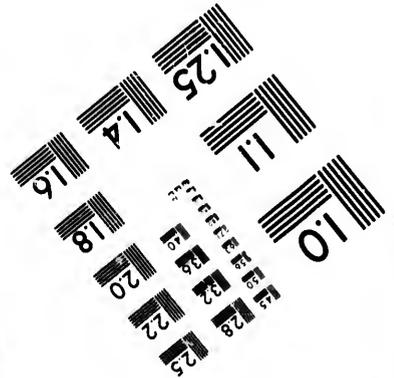
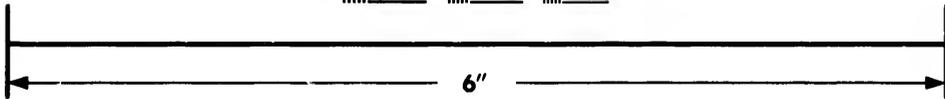
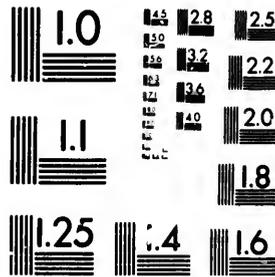


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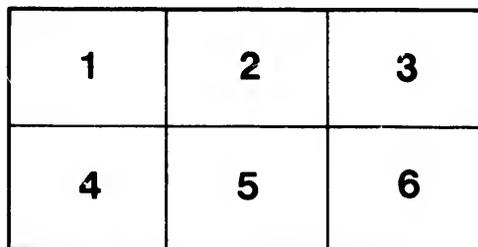
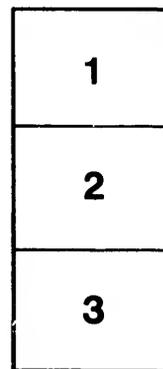
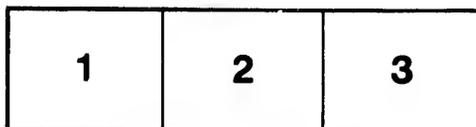
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**EASTWARD WORSHIP,**  
**THE**  
**PRIMITIVE PROTESTANTISM.**

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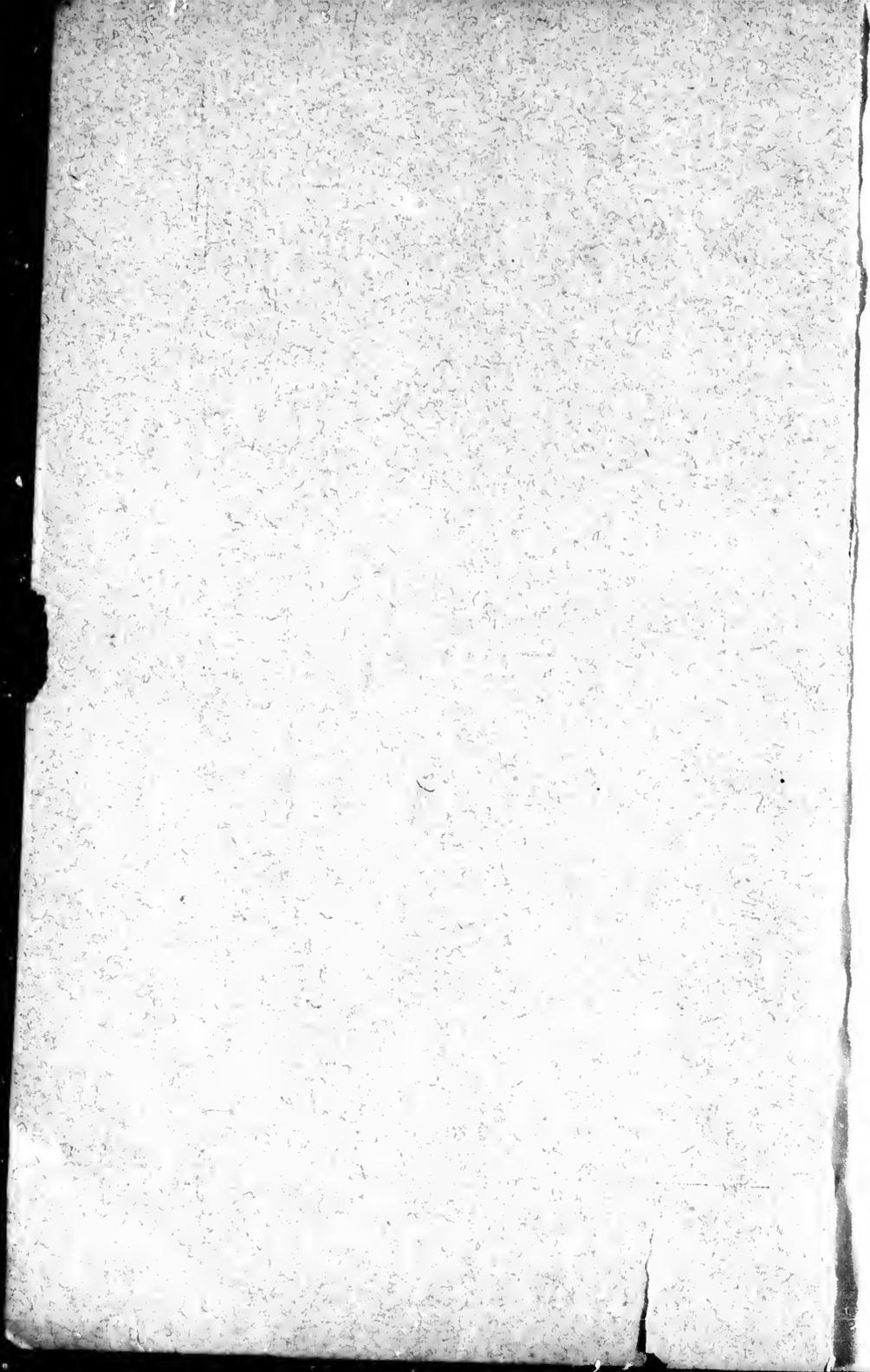
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EASTWARD WORSHIP,  
  
THE  
  
PRIMITIVE PROTESTANTISM.

