

We say no more here of the advantages of Public Worship, since this topic needs no special treatment, but pass on to the more important question, How shall it be made most interesting and useful?

The interest of Public Worship depends chiefly on this — that it shall be a *reality*, and not a *form*. If, when we enter the church, we are made to feel that we are among a people who have met only because it is a custom so to meet; if there is no awe, no earnestness, no devotion, no humanity; if we perceive the airs of fashion, display egotism, self-conceit, in the attitudes, looks, and gestures of the assembly, — not only is there no good done, but there is a positively evil influence. We can bear these manifestations elsewhere, but not here; — here they disgust and offend us, and make us doubt the reality of all faith and all religious feeling.

For it is no doubt the fact, that we feel at once what is the spirit of a congregation. Seriousness manifests itself inevitably without effort, in the attitudes, looks, gestures. Frivolity manifests itself as inevitably in careless attitudes and gestures or looks which express indifference to others, satisfaction with self, irreverence toward God. You cannot enter a congregation without feeling at once this spirit, and you unconsciously sympathize with it. The voluntary on the organ tells you that the organist is wishing to show off his technical skill and power over the instrument, — the choir say in their singing, very audibly, “We are paid so much for coming here, and we must do this as a matter of business,” or, “We wish to show you what fine voices we have, and what we are able to execute.” The minister reads or prays, and the sound of his voice says, “I am unprepared to pray, — I have nothing