

ALTAR LIGHTS: THEIR HISTORY AND MEANING

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THE symbolic use of candles in Divine worship was not derived from the Jewish Church. St. Ephraem, the Syrian, in commenting on Exodus xxxvii., says expressly:—"But when the Dawn appeared, through Our Lord, the service of the lamps became vain and passed away."¹ And though Mr. P. G. Lee and others quote, as authority for their "two candles," a Syriac Ordo Communis, yet Sir Wm. Palmer (*Orig. Liturg.*, i.-21) Dr. John Mason Neale, (*Hist. Eastern Church*, ii.-326). and Mr. Trollope (*Liturgy of St James*, p. 21, cf. *Renaudot*, i. -58, 245. *Swainson's Greek Liturgies*, p. 334) admit that this so-called "earliest form of the Eastern rite" is, in fact, "spurious, late, and worthless." These lights were in truth

UNKNOWN TO THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

The late Mr. Scudamore, the most learned of English writers on Ritual, said in his "Notitia Eucharistica," p. 133, and in Smith's Dict. of Christian Antiquities, Vol. II., p. 993:—"It is certain that for more than three centuries after Christ no ecclesiastical sanction was given to the symbolical or ritual use of lights in the public offices of religion. They were so employed by the heathen, and Christian writers reprobated every such use of them as a senseless mode of honouring the gods. Thus Tertullian, A.D. 192, ridicules the practice of 'exposing useless candles at noon,' and by that means 'encroaching on the day.' 'Let them,' he says, 'who have no light, kindle their lamps every day.' (Apol. xlvii., xxxv.) 'They kindle lights to God,' says Lactantius, A.D. 303, 'as if he dwelt in darkness. . . . Is he then to be thought in his right mind, who offers for a gift the light of candles and wax tapers to the Author and Giver of light? But light of another kind He does require of us, and that not smoky, but, as the poet sings, liquid and clear, to wit, that of the mind.' Gregory Nazianzeu, A.D. 370:—"Let not our houses blaze with visible light . . . for this is indeed the custom of the Greek Holy-Moon . . . but with . . . lamps that light up the whole body of the Church, I mean with divine contemplations and thoughts.' These writers objected to this employment of light on principle, and not merely because it was in honour of idols; from which we must infer that they knew of nothing similar to it in the practice of the Christian Church."

THEIR PAGAN ORIGIN

The steady influx into the Church of *adult* converts (many of them ignorant semi-barbarians, retaining much of the engrained superstition and habits of their early childhood), soon began to import Pagan Rites into Church Worship.

Cardinal Baronius,² admits that the *cultus* of images by means of lights burning before them was taken directly from idolaters, "the venerable ecclesiastical antiquity brought it to pass,' he says, 'that what used to hang before the idols should be providently converted to the worship of God.'" The Synod of Elvira, A.D. 306, condemned the use of pictures in the churches, and decreed "that candles be not burned during the day in cemeteries, for fear of troubling the spirits of the saints." This Canon was only one of a series directed against heathenish rites then calling for repression; and Mr. Dale in his interesting "Essay on the Synod of Elvira" (published by Macmillan), has shown (pp. 207-22), that the 'Fathers' who condemned these rites were themselves infected by a belief in necromancy. So soon had "the fine gold become dim"! Dupin honestly says, "that the Fathers of

this Council did not approve of the use of images, no more than that of wax candles lighted in full daylight.”³

The deterioration of Christianity in the fourth century is evident also from the well-known complaint of Vigilantius, that—

“Under the pretext of religion we see a custom *introduced* into the churches which approximates to the rites of the Gentiles, namely, the lighting of multitudes of tapers while the sun is yet shining. And everywhere they kiss in adoration a small quantity of dust folded up in a little cloth, and deposited in a little vessel. *Men of this stamp* give great honour, forsooth, to the most blessed martyrs, thinking with a few insignificant wax-tapers to glorify those whom the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, enlightens with all the brightness of His majesty.”

St. Jerome in reply *denied* that it was “the practice of the Church.” He said:—

“We do not light candles in the daylight as you falsely accuse us, but we do so that we may alleviate the darkness of the night by this comfort.”

Yet he admitted that the ‘Ritualists’ were beginning the practice complained of:—

“But what if *some* do so, in honour of the martyrs, through the ignorance and simplicity of secular men or even of religious women (of whom we may in truth say, ‘I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but *not according to knowledge*’) what loss do you thereby sustain?”⁴

Unluckily, St. Jerome was not content with this merely defensive attitude, but (urged, perhaps, by the controversial spirit) apologised for the encroachments of Paganism by saying “that was done to the idols, and therefore to be detested; this is done to the martyrs, and therefore may be received.”

Jerome mentions also a practice which had not then been imported into Europe, that

“Throughout all the Churches of the East, *when the Gospel is about to be read*, lights are lit at noon-day, not to disperse the darkness, but to show gladness . . . so that under the type of a corporal light, that light might be shewn concerning which we read in the Gospel, ‘Thy word, O Lord, is a lantern unto my feet and a light unto my paths.’”

