

**SPIRITUAL
WORSHIP. A
LAY DISCOURSE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649516230

Spiritual Worship. A Lay Discourse by R. M. Beverley

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."
Galatians v. 1.

LONDON:

ROBERT HARDWICKE, 192, PICCADILLY.

1865.

100. g. 104.

PREFACE.

WHATEVER strictures in the following pages may appear on some of the practices introduced of late years in the Established Church, I beg it to be understood that these are incidental, and originating in the necessity of the case. As my object is to warn Christians of the dangerous nature of the present superstitious tendency in religious worship, and as many Christians are within the pale of the Established Church, I cannot do otherwise than point out to them that these superstitions are sedulously cultivated by some of their own clergy, though my remarks apply with equal force to all others, and they are not a few, who, though not in the ranks of churchmen, show a marked inclination to imitate the inventions of the hybrid-papal school.

The Church of England must take its own course, and pursue its own policy. I have no desire to renew that controversy with it in which thirty-five years ago I was far too eagerly engaged, not without some success in a certain point of view, which has long, however, ceased to give me any interest. I cannot advocate reform of the Establishment; some of the grosser anomalies have been already remedied; and if it were not so, it would matter very little to one who considers all these

laces, the most glittering crosses, and the most gaudy dalmaticas. With stately processions and banners they bow to the altar repeatedly, ring bells, throw up incense, and perform all those evolutions round the altar which seem to resemble a quadrille executed in walking pace. Now it is obvious, if they may do all this with impunity, they may with equal impunity perform high-mass; nor should I be the least surprised to hear before these sheets have gone through the press that they have passed the Papal Rubicon, and that *bonâ fide* Mass has been sung in some of the London churches.

In the meanwhile the world inquires, is there then any responsible government in the Establishment? Numerous Acts of Parliament, in many reigns, have been passed to strengthen the hands of the Bishops, and to regulate and amend the government of the Church, yet for the present emergency nothing is done, and, as far as can be discerned, nothing is desired to be done by those who ought to be the guardians of the flock. Are all these Acts of Parliament of no avail? Are the Canons of the Church waste paper? Has the Queen, the supreme Head of the Church, no authority in the Church? Is the Church of England the only religious community in the nation in which its clergy may run riot, and do anything that they please, in any extravagance of doctrine or any excess of practice? May they, on the one hand, denounce the Bible as a false teacher, or, on the other, preach up the Papal traditions, the worshipping of saints, prayers for the dead, and the worship of the Virgin Mary? May pseudo-shavelings, the ridicule both of Romanists and Protestants,—yet still clergymen of the Established Church,—play all sorts of pranks up and down the country? and may public lectures be delivered by clergymen to prove that the monastic system is a holy institution?

What then, it is asked, is the real cause of this apathy in the rulers of the Church? It is surmised that there are several ways of accounting for it. First, by that very natural cause of all inaction, timidity, and a dislike of trouble. It certainly would not be a pleasant task to confront this well-organized and audacious party—the ultra-section of hybrid Papists. That they are not very scrupulous in their ecclesiastical career their daily acts make manifest; the language of menace and denunciation is quite their ordinary dialect, and if we may believe their high tone, they would not be behind the monks of the Thebaid in eagerness for a holy war. Such opponents are not lightly to be attacked. The weapons of their warfare are indeed carnal, so that we need not be much surprised that, as yet, no bishop has boldly stood forward to protect the Church from their aggressions. But, in the next place, there may be amongst the majority of the prelates a real disinclination to stir in the matter, if they do not on the whole disapprove a movement which tends to magnify their own power. The extravagance of these ritualists may indeed be excessive, and they may be attacking the very vitals of the Protestant religion, but in the meantime they are highly exalting the clerical* prerogatives, which necessarily includes

* The following passages will show what these people teach:—
“Then (*i.e.* when we have established the apostolical succession) you will look at us, not as gentlemen, as now; then you will honour us with a purer honour than many do now, namely, as those who are entrusted with the keys of heaven and hell, as the heralds of mercy, as the denouncers of woe to wicked men, as entrusted with the awful and mysterious privilege of dispensing Christ's body and blood, as far greater than the most powerful and the wealthiest of men in our unseen strength and heavenly riches.” (*Oxford Tracts*, no. 1.) In another tract they thus exalt the bishop:—“By virtue of this commission (Matt. xxviii. 20) each bishop stands in the place

an exaltation of the episcopal office also. The priests (so they call themselves) are created by the bishops; but the creator must be superior to the thing created; it is therefore a logical necessity that the more the priestly order is magnified the higher is the bishop elevated. This is a consideration not likely to be overlooked; and it is not improbable, moreover, that some of that high order may find a gratification in pomps and splendid rites, and may have little sympathy with a spiritual form of worship, which, by those who do not like it, is generally called "naked," and sometimes "fanatical."