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DISCLOSURES OF CONCEALED AND INCREASING ROMANISM.

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## WHY THIS ESSAY?

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Troubles sometimes arise in congregations of the English Church by the introduction of more or less of what is called eastward worship where such forms had not previously been practised; and individual members of the Church, who had never seen this kind of worship, when visiting for the first time those congregations where it prevails, are sometimes painfully surprised when they first witness it. The writer of this essay, believing that most, if not all, of such troubles may be removed and avoided by a candid consideration of the origin and meaning of this ancient devotional practice, and having verbally stated his views of the matter to several intelligent and pious members of the Church, they have requested him to put his thoughts into writing, and have them published. He feels honoured by the request; and this essay is the result, which he sends forth to the Church and the world, with sincere prayer that it may promote the honour of Christ and the peace of his Church.

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# EASTWARD WORSHIP,

## THE

### PRIMITIVE PROTESTANTISM.

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IT is now many years since I first saw in an English Church a clergyman and the choristers turn toward the east in repeating the creed, and the clergyman turn his face in the same direction (his back to the congregation,) in singing the litany, and in consecrating the bread and wine in the Holy Communion.

Such practices seemed to me Romish, or at least superstitious; for, I had seen both the Romish priest at mass, and the Jewish rabbi or reader in the synagogue, conduct their public worship in like manner, each with his back toward the congregation. Moreover it was, and still is, a common opinion, that, worshipping eastward originated in sun-worship. Richard Carlile, the infidel, had said so; and a much better authority, the Rev. Thomas Scott, the celebrated Church of England commentator, had said so in his comment on Ezekiel viii., 16. The prophet Ezekiel tells us in that verse, that he saw "five and twenty men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the east." Scott says: "We cannot doubt that the practice of turning to the east in some parts of public worship, which is still retained in many churches, was originally borrowed from the idolators

who worshipped the sun ; and though it is possible for us to be *superstitiously* afraid of superstition, respecting any indifferent posture or ceremony, yet those who are very tenacious of this custom would do well to consider its original, in order to abate their excessive attachment to it."

Taking the advice of Scott to consider "the original" or origin of this worship eastward, I was led to consult the writings of several other authors on the subject, both Churchmen and Dissenters, such as Bingham's *Christian Antiquities*, Dr. Gill's *Commentary*, Mosheim's and Hase's *Church Histories*, Rev. Dr. Edersheim's "*Jewish Life in the Time of our Lord*," (*in Sunday at Home for 1875*,) Nevin's *Biblical Antiquities*, Prideaux's *Connections*, Prof. Eadie's *Ecclesiastical Cyclopaedia*, and some others. These authors (with the exception of Mosheim and Hase, who are, I think, almost silent on the subject,) were quite sufficient to convince me that the infidel Carlile, and the pious and honest Thomas Scott were both in positive error concerning the origin of eastward worship.

But, quite lately I have had the privilege of consulting the most instructive work I have yet seen on the subject, entitled *Worship in Heaven and on Earth*, and written by the Rev. J. G. Norton, M. A., of Montreal. I acknowledge my indebtedness to the author, especially for shewing so clearly the structural difference between pagan temples and primitive Christian churches, and the consequent contrast between the direction in which the clergy and people worshipped in the days of early Christianity and that of the worshippers in Paganism, Romanism, and Protestant Dissent.

Norton cites abundance of authorities for what he advances on this subject, but in this brief treatise I cannot be expected to do so ; I can only attempt to

give the substance of what I have carefully and impartially collected from his work, and from the others I have mentioned.

I take for granted that the reader is open to conviction; that he has, as I trust I have, a sincere love of the truth, and a heart-hatred of all delusion, sham, and superstition in religion, whether Pagan, Roman, or Protestant; and it is in confidence of this that I may warrantably give the substance of what learned men have written without invariably quoting their very words.

And now, in tracing the origin of eastward worship, we must go back to the early days of the Church, and we shall find, I believe, in the circumstances of those days, the true and very reasonable causes which led to its adoption—causes which, though ancient, still exist, and call for the practice to be continued.

Let us begin at the fourth century, during which some of the most celebrated of the early Christian writers refer to eastward worship as the common practice of their times, and give hints of its cause and origin. Thus we have as witnesses St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, who flourished about the year 398, Jerome about 378, Ambrose, 374, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory Nyssen, 370, Cyril of Jerusalem, 350, and Athanasius about 330. Then, when we pass into the second century, we have, as witnesses of the general use and practice of worshipping eastward, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, who flourished about the year 192, or less than a hundred years after the death of the Apostle John.

