

About this book...

- If asked, would you say the primary action and function of man is to worship?
- Would you agree that to worship God is to honour man and all things in creation?
- Would you equate worship with service, and could you worship authentically if you did not honour God and man?
- Would worshipping and serving both God and man prove to be a drudge and burden to you, or a matter of interest and delight?

These questions indicate where the author is going in this book. He claims he has spent many years working up to writing this volume, and believes it may prove greatly valuable to others. If you read the book you may agree that this is a modest claim. Worship is what life is all about.

Geoffrey Bingham is an Anglican minister. His experience as soldier, prisoner of war, farmer, missionary, writer, teacher and family man, as well as theologian, has given him grounds for writing material which is Australian in tone, and relevant to the society in which we live. Some have found his books life-changing.

New Creation Publications Inc.



The Way and Wonder of WORSHIP

Geoffrey Bingham

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SEMI-FICTION

Bright Bird and Shining Sails
Man of Dust! Man of Glory!
The Heavenly Vision

NON-FICTION

The Things we Firmly Believe
The Sons of God are the Servants of All
Great and Glorious Grace
True Preaching: The Agony and the Ecstasy
The Splendour of Holiness
The Day of the Spirit
Oh, Father, Our Father!
The Clash of the Kingdoms
Come Let us Pray

The Way and Wonder Of

Worship

Geoffrey Bingham

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FOREWORD

Worship is at the centre of everything. We are diverted if we merely think of worship as one of the numerous activities in a range of Christian options. It is at the altar of God that we either live out our lives with integrity, or not. If we are out with our worship, we will be out with everything else.

The brothers, Cain and Abel, are one of countless examples of this. Abel, a man of faith, worshipped the God he trusted as good, and he lived righteously. Cain, the theologian, had it wrong with God. His worship was not accepted by God, and he sought to put the world right by murdering his brother.

The prophets constantly warned Israel that injustice and bad dealing in society were linked with perverted worship. Once the people of God become wiser than God in their worship, and mix the revelation of God with the cultural values of the age, idolatry has the ascendancy and humanity the descendancy.

Are our Sunday services ordered to worship the God who justifies us by his grace, or are they ordered to justify us by our performances and stagecraft?

These, and many other areas, Geoffrey Bingham expounds with biblical excellence. This is a practical book. Practical, not merely in pragmatic terms, but in his taking

us to the heart of the matter of God and man. This is a book of joy, for what more joy could we have than to know and worship the living God? This is a book of God, for it is as God makes himself known that we cannot but adore him as he is.

Perhaps there could not be a more timely book than this one. Think what would happen if the people of God were restored to true and rich worship in the congregation and in their service to the world. It would be a foretaste of heaven.

Deane Meatheringham

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PREFACE

As a boy living in a family which gave outward observance to things religious, I was sent to Sunday School and church, along with other disinterested brothers and sisters. Much of the worship seemed unreal to me because I loved the bush, sport, and writing. We had what must have been a good choir. I found the Psalms difficult to sing, and thought worship was not only a bit of a bore, but a sort of punishment. Now, when I look back to those days, I realize how much the worship impregnated my thinking and attitude to life. To this day I love those old liturgies whilst also admiring the new. Given in my appreciation in later years, worship was always a mystery to me. Having seen worship in its many forms, in many religions, and then worship differing across many denominations, it has been a joy in later years to discover its wonder. Poets, writers, artists, musicians and sculptors— among many more—have a great sense of worship. They give honour to form and beauty, to grandeur and simplicity, to greatness in its many forms. Yet even the simple peasant at true worship can transcend the great artists. Pure worship is the highest of all human experiences, and the most transcending. That is why it is good to write on worship—however little we may know of it. It speaks of the most satisfying dimension the human spirit can enter.

It is good that many books have been written on worship. Some of them are manuals, others simply trace the history of worship, and yet others seek to discover the principles by which we can understand and practise worship. Worship is certainly a prime exercise in our world, and has been since time immemorial. The reason for this is simple enough—man is a worshipping creature. It is inbuilt in him to worship. We may argue whether or not this is a good or useless practice, but man goes on worshipping, i.e. giving worth to God, gods, idols, creatures heavenly and earthly, the creation itself, and things within it—as he wills.

Often we seek worship for its own self. The exercise and action of worship is satisfying and stimulating to us, especially if the object of our worship is attractive. Some even worship worship, since it is a pleasurable occupation. The writing of this book is not simply to impart knowledge concerning our subject, but to help us examine the whole matter of worship. It is not a subject that we would naturally study. Although—as we have said—worship is a life's occupation, for we worship incessantly, yet it is important that we know who we worship, and what we worship, for worship plays such a large part in our living. We have only to watch our television and video screens to see this. We can see thousands at a rock concert with arms raised, bodies moving, ecstatic looks on their faces, deeply moved emotionally, and soaking up the whole experience. We can see similar manifestations in Christian worship, and similar actions in worship that is not Christian. To go into a church, a mosque or a temple is to see the kind of worship that is common to man. Human beings can express great devotion. They can write great liturgies, com-

pose great music and masses, and add to the already rich treasury of worship the world has accumulated over the millenniums of its existence.

We see worship in the eyes of a parent towards the children, in spouses towards each other. We see it in the adoration of music, of film and pop stars, in attitude towards great giants in sport, and sometimes towards the leaders of nations. There is also worship of things, which is perhaps strange, seeing object-worship is a one-way thing. Things do not respond to human adoration.

We also see the hunger for worship in the eyes of children, parents, spouses and friends. We need to be honoured, which is worship at the human level. We need to be given worth to encourage us to think well of ourselves. Worship, then, is relevant to every part of our lives, and it helps to shape up the kinds of persons we become. Because it shapes up our characters and our lives, we ought to know something about it. It does not mean, of course, that studying it makes us better worshippers. The simple principle is, 'Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.'

The fact is that worship can be the most deadly as well as the most wonderful thing we practise. Many of the leaders (prophets, priests and kings) of the former covenant of Israel spoke at times of national crisis against idolatry. The true worship of God—'in Spirit and in truth'—was set forth as the richest experience the human race could know. Around us today is the modern equivalent of idolatry in materialism, worship of the intellect, and humanism—worship of the human self in place of God.

I trust that this book will reveal much to us of the beauty and wonder of worship, much to do with holy and

practical devotion to the Triune God, and that it will be a warning against false worship, self-worship and will-worship. How wonderful it would be if a new world of worship to God were to open up around us, and with it a new honouring of human beings, made in the image of God. We have spent decades toppling old values, traditions we thought were outdated and useless. Perhaps there is this great hour at hand when men and women will turn to love, worship and to serve the living God. How thrilling for a prodigal world to make its way back to the Father's arms!

Special note

An important matter I would like readers to note is that the book lacks a good section on 'Praise and Music in the Scriptures', and it was intended to add as an appendix a *Living Faith Study* (No. 23, NCPI, 1978) with this title. Again, the theme of confession—an essential part of worship—is necessary to understanding the whole subject of worship. This, too, was to be an appendix under the title of 'The Question and Comfort of Confession', but has not been included. The booklet of that title (NCPI, 1981) is available, as is also a booklet 'If We Say We Have No Sin...' (NCPI, 1987). For those who wish to fill out the subject of worship, these three titles are indispensable.

Geoffrey Bingham, 1989

CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction to Worship

A SHORT ESSAY AS AN INTRODUCTION

RUMINATION ON WORSHIPPERS

This man whom I knew, and with whom I had chatted about the interesting subject of worship during the day, was thinking over our conversation that evening. Reclining in his study, he let his mind go back over many of the occasions he had seen men and women at worship. To him it was surprising how many times he had been a spectator of that most intimate of practices—worship. By 'worship' he meant 'religious worship' and not just that rapt worship a man has for a woman, a mother for a child, or an ambitious man for his goal. Surprisingly enough—as he ruminated—the first picture to flit into his mind was that of a worshipper. The place was India and the worshipper was an Indian—a Hindu, in fact. He remembered him distinctly. Indeed, he

could see him now, clearly, seated on a dark shaft of rock as the sun rose. The person—a young man—was immobile, silhouetted against the light of the sun. He was seated, as is often the case with Eastern worshippers, legs crossed, hands on knees, and at ease. His hands were together, his head thrust forward, looking directly ahead, meditating and praying.

There was no movement of his lips. The movement—if any—was in his mind. His *mantras** were silent. He was calling upon some power, but whether this power was in the god he worshipped, or the inner resources of his own being, the watcher could not determine. He had gazed at the man for a long time, quietly marvelling at his practised meditation, his lack of tension, his calm assurance. There was an absence of hurry, of anger, or of any sort of intensity.

That picture had burned in on his mind, and now in this time of contemplation it had come to stir not only his memory but the matter of his thinking. Another picture of worship—associated with this—slipped as easily into his view. It had been one in the sunburnt hills of the North-West Frontier. The man was a Baluchi Moslem, seated on his prayer carpet, and the hour was the time of the prayer. The wailing call to prayer had come from the minaret of the mosque, and the man had hurried to perform his ablutions. Even as he washed his hands and his arms, cleared his throat, cleansed his nostrils and settled himself, his eyes seemed to lose their sight and he was looking into some dimension that the watcher did not know.

This disciple of Mahomet was gazing in the direction of

Mecca. At every moment of every minute and hour he would know where Mecca is located, and the time of prayer would be known, unbidden even by the cry of the maulvi from the mosque. His life was settled into such a pattern. He was not a man of great learning, for he was a village man, but he was not devoid of intelligence. Whilst he may have lacked in knowledge of many things, he did not lack in basic wisdom. Wisdom was etched into his face, was deep in his eyes, and was concentrated in his Worship of the Ineffable. Now—in his memory—the man saw the Baluchi at his worship, unaided by icons or even concepts of the mind. He caught the steely awe of the devotee who worshipped the Unknown One.

Another picture came to him. He remembered the man he had seen in a shrine in Sri Lanka, and the coiling, writhing supplication as he sinuously wove himself about the silent idol that he was petitioning pleading and imploring. He had brought a huge basket of fruit, and another of flowers, and these he was laying at the feet of his idol. His gaze was an endless beseeching. His arms were raised in painful supplication, but the idol seemed silent and unresponsive.

Now many pictures came rapidly to him, one quickly succeeding another. One was of a woman looking up at the skies in a time of drought, wildly crying to the heavens—and any deity it contained—to send rain down from the drought clouds which had assembled day by day. Stock were dying because of dead pastures and dried-up creeks. There was anger in the cry of the woman, but she had no doubt the skies concealed an uncaring god.

He had seen something of this despair in derelicts who had shuffled past him in a city slum area. They had made

* Repetitive prayers, chanted as an incantation.

their way to one of the small, silent parks, and the deadness of their eyes seemed to tell only of an emptiness of spirit, of an unrelieved nihilism. That is, until they had raised a paper-wrapped bottle to the lips, and the fiery spirit had dribbled into the mouth, and made its way into the empty stomach of the worshipper. Much the same look as that of the Indian devotee in the dawn, or the Baluchi as he adored the Allah he would never really know in the depths of his spirit—those looks he had seen on the faces of addicts of methylated spirits. He had seen the same fixed—if somewhat more rapturous—stares on the face of drug-addicts, or sexually satiated persons.

No less had he seen it on the faces of worshippers of new cars, or vintage vehicles, a person beholding his new and spacious mansion or the gleaming lines of the recently acquired power boat. No less, also, had he seen it on the face of a young man gazing in speechless adoration at the woman of his dreams. Perhaps most of all he had seen it on the faces of mothers as they held newborn babes in their arms, snuggling them against their breasts.

‘Everywhere,’ he thought, ‘man worships. He has only one god, or he has idols galore. Sometimes he changes the objects of his devotion, but he must have some object to worship.’

As he ruminated about this, he realized that his own most painful moments were the times when nothing attracted him. On such occasions he seemed vacuous because evacuated of purposeful thought. In such times nothing had taste or attraction for him. He thought, ‘This is what makes gourmets of those normally satisfied with good plain food. It makes deviants of those whose lives have been reasonably functional. It makes addicts of food,

drink, sex, and visualization, of those who have lived normal lives, but now are bored. All these require titillation of their senses, stimulation of their nerve-ends, variety and excitement to kill the deadness they know as non-worshippers. If they leave one worship they must quickly discover another.’ It came to him in the same moment that man without worship is man without expression of his being.

He thought, ‘If a man were to properly worship that which is true, giving due honour to it, then he would be a person of fulfilment, and would come to acquire unusual wisdom.’

He said to himself, ‘Perhaps we do not so much understand worship as we—in fact—participate in it. To worship is to share with others in the reality of life. Our worship may vary, but then it is worship. It may be of false gods or true, but—again—it is worship itself. It seems that we are born to worship, as we are also born to breathe. To have no object to adore seems to be empty of worthwhile living. It may be better to have broken idols, and even false lords, than to have none at all, for worship seems to be a good thing, of itself.’

THE NATURE OF WORSHIP

What is worship? A simple answer is that worship is giving due worth to God, and due honour to other persons and creatures, including one’s self. Later we will see that when due worth and honour are given, i.e. worship, then this worship also includes serving the object of our honour and respect. Sometimes in the Scriptures certain

modes are set out for worship, honour and service, but they first require a right attitude to the objects worshipped or honoured. The drive for worship is apparently inherent in man. He worships twenty-four hours of every day. As we saw above, if he is not worshipping he is empty, and in fact is a contradiction of the creature he really is. He cannot be satisfied without worship, adoration and service. If he is an idolater then his worship is illicit according to the Jewish, Christian and Islamic views, i.e. the religions which claim to be revelation. We will have need to examine the nature of idolatry. In order to have what Paul calls 'reasonable service' or 'spiritual worship', we must know the object of our worship or we will fail to worship truly. This means that for worship to be authentic we must know God, and that knowledge must be one of our 'heart, mind, soul and strength', i.e. a relational knowledge of God.

WHO IS GOD? HOW SHALL WE KNOW HIM?

As we have indicated, if it is a deity, person or object which evokes worship in us, then we will first have to see and know that particular object. The more we know, then presumably the more and better we will worship. Whilst in some sense we can know an object or visualize a god or conceive a concept, yet how could we know God Himself?. Objects can be examined, idols can be formed and mental concepts can be images of the mind which we devise, but God is different. We have no control of Him. Indeed, shall we evaluate God? If we are to give Him His worth, then we must know Him in the way we have mentioned above.

Since God has made us in His own image then knowledge of Him would surely be natural, springing from our creation, i.e. the knowledge a creature would have of its Creator. This must mean that our understanding of God would not spring from speculation, but from a relationship with Him. We ought, then, to know Him in the way that a human needs to know Him in order to give right worship, adoration and service, since such would spring out of love for, and union with, the Creator.

MAN KNOWS BUT DOES NOT KNOW GOD

Statements such as, 'The fool says in his heart, "There is no God" ', 'no one understands, no one seeks for God', and, 'they did not see fit to acknowledge God', show us that man refuses to *know* God, although in another sense he does know about God. Such persons are spoken of as idolaters (Rom. 1:20-23). This appears to be a strange mystery, for how can a man know but yet not know God? How, too, can he be an idolater if he knows God?

Much of the answer to these questions lies in the moral fall of man from God when he—man—sought to be a god in his own right—an impossible accomplishment, since God is his Creator, so that 'the way of a man is not in himself'. God is God, and man is man, but the ambitious man sought to obliterate the ontological reality, i.e. of man being creature and God being God. It is to foolish man that God addresses the statements which now follow.:

To whom then will you liken God,
or what likeness compare with him?

To whom then will you compare me,
that I should be like him? says the Holy One.
To whom will you liken me and make me equal,
and compare me, that we may be alike?

These strong statements of Isaiah 40:18, 25 and 46:5 are echoed in the Song of Moses (Exod. 15:1-18), especially in verse 11:

‘Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like thee, majestic in holiness,
terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?’

GOD IS INEFFABLE, UNKNOWNABLE YET KNOWABLE

If God is ineffable, i.e. ‘unspeakable’, ‘unutterable’, then how can we know Him? Zophar asks, ‘Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?’ (Job 11:7). Even so, God is knowable if we would know Him: ‘You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart’ (Jer. 29:13). For certain reasons God does sometimes hide Himself (Isa. 45:15, ‘Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself’), but He is known to those who would truly know Him. In fact it is all of a man’s life to know Him:

Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the Lord.’

Just to know Him is to worship Him, but then to know the true God and His Son Jesus Christ is life eternal itself (John 17:3; I John 5:20). To know anyone relationally is a significant part of life. To know God wholly as a person can know Him is the very essence of true life. It is from such knowledge that true worship issues.

WHY, THEN, DO MEN *NOT* KNOW HIM?

We saw first of all that man did not and does not wish to know God. He still does not wish to know God. Why is this? The answer is that man—because of his fall into sin and selfish self-rule—does not dare face God in all His holiness, goodness, righteousness and love, because the truth of Him would be too confronting. Confrontation by God—apart from salvation—would utterly destroy man. He would be in great anguish, even as Isaiah in the temple (Isa. 6:1ff.) saw the vision of God, and realized himself to be fearfully impure. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, fell at his feet during the miracle of the extraordinary draught of fishes and implored his master to depart from him. The things of God’s holiness shame unholy man. No wonder he does not wish to know Him.

A CONCLUSION: WORSHIPPING WITH, AND WITHOUT, GOD

We conclude, then, that we can worship God only when we know Him, and when we wish to know Him. Now, it is impossible—by nature of the case—not to worship

something. We are not free-standing persons, for we are creatures, and creatureliness presupposes dependency of some kind. Thus we are driven to worship something, and every one of our worship objects can be called ‘an idol’. We need not think of idols as only being objects formed out of various materials, but as the images of our minds which incorporate the desires of our hearts. This is inner visualization, i.e. interior idolatry.

It is a clear fact of Scripture that God reveals Himself. Man does not have to live bereft of the intimate knowledge of God, because although man has rejected Him God does not refuse to know man or to reveal Himself to him. He has always revealed Himself by His word, by angelic visitants, by the creation He has made, by His law, by His prophets, by Christ (the True Way to Him), by His Holy Spirit, and by the community of the faithful—Israel and His church.

If man will know God, then he can know Him, and so come to worship Him.

CHAPTER TWO

Pure Worship of God (I)

WORSHIP IS FOR THE PURE IN HEART

WHEN Jesus said, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,’ he must have meant— amongst other things—that it would be a frightening experience to see God unless one were clean in heart, and that not being pure in heart would—in fact—prevent one from seeing God. Paul said, ‘To the pure all things are pure,’ and this would mean that an indispensable prerequisite to seeing God and worshipping Him would be to have a pure heart. This principle refers to the existence of man on the earth. It would be no less in the celestial—i.e. the heavenly—sphere.

THE REVELATION OF TRUE WORSHIP

Seeing God is always a revelation. ‘Revelation’ means that God takes the initiative. In revelation and worship God always takes the initiative, for Christ said, ‘for such the Father seeks to worship him,’ i.e. God as Father seeks us to worship Him. We saw briefly in our last chapter that

God reveals Himself, and this revelation will reflexively bring worship of Him. Jesus also said that true worship must be ‘in spirit and in truth’. Since worship is spiritual, and in truth, then where, on earth, would we find such worship? Eventually we come to see that all our worship must spring from grace, be exercised in grace, and be received by His grace, since none of us is ever perfect. When our nature was unfallen, then we worshipped ‘in nature’, but since we have fallen and our nature is likewise fallen, then we must worship ‘in grace’, or not truly worship Him. How then shall we derive the pattern or paradigm for true worship? Since we cannot view perfect worship on earth, where will we find it? The answer is, ‘In heaven!’

Before we set out to see the principles of worship as they operate ‘in heaven’, we are encouraged to believe that since the Father seeks us to worship Him, then He will also teach us to worship Him. Then we will know how to worship Him as God. Our life is not simply a matter of learning certain principles and acting by them. That is, we do not worship God as self-acting individuals. The strange and wonderful truth is that true believers are *inhabited* by God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and they also inhabit God. Doubtless such a statement is incredible, yet it is true. Worship, then, issues from this mutual relationship of God and man.

TRUE WORSHIP AS SEEN IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

We have said that true worship is that which is exercised in heaven. We use the terms ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ to cover

what we call the seen and unseen spheres. All worship which we offer on earth must—by nature of the case—be imperfect. Something of our fallen humanity—our human flesh—mingles even with the worship which the Spirit inspires. Yet this does not mean that such worship is unacceptable to God. Worship is commanded, and—as we have said—is offered through grace, and so is accepted by grace. Thus we can be at peace concerning the worship we offer to God.

At the same time worship is called ‘logical’ (*Gr.logiken*) in Romans 12:1. It is not against reasoning and thinking. It is because of this that we have minds to examine what is true worship. Israel had its worship set out for it, but prior to the covenant with Moses men worshipped God. Often this was through sacrifices, some of which were intended to be propitiatory, and some to express praise and thanksgiving. If we have a mind to understand worship, then the Book of the Revelation is a good place to commence. There the celestial creatures and inhabitants are without deceit or defects, and for this reason their worship is pure. It is delightful to know we have such a pure source of enquiry into worship.

Our minds must be ‘in the Spirit’

The writer of this Book of the Revelation is ‘in the Spirit’ (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), and the Spirit being the Spirit of truth, he (John the Divine) sees the matter of worship wholly, especially in regard to its holy operations, i.e. why and how God is praised. Now, it follows that if John needed to be in the Spirit to see and understand the prophecy in which he was involved, then no less should

we also be 'in the Spirit'. We will now look at several passages to examine these things for which God is worshipped, because such things constrain the worshippers to adore God, to bring thanksgiving, and to praise Him. We also see by whom He is worshipped, and the modes of worship, i.e. how He is praised. The how, i.e. the modes of worship, the by whom, and the for *which* are all of one piece, but we will try to state them separately, as follows:

The reasons for the worship of God

In regard to worship by humans we have some elements stated in Romans 12:1 where (i) honouring God, i.e. giving true worth to God, and (ii) the giving of thanks to God are the two actions mentioned. These remain the essential heart of worship whether it be celestial or terrestrial. We would expect to see them in the Book of the Revelation, and will not be disappointed. The attributes of God are stated when He is honoured, and the reasons for thanksgiving are also made dear. With this information we may now proceed to understand the worship of God by the celestials.

REVELATION 1:12-20

This passage does not speak about worship as such, but verse 17 tells us that John fell at Christ's feet as though dead. This indicates the powerful effect of having seen Christ. The passage describes the vision of Christ, including the rich elements of his person. John is undoubtedly evoked to worship, but the vision is too powerful for a controlled action on his part. The revelation of the Lord causes John to swoon. Christ raises him from this and

converses with him. Prayer is always dialogue, and so—for the most part—is worship.

REVELATION 4:1-11

We note firstly the place of worship, i.e. at and around the throne of God. The throne is significant of authority, of universal reign. It has, too, the elements of beauty, i.e. the colours of translucent white, red and green, as also the emerald rainbow with covenant significance. The four great authorities—the living creatures—represent rich moral attributes. The throne is dynamic with its Sevenfold Spirit before it, along with its noises and movements, which we later see to be expressions of purposive actions and judgements. The translucent sea before the throne doubtless symbolizes utter peace and purity. The living creatures head up all the worship of creation, but never without the twenty-four heavenly elders, who, having a given authority, do not covet it for themselves in the sight of God.

God is praised because of who He is. In 4:8 it is because He is holy, for the living creatures never cease to sing, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty.' Holiness is the primary theme of all things, and the essence, the very Being of God, without which the universe would have no true meaning as a moral creation. One can only worship the Lord 'in the beauty of holiness', but His holiness tells us that He has created in holiness, and no creature or thing is essentially unholy (cf. Rom. 14:14).

In the same verse (4:8) it is said, 'who was and is and is to come'. God is therefore praised because of His eternity, but this eternity is not merely a timelessness, or a 'time' beyond time, but rather is an actional attribute, for it really

means, ‘who always was working, always is working, and always *will* be working’, i.e. all things that are true happen according to His counsel and plan, and nothing is outside of that. Thus God is Sovereign over all time and eternity, and is the Prime Mover in all history. This means there is never a time when God is not working, and when His working is not wholly purposeful. This is because He ‘accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will’. Later, in chapter 17:744, we read of ‘The beast that you saw [that] was, and is not’, who is later described as ‘and is to *come*’, meaning the beast does not have control or action *all* the time. So then, He ‘who was and is and is to come’ is the only One who has full control and works unceasingly. This means the living creatures are praising God for His continual, purposive, pure and effective activity.

Next (verse 11), God is praised because He has created all things, and by Him they are upheld and go on existing, i.e. God alone is Creator, and all things have their being in Him. To celestial beings this is an incredible and wonderful thing. It would be to us also if we could but grasp the essence and marvel of creation—our being created, and the creation of all things. To be alive is a rich realization for any creature. To see that not only has God created—glorious thought!—but also that He sustains all creation and this continually—why, this is most evocative of delighted worship!

Notice that along with the praise is the statement that God—alone—is ‘worthy... to receive glory and honour and power’. We need to realize that all of history is the story of fallen celestial and terrestrial creatures trying to grab for themselves ‘the glory and honour and power’.

Kingdoms are built upon this hope and system of endeavour. Some of these kingdoms are tiny—such as in a home, in a business, or even in the mean minds of some ambitious folk, but the tussle is still for ‘glory and honour and power’. That is why we do not worship God, for we covet glory, power and honour for ourselves. Whole cosmetic manufactories are built on the yearning for glory, religious and political systems for the sake of acquiring power, for who does not seek after glory, the glory which alone belongs to God?

We surely learn from this worship what constitutes the true ingredients of ungrudging adoration.

REVELATION 5:8-14

He who sits upon the throne is the great Creator. With Him is the Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah who was slain, so that by his own blood he did ‘ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation’. Because he has done this he now holds the scroll of history in his hand, having proved worthy to open the seals and set in action the three sevenfold sets of judgements. This really means that all history is in his hands—so much so, that those whom he redeems he will cause to be ‘a kingdom and priests to our God’ and cause them to ‘reign on earth’. The song of the celestials is,

‘Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God
from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on earth’.

The song of ‘every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein’ is,

'To him who sits up. on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!'

Salvation, then, is the *cause* of worship here, for salvation is the saving of the original creation and bringing it to renewal. We note, too, that whilst the Lamb is subject to God, nevertheless he receives the same adulation as is given to God! This must mean that he is one with God, indeed he has Deity himself, within the Triune Godhead.