This mode of dramatising Psalm cxix.-105 might be childish, and was certainly quaint, but at least it involved no Romish doctrine. On this point we may cite the testimony of two learned Roman Catholics.

Erasmus said,⁵

“Jerome seems to have been of this opinion that he thought it superstitious to burn candles in honour of the saints by day, and that they were not to be burned except for a solace of the night, although at the present day sacred worship consists chiefly in candles. But it appears that in that age the custom was rather tolerated than approved of; and time changes many things.”

Cardinal Zaccaria says,⁶

“We learn three things from this place [viz. of St. Jerome], 1st. That the cause of lights and candles being burned at the reading of the Gospel was for a sign of gladness. 2nd. That the custom did not exist in the whole Church, for he said that it was peculiar to the Churches of the East. 3rd. We gather that in the Churches of the East no candle was burned in the other parts of the Mass, nor at the introit, and we gather the same thing, too, from the *Ordo Romanus*, written after [the time of] St Jerome.”

The “Gospel lights” were at first “extinguished in their place after the reading of the Gospel” and at a later time “we find them when extinguished set behind the altar—a practice which, in conjunction with

the need of light at an early celebration, in due time paved the way for the introduction of altar-lights.”⁸ “One proof that those candles served for the reading is, that according to the Ordinary of the Jacobins, and the Missal of the Order of the Holy Cross, the minister or clerk, when removing the Missal from one side to another, ought, at the same time, to shift the candle, if there was not one on each side; that is to say, in one word, the light *followed the Missal*, and only referred to the Missal.” (De Vert. Explication, p. 159.)

In Spain, Isidore of Seville, so early as A.D. 636, had begun to confuse and extend the symbolism of the Gospel-lights. He said,

“Those who in Greek are called acolytes, are in Latin called *ceroferarii*, from their carrying wax candles when the Gospel is to be read, *or* the sacrifice to be offered.”⁹

This vague extension of the meaning is the earliest hint we get of the later symbolism of the Middle Ages. Yet “no candles are shown in representations of the Mass of the tenth century.”¹⁰ Mr. Scudamore adduces many illustrations, ranging from A.D. 1100 to A.D. 1541, showing that Mass was even then said either “without light,” or with only *one* candle, shifted from side to side for purposes of mere utility.

But in 1215 at the Council of Lateran, Pope Innocent III. first defined the doctrine of ‘Transubstantiation’ by name, and appropriately enough, this same Innocent (“a man most pernicious to the Church and Commonwealth of Christ,” as Ridley termed him) was the first bishop to order lights to be set upon the altar.¹¹ In England the earliest order of this kind is that of the Council of Oxford, A.D. 1222,¹² presided over by the Cardinal Legate of the Pope, in which the decrees of Lateran were closely followed.

THE ‘SYMBOLISM’ OF LIGHTS

Symbolism is the reflection of man’s imagination embodied in the works of his hands. “As the fool thinks, so the bell tinks.” “The eye sees what it takes with it the power of seeing,” says Kingsley. And hence, Ritualists gravely assign to the self-same rite a variety of meanings, derived solely from their own changeable wishes and fancies.

For example, Jerome’s “Light of the Gospel” became in Durand “The Law and the Prophets,” or, the Jews and Gentiles, or, according to others, “The two Natures of Christ” (which view, by the way, would involve the *separation* of the two natures, i.e. Nestorianism). Next, as sacrificial notions grew up, Suarez and Lyndwood claim the lights as meaning “sacrificial fire,” and refer to Levit., vi.-13 for a scriptural warrant! The Gemma Animae (in A.D. 1130) taught that “the Holy Ghost,” as the consecrator of the sacrament, was thus symbolised. Lastly, Lyndwood refers us to the Decretals, which teach that the sacrament should be carried to the sick “with a light going before it, because *it*—the sacrament—‘is the brightness of the eternal light.’” “*Lumine praecedente quod sit candor lucis aeternae*” (De Celebratione, cap. 10).

Thus, before the Reformation, the “lights before the sacrament” had come to be regarded as symbolising (1) Transubstantiation, and (2) the sacrifice of the Mass; and they were burned both ‘before’ the Host in processions, and in honour of the reserved ‘Host,’ precisely as the heathen worshipped their sacred images, by ‘setting’ lights ‘before’ them.

THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

Up to the day of his death King Henry VIII. sent men to the stake for denying Transubstantiation, and he left money for Masses to be said for the repose of his soul.¹³ Yet he curtailed the worship of images, and, by his Vicar-General’s Injunction, ordered, in 1536,

“Ye shall suffer from henceforth, no candles, tapers, or images of wax to be set *before* any image or picture, but only the light that goeth across the church by the rood-loft, the light before the sacrament of the altar, and the light about the sepulchre, which for the adorning of the church and divine service ye shall suffer to remain still.”¹⁴

In 1538, 1539, and again in 1541 he required “no other lights to be used but that *before* the Corpus Christi’—‘but only *to* the blessed sacrament of the altar.”¹⁵

The celebrated Injunction of July 31st, 1547, published by Edward VI. in the first year of his reign, was copied directly from these Injunctions of Henry VIII. It ran—

