

WHY DOES THE CHURCH USE VESTMENTS?

It is remarkable what an important position the subject of dress occupies among men, and what a tendency there is to distinguish the various grades and professions of society by some special form of dress or some official uniform.

As ages roll on and the world grows older, we see this tendency becoming more marked; at one period what it quite an ordinary part of every day attire becomes eventually a ceremonial or official distinction—an example of a curious conservatism inherent in the nature of man, since a reluctance to part with old traditions balances his ever-increasing desire for advance and progress.

There is no more striking instance of this to be found among all the forms of official dress than in the vestments of the Church, and in a lesser degree, the ordinary dress of clerics.

At the outset it would appear to be only in accordance with the fitness of things that if the callings of secular life have their distinctive dress, that all calling should be in like manner distinguished; this even that dress, as befitting the rank of the departments of the State.

The days when the vestments of the Catholic Church were looked upon as the "rags of Popery" or the "garments of anti-Christ" have now happily gone by, except, perhaps, in the case of a few fanatics, who, in this enlightened age, still choose to make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of all tolerant men.

Most of those outside the Church nowadays look upon vestments (whenever they think about them at all) with a sort of good-humored contempt, wondering why any sensible people should think it necessary to dress up in such outlandish garments for their church services.

Of course, they quite see the need for some kind of ministerial dress, as befitting religious decorum and decency; the surplusage and the stoles and chasubles and all the rest of such garments, they cannot make them out at all. To some, indeed, it appears that all this elaboration of vestments and ceremonies is a conversion of Divine worship into a mere theatrical display, tending to lead simple-minded people to believe that God's service consists entirely in these things, and that nothing more is needed to Him honor.

And truly the amount of discussion and bickering that goes on among a certain portion of the advanced party in the Anglican Church with regard to the shape, color and use of the ecclesiastical vestments might give countenance to such a view.

But it is not so much with Catholics; it is enough for them that the Church commands vestments to be worn in her services, and they are ready at once to uphold their use and necessity; but as to thinking that the worship of God consists entirely in going through certain ceremonies in a particular form of dress, no Catholic has ever thought, or is ever likely to think such a thing.

To any one who reflects upon such matters, vestments appear, as they truly are, the outward expression of the Church's reverence for God, striking symbols by which her doctrines are clearly shown forth and valuable exterior helps to keep up the interior spirit of Divine worship.

But all this need not be enlarged on here; our chief purpose in this sketch is to show that the present use of vestments by the Church is merely the logical outcome of that principle of consistency which is the foundation of all true consistency.

That whatever is used in the service of God should be specially set apart for that service alone, and should be the very best that can be procured.

This principle is admitted by every Christian, at least in theory, to be only right and proper, and yet what inconsistency we see in the practice of the various forms of Christianity. It is only in the Catholic Church that true consistency is to be found; she follows out her principles to their ultimate conclusions, and as time goes on, draws them out and expresses them more and more clearly as according to her opportunities.

In saying that the principle regarding the use of vestments has come down to us from the very foundation of the Church, we do not wish to imply that the Christians of the first century wore vestments in exactly the same way as we now use them. Such a thing could hardly be maintained, for the Church was then in a missionary state; hardly yet a defined society, it was small in numbers and was persecuted and hunted down as an illegal sect by Jews and Pagans alike.

Pelagians: "What is there, I ask, offensive to God if I wear a tunic more than ordinarily handsome, or if Bishop, priest and deacon and other ministers of the Church in the administration of the sacrifices come forth in white clothing?"

From this it is obvious that it was thought befitting the dignity of the sacred rites to reserve special garments to wear when celebrating them, and that these should be of better quality than those in ordinary use—the Sunday best, as we should say! But we also see from the above and from other instances that these primitive vestments differed from ordinary dress not so much in shape and style as by the fact that they were used on these special occasions only, and were more handsome and more richly adorned than those of every-day life.

This it is that constitutes the great difference between primitive and modern vestments, for nothing could be more unlike ordinary dress nowadays than the latter. But this fact, the marked distinction between ordinary dress and ecclesiastical vestments, is only the outcome of that conservative spirit shown even in ordinary society, by which a garment, unsuitable in changed circumstances for every-day wear, becomes restricted to the use of special class or to certain occasions.