REVELATION 7:9-17

We will miss the significance of worship if we do not see that the prophecy of the Book (i.e. the whole Book) combines God's action with worship and service. Thus in 6:1-12 six of the seven seals of judgement are opened. Then follows the two doxologies of the seventh chapter. In 6:9-11 is the account of dialogue between the altar and the martyrs. This can be included in the great prayers which are offered. In 5:13-14 praise and worship is offered by 'every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein' to God and the Lamb, and doubtless this includes mankind. In 7:9-12 we see the innumerable multitude clothed in white garments, and with palm branches—signs of praise and worship—in their hands. The redeemed cry, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!' whilst the celestials cry, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.'

So then, salvation is attributed to God and the Lamb by the redeemed of humanity, and this ascription then causes the heavenly creatures to add to their previous

doxologies the word 'thanksgiving'. Thus the elements ascribed altogether are glory, honour, power, wisdom, might, whilst blessing and thanksgiving are offered with them. If we realize, again, that these are things which self-seeking human beings long to have ascribed to themselves, and if we see the significance of them in terms of the Godhead, then they are indeed wonderful. Indeed, who ever could plumb the depths of these great qualities of the Godhead! They will for ever be the source of adoration and wonder, for they are the attributes of God, very God Himself.

REVELATION 8:1-6

Here we shall miss the reality of worship if we fail to remember that worship and service are of the one piece. The silence (v. 1) which is 'for about half an hour' actually follows the marvellous song that is sung concerning the redeemed, God and the Lamb, in 7:15-17. That the scene in 8:5 is worship is clear by the fact that they stand before the altar of God—probably the altar of incense which is itself part of the whole altar worship, including the altar of sacrifice. An altar is for worship. The silence is portentous. It is a break from the marvellous songs of chapter 7, and is a prelude to the action which takes place as a result of the offering up of the prayers of the saints, for such an offering is *ipso facto* worship. In 5:8 the elders have golden bowls which are filled with the prayers of the saints. These prayers (in 8:3-5) are gathered together and offered upon the golden altar. The result of this special worship is that 'there were peals of thunder, loud noises, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake', all of which were signs of the dynamic action evoked by the prayers offered. Truly this

action conforms with the commanded prayer ‘Thy kingdom come!’

We gradually add to our understanding of worship and prayer, i.e. that it is in the midst of God’s action, the service of His creatures and His redeemed people, and in the context of their prayers. Worship is not only the expression of hearts deeply moved by God, but of lives that are involved in His eternal plan and its fulfilment.

REVELATION 11:15-18

In this passage God is worshipped (i) because He has so worked in history that ‘the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever’; (ii) because in His eternity—’who art and wast’—He has taken His great power, and begun to reign, i.e. He has triumphed over all evil; and (iii) because He is effecting His judgements in justice and is ‘destroying the destroyers of the earth’. Again, this worship is in the context of God’s action in history against the raging nations (v. 18; cf. Ps. 2:1), effecting both judgements and rewards, and controlling the adverse elements who oppose His Kingdom. Such worship leads on (in v. 19) to the same kind of dynamic action which previously followed the prayers of the saints (cf. 8:5; 4:5).

REVELATION 14:1-5

The worship in this passage takes place on Mount Zion. In accordance with Psalm 2:6 and context, this is the place of victory over the forces hostile to God. The 144,000 are with the Lamb and they sing a new song. The new song seems to be the one we have heard in 5:9-10 and 7:10-12. It can be argued that this is the earthly Zion or the

heavenly, but probably it is both in the one. The sound of worship ‘like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder’ is a vast, profound and thunderous one. With it, and as part of it, is the mighty song of the holy redeemed. Again, action, service and worship are closely linked.

REVELATION

God is worshipped because. of the ways of this ‘King of the ages’, whose ways are just and true so that all nations come to worship Him because His judgements have been revealed, i.e. seen as they truly are and as they are needed. We are thus introduced into a new dimension of worship—praise for judgements. At first sight this will not appear as significant. Indeed, for some it will be puzzling. If, however, we look at the text of the worship, it will become clear:

‘Great and wonderful are thy deeds
O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are thy ways,
O King of the ages!
Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord?
For thou alone art holy.
All nations shall come and worship thee,
for thy judgements have been revealed.’

REVELATION 16:4-7

The same matter of just judgements is here continued, where men are said to warrant justice because they have caused death, and so—themselves—must die.

‘Just art thou in these thy judgements,
thou who art and wast, O Holy One.
For men have shed the blood of saints and prophets,

and thou hast given them blood to drink. It is their due!’

We may not at first realize it, but the climax of praise is now happening, and it is in regard to judgements. Mankind dreads judgements, and sees no cause for praise. If, however, evil is not dealt with justly, then it has triumphed, and God is not holy, nor is He worthy to have ascribed to Him wisdom, power, honour, blessing, and thanksgiving, for without victory He cannot be holy, have eternity (i.e. ‘who was and is and is to come’), and be Sovereign over all time and eternity. Thus the praise for His judgements can be counted as highest of all in the history of creation.

REVELATION 19:1-8

This final act of worship has two elements to it. The first is worship because of the defeat of evil Babylon—the unholy harlot We can now read this celestial worship aright:

After this I heard what seemed to be the mighty voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying,

‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ‘ for his judgements are true and just;

he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication,

and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants’

Then it is that the four and twenty elders and the living creatures cry, ‘Amen. Hallelujah!’ After this there is a call from the throne:

‘Praise our God, all you his servants,
you who fear him, small and great.’

The answer to this is marvellous, for ‘Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the

sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying...’ What they cried is full of great triumph and beauty, and is certainly higher even than the previous praise for judgement, for it is bringing about the climax of history—the Holy Marriage:

‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen,

bright and pure...’

CHAPTER THREE

Pure Worship of God

WORSHIP OF THE SON—THE LAMB

Whilst Revelation 1:4-20 does not speak of Christ being worshipped—as such—for what he is, yet it reveals fully what he is, and the reader should go carefully through this remarkable passage. John certainly worshipped—to the point of swooning. There are, however, quite clear passages where Christ is worshipped and from which reasons for worship of him can be adduced, and we ought to read these in detail. The passages are:

REVELATION 5:6-14

Here—as we have seen—the Lamb is accorded exactly the same honour as God (the Father). If we compare 4:11 and 5:12, then we are led to believe that they are equal in praise and worship for what and for whom they are. Equally in 5:13 they are placed together ‘To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!’ It is no small thing to equate the Father and the Son in praiseworthiness. It is in fact a matter of great awe.

REVELATION 7:9-12

Again we see (v. 10) that *both* the Father and the Lamb are adored because they have effected salvation. The worship is primarily by the great multitude from every nation, but, their praise having been given, the living creatures and the twenty-four elders join with them, worshipping God.

REVELATION 11:15-18

We have seen that both the Father and the Lamb have effected their reigning and sovereignty over all history and all creatures. Whilst all praise is ascribed to God, it is evident the Lamb—‘His Christ’—is included. So then, worship is given to him when God is adored. Other passages (I Cor. 15:24-28; Phil 2:9-11) show that the Lamb has worked to effect the climax of the Kingdom.

REVELATION 15:1-4

Those who sing the Song of Moses and the Lamb sing praise to God. The original Song of Moses was at the time of victory over Pharaoh, but here it is probable that those who had conquered the beast and its image are singing praise to both Moses and the Lamb, perhaps because Moses had led God’s people out of bondage, and now the greater Moses, i.e. Christ, had led them out of an even greater bondage. Whilst God is praised, yet in some measure both Moses and the Lamb receive honour, and God is praised for giving Moses and the conquering Lamb to the people of promise. Moses, of course, conquered only in the power of God, and is not as praiseworthy as he who is ‘the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’.

REVELATION 19:6-8

We have left this passage until the last, for in it God is praised for the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. The passage appears to show that God—and not necessarily the Lamb (though he too must be included)—is to be praised for the great and joyful climax of human history, i.e. the joyous union of the elect Bride with her elect Husband. Thus man is caused to be in union with God. This, of course, is a mystery.

As we have observed above, it is when we see the causes — especially in heaven where there is pure worship—for praise and adoration of the Father and of the Lamb, that then we see the basis for our own worship whilst here on earth, and that understanding is of immense practical value.

THOSE WHO WORSHIP GOD AND THE LAMB

Those who are first in the ministry of worship of God are the four living creatures. In Revelation 4:6-9; 5:6-14; 6:1-7; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4 we see both their worship and their service. They are significantly in the action of God. They are closest to the throne, and are on all four sides of it. Whilst we do not have time to go into details of their nature and characters, by looking at the references here given we can acquire valuable knowledge of who they are, and what they are and do. They seem to be the highest creatures after God and the Lamb. Something of their nature may be found in Isaiah chapter 6, but the main point is that 'day and night they never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"'

Next in the hierarchy of worshippers are the twenty four elders, who seem to represent mankind. Their status and vocation can be seen in any good commentary or Bible dictionary, but it appears that they are celestials (perhaps angels) and may be of 'the council of the holy ones' (cf. Ps. 89:7; Isa. 24:23; I Kings 22:19). It is a good exercise to look at every reference to them in the Book of the Revelation (4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4). These passages show us their vocation. They are constantly worshipping and serving God, and seem to be triggered off in that worship by the four living creatures (eg. 4:9; 5:11).

With the living creatures and the elders are 'many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands', and almost no reference to heavenly worship omits their acts of adoration.

The last worshippers mentioned are the redeemed. In 5:13; 7:9f.; 14:2-3; 15:2-4 and 19:1—8 human beings join celestial creatures in rich and powerful worship. In Psalm 145:10 it is said, 'All thy works shall give thanks to thee'. Thus all creation praises God, and in particular all creatures. See Revelation 5:13:

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying 'To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!'

Romans 8:19-25 informs us that the whole of creation longs to be set free from its bondage to corruption, so as to know 'the glorious liberty of the children of God', and doubtless seeks its freedom in order to utter pure worship to God. God tells us that in the beginning 'the morning

stars [angels] sang together, and all the sons of God [angels] shouted for joy.’ As in the beginning, so too at the climax of history.

THE ‘HOW’ OF WORSHIP IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The how of worship in the Revelation relates to the where of worship, as well as the object of worship. Doubtless heaven was the place of holiness. Satan and his angels were drawn or cast down from heaven (12:4, 7-9) and heaven was purified. We see that worship took place in the temple of God (7:15; 11:19), but certainly the temple is the dynamic centre of worship. It is difficult to separate the throne of God—the place of authority and action—from the altar of God or the temple as a whole, since the terms ‘throne’, ‘altar’ and ‘temple’ are often used synonymously (see 3:12; 7:15; 11:1, 2, 19; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8; 16:1, 17; 21:22). In 21:22 the temple as such has dissolved within or into the holy city, ‘for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb’. In fact the very holy city is now the temple, the place of the pure, and ‘the river of the water of life’ flows from the throne, i.e. the altar or temple (Rev. 22:1f.). This is seen clearly when we look at Ezekiel 47:1-2, with which it must be prophetically linked.

Without understanding God as the Object of worship, and the temple as the place of worship, we cannot understand the modes of worship. John, the writer of the Book, was ‘in the Spirit’ as he viewed all these elements, hence he could truly understand the worship itself. His understanding transcends our more analytical treatment of it. He

experienced the wonder and the reality of it all. We have observed before that we also must be ‘in the Spirit’ in order to comprehend the truths he is telling us.

Having seen the glorified Christ in a visionary way, he would understand the singing of the four living creatures (4:8; 5:8-9; 7:11), and their falling down (19:4), as also the casting down of the crowns (symbols of authority) by the elders (4:10) who fell down before the throne (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4), as likewise the angels (7:11), the singing of the elders (4:10; 5:9), and the crying (7:10) and singing (14:2-3; 15:3ff.) of the redeemed. These, then, were the modes of worship.

CONCLUSION TO CELESTIAL, THAT IS, PURE WORSHIP

Undoubtedly the worship of God’s believers in this world can be very high, rich and fulfilling to the human heart, but not without the Spirit of worship. Our introduction to heavenly worship is a foresight of the worship in which one day we will participate. The revelation we receive in the Revelation is the basis for our hope of eternal worship.

What, then, are the basic principles we have learned from our examination of what we have been pleased to call ‘pure worship’? They are as follows:

- (a) God is worshipped for His essential Being of eternity and holiness, especially as Creator of all things. His eternity is His Being which has always acted, and which will always act, and such actions accord with His nature.

- (b) God is worshipped as Redeemer. The Lamb—under God—is both the Redeemer and the Divine Victor over all evil. He is worshipped with God (the Father) for his work as Redeemer.
- (c) All power is accorded to God for all things, and He and the Lamb take the kingdom of this world, establishing their own Kingdom in authority over all creation.
- (d) God is worshipped because He ‘establishes justice in all the earth’, i.e. He judges all evil—in all its forms— and destroys it, thus purifying the creation and vindicating His own righteousness and love. This He does through the Lamb.
- (e) Worship is accorded at once to both God and the Lamb.
- (f) God is worshipped because, and as, He brings all things to their final climax in Christ the Bridegroom, and in the Bride, the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.

We may find the application of these principles to be strange, and a new way to be going about worship. Nevertheless, this is the way of pure worship.

CHAPTER FOUR

Man At Worship

WORSHIP IN GENERAL

IN this chapter we will discuss worship in general, i.e. the principles which appear to obtain universally. This will then prepare the ground for examining Judaic-Christian worship in particular. Man is a worshipping creature— whatever—so that what is ontological, i.e. true worship, drives man to worship generally through similar, if not identical, ways and modes. What differ are the objects of Worship, and these differences may to a great degree determine worship modes.

THE MEANING OF WORSHIP

Our English word ‘worship’ is from the Old English ‘weorthscipe’, and means ‘worthship’. It carries the ideas of worthiness, hence respect, dignity, recognition of the honour due to one because of his worthiness; hence such titles as ‘your worship’, ‘your majesty’, ‘your excellency’, ‘the right honourable’, all of which are linked with office

rather than the innate character of the person addressed. In the religious worship of God or the gods, the titles will differ, but they will explain and ascribe the nature of the deities.

The primary word for 'to worship' in Israel was *abad*, which meant 'to serve', and related to *ebed*, the primary word for 'servant'. The Hebrew word for the motions and modes of worship—such as bowing kneeling and kissing— was *shachah*, meaning 'to bow (oneself) down'. In the New Testament the Greek verb corresponding to *abad* was *latreuo*, whilst the word for bowing the knee (or 'kissing the hand towards') was *proskuneo*, corresponding to *shachah*. There seems to be little doubt that these ideas are universal both in modes and meaning. *Abad* carries the twin ideas of worshipping and serving, as also does *latreuo*.

The significance of worship is that of serving the deity, that is, to serve is to worship, and to worship is to serve.

THE GOD AND THE WORSHIPPER

To worship and to serve the deity implies a relationship between the god and the devotee. In other words, the heart of the matter is that a man or woman does not stand alone. This seems to indicate that a human being has to recognize that he is not free-standing. No human being can stand alone. He—or she—must worship something or someone—whatever.

In I Corinthians 10:14-22 Paul has a discussion on idolatry, in which he says such things as, 'are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar?' and, 'what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God.' He

is showing that worship is personal. In Joshua 24:14-15 Joshua, in addressing the people, said, 'Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your father served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'

In this passage Joshua is saying that they *cannot but serve* a god or gods. The serving of any deity will be personal. There will be a mutual relationship. Later, when we study idolatry, we will examine the relationship more closely. Then we will see that man cannot live without relationship, yet the service which he gives is not always a matter of a careful liaison with his god or idol. To worship is to serve, and that service is mandatory, for the worshipper is virtually the slave of his god, whether it be an idol or very God Himself. Whilst his idolatry may have begun in an arbitrary fashion, yet soon the worshipper is forced to conform to the laws and demands of his idol.

THE PLACE OF WORSHIP

There is always a sanctuary wherever worship exists. Joshua nominated 'beyond the River', 'Egypt', and the place of 'the Amorites in whose land you dwell'. The lords, gods, idols, and deities seem to have their territory, and their territorial rights. To worshippers of other deities than the Lord, it seemed like pride and presumption for God—the God of Israel—to be called 'the Lord God

Almighty', i.e. 'the God of all gods', so that all deities were thus subservient to Him, and so there was no place where the Lord (Yahweh) was not. When we examine the sanctuaries of the idolaters and the people of the true God, then we will see this more clearly. The nations—for the most part—saw their deity as the god of their family and nation, and so of their territory. This is why the encounter of Jacob with the Lord (Gen. 28:10-22) brought the revelation not only of God's omnipresence, but His personal presence to His servant Jacob, wherever that man went. Romans 9:4-5 shows the special gifts given to Israel, among which are 'the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises'. 'The worship' given to Israel had no point apart from the other gifts—all of which we will see in our study on 'The Covenants and the Worship'.

WORSHIP AND LAW

All worshippers must—perforce—be slaves to their idols (cf. Gal. 4:8-10; Col. 2:13-23). An extended examination of the idols and the idol-lords reveals the tyranny of the gods, and the detailed legalism which had been supposed to deliver from guilt and give freedom. If the idol is not God, then the worshipper will have a deficient object of worship. This will cause the worshipper to be deficient, indeed more so than previously, for he can be no better than his god. In fact, idols are ontologically non-existent. They are the products of men's desires, demands, and their guilt-ridden, God-rejecting hearts and minds. They may well be the very consciences of human beings who are

working out their own expiation or guilt pay-offerings. Whether the statements of the last two sentences (above) can prove acceptable or not, it is certain that no human being is without a conscience, though some persons *appear* to be amoral. What is certain is that man—by nature, fallen or otherwise—is structured to receive laws, and live by laws. He is a legal creature. The true man of God will seek to obey the laws of God. The idolatrous person will always have law, but he may express his resentment and anger with his god/s because he seeks autonomous freedom, yet such a thing no man can obtain in this world. The idolater then may be constantly guilty before his idol, and such guilt, because it has no hope of forgiveness, purification and justification, cannot be authentically expiated. Galatians 4:8-11 and Colossians 2:16-23 show the appalling legalism of the gods and idols, whilst the Judaic-Christian law—rightly understood—is simply the way of living in true freedom. It has its own special provisions for dealing with human guilt.

The Judaic-Christian understanding and practice of law is not merely that God demands obedience—or else! Rather, law constitutes (i) instruction concerning the nature of God which leads to a true explanation of the necessity of law, and (ii) the very way in which the worshipper serves God. As we will later see, obedience—i.e. worshipping (serving)—springs from the love and grace of God (cf. Exod. 20:1 f.; Deut. 30:6). God is not merely a Lawgiver. He is a Life-giver. He gives life by creation and then eternal life by grace. The Judaic-Christian worshipper is not to obey law that is apart from God, but the very law of God Himself, for true law does not exist apart from God. In the New Covenant the same given law of God is called

‘the law of Christ’, i.e. ‘the law of love’.

All worshippers have some kind of nexus or unity with their deities, and that relationship determines their response to the laws of their gods. The Christian believer does not see law as bondage, nor obedience to it to be a condition of his salvation. He is freed from the condemnation of the law in order to obey the law freely.

CHAPTER FIVE

True and False Worship

MAN AND PRIMAL WORSHIP

CREATION, as it was brought into being, was ‘very good’, i.e. without flaw and wholly functional (Gen. 1:31; Eccl. 3:11). In it—the creation—there was nothing essentially evil. In Job 38:7 it is said there was such joy at creation that ‘the morning stars [the angels] sang together, and all the sons of God [the angels] shouted for joy’. The creation of man likewise must have been a joyous thing to the primal pair. Worship for them would have been joyful and natural. The gifts first given to Israel and then later to the church—such as the glory, the sonship, the law and the worship—must have been present initially, i.e. at the time of creation, as a natural part of the order of creation. These gifts which Israel and the church received through grace must have been present to the primal pair for their enjoyment. The giving of worth to God, and the serving of Him, must have been out of innocence of evil, and in the knowledge of the God of righteousness, holiness, goodness, love and truth. The writer of Genesis depicts man walking

with God in the cool of the day, hearing His ‘sound’, and fellowshiping with Him, i.e. worshipping Him.

LAW AND WORSHIP ARE LINKED

Man was given law in a number of ways. In Genesis 1:28f. man was commanded to ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’. In Genesis 2:15 -17 man was to ‘keep’ (i.e. guard) the garden of Eden, and to till it. He is also commanded not to eat ‘of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’.

Man’s worship, then, was to serve God, and this service was a serious matter, though not a thing lacking delight! There was no room for man to do as he willed, i.e. no leeway for vagrant choices. He was God’s slave, but then he was marvellously free in his slavery to be truly man. What we have to understand about all worship is the intercourse of the Deity and the devotee. Primal intercourse must have been incredibly beautiful, wonderfully enriching, and relationally sustaining. Yet it was all in the context of a true directive—the functional laws of life. Later Israel was given the gift of enunciated law, and still later the Christian community was given the law in the shape of ‘the law of Christ’.

THE LOSS OF TRUE WORSHIP

Man’s oneness with God was lost in the fall of man (Gen. 3:1-10). Man was tempted to become autonomous—self-

ruling, self-dependent—so that he might cease to be dependent. In ceasing to be under God, and refusing to be reliant upon Him, man was cast out into a universe where evil powers had already become the opponents of God. Since no human can exist within himself as a free agent, i.e. can be free-standing, every man was forced into the camp of the Evil One. John says the world—evil’s system—lies in the Evil One (I John 5:19). From being under the Lordship of God, man came under the power and bondage of Satan and the fallen angelic powers who were also in his grip (see Rev. 12:4; Eph. 2:1-3; II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Whatever may have seemed to be the restriction of the law or mandate God had given man was necessarily replaced by another law—that of the kingdom of darkness—a harsh set of laws indeed.

Man had been initially warned that if he were to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then he would surely die. That meant—among many other things—that he would have no true worship of God, as also no intercourse with Him. Man, then, would have to find another object (or objects) for worship.

THE BIRTH OF IDOLATRY

Idolatry is the giving of prime worth to any one or thing other than God. Idolatry cannot exist within the pure worship of God. Often a person seeks to include God within the temple of his idols, i.e. for Him to be One within a whole pantheon of idols. Hence Isaiah says (26:13), ‘O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have ruled over us,’ thus showing that Israel had from time to

time combined worship of other gods with the worship of Yahweh. This practice, today, is called syncretism, i.e. the bringing together of different deities, making one deity out of an amalgam of all.

We must realize that the world system under Satan has many brilliant principalities and authorities who themselves combined—and combine—to make a functional and workable system of the kingdom of darkness. This kingdom has an hierarchy. It is interesting to study the idols, lords, and gods of this kingdom of darkness, and to trace through history the generations of lords and devotees within the system.

The true system of God's creation and kingdom we call 'ontological'. Satan seeks to emulate all that God is and does, as also His work of creation, providence, redemption and the like. Here we will not pursue the anti- or ante-ontological elements wrought by Satan, such as those of a surrogate fatherhood, family, kingdom, and a counterpart trinity. The rise and form of these surrogate or counterpart devices can be traced in the Scriptures. Satan can only emulate God, but cannot create, redeem, recreate or restore anything of his own. In no sense is he original. Since all things were created by the word of God (Heb. 11:3), and because Satan has no true word, he must emulate and seek to draw on the power of that which is ontological.

What we need to see is that man can only be *ontologically* satisfied with what is real. Any counterpart to the real may give him what we call 'provisional' satisfaction and fulfilment. If we make for ourselves a surrogate father instead of the real (ontological) Father, then—by nature of the case—we cannot have ontological joy in such a fatherhood. Only the true Father—God—can provide

that. Thus worship of the true Father will provide man with deep emotional and relational satisfaction, but worship of a lesser father—especially evil's father—will leave us deprived, unfulfilled, unsatisfied, and with the guilt that comes to all persons when they undertake the lesser (substitute) worship. The latter kind of arrangement we call 'provisional', but it lacks the reality of the ontological.

THE THINGS THAT CHEAT US OF WORSHIP

God's truth and real worth is seen in His actions of creation, redemption, recreation, and the restoration of the entire universe. God alone can be worshipped for these things, and since Satan has absolutely no worth and seeks to destroy that of true worth, the worship he seeks must be false. The idols promise so much, but because worship of them is entirely without ontological basis and is illicit, then the idols prove fascinating to their devotees, who hate the true, and seek to steal the substantial worth of God.

In all this we should understand that Satan is jealous of God. His fallen angels hate God and the Creator's true angels, and seek to exalt their system above His. Man, too, has the same hunger for authority and power. Indeed, we soon discover that all history is a struggle for power. The guilty seek power for themselves in order to justify themselves, i.e. prove themselves to be right in a world where others accuse, and where their own consciences will never let them off the hook of present and future judgement. To come to worship the true God is to admit they were wrong, and that they lived in an insubstantial world. The kingdom of darkness has no essential (ontological)

existence—hence the fear, and the compulsion to be right and to have dominion over all things. They have nothing to give to God, and they must cling to their own gods, and seek the aid of these powers of darkness—the delusive idols—to increase their goods and things which seem to promise them security. Their kingdom—because of the constant fear of death—is a terrible kingdom.

THE EFFECTS OF IDOLATRY

What man seeks continually is emotional fulfilment. All things or persons which promise such fulfilment occupy his attention, and receive worth (worship) from him. Later we will dig more deeply into the nature of idolatry, but for the moment we will look at its simple and direct effects:

- (a) Man is seduced from his true being, for he can only be true when he relates to God as his Creator, Father, and King. To relate to a surrogate creator, father, and king is to be false to oneself, one's God, and one's creation.
- (b) Man has to live in a lie by rationalizing the God he will not have as being false, the god he worships as being true, the creation he lives in as not coming from God, the person he is (i.e. thinks he is) as being able to exist and subsist apart from the true God. This being so, he is constantly forced to go against the truth—things as they essentially are, i.e. that which is ontological. All of this requires enormous effort and cannot be guaranteed to succeed, since—by nature of the case—it must ultimately fail.

- (c) The idolatrous man ceases to exist as a true person. True law (or laws) would be beneficial to him, were he to follow them, which he does not. Surrogate laws cannot be satisfying. In delusion and accumulating guilt, man's anger against God will increase—especially with every further increase of his own guilt. Such a man is gripped by sin, and sin compounds his guilt, as guilt increases his sin. This is the slavery of sin, as it also is imprisonment within the kingdom of darkness—a kingdom doomed never to succeed.
- (d) Idols are notoriously deceptive. They promise much but give little. If they give, it is only enough to keep the devotee hooked to his deity.
- (e) Idols have no future, no inheritance to offer, no goal to reach. Not being sovereign, they can promise nothing substantial. Since man lives on hope as well as faith and love, the idols cheat him, turning him into a derelict, depriving him of true faith, hope and love.