“Item. . . shall suffer from henceforth no torches nor candles, tapers or images of wax to be set *afore* any image or picture, but only two lights upon the high altar, *before* the Sacrament, which for the signification that Christ is the very true light of the world, they shall suffer to remain still,” &c.¹⁶

The lights thus “suffered to remain still” were of course the same lights which had existed in the reign of his father;¹⁷ for during the whole of the first year of Edward VI. (i.e., A.D. 1547) Transubstantiation was not only the received and authorised doctrine of the Church of England, but a denial of it was punishable with *death*. The bloody act of the “Six Articles” still remained on the statute book, and Edward issued a commission under it as late as April 19th, 1547. (Foxe V. App. No. xx.) So real was the terror which it inspired that even in Nov. 1547 Convocation was afraid to discuss any reforms of the service books until it had been repealed.¹⁸ The Latin Mass, the elevation, reservation, and adoration of the host, the denial of the cup to the laity, the doctrine and practice of the seven sacraments were all exclusively in use throughout the year A.D. 1547. “The necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian man” drawn up by Gardiner was still the authorised formulary of the English Church. In short, no reformation of doctrine or ritual, so far as regards the Lord’s Supper, had even commenced when this Injunction of Edward was issued in 1547.

Transubstantiation, then, and the Mass-sacrifice were both symbolised by the two lights thus “suffered to remain still” in 1547.

THE INJUNCTIONS OF KING EDWARD VI

Under these circumstances it might naturally be asked what can we possibly have to do with them now—seeing that the ‘altar’ for sacrifice is abolished, and the doctrine of transubstantiation is repudiated as a falsehood. And the natural answer “nothing at all,” is also the true one. It has been disputed whether these Injunctions of 1547, which *claim* only Royal authority, had any authority of ‘Parliament.’ But that question is disposed of by the fact that the statute 1 Ed. VI., c. 12, sec. 4, passed on December 24th, 1547, repealed *nominatim* not only the heresy acts, but every statute which had been held to give to royal Proclamations the force of a statute.¹⁹ Consequently, in the “*second* year of Edward VI.” (commencing January 28th, 1548) these Injunctions had no *Parliamentary* force. For

“It is a well-settled principle of law that any obligation flowing from a statute either immediately or mediately (i.e. from some rule or order made in pursuance of powers granted by a statute) becomes null and void as soon as the statute is repealed. It is on this ground that when it is intended to keep alive what has been previously done under the powers of a repealed Act, a saving clause is always inserted to this effect in the Act which repeals it.”²⁰

Nor could the Injunctions of 1547 gain any Parliamentary force from King Henry’s Will (as suggested by Cardwell, Doc. Ann., i-5), because that Will required that a *majority* of the executors should sign the document, whereas only half (viz. eight out of sixteen) of them signed these

Injunctions. “Five of the Aiders and Assistants also signed them, but their names were not required by the Statute and the Will. The Injunctions, therefore, if issued under the authority of the Succession Act and the ‘Will’ of Henry VIII., must be pronounced *invalid*, as not signed in conformity with their requirements.”²¹

“THE SECOND YEAR OF KING EDWARD VI”

The “Second Year” began January 28th, 1548. It was a year of continuous change and transition. During the first twenty-eight days of that year all images which had not been specially ‘abused’ were retained. Up to Easter in that year the elevation of the host and the denial of the cup to the laity were the law of the Church. Even after Easter there was “no varying of any other rite or ceremony in the Mass,” so that up to (and beyond) the end of the second year of Edward VI. the following ceremonies were in use, viz. processions of candle-bearers, thurifers, deacon and sub-deacon; repeated crossings of the face, book, breast, chalice, and paten; making crosses with the host over the chalice and before the priest’s head and mouth; kissing the priest’s hand, book, altar, pax, paten, and corporal; bowing to the priest and altar; elevating, pining, and washing the hands; censuring of the altar, priest, sacrifice, Gospel, &c. Except at the actual distribution of the elements, the service was still in Latin, and prayers were offered “by the merits of the saints,” and “by the intercession of the blessed, glorious, and ever-virgin Mother of God.” The use of the cope at Holy Communion was unlawful during the whole of “the second year of Edward VI.” The use of amice, girdle, stole, maniple, dalmatic was compulsory throughout that second year. The crucifix, pyx (or tabernacle), holy-water vat, and all the paraphernalia of the ‘seven’ sacraments was sanctioned as matter of fact during the whole of that “second year.”

But (and this is most important) *not one of these things rested upon any “authority of PARLIAMENT.”*

That “authority of Parliament in the second year” was conferred by the first Act of Uniformity (2 & 3 Ed. VI. c. 1) passed during the last week of that “Second Year,” and it utterly swept away and abolished all the above-named *non-Parliamentary* usages of the “Second Year,” and of course abrogated all merely Royal Injunctions which involved any variation from the new “Book of Common Prayer.” Yet, so far as they harmonised with and were subsidiary to the changes made in the new ‘Parliamentary’ Prayer Book, the Royal Injunctions would still be recognised as entitled to observance, though resting, of course, solely upon the Royal prerogative.

