

case and try to define what ought to be the just limits of ritual. A few principles, however, seem to be emerging with some degree of clearness. One of these is that ritual usages must be regarded as meaning and symbolising something. What that something is it may not always be easy to define. Still something there is, and in dealing with ritual usages, to regard them as either the infinitely little or as having no doctrinal significance whatever, is simply to leave antagonisms as we find them, and seriously to augment existing difficulties.

It may be quite true that in the case of some of the usages the teaching originally intended to be conveyed may have become obscured, and that the real ground on which the usage is maintained and defended is its antiquity and sometimes its universality. Still, it is impossible to deny that there are usages and ceremonies which are intimately connected with doctrine, and are tenaciously maintained, and just as tenaciously opposed, because both parties know that doctrine is the moving principle. Such usages will never be disposed of by the declaration that they are to be understood to have no doctrinal significance. Neither party will admit this, and controversy will continue with even increased asperity. In attempting to lay down limits of ritual, limits of doctrine will commonly have, in some form or other, to be regarded as a part of the problem, and it is idle to think it can be otherwise. Another and very obvious principle is that a careful and sensitive regard should be had for the feelings of congregations, and that changes in ritual positively must not be introduced without some reference to higher authority. We have had of late a great deal too much of what has been called fancy ritual—if, in some cases, happily becoming fewer, it may not have deserved a much more serious name. Thirdly, this seems to be plain—that the attempt at the present time to come to any settlement of the ritual question by any definite enactments is hopeless and mischievous. To modify, for example, or to remove the ornaments Rubric, would be to bring about a catastrophe which even now we cannot perhaps adequately realise. That rubric is regarded by numberless devout persons, and rightly regarded, as the means whereby the Eucharist has been restored to its proper place in the services of the Church, and to touch it is really to touch all that is dearest to their highest religious sensibilities. We must leave our Prayer book alone. Let us only agree to be loyal alike to its spirit and its letter, and all yet may be well. If we can only agree, on the one hand, not to ignore its Catholic spirit, nor to neglect its ordinances, and, on the other hand, not to sub introduce what it patently disavows, there may yet be a closer knitting together of all hearts, and a blessed future of peace for the Church of our baptism.—*Church Bells*.

THE INFLUENCE OF IMITATION IN MATTERS OF RITUAL.

Those who have carefully studied the Archbishop's judgment in its fulness must have become conscious of their own comparative ignorance. The simple decisions on the various points, with the short summaries of the reasons on which they are based, as given in a couple of columns in our newspapers, gave a necessarily imperfect idea of the judgment. The carefully arranged historical facts, as read in full reports, not only give weight to the decisions, but impress upon most men who know something of ritual history the importance of a wider and deeper knowledge than they possess. Yet men of all parties in the Church fancied that they could justify their actions from their investigations. Few men in their own cases have allowed enough for the force of

imitation. Men are, as a rule, receptive rather than critical, imitative rather than original.

We are told that in the old days of Newman's influence in Oxford many of his disciples were seen with short trousers and black socks, because Newman happened to dress in that way. Younger Oxford men remember that from fifteen to twenty years ago many of the advanced High Church school used to walk with necks bent forward and heads bent down, with their hands behind them, in conscious or unconscious imitation of the leader whom they revered. Imitation, which leads to mannerisms and caricatures in ordinary life, has a strong influence in shaping religious observances and modes of religious thought.

It is not too much to say that much modern ritualism is based on imitation rather than on knowledge. Members of congregations with æsthetic tastes have found ritual acts not only pleasing to them personally, but helpful from the thought that such acts were in accordance with primitive practices and essentially symbolical of doctrines. The clergy, in adopting the practices that have suited the tastes of their congregations, have followed in many cases the modern traditions of their party, and tried to assimilate their ritual to the standard set in a few well-known churches. They have imitated others because they believed that in so doing they were helping to teach the doctrines which such imitations seemed to them to symbolise. Imitation is a natural feature in man's character, and men whose personal knowledge is imperfect are justified in conforming to a personal standard.