Thus the Church, when she had at last gained her true position in the world, adopted from the dress she saw around her—those grave, flowing robes of the Imperial era—the garments most fitting for her sacred character. But as time went on and according to the dictates of fashion, each age saw the adoption of some new style of dress and the setting aside of more antique forms, the Church refused to follow the vanity and fickleness of the world and kept to the time-honored garb she had consecrated to her own use. Even when this became restricted to the service of the altar, and the clergy were allowed in their ordinary dress to approximate more closely to the fashions of the world, we see the same clinging to the more ancient forms, the same refusal to keep pace with the giddy world in its perpetual course of change.

Here, then, we have an outline of the development of Christian vestments. First came the setting aside of special garments for the service of the altar; then, as fashions changed, the growth of a distinction, both in form and style between ordinary dress and that used in the sacred rites; finally, as a necessary result, the difference between lay and clerical dress in daily life.

Thus does the Church show her wisdom; she is always ready to give up the usages consecrated by past ages, she is, nevertheless, always ready to adopt herself to circumstances, avoiding all unnecessary rigor that she may truly be "all things to all people."—St. Andrew's Cross.

EGOTISTIC MEDIOCRITY.

More than anything else in the present condition of the world, the Church needs Catholic men—educated Catholic men. Nor alone in higher walks of life is this need imperative where laziness prevents society from thinking and luxury creates a hatred against all restraint; but even in the rank and file of the toilers are disordered men who can turn away the tide of anarchy and stand as a strong wall for the preservation of law and order.

The great difficulty with the modern world, a difficulty that most of all lies at the root of our present discontent, is that men and women are satisfied with mere mediocrity in intellectual pursuits. Piece-work has become the fashion as far as education is concerned just as it has been forced upon tradesmen in the purely mechanical vocations—what so rare nowadays as a machinist who is a master at all branches of his trade? And so we have eminent physicists, chemists, biologists and electricians; but we find few men who can boast of a liberal education. Once he knows the number of the elements, the mixer of acids fancies that he is shaping the destinies of the world. Nay in many great universities the cry has been raised against what used to be considered essential to the refinement of a scholar; and eclecicism has been substituted for the time-worn system of training men and women according to prescribed ideals. From the universities the new methods of education have found their way into the Public Schools until we hear the youth of the country ejaculating curious words whose very definitions have in many instances been understood by great intellects only after years of study.

The result of this ridiculous cramming of everything into a child's head is a sort of mental indigestion. Free appetites are created and the student himself does not know what ails him. He can no longer assimilate what he reads. He is incapable of serious thought. He gets impatient with a book that calls for more than superficial study. Worse than that he is content to let others do his thinking for him. He begins to feed his intellect on peptonized syllogisms. He will accept as gospel whatever every Tom, Dick or Harry has to say concerning the great questions of life.

This mediocrity in intellectual culture gives rise to moral indifference especially when coupled with that egotism which makes little learning a dangerous thing. The high school graduate with a meagre knowledge of botany, geology, chemistry perhaps and physics is apt to imagine that he understands all about the secrets of nature. He knows, for instance, that the earth revolves around the sun, that water is composed of oxygen and hydrogen, that mountains were formed by lateral pressure of the earth, and that mighty oaks from little acorns grow; he knows all these things because he has read them in a book, or because his teacher has read them for him and given her word of honor that they are all true. And forthwith he poses as an opponent of revealed religion.

What is demanded most of all in our schools both public and private is a curriculum of studies that will give substantial food to the intellect; and a

body of teachers who will inspire their disciples to drink deep of the Plerian Spring. From that fuller knowledge which comes with serious study and which sobers the reasoning faculties is drawn the delight that evidence gives to the intellect and that humility and strength of character which makes for a purer and nobler world.

With men educated along these lines the Church may hope to seize the opportunities which are offered to her especially in our own country. Men are callous in matters of religion not so much on account of ill-will; they are indifferent because they have been trained to be so. Give the Church a free hand in the matter of education, let her pursue freely her divine commission of teaching the nations, and the world will turn again to the ideals of Christianity.—Providence Visitor.

NINE REFORMS.

Victoria (B. C.) Orphan's Friend

A non-Catholic offers the following suggestions to the Pope that is to be. We shall briefly comment on each one of them.

1.—The restoration of the cup to the laity, at Holy Communion.

Comment.—Where it should be: "Whoever eats My flesh or drinks My Blood," we have now in Protestant Bibles: "Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood." Then there is the aversion of many to drinking of the same cup, or the inconvenience of having one cup for each communicant, and also the danger of spilling. But, perhaps this is made little by those who do not believe in the Real Presence.