One way or another, if the evidence of facts can give any certainty, we may feel sure by this time that the Church of England will receive no aid in her extremities from her highest functionaries. If help should ever arrive at all, it must come from some other quarter.

Then, agsin, if we turn our attention to another view of the subject, it is surmised that the balancing of parties in Parliament, and especially in the upper house, makes it very awkward for any minister to endeavour to protect the Establishment in a Protestant sense. It is affirmed that a decided Puseyite majority prevails in the high chamber of our legislature, and this is not impro-

of an apostle of the Church, and discharges the important trust reposed in him, either in his own person, or by the clergy whom he ordains and gifts with the share of his authority. A person not commissioned from the bishop may use the words of baptism, and sprinkle or bathe with the water on earth, but there is no promise from Christ that he shall *admit souls to the kingdom of heaven*. A person not commissioned may break bread and pour out wine, and pretend to give the Lord's Supper, but it can afford no comfort to any to receive it at his hands, because there is no warrant from Christ to lead communicants to suppose, that while he does so on earth, they will be partakers in the Saviour's heavenly body and blood," etc. etc. (Tract xxxv.)

bable, for it is exactly in this class that such a phenomenon might be expected; but whether this be true or not, it is not improbable that if a minister should boldly stand up in his place, and declare that he had made up his mind to resist these aggressions on the religion of the country as manifestly illegal, he would find himself checked by many obstacles right and left, and would be glad, perhaps, to retire at last from a contest involving consequences which no *politic* minister of the Crown would care to encounter.

In the meantime, the Church of England, bound hand and foot, seems to be delivered up to the will of her enemies. The Convocation, which has lately gained an unenviable notoriety by its declaration of sympathy with the Bishop of Cape Town, and which has not scrupled to affirm, officially, its deep sympathies with a prelate who has been acting in his diocese without and beyond the law, has not a word to say on the important subject of these new practices which are rapidly propelling the Church of England back to the Church of Rome. There is text enough for them, in that theme, to occupy the exclusive attention of many convocations, serious matter enough for their gravest counsels and their most energetic strategy, as well as their most prudent tactics; but all this they pass over in silence, as if they were totally ignorant of all that is going on, and as if they did not know that converts are continually passing over from the Church of England to the Romanists, and that entirely in consequence of these unchecked superstitions. If this is not connivance, what else is it?

In the model of an Egyptian temple, which I saw many years ago, there was, in the vestibule, a row on either hand, of gigantic figures, pressing their lips with the forefinger of the left hand. This represented the silence

imposed on the initiated relating to the mysteries of religion. Might it not also aptly represent the Convocation of the Church of England, those venerable hierophants of the faith reminding one another to keep silence on subjects inconvenient to handle?

But I do not pursue this theme, nor would I have started it, but to convince the reader that a state of things exists, in which it is time for Christians, who are implicated in such a system, to consider well all its bearings, and to examine carefully the value and real import of those principles on which they have believed their faith is grounded; that they may understand the whole danger, and the little probability of any help from without, or of any amendment from within, and may thus be brought to ask themselves this serious question, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

A word is due in explanation of the expression in the title page, "a lay discourse." I have here adopted a language everywhere in use, and perfectly intelligible, as expressive of a notorious fact, that there exists a certain order of men called the clergy, and that they are a class distinct from all others who have not been admitted into that order. Those who are outside this class are called laymen, and this distinction is not only a custom, with which we are all familiar, but is defended by the laws of the country. As a legal institution I have nothing to say against it, for I would always treat with respect this and every other grade acknowledged in the state. At the same time, in an introduction to a discourse on Christian doctrine, I must aver that I cannot by such information as I have received from the New Testament, assent to the proposition that the distinction between clergy and laity is based on any authority of the Scriptures, or that a clerical class was appointed either by our Lord or the