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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

THE  
CHURCHMAN

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MARCH, 1883.

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ART. I.—THE RESPECTIVE TENDENCIES OF  
LITURGICAL DEFICIENCY AND RITUALISTIC  
EXCESS.

**B**EFORE entering upon a consideration of this subject, it is well to define the limits of our inquiry, and the terms employed in the statement of it.

We have here nothing to do with the modes of Divine worship outside the boundaries of our own communion, the Church of England; or beyond the requirements of our "Book of Common Prayer." Whether ancient or modern, Oriental or Occidental, Liturgies are the best, the most Scriptural, the most advantageous, we do not inquire. Whether the formal Ritual of the Church, or the informal worship of Nonconformists, possesses these characteristics to the greatest extent, does not come within the scope of our subject.

The ministers of the Church of England have been entrusted with the conduct of Divine service according to a prescribed form fenced with divers Rubrics of direction in its use, and they have accepted that Trust under most solemn circumstances, bound by most solemn promises. We are not to add thereto, for we are pledged to use "no other." Are we allowed to diminish therefrom?

This question brings us to the terms of our thesis. By Ritualistic excess we mean the adoption and use of forms of worship, whether in matter or manner, which are not prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer. Taken from the Use of Sarum, the Roman Missals, Greek forms, or Genevan customs, it matters not; they all come under the term Ritualistic excess.

By Liturgical deficiency we understand the failing to comply with the formal appointments of our Prayer Book as to the

times, the frequency, the character of our services; as to the mode in which we conduct them, whether in accordance with, or deviation from, the Rubrics; and as to the accessories and arrangements for their performance. As everything beyond the Prayer Book constitutes Ritualistic excess, so everything that falls short of its requirements constitutes Liturgical deficiency.

Both these are violations of our Prayer Book and its requirement so far as the letter is concerned; but there may be a very important practical difference in the results. We have therefore to inquire into the "respective tendencies" of each, and see if they can be equally justified by those results, or if either of them is quite unjustifiable under the circumstances. If the tendency (or outcome) of either is contrary to the spirit as well as the letter of the Prayer Book; if it introduce discord and contrariety into what should be in harmony and concord; if it should tend to a destruction of the plan on which the Book is based—should affirm what the Book has denied, or deny what it has affirmed—then that one is unjustifiable; and common honesty towards the Church, the congregation, and the Book, demands that such shall be given up, and the services be expanded or contracted to the required limitations.

Having thus defined the terms of our thesis, we are prepared to enter upon its consideration.

It will be generally admitted, no doubt, that there are few, if any, of the clergy who strictly conform to all the Rubrics and requirements of the Prayer Book. One large portion are especially charged with Liturgical deficiency, and with great semblance of justice; some of them, possibly, are amenable to the charge of Ritualistic excess, using the term in its proper, not technical, significance. Another large section are equally charged with Ritualistic excess, and might, in some points, we think, be found guilty of Liturgical deficiency.

In these divergencies of opinion and practice, the best way of dealing with the subject is to try if an overruling principle can be found to guide us in both. We are not individual Christians, nor isolated congregations, occupied only with personal interests, or combined only for sectional purposes, but much more. We are Christians and congregations in a great community—an Apostolic branch of the Catholic Church of Christ. As regards common needs and their supply, common blessings and gratitude for them, common privileges and their use, we all are on the same platform; and in the realization of this unity, our Liturgy has been compiled, and is entitled the Book of *Common Prayer*. The need of one is the need of all—the need of all is the need of each; and when all come together

to express their need in prayer, and to receive a blessing from God, it must be that the form of worship is the most perfect expression that can be found of the principle that binds all together.