To quote the words of all these authors would be a needless task, and would swell the size of this essay far beyond what is intended; a few quotations, however, will be given as we proceed in our search for the truth. Suffice it to say here, that some of these speak of worship-eastward in connection with Christian bap-

tism, and others both in connection with baptism and as the general practice in public prayer. It is in connection with the primitive ceremonies in baptism that we shall find, I believe, the true origin of the practice in public prayer. Bingham, who is an acknowledged authority in Christian antiquities, says, "that this custom of worshipping toward the east seems to be derived from the ceremonies of baptism, in which it was usual to renounce the devil with their faces to the west, and then turn about to the east, and make their covenant with Christ; from whence, I conceive (says Bingham), it became their common custom to worship God after the same way that they had first entered into covenant with him." B. XIII., c. viii., sec. 13. As to the cause or origin of this singular and ancient ceremony in baptism we shall by and by discover as we proceed in our search. Meanwhile take a few sentences from these ancient Christian authors who speak of the practice itself. Cyril of Jerusalem (A. D. 350), in his *Catechism to the Illuminated*, says: "Ye were first brought into the ante-room of the baptistery, and placed toward the west in a standing posture, and then commanded to renounce Satan, by stretching out your hands against him, as if he were present." "The west," says he, "is the place of darkness, and Satan is darkness, and his strength is darkness. For this reason ye symbolically look toward the west, when ye renounce that prince of darkness and horror." St. Jerome says, speaking of baptism, "We first renounce him that is in the west, who dies to us with our sins; and then turning about to the east we make a covenant with the Sun of Righteousness, and promise to be his servants." And St. Ambrose, discoursing to some baptized persons, says: "When you entered the baptistery, and had viewed your adversary whom you were to renounce, you then turned about to the east. For he who re-

...nounces the devil is turned unto Christ." (Bingham, B. XI., c. viii., sec. 4.)

Such was the practice in the fourth, the third, and the second centuries of the Church's history; and what do these ancient writers say of the origin of the practice? very little indeed. They merely speak of it as existing in the Church, not at all as a novelty, or an innovation; but when speaking of its origin at all, they ascribe to it a high, even an *apostolic* antiquity. Thus, while St. Basil, in 371, ranks these mystical rites which were practised in the Church in his day, as "not derived from any written word, but by private direction and tradition of the Apostles:" Tertullian, in 192, reclaims the formal renunciation of the devil and all his works, &c., as "among many other ecclesiastical rites and usages, which are not expressly determined in Scripture, but yet proceeded from tradition, and are confirmed by custom."

But we have not yet arrived at any satisfactory reason for this religious preference for the east to the west in the ceremony of baptism and in the posture of public prayer. Why face the east in making the covenant with Christ in baptism? and why ever afterwards face the east in prayer and other acts of devotion in the Church? Was the practice derived from sun worship? Impossible: and that for at least the following reasons: there were three special times of the day for worshipping the sun, namely, at sun-rise, when the disc of the sun was appearing above the horizon; next at noon when the sun was in the south; then in the evening just before the sun went down in the west. Prideaux shews that, (except in worshipping an image of the sun in a temple), there was no worshipping of the sun itself or of a star, unless when it was visible or above the horizon. The worshipper, of course, turned his face toward the thing worshipped.

Hence it was, and still is, the practice for sun worshippers to face the east in the morning, the south at noon, and the west in the evening. Ancient historians tell us that the priests of the sun at Heliopolis (the city of the sun,) in Egypt, offered to their sun-god a different kind of incense at morning, noon, and evening. Priccaux' also shews that it was because of the difficulty of always seeing the sun or star, that temples for their worship were erected, and images of them were worshipped instead, the belief being that the god that had his residence in the sun or star, could also reside in an image. Such images were generally placed in the west end of the temples. Norton gives a long list of pagan temples in various countries, shewing that in almost every instance the idol was in the west, and the worship consequently westward. The exceptions are Buddhist temples, which are built in any direction, and those on the banks of a sacred river like the Nile, which have the principal entrance towards the stream or river-god. But with these exceptions the rule was universal to have the entrance in the eastward and the idol in the westward end of the building, as may be seen in the remains of the ancient temples of Greece, Italy, Malta, Carthage, Baalbec, in Syria, where are seen the gigantic temples of Jupiter and the sun; also throughout Central and Eastern Asia, Egypt, and in South America, as at Cuzco, in Peru; all requiring westward worship, whether the temple was for the worship of the sun or the worship of demons or devils. In sun-temples worship was necessarily westward, and when performed outside of temples it was either eastward, southward, or westward, according to the position of the sun at the time. Norton says: "Some of the northern tribes of ancient Europe looked northward when praying and sacrificing. To residents in high northern latitudes

the north would naturally seem to be the centre of the heavens, and of heavenly phenomena."

Now, in the first days of the Church, when our Lord's Apostles and others went forth and preached the Gospel to all the Gentile nations, the human race, with the exception of the Jews, were idolators—worshippers of the sun, moon, stars, devils, reptiles, and images of dead heroes, and other false gods. Here were lords many and gods many. In some cities there were many large and magnificent temples, and idolatrous images and pillars on every hand. Towns and villages also had their idolatrous shrines, before which, or toward which, worship was offered; and far and wide the human family offered prayer to the rising, the noonday, and the setting sun. But when such idolators, through the preaching of the Gospel, became Christians, the question quite naturally arose in their minds and consciences, "How shall we worship now? What have we any more to do with idols? It is surely our duty to turn away our eyes from viewing such vanities! We have hitherto, in temples, turned our faces westward in honour of false gods and devils. We must no longer do so, but avoid even the appearance of such evil. We have turned our faces east, south, and west in worshipping the sun when it was visible. Some of our benighted fellow-men, in worshipping false gods, do so with turning their faces northward, while here and there, on every hand, are images and temples innumerable inviting us to come and pay our devotions there.

We must needs worship in some direction. What shall that direction be so as to protest against idolatry, and avoid even seeming to have any sympathy or the slightest connection with it? Here was a conscientious difficulty to be met and overcome. The protest against idolatry, the honour of Christ, and unanimity

and uniformity in Christian worship, all demanded that Christians should be known by the direction in which they turned their faces in prayer, as well as by other characteristics of their religious belief and practice.