2.—Permission to married convert clergymen to take Holy Orders, in joining the Church.

Comment.—This would seem to imply that when a clergyman becomes a Catholic, he is, by that very fact, called to the priesthood, which is not the case. A single life is one of the great features of the imitation of our Lord's manner of living.

3.—The resignation of a Pope on reaching the age of seventy.

Comment.—As some of the great men have been greatest after that age, we do not see the necessity of this rule. Experience is gained with age and advanced years inspire more confidence. Besides, as God rules, the Church, we should not limit to the age of the head of His Church.

4.—The surrender of all claims to the temporal power.

Comment.—This is beautiful. After robbing a man, it is certainly bold to ask him to renounce all claim to his property. The lands held by the Popes were in their quiet and undisputed possession for over a thousand years. In 1870 they were deprived of them and now they should surrender all claims to them!

5.—The appointment in every country of a commission to examine into the authenticity of the relics preserved for the adoration (sic) of the faithful.

Comment.—We have traveled a little ourselves in some countries with people who could hardly make up their minds to believe that anything at all was left of ancient heroes, and when they said: "I wonder if that is as represented." I wonder if that is as represented. "I wonder if the St. Patrick of our day is the same as the real one? If the name and fame of a person can remain in people's minds; much more a bone or anything tangible may outlive the ravages of time. The Church in every country is generally the last to venerate anything new; the people begin the devotion, we might say, by divine impulse, and then they ask the authorities to sanction it.

6.—Raising the age limit of confirmation for children, and thereby preventing their approaching the altar for Communion and entering the confessional too soon.

Comment.—The ages for receiving the sacraments have been fixed long ago, and we see no suggestion of any other effort of making people unchristian. It is the desire of infidels to keep children away from holy things so as to kill their wish for them.

7.—Restriction of the powers and numbers of the Society of Jesus.

Comment.—Poor Jesuits! To their glory be it said that they are named worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus. It is because the results are more than a match for the enemies of religion that their powers and numbers are considered too great. A power cannot be too great except for jealous people. A ship is never considered too strong to brave the storms of the sea.

8.—The publication of an annual balance-sheet, minutely showing the distribution of the funds collected under the name of "Peter's Pence."

Comment.—This would seem to indicate, in the minds of non-Catholics, an amount so enormous, that it would be interesting to know how it is distributed. But the ruler of two hundred and fifty million people is not so loaded with money that he can afford to pay twenty-five book-keepers in addition to the present claims on his income. The recent curtailing of expenses in the papal court amply shows this to be the fact. The moment it would be known how his income is distributed, at once the one or the other share of Peter's Pence would be proclaimed unnecessary, as was the case in 1870 when the whole of his estate was confiscated. The numerous charities of the Holy Father, his simple life, his refusing of the Peter's Pence of poor dioceses are ample guarantees that the small donations to him are used better than the heavy taxes paid into the treasury of any other sovereign.

9.—The abolition of the taking of "final vows" by monks and nuns. By this I mean vows binding men and women, young or old, to conventional seclusion for the whole of their lives.

Comment.—People who so choose should be left as free to make perpetual vows in a convent as others are to make marriage vows in the world. Because there might be one in a hundred who breaks the final vows, that is no more reason to abolish them, than it would be to abolish marriage in which unfaithfulness sometimes occurs. If the sacrifice is greater in these final vows

greater courage is found there to keep them and greater help from above is also given to carry out their noble purpose.

VICTORY THROUGH SUFFERING.

THAT IS THE TRUE VOCATION OF THE CHRISTIAN.

By Rev. William T. Russell.

If hope gives color to the Christian life, suffering paints the shadows. The one is as necessary to a true picture as the other. Penance, suffering, self-denial,—what words more frequently occur in the sacred Scriptures? From the day when God commanded Adam and Eve to toil and sorrow until the coming of Jesus Christ, we find not a prophet but speaks of penance, not a law but imposes some self-denial, not a ceremonial but suggests sacrifice and immolation.

A Christian's life must, of necessity, be one of warfare and of suffering. He is so understood by the Apostles and by the early Christians, and so it must be looked upon by us to-day. It is true, indeed, that He says: "Come unto Me all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you." He does not promise to relieve us of our burden, but to refresh us again that we may carry it more willingly. If we ask how this shall be done, immediately He answers, "Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

But suffering is made so unendurable, so unappealingly bitter by our revolt against it. "My yoke is sweet and My burden is light," but we will not submit to the one nor bear the other, and so He goes before us carrying His cross to show us how to suffer with patience, with resignation and with submission.