It may be a question whether forms are the best mode of expressing this sense of community. The Church has decided in their favour; the Nonconformists have, for the most part, decided against them. But the decision once made by the Church, it follows, surely, that *the highest and most perfect form that could be devised by those engaged in its compilation would be put forth as the Book of Common Prayer.* It is no mere fortuitous concurrence of devotional atoms, no mere aggregate of personal predilections. It is the offspring of the thoughtful, prayerful, efforts of men, whose character was as holy as their ecclesiastical position was lofty—whose spiritual acquirements in the knowledge of God's Word and man's need were as great as their knowledge of the Liturgical heritage of the Church from the Apostolic age to their own. They knew the meaning of "Liturgical excess"—had seen and experienced its tendencies. Preserving all that was good, and true, and suitable, they cut away the excesses and accretions of later corruptions, and put forth, for the use of the whole Church of England, what they deemed to be a perfect Ritual, beyond which, or contrary to which, nothing should be enjoined, practised, or allowed, except by that competent authority which put it forth.

This, surely, is the principle of the Prayer Book, which has been accepted by each succeeding generation of Churchmen. No competent authority has altered it in any material point; and it is very doubtful whether we should get one nearly so good if it should be cast into the furnace of conflicting prejudices, feelings, and opinions in our time. This Book, at all events, every clergyman holding benefice or license to minister in the Church of England has accepted; he accepted the Book with a solemn promise to use it in his ministrations, and "no other." I do not see how these words "no other" can be honestly evaded, or explained so as to cover much in the way of Ritual that is in use in our day in some churches of our communion. On the other hand, this is a first principle: whatever is really included between the backs of our Book of Common Prayer cannot be, and ought not to be, called Ritualistic excess. It had been better if this had been earlier recognised, and much harsh language, uncharitable judgment, and misguided zeal, had been held back until the limits enjoined by the Church had been actually transgressed. The opposition would have been more powerful for good had it been suppressed until there was something real to oppose.

Let us now turn to the other aspect of the question. The exclusive boundary of our Ritual, it has been maintained, is a hard and fast line, allowing no transgression. Is it necessary, as a requirement of the Church, that every one of her ministering clergy—every single congregation—shall come up to that boundary internally? Is it according unto right, and in conformity with her wish, that all her sons and all her assemblies, who do not come up to the high standard which she has set up, shall be deemed unfaithful to her, to their ordination vows, or to the spiritual interests of her various flocks? At first sight, we should be inclined to say that it is—that the clergy have no more right to be Liturgically deficient than to be Ritualistically excessive. This is the position taken up by many, expressed by some occupying high position in the Church, and put forth as a reason for non-repression of unlawful forms of worship, borrowed from pre-Reformation times, or taken from the Ritual of unreformed Churches. One evil does not justify another; and, if both Liturgical deficiency and Ritualistic excess be equally unjustifiable, the only legitimate conclusion is—let both be stopped; let the Procrustean bed be the exact standard of measurement, and let the Ritual that is too long be lopped, and the Ritual that is too short be pulled out to its proper length.

Now it would be easy to establish the fact that there may be—that there is—a vital difference between these two which will largely justify the one, and as decidedly condemn the other. Illustrations of this need not be adduced; let us not be led away from principles. We may pursue a much more direct course in establishing the position which has been taken up.

We have affirmed it as the only *rational*, and a really *necessary*, principle in the formation of our Book of Common Prayer, that it should be the most perfect and complete Ritual possible to the piety, the wisdom, the learning, and the condition of its compilers.<sup>1</sup> Our Ritual is often spoken of as a compromise, as if that were something very dreadful. Many compromises are very harmless, not a few very advantageous. The charge is, however, usually made with the signification that truth has been sacrificed, and the Church's protest against false doctrine and erroneous practice been weakened, in order to include as large a number as possible of those who still adhered to the unreformed Church. To this it is almost enough to reply that the expressions used respecting those doctrines

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<sup>1</sup> Possibly most clergymen, and many laymen too, think that if they had only had a hand in it, it would have been more perfect; but that part of the subject need not be discussed.

and practices in our Articles, which find their place in, and form part of, our Book of Common Prayer, emphatically overpower any forms of compromise which an unjust and unreal interpretation may seem to discover. A comprehension extending even to the utmost limits of what is true is very different from even the smallest compromise with what is false. Our Prayer Book may illustrate the former, it does not exemplify the latter.

