

RITUALISM.

The Bishop of Springfield, the Right Rev. Dr. McLaren, in his Convention address thus spoke of Ritual:—

"Looking at ritual in its relations to the faculty of taste, it is perfectly evident that some latitude must be allowed within the limits of the law. I have already indicated this in expressing the conviction that to attempt to reduce every parish in the land to the mechanical sameness of the pins on a paper of pins would be against nature, against common sense, against the spirit of the law, against possibility. And this allowable latitude is something to be recognized not only by Bishops and other clergy, but by all classes and conditions of the laity as well. There is a great deal of popery among the people on this subject of ritual. 'Orthodoxy is my doxy.' 'Ritualism is doing something that my taste does not admire.' 'The rector does not live, move and have his being in punctilious conformity, with respect to dress, tone of voice and bend of knee, with my taste as acquired under the ministrations of that ideal of a minister, my former rector.' If the *individual taste* is to be the ritual law of the Church, then we shall have to have as many churches as tastes, or, in other words, no church at all; and, as a matter of history, it has been shown that there are people who preferred to have no church at all rather than to worship God in any other way (even where the laws of the Church on the subject are scrupulously obeyed), than the way of their taste. I can point out dead parishes in this State that have died of this disease. So that it is manifestly most important that we should all educate ourselves, if not already educated, to recognize the fundamental proposition that, under the aegis of law, a certain *measure of latitude in ritual observance* must be granted to differences of taste. The law of affinity will operate to draw those together who have like tastes. Such groupings become practicable in large centres of population. In smaller places the difficulty becomes a more serious one, and I see no better method of meeting it than by the exercise of mutual charity and a spirit of surrender along the line of taste upon the part of those who differ in that respect. To illustrate what I mean: A priest, whose taste leads him towards extreme simplicity and baldness settles in a parish where a goodly number of his people are edified in their approaches to God by modes of rendering the service much more elaborate and ornate than his taste justifies. He and they are children of a common Father, in union with a common Lord, and living toward a common End, which is God. It seems to me that mutual charity and loving concession ought to meet the difficulties of such a supposable case; and, in point of fact they do, for such cases, and cases of a directly opposite character, are constantly to be met with. There is, after all, a vast amount of good sense and charity among us.

Latitude, then, as to questions of taste, must be recognized and made effective wherever practicable. But I think another important remark needs to be added. The whole question of the worship of Almighty God by the use of outward forms has assumed an unprecedented prominence since the beginning of the Catholic Revival in the Church of England in the first third of the present century. It is a movement which has spread far and near. Ritualism, viewed as a question of taste and perhaps even of doctrine, stirs the pulse of Presbyterianism. Our Methodist brethren are making rapid advances in the direction of the old home from which they went out. The same is true of almost every modern Protestant body. Even in Scotland, where Presbyterianism is the established religion, the indications of this remarkable revival are most observable. The rising tide has been very distinctly felt among ourselves, and it was demanded by the condition

of things; for simplicity had in many quarters degenerated into frigidity, and prejudice against ceremonialism had become the ceremonialism of prejudice. There was a great need—it was the need of new life. There was need that the devotional possibilities of the Prayer Book should be developed, and not strangled; and this whole movement, involving greater veneration for the instrumentalities of worship, a more elevated standard of taste in ritual observance, and a better appreciation of the inseparable connection between the body and the spirit in worship, has been an evolution of those principles of ritual which are contained in and illustrated by our formularies of worship. The best evidence of this statement is the fact that these advances in the order, decency, beauty and proprieties of Divine worship are almost universally recognized, and are no longer pointed out as the distinctive badges of the school which reasserted the Church's lost heritage, and began their use under reproach and contumely."

A PLAUSIBLE PLEA.

Why should I be confirmed? I don't see the good of it. (1) The rector says it is time for me to take a public stand, as a "faithful soldier and servant of Christ," of my own free will and accord.

Well, a good many people have done it before now, and I don't see that they have met with any great success.

(2) He tells me that God gave His Spirit to the early Christians by the laying on of the Apostles' hands, and that He will give me, by the same means, a like gift of the Spirit, such as is necessary for my spiritual life.