To teach us this great lesson we see "omnipotence become an abject, the Life a leper, the first and only Fair with an inglorious visage and unsightly form bleeding and ghastly lifted up in nakedness, stretched out in dislocation," obedient, submissive, even unto death.

We seek peace by the road of pleasure, self-gratification and worldliness. But this is not the peace of God. "My peace I give you. My peace I leave you, not as the world gives peace do I give unto you."

His peace is the fruit of suffering—"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find peace for your souls." His peace is the result of fashioning ourselves after Himself. It is found according to the measure that the creature is roughed down by suffering after His Model, Jesus Christ. Our vocation calls us to be imitators of Jesus Christ, and our peace will be found only in fulfilling our vocation. If, therefore, He tells us to do penance, to suffer, to mortify the carnal desires of the flesh—and His whole life proves that He means just what He says—it is because He knows that by suffering, and by suffering alone, we shall attain that for which each one of us has been created, what our hearts long for—peace in this life and eternal bliss in the enjoyment of His love.

ROCKEFELLERISM.

N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

The ideals men fashion for themselves exert great influence in molding their lives. For this reason it is of the utmost importance that our ideal should be of the right sort. In this matter the Catholic Church displays, as she displays in many other ways, a great wisdom. The average man is not satisfied with proclaiming the great truths she has been commissioned by her divine Spouse to deliver unto men, but she supplements her teaching by directing our attention to the saints, who are the highest exemplars of Christian perfection. We may not be able to reach the high spiritual plane on which they moved, but that fact does not prevent their example from influencing their lives.

It does not follow that unattainable ideals, because they are unattainable do not have their influence. They are like the polar star, which, though beyond the reach of the mariner, ever guides him in his onward course. We cannot all be saints, but we can find in their lives much to evoke in us aspirations for a higher life. We are so constituted that the average man is not influenced so much by abstraction as by concrete examples. Eloquent volumes on patriotism would not impress one so much as an unvarnished story of the life of George Washington, who in his own person bodied forth the civic virtues that are included under the term patriotism. For this reason the memory of the Father of his Country is a precious heritage to Americans.

From Washington to Rockefeller is a far cry and the reader may be surprised that we should bring the two names together, except for antithetical purposes. Our motive in so doing may be understood if we keep in mind what we have said about the part ideals play in moulding men's character. A country that takes a Washington for its ideal has a future before it; a country that would select a Rockefeller as its model would be doomed to inevitable destruction. In this stage of our national development, when money madness is triumphant temporarily, it is well that the head of the Standard Oil Company should be assigned his right place, as the representative of the worst element in the land. We say this advisedly, John D. Rockefeller, clutching his millions acquired by open and flagrant violation of the laws of God and man, represents a conscienceless and vicious element that if not held in check will utterly pervert our form of government, and thus prepare the way for the overthrow of the Republic.

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VOLUME The Catholic LONDON, SATURDAY CHRISTIANITY PROS "Pleasant Home young folk of T the Rev. John V how pleasant he hours for the you from an article "Picturesque Ire in the issue of respondent knowle cler, but he ma the beautiful isla to a bit of home- strange that a write for religio serve their wa things that are with religion. dences of luxu etc., they are when these thi Protestants and the beautiful and religion." The millionaire as Christianity. I sent oppression the mire of met ignoble robber in the eyes it reflects heaven. Mon is an evidence a Methodist m a very holy m is the test of ion. Hence p of salvation an And yet Chri is not of thi His disciples n poverty and up for yourl And St. Jam rich in faith which God ha love, Him." how they who "open Bible perity as a We do read in of the kingdo glory, but it them as a rec Some touris —the materia of the countri to those who are visible co and an absen tian virtues. mon in the Protestant E "I lament and almost the toiling have outgro permitted to that touches their desti sands of a mighty God. Being excep hideous out redeeming lo distant as a And in Dec view (Dee writes: "Never the evidence never before general and never before poor more their daily Says Bish "If Eng the account for tenth and if the de brought at to what c of Hollan tenth c and did th II, again, v of the gen we explain our Metho due to the and indust some the lips of a B them as t undertake is not for building —for the not where CATHO The wr unburden "The p Ireland w Roman C to sap the of any pe Which sible to lose by quantan If this