The further progress of the Reformation was effected not by formally *cancelling* the Royal Injunctions of 1547 as a whole, but by omitting such as had become illegal from their conflicting with the new Prayer Book. Hence the first of the Royal Injunctions of 1549 ran as follows:—

“That all parsons, vicars, and curates OMIT in the reading of the Injunctions all such as make mention of the Popish Mass, of chantries, *of candles upon the altars*, or any other such like thing. *Item* for an uniformity, that no minister do counterfeit the Popish Mass, as . . . setting any light upon the Lord’s board at any time; and finally to use no other ceremonies than are appointed in the King’s Book of Common prayers.”²²

Ridley’s Diocesan Injunctions, given in his Visitation in May, 1550, begin: “That there be *no* reading of such Injunctions as extolleth and setteth forth the Popish Mass, candles,” &c.; and he forbade “counterfeiting the Popish Mass in saying the Agnus before the Communion, setting any light upon the Lord’s board,” &c.

“And finally, that the minister, in the time of Holy Communion, do use only the ceremonies and gestures appointed by the Book of Common Prayer, and *none other*, so that there do not appear in them any counterfeiting of the Popish Mass.”²³

In the same way, Hooper's Injunctions of 1551, while ordering the clergy to "*not read* such Injunctions as extolth and setteth forth the Popish Mass, candles," &c., and forbidding the "setting any light upon the Lord's board," yet at the same time direct "the homilies to be read orderly according to the King's Majesty's Injunctions."²⁴

Thus the Royal Injunction of 1547 relating to the Mass lights was held to have been abrogated by the Act of Uniformity (2 & 3 Ed. VI. c. 1) which in "the second year of King Ed. VI." superceded and supplanted all previous ritual possessing any "authority of Parliament" even had the Injunctions ever possessed any *such* 'authority.' This is proved by the conduct of Ridley on his appointment to the See of London—"before he would enter the choir, he commanded the lights on the altar to be extinguished" at St. Paul's.²⁵ The contemporary *Greyfriar's Chronicle* says (p. 67) April xii. 1550, "At that same time the Bishop commanded the lytt of the aulter to be put owte or he came into the qwere."

Cranmer altered his conduct gradually so as to conform to the successive changes of the law. Thus in 1548 (i.e. *before* the reformation of the Missal) he asked

"Whether they suffer any torches, candles, tapers, or any other lights to be in your churches, but only two lights upon the high altar."²⁶

Here it will be noted that he omits the significant words "*before the Sacrament.*" For, during that same year²⁷ he published his 'Catechism' from which he had struck out the accompanying woodcut ("where is the altare with candel light set forth, the priest appareled after the old sort," as Gardiner jeeringly boasted) and substituted the "Lord's Supper" as here depicted; so that, as he told Gardiner, "you should rather have gathered your argument upon the other side, that I mislike the matter, because I *left out* of my booke the picture that was in the originall before."²⁸

At that very time he was engaged in the compilation of the "first Prayer Book." In 1550 his Visitation Articles were changed. Nothing is now said about 'lights' even at Canterbury Cathedral.

On the contrary, it is demanded

"Whether any of this Church do keep or observe . . . the book called the Common Prayer . . . and whether you use any other ceremonies at the Communion or other Divine Service than is *mentioned or allowed in the same book.*"²⁹

In 1551 (still under the first Prayer Book) he says—

"Thus our Saviour Christ, like a most loving Pastor and Saviour of our souls, hath given us warning beforehand of the perils and dangers that were to come, and to be wise and ware, that we should not give credit unto such teachers as would persuade us to worship a piece of bread, to kneel to it, to knock to it, to creep to it, to follow it in procession, to lift up our hands to it, to offer it, *to light candles to it* . . . having always this pretence or excuse for our idolatry 'Behold here is Christ.'³⁰

Latimer preached his celebrated "Sermon on the Plough," on the very day on which the Act of Uniformity passed the House of Lords, for the third time, January 15th, 1549. He said (p. 70)—

"Where the devil is resident, and hath his plough going, there away with books, and up with candles; away with Bibles, and up with beads; *away with the light of the Gospel, and up with the light of candles, yea, at noon-days.*"

No higher authorities as to the meaning of the first Prayer Book than Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer can be imagined, yet Cox, another of its compilers, is remarkable as having (like Dr. May) assisted at *both* revisions of Edward's Prayer Book as well as at that under Elizabeth. No change as to

altar-lights was made by either of the later books. Cox was the leader of the “High Church Party” (so to speak) among the Marian refugees at Frankfort, and when Calvin had been misinformed that lights were authorised by the English Prayer Book, Cox wrote to him—”As for our lights, we never had any;” and the Puritan leaders felt so discredited by the supposition that they had been furnishing to Calvin false information that they wrote—

“By cause that Maister Calvin in his letter maketh mention of lights, some might gather that he was untruly informed that in the English Book lights were prescribed, the *contrary whereof* appeareth by the description before.” They argued “for so much as lightes and crosses be 2 of the most ancientest ceremonies . . . *are yet for suck cause abolished*; how much more,” &c.³¹