Our next proposition is, that the Book of Common Prayer, though put forth on the principle of its completeness and perfection as a standard of Ritual worship, does not enjoin or expect that all the congregations of our Church shall come up to that standard or fill out that measure; but, on the contrary, while she allows of no transgression beyond the limits which are assigned, does sanction deviations from a rigid uniformity, and *makes provision* for such Liturgical deficiencies as the circumstances of respective congregations may justify. The importance of this position will be seen at once. Though a failure to establish it by evidence may not necessarily prove an unfaithfulness in certain cases of Liturgical deficiency—for a spirit may give life even where a letter kills—yet if we can establish it by the testimony of the Book itself, the charge of unfaithfulness will be removed from many, and only rest with added weight upon those who make it, and endeavour, by raising a cloud of dust around their brethren, to hide their own violations of both the spirit and the letter of the Prayer Book.

We proceed, then, to establish our positions, thus affirmed, by evidence from the Book itself. It may be sufficient to place the facts in dry light; the clearness of the light, it may be hoped, will excuse the dryness of the mode in which it is presented. The Preface to the Prayer Book, which is too seldom read and too little known by Church people, is an expansion of the principles which have been laid down. These are its first words:—

It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first compiling of her public Liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it. For, as on the one side common experience showeth, that where a change hath been made of things advisedly established (no evident necessity so requiring), sundry inconveniences have thereupon ensued; and those many times more and greater than the evils that were intended to be remedied by such change: so on the other side, the particular forms of Divine worship, and the Rites and Ceremonies appointed to be used therein, being things in their own nature indifferent, and alterable, and so acknowledged, it is but reasonable, that upon weighty and important considerations, according to the various exigency of times and occasions, such changes and alterations should be made therein, as to

those that are in place of Authority should from time to time seem either necessary or expedient.

Again we read :—" Of the sundry alterations proposed unto us, we have rejected all such as were either of dangerous consequence (as secretly striking at some established doctrine, or laudable practice of the Church of England, or indeed of the whole Catholic Church of Christ) or else of no consequence at all, but utterly frivolous and vain." The Preface closes with these words :—" We have good hope that what is here presented, and hath been by the Convocations of both Provinces with great diligence examined and approved, will be also well accepted and approved by all sober, peaceable, and truly conscientious sons of the Church of England."

In the next section, " Concerning the Service of the Church," after an assertion of the necessity for some Rules, and that those framed are few, plain, and easy to be understood, we have another declaration of the principles on which the compilers acted as follows :—

Here you have an Order for Prayer, and for the reading of the Holy Scriptures, much agreeable to the mind and purpose of the old Fathers, and a great deal more profitable and commodious than that which of late was used. It is more profitable because here are left out many things, whereof some are untrue, some uncertain, some vain and superstitious ; and nothing is ordained to be read but the very pure Word of God, the holy Scriptures, or that which is agreeable to the same.

The various Uses of the kingdom are put aside, and " now from henceforth all the whole Realm shall have but one Use." Further, provision is made for doubts and diversities. These must be submitted to the decision of the Bishop, " who by his discretion shall take order for the quieting and appeasing of the same, so that the same order be not contrary to anything contained in this Book." Surely this restriction laid upon the highest official Authorities of the Church is a clear assertion of what we have called the perfection of the Book of Common Prayer ; and, as we believe, facts show that there is no body of the Clergy more loyal to their Bishops than those who are so freely and sometimes contemptuously charged with Liturgical deficiency.

While there is thus a principle of perfection asserted, we affirm that there is also a permission granted for such variations in the performance of Divine service as are adapted to particular circumstances which preclude the attainment of that perfection ; such as are not transgressions but simply shortcomings.

There is no doubt, for instance, that daily prayer, morning and evening, is the intention and order of the Church ; but

variation is allowed by the permission to say it privately or openly, or to omit it for some urgent cause, leaving the "urgency" at the discretion of the Curate. But the cause need not even be "urgent," like sickness; it is sufficient if it be *reasonable*. And that there might be frequent reasonable causes is shown by the order for a bell to be rung when prayer is to be said, and only then that the people may not assemble in vain.