It was, and must have been in answer to this perplexing question of sincere converts to Christ from among idolators that the Church instructed them at baptism to turn their faces westward, as they had formerly done in idolatrous worship, and renounce the devil, the prince of darkness, and all his works. That is, renounce all idolatry, which consists of delusions of the devil, and the service of the devil ; with all the works of darkness, the abominations and immoralities, and pomps and vanities of that service. Then turning the face eastward, and with hands and eyes uplifted to Heaven, profess faith in Jesus Christ, and vow to be henceforth his obedient soldiers and servants for ever. This eastward direction in which the early Christians first entered into solemn prescribed covenant, became, of course, henceforth the direction in which they prayed, especially in social or public worship, that they might thereby manifest their continued renunciation of idolatry and avow their steadfast love and obedience to Christ. It was not a superstition but a protest against superstition. It was not a useless ceremony but a necessity.

But these primitive Christians required also to protest against the unbelief of Judaism. The Jews all worshipped, as many of them do yet, with their faces toward Jerusalem. A Jew west of Jerusalem worshipped toward the east ; east of Jerusalem he worshipped toward the west ; south of Jerusalem he worshipped toward the north ; and north of Jerusalem he worshipped toward the south. This Jewish custom prevailed not only in the Holy Land but in whatever part of the

world the Jews and their proselytes happened to be. Daniel, in Babylon, praying three times a day, with his windows open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, is an instance of it. And this practice, indeed was sanctioned by Divine authority, as may be seen in several passages of Scripture, as in 1. Kings, viii. and<sup>m</sup>ix., 2, 3; Ps. v., 7, xxviii., 2. In the days of the Apostles many Jews and proselytes dwelt among the idolatrous nations surrounding Palestine, as may be learned from the 2nd chapter of the Acts, where we read of Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Cappadocia, Pontus, [Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Lybia, Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia, having come to Jerusalem to observe the Day of Pentecost. The Christian Church soon spread into those various countries; but were converted Jews and proselytes to continue worshipping westward, southward, northward, or eastward, as hitherto, and thereby, give no evidence of having turned to Christ? or should they adopt some other direction by which they might confess Him before men, and shew their faith and obedience to Him? Thus the same difficulty occurred to the converts from Judaism as to the converts from Paganism.

When, where, and by whom the difficulty was first removed by the adoption of the eastward position in prayer, I know not. That it was adopted very early is proved by the ancient authors already cited. Basil and Tertullian, as we have seen, would trace its origin to apostolic authority,—a not improbable origin considering its general observance in the Primitive Church, its necessity in the circumstances, and the utter absence of any recorded account of its introduction, and far less of any opposition to it as a novelty or innovation in the practice of the Church. There was, indeed, an opposition to it at the end of the first century, but not

by members of the Church, and which only proves its very probable apostolic origin. This opposition arose from a branch of the Ebionites, called Elkesaites, a heretical sect inhabiting the country east of the Dead Sea, and consequently east of Jerusalem. They taught that the Law of Moses was binding in all cases, and Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary. They rejected all of the New Testament except what seems to be a mutilated copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew. The Book of Elkesai or Elxia, their supposed founder, strictly forbade their worshipping eastward: these were opposed by another and contemporaneous sect, called the Lampsacans, so named, says Epiphanius, because they turned their faces in prayer, not toward Jerusalem, but toward the east. These were not sun-worshippers, but professed Jewish Christians, who seem to have rejected so much of Judaism as not now to worship toward Jerusalem, and to have accepted so much of Christianity as to worship like Christians toward the east. Provided that the opposition of the Judaizing Elkesaites to the practice of their Hebrew brethren in worshipping eastward be a historical fact of the first century, it is proof that within the apostolic age, even Jewish Christians who, with all their errors, yet dreaded any approach to sun-worship, could, without fear of being guilty of such idolatry, turn their faces eastward in prayer.

But how could the first Christians avoid the suspicion of being worshippers of the sun in the morning, and especially when their principal day for worship was the first day of the week, called *Sunday*? They did not escape this suspicion; for Tertullian (A.D. 192), who tells us that "both their churches and prayers were directed eastward," yet, in answer to the suspicion, says, "Indeed we make Sunday a day of joy, but for other reasons than to worship the sun, which

is no part of our religion." (Bingham, B. XIII, c. viii., s. 15. Eadie, *Sabbath*.) The pagans began worshipping the sun in the morning, just when it was becoming visible, not till then. The first Christians avoided such worship by offering their prayers and hymns eastward before sunrise; and this they did doubtless partly from choice, and partly from necessity, as the following extract from Eadie's *Cyclopedia* will illustrate under the words ANTELUCAN SERVICES (*before dawn*):

"During the time that pagan persecution raged against the professors of Christianity, they were accustomed to assemble for purposes of devotion and religious instruction at night, hence the above title was given to the services on these occasions.

Tertullian, exhorting Christian women not to marry heathen husbands, asks them: "What husband will be willing to suffer his wife to rise from his side, and go to the night assemblies?" And Pliny (A.D. 158), in his celebrated letter, states that the "Christians were used to meet together on a certain day before it was light, and sing a hymn to Christ as to God."

When the fires of persecution ceased to consume the victims of heathen rage, and Christians were permitted to worship after their own fashion, these nocturnal services were continued, partly for the accommodation of those whose secular occupations prevented them from attending Divine worship during the day, partly to stimulate ascetics to a more devotional life, and partly to withdraw the orthodox from the nocturnal meetings of the Arians, who made their services as attractive as they possibly could by chants and psalm-singing in order to induce others to join them." Might not Eadie have added, "and to avoid the appearance of sun-worship."