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Although candlesticks for the Holy table were not among the “ornaments of the church” contained in or prescribed by the “first Prayer Book of Edward VI.,” yet two pieces of evidence have been tendered to show that they were actually used under that book. The first is a letter from Bucer and Fagius dated at Lambeth on April 26th, 1549, in which they said—

“As soon as the description of the ceremonies now in use shall have been translated into Latin, we will send it to you. We *hear* that some concessions have been made both to a respect for antiquity, and to the infirmity of the present age; such for instance as the vestments commonly used in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the use of candles: so also in regard to the commemoration of the dead, and the use of chrism; for we *know not to what extent or in what sort it prevails.*”

It is to be observed that when Bucer and Pagius wrote this letter they had not had twenty-four hours’ experience of England, and were entirely ignorant of the language: no translation of the new Prayer Book then existed, while its actual use *began* on June 9th, i.e. a fortnight *later*. On the same day (April 26th), Fagius wrote two other letters in each of which he said, “I cannot at present give you any *certain* information about English affairs.”³² Bucer and Fagius added that “these things . . . *are only to be retained for a time*, lest the people, not having yet learned Christ, should be deterred by too extensive innovations from embracing his religion.”³³ That temporary toleration may have ceased at the introduction of the “first Prayer Book;” but in any case the second-hand impressions of newly arrived foreigners can be no evidence as to the requirements of a book with which they had then had neither time nor opportunity to become acquainted.

In estimating such evidence it is well to call to mind the words of the present Bp. of Carlisle, Dr. Harvey Goodwin, when Chairman of the Committee of Canterbury Convocation.

“To show the extreme difficulty of arriving at a true judgment on historical evidence, I may mention that on preaching at the Chapel Royal lately the candles on the altar were lighted. Supposing that, after the manner of a Zurich Letter, I had mentioned the fact in writing to the Continent, and two hundred years hence my letter had turned up. It would be evidence very difficult to be got rid of; whereas the truth was that on that day there was a London fog, and it would have been difficult to have read the Communion service without lights of some kind. If, then, we take contemporary letters without knowing all the surrounding circumstances of the events narrated, we are liable to be led into error. There are, then, great doubts whether there ever was what might be called a ‘Use’ for lighted candles on the Lord’s table since the Reformation or not. My own feeling is that *there was no such Use.*”²⁴

A second witness wrongly alleged is Bp. Hooper, who on December 27th, 1549, complained of the nonconformity of certain old Popish incumbents—

“Where they used heretofore to celebrate in the morning the *Mass* of the apostles, they now have the *communion* of the apostles; where they had the *Mass* of the blessed Virgin the now have the communion which they call the *communion* of the Virgin; where they had the principal, or High Mass, they now have, as they call it, the high communion. They still retain their vestments and candles

before the altars...God knows to what perils and anxieties we are exposed by reason of men of this kind."³⁵

These candles '*before*' the altars were, however, not altar-lights, but the two tapers ordered by the Sarum Consuetudinary to be carried by acolytes and set down at the altar-*step*. Six months before Hooper's letter was written, the Privy Council had complained to Bonner of his connivance at the same irregularities mentioned by Hooper.³⁶ Bp. Bonner had been deprived for non-compliance on October 1st; and just two days before Hooper's letter above cited, an Order in Council directed the defacing of the Sarum Missal and all the old service books, "the keeping whereof should be a let to the usage of the said Book of Common Prayer.' . . 'That they never after may serve *either to any such use as they were provided for*, or be at any time a let to that godly and *uniform, order*."³⁷

The charges against Bonner are given at length in Foxe, "Acts and Monuments," V.-763, and included these—

"That ye know . . . that certain persons within your diocese . . . have heard, been at, or celebrate mass or evensong in the Latin tongue, and after the old rite and manner, other than according to the King's Majesty's Book," and "that the rites of the common service of the Church, now set forth, be in some parts of your diocese *diversely* used; and you, knowing or hearing of the same, have not called any ministers of the service before you for redress of such diversity, nor corrected the *misusers* thereof."

Hooper and Latimer were Bonner's accusers; and Hooper and Ridley describe what they complained of as a "counterfeiting of the Popish Mass," as including "setting any light upon the Lord's board," which they forbade accordingly, being "*other ceremonies than are appointed in the King's Book of Common Prayers*."

The use of Mass lights existed, therefore, "under the first Prayer Book only" in the same sense that theft exists 'under' the Eighth Commandment, or Ritualism 'under' the Public Worship Act.

