

TRUE AND FALSE RITUAL.

SERMON I.

I HAVE been asked to speak to you this evening upon Ritual. It is a subject, which at the present day, is attracting a great deal of attention. It is spoken of everywhere; the newspapers are full of accounts of it, men say that the whole appearance of many of our Churches is being completely changed by it,—that you would scarcely recognize the once familiar services. And many are much alarmed by this state of things: they are puzzled and terrified, or even enraged. Others again rejoice at it, point to it, with thankfulness as an outward sign of the increasing life and spirituality of the Church. However they differ in their opinions about this movement, all agree that it is one of great importance for good or evil. No apology, therefore, need be made for making this the subject of our lectures in this place.

First let us define what we mean by Ritual. In speaking of worship, we mean two things—the inward and spiritual service, the worship of the life which S. Paul enjoins when he says (*Rom. xii. 1.*) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service”—and the solemn outward service of the congregation in prayer and praise, and other acts. In this latter sense there are required some accessories of worship, some way of conducting it. This, of whatever kind it may be, whether very elaborate or as simple as possible, is the Ritual of the worship.