Another permitted variation is the permission either to *say* or *sing*, certain portions of the service, while in some other portions the permission is not granted. The General Confession is to be *said*, so is the Lord's Prayer wherever it occurs; but the Psalms, the Canticles, the Creeds, the Litany, may be said or sung.

Again, a distinction is made and a variation permitted in the Rubric after the third Collect, "In Quires and Places where they sing here followeth the Anthem," clearly intimating that there may be churches where they do not sing.

If we turn to the "Order of the Administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion," we trace the same permission of variety. The perfect idea of the Church respecting the frequency of its administration may possibly be indicated by a Rubric at the end of the Order, "In Cathedrals and Collegiate Churches and Colleges, where there are many Priests and Deacons, they shall all receive the Communion with the Priest every Sunday at the least." Yet even this is not absolute, for the Rubric concludes, "*except they have a reasonable cause to the contrary.*" Granted that it is desirable to have weekly Communion in every Church, no command for it can be found in the Prayer Book. The Rubrics all tend the other way, fixing the minimum at "three times in the year, of which Easter shall be one." A Rubric directs that the minister shall always give warning for the celebration or administration "upon the Sunday or some Holyday immediately preceding," which excludes the idea of a weekly Communion being necessary for conformity. The Table is to have a fair white linen cloth upon it "at the Communion-time," and may stand either "in the Body of the Church or in the Chancel." Intending communicants are to give in their names to the Curate at least the day before: it can hardly be intended or expected that they shall do this weekly. In the Rubric before the Prayer for the Church Militant, the words "when there is a Communion" preclude the idea of its administration on all occasions of Morning Service. Again, the Rubric allows a variety in the position of communicants at the time of actual administration, merely ordering that they shall be "conveniently placed for the receiving of the Holy Sacrament." Once more, when there is no Communion (according to the Rubric after the final blessing), one

or more of the appended Collects is to be said; "and the same may be said also, as often as occasion shall serve, after the Collects either of Morning or Evening Prayer, Communion or Litany, by the discretion of the Minister."

Sufficient evidence has been adduced, we think, to establish our two propositions, and that without going outside the Book of Common Prayer to introduce other arguments of more or less validity. The system of the Prayer Book is a complete system; its Rubric is a perfect rule. To go beyond it, to re-introduce the old and discarded, or to introduce a novelty, is transgression and disobedience. But inasmuch as from the nature and necessity of things it is improbable, perhaps impossible, that every congregation of the Church shall be able to reach this perfect standard, permission has been given for certain variations or omissions or deficiencies, so that the worst that can be said of them is that they are shortcomings, not transgressions. Thus the Church has ordered her worship on the principle of her XXXIVth Article:—"It is not necessary that the Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, and utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word."

Let us now examine the "*tendencies*" of Liturgical deficiency and Ritualistic excess. For Ritual excess there is absolutely neither plea nor warrant within the backs of our Book of Common Prayer; and history shows clearly that the tendency of excess in ritual has been ever in the direction of still further excesses, and that beyond a certain point the multiplication of forms is a painful increase of formality, and a still more painful diminution of spiritual piety and power. The memory of some of my readers can go back to the early history of the "Oxford" movement. We can trace the progress of the Ritualistic movement, step by step, from what was at first a noble protest against a too general slovenliness and indifference to the accessories of Divine service, onwards to what is now an avowed determination to restore the abandoned doctrines and discarded rites of pre-Reformation times. Upon the principles of our Prayer Book, I do not hesitate to affirm that this is dishonourable to those who teach forbidden doctrines and practise a forbidden Ritual; and dishonest to the Church of England, to her Bishops, to her Liturgy, and to her people. They have a perfect right to their opinion, but not a right to teach and practise it in a Church that has condemned it, and a Realm whose Courts of Law have declared against them.