These are some of the sad results of idolatry, i.e. of false worship and fruitless service.

CHAPTER SIX

Do We Really Worship God?

HAVING A HEART TO TRULY WORSHIP GOD

Do we, really worship God, that is, do we first know as love, and so love Him, and out of our love responsively .worship and serve Him?

If we do not love Him, then we do not really worship Him. If we do not worship Him, then we do not truly serve Him, i.e. we are not part of His action and purpose in history. In order to love God we first have to know Him, and coming to know Him is the most profound crisis a human being can experience in his or her lifetime. In a following chapter we will discuss how it is that a person comes to know and love God, and so proceeds to worship and serve Him. First, however, we need to see whether one needs to know and love God before one can—and will—worship Him.

Moses spoke to God's covenant people, Israel, in the following terms:

'And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

*and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I command you this day *for your good?*'*

The *for your good* which I have italicized is the heart of the matter. It is God who primarily serves us, not us Him! He honours us first by creating us, and then by redeeming us, finally glorifying us that we may be truly the creatures of His love and grace.

Moses then showed Israel God's elective love:

'Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it; yet the Lord set his heart in love upon your fathers and chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day.'

The same elective love has been shown towards us in Christ and the new covenant which he established in his own death, by the shedding of his blood.

The discourse in which Moses spoke the words above is a long one. Prior to the passage just quoted (Deut. 10:12-15), Moses had shown the link between law and worship, and the sturdy and honourable nature of the two elements:

'Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?' (Deut. 4:5-8).

What we need now to see is whether or not we genuinely know and worship God. It is possible for us to live under a delusion that we do, when in fact we do not.

DELUSIONS OR ILLUSIONS THAT WE WORSHIP GOD

The essence of the speech of the martyr Stephen, as we now read it in Acts chapter 7, was that Israel had always been incurably idolatrous. This hateful revelation moved the Jewish hearers to anger. Those hearers constituted the seventy elders of Israel—called the Sanhedrin—and so they decided officially to destroy Stephen. For this reason, his speech ought to be read.

Jesus, no less than Stephen, often spoke of the delusion that had gripped the Jewish leaders. In Matthew 15:8-9 he is heard quoting Isaiah 29:13: ‘This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts [traditions] of men.’ The statement ‘in vain do they worship me’ is a terrible revelation, an unmasking of false worship, but doubtless in Isaiah’s Israel, as in Israel at the time of Jesus, people believed they were truly worshipping God.

In John 8:31-47 Jesus debated with certain of the Jews who opposed him. They were highly critical of him, and in their argument claimed to be children of Abraham and the true sons of God. Jesus told them, ‘You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth.’ His hearers were enraged and finally took up stones to throw at him, and well they might, for Jesus was inferring that their worship, which they thought to be of God, was really of the devil. Ultimately they—amongst others—helped to crucify him, thus showing they were under the delusion that they worshipped God. On this score Jesus warned his disciples concerning the

same people: ‘They will put you out of the synagogues; indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.’ The statement ‘offering service’ can equally be translated ‘offering worship’.

The prophecy of Isaiah which we have quoted above is only one of many strong exhortations the prophets gave to Israel to unmask the hypocrisy of worship in the nation. The same hypocrisy that was found in the Israel of old is also found in the Christendom of today. In the face of human self-deceit, and the deliberate deception practised by evil powers, it would be remarkable if the church had been left unscathed by hypocrisy. Israel was punished many times for its false worship, and church history shows that this has been the case with the church where its worship has become empty and false.

REASONS FOR VAIN WORSHIP

It requires a mammoth task to open this particular can of worms. If man has to have idols then it is because he is incorrigibly a worshipper. He *must* have his objects of worship. When he dresses these up in religious garb, and uses religious language, he appears to justify himself. For example, the so-called ‘Christian worshipper’ may have made an idol out of God! This statement is not as foolish as it may appear to some. We can take favourite texts from the Scriptures and fashion a fair-weather god whose genuine reality is lost to us. This god works according to the modes and mores we have attributed to him, but he is not the true God.

Others do not make a fair-weather god, but a foul-weather one. They see him only as grim, fierce, humour-

less, colourless, vengeful and judgemental. Accordingly, they worship him. Their lives are full of fear, dread of judgement, and their hearts are angry and disturbed. They have a perverse desire for grimness; they seem to desire what they dread. They are conscripted into (so-called) worship. They find no joy in this terrible idol.

So we could go on and find numberless reasons for the types of worship people offer to their deity, thinking him to be the true God. Some worship in offhand and careless ways, having been trained and indoctrinated that way. For others, worship is a pay-off to a demanding deity. Some offer worship to God as holy, but in their heart entertain a kingdom that is not holy. Some are simply moralistic or legalistic, for they do not understand the beauty of God's law. They are ethicists without love, legalists without life, and this shows through their forms of worship. Yet others are far from the states we have mentioned. They are enthusiasts, ecstatic, lacking inhibitions as they offer worship. They have immense delight in colour, form and movement, and are sure their worship is legitimate. Whilst all these elements can constitute part of genuine worship, they may be the very elements Israel experienced on their infamous day of idolatry in the desert when they fashioned the golden calf. They may be the elements of worship in the high places in Israel which were connected with the asherah—the female consort of Baal—or they may be the very elements one sees at a concert of heavy rock music, since this, too, is an intense form of worship.

Whatever the delusions may be to which we refer, we—in order to worship authentically—must have criteria by which we can recognize and practise true worship.

There must be some entrance into such worship. These criteria we will now seek to examine.

CRITERIA FOR RECOGNIZING TRUE WORSHIP

- (a) If we take the principles of worship we saw in the Book of the Revelation, it will mean we know God in His eternity, His holiness, His constant acts in history, His retributive judgements and the fulfilling of His will for creation by the unification and glorification of all things, i.e. things culminating in the ultimate marriage of the Bridegroom and the Bride. The worship Of the Lamb is included in this, and especially in relation to salvation and the defeat of Satan, his kingdom and his powers, so that the people of God are liberated. Thus, if these things constitute the basis of our worship, prayer and service, then we can say we meet the true criteria for worship.
- (b) The command given to Israel for worship was,

‘You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.’

Whilst we rarely have graven images as such, we do have mental images, icons of the imagination which are no less powerful because they are not objectified in material forms. We also have material objects to which we give more honour than is due to them. Again, we have persons whom we idolize. True worship gives due honour to God, man, and other parts of creation. These are criteria we can recognize.

- (c) In the Old Testament the command to worship is on the basis and constraint of God's liberating action. Israel has been delivered from Egypt; then let it truly worship God its Redeemer. In the New Testament the principle is much the same, i.e. 'Let my people go, that they may worship [serve] me'. Jesus said, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.' We love him because he first loved us, and so we serve and worship. We saw in Deuteronomy 10:12-13 that love for God, worship and service are all one. In Deuteronomy 30:6 Moses said, 'And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.' Christ's liberating action of the Cross and Resurrection causes us to see and know the constraint of love and so to worship Him through love.

Disobedience is against true worship. This is seen in I Samuel chapter 15, where Saul listened to the voice of the people and would have kept the cattle of the conquered Amalekites, when God had commanded the destruction of it. Saul told Samuel that the cattle were spared 'to sacrifice to the Lord your God,' but Samuel's reply was,

'Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.'

Thus, if we put worship and service in the same category, it will then be clear whether we truly worship God.

- (d) In the New Testament, worship is linked with the knowledge of God as Father (John 4:21-24; Gal. 4:4-6;

cf. Luke 11:2). Such knowledge and worship come by the Holy Spirit. Pentecost brought the new era of worship with the coming of the Spirit. Paul thus claims, 'We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit.' The new era has arrived, and they who are born of the Spirit, who walk in the Spirit, who are led by him—they are the ones who truly worship in the Spirit. In this age there is no other worship but that which is in the Spirit.

- (e) The above criteria are only some of the tests of true Worship. We can think of false worship which comes out of deceit, desire for satisfaction, legalism, the drive for self-justification, and the like. It is probable that those who worship under such promptings will not see their worship as false. It will be because they do not know God. To such, Jesus said, 'You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know,' and Paul told the Athenians, 'What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.'

COMING OUT OF FALSE WORSHIP

Some readers may find the criteria stated above to be quite devastating. If this be the case, then the answer is to come to know God through Christ. Whilst some have theological or doctrinal knowledge concerning God, they may not have personal and relational knowledge of Him. Without this they cannot truly worship. Jesus claimed to be the Son, to be the embodiment of truth, and he issued the invitation to come to God by way of himself, since he (only) was—and is—the way to the Father.

When we come to God through Christ, receiving the

gifts of forgiveness, cleansing and eternal life, then we—
through the Holy Spirit—truly worship God.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Worship God and Honour Man

A FURTHER TEST OF TRUE WORSHIP: WORSHIPPING GOD CALLS FOR HONOURING MAN

God has said, ‘those who honour me I will honour. ‘Without doubt honour is given to God, and this is synonymous with giving worship to Him. Even so, the test of *whether we give genuine honour to God is whether we truly honour man*. Since man is made in God’s image, then we must honour him.

The writer of Proverbs says, ‘He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honours him.’ We have one God and Father, one origin, and all come from one man; we ‘are all brethren’. We ought therefore to honour all men. James complained about the tongue in its wrong uses: ‘With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God.’ Job cried,

‘If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant, when they brought a complaint against me; what then shall I do

when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him?
Did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one
fashion us in the womb?’

James’ diatribe against those who have partiality—favouring the rich against the poor—is in the same spirit and from the same source.

EVERYONE IS TO BE HONOURED

Our conclusion, then, is that we do not worship God if we dishonour man. That we should honour man is brought out in so many ways. We are to ‘Honour all men’, we are to ‘outdo one another in showing honour’, to ‘Honour the emperor’; husbands are to honour their wives ‘as the weaker vessels’, ‘widows who are true widows’ are to be honoured, fathers and mothers are to be honoured, and old age is to be revered, for it is ordered that ‘you shall rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord’. It is also said that ‘A gracious woman gets honour’ (I Pet. 2:17a; Rom. 12:10; I Pet. 2:17b; 3:7; I Tim. 5:3; Exod. 20:12; Mal. 1:6; Lev. 19:32; Prov. 11:16).

Elders of the church are also to be honoured, and in fact to be given a double portion for their living. If Job speaks of honouring his servants, so, too, masters must be honoured (‘he who guards his master will be honoured’, Prov. 27:18; cf. I Tim. 6:1). Nor is it the successful and the rich who are to be honoured—as such. The Book of Proverbs says often that ‘humility goes before honour’ and that ‘he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honour’. This, of course, was brought out in the parable of the invited guests at a feast, as told by Jesus (I Thess. 5:12; I Tim. 5:17;

6:1; Prov. 15:33; 18:12; 29:23).

When we pause to examine each of the persons who is to be honoured in the account above, we see that no human being is excepted. The foolish man is not to be honoured for his foolishness (Prov. 3:35; 26:1, 8) but then he is to be honoured as a person, for he is still in the image of God. Thus, to kill a man is to dishonour him, and the man or beast that does this must himself (itself) be destroyed. Such dishonouring is of the image of God, and so of God Himself. Many of the old Levitical laws ensured that the poor should be honoured, and likewise the stranger. Life in the womb was also to be respected, and punishment exacted for any dishonouring of a woman or the child in the womb.

To such honouring we might add, ‘Let marriage be held in honour among all’ (Heb. 13:4), ‘magnify the law and make it honourable’ (Isa. 42:21, AV), ‘call the sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honourable’ (Isa. 58:13), for institutions, also, are to be honoured. Likewise to offer sacrifices without true honour is to dishonour them, and the object of their worship, God.

ALL THINGS MUST BE HONOURED

In Romans 1:21-22 Paul says that when men ‘did not honour him as God,’ then ‘they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles,’ i.e. when they ceased to honour God they ceased truly to honour the creation. Indeed, their understanding of the creation was lost, and

in its place they had a false view of it. This was shown by their descent into immorality, i.e. ‘to the *dishonouring of their bodies* among themselves’ (v. 24). The dishonouring of their bodies was a dishonouring of themselves—a frightening thing to contemplate.

The writer continues: ‘[this was] because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever’ (v. 25). The Creator who warrants blessing—i.e. honouring because He is praiseworthy—is dishonoured, and the gift of worship is now expended upon ‘the creature’, i.e. ‘that which is created’, instead of upon Him who is Creator of all things. This is a terrible perversion of God and His creation. It is a dishonouring of Him and all things. The passage that follows—Romans 1:26-32—is an account of the dreadful degradation of the human spirit as it becomes brutalized, dehumanized and debased. All true relationships become evil and perverted. Through dishonouring their glorious Creator, they become inglorious.

CONCLUSION ON THE PRINCIPLE OF GIVING HONOUR TO GOD AND MAN

We may say that there is an ontological drive in man to be honourable, and this by honouring God, his fellow creatures, himself, and the creation. He will always be compelled to honour—i.e. worship—something. When that gift of worship is expended in idolatry, then he must give disproportionate value to God and the various things and elements of this universe. Being so created and structured to find harmony only in the true order of things, and in

giving each element its true value, he does not therefore truly give honour to anything. This means he is awry in his universe, alienated from the Creator, and perverse amongst His creatures. As we have observed, all this is too terrifying and too sad to contemplate. The joy of giving due honour to all things is the joy of living in ontological harmony, from which issues the right worship of God and the honouring of His creation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Encountering God

THE GOD WE ENCOUNTER

PERHAPS we should say, ‘The God who encounters us,’ rather than, ‘The God we encounter,’ for it is God who takes the initiative in worship. He draws us to worship Him, both by His very being, and also by His calling, His ‘prevenient grace’. Even so, it appears to us that as human beings we encounter—or could encounter—God. Do we realize what this must mean? Are we aware of the loftiness of God? Might it not be presumption to think that we can, and may, encounter God? Let us look at some of the ascriptions to Him, and statements about Him which will prevent us being presumptuous in our approach to Him. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ tells us that the experience of the beatific vision is indeed beautiful. ‘Worship the Lord in the beauty [splendour] of holiness’ also informs us that true worship is joyous to the human spirit. What, then, is the nature of God, that we human beings should approach and worship Him?

GOD IS INEFFABLE

Job asked, ‘Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?’ Moses and the people sang, ‘Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?’ In asking, ‘Who is like thee?’ they saw that He was ‘terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders.’ Isaiah’s prophecy asks, time and again, ‘To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?’ Israel had been forbidden to make any god, and to fashion or think of God Himself in the likeness of anything in the universe. In this sense God is ineffable, i.e. unknowable, and undisclosed. Man in his thinking cannot start anywhere to begin to understand and know God. God must reveal Himself or He will not be known. So the prophet Isaiah enquires,

*To whom then will you liken God,
or what likeness compare with him?
To whom then will you compare me,
that I should be like him? says the Holy One.
To whom will you liken me and make me equal,
and compare me, that we may be alike?*

These are searching and unanswerable questions. That God chooses to reveal Himself is a thing of mystery and wonder.

GOD IS HOLY AND POWERFUL IN HOLINESS

*‘Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like thee, majestic in holiness,
terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?’*

‘There is none holy like the Lord,
 there is none besides thee;
 there is no rock like our God.’
 ‘Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?
 And to whom shall he go up away from us?’
 Ascribe power to God,
 whose majesty is over Israel,
 and his power is in the skies.
 Terrible is God in his sanctuary,
 the God of Israel,
 he gives power and strength to his people.
 The Lord is great in Zion;
 he is exalted over all the peoples.
 Let them praise thy great and terrible name!
 Holy is he!
 The Lord God has sworn by his holiness.
 But the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice,
 and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.
 .. they. will sanctify my name;
 they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob,
 and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.

HIS HOLINESS, GLORY, EXALTATION, AND MAJESTY ARE ONE

The following statements show that He is ‘majestic in holiness’:

robed in majesty...girded with strength;
 clothed with honour and majesty;
 clothed with terrible majesty;
 Honour and majesty are before him;
 his glory is above earth and heaven;
 the glorious splendour of thy majesty;
 how majestic is thy name in all the earth!

ENCOUNTERING GOD 61 **Psalm 29 adds colour to this glory:**

ascribe to the Lord glory and strength...
 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;
 the God of glory thunders,
 the Lord, upon many waters.
 The voice of the Lord is powerful,
 the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.
 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars,
 the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon...
 The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.
 The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness...
 The voice of the Lord makes the oaks to whirl,
 and strips the forests bare;
 and in his temple all cry, ‘Glory!’

GLORY AND EXALTATION ARE ALSO LINKED

The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high;
 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!
 Let thy glory be over all the earth!
 For the Lord, the Most High, is terrible;
 the Most High God...
 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders!
 Behold, God is exalted in his power,
 Be exalted, Lord, in thy strength.

HIS HOLINESS HAS A FEAR INDUCING ELEMENT

.. a God feared in the council of the holy ones,
 great and terrible above all that are round about him;
 For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God;
 you shall not bow down to them [other and false gods] or serve them; for
 I the Lord your God am a jealous God;

62 THE WAY AND WONDER OF WORSHIP

'You cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins...' you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God; I will be jealous for my holy name.

HIS HOLINESS IS THE BASIS OF HIS WRATH WHEN HE IS PROVOKED BY EVIL

Now I will soon pour out my wrath upon you, and spend my anger against you, and judge you according to your ways; and I will punish you for all your abominations. And my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; I will punish you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the Lord, who smite. God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation [who expresses his wrath] every day. For all our days pass away under thy wrath... Who considers the power of thy anger, and thy wrath, according to the fear of thee? O Lord, rebuke me not in thy anger, nor chasten me in thy wrath! Thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on wrong.

CONCLUSION TO THE NATURE OF THE GOD WE ENCOUNTER

This, then, is the God Whom we encounter! How wonderful, and yet how fearful is He! How holy and completely beyond us is He. Even so, we encounter Him.

Isaiah (57:15) speaks in the one verse of His loftiness and—also—His tender intimacy with us:

For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.'

As we will see, an encounter with this high and holy God is not beyond human experience. God has already revealed Himself through many media, and reveals Himself every day. It is simply that the fallen' human spirit causes us to fear an encounter. There is no need to fear. To know the true God and His Son Jesus Christ is eternal life.

CHAPTER NINE

Encounters With God

HUMAN ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD

WHAT we might call the ‘awefulness’ of God, in His holiness, His loftiness, His glory and His terribleness, would make us afraid to approach Him. Yet His love, His goodness, His compassion, tenderness and grace, all encourage us to seek Him. What does seeking Him mean when we find we have been sought? What if, meeting Him, we discover we have been met? It is of the one piece. ‘The Father ever seeks us to worship Him.’

The Scriptures give us many descriptions of human beings who have been visited by God. The primal couple heard ‘the sound of God in the garden’. Abel, by faith, offered up an acceptable sacrifice to God, and fellowshiped with Him. Enoch walked with God and was translated, not seeing death. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and God spoke to him. These are all stories out of the dim past of our human history. No wonder some have called them fables or myths, because they seem so unreal to us in what we are pleased to call a ‘scientific age’.

GOD AND ABRAHAM

The story of Abraham seems ever so close to us. It is quite intimate. Stephen the martyr described the meeting of God and Abraham. He said, ‘The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham.’ God appeared many times to Abraham, and spoke to him. Abraham dared to speak to Him, also. In the accounts of the theophanies—the appearances of God to human sight—we find only one special occasion of awe, i.e. that of the ritual of ‘cutting the covenant’. All other accounts seem so natural, and almost domestic. There is even laughter about God’s predictions of the child to come in the old age of Abraham and Sarah. This surely teaches us that we can have encounters with God which are not apparently awesome.

There was that one occasion, however, it being the time of ‘the cutting of the covenant’. We read, ‘As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram [Abraham]; and lo, a dread and great darkness fell upon him’. In this situation the Lord spoke to His servant. Later the prophet Isaiah was to speak of Abraham as ‘the friend of God’. The holiness of God met Abraham in the mystery and power of covenant, the expression of God’s grace.

GOD AND JACOB

Jacob came from a family in which there was fellowship with God. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob had encounters with God. Just prior to the time of his first vision of God, Jacob had fled from the anger of Esau into a strange land, and there, whilst sleeping, had this dream of great significance. In it he saw a stairway to heaven, and the

angels of God ascending and descending its steps. On awakening, Jacob said, ‘ “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it.” And he was afraid, and said, “How *awesome is this place!* This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” ‘ This event was, of course, an event of worship. It was also a time when Jacob promised a form of service to God.

The sense of awe—it seems—was never forgotten. Many years later, and at a time of crisis, Jacob returned to Bethel, the place where he had dreamed. What happened on this second occasion was not in the form of a dream. He wrestled, physically, with a man—a man who was in fact an angel, and almost certainly the angel of the Lord. There was an enormous drive in Jacob to discover the secret of the angel, and thus—it would seem—to have a revelation of God. This was Jacob’s greatest experience of worshipping God.

GOD AND MOSES

The covenant God had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—in turn—drew Him to hear and see the misery of enslaved Israel within Egypt. At the appropriate time He appeared to Moses by the agency of the burning bush. The strange phenomenon was that the bush burned but was not consumed. Doubtless we can draw much spiritual significance from this event, but Moses, who was simply curious as he approached the bush, was warned in strong terms that the ground on which he stood was holy, i.e. that he was in the very presence of God. We are told, ‘Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.’ Such an act was one of true worship.

Later, Moses had other special experiences of meeting God. Like Jacob, he wished to know ‘the whole of God’, and dared to request that God would reveal His full glory to him. This request God refused, saying, ‘You cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live.’ He was permitted to have a limited view of God, but so awesome was it that ‘Moses made haste to bow his head toward the earth, and worshipped’. Later, God told Israel that His communications with the prophets were in dreams and visions, but ‘With him [Moses] I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord.’

GOD AND MANOAH

An angel of the Lord—a theophany—appeared to the barren wife of Manoah, assuring her that she would have a child—the one who was to be Samson. She described the angel to Manoah: ‘his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, *very terrible.*’ When the angel came to Manoah he thought him to be a man, and offered him food. He said to the angel, ‘What is your name?’ The reply was, ‘Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?’ ‘Wonderful’ here really means ‘ineffable’, i.e. ‘beyond understanding’, ‘beyond comprehending’, ‘a mystery’. As Manoah offered a sacrifice to God, ‘the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar while Manoah and his wife looked on; and *they fell on their faces to the ground.*’ Manoah then realised that this was a theophany, an angelic manifestation of God. He said to his wife, ‘We shall surely die, for we have seen God.’ What had at first seemed so domestic quickly took them to the place of worship.

GOD AND DANIEL

In the prophecy of Daniel there are a few accounts of the prophet having visits by angels. The first (8:15-27) was when Gabriel came to Daniel to explain a vision he— Daniel—had seen. Daniel describes this event:

So he [Gabriel] came near where I stood; and when he came, I was frightened and fell upon my face. But he said to me, 'Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end.' As he was speaking to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and set me on my feet.

The next occasion was a second visitation by Gabriel whilst Daniel was 'praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people'. On this occasion there was no swooning.

The third visitation did not appear to be by Gabriel, and the celestial manifestation was a very powerful one. It would appear to be no less than the angel of the Lord, who, by some people, is thought to be Christ the Son of God:

I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with gold of Uphaz. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the noise of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me; my radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in a deep sleep with my face to the ground.

This moving account tells us the powerful impact of the celestial upon the terrestrial, the heavenly upon the

earthly. It shows how we worship when the two come together.

GOD AND HIS PEOPLE

There are many such manifestations in the Scriptures— many indeed. The appearance of God to Job was an event which could not have been invented simply by a writer of plays. It could not just be a literary device. Job was quite overwhelmed by it His final word to God was, 'I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know... I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' This is truly worship.

One of the most outstanding Divine-human encounters was that of Isaiah in the temple, seeing the holy vision of God and being caught in the agony of his own uncleanness. He believed—like Manoah—that he had seen God and must die. He discovered in that hour that the Holy One of Israel is the true Redeemer, and he was released from his defilement by the seraphim who touched his lips with the sacrificial coal from the temple altar and pronounced him free from guilt and defilement. We will see later his worship took the form of service, but his awe on this theophanic occasion knew no bounds. He saw worship happening, and was caught up into it

We might say that Peter had a similar experience of the holiness of God when he fell at the feet of Jesus at the time of the miraculous draught of fishes and cried, 'Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.' His falling at the feet of Jesus was his worship. His cry was that of confession and repentance.

The angry and vicious Saul of Damascus had a glorious vision—a light in the sky that was overwhelming. It was the glory of the risen Christ, and he fell to the ground in awe, crying, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Later he could say, ‘I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.’

The saintly prophet John on the Isle of Patmos was given a most glorious vision of Christ. So overwhelmed was he that he fell at Jesus’ feet as though dead. This was the supreme act of worship. As we have seen, similar experience had happened to Daniel the prophet. Undoubtedly the intercourse of angels with men is a marvel, and cannot be organized by humans. Through such creatures men have a view of God which is both awesome and edifying. Through such events a quality of worship comes to man that is rarely his on other occasions.

THE SIMPLE ENCOUNTERS OF GOD AND MAN

Perhaps no more beautiful heritage has been given to the human race than the Psalms and Wisdom writings of the Scriptures. Here we see, in the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, the rhythm of human living as it meets God and the great realities of His work and will in human affairs. Our thesis holds true in the magnificence of the great men and women whose names are mentioned above. They came out of the ordinary process of life to be faced by the Eternal One, and they were brought into the richest dimension the human spirit can know. Yet the chronicles of such fellowship between God and man must not be confined to these outstanding encounters. Down through our history, countless—
and

nameless—numbers of human creatures have lived in constant encounter with God. The simple, the humble, the unnamed, the ordinary and the needy have trusted God. They have had silent worship with Him in their anguish, their tears, their brave endeavours to follow the Godly way of His will against the innate evil of the fallen human race, and in the face of the attacks of evil powers upon their human spirits. For them ‘the name of the game’ has not been fame or recognition, but a quiet witness to the truth that man can fellowship with God, be drawn to Him, worship Him, and serve Him, knowing that—in truth—it is God who is moving in his—in her— life. The principle of worshipping God, proceeding from worship to action, and then action to worship, has been a pattern worked out in those numberless lives. If mostly unseen, then not unreal is this unceasing scenario.

