

THE GROWTH OF RITUALISM

"THE Order of the Holy Cross, a monastic order representative of the extreme ritualistic or 'Catholic' party of the Episcopal Church, publishes a little monthly magazine, in the April number of which we find this paragraph:

"The progress we are making toward the recovery of the full enjoyment of our Catholic heritage is very noticeable. Fifty years ago an altar raised above the floor of the sanctuary and a font properly placed called forth a warm remonstrance from a holy prelate. To-day it would be hard to find a church recently built without these and many other marks of the Catholic revival. It was pleasant to find in St. Louis, in a mission chapel supported by the Church people of the city in general, the daily mass, lights, colored vestments, wafer bread, the mixed chalice and a reverend ritual.'

"The progress of ritualism in the Episcopal Church was also shown in the ceremonies of last Palm Sunday. At Trinity Church the altar cloths and the vestments of the clergy were of a color symbolic of the Passion; and palms, which had previously been blessed, were distributed to the departing congregation. In other Episcopal churches of the town palms were also distributed, and the ceremonies generally were of so pronounced a ritualistic character that they would have shocked the Episcopalians of a generation ago as indicative of a perilous tendency Romeward. In several of them the services were marked by the pomp and the careful regard for symbolism which were formerly associated with Roman Catholicism only. Even in churches which are classified as Low or Broad, the celebration of the day was carried to a ritualistic extreme that would have provoked surprise even in

the distinctively ritualistic churches as they were known thirty or forty years ago.

"The confessional is now well established in the extreme ritualistic Episcopal churches and in some that do not receive that designation. We believe, for instance, that the Rev. Dr. Houghton, of the Church of the Transfiguration, or the 'Little Church Around the Corner,' as it is familiarly known, is the 'father confessor' to great numbers of people.

"This tendency to ritualism is extending to Protestant churches which in the past have rejected liturgical services the most strenuously.

"It seems that the doctrinal skepticism and theological doubt and denial of the Protestantism of this period have generated a desire for more impressive *forms* of worship. The religious sentiment is as strong as ever, apparently, but it finds its expression in devotional *ceremonies* appealing to the aesthetic sense, rather than in settled conviction as to the standards of faith."

– *New York Sun*.
