

**TRUE LIMITS OF
RITUAL IN
THE CHURCH**

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True limits of ritual in the church by Robert Linklater

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EDITED BY

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PREFACE

AS I am only contributing a very elementary paper to this volume, I can the better explain its scope and praise its merits. First as to the scope. The writers intend it as an Eirenicon. We think it is advisable to use the present opportunity, when laymen are greatly agitated about ritual (as witness the correspondence in the papers and the discussion in Parliament), to place before those who honestly want to know the rights of the matter the fundamental principles which govern the ritual of Divine Service. For this reason it seems a propitious moment to address the public.

Men want to know about ritual, and they are as a rule fair enough to listen to both sides.

We offer these papers as a modest defence of the High Church position ; but above all things, we are anxious, for the sake of Divine charity and because

we love our people, to allay the uneasiness and distrust which have been created. Devout and earnest laymen, who have not had special opportunities of studying the subject, are asking, "Where will this end?" Here is our answer, which will both defend our position and assure those who are disquieted of the due limit we have set before us—namely, loyalty to the Prayer-book and obedience to the lawful directions of our Bishops.

We are pledged to the Prayer-book, and we only wish to keep our pledge. The Prayer-book is our Office-book, and, read with common sense and properly understood, it is quite sufficient.

We have already, as clergymen, asserted this in our "Declaration of Assent," in which we use the words, "I assent to the Book of Common Prayer and of the Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons . . . and in Public Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, I will use the form in the said Book prescribed and none other, except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority."

This we affirm *ex animo* and without any reservation. The papers in this book of ours are treatises on the meaning of this "Declaration," all that it demands

and all that it implies. The various writers may and do take different views of *detail*, but they uphold their views only as conscientious and defensible interpretations of the rubric, and not in a spirit of disloyalty to the authority of the Church of England.

It will be a relief to many of our readers to know that there is a limit in our ritual matters, and what the limit is, even if they do not accept the premises on which we base the limit.

There *must* be some sort of ritual in the public worship of Almighty God, and its character cannot be settled by the changing whims and fancies of men—what we like or dislike; for our likings are all different, and we could not possibly please every one. There must be some rule other than this. Yes, there is a high fixed principle to guide us—it is the only true principle, satisfactory to men and pleasing to God—*The Order of God Himself*. This will answer all objections, satisfy all objectors, and close the controversy, at least as far as principles are concerned.

For remember, when the privilege of worship was given to man, when on the approach of the Incarnation men were taught how to worship, in order