during the first half of its existence, and adopted in a period of the deepest ignorance and superstition, should have led inevitably to a disastrous eclipse of ancient devotion. But it is indeed surprising that in our own day, with all this Church history behind us, it should be seriously proposed to adopt in the English Church the measure which marks the commencement of this grievous corruption. Of the two proposals, the introduction of a special Eucharistic Vestment would seem the worst. The authorization of what Father Braun calls the Mass Vestments of the Roman Church would be of the most grievous

consequence in assimilating our Communion worship to that of the Church of Rome; but the authorization of a special Eucharistic Vestment would be of more far-reaching danger, by introducing the germ of the tendency which has undermined in the Church of Rome the ancient Divine offices. The danger cannot be better expressed than in words which I beg leave to quote from Archdeacon Freeman's "Principles of Divine Service" (vol. i., pp. 205, 206). He is deprecating what he describes as "a tendency which has begun to appear here and there amongst us to depreciate the Church's ordinary worship, if not to desire even the partial abolition of it. There are those who, rightly impressed with the transcendent excellence of the Eucharistic rite, and possessed with a proportionate desire for more frequent celebration of it, are inclined to look upon the Church's ordinary offices with toleration at best, and as impeding, rather than promoting, the highest kind of spiritual life and growth. They see not why the ordinary daily offices, or the morning office at the least, might not be dispensed with, and daily celebration of the Eucharist be put in its place. The rest of the Western Church is known to have even substituted, in practice, non-communicating attendance at the celebration of the Eucharist for her nominal morning offices, which have accordingly ceased to exist as the vehicle of the people's devotion. And some among us would perhaps advocate our following even this extreme example. But at present I have in view the case of those only who would desire the substitution of a daily and genuine congregational Eucharist for our ordinary office of morning prayer. This view, as expressing a zeal for the one act of worship instituted by our Lord Himself, is naturally engaging to devout and reverent minds. But . . . this expression of zeal for the Eucharist ignores the position, dignity, and powers of the ordinary worship of the Church—its position, as being, under one view, the indispensable instrument for the carrying out of the Eucharistic idea; its dignity, in virtue of that connexion; and its powers, in virtue both of our Lord's express and separate promise to it, and of the quasi-

priestly and sacrificial character which, in its degree, it shares with the Eucharist."

I submit that the objections thus indicated are not those of a narrow Puritan obstinacy. They are prompted by the jealousy, which cannot well be censured or disparaged in an English Churchman, of anything which would be inconsistent with the claim of our Church to be guided by the example of the best and purest ages of Christian history. There is no question here of three centuries, or six centuries, or even nine. It is a question of abandoning the practice of all ages previous to that in which the Western Church reached its lowest depth of ignorance and superstition. The history of the Western Church since that time has demonstrated the danger of the course proposed, and the English convocations would stultify their own appeal to antiquity and their noblest traditions if they enter upon it.

These considerations ought, in conclusion, to make it clear that such a course would be fatal to that hope of establishing peace within our Church which, to some minds, seems the fascination of these proposals. It is no mere Puritan or Protestant narrowness which unites many of us in intense opposition to them. It is to the ideal of the primitive Church of six centuries at least, and of the English Church of three centuries—to half the centuries, that is, and, as few will deny, to the best centuries, of the Christian Church—that our allegiance and our enthusiasm are devoted. We are asked to consent to abandoning this great ideal in favour of an ideal which I will not further designate than by saying that it is the ideal of the Middle Ages and of the Roman Church of the counter-reformation. Will any reasonable person suppose that, except by forcible expulsion, we can be restrained from asserting that primitive and reformed ideal by every influence in our power? To authorize either the Roman Vestments or any special Eucharistic Vestment would be to challenge us to a more strenuous, a more uncompromising, and a more general opposition to Romanizing tendencies in our Church than has yet been

offered, and such an attempt to make a false peace would only lead to a far more bitter war. Those who feel with me have no idea of willingly abandoning our place in a Church of which we believe our principles to embody the true spirit. We may be driven out, but until we are we will resist with the utmost determination any measure which is inconsistent with the Scriptural and primitive Churchmanship which is our pride. Maintain in our liturgy and services that primitive, and in some respects neutral, character which has hitherto marked them, and we can trust to the inherent truth of Scriptural and primitive principles, and to the permanent pressure which they must exert through the Prayer Book to throw off the feverish symptoms of a passing Roman malaria. But once break down the barrier which those primitive and neutral services establish, and we must struggle with a new and unremitting energy to extirpate what we should then regard as the poison, not only of a dangerous, but of a critical disease.

True History or Literary Invention?

By the Rev. W. FISHER, M.A.

THE Old Testament in its great stages and main outlines presents a story intelligible and consecutive. The Creation is followed by the Fall and the Flood; the call of Abraham and the patriarchal period are followed by bondage in Egypt, the Exodus, the Covenant at Sinai, the conquest of Canaan, the settlement of the tribes, the rise and division of the monarchy, the captivity of Israel and Judah, with the eventual return of Judah. We have here the national records of a people. Is this a true record of actual events, or, whatever religion and patriotism have done, is it but literary manufacture? It must be historically true or historically false. If these great stages are true in record, the quarrel induced by modern criticism of the Old Testament comes to an end, for