

**WHY AND WHEREFORE?  
SIMPLE EXPLANATIONS OF  
THE ORNAMENTS, VESTMENTS,  
AND RITUAL OF THE CHURCH**

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Why and Wherefore? Simple Explanations of the Ornaments, Vestments, and Ritual of the Church by H. Wilson

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# WHY AND WHEREFORE?

SIMPLE EXPLANATIONS OF THE  
ORNAMENTS, VESTMENTS, AND  
RITUAL OF THE CHURCH.

BY THE

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DAYS OF LENT," etc.

ADAPTED TO THE USE AND CUSTOMS OF  
THE AMERICAN CHURCH.

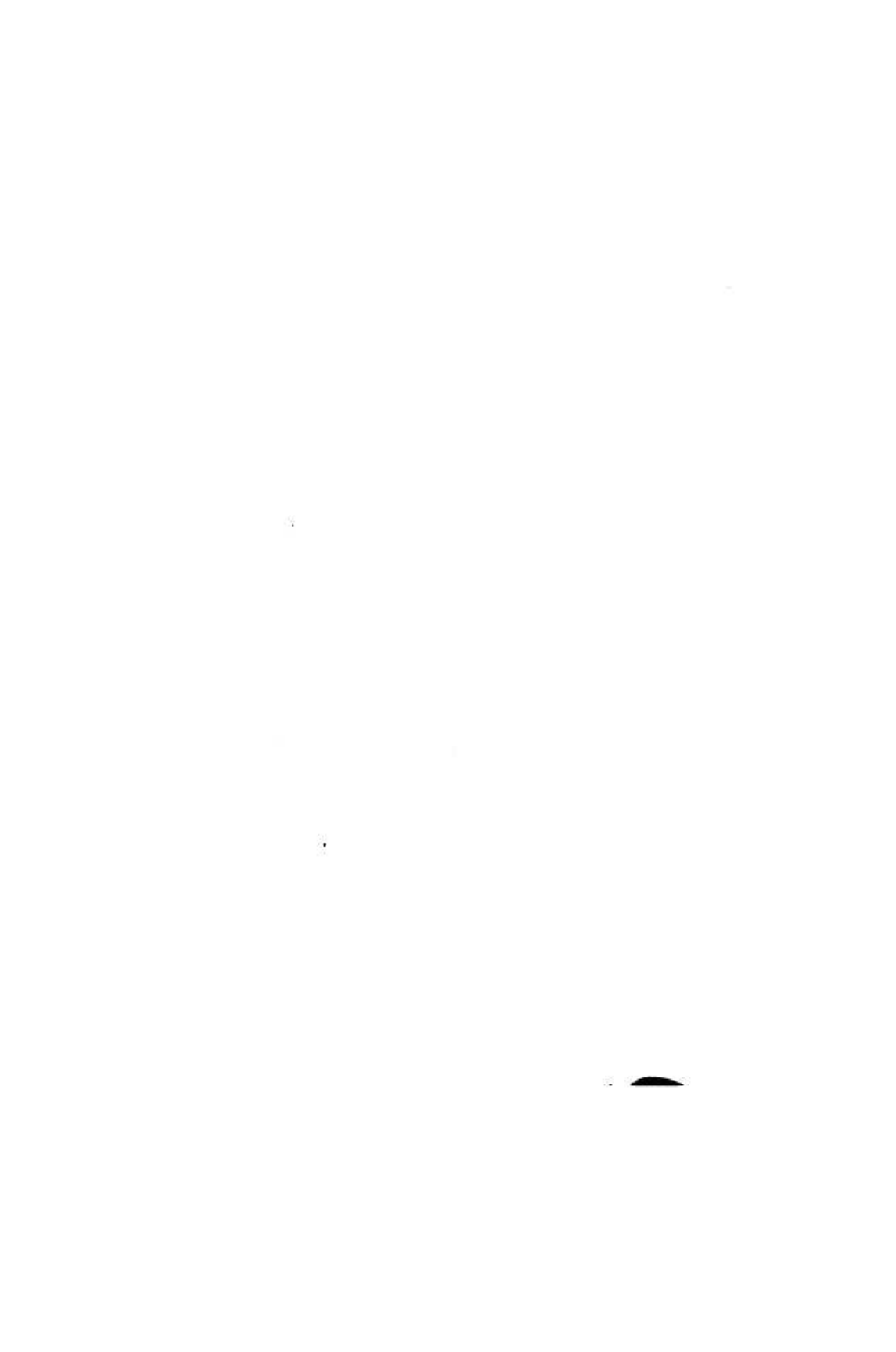
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## Why and Wherefore?

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### I.

#### Ritual.

Many years ago at Brighton, a lady and her little boy went to service at what was considered then a most "advanced" church. The boy took a lively interest in all that took place; but was much puzzled. As soon as they were out of church, he asked: "Why did the people bow their heads?" His mother did not know; but she did not like to confess her ignorance, so she said: "*Everything they do in that church has got a meaning, if one only knew what it was.*" The little boy said no more; but he made up his mind that when he was older he would find out all about it and what it did mean; and some of the things he found out when he got older are here written down for the benefit of others like himself who want to find out all about it.



The reason why many people object to Ritual is because they do not understand its meaning; and the reason why Ritual has made such progress of late years is that so many religious people have taken the trouble to find out what it does mean, and also find in it a real help to their devotion and a genuine assistance to their endeavors to express to God the heartfelt worship of the soul.

There used at one time to be a funny bit of Ritual in use in one church at Brighton, where there was a high pulpit and a long flight of steps up to it. The vergier used to follow the preacher right up the steps and carefully shut him into the pulpit and fasten the door. It did not seem at all funny then, because one was used to it; and there was meaning in that bit of Ritual! It meant this: "The sermon is a most important part of the service, and to add to the dignity of the preacher and his discourse he has a servant to wait on him at the time when he is going to deliver it."

"To do something that has a meaning," that is Ritual. The New Testament is full of it! Zacharias was engaged in conducting a most "Ritualistic" service when the angel appeared to him to tell him he should have a

son. Our Lord Jesus Christ was Himself continually in the Temple, attending these same services, of which the minute details of the Ritual had been ordered by God and revealed to Moses. These services were also attended by Christians as long as the Temple lasted, for we read in Acts iii. 1, that S. Peter and S. John "went up together to the Temple at the hour of prayer," so we see that the principle of Ritual in God's service was not done away with by our Lord. Again, people came to our Lord and *fell down* and worshipped Him, and He accepted their worship. When He broke the bread and blessed it He was expressing by His actions His coming sufferings. When He ascended into heaven we are expressly told that "He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and it came to pass that while He blessed them He was parted from them and was carried up to heaven."

Again, in the account that is given in the Book of the Revelation of the worship of heaven, the Ritual by which the heavenly beings expressed their devotion is most carefully described. "The four-and-twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne,

saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power : for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. iv. 10, 11). This all shows that it is right to use Ritual in God's service.

Ritual is the expression of our faith and our devotion. The Ritual, the expression, *without* the faith or the devotion would be a sham, a lie, an insult to God; but where the faith exists, or the devotion is felt, there is a desire imparted by God within us to show that devotion both in word and in action.

It would not be right, however, in the public services of the Church, for each person to express his religious feelings just in the way it seemed best to him. This would produce disorder, and S. Paul says: "Let everything be done decently and in order," that is in the regular prescribed order of the Church. The Ritual of the Church is the expression of the faith and devotion of the Church of God by the actions both of priest and people.