

OPINIONS OF RITUALISTIC PRACTICES.

Four eminent Counsel, including Lord Justice Cairns, the late Attorney-General, and Mr. Mellish, were consulted, some six months ago, on behalf of several Archbishops and Bishops as to the legality of certain vestments, of incense, altar-lights, and some other disputed points of ecclesiastical ritual. Of all these the four eminent Counsel pronounced a sweeping condemnation. We ventured at the time, with the respect due to such distinguished and excellent lawyers, to express a doubt whether the construction on which they relied of the Rubric respecting Ornaments, whether true or not, was conformable to the ordinary principles of legal interpretation; and we afterwards took the liberty to question whether the Arch-bishop of York was justified in assuming that the opinion was a conclusive explanation of the law. The English Church Union, entertaining the same doubts, have proceeded to arm themselves with the opinions of nine eminent Counsel, including the Chief Baron and Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, the Queen's Advocate, Mr. Coleridge, and Mr. W. M. James. The nine Counsel, with remarkable unanimity, reject that construction of the Rubric which was adopted by the four Counsel, and agree in holding that the use of vestments mentioned in the First Prayer-Book of Edward VI. is now lawful. As to altar-lights, wafer-bread, the mixed chalice, and the use of Anthems, Hymns, or Introits before and after the Communion Service, they are not agreed; Sir W. Bovil and Mr. Coleridge holding all these things unlawful, the rest allowing some, and differing among themselves as to others. Hymns during the Communion Service, and Incense, are disallowed by all. Sir F. Kelly, it must be added, answers the first question only, being one upon which he had expressed his opinion in consultation before he was raised to the Bench. Of the soundness of these various views we shall say nothing, remarking only that the conflict deprives the first Opinion of any claim to be considered authoritative or final. Incense is virtually put aside; but the capital question of the vestments is thrown entirely open.

It therefore appears that all the Opinions are in favour of the legality of vestments. Six are in favour and two against the legality of the two lights. All more or less against incense. Three believe the mixed chalice lawful; three unlawful; and two not authorised. Four in favour of wafer-bread; one, Mr. James, makes it dependent on size and quality; three inclined to consider it illegal. All consider Hymns, &c., not lawful during the Communion service; but six consider them lawful at the beginning and the end. These Opinions are classified in an appendix to the Case; and the Opinions of the Lord Chancellor (then Sir F. Thesiger) and Dr. Deane, set out as given in 1857, in favour of vestments and the two lights.—*Guardian*.

Colonial and Foreign Church News.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS.—The decoration of St. Paul's (Valley) is in several respects more elaborate and effective than at any former season, and the church has well maintained its character of being the most beautifully ornamented of all in the diocese. In the body of the church the new feature, this time, are the illuminated texts between the windows, which are covered with glass to preserve them from being soiled by dust, and enclosed in neat frames of evergreen, in rustic shape. The pillars are twined as usual, and three borders run around the gallery, in the panels of which are various emblems in evergreen, such as the Maltese cross, quatrefoil shield, the circle containing the triangle, and so on. A large wreath surrounds the lofty chancel arch, over which, following the line of the arch, is the text in green letters, "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord." The very effective rood screen which formed so conspicuous a part of the decorations in other years has been again erected,