

RITUAL AND CEREMONIAL.

BY THE REV. THOS. J. PULVERTAFT, M.A., Vicar of St. Paul at Kilburn.

WHAT a man says is not so important as what a man does, and what he does, will not carry as far as what he is. This is a commonplace which we all admit to be universally true. In the conduct of public worship a man's actions ought to be the expression of the teaching of the Church. They are authorized—at least they ought to be authorized—by the Church, and as such have something more than the teaching value attached to his pulpit utterances, which arise from his individual interpretation of the Church's message. What he believes in his heart is expressed by his ritual and ceremonial actions as well as by his spoken words. The actions of most men in the conduct of public worship are the same Sunday after Sunday, and their oft repetition has a greater psychological and intellectual effect than the fugitive memory of a sermon which varies from Sunday to Sunday. We have no desire to depreciate in any way the value of preaching, but the message delivered owes much to the framework of the service, and is interpreted very largely by the character of the service with which it is associated.

Broadly there are two types of men in the ministry of the Church of England. We are called to be Ministers of the Word and Sacraments. Some place the chief stress on the Word, and consider the sacraments owe their efficacy to the acceptance in the heart of the Gospel message. Others maintain that the Minister is a Priest in the Apostolical Succession, and on his sacerdotal character depends the validity of the sacramental ministry and the sureness of the reception of sacramental grace. The former places all his stress on the relation of the worshipper to God and the rightness of his heart with God—the latter looks upon the Priest as the essential element in the due reception of grace from God. Without the Priest there is no valid sacrament—the Priest offers the Divine Sacrifice, the Priest is a necessary agent in attaching the Divine Presence to the Elements, and through the Priest the ministry of absolution in the sacrament of Penance is practised.

Until the rise of the Tractarian movement the ceremonial ritual of the Church of England was practically the same in every Church. At first the Tractarians were content with asserting their view of the Ministry and the Sacraments, but they made little headway until they gave expression to them in Ritual and Ceremony. When this was done they at once challenged attention, and the English Christian public saw they were face to face with a reversion to views previously considered to be those of the Church of Rome from which the Church of England had emancipated itself. A new interpretation was given to the Ornaments Rubric, a new position of the Celebrant at the Holy Communion was demanded, and a fresh view was put forward of the meaning of certain phrases

in the Communion Service and the Visitation of the Sick. The difference between the traditional reformed conception of the services of the Church and the Tractarian view was symbolized in acts and vestments. And we as Evangelicals have to consider the course we must follow.

Two courses are open to us. We may persuade ourselves that many practices which are associated with the prevalent Tractarian or Anglo-Catholic movement are in themselves innocent, and therefore we may adopt them and by so doing take the sting out of them and show the public that they mean nothing erroneous. Or we may persevere in the simplicity of our worship, retaining the customary ritual and ceremonial of the Church as at once the mark of our beliefs and our protest against false teaching. Since the Lincoln judgment the Eastward Position, so called, has been made legal. It is not for us now to question the merits of the judgment. We are free to adopt it without incurring the charge of lawlessness. But we cannot forget history. In the primitive Church the Westward Position was universal—the consecrating Minister faced the congregation. It is an undoubted fact that in Spain until the eleventh century this was the universal custom of the Mozarabic Church, and was only abandoned when that Church became subject to the domination of Rome. It is still retained in certain South American Churches—by papal permission—whereas even in the Mozarabic Chapels in Spain the Eastward Position is uniformly adopted. Undoubtedly the men who introduced the Eastward Position in England held the belief that the Minister at Holy Communion is a sacrificing priest. The position symbolizes this belief, and it is a matter of conscience with a large number of men that they will not consecrate in any other manner. To do so would disown their priesthood, and this is with them a matter of supreme importance. In the Army it is incumbent upon all Chaplains to adopt the Eastward Position as legal without doctrinal significance. Uniformity is a rule in the Army, and many men who had never adopted this position in their parish Churches had to choose between losing the privilege of ministering to the troops in war time or doing what they had not done before. The interpretation of the King's regulations enabled them to do so with an easy conscience. On their return to civil life what should their attitude be? They knew that the Eastward Position is definitely symbolical of doctrine which they reject, and by continuing the practice they place themselves in line with the Roman and Anglo-Catholics who hold the sacrifice of the Mass. Are they able to maintain that their actions are not open to misrepresentation when at least ninety-nine per cent. of the Ministers of the two Churches known to them who consecrate in this fashion do so because they accept teaching which Evangelicals reject? The Eastward Position is a label that has a definite meaning to those who know what ritual means.

Attempts have been made to introduce a Diocesan use of the Eastward Position and two lighted candles on the Re-Table, in the hope that this may become the maximum and minimum of

ceremonial ritual. Has it been effective? Has any Anglo-Catholic or Tractarian reduced his ritual through satisfaction with the efficient symbolism of the position and the lights? No one has done so and the effort to secure Uniformity has not succeeded.

