

order in divine worship—which comprehends what we mean by the term “Ritualism”—as if it were a vain and useless question of empty ceremonial, seems to my mind a very serious mistake, notwithstanding so many pious and religious men have adopted it.* And it is worthy of remark that they cannot make their own practice consistent with their theory. For every Christian sect has found it necessary to have some form and order—or, in other words, some *Ritualism*,—which they will not suffer to be invaded. The controversy, therefore, at last resolves itself into the same inquiry, which meets us in everything else belonging to humanity, namely, what is the *best system* of form and order? And this, where the work-

* This Puritanical discovery was brought to full-blown perfection by George Fox, the favorite Apostle of the Friends or Quakers, who dismissed all the forms with which the wisdom of the Most High had invested religion, and set the women to preaching in the face of Scripture, and finally succeeded in making his followers, after their own fashion, the most formal sect in the world,—formal in dress, formal in speech, formal in everything which the Lord had left free, and only enemies to forms where He had expressly commanded them. But success was impossible in a scheme which stood in such manifest opposition to the Word of God, and the laws which He had given to humanity. The pure morals, the love of peace, the strict discipline, the quiet zeal, and the active benevolence of the Quakers have always won for them a high degree of estimation.

Yet the whole of these, admirable as they were, could not secure a lasting, much less a growing, influence. They have gradually diminished until comparatively few remain, even in the city of William Penn, once the stronghold of their society. And thousands of their descendants have found in the Church that true system where the worship of God is conformed to the nature of man, and the spirit and the form of religion are united together.

ship of God is concerned, must surely bring us to the standard of His own Word, the Bible. For if, in that Sacred Volume, we find that the Almighty has provided for his Church a Ritual possessing His own divine sanction, what shall justify us in His sight if we pour contempt on that only model dictated by His perfect mind, and fancy that we can be more spiritual and more religious by preferring another form and order of our own devising?

In the Church of God, which is Christ's Kingdom upon earth, there must be not only the inward life, but the *outward manifestation*. My present subject concerns the latter only. There is no question about the *faith* in the blessed Redeemer, Who died for our sins and rose again for our justification; no question that by this faith we must be saved through grace; no question that this precious grace is not of ourselves, but is the free gift of God. All this involves the *inward life* of each individual believer, for which, of course, no outward form and order of the body could supply the living energy of the soul? And it would be just as absurd to suppose that the outward form and order of the Church can avail, where the spiritual grace of a loving faith in Christ is wanting.

This is the essential, and the only strictly essential, matter for each individual believer. And hence in the *private* exercises of the closet alone in our communion with the Searcher of hearts, no form is laid down for the expression of our feelings; although the Christian suppliant may well make our Lord's Prayer a stated part even of his most secret devotions.