But long before the days of Arius, and for long afterwards, Christians had need, and still have, to worship eastward in opposition to false religions. Morning, noon, and evening were of old the stated times of worship for Jews, Pagans, and Christians. But when at midday the sun-worshippers were facing the south, and the Jews facing the north, south, or west in prayer toward Jerusalem, Christians were known to be such by facing the east in their devotions. And when evening came, and sun-worshippers were facing the west, and Jews again facing Jerusalem, faithful Christians continued their protest against idolatry and Jewish unbelief by offering up their evening prayer with their faces eastward. Then, in later years, when Mohammedanism spread over a great part of Asia and Europe, and the followers of the false prophet were praying five times a day, as they still do, with their faces turned toward the temple of Mecca, true Christians, despite of cruelty and bloody Mohammedan persecutions, continued to profess their faith in Christ the true Prophet of God, and gave their practical protest against the impostures of the false one by persistently praying with their faces eastward.

When Jews prayed west of Jerusalem they, of course, faced the east, so also did Mohammedans west of Mecca, and a Christian, in praying in the same direction, might seem thereby to be in sympathy with such unbelievers. His protest by his mere posture in prayer would be almost nothing in such circumstances, and could only be fully made by otherwise professing the Christian faith, and letting it be known that Christians, whether living east, west, north, or south of Jerusalem or Mecca always prayed in the one direction, namely, eastward.

I am aware that several of the ancient Christian writers I have mentioned do not apply the word *pro-*

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*test* to the eastward position in prayer. They, however, imply it. They imply it by indicating and requiring a necessary change from any other position excepting the eastward in which converts from paganism or Judaism to Christ may have previously and habitually worshipped: and they give various symbolical reasons for the Church's preference for the east. They say, for example, "We worship toward the east because it is the most honourable place, it is the place of light, Christ came in the east, was crucified in the east, He ascended in the east, and will come again in the east. Paradise was in the east; and the east is a symbol of our Saviour, who is called the Orient, the Light, and the Sun of Righteousness." Such considerations as these may have probably influenced the first Christians in preferring the east to other points of the heavens. But some of these considerations are mere afterthoughts, while others of them are only local, and not at all applicable as reasons for such worship by the Church throughout the world. Christians living east of Eden could not say that Eden or Paradise was in the east; and those living east, north, or south of Jerusalem could not say that Christ came in the east, was crucified in the east, or ascended in the east. The true reason, I believe, is only to be found in what I have already stated, namely, the early necessity of protesting against Paganism and unbelieving Judaism, and a fervent desire for manifest unanimity and uniformity in confessing Christ in prayer and praise. Nothing else than this necessity and earnest desire can account for this mode of worship having prevailed universally, and, with but few exceptions, if any, among all Christian nations from the earliest times.

Here I would willingly end this essay were it not that some lingering objections to this mode of wor-

ship may still disturb some tender conscience among my readers. In answering such objections I must do so very briefly, and that in replying to objections, some of which might demand a whole essay to do them justice.

Some good people have long entertained the opinion that this eastward worship is Romish, that it originated in transubstantiation and the consequent worshipping of the Host, and hence the officiating priest's face turned to the altar.

Now, what has been already said might be a sufficient answer to this objection ; but the answer can be made much stronger, and eastward worship shown to be, so far from Romish, one of the strongest protests against the supposed Romish practice in the objection.

As already proved, I believe, eastward worship began in very early times when the Church of Rome was yet a pure Church—the Church to which St. Paul sent his Epistle to the Romans. Baptism in the Primitive Church was usually administered where there was no altar toward which to turn the face in worship. Thus Tertullian, in the year A.D. 192, says, "It is an indifferent thing whether a man was baptized in the sea or in a lake, in a river, or in a fountain, in the Jordan or in the Tiber." Moreover, he and other early writers tell us that it was not the custom to baptize in the church where the altar stood, but outside in a place for the purpose. But wherever or whatever that place was, the rule was, to renounce the devil and all his works facing the west, then turning the face eastward confess faith in Christ and enter into solemn covenant with Him. There was no facing an altar in that eastward worship.

Next, it is surely noticeable in the English Church that when the clergy and choir turn to the east in repeating the Creed, at Morning and Evening Prayer,

they are not facing the altar but the east wall on each side of the altar : whereas in the Romish Church the worship is toward the Host either when elevated by the priest or when contained in the tabernacle on the altar.

Moreover, let us consider the difference in the general situation of our churches and of those of the Roman Communion. The Presbyterian Professor Eadie, in his *Cyclopedia*, under the word *Altar*, says: "It was the ancient practice of the Greek and Latin Churches, (that is, the Eastern and Western Churches) to pray with their faces toward the east, and to place their altars or tables toward that quarter."