A CONCLUSION REGARDING THE HEAVENLY-EARTHLY WORSHIP ENCOUNTER

It is true to say that worship does not precede but follows encounters with God in angelic visitants and other forms of theophany. The main point we wish to make here is that if such graduated—i.e. mercifully insulated— manifestations of God cause rich actions of worship, how much more would direct revelations of God Himself cause even more profound worship? If we look at the Scriptures in our previous chapter which describe the holiness, the awefulness, the glory and wrath of God, then we will surely see how merciful God is to protect us from an immediate view of Him.

The spirits that surround thy throne
 May bear the burning bliss;
 But that is surely theirs alone,
 Since they have never, never known
 A fallen world like this.
 O how shall I, whose native sphere
 Is dark, whose mind is dim,
 Before the Ineffable appear.
 And on my naked spirit bear
 The uncreated beam?

CHAPTER TEN

Encounter Worship

WHY GOD ENCOUNTERS MEN

IT is no doubt interesting to describe and discuss the matter of theophanies, but what point is there to them? Does not man have an encounter with God apart from theophanies? The answer must be, 'Yes!' Then why were special encounters given, i.e. in the form of angelic visitants and theophanies? They were given for a simple reason, namely that God is the God of action. He is the God who works in history. He has His plans and His purposes, and He involves man in the outworking of these plans. The biblical term 'the living God' means that God is in action all the time, accomplishing what He will. In working out His plans He comes to certain of His servants in the theophanic way.

This way has behind it a number of reasons. One is to acquaint the person with Himself. He makes that kind of revelation which bums itself upon the recipient, so much so that they are never what they previously were. It has been said that 'Whom God wishes to send out He first calls

into Himself.’ They will have no understanding, no message, no impression to take with them, if God has not first granted such.

The second reason is simple: God wishes to give them a task to do. It is so important that He gives a manifestation. Abraham had to know, understand and work in covenant faith. Jacob was similarly informed, although he already knew of the covenant. Moses was called to be the liberator of Israel, and help fashion the twelve tribes of Jacob into a nation. Manoah was to train his son—Samson—until the time he would be a judge, and Samson was to defeat Israel’s enemies. Daniel was God’s effective servant in Babylon and was to be prophet to his own people. Isaiah was to go as sent to his people and proclaim the word of God. Paul was to preach Christ among the nations. John was to issue his great prophecy of the Revelation.

Now it is apparent that those to whom God appeared had to have such a visitation in order to know God, and so to come to know His will. Later we will open up the principle that worship and service are both the one thing, but here we can see it was so with those whom God had visited. No true worship can be without service, and—for that matter—no true service without worship.

WORSHIP, SERVICE, AND THE WILL OF GOD

Elsewhere we have seen that worship, service, and the will of God (i.e. the plan of God) are very closely linked. At the beginning, when God created man, His first command was for man to work in this world, and to work purposefully. It is significant that with the creation of man and

woman He blessed them first before giving them the mandate to work. They were at one with Him, i.e. worshipped Him. They knew Him, and they were aware of His will. The major thing of all history is the will of God.

MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAD ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD

The loss of the knowledge of God brought the loss of true worship and so the coming of false worship. With that came also disobedience. The law of God was subverted, and His will was not done. The truth of revelation is that God insists on disclosing Himself to man, that man may again know Him and so worship Him, become aware of His will and do it. This, then, is the key. of which we have spoken above, for Abel was a prophet (Luke 11:5 1), and so, also, was Enoch (Jude 14). Noah also was a righteous man, a proclaimer of the truth. Abraham was—and is—the father of the faithful, the progenitor of people of the faith, and was called ‘the friend of God’. Jacob the supplanter became the man-who-had-striven-with-God (or, perhaps, the man with whom God had striven), and he was the father of all Israel.

Moses was the meekest man upon all the earth. At the same time he was the great pioneer of Israel’s faith and Israel’s nation. The encounter of God with Manoah—as we have seen—played a significant part in the life of Samson, as indeed did Manoah’s wife, who was part of that meeting. Isaiah’s encounter with God is in one way a paradigm for us today. Theologically we learn that without a revelation of God we cannot know His holiness, and so we cannot have an effective revelation of our defilement and doom, and without such knowledge we will not

come to repentance, faith and—so—salvation. Daniel— that man who had many meetings with God—also was a prophet and an outstanding man of God in all his life, and his teaching is of great value to us today.

The story of Mary the mother of Jesus and her encounter with Gabriel is of great value. She, too, was told she would be the mother of Messiah. Zechariah was aided to receive John the Baptist as his son, and the precursor to the coming of Christ Whilst Peter did not exactly have a theophany in the fishing boat, yet he did have a change of life in it; and later, at the Mount of Transfiguration, he did have a theophany which came to be most significant for him (II Pet. 1:16-19).

Paul's vision transformed him into the great apostle to the nations, and the greatest protagonist, apologist and teacher of the Christian faith. In his case, our argument— namely that theophanies all lead to action—is clearest of all. He tells us, 'He was pleased to reveal his Son in me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.' Time and again Paul returns to this theme, namely that God appeared to him by and with a revelation that was intended to cause him to preach the Gospel to the nations. No encounter of worship without consequent action of service.

We cannot estimate the value of the manifestation of Christ and his work in history to the prophet John on the Isle of Patmos. The canon of Scripture would not only be much less intelligible without the Book of the Revelation, but it would lack the knowledge we require to truly understand God's action in our present stage of history.

We may rightly conclude that God's encounters—be they theophanic, be they by His word, through His acts in

history, or any other medium—are intended to bring the knowledge of Himself to men and women, to lead them into worship, and so into service.

GOD SEEKS US FOR HIMSELF

What is written above in this chapter appears to be utilitarian, i.e. God seems to meet us to reveal Himself in order that we may worship Him, serve Him, and do His Will. It is not, however, just this. Israel was chosen as His people because He had set His love upon them for the reason only that He loved them. The forbearance that God had towards Israel is the story told time and again by the prophets. Hosea is a beautiful and yet sad story of how God loved Israel freely, albeit they were unfaithful to Him. If being Israel had been simply a matter of true worship, true service, and true sharing in the fulfilment of His will, then Israel must be seen as having failed. It was simply by God's grace that they were not destroyed and that He persisted with them. No, there is nothing utilitarian in God's revelations of Himself or His encounters with men and women. The New Testament statement (unique amongst all religions) that God seeks us to worship Him—seen in the stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son—all tell us that He is the God who loves us and seeks us in the midst of our sinfulness in order to redeem us. He redeems us for our sakes. He renews us into full sonship. He sanctifies us and sets us on the path of glorification.

It is true that we worship Him as we come to know Him as the loving Father. It is true, also, that we serve Him, but

then this is a free service and a loving co-operation with Him in His plan for mankind. The revelation of who He is will not let us do otherwise. We simply wish to do His will—that most significant of all things in all history. What, however, is so rich—so unbelievably wonderful—is that we know this God whose holiness could terrify us, whose greatness could astonish our simple humanity, and whose wrath upon evil could send us into states of dread, to be the God who loves us. No wonder we worship Him!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A Brief Survey of Worship

INTRODUCTION TO A BRIEF SURVEY OF WORSHIP

A complete survey of man's worship would require many volumes of treatment, since it would include not only Judaic and Christian worship, but also worship in other religions and cultures—a massive work indeed! In this short survey we seek to get the shape of worship, rather than treat it in detail. It will help us to get Judaic-Christian worship into some time and cultural perspective. We may—though briefly—adduce certain principles of worship by means of such a survey.

MAN'S WORSHIP OF GOD IN INNOCENCE

We have seen, briefly, that the first couple had a rich affinity with God. They knew Him, and such knowledge presupposes worship. They were commanded to do His will, but then the command came not as harsh law or

dominating demands, but as sharing with God in His Lordship over creation. The total absence of guilt, fear, apprehension, and dread of the creation must have made for a joyous way of living. Worship would have required no effort, nor would obedience have brought other than delight.

So much for primary worship—the worship of innocence.

THE FALL OF MAN AND THE CHANGE IN WORSHIP

We have also seen, briefly, that man's desire for autonomy—'you will be as God [gods], knowing good and evil'—beguiled the woman into thinking she could be moral apart from God. The man likewise wished to be free-standing, and the state of free-standing did not—and does not—allow for pure, i.e. contingent, worship of God. Paul summed up this human sortie into so-called freedom, by saying, 'When they knew God they honoured him not as God, neither were thankful.' Honouring and thanksgiving—so evident in the pure celestial worship—were abandoned. Innocence lost, man proceeded with his own version of 'good and evil', to his detriment, so that he was inevitably landed into idolatry. Compelled to worship by an innate ontological pressure, he found his release in idolatry. That which is not ontological cannot give pure expression to worship, nor can the idolater receive ontological love, joy and peace. He must be satisfied with less than the best. He is as a star without orbit, a heart lost from its true home.

TWO BROTHERS AT WORSHIP

Cain and Abel represent two streams of humanity, both of them worshipping but at different levels—on vastly different planes. Cain had anger and hostility towards his brother and so towards God (cf. I John 4:20; cf. 3:10-11), or, towards God and so towards his brother. We are told that Abel offered his sacrifice by faith, and it appears from Hebrews chapter 11 that all who worshipped by faith had acceptance with God. It little matters what form the ritual took. The heart—i.e. the attitude of heart—is the thing that matters, as we have seen in Isaiah 29:13 (cf. I Sam. 15:22-23; Ps. 40:6; 51:16-17; Micah 6:7-8). At best Cain's offering would represent a bribe, even if it were that unconsciously.

ORIGINS OF HUMAN WORSHIP

The question is whether—as some anthropologists believe—man was originally monotheistic* and receded

* Monotheism—even ethical monotheism—as a religious-philosophical system has been accorded a higher place than polytheism, yet monotheism as such is not necessarily dynamic and enriching. Islam has no true Father for it has no true Son, so that the mystery of human relationships is also lost. Hinduism is really monotheistic at heart, for its many lords and deities represent part of the great Ram—the one true God. Perhaps we should count Buddhism as the highest conceptual achievement of all, since it goes beyond monotheism to atheism. Its adherents are in fact mostly idolatrous, but Buddha had no belief in God as God. Because man rejected God, according to the Pauline account in Romans chapter 1, it should not be surprising to reflect that many religions would have risen out of man's desire to have gods other than the God of heaven. We ought not to be surprised at the rich variety of religions. A phenomenology of them all may result in a number of common principles of worship and service to the lords and deities, but these would be surely linked with the drive that there is in man to have his object of devotion. Israel's worship seemed so different—so *other* than even the immediately surrounding forms of culture and worship—as to make it quite distinctive.

into polytheism. Some biblical scholars would also hold this view, and go further and say that there has always been an ontological sense deep in the heart of man which is a sense of the unity of God, and which tells man how he ought to approach God, i.e. in faith and trust, and acknowledgment of his—man's—sinfulness and need of Divine grace.

ANTEDILUVIAN AND POSTDILUVIAN WORSHIP

It appears that Seth was the substitute given to his mother for the murdered Abel. From the time of Seth—or perhaps from the time of his son Enosh—men began to call upon the name of the Lord', i.e. they worshipped Him. Just how they worshipped is not said, but we gather from Abel's sacrifice that such a system of worship was with man from the beginning.

In the age of Noah evil had spread across the face of the earth, for 'every imagination of the thoughts of his [man's] heart was only evil continually'. Following the Flood, Noah offered sacrifices upon an altar, and these were burnt offerings in the nature of thanksgiving to God for His grace. This was Noah's worship of the Lord.

The building of the tower of Babel was an arrogant affair. The humility of true worship was absent. Man, again, sought his own thing. God did not view this bid for human independence of Him with indifference. The now monolithic nature of the race was shattered with the coming of many tongues. From that point onwards it is difficult to be specific about the varied forms of worship that must have arisen.

PATRIARCHAL AND COVENANTAL WORSHIP

Abraham was an idolater. This information is derived from Joshua 24:2, and appears to be substantiated by Romans 4:1-5. God called Abraham's family from 'beyond the River', i.e. the Euphrates where the family 'served other gods'. God showed His glory to Abraham (Acts 7:2), and so began in Abraham that belief in God which was accounted to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6), and with it came a different kind of worship. We do not know exactly what this was, but we know Abraham's relationship with God derived from his faith in God. God appeared to him many times in theophanic forms.

Worship comes from knowledge, and we know that Abraham built an altar at Shechem (Gen. 12:7), another near Bethel (Gen. 12:8; cf. 13:4), and yet another at Hebron (13:18). It is notable that these altars are linked with covenantal promises. The offering of Isaac was on an altar that Abraham built on the mountain in the land called Moriah. This sacrifice was also linked with promise of the covenant. The statement often made in connection with these altars was, 'Abraham called upon the name of the Lord,' which was a term for the worship of faith.

Isaac is only said to have built one altar—that of Beersheba (Gen. 26:25). Here he called on the name of the Lord. His son Jacob came to Bethel (formerly called Luz), and having had a dream of God he saw the place as 'the house of God', i.e. 'Bethel'. He made a pillar from the stone which had been a pillow, and poured oil on it. Later he came to Shechem—following his meeting with Esau—and built an altar, calling it 'God, the God of Israel'. Later

God commanded him to go back to Bethel and build an altar, which he did, and called the place 'El-bethel'.

NO LITTLE WORSHIP

The account such as we have given in this section may appear somewhat cold and formal, yet the events themselves were not. Involving the worshippers, calling upon the name of the Lord, and building altars could not have been matter-of-fact events. We have seen in our discussion on 'Encounters with God' that theophanies are remarkable events. The giving of the covenant first to Abraham, then to Isaac, and finally to Jacob, were events far from 'run of the mill'. They were extraordinary. They were magnificent and beautiful. Out of such encounters with God, idolatry was spurned as being spurious, the vision of a wonderful family saga was born, a child was born in the old age of its parents, a son allowed himself to be bound to an altar of sacrifice, and a 'supplanter' was changed into a man who dared to strive with God Himself. The sacrificial offering of a son who was to be heir to the world is perhaps one of the most striking and gripping stories of human history. Certainly there was knowledge of God, intimacy with Him in His purposes for the human race, and worship of a high order, however primitive it may appear to our—so-called—modern eyes. Worship is always a mystery. Whilst the altars of those days have long vanished, and even some of the place-names have gone back again to anonymity, yet the worship then offered stands high in the living annals of man's spiritual history, and is deeply implanted in what we call 'salvation history'. It is part of the rich treasury of human events, and of the human race.

WORSHIP IN ISRAEL

Whilst certain cultures have a rich history of worship, probably none has one so fine as that of Israel. We certainly cannot do justice to it in so brief a survey, and we will need to return time and again to look at its extraordinary *cultus* of moral laws, ethics, sacrifices, rituals and ceremonies, all fraught with meaning. Some scholars see this *cultus* as being partly derived from other cultures and religions. They see it firstly as a syncretism of other forms of worship, the turning of polytheism (many gods) into monotheism (one God), and secondly as adaptations of rituals, festivals and sacrifices which form a synthesis. If this were the case, then the worship of Israel—and for that matter much of Christian worship—was not built upon principles which are ontological, but those which were mainly provisional. Did Israel's worship, then, proceed not from revelation but from other sources?

ISRAEL'S WORSHIP WAS COVENANTAL

As the patriarchs' worship was rooted in covenantal promises, so was that of Israel the nation. The Book of Exodus tells us of Israel as a slave people in Egypt, suffering deeply, and being remembered by God, who promised He would liberate them from their cruel taskmaster, Pharaoh. God had remembered His covenant, and set about delivering Israel. His message to Pharaoh was, 'Let my people go that they may serve [worship] me.'

The training of this people of God in the wilderness was the history of a people being prepared by Him to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. They were to be 'the

priest nation among all nations'. They were given laws which were so special that no other nation has ever equalled them. There was a rationale behind their sacrificial system which set the basis and reason for the later all-redeeming sacrifice of Christ. Their ethical scheme was integrally a part of the moral, sacrificial, and worship system. Also linked with this remarkable pattern were laws of relationships, hygiene and sanitation. The whole of it made for remarkable social living.

Whilst the system was a fine one, yet that did not mean Israel as a nation steadily and meticulously observed it. Its principle was based on the love of God to the nation, and the nation's responsive love to Him, so that human obedience was to spring from responsive love and gratitude. Covenantal love assured them that 'God's gifts and calling are without recall', so that the nation could trust God. Sadly enough, the call and attraction of idolatry, with its sensual overtones, its sex-mystique, and its seeming freedom from too rigid a morality, often drew Israelites into worship orgies. Polytheism—the distracting worship of many deities—generally destroys that unity of the personal human spirit and of the nation which is found only in monotheistic worship. When the personal knowledge of the true God is lost, then pure worship is adulterated and presents great dangers to the person and the nation.

THE BASIS OF ISRAEL'S WORSHIP WAS THE NATURE OF GOD

As we keep suggesting, Israel's worship system was linked with God's covenant love, yet that love issued from holiness. It was not a static holiness, a simply ethical

purity, but holiness which confronted profanity anti impurity to defeat and destroy it. It was redemptive holiness which insisted upon proper righteousness. The prophetic cry was that God, 'the Holy One of Israel, is your Redeemer.' The various rituals which were linked with ceremonial purification were meant to teach the principle of Godly holiness. The redemptive sacrifices brought back erring Israelites to 'covenantal righteousness' and so to 'covenantal holiness'. Doubtless the sacrificial system brought relief from guilt to sinful men and women, and thus assisted in their continuing and general good health, since much sickness springs from guilt in the conscience (cf. Isa. 1:2 -6; 24:4-6; Ps. 103:3).

Some ceremonies were linked with God as Creator, Sustainer of creation, and Provider. The festivals celebrated the great events of the Passover, the deliverance from Egypt, the provision of crops, and the maintaining of cattle. They were re-enactments of God's saving events, and His creational blessings. They were events of *anamnesis*, i.e. 'remembrance', for such remembrance was dynamic—a reminder from the past of God as the living and acting God, and so a stimulus in the present to faith and hopeful expectation.

THE PRIESTLY SYSTEM AND THE WORSHIP OF THE PEOPLE

We will not seek to cover Israel's worship system at this point, but will return later to examine some of its details. What we need, now, to see is that the moveable Tent or Tabernacle God commanded Moses to build during the desert journeying was built on a definite pattern for worship.

Later it was the pattern for the building of the Temple.* By the time of the New Testament it was quite elaborate, but it remained essentially faithful to its original form, i.e. a centre for the true worshippers to assemble, the place of worship with the altar of sacrifice, the ablution bath or 'sea' for cleansing of the priests before they entered into the shrine, the first part of which was for the offering up of prayer by means of the altar of incense. This first section of the shrine—'the holy place'—contained the sevenbranched candelabra, and the loaves of showbread. The final section which contained the ark of the covenant was known as the 'holy of holies'. Only the high priest was permitted to enter there, and then but once a year with the blood of the atonement sacrifice which he sprinkled on the mercy seat situated on the cover of the ark of the covenant—the symbol of God's presence—overshadowed as it was by the forward-outstretched wings of the cherubim.

THE TABERNACLE—AND TEMPLE— THE PLACE OF PRAYER, PRAISE AND WORSHIP

We know Jesus called this place 'the house of prayer' and 'my Father's house'. 'House of prayer' means 'house of worship' (cf. II Chron. 7:15 - 16). It was the only place of worship for all Israel, and sacrifices were not to be offered apart from its altar. The worship—including fasts and festivals—presupposed the whole structure of the Aaronic priesthood and the Levites, not all of whom were priests. It

also presupposed the great days of praise, great times of joy, with the use of instruments by the Levites to accompany the singing of psalms and spiritual songs (I Chron. 2 5:1; II Chron. 5:12 - 14; 7:6), even to the point of prophesying. The Psalter with its one hundred and fifty Psalms was—and is—a treasury of devotion, truth and doctrine that has never been exhausted. Certainly the house of prayer, praise and worship was not at all dull. Not only do the Psalms themselves speak with love and loyalty of 'the house of God', but the history of Israel is the history of the temple. Even the city Jerusalem was famed because it was the city of the temple, rather than its shrine being merely the temple of the city.

THE PROPHETIC SYSTEM AND THE WORSHIP OF ISRAEL

Because God was holy it was intended that the worship of Him should be pure. We have seen that covenant, law, worship and service are all components of the will of God, and the doing of the will of God—as His covenant people. The worship structure was certainly a given system, and only those of the house of Levi could be priests and servants of the temple.

By contrast was the prophetic ministry. It was not inherited. It was not ordered by the king, or called into being by the priestly caste. Anyone of any tribe could be a prophet if God called him to that function and office. Prophetic ministry was by calling and not by human appointment. By nature of the case, the royal house could not name a prophet since often the prophet had to deliver a message to the king, as he also had to prophesy to the people. Often that prophesying would have to be against

* See my *Living Faith Study* (No. 40) 'The Tabernacle, and the True and Living Way' (NCPI. 1979) for a detailed description of the structure, furniture and worship of the Tabernacle and later Temple.

the king, and against the people. Some scholars have supposed that a constant ‘law versus prophet’ struggle went on in the nation. Some have even supposed that the prophet was seeking to take the nation on beyond law. Neither of these things is true. The prophet was the messenger who delivered God’s word to the nation at his—and its—particular point of history. Far from negating law the prophet upheld it, but then he upheld the living nature of the law as against mere traditional understanding and outward but hypocritical observance of it.

It is true that the prophet brought fresh revelations of God, and predictions in regard to what He was about to do with His people, but none of this was outside the parameters of the covenant. The prophet was the servant of the covenant, and in bringing renewal by the word— from which often issued revelation and reform—the prophet helped to revive true worship. Since the prophet was really the voice of God (cf. Exod. 7:1-2; I Pet. 4:11), the law was never allowed to lapse into a system of legislation, or a mere code of observance, without the prophetic voice being raised against such culpable deviations. ‘Where there is no prophecy [vision] the people cast off restraint [perish]’, meant that the word of God had to come through freshly, by the prophet, to each generation. We have said (above) that the nature and action of God is the basis of true worship. Worship of God is only alive in God’s people when His people are alive to Him, and the prophets were saying that God was still directly speaking to His people, that He was ‘the living God’, i.e. always doing His works amongst them as He related to them.

WORSHIP OF GOD IN THE NEW *TESTAMENT*

We will later be giving considerable attention to this era of worship, so that what we say here will be minimal as we do a brief survey of worship as it developed in the new Christian people whose roots had been in Judaism, assuming as we do that they had become the true people of God.

JESUS AND HIS WORSHIP

Jesus was certainly a true Jew. He was presented to the Lord at the time of his circumcision, and by dedication came into the congregation at the age of twelve. He looked upon the Temple as ‘my Father’s house’, and. ‘the house of prayer’. He attended the festivals, insisted on careful obedience to the law, taught that this law would not be abrogated, and commended the ministry of the prophets. He came only for ‘the lost sheep of the house of Israel’, and rarely ministered to any person outside of Israel. He told the Samaritan woman at the well that salvation was only of the Jews and the true place for authentic worship was Jerusalem, and Jerusalem only.

All this given in, he also told the same Samaritan woman that things were changing in regard to both worship and salvation, and this because of his own presence in the world. A new worship situation was arising without reference to either Jerusalem (the Temple) or Shechem (an ancient place of worship). The new worship would have to be (i) of the Father, and (ii) in spirit and in truth—not, of course, that worship in Jerusalem ought ever to have been otherwise.

He warned his disciples that the Temple would shortly

be destroyed, yet he did not teach them any alternative to Temple worship. The four Gospels tell us of synagogue worship, and historically that worship is not difficult to understand, since we can trace its patterns because of the many accounts of it which are available to us.

PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

The two principles Jesus set before the woman at the well were those which came into being at Pentecost. Filled with the Spirit, the followers of Christ began to worship, proclaiming ‘the wonderful works of God’. The Spirit had led them into all the truth, i.e. the truth of the Father and the Son. So then they could worship (i) God as the Father, and (ii) in the Spirit and in the truth that Spirit revealed. The revelation came by the Spirit at Pentecost. Later Paul claimed that the Jews were the circumcision who worshipped God in the flesh, whilst the Christian people were the true circumcision who worshipped Him in the Spirit.

Historians have shown us that much of early Christian worship was based upon the modes of synagogue worship, and this is surely correct. However, we need firstly to ask whether synagogue worship itself did not truly embody the same principles of worship as were followed in the Temple—excepting, of course, the sacrificial and festival worship. The Epistle to the Hebrews leads us into the Christian understanding of covenant, Christ being Mediator of this better Covenant, his being the true High Priesthood with the consequent efficacy of the Atonement, and the resultant approach of the new worshippers to God, as they were granted a conscience purified from

dead works (Heb. 1:3; 9:14; 10:22) and so led to a true worship of the living God. It is clear from this Epistle and from I Peter 2:1-10 that the early church believed its worship to be authentic and of a deeply spiritual character. We might even claim that they saw their worship to be ontological, and so to constitute the only true worship.

From a passage such as Ephesians 5:18-20 it is clear that worship with its ‘psalms and hymns and spiritual songs’, and with its thanksgiving to the Father, arose from worshippers being filled with the Spirit. In I Corinthians chapter 14 this becomes even more clear. The presence of the Spirit in worship, his assistance in prayer (cf. Rom. 8:26), and his leading in the use of the gifts he had distributed, is evident. Galatians 4:4-6 (cf. Rom. 8:14-16) speaks of the cry of the heart as it discovers the Fatherhood of God and the sonship of all believers—and this a revelation by the Holy Spirit. It is also clear that the Lord’s Supper was celebrated, and that this worship was most important. This ordinance or sacrament looked back to the event of the Cross and proclaimed it powerfully in the present whilst it spoke of ‘things to come’, i.e. the great Messianic banquet of triumph which would happen at the end-time, when the Kingdom of God would be consummated.

WORSHIP AND SERVICE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

As in Israel, so in the church, worship and service go together. Indeed, they are the one, each inseparable from the other. Such service is not only internal, i.e. member to member, but it is also to the world, chiefly in the proclamation of the Gospel of grace. At the same time the early church lived in expectation of the coming Kingdom, and

the true worship which would ensue. It is fitting that the Book of the Revelation concludes, and rounds off, the canon of Scripture, for—as we have seen—the church will be translated into the realm and experience of pure worship, the worship which will include the ‘whole company of heaven and earth’. Later we will see that Christian worship has to be conducted in a world of conflict, of flux, and that in essence it is eschatological (see Chapter 28, ‘True Worship in the Eschaton’).