UNDER ELIZABETH

A fresh set of Injunctions was issued in 1559, based on those of 1547, but the Edwardian Injunction 'suffering' the "two lights" to 'remain' was *omitted*, while the general prohibition against "setting up candles" was retained. In Elizabeth's private chapel lights were burned before the crucifix, at *evening* service as well as at other times during the first four years of her reign; but this had no connection with lights "before the Sacrament." The history of Elizabeth's image-lights has been fully detailed in THE CHURCH INTELLIGENCER, Vol. III., p. 4. Strype says they were "contrary to her own Injunctions."³⁸ Their introduction greatly alarmed the Protestants who wrote to ask what should be done "*suppose the Queen should enjoin the bishops and clergy to admit this image with its candles (imagine cum candelis) into their churches?*"³⁹ After April 26th, 1563, the Elizabethan image-candles were never again lighted.⁴⁰

On Aug. 1st, 1563, the second book of Homilies was published with a preface by Bp. Cox: and in the Homily on "Peril of Idolatry" Bp. Jewel taught that "In the daytime it needeth not, but was ever a proverb of foolishness to light a candle at noon-time." Long before this, on March 24th, 1560, Cox had refused to minister in the Queen's Chapel "lights and the cross remaining." Abp. Parker also protested on the same occasion.⁴¹ Bp. Bullingham, one of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners who framed the Advertisements of 1566 (which were issued "by virtue of" Elizabeth's Letter of January 25th, 1565), preached against "candles at noonday." Bps. Grindal and Horn, two of the Elizabethan revisers of the Prayer Book, wrote in 1567— "The Church of England has entirely given up the use of lighted tapers, and other things of that kind, which by prescript of the laws are never to be recalled."⁴² Those last words are especially to be noted as showing that the Prayer Book excluded what it did not expressly 'retain.' Harding, the Romanist, taunted Bp. Jewel—"If lights at the Gospel

and Communion be not had . . . judge ye whether ye have duly kept the old ceremonies of the Church.”

Jewel defended the Use of the Church of England by quoting Jerome and Tertullian, as above.⁴³ But the most conclusive proof of the entire absence of altar-lights from Elizabethan Churches, is the fact that the Puritans who were morbidly sensitive about the most trivial matters of ritual, *never once* complain of altar-lights. Hooker and Whitgift are equally silent. Dean Sampson expressly said, “The candles are retained at Court alone.”⁴⁴

It has been shown in THE CHURCH INTELLIGENCER, 1886, Vol.III., p. 3, that Elizabeth’s fancy ritual was political rather than theological in its significance, and was always recognised as being at variance with the formularies, and with the received usages of the Church in her own day.

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When the genuine Mass was restored under Mary, we read in Strype (under date August 21st, 1553), “Mass began at St. Nicholas Cole-Abbey, sung in Latin, and *tapers set on the altar*, and a cross.”⁴⁵ The clean sweep made of altars and their furniture in 1559, at the restoration of Edward’s second Prayer Book, finally banished the Mass-lights from the Church of England. Bp. Andrewes describing “some of the superfluous and wicked ceremonies of the Papists borrowed from the heathen,” instances that “their burning of tapers at noonday is altogether a pagan custom.”⁴⁶

Yet Andrewes is the earliest bishop after the Reformation who adopted the use of candlesticks on the holy table in his private chapel: but of course, only for necessary use. At that very time we know that the candles in the Chapel Royal were also unlit from the celebrated lines of Andrew Melville ridiculing its clasped books and “blind lights.”

“Cur stant clausi Anglis libri duo regiâ in arâ?
Lumina cæca duo, pollubra sicca duo?”⁴⁷

Laud, the professed imitator of Andrewes, introduced candlesticks at Lambeth where they had been “never used in his predecessor’s days;” but in his defence, he testifies that they were “*not* burning.”⁴⁸ The eccentric Nicholas Ferrar had candles “not for the purposes of superstition but for real use, which for a great part of the year the fixed hours of prayer made necessary both for morning and evening service.”⁴⁹

At the coronation of Charles I. at Edinburgh, in 1633, the two wax candles “were *unlighted*.” See Canon Robertson’s “How shall we conform to the Liturgy?” third edition, p. 392, correcting Mr. Fuller Russell’s misrepresentation of Spalding.

Prynne himself, in his “Quench Coal,” published in 1637, said (p. 34), “There is no analogie between the Communion table and light, unless in respect of those candlesticks, and *unburning* tapers which some Popish novellers place for a double shewe upon it.” In 1640, a proctor in Convocation said, “I know not why we should have candles in the day-time; I wish there may not be so much as an emblem of a fruitless prelacy or clergy in the Church, that only fill the candlestick, but give no light.”⁵⁰

In the following year a pamphlet entitled “Vox Borealis” described a person who on “coming into a new altered church, and looking upon their implements, told his friend that was with him . . . that . . . their two dark tapers betokened blindness and superstition.”⁵¹ “Lambeth Fair,” a Puritan satire, describes the candles at St. Paul’s Cathedral,

“When we at matins, and at even-song were,
We had them by us then devoid of fear,”

But no hint is given of their being used at Holy Communion.⁵²

On the eve of the Savoy Conference “divers ministers of sundry counties” published “reasons showing the necessity of reformation,” in which they complain of the Laudian party that “they must have all (*except* candles lighted) that are upon Popish altars where Mass is used.”⁵³

At the Savoy Conference, “Dr. Bates urged Dr. Gunning that on the same reasons they so imposed the cross and surplice, they might *bring in* holy water, and *lights*, and abundance of such ceremonies of Rome, which we *have cast out*.”⁵⁴

