

AN AUSTRALIAN VIEW OF RITUALISM.

We concluded in our last issue the evidence which was brought before the Ritual Commissioners. One thing at once strikes us as plain and indisputable—that we shall never secure in our Church perfect uniformity of worship; nor is it necessary or desirable that it should be so. All that is required in the midst of divergence of ritualistic practices within the limits allowed by the law, is that we should often bring back our thoughts to the grand essentials of worship. The only advice we venture to give our readers is that, whatever school of theology they may prefer, they should always be careful that their worship be spiritual and real. We shall always be tempted to cry down those who are more simple or more ornate than ourselves, but we may be saved from much bitterness of spirit, if we recur to first principles and remember the doctrine of our Saviour,—“God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

There will always be those who like to attend a service severely simple, and there will be others of æsthetic tastes who like an elaborate service, where processions and choral music make the worship imposingly showy and grand. Now we cannot step between and decide what kind of worship is most likely to be real. An attendant upon either service may have a demeanour most becoming, while all the time evil passions may be ruling in his heart. We can remember no passage of Scripture which prohibits men allowing themselves large liberty as to the externals which they will call in to aid them in their solemn assemblies. There are, perhaps, few educated men who have ever joined in our noble Cathedral services who are not constrained to acknowledge their beauty, and high devotional character. While, on the other hand, a plain, unpretending barn-like structure, where inharmonious music and bad grammar prevail, may hold within its walls equally sincere worshippers as could be found in York Minister or Canterbury Cathedral. Therefore we plead for the right of our fellow-churchmen to adopt for themselves, *within the limits of the law*, the kind of ritual which best suits the peculiar bent of their own minds.

Perhaps we are peculiarly able in this country to form a calm and dispassionate judgment on this question. A clergyman here often holds service in a wood-shed, without even a surplice on to mark his office, and then within a week, perhaps, he may be seen leading the worshippers in one of our city churches, where Gothic vaults, surpliced choirs, and painted windows all adorn and elevate the worship. Such great changes help one to realize that externals are of secondary importance—that the great matter of moment is that our worship should be something deeper than merely adhering to a prescribed form of words and ritual. Just as a student in reading up a subject, if he is to succeed, must enter himself heartily into the work, so we must likewise give ourselves to prayer and praise, with full attention and purpose, “in spirit and in truth.”

The subject is likely, ere long, to be of still more interest to us. It will not be long, we trust, before St. Andrew's will be thrown open for public worship. Of course there will be cathedral choral services. We wish to see the highest form of worship which our Church invites her children to share in, introduced into the diocese. Yet we fear that its introduction will be heralded in by a howl of stupid bigotry. The intonation of the prayers will be denounced as Popish, and the choral music will be called a Sunday opera. Of course we are aware that such services may rather hinder than help a certain class of worshippers. There is undoubtedly a danger of mistaking mere sentimental excitement for elevated aspira-