So, on the other side, there is a dangerous tendency, arising from the weakness of human nature, to extend permitted variations to an entirely unpermitted length. This needs, in-

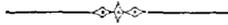
deed, to be carefully watched by all the Clergy, lest neglect and slovenliness in the performance or accessories of Divine service offend the people and drive them into the opposite danger. I do not say that those against whom this charge is most freely made are as guilty as is represented, for we must never forget that the great Evangelical revival was as noble a protest, not only against an undoctinal morality but also against an indifferent Ritual, as the former; and that the broader and higher Evangelicalism of to-day is a very much nearer approximation to the true system of the Church, than the Church has seen for many decades of years. I must, however, say that in my opinion the Evangelical portion of the Church lost a great opportunity when at the first rise of Liturgical revival they refused to recognise their Liturgical deficiencies, and strenuously opposed the restoration of practices which were fairly within the perfect standard of the Church's worship. Had they acknowledged their deficiency, or at least charitably allowed such divergencies, and reserved their antagonism till it was fully justified by open violations of the Church's order, much heated argument, much uncharitable feeling, much disturbance of the Church's peace might have been avoided, and present dangers largely mitigated.

That the Church is in danger, imminent danger, is clear to everyone who will open his eyes and ears. Full of faction, divided by party spirit, with no certainty of doctrine, no uniformity of Ritual, she stands an object of exultation to the infidel, of scoff to the profane, of mockery to the indifferent. Daily becoming more and more a congeries of mere congregations, severally gathered by the peculiar idiosyncrasies of her individual teachers, and held together by merely personal ties, she is rapidly losing her national appreciation and influence; and another period as prolific of Ritualistic excess as the last, will see her disestablished from her national position, and perhaps her patrimony dispersed—a Christian Church, but not the Church of England.

The great want of the Church now for deliverance from these pressing dangers is the cordial co-operation of the three great and ever-existing schools of religious thought, High, Broad, and Evangelical, acting upon Church lines in Church matters as one body, and determined (without giving up such divergencies as are within the limits of our Prayer Book) to stand fast by the Church, to protest against everything beyond those limits, to elevate the standard of worship to her requirements, and to carry her spiritual influence amongst every class of men, into every walk of life, and every corner of the Realm. We should then have a Church, the Church of England, like the old Jerusalem, "a city that is at unity in itself;" and we

should be able to add, "whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the Name of the Lord."

E. BOTELER CHALMER.



## ART. II.—THOUGHTS ON SOCIAL SCIENCE.

ANOTHER Social Science Congress has been held. A few remarks upon the proceedings, so far as they bear upon the main question mooted in my former article (Sept., 1882), will be helpful at this juncture.

On the whole, an advance has been made at this Congress towards the goal at which I am aiming—namely, to induce thoughtful people to think of Social Science as a real science, and in particular to give serious consideration to it as a religious question of great practical importance. The advance, however, has not been very considerable. As to the claim of Social Science to be regarded as a true science, there may be found, even now, more to justify it in the remarks of opponents than of advocates. The quiet banter of the *Times* is much more to the purpose than an after-dinner remark accepted by the President as a sufficient answer to "the question asked by certain newspapers, What is Social Science?"

The following circumstances were the occasion and gave rise to the observations to which allusion is made. It is customary at the various Congresses to provide a series of excursions as a relief to the weariness that otherwise might ensue in listening day after day to the reading and discussion of papers, however interesting and important they may be. To many, indeed, these excursions form the principal part of the attraction of Congresses. Accordingly, at Nottingham, the members of the Social Science Association were invited to visit and inspect the "Radford Training Institution," a social experiment well worthy of careful study. The founder, being Chairman of the Nottingham Board of Guardians, has induced the ratepayers to take some workhouse children, who were orphans, and to bring them up in such a way as to lift them out of their unhappy atmosphere of pauperism.

It would be premature to speak of the endeavour in other terms at present than as an interesting social experiment. The happy faces of the children gave promise of success. They were dressed just like other children, uniformity being