THE HISTORY OF FALSE WORSHIP

No history of true worship is complete without reference to the saga of false worship—that ever-present evil which seeks to draw men from the knowledge, service, and adoration of God. No better description can be given of it than in Romans 1:19-32. Along with this account is the centuries’ old history of idolatry found particularly in the Jewish Scriptures and the history of mankind in general. We have noted that Satan is compulsive in his desire and ambition to have heavenly and earthly creatures accord him high esteem and worship. Much of the tragedy of God’s people has been worked out in the realm of the delusive idols. They promise what they cannot give. A comparison of true and false worship reveals this fact

CONCLUSION TO A BRIEF SURVEY OF WORSHIP

Undoubtedly this short history of worship is fragmentary, but it is our intention to dig yet more deeply into the

nature of worship, and seek to discover its rich principles by which we can better adore and serve Him. Two thousand years of Christian history have undoubtedly garnered great worship treasures, but much that is faulty has also invaded the doctrine and practice of the people of God. The line of Cain and the line of Abel is really the history of mankind—the struggle for worship by Satan, and the unremitting demand for it by God. We will need to examine our historic development of Christian worship both in the East and the West, and seek to determine whether what obtains today in worship is consistent with the principles which obtained in the apostolic church and the apostolic faith, i.e. the worship which issues from the eternal Gospel.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Breakthrough into Worship

HE WHO KNOWS GOD WORSHIPS HIM

JESUS said to His Father on the night of his betrayal, ‘And this is eternal life; that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’ He meant that the very knowing of God is life, and life of that quality which can be called ‘eternal’. What do we mean by this? We mean that all life is a matter of relationships. As human beings we can relate to other persons, and to objects, i.e. to our environment, our possessions and the works of our hands. A relationship with a person can be detached, even negative, but when it is genuine, personal and intimate, it can be of the highest quality that a human being can experience. When our relationship is with God, then it is of an extraordinary nature, but not yet above what it means to be truly human. God and man in union with each other, having fellowship one with the other, is of the highest order of human experience. That is why Jesus called it ‘life eternal’.

THE DREADFULNESS OF NOT HAVING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Two-way relationships with another—or others—can be most thrilling. True knowledge of another human being is relational, and not just cerebral, i.e. purely of the intellect through observation, analysis and deduction. To know a human being by relationship is a matter of heart to heart, mind to mind, even soul to soul and spirit to spirit, which are simply ways of saying that we fully accept one another and relate each to the other. By this means we discover the excellencies of those we now relate to, and accept them even though some of their habits and idiosyncrasies do not appeal to us.

When man knew God because he was created by Him, then his knowledge of God was wholly innocent and so most beautiful. To know God was to be a full and true human being. To reject such knowledge was what we might call ‘spiritual suicide’. God forbade man to eat of ‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’, warning him that to eat of it would be to die. Man ate of it and died. Because, in fact, he continued to exist, we make the mistake of thinking that he did not die, but was simply doomed—one day—to go to physical death. Indeed, man did die. He died *relationally* to God. He was no longer in communion with Him. Such a death was (is) dreadful.

Each one of us, at some time or another, has died *relationally* to another person. Some children have come to hate a parent with bitter hatred. A husband and wife have come to do the same thing, and the State, on hearing their case, pronounces their divorce each from the other. We might call this *relational death*. Only those who have

experienced it know how sad and bitter it can be. Man, in his rejection of God, lost his *relational* union with God. This loss of union has unmanned or demanned man, i.e. man is no longer fully a human being. Without God he is Godless, and really manless.

The one who has died to God and so come alive to himself is self-seeking, self-protecting, self-extending, and so in many ways is essentially selfish. He is not *man-ful* but *self-ful*. Human beings, in order to have true relationships with one another, must have them via their primary relationship with God. This is by nature of the case, i.e. by nature of creation. So then, where God is not known *relationally* He is not truly known, and the human being who has rejected knowledge of Him is in a pitiable plight. True and rich relationships with others and himself are not possible. The person, generally speaking, does not realize it is this way. He continues to rationalize his life as being normal, when indeed it is not.

THE BONDAGE OF UNGODLINESS

Paul once wrote, 'When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly.' By 'ungodly' he meant 'not knowing, and not believing in God'. He meant 'separated from God, living on one's own'. This state of being is such that man does not really live. It is a state which drives man to have idols. He *must* worship, and so he makes his idols, trying to give them the characteristics or attributes of God so that they will be powerful enough to accomplish for him what he desires of them. He desires emotional fulfilment, security in life, and even security against death. The idols cannot give him these things

What man needs more than all that he wants is freedom from his guilts and cravings, rest from the torment of his conscience, joy in knowing God, and living in all His love and gifts. Instead, man is shackled, in bondage to his own selfishness, to his gods, and to the powers of darkness and evil which fasten on man by reason of his guilt. His sins compound his guilt, and his guilt compounds his sins, and he is caught irretrievably in his own ego. Far from knowing and loving God, he is angry with Him and seeks *not* to know Him. Since he has an ontological drive to know God—without Whom he cannot be truly himself—he lives in misery, the misery of never being truly fulfilled, and of living in a constant state of deprivation. Nor is this misery solely within the self-action of a sinful human being. It is also linked with the powers of evil which seek to keep man in bondage, tormenting him with his guilt and failure, and keeping him in such misery.

It is this misery which God seeks to dispel. He seeks to bring man to Himself, and thus to liberate him to be once more truly man—filled with love and joy and peace! God plans and God effects his salvation.

THE FULLNESS OF FREEDOM

God told Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, 'Let my people go, that they may serve [worship] me.' He knew His people would have to be liberated in order to worship. Egypt itself was filled with idols and idolatrous worship. The Israelites were slaves of Pharaoh. They needed to be freed. God was telling Pharaoh that a free person can worship God freely, and that only, a free person can do so.

When God effected Israel's liberation from Pharaoh, He commanded worship of Himself. This was reasonable on two scores: (i) God had made a covenant with the patriarchs of Israel, namely Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and (ii) by reason of this promise He had actually liberated the nation of Israel from Egypt's bondage. He therefore said,

'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments?'

God was saying, 'I liberated you. It is reasonable then to demand your total worship of Me.' If we think about it, then, God had revealed Himself as the God of covenant, the God of love, by liberating His people. In fact by doing this His liberated people could now see who He really was (is).

It is the revelation by God of His true nature which causes people to worship Him, and this with responsive love and joy. Worship is rich and wonderful because man was made to worship God, but it is ever so much more wonderful because God has cared and loved enough to bring man to his freedom when he did not (does not) deserve it! God's love, then, is personal, and by it man comes into true union with God, living constantly in His love.

THE TOTAL LIBERATION OF A HUMAN BEING

Jesus stated, 'Every one who commits sin is the bondsman of sin... but if the Son shall make you free *you shall be free indeed.*' What did he mean by *free indeed*? The answer must be: 'Free from the guilt and wretchedness of sin, with its dreadful accusations by the conscience. Free from sin's power to drag one down, or control one, and free to be pure and not sense any personal moral defilement. It must mean freedom from the endless drive of one's self, and liberation into a new life in which one can worship God with love and peace and joy, can know Him and so know others, and find life a matter of true liberty.'

The writer of Hebrews said, 'how much more shall the blood of Christ purify your conscience from dead works to serve [worship] the living God.' He had been describing the Old Testament ritual of cleansing oneself ceremonially after touching a dead thing, and he contrasted it with the sacrificial death of Christ. He was saying Christ's death effects total purity within the conscience of a human being. When that person experienced this purification he would be freed from the bondage of his sin, and would thus have a revelation of the grace and love of God, and so be joyfully compelled to worship Him! All this on the basis of, 'Let my people go that they may worship me.'

Paul also referred to the same principle. He said, 'I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.' He was saying—in effect—'God's mercies have liberated you from your former bondage to sin and guilt, so now, in response, offer up your body—that most vital and worshipping part of

you—so that in all your living you are glad to worship the living God.’ First mercies which bring freedom, and then worship as a result of that freedom.

In the Book of the Revelation John the Seer describes a vast multitude of human beings in heaven. They are dressed in white—the symbol of purity and victory; carrying palm branches—symbols also of victory and praise. The celestial Elder who attends John tells him, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* are they before the throne of God, and serve [worship] him day and night within his temple.’ Here again is the thrilling and dynamic principle, ‘First liberation, then worship.’ Such worship is irresistible.

THE PRINCIPLE OF LIBERATION

All that I have written in this chapter may fail to have any appeal to a certain reader. That reader will think that this idea of freedom is nonsense. He will say, ‘I find no urge to worship God. I do not see myself as the slave of sin and evil powers. I can manage to live sanely without the bondage this writer describes. To me, therefore, what he says is a lot of nonsense.’

One must accept that assessment, of course, but it will mean that the reader has not come to that point in life where he truly feels his guilt, recognizes the bondage in which he lives, and so despairs of himself. This state of self-recognition Christ calls ‘conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement’. The very idea that we are in bondage is so humiliating to the human spirit that many angrily

reject it. However, for the one who has come under such conviction, the principle of liberation and consequent liberty is very wonderful.

True freedom is liberation from the bondage of guilt and the fear of judgement. It is freedom from the pollution of sin by reason of Christ’s death upon the Cross. On an authentic basis man is forgiven and purified. He is thus freed from the fear of death, i.e. the fear of judgement. He is now free to obey the true law of God and take his—or her—place among the redeemed people of God. In fact, obedience to true law is the way of living freely. Obedience to God’s good and holy law is not in order to be forgiven, purified and justified—for that has irreversibly taken place—but is simply the functional or ontological way of living in this world. It brings its own ‘ontological joy’.

THE BASIS FOR TRUE WORSHIP

The great act of God in grace—liberating man—makes worship of Him intelligible. By this we mean that when man is under guilt and moral pollution, and is caught in his own ego-pursuits, the very thought of God is distasteful to him. He does not wish to be confronted by this holy and righteous God, much less worship Him! When, however, this God reveals His love by sending His own Son as a revelation of Himself, and when through that Son He effects man’s liberation, then *man truly sees God as He is*. Seeing God as He is—the loving Liberator of enslaved humanity—a person is himself liberated, and in his newly found freedom really loves God and wishes to serve and worship Him. The very serving and worshipping carries

its own delight and its own incentive to go on loving and serving God.

This is the heart, cause, and constraint of true worship.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Worshipping the Father

FINDING GOD AS FATHER

THE special revelation Jesus gave to the Samaritan woman at the well was, ‘God is Father. It is as Father that you worship Him. He seeks such worshippers. He seeks you to worship Him—as Father.’ This can be called no less than a tremendous revelation. Perhaps no greater is ever given to man. Certain it is that this revelation—or rather the substance of it, God’s Fatherhood—is what meets the ontological needs of man. In this chapter we will see how God reveals Himself as Father, but first we need to look at His being as Creator and Redeemer.

GOD: CREATOR AND REDEEMER

What we often miss in our excitement about God’s act of salvation is that His being as Redeemer is not beyond, or better than, His being as Creator. Creation is God’s primary intention and His plan is to bring this creation to its *paliggenesis*, i.e. its regeneration as the new creation (Matt. 19:28). It is redemption which accomplishes this. That is why Paul speaks of Christian believers who ‘wait for adoption

as sons, the redemption of our bodies'. Creation, then, is primary, and the renewal of that creation through the redemptive work of the Cross and Resurrection is primary in God's plan. The One who created was Redeemer before He created, before—in time—there was need for a Redeemer.

GOD: FATHER, CREATOR, AND REDEEMER

By a strange quirk of the mind there have been excellent scholars who have thought that God did not create as Father, and as Redeemer, i.e. as Father-Redeemer. Since God never *became* Father and/or Redeemer, and since He was always such, then His act of creation had to be that of Creator-Father-Redeemer, and creation must therefore be interpreted in the light of this understanding.

Whilst in the Old Testament a great deal is not spoken about His Fatherhood, it can nevertheless be discovered there. It would appear that such Fatherhood was looked upon in a covenantal way, God being Father of His people. In the New Testament that matter of His Fatherhood is certainly revealed in a new and fresh way. The simplicity of such a revelation was that now men could see the Son of the Father. In the old regime of Israel, the Son—as such—had not appeared. Some see him as being the angel of the Lord, and there are strong indications that he was present with Israel, yet the conscious view of God as Father because of a Son—or His Son—is not strongly present.

In his high-priestly prayer on the night of his betrayal (John 17), Jesus—as he had on other occasions—addressed God as his Father. Speaking of his disciples, he said, 'I have manifested thy name to [them],' and, 'I made known to

them thy name.' That name could be no less than 'Father'. This is really saying, 'I showed You to them as Father, for that is Your name and nature.' He did this, of course, by being the Son, by living out Sonship before them, as well as by discoursing on Fatherhood and Sonship.

In Matthew 11:25 Jesus addressed God as 'Father, Lord of heaven and earth!' He then went on to say, 'All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' This is a clear statement. The knowledge of God as Father and of Jesus as the Son is knowledge none can obtain by himself, for himself. God—as Father and Son—must reveal it to a person.

THE REVELATION OF GOD AS FATHER—BY THE SON

Christ's revelation of God's Fatherhood

The statement that all things have been delivered to the Son (of John 3:35) must mean that rule over the Kingdom of God and the world has been given to the Son, and he must be responsible to carry out such Lordship. It is an enormous claim, and is the highest office of all. If God were only *figuratively* a Father, then Jesus had no true authority to claim he was the Son of God. At best he could have said, 'A son of God, i.e. *figuratively* a son'. A figurative Father and Son are not essentially (ontologically) Father and Son, so that God is not essentially Father, and so He can only ever be figuratively the Father of His people.

Jesus revealed God as Father. He was the Word become

flesh, the ‘only Son from the Father’. John the apostle reported, ‘No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.’ Jesus later said that he did only what the Father showed him. In this way he was Son. He also said that the Father showed him all things which he was to do. By his life and teaching he showed God as Father. The Temple was his Father’s house. In the Sermon on the Mount—as on some other occasions—he taught clearly the nature of God as Father. He prayed to the Father as ‘Father!’ i.e. ‘Abba!’ He said time and again that the Father had sent him into the world. He went so far as to say, ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father.’

From many biblical references we conclude that the Cross and Resurrection constituted a direct revelation of God as Father, and so of Jesus as the Son. The revelation was not ‘simply a revelation’, for this revelation is the highest a man will ever receive. Without the revelation of God as ‘Father’, even avid readers of the Scriptures may see Him only as Creator and Redeemer, and rich as these understandings may be, they are not complete, they do not tell the whole story.

THE REVELATION OF GOD AS FATHER BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

In Jesus’ time on earth, few—if any—really had a complete revelation of Jesus as the Son of God.* Jesus encouraged his disciples to believe that the Spirit of truth would

* It is not our purpose, here, to go back into the Old Testament, and show the origins of the concept of one who was ‘Son of God’. This fact emerges in a study of Christology. Jesus certainly understood himself to be the Son of God, not only from the affirmations he received at his baptism and his transfiguration, but from the prophetic Scriptures themselves. One of these was Psalm 2, a passage which is quoted many times in the New Testament in regard to his Sonship.

come after his—Jesus’—going, and he would (i) bring into remembrance all the teaching Jesus had given to them, (ii) teach them all things, (iii) lead them into all the truth, and (iv) give a complete revelation of the things of the Son, and the things of the Father, i.e. he would show God as Father and Jesus as His only Son.

What we have to realize is that the events of the trial of Jesus, the judgement and the crucifixion, as also the resurrection and ascension, were confusing, even to the disciples. This being so, the Spirit needed to give a clear revelation to them concerning the Son and the Father, which of course he did at Pentecost and on later occasions. This revelation by the Spirit was virtually what Jesus had told the woman at the well was then about to happen. The Father would be worshipped, yet how could Father-worship take place unless the salvation events of Christ were seen to be initiated by the Father? So the Spirit came, and through him believers saw and understood ‘the things of the Father and the Son’.

Paul spoke of the dynamic of this revelation in Galatians 4:4-7:

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive *adoption as sons*. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

We see (i) the Spirit comes as the Spirit of the Son, i.e. the very Spirit who was in Jesus when he was the Son of God

living in Palestine, and (ii) the Spirit keeps crying ‘Abba! Father!’ so that the reality of God’s Fatherhood is now in our hearts. A similar statement is made in Romans 8:15-17:

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

OUR WORSHIP OF THE FATHER BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Spirit reveals all things of the truth to us, especially the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, that God is his Father, and also our Father, and this by adoption (accounting us as sons) or by making us to be His sons through regeneration, i.e. through new birth. By the Spirit we not only realize these things as ideas, but by the Spirit we experience them. They are thus reality to us. This then helps us to see that God is our Father, and that the One who created us has also redeemed us and taken us prodigals to His breast, i.e. as erring sons turned homewards.

This is the great revelation that makes the cry burst from us, ‘Oh, Father!’ We are thus united to God the Father, from whom—as Paul said—all fatherhood (family- hood) in heaven and on earth is derived. When he added, ‘... one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all,’ then he displayed the whole gamut of God’s being as Father above, through and in us—His

family. This means that all human relationships stem from God’s Fatherhood, the Son’s Sonship, and the Spirit’s communication of our sonship through the Son, in the Father. No wonder we praise and worship God! The words of Jesus, now, are easily understood:

‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you *worship the Father...* But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will *worship the Father* in spirit and truth, for such the *Father seeks to worship him.*’

THE SPIRIT AND THE FATHER

When we look at Ephesians 5:18-20, we note that (i) worship is by the Spirit; (ii) it is in joy of singing; and (iii) in such worship to God the injunction is ‘always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God *the Father*’. When the Spirit reveals to us the love and grace of the Father, then we naturally ‘give thanks to God the Father through him [the Lord Jesus]’ (Col. 3:17). This means that the tragic rejection of God by man—of which we read in Romans 1:19-21, when failure to honour God and to give thanks to Him occurred—has now been turned to acceptance of God the Father, and great thanksgiving to Him. Truly the Son and the Spirit have led us to the Father, and so to true worship of Him.

TRUE FATHERHOOD COMES TO US

Any reader who has followed the theme of this passage may grasp the points which have been made, but it is possible that the same reader has missed the reality and experience of God’s Fatherhood. God, we see, is not *like a*

Father. He *is* Father! Human fatherhood may disappoint us, and even anger us, but Divine Fatherhood is trustworthy and true. Because of this Jesus once said, ‘call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.’ He was telling us not to work from our knowledge of earthly fatherhood in order to understand God as Father, but rather for us to grasp the revelation of God as true Father—heavenly Father—out of which would come our true relationship with Him as sons. Such sons ever worship the Father, for they are ever secure. It is they who pray, ‘Our Father who art in heaven ...’ It is they who one day will hear the words, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’

**CONCLUSION: WORSHIP IS A RELATIONAL AND
FAMILY MATTER**

We can see simply from the Gospels that Jesus thought of worship in the filial, familial context. Himself addressing God as *his* Father, he taught his disciples to address God as ‘Our Father...’ He cried ‘Abba! If it be thy will...’ in Gethsemane; ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,’ and ‘Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit,’ on the Cross. Following the Resurrection he had told Mary Magdalene, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ He had told the disciples prior to the Crucifixion that he was going to his Father’s house, and there he would prepare a place for them. His people would always be the ‘blessed of my Father,’ and from their hearts would always cry, ‘Abba!’

Father!’ as he himself so naturally cried. Meanwhile they were to ‘wait for the promise of the Father’, i.e. the Holy Spirit by whom they would know God as Father, and by whom they would worship Him ‘in spirit and in truth’. Because ‘the Father ever seeks such to worship him’, we can ‘bow [our] knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named’. This, then, makes for the warm and reverent family worship in which all are brothers and sisters, in which the family prays that the Father’s name may ever be holy, that His holy will may be done, and His Kingdom be moving towards its climax of fulfilment, i.e. until it finally comes. Such worship and such prayer are the present functional possession of all God’s children. Such worship furthers the Father’s will. The Father is at the heart of it all.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Battle for Worship

GOD ONLY TO BE WORSHIPPED

WE have seen something of the nature of God, and what we have seen tells us that whilst all celestials, men, creatures and creation must be honoured according to the worth of their office and situation and being, yet God must be primarily worshipped. We saw that God is worthy of all glory, honour, power, blessing and thanks because that is how He is. His eternity, His holiness, His acts through all time and eternity, as also His righteous judgements, make Him the true Object of worship. The Lamb—the Son of God—is also accorded such worship, since he is one with God. None other is worthy of such honour.

THE BATTLE FOR WORSHIP

We have seen, briefly, that others seek for glory and honour, whether rightly or wrongly. In Romans 2:6-7 Paul says, 'For he [God] will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing

seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life.' There is, then, a right seeking of glory and honour, and God accords the proper honour and glory. It is not, however, the glory and honour that belongs to God alone. God has said, 'My glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to graven images.' The true glory that man receives is really a participation in the very glory of God, since we have 'become partakers of the divine nature'.

We will now see how history is really a battle by evil powers and men to filch the glory of God for themselves, and how it is that God resists such arrogance, and irreversibly asserts and establishes that glory for eternity.

'THAT OLD SERPENT CALLED THE DEVIL'

This is how Satan is described in Revelation 12:9. He is called 'the prince of this world' by Jesus, and 'the god of this world' by Paul and others. It is difficult to trace the history of this 'prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience'.* Briefly described, Satan was created as a beautiful celestial creature, and had great authority as an angelic prince. He sought to be over the angels:† 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars [angels] of God I will set my throne on high.' It appears that, captivated by his own beauty, he set out to be equal with God, and in this attempt subverted man at

* For a full treatment of the theme of Satan and his fallen evil powers, see my *The Clash of the Kingdoms*, NCPI, 1989.

† The passages of Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-21 are obviously apostrophes to the kings of Babylon and Tyre respectively, but the principles found in these two passages go far beyond the two kings, even though they apply to them. Many scholars see them as applying to Satan, and giving us some hints as to the original pride of him, with his ambition to be equal with God, if not superior to Him.

the time and action of the Fall. He promised them that they would be like the Most High God, that they would— of themselves—be able to know good and evil. He sought to get man under his own power by weaning him away from God, and in this he was partly successful. He drew away from God one third of the angels. In the Old Testament we find him spoken of as an accuser. This is seen in the first two chapters of the Book of Job, and in Zechariah chapter 3 where he would have accused Joshua, the high priest, of filthiness. Whatever the origins and nature of this accuser, it is certain that he longed for worship and adoration.

SATAN'S DESIRE FOR WORSHIP

The story of Christ's temptation by the devil, in the wilderness, shows the desire of this prince to be worshipped by Jesus. He sought to subvert him from the way of the Cross, and to use the way of power and politics. Showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, and claiming that they were under his authority and that he could give them to whom he would, the devil said, 'All these will I give you, if you fall down and worship me.' Jesus' reply was, 'It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."'

Satan, then, desires to be worshipped as God. In the Book of the Revelation we see his efforts to achieve rulership first in heaven, and then upon earth. In the forms of the beast and the second beast (the false prophet) he seeks to rule mankind. In II Thessalonians 2:3-4 Paul's prophecy of the last days shows us that Satan's plan to be worshipped will be headed up in and by one—the son of

perdition'. This one is obviously Satan's counterpart for 'the son of salvation', i.e. Jesus. Paul wrote,

Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day [i.e. the day of the Lord] will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed. the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

'The temple of God' must mean no less than the church of the New Covenant, i.e. the company of God's people. The prophecy, then, is that Satan will seek to deceive the people of God into worshipping his 'son' as God Himself, and if we take the truth of God and His Son, then Satan is seeking to ape God, and to filch His true praise, glory, honour, wisdom, might and blessing.

THE SATANIC BATTLE FOR POWER

The Book of Daniel—especially in chapters 7 to 11 portrays the battle of the beasts for power in the international arena. History—it would seem—is being formed by these great political powers. They appear to succeed in their efforts—even to the point where one of the kings (i.e. 'a beast', or 'a kingdom'; Dan. 7:21, 25 and context) will think that he can even oppose God, and exercise a sovereignty of his own:

He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time.

This seeming or surrogate sovereignty, however, shall be defeated:

But the court shall sit in judgement, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey them.

Daniel 7:9-22 speaks of ‘one like a son of man’ who is given ‘dominion and glory and kingdom’, who is to be over all the nations. This is God’s person appointed by Him. In the New Testament Jesus is known as ‘the Son of Man’.

In all of Daniel’s visions Satan is not mentioned—as such. When we come to the Book of the Revelation, we have revealed to us—especially in chapters 12 to 16—the great red dragon who is Satan, and clones of him in the form of the first and second beasts and the false prophet. These are involved in taking and holding power within the universe.

The compulsive drive which the devil revealed to Christ during the temptation was one for worship of himself. This was the mad and impossible dream he held for himself. We have seen in the pure worship within the Book of the Revelation that all glory, honour, power and dominion is attributed to God. This is true worship of Him. His actions in creating, in redeeming and in judging righteously are all part of that glory. It is this glory that Satan is seeking to filch, but as for actually doing the work which constitutes the glory—that is impossible for any but God to accomplish. It is this glory that sinful man seeks when he rejects God in order to have his own autonomy, his own special glory. By nature of the case, it is a vain endeavour.

The power-drive of the nations in Daniel receives a richer interpretation in the Book of the Revelation, for here all the beasts are under Satan’s control. He moves and manipulates them. Thus we can better understand the Daniel prophecies in the light of the Revelation prophecies. Again, in the Book of the Revelation we have the principle of Babylon. It, too, is a great power. It seduces—in the form of the Great Harlot, the unholy city—the nations of the world. Babylon is significant in the Old Testament as being a great world power, if not the world power. The Great Harlot rides on the beast in Revelation 17:3. Both are cruel, and the Harlot, for all her beautiful appearance, is innately vicious, hating and destroying God’s people. She wishes to be admired by the kings and merchants of the world’s nations. Indeed, she seduces them. She glories in her power and her achievements. She glories in the worship the nations give to her. Yet even here the power struggle is so fierce that the beast is jealous of the glory of the Great Harlot, and devours her flesh and destroys her by fire.

HISTORY IS THE STRUGGLE FOR WORSHIP

For those who are only partly acquainted with the Scriptures, and for those who see them only as a collection of Jewish and Christian stories, myths, fables—a religious history of a kind—then what I have written above must seem weird and bizarre. Even loyal followers of the Scriptures find themselves in another world when they read prophecy and apocalyptic. That is why some of us separate such prophetic writing, and place it in a world all of its

own. In one sense it seems to require a juggling of symbols, visions and ideas, so that we can obtain some sense from it.

