

theories, doctrines and dogmas, the schemes and contrivances that religious leaders have invented to save men from their sins, and from the wrath or malevolence of these forces of nature which the imaginations and ideals of men have formulated into an irresistible personality, on which they bestow their devotions in diversified methods. This is called worship. Whatever forms it takes, whether of solemn countenance, reverent attitudes of body, in silent emotional mental activity, whether gesticulations and genuflections of person, or vocal exclamations of devotional exuberance in song or prayer, it is worship.

The idea and practice of worship is so deep-rooted and thoroughly established, that the masses of those who believe it a religious duty, would think it unwise and superfluous to investigate the grounds on which its claims are based.

It is not unlike many other habits in which we indulge without knowing, or caring even to know, their origin or how we became addicted to them. Habits that are seriously injurious to our welfare, yet we practice them, unconscious of their evil effects.

When reverence dominates the mind, so as to obstruct its action and to retard its searches after truth, it becomes an impediment to progress. The tendencies of our human lives are towards excesses and abuses, even with these better impulses which obstruct our more serious interests. We are so apt to follow leaders who are slaves to traditions, rather than wide awake searchers after what is true, wholesome and best, with an intelligent purpose and desire to enlighten and aid us to that wisdom which is more precious than rubies and fine gold, and whose paths are paths of peace. Yet through all the historic ages, there have arisen great and wise religious teachers and leaders, who devoted their lives to a service of their fellowmen in efforts to correct these errors and abuses of the emotional impulses of their misguided

brethren. They were great teachers in their day, yet despised, persecuted, and not a few of them subjected to martyrdom, then deified and immortalized in subsequent ages for their transcendent wisdom, noble deeds, and heroic virtues.

Every age punishes or despises its own saviours, while it worships those of a preceding epoch. Confucius, Gautama, Socrates and Jesus were of far more importance when dead than while living. They rebuked the misguided and the evil doers of their days, and were rewarded by reproaches and contempt.

We, professing Christians, express our admiration and obligations to the character of Jesus as our example, while we studiously and religiously reject the very lessons He taught, and for which we so much venerate Him. He taught His disciples to pray in secret, if they prayed at all, or felt they must pray. To worship in Spirit, if they did worship, and not in an automatic form of routine. He did not prescribe or recommend any place of gathering or any form to be observed, but was most vehement in his denunciations of those who indulged in such periodic assemblies, and in the performance of such social religious worship. He saw the absurdity of it, and the evil influence it had on the minds of those engaged in it.

The narrative tells us He met with His disciples, and with the common people, yet not to engage in any special or prescribed forms of worship; but these assemblies were to teach, to instruct His hearers, in order to direct them from these vain and idle pursuits that the most religious and pious people of His age were engaged in so zealously in the name and for the purpose of Divine worship, in order to show their devotion and discharge their obligations to the unseen power, through whom they lived, and moved, and had their being.

It is said Jesus Himself prayed, yet His prayers were not vocal, if He was