Norton mentions some departures from this ancient practice of placing the altar in the east, so early as the days of Constantine the Great, but adds, "There being no seats, however, in the nave or aisles of such churches, made it comparatively easy for the worshippers to turn to the east, as we know they did, in their devotions: but this necessitated their turning their backs on the choir, the Holy Table, and the clergy." A proof, I may add that they did not, in their devotions eastward, worship the altar or anything upon it. But this was not the plan or structure of the most primitive churches. "The ancient Nestorian churches among the mountains of Hindostan, in eastern Armenia and Persia, the more ancient of them dating very probably from the second and third centuries, are rectangular in form, with the Lord's Table close against the east wall in a rectangular shrine. The clergy and people enter at the west end, and always worship eastward." (*Norton.*)

The remains of the first or most ancient churches in Britain and Ireland show the same arrangement for eastern worship. For example the church of Perranzabuloe, in Cornwall, a rude structure of the fifth cen-

ture, with its stone altar close to the east wall ; underneath which, when exhumed in 1835, were found three skeletons with their feet eastward. One of these skeletons was known to be that of St. Piran who lived and laboured there as a missionary, and after whom the place is named. (Norton. "*Perranzabuloe, or the Lost Church Found*," by Rev. C. T. C. Trelawny.) A clergyman well acquainted with Canterbury leads me to believe that St. Martin's Church, part of which is said to date from the second century, if not earlier, was also constructed for eastward worship. "It is well known," says Norton, "that St. Patrick's mission to Ireland, A.D. 431, was not the first planting of Christianity in that country," and mentions "the little Church of Gallerus, in Kerry, evidently Asiatic and Jewish in its structure." It is placed strictly east and west, with the door in the west end, evidently intended for eastward worship. This ancient building was probably erected before A.D. 303. Now, it is true, as Eadie says, that it was the ancient practice of both the Greek and Latin Churches to worship eastward. But Rome has ceased long ago to pay any regard to this primitive mode of worship. Her Churches are generally built in any direction like Buddhist temples and the meeting houses of Protestant Dissenters. The people therefore worship in whatever direction the altar happens to be placed. "Even the high altar of St. Peter's at Rome at the west end," and the congregation worship, of course, westward, as their forefathers did in the days of Paganism. It must be evident that eastward worship is no part of Romanism.

But it is objected that when a minister, in the Holy Communion, turns his back on the congregation, and faces the altar, "it looks as though he were worshipping the sacrament." But I would reply by asking, is a minister more likely to be worshipping something

on the altar, when facing the east than when standing at the north end and facing the south, or if he stood behind the altar, and faced the congregation, as the Pope does when celebrating Mass in St. Peter's at Rome? If a clergyman believes that the eastward position in public worship is essentially a protest against Paganism, Mohammedanism, Romanism, and unbelieving Judaism, and practises that position, would it be right for him to change it for any other, and thereby cease so far to be Protestant? If a man is Romishly inclined he can worship the sacrament at either end or either side of the Holy Table; but whatever may be his inclination, he is, by worshipping eastward, practically protesting against Rome.

But, it is further objected, granting that the Anglican Church does not worship anything on the altar, does not this worshipping eastward seem to imply that God is more especially in the east? or that he is not equally everywhere present? or at least that the Divine Presence is confined to, or localized in the chancel? and that the chancel is thereby more sacred than the rest of the Church?

These are great questions, concerning which volumes might be written, but I must bring this essay to a close by answering them very briefly. Such questions as these have doubtless occurred to many pious minds from age to age of the Church's history. St. Augustine (A.D. 398) answers one of them by saying, "At our prayers we turn to the east, whence the light of heaven arises; not as though God was only there, and had forsaken all other parts of the world, but to put ourselves in mind of turning to a more excellent nature, that is, to the Lord." "This reason," says Bingham, "falls in with that which is given for turning to the east when they covenanted with Christ in the solemnities of baptism."

Eadie, in his cyclopedia under the word *east*, has this brief sentence, namely, "churches were usually built from east to west, *the most sacred portion* of the building being towards the east." Eadie, in that sentence, states a simple matter of fact known to all readers of ancient Church history. From the earliest times when churches were built they were dedicated to God, and therefore were considered sacred or holy, but the most sacred part of them was what we call the chancel or eastern portion. Why has the Church, during all these past ages, and in all parts of Christendom, continued to regard the eastern part of the church as the most sacred part of the place of worship? and from whence did they derive this idea? Let us remember that the first Christians were Jews, who were accustomed to worship in the synagogue. Synagogues were built in imitation of the temple at Jerusalem. They were oblong, rectangular buildings, having at the inner end what was called the temple, containing a chest or ark, in imitation of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. The ark of the synagogue contained the rolls of the Old Testament Scriptures. The whole building was dedicated to God in prayer, and was therefore considered holy or sacred, but the most sacred part was the temple where the Word of God was in the ark. Before this ark the rabbi or reader offered up, with his back to the congregation, the most solemn prayers of the synagogue, called Eulogies. This posture in prayer is still practised in synagogue worship. Why face the Ark? Doubtless it was not to pray to it, nor to the Scriptures contained in it, but to God, whose presence was believed to be with his Word, and to whom the Eulogies or thanksgivings and prayers were addressed. The Baptist commentator, Dr. Gill (a profound Hebraist), in his comment on St. Matthew, vi. 5, quotes the

following words from the Mishna, a book compiled about A.D. 150, and containing the then ancient traditions of the Jews. The words are these: "On their fast days (when the synagogues could not hold the people) they used to bring out the Ark into the streets, and they stood in prayer or *praying*: and caused an old man to go down before the Ark, who was used to recite prayers, and he said them." This praying before the Ark in the street was evidently the result of a belief that the gracious presence of God was there. The same belief must have led to the rule among the Jews that it was a great sin to pray behind a synagogue without turning the face toward the Ark. (Ber. 6. b. in *Sunday at Home*.) Our Saviour and his apostles were all accustomed to see and unite in this worship before the Ark. Had there been anything superstitious or idolatrous in it our Saviour would undoubtedly have rebuked it. But so far from rebuking it, there is a strong probability that he approved of it even to the extent of conducting the prayers of the synagogue in that manner himself.