In fact it is God's revelation of the power struggle of history, ie. the struggle of persons and powers to have glory, honour, wisdom, blessing and power ascribed to them in one way or the other. That struggle may seem to be magnificent when it happens on national and international levels. It takes on the character of 'grand opera', but then opera is constituted of mayhem, rape, murder, and other forms of evil. It is not 'grand'. We see how mean and petty these things are when they happen as the power struggle within a family—husband and wife fighting for supremacy, children fighting each other, wanting to have a place in the sun. The same battles and intrigues are found within businesses, trades and professions. They are there in the realm of churches—whether they be seen as 'spiritual' or merely 'organizational'. Then, of course, they are found in upper echelons of the political world—in state, interstate, and international arenas.

Each person is crying out for some special recognition, some form or level of worship. Every human being is caught in the restless round of self-expression, self-justification, self-vindication. He—or she—cannot afford to be wrong. Failures are excused, sins are rationalized, crime is blamed on factors other than one's own will and decision. We see ourselves as victimized by all things, yet struggle to make it to the top!

All this being so, we should not be surprised that the struggle for acceptance, praise and honour will be a most complicated one. We should not be surprised to know that it is at the seat of human ambition and Satanic kingdom-making. When we realize the angers that are in

the human heart as a result of our being demeaned by others, failing to achieve goals, being crushed by those more competent, and a whole host of similar elements, then we will realize the nature of this dreadful power that drives human beings to despair, bitterness, mental suffering, crime, and other forms of suffering and evil. Fame is always the spur, and the desire for adoration the mainspring of our endeavours.

THE ATTACKS UPON PURE WORSHIP

We have already said that worship in this world will never be wholly pure. This is because we are sinful, even though redeemed. We still sin. Ambition is still a temptation we must face daily. Even as members of the church we can go on living cosmetically—putting on a good appearance to others. We can still be tempted to justify ourselves, even by the—so-called—good works we do. We can work hard to be thought to be truly spiritual. Our devotions can be used to earn us some praise or acceptance from others. And so on.

THE FIRST HUMAN ATTACK ON WORSHIP

Given the tragic division between the first couple, the tragedy widened over the matter of worship. Cain hated Abel because his brother's worship was accepted by God, and his own was rejected. This should tell us something about the dynamics of giving worship, and of receiving honour. Hebrews chapter 11 teaches us that all we do must be in faith. Abel's offering was by faith in God.

THE CONTINUING ATTACK ON WORSHIP

When it comes to man's rejection of God, we can see a whole blanket operation of false worship within the context of idolatry. Idolatry is the way to subvert God. God's covenant opened up the way to a renewed worship of Him, yet this was constantly contested within the great family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. With the gift to Israel of 'the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises', we would expect reasonably pure worship, and of course this was partly so, but Israel was plagued with its own idolatry from beginning to end. The tragedy of Israel was simply that it was often more attracted to the idols than to God.*

The advent of the new worship of the Father, in spirit and in truth through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the mediator Jesus Christ, would point us to the truest worship the world has known. Yet Ananias and Sapphira would have polluted that worship by introducing hypocrisy. Simon Magus would have introduced manipulation of the power of the Spirit. We find the church warned against 'covetousness which is idolatry', and John closes his magnificent First Letter with the statement, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols.'

* The attractions of idols may be many. Chiefly, idols do not make the moral demands that are made by the holy, righteous, true, good and loving God. Idols appear to be under the control of the devotee. He 'extrajects' his models of divinity into his idols, and seeks to satisfy the ontological drive he has for authentic worship. His own conflicts of 'good' and 'evil' are reflected in his making of the idols. On the one hand they offer him liberty of mind and conscience, and freedom to do what he wills, but on the other they become rigid in their laws and tyrannous in their demands. Even so, man never gives up making, breaking, forming and reforming his gods until finally he has lost integrity at the core of his being and is shattered beyond healing.

We see that within the church there is the struggle of Satanic powers to capture the worship of God's people, i.e. the son of perdition which seeks to deceive the very people of God. The beast sets out to defeat the people of God, and force upon them his mark, as against the mark of the Father and the Lamb which is on their foreheads. Babylon would seduce the saints and silence the prophets. And so on.

THE ATTACKS ON WORSHIP IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

This is the realm of the Christian theologian-historian. It would take much research to discover and tabulate the attacks within the church upon true worship, as well as the attacks which have come from outside the church. What we do know is that there has ever been the sinful human struggle for supremacy even within the church. Sometimes it takes the forms of ecclesiastical politics, sometimes simply the personal power struggles of ambitious men and women.

In the early church, the *laos* (people) of God were 'of one heart and one soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own', so that the distinction between the laity—so-called—and the clergy—so-called—was not present. All God's people were called to love and service. They were brethren: 'You have one Father... and you are all brethren'. Whilst the elders (bishops, overseers, shepherds of the flock) and deacons had a functional office, yet the modern clergy-laity distinction was not known as such. Even the apostles were considered by the world as the 'offscouring of all things' (I Cor. 4:13).

THE BATTLE WITHIN THE CHURCH

Battles have ensued over forms of church polity, over the nature and purpose of the sacraments, and over doctrine, yet so often the real struggle has been that of personalities, and the drive for recognition or power. Many differ on the nature and forms of worship. Some reject liturgical worship and others espouse it. It is evident that the principle of idolatry may be found in any system of worship. Liturgies or extemporary forms of worship are surely legitimate modes, and of themselves are not idolatrous.

How often has research into the worship of the church been conducted on the basis of seeking and establishing continuity to ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’, and the worship that sprang from, accompanied, and expressed that faith? It is not our place here to examine early forms of worship to see whether they had diverged greatly from that which we call ‘apostolic’. It would be remarkable if some had not. An interesting exercise for research would be to compare the doctrines inherent in various liturgies with the doctrines inherent in the New Testament apostolic teaching.* We know from the text of the New Tes-

* Some liturgiologists hold the view that there is a gradual development liturgies from simple or primitive forms to richer and more complete forms. This assumes a post-apostolic development, something like Newman’s ‘acorn and oak tree’ theory, i.e. that worship is germinal in the New Testament, and proceeds to a natural and full development in the post-apostolic period. Certainly we have various branches of liturgy, and an examination of these shows that they developed from certain theological and cultural elements, for the Eastern Churches and the Western Churches developed along varying—and sometimes differing—lines. What is required—if it has not been already done—is a detailed examination of the genuineness of liturgies with apostolic doctrine. This assumes the unchangeability of apostolic doctrine. The liturgical variety possible within apostolic doctrine is endless, but since liturgy is really a form of ‘the word of God’ then it ought to be pure, and in this sense, wholly biblical.

tament that heresies were within the church, and these— from time to time—could possibly have made it diverge from the apostolic truth and practice. If evil powers could insinuate themselves into the battle for true worship, then they would have great influence on the course of the history of the church and its impact on the world. It would be remarkable if Christian history had not turned out the way it has, for the basic *battle for the faith is the battle for its true worship*. Today the same conflicts wage backwards and forwards, and will continue to do so whilst we seek to establish some system or other which we insist is the true One.

We are grateful to God in His sovereignty and Christ in his Lordship over his people that the effects of such struggles do not destroy the church. ‘Great grace’ is upon the church, constantly delivering it from its repeated failures and foolishnesses. Christ walks among the candlesticks, rebuking, reproving, exhorting, correcting, stimulating, encouraging and restoring. We are gratified that rich worship still obtains, that worship—whether it be extemporary or liturgical or both—still continues to be the vehicle of our adoration of Him Who is the Father and of him who is the Lamb.

THE ATTACKS FROM OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

Again we need a Christian historian-theologian to research the last two thousand years of history. For example, if we were to search the Old Testament for accounts of attacks against the faith and practice of Israel by Satan, we would find few—if any—nominated. We might say that all attacks upon Israel by outside national powers were attacks upon the faith, and this could be correct in part.

However, the real attack—as we ought to expect—was upon Israel’s worship.

The warnings in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the OT)—especially in the Book of Deuteronomy—are many. They are warnings, primarily, against idolatry. There are also warnings against having contact with occultic powers (eg. Deut. 18:9-22). We know that idolatry is the worship of gods other than God. We also know that the governments of nations related to the idols of a people. Abraham had been turned from idols, but under Moses— though not because of him—the people were deeply idolatrous.*

It was idolatry which attacked the very heart of worship in Israel. The worship the idols offer is more attractive to the natural man than that of the worship of God. Man easily tends to the idols: indeed he is prone to them. Israel, then, was constantly attacked in this area of its life, the area which was central to its very being as a covenant people. No less, then, has the church been attacked from without by idolatrous and cultic powers. There is no need to think conspiratorially here, i.e. to imagine a conspiracy. The flesh and the Holy Spirit have always been in conflict; flesh and the law have always been irreconcilable.

* One point we need to note here is Paul’s insistence that the worship of the idols is linked with fellowship with demons. Idols are closely linked with demons, and those who worship idols are therefore inevitably linked with demons (cf. 110:8-22; Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106::36-37). This being so, then Satan was always attacking Israel by the subterfuge of ‘reasonable idolatry’, i.e. Israel was attracted by idols, but did not see them, often, as other than the worship of God. This in spite of the warnings in Deuteronomy such as, ‘Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of those nations; lest *there be among you a root bearing and bitter fruit*’ (Deut. 29:18; cf. Heb. 12:12 15).

To think that the flesh-Spirit conflict is simply a personal inner conflict, and does not represent the widest struggle of the world and the church, of the kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God, is to miss the reality. At present Christ is about subduing the kingdoms of this world, and the enemies of God. That is the significance of his Ascension and Session at God’s right hand. It is also the conflict that Satan and his kingdom have with Christ and his people. So we would expect the constant invasion of ideas, suggestions, manipulations, deceits and seductions from ‘the principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places’.

It may be that we can never expertly interpret our last two thousand years of history, the wrong doctrines the church has from time to time espoused, as also the attacks upon the church which have come from political and national powers. We may not even be able to assess whether the politicization of the church by Emperor Constantine was a curse, or a mixed blessing, or wholly wrong; whether the growth of the Holy Roman Empire and the Holy See of Rome were dreadful mistakes, and whether the rise and incursions of Islam and the resultant Crusades were more of God than the devil; but all these events give us cause to pause and think.

How much of the world has been evangelized, virtually, at the point of the sword, through ‘gunboat diplomacy’, through political and economic pressure? How much have tribes and nations been attracted by the ‘success’ of the West? Have we offered rice and medicine, education and social emancipation as attractive gifts rather than that they have been fruits of the Gospel? How much of our ‘social concern’ or ‘social justice’ is really Christian at

heart, and how much of it is of ‘the politics of guilt and pity’ (as Rushdoony entitled one of his books)?

The basic questions are, ‘Do we—as the people of God—really worship God? Do we serve Him with all our being? Do we seek glory and power for the church or do we simply acknowledge that glory and power belong to our Head—Christ himself?.’ These are the questions we must keep asking. We must constantly seek to see the divergence between political power and genuine Godly humility, lest we betray Christ and his church by using the methods of our fallenness, our human politics and our innate idolatry, and, by so doing, become tools in the hands of Satan and his kingdom of darkness.

LIVING IN THE *BATTLE FOR TRUE WORSHIP*

The way in which we can truly share in this battle is not so much to see the widest parameters of this struggle— although seeing them will be most helpful—but it is to worship God personally and to serve Him wholly. It is also to worship Him corporately with God’s people. This direct union with the Father and the Son in prayer, worship and service will have its wider effects and repercussions as God is pleased to use them.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Worship and the Temple

THE NATURE, PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TABERNACLE

GOD ONLY TO BE WORSHIPPED

Abraham had been an idolater. ‘The God of glory’ appeared to him. When that revelation came, we do not know. Perhaps it was when He spoke to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), or perhaps Stephen the Martyr gathers up all God’s appearances to Abraham in his statement. It does not matter. what matters is that God—so to speak— came from the vertical to the horizontal. Man’s religions always start on the horizontal, and, whilst perhaps an endeavour is made to rise to the vertical, they always fall back to the horizontal and become banal, and at best (or, worst) seek to take on the mystery of the occult. The amazing thing about Abraham, Isaac, and Israel and the covenant, was that God came personally to encounter

man, and to form what He has called ‘my people’. This is the extraordinary act of ancient history. Their faith, then, could never be wholly on the horizontal. As we have seen in Isaiah 57:15, this High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity also dwells in the heart of the humble and contrite one. Thus, what we have called ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ intersect or become one, especially in regard to worship.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

We have seen that Abraham, in encountering God, would build places or altars of worship such as at Shechem, Bethel, Hebron and Mount Moriah. Isaac built only one—that of Beersheba, and Jacob built the altars of Shechem and Bethel (El-Bethel). Israel was ensconced in Egypt in the midst of the idolatry of that land, and God called on Pharaoh to let His people go outside the land for true worship of Him.

The Tabernacle moved with Israel in the desert, but of the forty years, thirty-eight of those were spent at Kadesh Barnea in the Negeb of Judah. After crossing the Jordan, the first site for the Tent was at Gilgal near Jericho, but was later moved to Shiloh in Ephraim, which was a central location for the tribes. In David’s time we find the Tabernacle is at Nob, where Saul slew the priests with the exception of Abiathar, and the Tent was moved to Gibeon. Finally David pitched a new Tent on Zion, the captured city of Jebus (then renamed Jerusalem). David began preparing materials for the Temple which was to replace the Tabernacle, and Solomon his son built the new sanctuary, i.e. the Temple.

THE VARIOUS TEMPLES

When we say ‘various Temples’ we mean, really, one Temple which, being built by Solomon, was destroyed, and was rebuilt in the time of Zerubbabel, being commenced in 535 BC and completed in 516 BC. It stood for some five hundred years. It was still standing but in bad condition—having also been used as a kind of fortress—and Herod began building in 19 BC. Although substantially it was built in ten years, it was not fully completed until AD 64.

Because of the nature of our study, we need not go into the details of these three Temples. Plenty of such detail is available in Bible dictionaries and monographs of the Temple. Because the Tabernacle and Temple were virtually one—the architecture of the Temple deriving from that of the Tabernacle, so embodying its true significance—we should look at the structure and significance of that Tent.

THE INITIATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TABERNACLE

God’s promise in regard to His covenant people was, ‘I will be their God’ (Gen. 17:8). This becomes apparent when Israel is in Egypt, i.e. ‘Let my people go.’ In the wilderness God seals His covenant with Israel (Exod. 24), and then says, ‘let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst’ (Exod 25:8). Other statements are, ‘I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God’; ‘they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought

them forth out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God’.

Such statements are of great significance. Whilst peoples had their tribal gods—and many saw (and see) Yahweh simply as Israel’s tribal god—yet this ‘King of all the earth’ chose Israel for His people. This does not mean they were His *favourite* people, but His chosen people—chosen for a task and a future He had prepared for them, and, ultimately, for all the nations, as He had indicated to Abraham.

GOD DWELLS WITH HIS PEOPLE

In Ezekiel 37:27 the promise of God was, ‘My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’ This pointed back to past promises and to future restoration, for in Revelation 21:3 John the Seer recorded, ‘I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them."’ ‘John then went on to say that because of that dwelling there would be no more tears, crying or pain. A beautiful scene and promise indeed! This surely is the consummation of the oft-repeated promises to dwell with them. That is why Paul speaks of the church as presently being ‘a holy temple... a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.’

God, then, would dwell in the Tabernacle, but only as it would be structured according to all that Moses was shown in the Mount. The Tabernacle was enclosed as a sacred site, and only consecrated priests and assistants might touch the Tabernacle and conduct the rituals of sacrifice and other worship.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE TABERNACLE

A tabernacle or tent may be understood by the various references to it in the Scriptures. Tents have always been the homes of nomadic people, but a tent is not looked upon as a temporary dwelling. It is indeed ‘home’, for it is the permanent dwelling of the family. In Exodus chapters 25 to 27 it is called ‘the dwelling place’ (*miskan*), in chapters 28 to 31 it is called ‘the tent of meeting’ (*ohel moed*), and in some other places (Num. 1:50, 53; Exod. 38:21; cf. Acts 7:44; Rev. 15:5) ‘the tent of testimony’ (*ohel eduth*). The Hebrew word *miskan* is translated by the Greek word *skene*, and from Luke 16:9 and Hebrews 8:2 it is clear that it can refer to what is permanent, eg. ‘eternal habitations’, ‘the true tent’, i.e. the ‘eternal tent’, or ‘the archetypal tent or habitation’.

What, then, is the significance of the terms ‘tent of meeting’, ‘tent of dwelling’, and ‘tent of testimony’? The first indicates that God meets His people where they are—in the camp. Often translated ‘tabernacle of the congregation’, it was where (i) the congregation met together, and (ii) the congregation met God. In fact it was primarily where God met Moses and Moses met God (Exod. 33:7). In those times the congregation did not necessarily come together. The terms for congregation—*edah* and *qahal*—referred to the congregation as a people, rather than as meeting together for worship, even though they did meet together for the special festivals.

The second term ‘tent of dwelling’ we have already covered. In some way God dwelt amongst His people, especially in ‘the holy of holies’, and the third term ‘tent of testimony’ was given because the ark contained the

covenant tablets of the law and was itself called ‘the ark of testimony’.

Some elements of what is written above have been debated, eg. some see ‘tent of meeting’ as referring to a tent in which God met Moses but which was not the eventual ‘tabernacle’. Indeed, there has been much debate as to whether the ideas of *congregation* as *edah* and *qahal* are equal, or whether one refers to the whole people as a corporate being and the other to their actual gathering together before the Lord.

It does not much matter. What matters is that uniquely in history a people have become the people of God, that He dwells with them, leads them, guides them to the land He had promised their forefathers, and remains their God for ever. Only as we understand Israel and its worship places of Tabernacle and Temple do we even begin to understand the church, the new, true congregation of God.

THE FORM OR PATTERN OF THE TABERNACLE

The sketch below helps us to visualize the Tabernacle. The court of the Tabernacle was a rectangle based on an east-to-west setting, being 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, i.e. its length being twice its breadth. The court was fenced off by five white curtains which were seven feet and six inches in height.

It can be seen that at the eastern end of the court there was the altar of burnt offerings, and forward of that, and perhaps a little to the right, was the layer where the priests

cleansed themselves before entering the Holy Place. West of these two pieces of equipment was the Tabernacle, itself divided into two sections, the first being the Holy Place with its golden candlestick, table of showbread, and altar of incense. In the Holy of holies was the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the ten commandments, the pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded. The top of the Ark was the mercy seat—the *hilasterion* (in Greek) or propitiation place—where the blood of the Atonement was sprinkled. It was overshadowed by the two golden cherubim, they having their wings stretched forwards over it.

THE OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TABERNACLE

In a somewhat prosaic clinical examination of the tabernacle we are likely to miss its living significance. Being members of Christ’s Body—the church—the significance of Christ’s community should be richly and warmly alive to us. So, then, was the significance of the Tabernacle to Israel. God was their God, dwelling with them, taking them out of Egypt, fulfilling His covenant promises which He had given to the patriarchs of that race. In the wilderness He led them by means of the cloud during the day, and pillar of fire by night. He met with their leaders, and they could meet with Him at the Tabernacle.

THE HOLINESS OF THE INDWELLING GOD

The Tabernacle embodied in its structure and furniture the necessary conditions for God’s indwelling of it. Its holiness was accentuated by the cordon around it, and the

consecrated priests and Levites who alone could minister in it. The sacrifices spoke of the God of grace, forgiveness and love, whilst the laws attached to the covenantal system spoke of God's holy demands upon His people. The approach to God by the sacrificial and worship altar, the laver, the holy place of prayer, and—most of all, though only once a year—the sprinkling of the blood of Atonement on the mercy seat, told of holiness and mercy together. This people could dwell together with the Holy God, and He with them.

THE UNITY OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE

'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord', is the covenant principle. Israel must worship not only one God, but the God Who is One (cf. Exod. 3: 14-16). So then, God is One; He is true unity. That is why Israel must not diversify its worship by loyalty to other gods, for these are not true gods and will fragment Israel if worshipped. There must be only one altar and one place of communal worship—the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle is a living symbol and exposition of unity—and this by its very structure. It is also designed to show God as King, reigning over His people, and keeping them as one. History confirms that when there was the one altar at Jerusalem but Jeroboam set up two surrogate altars at Dan and Beersheba, the unity of Israel was broken.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE ADORNMENTS AND FURNITURE

Some have seen something of a mystery in the architecture of the Tent, and have said that its proportions are the

most pleasing in the domain of architectural art. The numerical symbolism of the Tabernacle has also been set forth by certain commentators. Overall, the aesthetics of the construction point to the perfection and character of God. It is right, then, to emphasize the beauty, texture and placements of the various adornments and colours.

The bronze altar, or altar of burnt-offerings, relates to the full principle of sacrifice, a subject which is worthy of a special disquisition on its own. The principle of sacrifice taught by it is also present, richly, in the New Testament. In the Mosaic Covenant the principles of ritual were rigorously outlined and prescribed. The laver was, of course, linked with washing and holiness. No priest dared to enter the Holy Place without such ritual cleansing.

In the Holy Place the altar of incense 'signified the offering of prayer to God—prayer which was generally mediatorial. The incense was made on special prescription, and so holy was it considered that none dared use it personally, under pain of judgement (cf. Exod. 25:6, 29; 30:34ff.). The showbread spoke of God's providence for His people in both spiritual and physical bread. He was the source of their life, and the twelve loaves represented, of course, the twelve tribes.

Within the Holy of holies the Ark of the Covenant represented, primarily, God dwelling with His people. He had commanded the making of the mercy seat on top of the Ark, and the placing of the law tablets within the Ark (Exod. 25:21-22). He had promised, 'There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.' Whilst the Ark was

once used in idolatrous fashion, i.e. as they went to battle with the Philistines, yet they believed God was with them. David's dancing before the Ark was seen as his dancing before the Lord. The mercy seat, of course, symbolized the grace and mercy of God in purifying His people by the taking away of their guilt through atonement.

CONCLUSION REGARDING THE TABERNACLE

We must admit that we have but touched the edge of this fascinating subject, and vehicle of true worship—the Tabernacle. Without it we would be helpless to understand the Temple and its worship. We would then have no true rationale for what we may term 'New Testament worship'. Moses was shown this Tabernacle on the Mount, i.e. at Sinai. Did he, then, look into heaven and see its true pattern and significance, or did he simply have a revelation which brought all this to him? We do not know, but the writer of Hebrews insists that the true Tabernacle, i.e. the archetypal sanctuary, is supra-mundane, and that through our High Priest, Christ, we have entered into the Tabernacle, and will one day—in glorification—be in it for ever. Certainly the Revelation of John the Divine brings us rich and wonderful glimpses into it, and the worship that obtains in it.

All of this is a strong incentive for us to examine the Tabernacle, its furniture and its uses, not neglecting the place of the Aaronic priesthood, and the ministry of the Levites. Even given in that Israel under Moses practised not the ultimate but the penultimate form of worship, yet the ontological principles upon which this worship was

enacted should—when understood—give us great insight into true worship of God.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Worship and the Temple (II)

THE NATURE, PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE

TABERNACLE AND TEMPLE

As we have already seen, the principle of the Tabernacle was followed and enshrined in the Temple. That meant that the principles of worship were the same. The Temple of Solomon was a temple God would not allow David to build. David had said, 'I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains' (II Sam. 7:2). David then requested through Nathan the prophet that God allow him—David—to build a house for the Lord. The answer of God—through Nathan—was that He had ever 'moved with all the people of Israel' from the time in Egypt up to the days of David, and had never asked the judges—i.e. the shepherds of Israel—to build Him such a house. Instead God promised David that he would build him—David—a *house*, i.e. a lineage of his blood which

would never fail as the royal family before God. David was much moved by God's counter-promise, saying,

Therefore thou art great, O Lord God; for there is none like thee, and there is no God besides thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. What other nation on earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name, and doing for them great and terrible things, by driving out before his people a nation and its gods? And thou didst establish for thyself thy people Israel to be thy people for ever; and thou, O Lord, didst become their God.'

In all of this promise, God never sought to have David build Him a house. However, in I Chronicles 22 (cf. I Chron. 28) God told David He would not allow him to build a house, i.e. the Temple, since David had been a man of war and had shed blood. Solomon his son would be a man of peace, and God would be Father to him, and he would be God's son. Already David had purchased the site for the Temple, and had built an altar which God had attested by sending fire from heaven upon its sacrificial offering. Henceforth David collected materials of stone, iron and cedar, having the stones cut in preparation for the building.

The building of the Temple was begun by Solomon in 967 BC, and completed some seven and a half years later. As we have seen, this Temple was also to be the model for the Temple built in the times of Zerubbabel and Herod.

WORSHIP AND PRAYER WITHIN SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

In II Chronicles 5:2 to 7:22 is the account of the dedication of the Temple, the address of Solomon to the people, and to the Lord, as also the Lord's address to Solomon.

The description of the praise and worship is very beautiful:

Now when the priests came out of the holy place (... and all the Levitical singers... arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with a hundred and twenty priests who were trumpeters; and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord), and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments in praise to the Lord,
 'For he is good,
 for his steadfast love endures
 for ever,' the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.

Even apart from this beautiful description of praise, there are few more moving passages relating to worship than we find in the section of II Chronicles. Solomon addresses Israel first, telling them how God planned this house. Then he turns to God and addresses Him in humble but high awe. He asks the question and gives its answer.

'But will God dwell indeed with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!'

In this he echoes the former prayer of his great father, David:

'Blessed art thou. O Lord, the God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come from thee. and thou rulest over all. In thy hand are power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank thee, our God, and praise thy glorious name.'

After Solomon's prayer we read,

•.. fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. When all the children of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord upon the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the earth on the pavement and worshipped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever.'

All of this impresses us that the building of Solomon's Temple was not simply an idea of man, nor an accomplishment of human flesh. The signs which attend this event attest to its Divine origins.

THE PRIMARY PRINCIPLE OF THE TEMPLE

This is seen not so much in Solomon's prayer which confesses the greatness of God, but in the command, promise, and warning contained in God's address to Solomon as He appeared to him in the night:

'I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my *name may be there for ever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time*'.

This tells us the true nature of the Temple. It is God's house. God has chosen and consecrated it. It is called

virtually ‘the house of prayer’, meaning that worship, prayer, and the offering of sacrifices are all of the one piece. It is in this place that God’s eyes will be open and His ears attentive to the prayer that is made in it. Indeed, His ‘eyes and [His] heart will be there for all time’. What, of course, we have to keep in mind is that the Temple is for ‘my people who are called by my name’, and not for those outside ‘the commonwealth of Israel’.

