

**THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS;
ACCORDING TO
THE RITUAL OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

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The true worshippers; according to the ritual of the Church of England by Isaac Wood

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ISAAC WOOD

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OF ENGLAND.

BY THE LATE

VEN. ISAAC WOOD,
ARCHDEACON OF CHESTER, &C., &C.



"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in
spirit and in truth."—JOHN IV. 24.

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INTRODUCTION.

ALL true worship of God must be spiritual, proceeding from the heart. The Lord Jesus Christ, in His conversation with the woman of Samaria, laid down very decidedly this truth, "Woman, believe me, 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," (John iv. 23, 24.)

Mere formality is not the true worship of God; it is not suited to the service of a spiritual being; it is, in fact, no worship at all.

While this is true, the supposition that a ritual of divine worship necessarily conduces to formality is quite erroneous. Formality is a subtle evil, that insinuates itself into the devotions of those who pray

extemporaneously as much as it does into the services of those who prefer a form of prayer. True worship consists of the devotion of the heart to God. "My son, give me thy heart," (Prov. xxiii. 26.)

"Salvation is of the Jews," (John iv. 22.) The Lord Jesus Christ, when He became man, was "made under the law," (Gal. iv. 4,) and "took on him the seed of Abraham," (Heb. ii. 16.) His apostles and first followers were also Jews. It was, therefore, to be expected that they should adopt in the Christian Church that form of worship under which they had been accustomed to serve the God of their fathers, and to which their Lord and Master had Himself conformed.

The temple service at Jerusalem was entirely typical, symbolising in its sacrifices and other ceremonies, the atonement of Christ, together with the privileges and blessings of the Gospel. The temple service, being typical, was of necessity wholly ceremonial; but that which is typical is in itself transitory; it is ready to vanish away when that which it foreshadows is accomplished; the type is lost when the anti-type appears. So, when the Redeemer exclaimed upon the cross, "It is finished," and, bowing his head, gave up the ghost, (John xix. 30,) "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top

to the bottom," (Matt. xxvii. 51,) signifying that all which had been there foreshadowed was accomplished, and, consequently, that the ceremonial observances were abolished;—that the exclusiveness which had attended the ceremonial law had terminated, and that freedom of access to God was opened to all people;—that the worship of God was no longer limited to Jerusalem, but that as the Lord had declared, by the last of the prophets, "from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My Name, and a pure offering: for My Name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts," (Mal. i. 11.)

Christianity is Judaism perfected. In the Church of Christ all symbolical worship is laid aside, save where the Lord Himself has ordained, in the two sacraments of baptism and the supper of the Lord. We must, however, remember that the Jews worshipped in the synagogue, as well as in the temple; and this seems to have been the model followed by the early Christians.

The synagogue worship, as we collect from the slight intimations found in the New Testament, and elsewhere, consisted of prayer, praise, the reading of

God's Word, and exhortation or preaching. In short, exactly what we have in the Church of England in the present day.

The service of the Church of England is in nowise grounded upon the ceremonial worship of the Jewish temple; but is taken from the usage of the early Christian Church, before it was corrupted by mediæval superstition, as copied from the services of the synagogue.

The liturgy of the Church of England, when rightly viewed, is altogether opposed to formality. Its language is too fervid and glowing for the lips of a formalist. That it may be used formally, and that frequently it is so used, there can be no doubt. The choicest gifts of God may be abused; but it by no means leads to such abuse. The ritual of the Church of England is so scriptural, so perfectly in accordance with what constitutes true religion, that every spiritual worshipper may join in it with perfect freedom, pouring forth in its pure words the deep sighing of a heart devoted to God.

The repetition of its prayers, as mere lip service, without any corresponding emotion in the affections, may serve, through the deceitfulness of the human heart, to pacify the conscience as a duty performed,

and to lull the soul into a false security. On the other hand, if the child of God, awakened to a sense of his own guilt and danger as a sinner, throws his heart and soul into the service, he will find its prayers exactly suited to his need.

What we all have to complain of, more or less, is an absent mind and wandering thoughts, against which there is no remedy except prayer for the grace of God's Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds, to quicken our affections, and to enliven our devotion. If there is no deep consciousness of sin, there will be no heartfelt and humble confession; and if no sense of dependence upon the providence and grace of God for all things necessary, as well for the body as the soul, there will be no true prayer. If we do not feel, under the conviction of our own unworthiness, gratitude for the daily blessings which we receive at the hand of our heavenly Father, there will be no joyful praise. But even where the soul is taught of God, still, such is our infirmity, that the visible objects around us even in the house of prayer provoke worldly thoughts, and tend to draw aside the mind from that fixed attention which we desire to preserve.

At the Reformation in the Church of England, the

people had restored to them their right, so long kept in abeyance, of taking an active part in the public service of Almighty God.

A minister of the Church of England does not impiously assume to be a mediator between God and the people. He is an elder or priest, ordained to be the director or leader of the devotions of the congregation.

There is a natural desire and tendency, where the heart is fully engaged in the worship of God, to give expression to the feelings.

We notice this in the practice of some of the Nonconformists, who respond audibly to the petitions offered up, though not always with judgment, or with a very intelligible application to what is said.

The Church of England provides for this by suitable and devout responses, more especially in the Litany, which is one of the most beautiful services that ever was used. If the responses in our services are audibly uttered by all the congregation, they are calculated to give life to the whole service, and to keep the attention of individuals awake.

The parish clerk is only to give notice of the part which the congregation has to take. By leaving him to repeat the responses and the alternate verses of the Psalms alone, the object of those responses is de-