If the Archbishop's judgment had disregarded primitive customs and continuous traditions, any change in ritual would have been a difficulty. But the judgment is based on reasoning which all can understand. It does not only state what is legal and what is illegal: it helps men to understand the meaning of actions which they have practised; it makes a distinction between primitive customs and new fashioned innovations; it shows what is essential and what is merely in accordance with individual preferences. Where an action is shown not to be a symbol of one special doctrine but to be an act of devotion practised alike by each school of religious thought, or where it is shown that there is no traditional connection between one interpretation of a rubric and doctrinal views as to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, submission to the judgment becomes easy. The hero of one of Molière's plays had spoken prose all his life without being conscious of it. The reverse has been the case with many of the clergy; they have fancied they were practising symbolical actions, and they have simply been conducting their services in a manner which gratified their tastes. The Archbishop's judgment, in fact, explains to us what ritual means. Men who acted from imitation can now act from knowledge.

As to the duty of obedience in the province of Canterbury, there can be little doubt. In matters where differences exist, the private interpretation of the parish clergy is forbidden in the Prayer book. The Bishop of the diocese in the first instance, the Archbishop of the province finally, is entrusted with the responsibility of deciding what the Rubrics mean. The Archbishop of Canterbury has not sat alone. In five dioceses the clergy know the interpretation of the Rubrics approved by their Bishop. From this interpretation probably few of the other Bishops, if any, would be found to differ. Even if individual Bishops give no direct orders as to obedience, the Archbishop's judgment is in men's hands. His interpretation has authoritative weight; the private interpretation of individual clergymen are, from a Church point of view, absolutely worthless. Men have to decide between acting in accordance with the ruling of an authority which they are bound to recognise, and acting

on their own private notions. The question simply is whether the Church is congeries of isolated congregations, with practices dependent on the whims of individuals, or a corporate body with definite rules.

Though in any case obedience would seem necessary, obedience is made more easy by the fact that men in their ritual observances have been influenced rather by imitation than by knowledge.—A. C. S. in *Church Bells*.

POWER OF THE MINISTRY.

Bishop Stevens delivered an address in the lecture-room of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia, to a number of the ministers of the city on the subject, "What is the Chief Power of the Ministry?" Although in poor health the Bishop made a forcible and convincing appeal, which must be fruitful of good results. He thought that the answer to the question, "Wherein does the chief power of the ministry lie?" could be found in the words of Christ when He said, "Ye shall have power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you." The speaker continued: "We may know a great deal about Christ and yet not be able to preach Christ. It is not enough to be acquainted with His personal history, what He said and did, but one must be possessed of the Holy Spirit. Only as we know and understand the power of the Holy Ghost working in us can we preach Christ as He should be preached." Knowledge of the truth is revealed only by the Holy Spirit. It does not come from mere study of the Bible.

The speaker thought the Word of God was used too much in a perfunctory manner. It is visited to cull texts from, to work up sermons, but it is not sought on our knees asking God to open to us that great well of truth. A spirit of faith should be more pervading. As it is utterly impossible for the carnal mind to understand Christ, we must be taught by the Spirit of Christ. Ministers should rely on the power of the Holy Ghost to teach them the Word of God, and then upon the same power to help them preach that Word. The minister must first feel the effect of that spirit before he can impart the teachings of the Word to others.

"One of the great evils of this day," he continued, "in the ministry, especially among the younger clergy, is the tendency to preach upon what is called the times." These young men believe that they are doing great service when they attack the prevailing errors of infidelity. But often their statement of the infidel's case is stronger than their sermon, with which they combat it. The Bishop deeply deplored the sensationalism in preaching that very many young men find so alluring. There are others more intent upon preaching an eloquent sermon than on preaching the Gospel. They are anxious to have people say as they leave the church, "What an eloquent sermon; how well expressed!"

These ministers strive for success, but too often they forget what success is in the eyes of God. Success in winning soul to Christ is too often lost sight of in the desire for the world's approval. Man must be convinced that he is unworthy. The end of the ministry is reconciliation, to bring men back to God. Men will not be brought back to God until they feel that they are away from Him. In conclusion he exhorted all present to rely more upon God's Word in preaching and less upon man's word. The Word should always be approached reverently. More and more he felt the importance of the Holy Spirit in preaching the Gospel, and he appealed to all to let it be their guide and power.

Perfect valour consists in doing without witnesses all we should be capable of doing before the world.