

**A PLAIN HELP TO PUBLIC  
WORSHIP: QUESTIONS AND  
ANSWERS ON THE ORDER FOR  
MORNING AND EVENING  
PRAYER**

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A Plain Help to Public Worship: Questions and Answers on the Order for Morning and Evening Prayer by Francis Exton

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**FRANCIS EXTON**

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A PLAIN HELP  
TO  
PUBLIC WORSHIP:  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS  
ON THE ORDER  
FOR  
MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER.

BY  
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TO THE AUTHOR  
OF  
"THE PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE SERVICE,"  
WHO HAS DONE SO MUCH TO HELP THE MEMBERS  
OF  
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
TO A FULLER AND DEEPER UNDERSTANDING  
OF THEIR  
**Book of Common Prayer,**  
AND  
BY WHOSE KIND AND CAREFUL REVISION  
THE FOLLOWING PAGES  
HAVE BEEN SAVED FROM MANY IMPERFECTIONS,  
THIS HUMBLE ATTEMPT  
TO FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS,  
AND IN SOME MEASURE TO MAKE HIS LABOURS AVAILABLE  
TO THE POOR OF THE FLOCK,  
IS  
WITH THE DEEPEST GRATITUDE AND ESTEEM  
INSCRIBED BY  
THE AUTHOR.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

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To train up the children of his flock, more especially the children of the poor, in such a way that their Father's house may be to them a House of Prayer, must be the earnest desire of every faithful Pastor: to give them such instruction in the meaning of the Book of Common Prayer, that they may be able to pray with the understanding, and take an intelligent part in Public Worship, must always be one of his plainest and most necessary duties. Without such instruction and training, they will, as they grow up, either swell the number of those who forsake the assembling of themselves together—or, if they continue to go to Church, show most painfully by the posture of their *bodies* when there, that they know not in what posture to put their souls at the several parts of the Services. And the Author earnestly calls upon the Clergy to consider whether the silence and listlessness, and even apparent apathy, which sometimes dishonour the House of God, may not be traced, in no few cases, to ignorance of what we are called upon to do in "the prayers," arising from want of instruction in the Prayer Book in youth.

The Author has not been able to find any work, which can be put into the hands of the children in our Parochial Schools for the purpose of giving them such instruction, and has drawn up the following pages in order to supply this deficiency. When indeed he began them, he had primarily in view the children of the parish in which he is now labouring; but he is not without hope that they may prove useful to his fellow-labourers in the Ministry, who have no doubt many of them, like himself, felt the need of some such book.

It only remains to state in what way the Author designs his

book to be used. He thinks that if the children of the first two classes in our Parochial Schools were to go carefully through it, and be taught by the Clergy every week how to use the Psalms and Lessons, &c., of the next Sunday, according to the examples worked out in it, they would—especially if this mode of teaching were kept up afterwards in a Sunday or Evening Class, or in some other way, up to the time of their Confirmation—be able to take through life an increasingly intelligent part in the Services of the Church, and to receive in increasing largeness those special blessings which are promised to public Christian worship.

No one can be more sensible than the Author how much his work fails to sound the mighty depths of every part of the Services which he has presumed to handle, whether it be Penitential Confession, Healing Absolution, Song of Praise, Hymn of Thanksgiving, or Form of Prayer and Supplication: indeed, he has oftentimes been inclined to give up his work, from feeling how impossible it is to set down upon paper the meaning of words, into the full significance of which we can only enter by the Spirit that dwelleth in us, and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Bearing in mind, however, the object which he had in view, he persevered, and has done what he could; and in now commending his work in all humility to the consideration of his brethren in the Ministry, he prays that, so far as it brings out faithfully the meaning and spirit of our Morning and Evening Prayer, it may prove useful to them in teaching the children of their flocks, and not unacceptable to Him Whose glory and worship it is chiefly designed to promote, and Who knows that all prayers beneath, even our devoutest and holiest aspirations, are

"But cries of babes, that cannot know  
Half the deep thought they breathe."



## A PLAIN HELP TO PUBLIC WORSHIP.

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¶ *At the beginning of Morning [or Evening] Prayer the Minister shall read with a loud voice some one or more of these Sentences of the Scriptures that follow. And then he shall say that which is written after the said Sentences.*

When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. *Ezek. xviii. 27.*

I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. *Psalms li. 3.*

Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. *Psalms li. 9.*

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. *Psalms li. 17.*

Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious

1. Whose house is the church?

The House of God.

2. To whom, then, do we draw near when we go to church?

To God.

3. *How* ought we to draw near to God?

*As sinners*, confessing our sins. *St. Luke, xviii. 9-14.*

Therefore, we see how important it is to examine ourselves before we come to church, by questions like those at the end of this book; for if we do not feel ourselves to be sinners, we are only mocking God by coming to church, and had much better keep away.

4. Does not the minister when he begins the Service, teach us to come *as sinners* to the House of God?

and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. *Joel*, ii. 13.

To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him: neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws which He set before us. *Dan.* ix. 9, 10.

O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing. *Jer.* x. 24. *Psalm* vi. 1.

Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. *St. Matt.* iii. 2.

I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. *St. Luke*, xv. 18, 19.

Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified. *Psalm* cxliii. 2.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to

Yes: he reads one or more of the sentences taken from Scripture, and put at the beginning of the Prayer Book, which all move us to acknowledge and confess our sins before God.

5. Show that the sentences of Scripture do so?

Take the first—"When the wicked man," &c. This plainly speaks to us, as men that have none of us done our heavenly Father's will perfectly, but have all, some more, some less, disobeyed Him, and done wickedly; and moves us to come before Him confessing our faults, and steadfastly purposed to turn away from whatever wickedness we may have committed. Or take the last—"If we say that we have," &c. This means that if we draw near to God, we must do so *confessing that we have sinned*, and that if we draw near in any other way we are only liars, not speaking the truth.

6. For what purpose should we confess our sins before God?

"That we may obtain forgiveness of the same, by His infinite goodness and mercy;" for without His forgiveness we must suffer everlasting death.

7. Do the sentences read

cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 *John*, i. 8, 9.

Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness; and that we should not dissemble nor cloke them before the face of Almighty God our Heavenly Father; but confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, to the end that we may obtain forgiveness of the same, by His infinite goodness and mercy. And although we ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our sins before God, yet ought we most chiefly so to do when we assemble and meet together, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at His

from the Scriptures encourage us to hope that God will forgive us if we do confess our sins?

Yes; they tell us that "to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him;" and again, that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

8. When ought we to acknowledge and confess our sins before God?

At all times.

9. When ought we *most chiefly* so to do?

When we meet together at church.

10. Why?

Because we are then met together to worship God.

11. What worship do we meet to pay to God?

We meet together—

(1) to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at God's hands,

(2) to set forth His most worthy praise,

(3) to hear His most holy Word, and

(4) to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, for the body as well as the soul.

12. But would God accept our worship, if we were to