THE DEDICATION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE

Haggai the prophet had delivered God’s message that His Spirit would be among the returned exiles in Jerusalem, as it had been when they came out of Egypt. God had stated through the prophet that ‘The latter splendour of this house [the Temple] shall be greater than the former... and in this place I [the Lord] will give prosperity’. Zechariah had also delivered the word of the Lord, that ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit’ God would establish the New Temple.

An account of the completion and dedication is found in Ezra chapter 6. The exiles were greatly encouraged by the return of the Temple vessels which had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar. As we have seen, this Temple stood for five hundred years—more years than the first Temple. The description of the dedication of the Temple in Ezra 6:17 - 18 is not greatly inspiring, but at least the Temple was re-established, and so the worship was resumed. The worship of former times had meant much to Israel, so that there must have been great joy as they worshipped in the new house of the Lord. Our later chapters on the nature of

praise in worship should show how beloved was the Temple worship.

JESUS AND THE TEMPLE OF HIS DAY

Although the Temple had been rebuilt by Herod, who was not loved by the Jews, yet the Temple was used as though God had built it. Certainly this was Jesus’ view. Following his circumcision his parents took him up to the Temple to be presented to the Lord. At that time Simeon came into the Temple and gave expression to the beautiful ‘*Nunc Dimittis*’. Almost at the same time Anna the prophetess came in and ‘spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Israel’.

At the time of his being twelve he was taken again to the Temple, ‘according to custom’. When the parents were returning they discovered he was missing from the caravan of travellers and returned to Jerusalem, but were unable to find him immediately, precisely because they did not seek him where he would naturally be—at the Temple. He seems to have chided them gently, asking, ‘How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’ This shows he understood the nature of the Temple.

So high was his regard for the Temple that he twice cleansed it, once at the commencement, and once at the close of his ministry. In John 2:13-22 we have the first cleansing, with his statement, ‘Take these things away; you shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade.’ This, incidentally, links with John 14:2, ‘In my Father’s house are many rooms’, so that certainly the Temple is linked

with the celestial Home.

In Matthew 21:12-13 (cf. Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46) he said, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer"; but you have made it a den of robbers.' In Mark 11:17 it is recorded, 'And he taught, and said to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?' ' He was thereby identifying the statement with Isaiah 56:7, and so was going beyond the present custom of worship to a prophetic future for the Temple—a change which would be most radical.

There can be no question that the authorities saw him as a threat to the Temple, and so to the whole Mosaic system. In John 2:19-22, when he said that if they destroyed the Temple he would raise it in three days, he was primarily referring to his body, but it seems they sensed, also, some hidden meaning. At the judgement, their accusation was, 'This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days," ' and at the Cross they accused him, 'You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself!' We know that the temple of his body was raised after three days, and that members of that body, the church, have become the New Temple, so that in some way the authorities must have guessed at what he was trying to do.

THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE TEMPLE

From Pentecost onwards the early church was connected in some way or another with the Temple. Acts 2:46 tells us that day by day they attended the Temple, and—it appears—mainly at the hours of prayer. In Acts 3 Peter

and John were going up to the Temple for that purpose when they healed the man who had been lame from his birth. Acts 5:42 tells us that 'every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ'. Many years have passed when we find Paul back in Jerusalem, paying the expenses of four men who were under a vow, and himself being purified at the Temple. He is accused of 'teaching men everywhere against the people and the law and this place'. This, of course, was not the case, but long ago Paul had seen the revelation of the new true Temple—Christ himself, his people and his body.

In AD 70 Titus the Roman Emperor destroyed the Temple and ransacked its site, so much so that it still lies without a temple. Where the shrine was placed, there is now a Moslem mosque, 'the Mosque of the Dome'. The long history of the Temple was broken, but its continuity was established by Christ, and in Christ, and this we will now see. It is helpful to remember that Christ had prophesied that the Temple would be broken down until one stone was not left standing on another, and also to remember that Jesus had told the woman of Samaria that the hour was coming, and indeed was already come, when true worship would not be carried on even in Jerusalem. The new age of worship was breaking on the world—the age of worshipping God 'in Spirit and in truth'.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Worship and the Temple (III)

THE NATURE, PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NEW TEMPLE

THE NEW TEMPLE

John and the Tabernacle—Temple

IN John 1:1-4 the author of the Fourth Gospel speaks of the Word being the Creator-Mediator of all things, saying that he is the light that lightens every man. This great and creative Word becomes flesh and dwells among us, literally tabernacles amongst us, i.e. 'pitches his tent' in the human scene. Through him the Father thus tabernacles amongst us, via the humanity of this eternal Son, so that Jesus can say, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father.' The fullness of God is in this Son who tabernacles with men, i.e. God dwells amongst His people through him.

At the Feast of Tabernacles, in the Temple, he cries out that those who believe on him, and who drink of him, will

never thirst again. He is the true well of salvation. He is also the true candelabra, the true lampstand—the Light of the world. The true light is that which lightens every man. He is the Bread of life—linked with the showbread. The altar of incense was for intercession, and Christ taught his disciples that all their prayers must be in his name, i.e. he was the intercessory priest. His prayer on the night of his betrayal is a High-Priestly prayer, and he consecrates himself—who is the Temple—so that the members of his body—i.e. his group—will also be consecrated. That he is not only High Priest but victim is shown in him 'giving his flesh for the life of the world', and other statements. John shows us many other elements which relate in principle to the Temple, eg. the washing of the feet which links with the bronze laver, and also the statement that they—the disciples—are 'clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.' John also shows Jesus as concerned in the matter of worship. Whilst he does not explicitly state the fact of the New Temple, he certainly refers to it. We will later deal with this, but the material contained in his statement of John 4:21-24 deals with the fact that the Temple at Jerusalem, which was once the only centre of worship, is about to be outmoded, and a new worship situation is about to arise. This goes very close to saying that he—Christ—will abrogate the old Temple for a new place or state of worship which will be genuine worship.

Peter and the Temple

In I Peter 2:4-10 we have a full-orbed picture of the New Temple, i.e. the church. Peter first points to the fact

that believers are ‘living stones’ being built into the Temple fabric, indeed the Temple constitutes them. He speaks of a ‘spiritual house’ and ‘a holy priesthood’ which offers ‘spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is the medium, it would seem, of their offerings. Again, Jesus Christ is the corner-stone of the Temple, even though rejected by Israel as a whole. Whereas in the former covenant Israel had been God’s priest-nation to the world, now the people of Christ have that status and function, for:

•.. you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people [i.e. Gentiles] but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

There can be no doubt about it: Peter sees the church as the true Temple of God.

Paul and the New Temple

Paul’s statement is clear: ‘Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys [defiles] God’s temple, God will destroy [defile] him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are’ (I Cor. 3:16-17). In I Corinthians 6:19 he adds, ‘Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?’ This certainly refers to the body of a believer, but is by no means unconnected with the former statement.

In Ephesians 2:18—22 he equates ‘the household of God’ with the ‘holy temple’, and this would accord with the Old Testament idea of the Temple being ‘the house of God’, a

term so often used for the Temple, and, of course, likewise used by Jesus. As does Peter, so does Paul refer to Jesus Christ being the corner-stone of the Temple, adding, ‘in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.’ This latter is true covenantal language, for it speaks of God dwelling with His people, and the Temple is envisaged as the centre of that living. Later Paul writes to Timothy, telling him, ‘if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.’

Clearly Paul sees the church as the New Temple, and his use of the term ‘body’ for church accords with it, since the church is Christ’s body, which in itself is the New Temple.

Hebrews and the New Temple

The concept of ‘the household of God’ is used strongly in 3:1-7, the writer calling it ‘God’s house’ and referring it back to Israel, and then forward to the new people of God. He says, ‘We are his house.’ Even so, the Letter is more concerned with what is called ‘the heavenly sanctuary’ than with the concept of a New Temple—as such. Of course, in the long run, it may amount to much the same idea, for it is evident that although he sees the former covenant as outworn and outmoded and the old Aaronic priesthood as a priesthood replaced by Christ who is priest after the order of Melchizedek, yet the sanctuary itself is of the same order as the former, even if it has transcended it. Thus we who are on earth ‘enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened

for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh'. This is because 'we have a great high priest over the house of God'. The writer had said previously that 'Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf'. Whilst that sanctuary is in heaven, yet we enter it whilst on earth.

Even so, in 9:14 he gives us the key to true worship. He says that the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience from dead works to serve—i.e. to worship—the living God. To be totally purified of all sin and actions of death is to be utterly liberated, and so God is truly living to the believer, and is One to be worshipped. It very much links with 10:19, where we enter the sanctuary, having been cleansed from an evil conscience. We worship, of course, in the context of the saints—the true church—for the same principle is found in Revelation 7:14-15, where the redeemed, having made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, 'worship him day and night in his temple'. That, too, is the church at worship in the heavenly Temple.

Again, in 12:18-29 the writer makes a contrast between the worship God received at Sinai from His terrified people, and that which He now receives here on earth where His people are:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel (vv. 22-24).

This must mean that at once we come to Mount Zion, i.e. the place of the Temple, which in other places is equated with 'the city of the living God', which is itself 'the heavenly Jerusalem', so that all of this is heavenly and not earthly. Likewise the 'innumerable angels in festal gathering' are heavenly and not earthly, but 'the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven' must be the church on earth. At the same time we come to God, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Christ, the mediator of the New Covenant. The writer does not explain what 'you have come' means exactly, but is of course speaking to Hebrews who may be comparing the past with the present. The writer is saying that the present far transcends the past: that is his main point.

He does, then, speak here of the church on earth, and enhances its being by all the marvellous things which surround it, such as the 'innumerable angels in festal gathering', 'a judge who is God of all', and 'the spirits of just men made perfect'. He also leads his readers on to the matter of true worship, when he adds, 'Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God *acceptable worship, with reverence and awe*; for our God is a consuming fire.' All of this is saying something of extreme importance to the hesitant Hebrew Christians to whom he has been speaking throughout the Epistle.

A curious little contrast of the first Tabernacle and the New Temple is made in 13:10, where he points out that 'We have an altar from which those who serve the tent [tabernacle] have no right to eat.' It does not matter much what the argument is here, so much as recognizing that the new altar has superseded the old. In 13:15 he comes to

much the same position as Peter, in 2:5 of his First Letter: 'Through him [Christ] then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name'. He shows, then, that worship and service are the one, for as one worships 'vertically' one also serves horizontally; thus, 'Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God'.

The prophecy of the Book of the Revelation and the Temple

There can be no doubt about the Temple in the Book of the Revelation. In 11:1-2 the Temple is upon earth, and may well be called 'the eschatological temple', having reference to the Temple of Ezekiel 40:3 to 42:20. Some prophetic interpreters like to think this will be built at Jerusalem upon the site of Herod's Temple. Such an idea would be totally foreign to writers of the New Testament Epistles, as we have briefly seen above. The author of Hebrews would be scandalized by such a suggestion. To him the New Temple is heavenly, however much its functional operations may relate to the church on earth.

Other references to the Temple in Revelation show it to be in heaven: i.e. 7:15, where the redeemed worship God; 11: 19, where it is opened and the Ark of the Covenant can be seen within it, and from which come the actions of judgements; 14:15, 17, where angels emerge from it to take part in judgements; 15:5-8, where the seven angels with the seven plagues, with the seven bowls of wrath emerge, as a result of which the Temple is 'filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power'. No one can enter

the Temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels are ended; 16:1 describes the loud voice from the Temple telling the seven angels to pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God, and in 16:17, when this has been done, a loud voice comes from the Temple, saying, 'It is done!' Then follow horrendous actions of judgement. The final mention of the Temple is in 21:22, where it is said that the Holy City now has no Temple, for God and the Lamb are that Temple. It is not that the Temple has disappeared, but that the Sanctuary, as such, is God Himself and the Lamb. If in any way the Temple of the Revelation is the people of God, then they have become one with God. This would be a mystery. It is true to apocalyptic that the redeemed—having been the Temple of God on earth—can nevertheless worship within the Temple in heaven!

It is not easy to try to link the Temple on earth, and that Temple in heaven, in this Book of the Revelation. Is there a parallel in thinking between Hebrews and Revelation? Both speak of a heavenly Sanctuary, yet both also speak of entering a Temple whilst here on earth. The truth of the New Temple in the Epistles of Paul and Peter is that it has its visible aspects—not as a physical building, but as composed of the living stones of believers, for they are the living stones.

CONCLUSION AS TO THE NEW TEMPLE

What we have seen in this chapter is that there is a New Temple, but it is difficult, nevertheless, to define it from the Book of the Acts, the New Testament Epistles and the

Revelation of John the Divine. This is partly because we have yet to see the new worship, which fits the New Temple, and so too, the nature of the Temple in the light of the new worship. We will endeavour to do this in our next chapter. Some commentators would see the Temple of Revelation 11:1-2 as being a literal physical building, but this is difficult to fit in the prophetic-eschatological scheme. It is better to see that Temple as being the people of God, the Temple of Isaiah 56:6ff. In the Book of Hebrews—especially in the passage of 12:18-28—we do not see a Temple indicated so much as the people of God, but then in New Testament thinking that is the *ecclesia*, the true people of God, and so it must also represent the Temple, the New Temple.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Worship and the Temple (IV)

THE NATURE, PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NEW WORSHIP

THE NEW TEMPLE AND THE NEW WORSHIP

THE writer of Hebrews makes it clear that the old worship of Israel is finished. The mundane sanctuary on Mount Zion is not the expression and vehicle of the New Covenant. It represented the worship of the Mosaic Covenant, but Christ is greater than Moses, greater than Aaron, the true Apostle of our profession, the true Melchizedek, and the Mediator of the New Covenant. Jeremiah 31:31-34 and allied prophecies have been fulfilled in Christ. The old worship was but a shadow of the Reality which was to come in Christ, and which indeed has come.

At least twice Jesus spoke of this matter. The first was when he indicated to the Samaritan woman at the well that although at that precise point in history true worship

was offered only in the temple at Jerusalem—since salvation was only of the Jews—yet a change was imminent. He told her, ‘But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.’ Without at this point seeking to explain this passage, it is obvious that the old system of worship was passing away. The centre of salvation—henceforth—would not be the Jews.

The second occasion was when Jesus prophesied concerning the destruction of the temple. It was self-obvious to his hearers that the cessation of the temple would mean the cultus of Moses could not be practised. What worship, then, could there be?

With these two primary statements, there were other elements. Jesus’ statement, ‘I will build my church,’ had some indication that the old church (*qahal*, *ecclesia*) would be replaced by the new. His teaching that he was the true Vine and they the branches, he was the good Shepherd and they the flock that he was the true Bread (Showbread), the true Light (the Candelabra), spoke of a new people and he as their Head. One of his most powerful statements was that henceforth all prayer should be directed to the Father through him—the Son.

Finally, his commission or charge to them to go out into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, making disciples of all nations, and baptizing them into the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was radical, for it linked him with the prophecies concerning the Son of God, the Messiah, the Son of Man, the Davidic King, the Suffering Servant and the Righteous Branch. All of

these prophecies spoke of a rulership, a Kingdom, and a body of elect people. All of them presupposed the true worship of the living God. Such a presupposition in turn presupposed the true Temple of the living God.

THE NEW WORSHIP

Worship of the Father

We have seen in the passage of John 4:19-24 that Jesus predicted a new worship, and said that it was even—at that point of history—coming into operation. The passage can be described as follows:

‘You, a Samaritan woman, are enquiring as to whether your worship in Shechem of Samaria is authentic, or whether the worship at Jerusalem is the true worship. I tell you that you do not worship authentically because you do not even know who you worship. We Jews know whom we worship. There is only one authentic place of worship—the temple at Jerusalem. Hence—since salvation is linked with true worship—salvation can only be of the Jews. Indeed, it is only for the Jews. Nevertheless a change is coming, and even now is coming into operation. True worship is in the process of taking place—not the old Jewish worship, right as it was for its time—and this new worship is directed to God as Father. I have come to give the revelation of the true God as the Father of His elect. To know this truth is to worship God, in one’s spirit, as Father. The Spirit of truth reveals God as Father and so He can be worshipped as such, truly and authentically. The new worship, then, will be by the Spirit. God is

Father, and as Father He seeks true worshippers to worship Him because as His children they will have affinity with Him—their Father.’

Jesus, of course, had ‘declared’ the Father (John 1:18), and in his High-Priestly prayer of John 17 stated, ‘I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known.’ To know him—Jesus—was to know the Father (John 14:6-10). Henceforth, then, prayer was to be to the Father, through the Son.

This principle of worshipping God as Father, Paul later expounded. Not only did he say, ‘I bow my knees before the Father’, but he spoke of the redemption that brought us to the Father, and the Spirit who made Him known personally to the worshipper.

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

In this passage (Gal. 4:4-7) we can see that address to God as Father is first because of the redemption the Son brought to man, and then by the Spirit who has brought the truth, and enables the worshipper to see God as his Father. Paul tells us in Romans 9:4 that ‘adoption’ (i.e. ‘sonship’) was one of the gifts given to Israel. In Christ it is vivified and expanded. It is part of the source of worship. Paul reiterates this principle in Romans 8:15-16, where he says that ‘When we cry, “Abba! Father!”, it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.’

THE NEW WORSHIP IN THE SPIRIT

The prediction of Jesus, that in the new worship men would worship God in spirit and in truth, must mean that in their very spirits men and women would know God and worship Him. Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would lead them into all the truth, and would take the things both of the Son and the Father and show them to them—his followers. This would mean that believers would now have the truth, and could worship God in their spirits by the Holy Spirit That is why Paul could write, ‘For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit [or, worship in my spirit] in the gospel of his Son.’

Paul also says, ‘For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit [or, worship by the Spirit of God], and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.’ He is opposing this new worship by the Spirit to the worship which certain fleshly people (those who have the circumcision of the flesh only) exercise. This true worship by the Spirit is also seen in Ephesians 5:18-20, where Paul—after bidding his readers to go on being filled with the Spirit—says, ‘addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.’

If we analyse this latter reference, then we see worship springs from being filled with the Spirit It takes up the nature of mutual exhortation, along with direct praise of the Father. It includes that most important element, too, of thanksgiving. Further to this—in other places—Paul speaks of the gifts of the Spirit which are part of the

worship exercise, for they aid it. For example, he says that whilst a corporate use of the gift of tongues in worship will confuse an unbeliever who has entered the worship, yet the use of prophecy will act dramatically, for the unbeliever 'is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he *will worship God and declare that God is really among you.*' Paul also speaks of worship where one prays and even sings 'in the Spirit'. Whatever this may mean, it must indicate that such forms of worship are prompted by the Spirit

AIDS TO WORSHIP FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT

When Peter speaks of 'a spiritual house' and of offering 'spiritual sacrifices', then these may well mean 'a house of, or by, the Spirit', 'sacrifices of, or by, the Spirit'. If, as in Ephesians 5:18, we are to be filled 'in Spirit' (*en pneumatī*, i.e. if the dative is not instrumental but locative), and if worship springs from this infilling of our spirits by the Holy Spirit, then the principle of worship in the Spirit is established. Not only does the Spirit reveal God to the worshipper and cause him to cry 'Abba!' but the Spirit also prompts the 'psalms and hymns and spiritual songs', prompts the 'making of melody in the heart to God', and the 'thanksgiving to the Father for all things'.

The Spirit and the matter of prayer are also relevant to our theme, 'worship in the Spirit'. The Spirit knows our weakness in the matter of prayer and makes 'intercession within us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he who searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God'. No true prayer is not 'in the Spirit',

although the terms 'praying in the Spirit' and 'singing in the Spirit' may have particular reference to certain expressions or modes of prayer and singing.

True worship is offered when 'the fellowship of the Spirit' and 'the love of the Spirit' are present. As we have seen briefly, the gifts which the Spirit dispenses are aids to worship, and—we might say—really indispensable aids. Worship is carried on in the context—and by the aid—of the use of such gifts. We will later return to examine this matter in detail.

THE NEW ERA OF WORSHIP

We have seen already that the coming of Christ and his redemptive work have spelled the end of the old worship system. Everything that is the Gospel has changed the order of things. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost brought immediate worship in the Spirit, as also to the Samaritans (Acts chapter 8) the Gentiles at Caesarea (Acts chapter 10), and to the small group of John the Baptist's disciples at Ephesus (Acts chapter 19).

In Romans 9:4-5 Paul speaks of the *charismata* or gifts which God had given to Israel. We may be tempted to call these 'the old *charismata*', by way of contrast with 'the new *charismata*' as set out in I Corinthians 12. However, when we look at those gifts (*charismata*), i.e. 'the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, the promises, the patriarchs, and the Christ', then we see these are precisely the *charismata* that the church possesses, even over and beyond—though not apart from—the other gifts of the Spirit which are also called *charismata*.

THE DIFFICULTY OF CHANGE FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW WORSHIP

We have noted that the apostles and the early church still looked to the temple as a centre for worship, even up to late in the ministry of Paul (cf. Acts 21:7-26). We do not know in what elements of the Jewish cultus they participated. We do know that the early church had many converts from the priests (Acts 6:7) and the Pharisees (Acts 15:5), and doubtless the affection for temple—and even synagogue—worship must have been strong. Even so, house churches arose, as distinct from synagogues, and the temple meant nothing to the new churches outside Palestine.

The battle that takes place in the Book of Hebrews is that of Jews abandoning their old *cultus* and taking up the new worship. The writer of the Book astutely shows the new is better than the old, for the old is outmoded. Even so, there was a cultural as well as a theological-ecclesiastical struggle within the hearts of many of his readers. It is difficult to visualize a similar situation for the church today, but if the reader will bear with me, I would like to present something of a parallel, although a hypothetical one. Suppose Christ were to return, to be present, and for things to be as they now are. This, of course, will not be the case, for he will close off the age and bring in the new age or *telos*. Suppose, nevertheless, that his return were universally known: the logical thing would be to abandon the celebration of the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, since Jesus had said, 'This do, until I come.' Because he has come, the matter of that celebration is ended. Yet how many would insist on celebrating this Holy Communion? Most, I

would imagine, for it would be difficult for them to say, 'Yet, further, a new age has come, and the past is finished.' This was the difficulty many Jews had, even though they had believed on Christ.

What we must see is that not merely the old *cultus* was abrogated, but the modes of worship were also outmoded. The Holy Spirit brought in a new age of worship. He changed the understanding of the converts, and set them in a different system. The mind which is fixed in traditionalism will always seek to go back to what was. It is richly liberating to know that although the past was rich in worship, an even richer worship has arisen because of the amazing revelation of God in Christ Jesus. We may call this the new worship in—and of—grace.

THE NEW WORSHIP OF GRACE

Let us look at what inspired worship in the new people. In doing this we should see—as Jesus inferred to the woman of Samaria—that salvation and worship are both linked. True worship is (was) of the Jews; salvation is (was) of the Jews; worship and salvation are in the one bundle. This follows logically, since one does not worship the God one does not know.

Three passages indicate that true worship comes from grace, i.e. the grace of the Cross: (i) Hebrews 9:14 says that the blood of Christ purifies the conscience from dead works so that one will 'serve [worship: *latreuein*] the living God'. God, then, is only living to the person whom He has delivered from a conscience laden with dead works; (ii) Romans 12:1 says, 'I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by

the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship [reasonable service: *logiken latreian*]. That is, the mercies of God in salvation now become the motivating force for true worship, via the surrender of the body and its serving (worshipping) actions; (iii) Revelation 7:14-15 portrays the great redeemed multitude who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. As a result of this purification, 'Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve [worship: *latreuosin*] him day and night within his temple', i.e. purified, they are grateful and loving, and constrained by these elements they constantly worship Him.

It is this same principle that Paul describes when he says, 'But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me/that I might preach him among the Gentiles...' Paul is saying that the salvation God brought to him, and the revelation of His own love, constrained Paul to serve God. He said elsewhere, 'God... whom I serve with [in] my spirit in the gospel of his Son.'

THE VALUE OF CONSTRAINT FOR WORSHIP AND SERVICE

If we miss the point we have just made, or regard it prosaically and casually, then we will also miss the fact that this is the primary constraint for all worship and service, i.e. the love of God to us in Christ (II Cor. 5:14). Jesus said, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments,' and Paul added, 'Do everything through [in] love,' so that where love is missing, true worship is missing.

This fact of love animating, inspiring and constraining

to true worship-service can be seen not only in the New Testament writings, but down through the course of history—from Abel to us. The beautiful treasury of prayers and songs of adoration, praise and thanksgiving—all unparalleled in any other religion or faith—tell us what has been the true driving force of worship and service.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Worship and the Temple

THE FACT AND NATURE OF THE NEW TEMPLE

THE NEW TEMPLE IS A REALITY

IF we take the fact that Christ is the New Temple, and his people members of that, bonded in as living stones, and constituting the new priestly ministry, then we must agree that the New Temple—as against previous Tabernacle, and temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod is God’s true Temple for this age. Let us see again the references to such a Temple:

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are (I Cor. 3:16)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? (I Cor. 6:19);

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’ (II Cor. 6:16; cf. Exod. 29:44-45; Jer. 31:1; Ezek. 37:27; Rev. 21:3);

So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22);

.. the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth (I Tim. 3:15);

.. Christ was faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope (Heb. 3:6);

.. the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:23); Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus (I Pet. 2:4-5);

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (I Pet. 2:9);

Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written, ‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old.’ Therefore my judgement is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God (Acts 15:14-19; cf. Amos 9:11-12, Jer. 12:15).

These references show us that the church is indeed regarded as God's Temple. It is a spiritual Temple in that the Spirit leads its worship, it is composed of 'living temples' (cf. I Cor. 6:19), which are 'living stones' (I Pet. 2:5) and which are bonded together (Eph. 2:21). It has its own priesthood which is in Christ the High Priest, just as it offers its worship through him (I Pet. 2:5; Heb. 12:28; 13:15). Sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are offered, and believers are themselves offerings as they give their bodies as a living sacrifice.

THE NEW TEMPLE IN PROPHECY

We now enquire as to whether the old Temple of Herod —'the Father's house' to Jesus—is finished for ever, and the New Temple established according to prophecy. If its establishment is not according to prophecy, and if it is only a spiritual rationalization by Christian thinkers, then it is not valid. We have seen enough in the New Testament to know that the early church believed itself to be the New Temple, and that it saw no necessity for a physical temple to be built.

AMOS 9:1-12

There are certain Scriptures which are significant in our search for the identity of the New Temple. We will start in the New Testament use of the quotes from Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah in Acts 15:14-19:

Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written, 'After this I will return, and I will

rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, that the rest of man may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old.' Therefore my judgement is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God (Amos 9:11-12; cf. Isa. 45:21, Jer. 12:15).