Well, it seemed to make a good deal of difference in those early Christians. "They spake with tongues and prophesied," but I have known people who have been confirmed who cannot tell me that they felt any difference in themselves after it, or that they were at once the better for it.

(3) He tells me that Confirmation will entitle my soul to the habitual use of the spiritual food of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Again I know communicants who do not seem to be any better for the privilege and could not tell me if I asked them just how they felt the benefit.

A REASONABLE ANSWER.

(1) We have also known sick men, who, with all possible care, and with the best food and medicine, grew no better, and even died. Might not the "natural law" apply also in the "spiritual world." We have known children too, who would not thrive under the best care.

(2) You have grown from babyhood to manhood or womanhood. You never felt yourself growing, and you cannot tell just how you grew; yet, if you compare your present body with your past, you can see that there is a good deal of difference.

(3) The fact is, that the gift of the Spirit in those early days was a new and sudden experience to those who had grown up unregenerate. Hence there was a marked, so-called "miraculous" effect.

But you have been regenerate from youth up, and come from a long line of regenerate ancestors. The supernatural has become natural; what was then supernatural has become the natural atmosphere in which you "live and move and have your being." We must not look for sudden and miraculous changes which we can recognize at once, nor must we expect to feel our spiritual growth, any more than we feel our natural growth. The sudden creation of a full grown man is miraculous, but gradual growth to full manhood is natural.

(4) Anyhow, what does it matter about what others feel or do not feel? "Thou art the man." You are called now in God's Name to

complete your Baptism, and to take a place in God's world worthy of a full grown man or woman. Are you going to say no?

Read the parable of the men, who, when they were invited to "the feast" in the Gospel "all with one accord began to make excuse." They never had a second invitation. We cannot argue from this that you will never have another opportunity, but certainly the parable gives you no right to expect to claim one.—*Church Record.*

CONTEMPORARY CHURCH OPINION.

The *Church of To-day* has the following excellent words to say about struggling parishes:

"Many a little parish is struggling to maintain itself in village and town against social influences and prejudices, and minister and people are disheartened. The weakness of the Church is readily explained in such way as to make the outlook well-nigh hopeless. All the influences are said to be against the Church, and all the people are represented as having other religious associations and interests.

"But are there not in every community persons and families, particularly among the poor, who have no church connection, to whom this Church can and ought to minister? There is no town or village where there are not scores of poor and neglected people who can be won by kindness. It would be the greatest gain if the clergy and people in our small parishes would give up thought concerning persons of means and social position as alone desirable acquisitions to the Church, and go after those who have no such recommendation to a modern parish.

"The thought of clergy and people has been confined too much to those who could pay for a good pew and people of influence. In this country, the children of the poor of this generation are very likely to be rich in the next. But whether there is such prospect or not, the Master's mission to the neglected is ours, and there is a ministry to precious souls in every community.

All this is very true. How many times have we heard the expressions, "Some of the *best people* in town were in Church this morning." "If only we had a rector who could get hold of the *best people!*" Nay, we have known of a parish of the kind where the people actually murmured because the rector interested himself in the most degraded people in the town; people who were positively outcasts from all the churches for a reason which they could not help, and which came to them by nature.

The *Living Church* says:—

The news that Cardinal Manning recently received into the Roman Church the Rev. Mr. Townsend, lately principal of the Oxford Mission at Calcutta, was telegraphed all over the world. Whenever an Anglican 'verts to the Roman Church, the fact is heralded to the uttermost part of the earth, but when a Romanist is received into our Communion the news is withheld. The membership roll of a single church in Philadelphia (St. Sauveur) contains no less than a full score of *cidevant* ecclesiastics of the Roman Church. When priest and people of St. Joseph's church at Rome (diocese of Central New York) as a body were received by the Ordinary of that diocese, very little was said about it. Is the Associated Press in league with the Vatican?

The *Parish Helper*, Springfield, Mo., says:—

One has only to read the accounts of the work done by some Chapters of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew to realize the large and increasing opportunities that is presented for the effective work of laymen. One who keeps