It will be remembered that when our Saviour visited the synagogue at Nazareth he read a portion of the prophet Isaiah. The Rev. Dr. Edersheim, himself a converted Jew, and a great rabbinical scholar, in describing the ancient synagogue service, says: "A fact hitherto, so far as we know, unnoticed, requires here to be mentioned. It invests the prayers just quoted with a new and almost unparalleled interest. According to the Mishna (Migillah, iv. 5) the person who read in the synagogue the portion from the prophets was also expected to say the "*shema*," and to offer the prayers which have just been quoted. It follows that in all likelihood our Lord himself had led the devotions in the synagogue of Nazareth on the Sabbath when he read the portion from the prophecies of

Isaiah which was that day fulfilled in their hearing. (Luke iv. 14-21.) Nor is it possible to withhold the impression how specially suitable to the occasion had been the words of the prayers, particularly Eulogies II. and XVII. The prayers were conducted or repeated by one individual specially deputed for the occasion, the congregation responding by an Amen."

Dr. Edersheim quotes certain of these ancient eulogies or prayers, and Dr. Gill quotes, in his comment on St. Luke iv., the ancient prayer or eulogy to be said before reading the portion from the prophets, but they are too long to be quoted here. But that these prayers were more than probably repeated by our Saviour before the Ark with his back to the people, and thus sanctioning this method of conducting public prayer, may be inferred from the following considerations: The prayers were unexceptionable in matter, and were proper to the occasion. They formed at the time a part of the regular synagogue service, a service to which our Lord was accustomed to conform; and it is not at all probable that he would prejudice his presence and usefulness on the occasion by refusing to comply with a time-honoured custom which had good order and reverence for God and his Word to commend it. But this praying before the ark, implying a belief of a special and gracious presence of God there, and a decent and orderly way of approaching that presence, are matters well worthy of serious consideration, for they were undoubtedly sanctioned by our Lord, and a similar belief with regard to the gracious presence of God in the Christian Church, and a similar manner of approaching that presence, have prevailed among Christians from the earliest times.

We must always distinguish between what theologians call the essential and the gracious presence of God. God's *essential presence* is everywhere and al-

ways. His *gracious presence* consists in the special manifestations of Himself to His intelligent creatures, in particular places and in different modes, as the Lord God, merciful and gracious. When we think of the essential presence of God: His immensity or relation to infinite space: His omnipresence or relation to all His creatures in this and all other worlds, our minds are apt to become bewildered, and to lose any idea of the Divine Personality. But God, in His condescension and mercy to our finite nature, and feebleness and infirmity of mind, has appointed what we call means of grace, consisting of places, things, and actions, in our use of which He is pleased to draw us near to Himself, manifesting Himself to us, granting us spiritual blessings, and permitting us to hold conscious communion with Him. These means of grace He has ordained in His church from the beginning of the world; and consist of prayer, praise, the reading and hearing of God's word, offerings, and sacraments; for the Jews of old had what the Presbyterian *Confession of Faith* truly calls the Sacraments of the Old Testament, which in regard to the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited were for substance the same as those of the New." (Chapt. XVII. sect V.) Moreover, there have been from the beginning certain places, regarded as holy or sacred, in which these means of grace have been more or less stately used, the sacredness arising from a special or gracious presence of God in them. For example there was the place of the altar east of Eden, from which "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord," (Gen. iv. 16), and Bethel, "the house of God and gate of Heaven," where the lonely traveller Jacob found the presence of God, (Gen. xxviii. 16, 17), and to which, in after years, the patriarch with his family and large household was commanded of God to return and there build an altar for domestic worship.

What a holy place Mount Sinai was, where God gave the Ten Commandments! Exod. xx. Every place also, was sacred or holy where the Ark of the Covenant rested, whether in the wilderness, or in Shiloh; in Kirjath-jearim, or in the house of Obed Edom, or in the temporary tabernacle which David made for it in Sion; and when finally it was placed in the inner chamber of Solomon's temple that chamber became thereby the Holy of Holies. God's special presence went with His word, contained in the Ark, to bless those who obeyed it, and to punish those who transgressed it. God "dwelt between the cherubins," whether the Ark was in Shiloh, (1 Sam. iv. 4), or in the temple at Jerusalem. Ps. lxxxii.

What became of the Ark at the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar we know not; but "in the second temple this defect was supplied as to the outside form, for there was another Ark, of the same dimensions as the first, and put in the same place: but it wanted the Tables of the Law, Aaron's rod, and the pot of Manna; nor was there any appearance of the Divine glory over it; nor any oracles delivered from it. It was used as a substitute for the former on the great day of Expiation, and to be a repository of the collection of the Holy Scriptures made by Ezra after the Captivity. (Ency. Relig. Knowl.) Yet the whole Jewish nation worshipped toward that Ark; and our Saviour acknowledged this temple in which it stood as His Father's House, and a holy place from which He drove out the buyers and sellers, and through which He forbid even the carrying of any vessel. (Mark xi. 16.

The Christian Church has come in the place of both the Jewish temple and synagogue. Christian baptism, the one baptism with pure water, has come in the place of the diverse baptisms (Gr.) with blood, and

with water mingled with ashes ; (Heb. ix.) and the Table of the Lord, with only the consecrated bread and wine, shewing forth the Lord's atoning sacrifice, has come in the place of the Jewish altar of bloody sacrifice, at which God promised to meet the children of Israel (Exod. xxix.), and to grant to the penitent the forgiveness of their sins, Lev. iv. 20,26, vi. 7. Christian churches, like the temple and synagogues, are dedicated to God, and so are sacred, and are called houses of God. But is one part more holy than another? Analogy would lead us to believe so. The rule in both temple and synagogue was, the nearer the Ark the holier the ground ; even the nearer the altar was the nearer to God (Numb. xvi.), and the place consequently the more holy.