After the Restoration, Hiceringill wrote—

“I profess, when I came from beyond sea, about the year 1660, to Paul’s and Whitehall, I almost thought at first blush that I was still in Spain or Portugal; only the candles on our altars, most nonsensically, stand unlighted to signify what? the darkness of our noddles, or to tempt the chandlers to turn downright Papists, as the more suitable religion for their trade?” . . . “For what signification of light can this ceremony be any more than a stick?”⁵⁵

Bp. Cosin testifies that, at Durham, “during the whole season of the year no candles were lighted or used for the performance of Divine service but when it was dark;” but they were lit, he says, when the ‘lessons’ were read and the ‘psalms’ sung at night.⁵⁶

Yet Mr. J. D. Chambers stated—“that Cosin continued the practice of ‘lights before the Sacrament’ after the Restoration, is proved by a passage in Walter Brereton’s *Travels*, quoted in Mr. Street’s lecture given at Durham in 1868, *who saw them so used*.”⁵⁷

That is a typical sample of a Ritualistic voucher. Brereton *never* mentions either Cosin, or “lights before the Sacrament;” and the only allusion to an ‘altar’ is in Bp. Morton’s remark to Brereton, viz., that “it was not to be counted an altar, but the Communion-table.”⁵⁸

In 1674, Hickman wrote—“We, in England, in many places, set candles and candlesticks on the tables, but do not light them.” (*Hist. Quinq-Articularis Exarticulata*, p. 13.)

In 1695, a Puritan writes—“In some topping churches you shall see huge unlighted candles (for what use nobody alive can tell), but the meaner churches are forced to shift without them.”⁵⁹

Lathbury⁶⁰ quotes from a dissenting writer of George the Second’s time—“There is no command for setting up of candles upon Communion tables, and yet we see unlighted candles placed on Collegiate and Cathedral altars, which some inferior churches awkwardly ape:” and also a Scotch Presbyterian, writing in Queen Anne’s time against the Scottish Union, who urged—“We shall have *blind* lights, altars, and bowing to the altar.”

Mr. Fuller Russell cited “Drake’s *Eboracum*, p. 524,” as proving that in 1736 lights were burned at York Minster “at every service,” though his voucher merely says they were lit in winter “at *evening* service.”

Cosin referred, vaguely and inaccurately, to Edward’s Injunction of 1547, but he never quotes, nor appears to have been aware of the crucial words “before the Sacrament.” The fact is, his ‘Notes’ were written before Sparrow had reprinted these Injunctions; hence, like Wheatly, Cosin seems to have thought that the table-candles were for use at evening service. And this ‘tradition’ led to the introduction of many candlesticks during the reign of Queen Anne. Dr. Hook, in his “*Church Dictionary*” (eighth edition), takes Wheatly’s view, as also did Dr. Stephens in his “Notes on the Common Prayer.”

But lights “*before the Sacrament*” were unknown in the Church of England for 300 years, till the revival of Romish doctrine gave rise to the recent introduction of this appropriate symbol of a localised deity.

“The lights are of course not for use, but to symbolise the divine presence. We burn them on our altars, on the right side and on the left, before the oracle, when, *as the Bible says [sic]* there is ‘no need’ of them. ‘Two candlesticks *standing before the God* of the earth ‘appear in the Revelation, and in the authorised [*sic*] use of the English Church.”⁶¹

That is “the History and Meaning of Altar-lights.”

Endnotes

- 1) Opp. Syr.-Lat. Romæ, 1737, Vol. I., p. 230.
- 2) Annals, p. 551, ed. 1597. The *direct* imitation of the heathen in the matter of lights is avowed by Valesius in his note on Eusebius’ Life of Constantine, Lib. IV., c. 22, p. 243, also by Bede, De Temp. Rat. 10.
- 3) Hist. ii.-593.
- 4) Epist. Hieronymi, xxxvii., “Ad Riparium Presbyterum.” Dr. Gilly’s “Vigilantius and his Times,” p. 395. Mr. J. D. Chambers (p. 283) calmly attributes the half-quotation from Jerome to “Prudentius”!
- 5) Cited in Dallaeus (de cultibus religiosis Latinorum, 1671, p. 1167) who says that Cardinal Sandoval, the censor, struck out the passage.
- 6) Bibliotheca Ritualis, Tom. III., page xciv.
- 7) Smith’s Dict. Christian Antiq, ii-994.
- 8) Smith’s Dict. Christian Antiq., ii.-994, Not. Euch., 136. “In course of time,’ says Romsée, ‘it seemed more convenient to set the candlesticks with the candles on the slab of the altar, and to burn the candles” (Not. Euch., 138).
- 9) Smith’s Dict., 996.
- 10) Not., Euch., p. 138. Pugin’s Glossary, *Art.* “Altar candlesticks.”
- 11) Robertson, p. 313, note. Lewis’ Ref. Settlement, p. 78.
- 12) Wilkins, i.-595.
- 13) Collier, ix.-225.
- 14) Wilkins, Conc., iii.-816, 842, 847.
- 15) Strype’s Cranmer, p. 92. Burnet I.-ii.-279.
- 16) Card., Doc. Ann., i.-7.
- 17) It is to be remembered that altar-lights (as distinguished from the solitary lamp before the *reserved* wafer) never were usual or even common in England. “There is no allusion to altar-lights in the ‘Lay-folk’s Mass Book,’ or the ‘Virtue of the Mass,’ or the Explanation of Ceremonies drawn up under the eye of Cranmer, if not by himself, about 1543; all professing to explain to the laity the whole of the service of the Mass.” This “sufferance to remain still” was therefore a temporary tolerance of existing lights till other order could be taken; *not* an Injunction to provide the like ornaments elsewhere.