The same remarks apply to the use of the Chasuble, which is pre-eminently the sacrificial Vestment in the Church of Rome. It may be held, as it undoubtedly is by some, that the Chasuble has no doctrinal significance, that it is simply emblematical of charity and an outward sign of the continuity of the Church of England with the Church of St. Augustine, who brought Christianity to paganized England of the sixth century. It is also true that on some rare occasions in Roman ceremonial the Chasuble is used out of the service of the Mass, and that the Swedish Lutherans who have disclaimed the sacerdotal conception of the Ministry also adopt it. But who knew of the Jubilee celebrations in Rome or the clothing of Swedish ministers when the Chasuble was introduced? It is safe to say that only a few learned antiquarians were aware of the facts; and the effort to deprive an acknowledged symbol of the sacrificial character of the priesthood is an argument that attempts to justify the adoption of a vestment that is universally in the Roman Church, and ordinarily by those who use it in the Church of England, accepted as the outward sign of teaching which is rejected by all Evangelical Churchmen. Apart altogether from this we cannot as a minority of clergy in the Church rob of its significance a Vestment that has historically and contemporaneously one and one only meaning in the minds of at least ninety-nine per cent. of those who use it. We know its use in the Roman Catholic Ordination Service, and the attempt to revive its use in the Ordination Service of the Church in Wales met with just condemnation on the part of the authorities of that Church. Is there any instance on record that the adoption of this Vestment by those who do not attribute to it a sacerdotal significance has caused the change of conviction in a single one who has given to it the only meaning it has had in recent Church practice?

If this be so, then it is the plain duty of Evangelical Churchmen to consider carefully and prayerfully their conduct of public worship. They stand for certain well-defined views of the Ministry. They are the inheritors of a great tradition which they believe to be in full accord with the teaching of the New Testament and the Apostolic Church. They stand for Truth, and are bound to symbolize by all their actions their hold on Truth and to do nothing that will mislead their people as to the character of the Truth they hold and the doctrines they teach. History cannot be rewritten for the purpose of expressing the amiability of the Ministers of the Gospel, and their desire to go as far as possible with brethren from whom they profoundly differ on the character of the Christian priesthood. Our weekly actions and the vestments we wear have a permanent influence on the minds of those who worship with us. We desire above everything to lead them in the way everlasting. We can bring brightness into our services without compromising

truth—we can make our appeal to heart and head without attempting to read out of rite and ceremony what is in them and has caused them to be abandoned for centuries in our Church. Their revival is not the outward expression of Romantic movement in life and letters that is believed to have given a stimulus to the Tractarian advance. It means something more than this, for it implies the definite acceptance of teaching that is foreign to the Reformed and Protestant character of our Church as well as to its Catholic and Apostolic character. If the teaching symbolized were truly Catholic and Apostolic we should be bound to follow it, for a Protestant Reformation that is not Catholic and Apostolic would be a deformation, not a return to New Testament Christianity. I have no desire to condemn any man who differs from the view I put forward, but for my part I cannot conceive how a man who sees the great importance of the issues now at stake, and the duty of preserving the truth in Jesus, can adopt with an easy mind and conscientious regard to his influence being the greatest possible either Eastward Position or Vestments. It was not without reason that the late Archbishop Temple when he consecrated at Holy Communion uniformly adopted the North Side position. Have we really become so influenced by the prevailing custom of the day that we are ready to assimilate our practice to that of the Roman and Anglo-Catholics in our position at the Holy Table without thinking what it means to the people and to those from whom we differ? Is it not an easy step to go further in self-deception and to believe that by adopting the Eastward Position and wearing the Chasuble we can avoid giving the congregation the impression that we are sacrificing priests? Perhaps it may be said the white Vestment will be mistaken for the surplice and no harm will be done. Is this not in itself the gravest act of self-deception, believing that while we please our Anglo-Catholic friends and thereby show our liberality, we deceive our people into thinking we still wear the surplice? Evangelical Christianity in the Church of England can only exert its full influence, preserve its integrity and summon the Church back to Gospel truth by maintaining in its Ritual and Ceremonial a simplicity which proves to all that it is loyal to the New Testament view of the Ministry and true to its own great traditions. If we show, by our assimilation of our conduct of public worship to the practices of the Anglo-Catholics, our desire to stand as far as possible in line with them while rejecting the meaning they attach to their actions, we shall undoubtedly drive a wedge between ourselves and the great non-episcopal Churches of Christendom. It is a sad fact that Nonconformity has increased manifold in England during the last ninety years, and its growth has been contemporaneous with the spread of Tractarianism and Anglo-Catholicism. Do we or do we not wish our future to be bound up with Evangelical Christianity or with the reversion to Romanism and Medievalism which plainly reverses much of the teaching of the New Testament? That is the question we must answer in our decisions on Evangelical Ritual and Ceremonial.