

**WORSHIP**

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Worship by Richard H. Thomas

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**RICHARD H. THOMAS**

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# WORSHIP.

— BY —

RICHARD H. THOMAS, M. D.

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"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must  
worship him in spirit and in truth."

—Jno. iv, 24.

—  
BALTIMORE.

1889.

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## EXPLANATORY.

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The following essay appeared in successive numbers of the "*Friends' Review*," early in the present year.

It is now reprinted, with some slight alterations, in response to requests from different parts of the country.

R. H. T.

714 N. HOWARD STREET,  
BALTIMORE, MD.  
1889.

# WORSHIP.

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## INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP.

*Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*—

Jno. iv, 21-24.

The words "God is a Spirit," contain the foundation thought of all that our Lord said on the subject of worship to the woman of Samaria, both as regards its place, time and manner.

*The Place and Time of Worship.*—When Jesus said "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father," he was uttering more than a mere statement of fact. He was really proving it to the woman with a consistent, though very condensed argument. The underlying meaning is,



that for worship to be possible, the worshipper must be where he can approach God either directly or through some mediator. Therefore it is necessary for him to go where he can so meet with him. But the God, who upholds the world, is a Spirit. Men, who are partly spirit and partly body, are confined by outward limitations; but he is equally present everywhere, keeping everything in its proper place, and governing all things. Therefore, there can be no such thing as a holy mountain, or any locality where he is especially to be found, for all places on the earth are equally holy, and equally near him.

The same argument applies to the time of worship. God is a Spirit. As such he is not only equally present at all places, but at all times, and if so, then to all men, in the sense that he is everywhere, though in the case of men there are two ways of being near to God; one, in the way of which I am now speaking, which they cannot avoid, and the other in a way that they can avoid, that is, in respect to their will and character. If these considerations be accepted, there can be no such thing as a priesthood open to one class in the church and not equally open to all. If one believer is in "Holy Orders," all are, or may be,

whatever their outward position in the church. There can be no such thing as official nearness to God. The only way in which anyone can draw near to him is by becoming more like him, that is, coming into inward harmony with him. There is, therefore, in the worship of God, as far as any individual is concerned, no limitation as to place, time, surroundings or outward condition. The only limitation is found in the inward condition of the soul. This brings us to—

*The Manner of Worship.*—The suppressed argument here is similar. It is, that worship to be acceptable must be in conformity with the character of the Being who is worshipped. This is true in regard to any service that we may render to any one with whom we associate. The service we render to a man will differ from that which we render to a child, not on account of a difference in us, but because of a difference in them. From this it follows, since God is a Spirit, that the worship rendered to him is to be a spiritual worship. For the same reason the worship must not only be spiritual, but truthful, because from the nature of the case no deception is possible in communications between the universal all-seeing Spirit of God and our spirits. Therefore no outward act in itself can

constitute worship. It must of necessity be spontaneous in its character, or it will lack the elements of spirituality or of truth.

The thought conveyed by the word "worship" in our Lord's words to the woman of Samaria is that of bowing down, of prostration. Here the reference is to the attitude of the soul before the Lord. As there is no true prostration of soul before him without submission of soul, no one can worship in the true sense of the word, whose intentions and plans are consciously out of line with the Lord's will. If God is everywhere, and equally near to us at all times, and if the essence of spiritual worship consists in our inward attitude before him, then it must be that there is nothing in which we can rightly engage that may not be an act of worship, and nothing, however it may simulate worship in its outward form, that is worship without this inward condition of soul. There is no form or ceremony that can by itself be an act of worship, neither can there be such a thing as worship by proxy. The fact that everyone is worshipping around me does not make me a worshipper, unless I am myself in a right attitude of mind. If a man in loving loyalty to the Lord Jesus, and in dependence on him performs some simple service for