- 18) Blunt's Annotated Prayer Book, p. xxi.
- 19) Yet Dr. Stubbs omits from his summary of this statute its express repeal of the Proclamation Acts (31 H. VIII. c. 8, and 34 & 35 H. VIII. c. 23), by which they were "utterly made void and of none effect." [See Eccl. Courts Comm. Report, Historical Appendix, i. p. 41.]
- 20) Mr. B. Shaw, in *Contemporary Review*, i.-23, who cites the cases of *Surtees v. Ellison*, *Kay v. Goodwin*, *Reg. v. Mawgan*, *Barrow v. Arnaud*, and an opinion of Mr. Badeley to the same effect.
- 21) Pinnock, "Transition Period," p. 59.
- 22) Cardwell, Doc. Ann. No. XV.
- 23) Doc. Ann. No. XXI. "It is also especially worthy of note that, where he is supported by these Articles or other known authorities, he speaks in a tone of command; that where he is not, he only exhorts and recommends. He *orders* that there shall be no reading of the Injunctions that set forth candles, and that no minister shall "set any light upon the Lord's board;" while he 'exhorts' the curates and churchwardens, for reasons which he gives, to remove stone altars." [Scudamore, Not. Euch., p. 130.] As to the stone altars, the Order in Council for their removal did not issue till November, while Ridley's Articles were in May, 1550.
- 24) Later Writings, P.S., p. 128.
- 25) Milman's "Annals of St. Paul's," p. 226.
- 26) Doc. Ann., p. 43
- 27) Before August 18th, 1548. See Orig. Lett. P.S. ii.-381.
- 28) Dr. Burton's "Preface to Cranmer's Catechism, p. xx. Wafers placed in the mouth, and vestments were retained in the First Prayer Book, so that the only detail 'misliked' in the picture must have been the 'lights.'
- 29) Remains, p. 159.
- 30) Answer to Gardiner, p. 238.
- 31) Troubles at Frankfort, p. liv., or Gorham's "Ref. Gleanings," p. 347. Cosin's blunder about 'Knox's altar-lights' was pointed out in 1669 by his friend Durel (*Vindiciae*, p. 97).
- 32) Orig. Letters, pp. 332, 535. Gorham's "Ref. Gleanings," p. 78.
- 33) Compare Luther's explanation—"We allow the Mass dresses, altar, lights, to remain, until they all disappear, or it pleases us to alter them; but whoever will do otherwise herein we let him. But in the true Mass, among simple Christians, the altar must not remain so, and the Priest must always turn to the people, as without doubt Christ did in the Supper. Now let that wait its time." Daniel, *Codex Liturgicus*, ii.-105. Compare Hebert on Lord's Supper, ii.-297.
- 34) Chronicle of Convocation, 1866, p. 401.
- 35) Compare Bucer's *Script. Angl.*, p. 70C. Orig. Lett. p. 72.
- 36) Cardwell, Doc. Ann. I. Nos. xvi., xvii. and xviii.
- 37) Doc. Ann. i.-75.
- 38) Life of Parker, p. 46.

- 39) Z. L. i.-64 and App. p. 36.
- 40) Z. L. i.-129.
- 41) Strype's Annals, 1.-176 and App. xxii.
- 42) Z. L. i.-178, and App. 106.
- 43) Def. Apol., 176.
- 44) Z. L. i.-63.
- 45) Eccl. Mem. lii.-22.
- 46) Minor Works, Anglo-Catholic Library, p. 370.
- 47) Perry's Hist. Church of England, i.-146. We learn from Howell's Letters, p. 140, that the candlesticks taken to Madrid for Prince Charles' Chapel were "never used."
- 48) Hierurgia Anglicans, p. 162.
- 49) "Wordsworth's Eccl. Biog. v.-158.
- 50) Robertson, p. 79.
- 51) Ibid.
- 52) Hierurgia Anglicans, p. 256.
- 53) Hier. Ang. p. 329.
- 54) Sylvester's Life of Baxter, p. 340.
- 55) "Works, ii.-405, 441.
- 56) Works, iv.-390, 395.
- 57) Comment and Confutation, p. 25.
- 58) Brereton's Travels, Chetham Society, p. 81.
- 59) Hierurgia Anglicana, p. 354
- 60) Hist. Book of Common Prayer, p. 427.
- 61) "What Ritual has God appointed?" by the Rev. J. S. Pollock.