In the Christian Church we have no Jewish ark, but we have more than what the ark of old contained. We have not only the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, but also those of the New, deposited in or near our chancels. Not only so, but on the Table of the Lord there is ordinarily placed the volume containing "The Order of Administration of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion." In that volume are the Ten Commandments, and epistles and gospels given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Thus the Holy Table of the Christian Church has come in the place not only of the Jewish altar, but also in place of the Jewish ark, where penitent and believing sinners may meet with God, be forgiven, and hold communion as of old with the King eternal, immortal, and invisible. Neither Jewish temple nor synagogue contained greater privilege, nor contained more holy ground.

In this age of irreverence for what is sacred ; when Bibles are so very plentiful that they can be had for nothing, and are carelessly tossed about in our dwellings, and are less respected and cared for than some

well-bound books of man's composition, we have lost that profound reverence for Holy Scripture that filled the heart and mind of Christians in early times. The Jew still venerates the Old Testament Scriptures, and kisses them in the synagogue; and, thank God, the Church still rises and stands at the reading of the Gospel in the Holy Communion; though, of old, the Church paid the same homage to all the Word of God, because He speaks to us by the Scriptures.

Is God no longer present at his own appointed Table now? Is his gracious presence no longer with his written Word? Is *the place* of his Table, and of his Word, and of his gracious Presence, no longer to be considered holy? God forbid; and who, with enlightened conscience, could reply otherwise?

But should such considerations lead us to worship the altar? or anything on it? the sacrament? or the written Word? Certainly not. Solomon, facing the ark, and before the altar of God, raised his hands and eyes, in prayer, not toward the altar, but toward heaven (1 Kings viii. 22); and so were the Jews accustomed to do in the Temple of God. (Luke xviii. 13.) The place of the altar was the place to meet with the God of heaven, and his presence was there in a manner inconceivable. But the position in which to worship him in the Christian Church was of necessity, as we have seen, to turn the face eastward, and that position was not a worshipping of what was seen or tangible. So that if a clergyman turn in that direction he is no more of a mediator or sacerdotalist than if he faced the south or north, or were aloft in a pulpit, and in that position faced the congregation, and officiated in prayer "as the mouth of the congregation to God," according to the Presbyterian notion of the ministry. (Form of Church Government, Pastors, Confession of Faith.) Our Lord is ever present with his Church;

but he is specially present when his Church uses his appointed means of grace.

But our gracious Lord is present with us not only "at all times," but also "in all places." He is graciously near us when we, at home or elsewhere, it may be far away from his house, seek Him in secret prayer, our faces being turned in any direction. It would indeed be a grievous rule that would make eastward worship the only worship acceptable even in public, and much more grievous in private devotion. We have seen that facing the east in prayer was, and yet is a part of the outward profession, before men, of faith in Christ. But when we are alone with God, who knows our hearts, and no eye but his upon us, it matters not in what direction we seek to draw near to Him. Or when two or three are gathered together in his name to unite in prayer, not in public view, but in seclusion, or in the family circle, there may not be the least necessity for the eastward position; and circumstances may even render it inexpedient and improper.

And so we may warrantably make a difference between our public and private use of Holy Scripture, although we ought ever to regard it with that reverence which is due to the Word of God, for it is God himself speaking to us. God is surely near to us by his Word. Hence the reverential practice of standing while hearing it read of old in church and synagogue. But when we read or study our Bibles at home shall we always assume the standing attitude in order to shew our reverence? I do not know of any such rule requiring it. An ancient Jewish writer, expressing his belief from Exod. xx. 24, says, "If one person sits and studies the Law, the Shekinah dwells with him." (*Pirke Abot in Gill*, Matt. xviii. 20.)

If we possessed such a belief as this, or had we those loving, reverential feelings for Holy Scripture which the inspired writer of the 119th Psalm possessed, we should need no rule to guide us in reverencing the written Word of God. Such feelings would naturally prompt us, not merely to act like the young prince who forbid his attendant to use a Bible as a step to reach a shelf in the library; but might even prompt us to read our Bibles "humbly kneeling upon our knees," as a certain pious minister was wont to do; or, when having finished our reading, to kiss the sacred volume and reverentially lay it past in a place of honour, as a learned and pious college professor (not a Churchman) was overseen to do at his private devotions.

So also in private prayer; if we believe that the eastward position is right, and in our love of Church unity and uniformity of worship, we venture occasionally to adopt the eastward position so as, in spirit, to unite with the millions of Christians who in their public assemblies, at least, are worshipping in the same direction, we may warrantably do so. Daniel in his private devotions made conscience of turning his face toward Jerusalem. But let us beware of bringing ourselves into spiritual bondage, and troubles, and discomforts of conscience by such a practice. Let us rather rejoice in that large liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

Nevertheless, in public the necessity for eastward worship has not yet ceased. Our Lord requires of us decency and order in public worship. But it is not decent or orderly when the clergyman worships in one direction like a heathen, it may be, and the people worship like Christians, or *vice versa*. The Pagans, in millions, are still facing their idols in prayer; Romanists are facing all points of the compass in worshipping

the Host ; the Jews, in millions, are still praying toward Jerusalem ; and " not less than a hundred and eighty millions of our race daily turn their faces toward Mecca when they pray. They (the Mohammedans) are all the avowed enemies of the cross, and as intolerant, fanatical, and blood-thirsty, as in the days of the Caliphs." (Buried Cities Recovered, p. 488.) No, it is not yet time to give up the worship eastward.

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