In this passage James is saying the following things: (i) God has moved at this point in history, through the work of Messiah, to take out a people from the Gentiles (nations); (ii) this virtually means that David's tent (Heb. *miskan*; Gk. *skene*) is being restored; (iii) that tent is not his (David's) house, i.e. his family and dynasty, although it is connected with Jesus Christ as a descendant of David, but the Tabernacle that he knew before the Temple was built is now being restored, for (iv) whilst it was the Tabernacle, it also stood for the whole true people of God, so that its restoration is not simply making Israel—i.e. the Jews—afresh the people of God, but is making a new Messianic people with the addition of those (the elect) from the Gentiles (the nations). In this sense the new people of God—Jews and Gentiles together—constitute the New—i.e. renewed—Tabernacle.

The fruit of these three prophecies is that we see the New Tabernacle as the true people of God, and the true centre of worship. The conference which considered these matters in Acts 15 was faced with the fact that there was no longer any tabernacle or temple such as had been known. There was, now, only the New Tabernacle, i.e. the Old Tabernacle restored and renewed.

ISAIAH 2:2-3; MICAH 4:1-2

It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord

shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
 and shall be raised above the hills;
 and all the nations shall flow to it,
 and many peoples shall come, and say:
 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
 to the house of the God of Jacob;
 that he may teach us his ways
 and that we may walk in his paths.'
 For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
 and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

This prophecy is eschatological. It envisages the house of the Lord on Mount Zion as becoming the centre of worship, the law, and the word of the Lord. We can see this as perhaps the rebuilding of the Temple of Ezekiel or the New Temple of the New Testament, now become the centre for universal worship. If the former, then it is located at Jerusalem; if not, then it is simply the true place of worship, though not necessarily at one location. We note that in the New Testament the 'New Temple', the 'New Jerusalem' ('the Jerusalem which is above... which is the mother of us all'), the 'Holy City', and the 'Heavenly Zion' are all of one piece, as indeed they are in these two Old Testament passages.

ISAIAH 61:54; 62:12; 66:20-21; PSALM 132:9, 13, 14, 16

Aliens shall stand and feed your flocks,
 foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers;
 but you shall be called the priests of the Lord,
 men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God;
 you shall eat 'the wealth of the nations,
 and in their riches you shall glory.
 And they shall be called The holy people,
 The redeemed of the Lord;

and you shall be called Sought out,
 a city not forsaken.
 And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their cereal offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.
 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness,
 and let thy saints shout for joy.
 For the Lord has chosen Zion;
 he has desired it for his habitation:
 'This is my resting place for ever;
 here I will dwell, for I have desired it.'
 'Her priests I will clothe with salvation,
 and her saints will shout for joy.'

These passages remind us of many New Testament concepts and figures, such as the Temple which is God's habitation, the Holy City which is open day and night and into which the kings of the nations bring their glories. They speak of universal acclamation, i.e. of a world oriented towards Jerusalem, and of its priestly people.

ZECHARIAH 2:10-11; 14:16

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come and I will dwell in the midst of you, says the Lord. And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of you, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.
 Then every one that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths.

Again we see universal acclaim, Zion—the Temple—as

the universal centre of worship, and those of the nations (Gentiles) 'joining themselves to the Lord'.

ISAIAH 56:6-8; 60:10-11, 14

'And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,
and to be his servants,
every one who keeps the sabbath, and does not profane it,
and holds fast my covenant—
these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.
Thus says the Lord God,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather yet others to him
besides those already gathered.'
Foreigners shall build up your walls,
and their kings shall minister to you;
for in my wrath I smote you,
but in my favour I have had mercy on you.
Your gates shall be open continually:
day and night they shall not be shut;
that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations,
with their kings led in procession.
.. they shall call you the City of the Lord,
the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Perhaps more than any other passage in the Old Testament, that of Isaiah 56:6-9 speaks of the New Temple, the house of the Lord which is to be 'the house of prayer for all nations', and it is this statement which Jesus used regarding the Temple at Jerusalem, though it is, in fact, eschatological. Nothing other than that Herod's Temple

should be destroyed and the New Temple raised was in our Lord's mind. The passage of Isaiah 60:10-11 relates to Revelation 21:22-26:

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations.

The parallels cannot be missed. The identification of the eschatological Temple, dwelling place of God, the Holy City, Mount Zion, the New Jerusalem and the Bride of God (i.e. of the Lamb) cannot mean other than that the church is the New Temple—the eschatological Temple, if you will, but the True Temple.

CONCLUSION TO 'WORSHIP AND THE TEMPLE'

The identification of 'old Israel' with 'new Israel' must be accepted. Paul's argument from Ephesians 2:11 to 3:11 is conclusive. The old nation—Israel—has become one with the Gentile peoples through the Cross, for a new humanity has been created which is the New Man, Christ. Jew and Gentile are living stones in the New Temple. The mystery which had been hidden for ages, and revealed to Paul and his generation was (is) that 'the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel'.

In other words, the true 'Israel of God' is the new people, the new household, the new Temple, the new

City, the new Jerusalem, and this—whilst on the one hand still being built—is complete, and is operative in the world today. Just as there was no salvation apart from the Jews, i.e. through the worship at the Temple in Jerusalem the city of God, so now salvation obtains in the New Temple. It is the house of prayer for all nations, and they may flock to it to worship, to recognize and obey the law of God, and to hear the word of the Lord in this new Mount Zion ‘the joy of the whole earth’.

How deeply and richly significant is this truth. How we need to know it. How we need to live by it in all dignity, humility and obedience!

CHAPTER TWENTY

Worship and the True Proclamation

EVANGELIZING THROUGH THE NEW TEMPLE

SALVATION AND WORSHIP

THE principle we have been following in much of our book is that man—as created—was, and is, primarily a worshipping creature. We saw that the loss of true worship through the Fall was such as to change the *object* of his worship, and bring him into God’s judgement. Worship is man’s primary purpose for living. In order to worship God truly he must be redeemed, for such worship is the true *telos* of redemption. Objectively the Gospel is required for his salvation, and subjectively he cannot exist as a true creature without the exercise of authentic worship.

We have seen that there is, then, a drive in every human creature to come to such worship, even though that drive may be contested by powers of evil both within

and outside of man. The Gospel and its preaching is that work of God which declares the liberation of man from his bondage to sin, evil powers and his own flesh, and which effects that emancipation. Only when emancipated may a human person come to true worship. There is no other way of coming to worship of ‘the living and true God’ (I Thess. 1:9; John 17:3; 4:23; Heb. 9:14). We have seen that it is grace which reveals the living God, grace which purifies man and gives him a constraint and motivation to worship Him.

On that basis, then, we have to insist that worship presupposes salvation, especially if this is understood within the context of covenant, and particularly the covenant of grace. We thus conclude that salvation and worship are inseparable, and that the offer of true worship, i.e. the offer of coming to know the true God, is a fundamental part of the Gospel and its proclamation.

MAN AND WORSHIP

Worship in the Old Testament

We commenced our examination of man as a worshipping creature at the point of his creation. To be created in the image and likeness of God meant that man had affinity with God in a manner and measure not known by other creatures. God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and have dominion over it.’ *Service* and worship are virtually synonymous in both Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the Hebrew verb *abad* means ‘to serve’, and is related to *ebed*,

i.e. ‘servant’. The verb ‘to worship’ is *shachah*, i.e. ‘to bow down’. The verbs *abad* and *shachah* are often coupled as being parallel, eg. Deuteronomy 11:16 and Jeremiah 22:9. ‘Let my son go that he *may serve me*’ can mean nothing less than ‘that he may worship me’ (*J.E.B.* has ‘offer me worship’). When one serves the gods and idols, then one worships them, and when one worships them, then one serves them. Not to serve and worship God is unthinkable.

Worship in the New Testament

Similarly, in the New Testament the Greek verb to ‘serve’ is *latreuo*, and ‘to worship’ is *proskuneo*—‘to bow the knee towards’. Romans 12:1 uses *latreuo*, which is variously translated ‘reasonable service’ or ‘spiritual worship’ (*ten logiken latreian*).

Worship is reasonable

When, then, God gave the primal mandate to man, He expected man to serve Him by what he did, and so to give Him worship, i.e. ‘worth-ship’. In the light of God’s creation of man, this is ‘reasonable worship’. Man’s refusal to do this was wholly illogical. Paul’s account in Romans 1:18-32 of man’s rebellion against God shows the reversal of true worship: (i) they did *not* honour Him as God although they knew Him and His worth, and (ii) they were unthankful. True worship, then, is true knowledge of God, due honour of Him, and thanksgiving to Him. This refusal to worship—to serve—brought about radical changes in man’s mind, and so much so that (i) he gave the glory of the immortal God to idols, and (ii) he wholly

exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

This does not mean that man ceased to worship, but that the *object* of his worship changed, and so the values he gave to God, man, and creation radically altered. 'The lie' was a newly—though variously—rationalized theology, anthropology and cosmology. Henceforth what man would do would be conditioned by this changed set of values. This change wrought by man brought him into incongruent living with God, man, and creation. Man from that point onward lives under the tension of incongruence and personal dislocation. Nothing can be to him essentially what it was.

Man given up to idolatry

The thrice-repeated 'God gave him up', of verses 24, 26 and 28, must be the explanation of God's wrath, for 'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth'. The giving up of man to his attitudes and acts wrought by his rejection of God is the nature of the wrath of God. Man's guilt is compounded dynamically as he seeks to suppress the truth. His alienation from God causes his existential aloneness and loneliness. He suffers because he is against God, and against the truth of God, of man, and of creation. In this state he is in deep need of pure worship of God, and true service to Him. Because he refuses to accept the nature of the living and true God', his idolatry becomes compulsive—for he must, somehow or another, worship. He must give value to the creation in which he lives and the creatures and objects within it. He must know how to relate to them. To

function within a rational universe means he must understand it. The creation itself can give him no reason—of itself—for the being of himself, man, and itself.

The misery of false worship

To know God is life (John 17:3; I John 5:20), and to refuse to know God is death (Gen. 2:17; 3:1-10: cf. Isa. 59:2; II Cor. 5:15). Life and the living of it is a relational matter. Death is the breaking of that true relationship.

Man's misery arises from his existential situation—his self-alienation from God—and its consequent result—God's wrath upon man. Man must worship, but his worship will have to be of surrogate deities or inadequate spirits. He may even be reduced to total worship of himself—a form of closed-circuit or autonomous adoration.

What concerns us in our present is that by this fearful existential living within human incongruency, dislocation of the true self, and the unsatisfying worship of idols, man will know misery of an order that we cannot compute. This sort of misery is constantly discussed by the psalmists.

Not only will man's idols from time to time prove fruitless and futile, but a satisfying rationale of himself as creature will be impossible to obtain, even whilst it is imperative that he achieve it. The strong drive to worship—by nature of the case—will not be satisfied by surrogate deities. Man must have God or nothing else, and that is his dilemma, for he cannot and may not have Him for his true worship—not, anyway, apart from the grace of reconciliation with God.

ALL WORSHIP IS BY FAITH

Cain was a worshipper without authentic faith, whilst Abel worshipped by faith. That seems evident from Genesis 4:4-5, 7, Hebrews 11:4, and I John 3:10-11. This seems also to be the import of I Samuel 15:22-23. Hebrews 11 indicates that faith and obedience are integrally the one. The patriarchs worshipped in faith (Gen. 48:1-22; Heb. 11:21). Whilst Abraham was firstly an idolater (Josh. 24:2), yet God revealed Himself to Abraham (Acts 7:2; Gen. 12:7; 17:1-3; 18:1-2), and gave *him the gift of true worship and, with it, salvation* (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:3, 6-8). Isaac and Jacob worshipped by faith, knowing the grace of covenant. To Israel, too, the gift of worship was given, along with the grace of covenant.

Worship and salvation are inseparable

As we have seen already, worship and salvation are inextricably linked. This is borne out in the important passage of John 4:20-24. The woman at the well asked Christ whether Samaritan or Jewish worship is the correct worship. His answer was, 'You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for *salvation is of the Jews.*' She had not asked about salvation, and this is the only place in John's Gospel that the word is used. Why, then, did he say it? Salvation must have been linked in her mind with worship. Is there always, then, the link of worship and salvation in the minds of devotees? If so, then we have valuable information here. Her own countrymen later said of Jesus, 'we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.' In some way they, too, must have linked worship with salvation.

Jesus' statement, 'Salvation is of the Jews', was certainly a claim in the Old Testament (cf. Ps. 147:19-20; cf. Deut. 4:5-8; Amos 3:2; Isa. 27:12). Even as Jesus emphasized it to the woman, he gave her hope. A powerful change was taking place, and we have seen that this was the salvation he was about to achieve and the new worship he was about to introduce.

THE NEW TRUE WORSHIP IS IN THE TRUTH, AND BY THE SPIRIT

As against worshipping gods *in the lie*, the new worship must be in the truth. The worshipper must *know* 'the only true God'—as over and against the false idols—and this truth of God is revealed to him by Messiah, the Son of the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 1:14, 18; 14:6; 18:37; cf. I John 5:2). The Holy Spirit brings the very truth to which Christ himself witnessed (John 15:26; 16:12-15; I John 5:7) so that the worshipper can worship in truth, i.e. by the Spirit. What we have to see is that the truth is dynamic, and it is *soteriological*, i.e. of saving nature. Paul said, 'In him you also, who have heard the word of truth... and have believed in him...' He told the Philippian gaoler, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be *saved.*' James and Peter both speak of the word of truth bringing regeneration to the believing hearers.

PROPHECY, PREDICTION, FULFILMENT, WORSHIP AND THE NEW TEMPLE

The prophetic predictions regarding the new worship are plentiful in the Old Testament. As we saw in our last

chapter, they are linked with the *eschaton*, i.e. the final era before Christ's return. Of course, many students of Scripture differ in their prophetic views or interpretations regarding the *time* of the New Temple. Some see it as a literal Temple built at Jerusalem, and others see it as the present church. Yet others see the New Temple and the new age as following Christ's return when he will set up His Kingdom—the Kingdom of the Father.

It is true, then, to say that the new worship announced by Jesus to the woman at the well has come historically in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, at Samaria, and at Caesarea. That is why Paul can say, 'For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.' Whilst *functionally* their worship in their own spirits is by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:9; Phil. 3:3), yet *soteriologically* the centre of worship has changed from Israel to Messiah, or—if we will have it—to the New Covenant. This can be seen in Ezekiel 36:24-28, which corresponds with Jeremiah 31:31-34, and it is evident in Ezekiel 37, where in verses 1 to 14 the nation comes to life by the Spirit (as by Pentecost: cf. Ezek. 37:9-10 and Acts 2:24), and then, being unified, becomes the true sanctuary of God in the context of 'a covenant of peace... an everlasting covenant'. Now it can be said that 'salvation is of Messiah' (Acts 4:12) and not per se 'of the Jews'.

In conformity with all this, the passage of John 4:20-24 (cf. Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 8:14-17) reveals that to worship God the Father through Messiah the Son, and the Spirit, is to have salvation, i.e. to have already received salvation. When the Spirit reveals the Father and the Son (John 16:12-15), God can no longer be said to be 'the unknown

God', i.e. one unknown (John 4:22) or worshipped in ignorance (Acts 17:23).

THE PAULINE VIEW OF WORSHIP AND SALVATION

Paul's message to the pagans at Lystra was that he and Barnabas were not gods. He said, 'We... bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things [pagan sacrifices, Acts 14:13] to a living God who made the heaven and the sea and all that is in them.' The term 'living God' always indicates 'the God who acts', and Paul is urging them to turn to the God who acts. In I Thessalonians 1:9 the Thessalonians had turned 'from idols to serve [*doouleuein*] a living and true God'. His message to the Greeks in Athens is to proclaim to them the 'unknown God' (cf. John 4:22). He does this by an exposition of the nature of God as Creator, and moves to the fact that God is Father ('we are his offspring'; cf. Jer. 2:26-27) so that to worship depictions of God is something of which man, universally, must repent (17:30; cf. 26:20). Paul's first preaching at Athens had been of 'Jesus and the resurrection' (17:18). In 20:21 Paul sums up his ministry as 'testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God [*eis theon*] and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ' [*eis ton kurion Iesoun*]. When Paul preaches the Gospel at Athens, he is proclaiming the unknown God to them as now known. The call for repentance—because of their former wrong worship—and the demand for faith in Christ (17:30, cf. v. 34) meant the message was soteriological, but the call is not merely to repent of sin but of wrong (false) worship. Wrong worship is the evil of man who has rejected God (cf. Rom. 1:19-25), so that salvation consists in moving from wrong

worship to the true, i.e. from the false deity to the true God.

THE PETRINE VIEW OF WORSHIP AND SALVATION

On the day of Pentecost Peter proclaimed the Gospel to Jews only, and 3,000 responded and were baptized. Jesus was announced as ‘Lord and Christ’ (Acts 2:36). In the face of the centrality of Christ and the Jews’ rejection of him, Peter told the Jews (Acts 2:39-40) to ‘Save yourselves from this crooked [perverse] generation,’ i.e. those Jewish worshippers who refused to see salvation in Jesus—as Messiah. Such Jews are not simply reluctant to try new worship, but in fact are rejecting the truth of Messiah (cf. Acts 4:11-12; 5:30-32) and so the new worship and the new age. Whilst this fact is more implied than explicit in the apostle’s utterances, it is worked out further by Paul in such passages as Romans chapters 9 to 11 (esp. 10:1-3) and Philippians 3:3. Also the writer of Hebrews gives it great attention.

In the First Letter of Peter the writer speaks to his readers as the elect people of God:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; *once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.*

‘Mercy’ here undoubtedly refers to salvation, but the point is they are now the true worshipping people, and part of the expression of that priestly worship is ‘to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’, i.e. having been saved *their* priestly *worship is declaration of the Gospel*

THE VIEW OF WORSHIP OF THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

In this Book—as we have partly seen—Christ is High Priest as victim, so that his’ work is soteriological, i.e. saving. This is seen clearly in the ninth and tenth chapters. The efficaciousness of his sacrifice is such that worshippers now have ‘confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus’ (10:19). The worship is of faith and out of a cleansed conscience: ‘let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience’ (10:22).

One worships truly, then, when one is saved: ‘the blood of Christ... purify your conscience from dead works to serve (*latreuein*) the living God’ (9:14). We note again that God becomes ‘the living God’ to the saved person (cf. I Thess. 1:9; Acts 14:15), so that He is dynamically the object of worship.

WORSHIP IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

We have seen previously that much of the worship in this Book is by celestial creatures, and so is no paradigm, either for human or terrestrial worship. We might refer to it as ‘original worship’, i.e. that kind of worship accorded to God as Creator and as the Holy One (cf. Rev. 4:24 1). Yet, because of the salvation God has initiated, both God and the Lamb are worshipped, and their ultimate triumph is seen to be soteriological (eg. 5:644; 11:16-18; 12:10; 19:11—20:10).

What interests us is the worship (i) of the 144,000, as seen in 7:4-8 and 14:1-5, and (ii) of the multitude which

no man could number, as seen in 7:9-17. The latter's worship is soteriologically inspired:

'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve [latreuosin] him day and night within his temple.'

CHURCH WORSHIP AS PROCLAMATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

If, as we have claimed, worship is primal and central to true human living, then the Gospel brings sinful man to the point where he exchanges the lie for the truth (Rom. 1:25) because the truth is the Gospel of God (Rom. 1:1; Rom. 15:16) and the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1) is 'the word of truth' by which man is born anew (I Pet. 1:23) and becomes 'a kind of first fruits of his creatures' (James 1:18). We mean that the Gospel reveals God not only as Creator but as Redeemer and as Father, so that the one believing is not only a saved person but becomes a true worshipper.

The clean worship of the Jewish community drew pagans to it

First it can be said that the worship of the Jews prior to the proclamation of the Christian Gospel was itself a witness to those who, seeing it, became 'god-fearers'. The Book of Acts shows us a group of Gentiles who gathered around Jewish centres of worship. It appears they had become disaffected of pagan worship, and were attracted

by Jewish teaching and worship (cf. Acts 10:1-2; 13:43; 14:1). Some of these had become proselytes, i.e. had become Jews by an initiation ritual. At Caesarea Cornelius and his household would be included in the 'devout' persons (Acts 11:1-2), and Whilst they had been deeply affected by Jewish worship, they had not as yet received salvation. An angel had said to him, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon called Peter; he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household' (Acts 11:13-14). Once this household believed (Acts 10:44-47) they immediately began worship by the coming upon them of the Holy Spirit. *Worship was the immediate fruit of the Gospel.*

Worship was always by faith and so held elements of proclamation

It would be interesting to examine the worship of the Old Testament to see what soteriological elements it contained. There can be no doubt about the case of Abel's worship. A good commentary on this could be Luke 18:9-14, where the tax-gatherer, in saying 'God, be merciful to me a sinner,' was really saying, 'God be propitious [*hilastheti*] to me, the sinner.' Paraphrased, his utterance could have run something like this: 'Oh God I am a sinner, and as such I deserve death. Look at me, I am beating my breast as a sign of the death I deserve. I cannot offer to You—the Holy One—a pure sacrifice. My position as sinner-tax-gatherer prohibits me—a Jew—from offering a bloody sacrifice, and that is why I stand in the court of sinners, where also stand the Gentiles. You require a propitiatory sacrifice from me but

I am unable to give it. I know, however, that You offer such a sacrifice, though how I know not—but that You are the propitiation-making God, I know. So—I implore You—do just that and free me from my guilt as a sinner. This is Your innate mercy as the God of grace.’

Of course, we are reading more theology into the utterance than the tax-gatherer may have consciously thought, but this idea certainly stands in the use of the imperative, ‘be propitious’.

Jesus said of this sinful tax-gatherer that he went down to his house justified, rather than the self-justifying Pharisee. Our whole point in using the incident is to say that man worshipped by *faith—through* the cultus of sacrifice— and Abel could have done no less. There must have been much that was salvific (i.e. saving) in the worship of the patriarchs, and much also in the worship of Israel, especially as we understand the nature of the covenantal sacrifices that resulted in the forgiveness of sins. We have only to look at chapters such as Leviticus 4 and 5 to realize this.

There is surely something of this in the following Pauline passages which, though they speak of worship, also speak of the saving work of Christ.

I Corinthians 11:23-26

Here Paul is saying that every time we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, especially in the manual acts of breaking bread and holding forth the cup, we ‘declare’ (*kataggellete*) or ‘show forth’ or ‘proclaim’ the Lord’s death until he comes. Doing this, it is most reprehensible to do so in an unworthy manner, whatever action that may be. We

cannot escape the fact that participation in the Lord’s Supper is also a form of proclamation, and a dynamic one at that. This ‘holding forth’ is a soteriological act, and is a proclamation of the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 14:20-25

In this passage Paul has unbelievers in mind. The ministry of tongues will be misunderstood by unbelievers if all speak in tongues. Indeed, unbelievers will think the assembly to be mad. He then says,

But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship (*proskunesei*) God and declare that God is really among you.

This speaks of the dynamical nature of worship. It also informs us that the use of prophecy—the utterance of God’s word directly from Himself—will bring conviction to the unbeliever’s heart and cause him to fall down on his face and worship God. Whilst it does not say salvation comes to the convicted worshipper, it certainly says that he knows and acknowledges the presence and reality of God. In fact, this passage may introduce us into the evangelistic importance of worship—something we rarely speak of or even think about

Galatians 4:4-7

This is not, primarily, a worship passage. However, it does speak of the utterance, ‘Abba! Father!’ Doubtless this cry arises at the initial awareness of adoption or sonship of the Father. Even so, the form of address to God will be

‘Father!’ as was the case with our Lord. When he prayed to his Father the disciples asked him to teach them how to pray, and his answer was, ‘When you pray, say, "Our Father..." ‘ It may well be that just as in the Lord’s Supper the manual acts can conduct one to the first Last Supper event and all that it meant, so to prophesy directly from God or to address Him as ‘Father!’ may have vital, existential communication with the hearer, and form a mode of proclamation, especially on the principle of ‘It’s better felt than tel’t.’

ESCHATOLOGICAL WORSHIP

We now come to the heart of contemporary worship, the presence of God’s people as the New Temple in the present world. We suggested above that our interpretation of the New Temple may require—for some of us—rationalization in the light of one or other *schema* of eschatology, i.e. the use of some millennial view. The way to avoid this problem is to grasp the *Sitz im Leben* of the apostolic church—its life-style, its functional nature and purpose, its very ethos. This we cannot grasp unless we enter into the apostolic understanding of the new community of Christ.

The apostolic view of the church as the New Temple

Let us repeat what we have seen before of the apostolic understanding of the church as Temple. Paul sees the new church as a dynamic and spiritual entity in the present time, as composed of living stones built together for a

sanctuary (habitation) of God in the Spirit (I Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:19-22; cf. Ezek. 37:26-28; Rev. 2i:1-3). Peter has a similar understanding, as can be seen from I Peter 2:4-10, and when the writer of Hebrews uses the principle of ‘the house [or household] of God’ (Heb. 3:14), then his thinking is similar to that of the two apostles. The three writers also hold similar ideas of ‘spiritual sacrifices’ (Rom. 12: 1; I Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-16). We have seen—interestingly enough—that Peter sees part of the priestly ministry of the new spiritual priesthood as telling ‘the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’, and this must be soteriological.

UNIVERSAL WORSHIP AND THE NEW TEMPLE

Those Old Testament passages which indicated that a desire for a new law and a new worship would ultimately grip the nations, now present us with the fact that as Jesus had contained all true worship—and salvation—within Jerusalem (i.e. Israel), so now this worship is to be available through the New Temple. In one sense all worship is still to be contained within the New Temple, but the New Temple is able to embrace all who are prepared for the new worship. The Temple is not located—as such—for ‘neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father’.

Just as there was no salvation outside the Jews, so there is no salvation outside the new people of God. Israel itself will be part of this new people of God (cf. Rom. 11: 13 -24), but in no way will transcend it, or be above and beyond it (Eph. 3:16).

The nature of the Temple as the house of prayer is seen in II Chronicles 7:12-16, where—amongst a number of elements—God says, ‘Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there for ever; *my ears and my heart will be there for all time.*’ There is no dichotomy between prayer and worship, for they are the one. God, then, is saying that Israel exclusively has the locale of true worship. This, of course, would be in face of the other—and false—gods.

When Isaiah universalizes the Temple as the house of prayer for all nations it is indicated that the New (i.e. eschatological) Temple will be inclusive of all nations, but exclusive for the true worshippers, i.e. (i) those who worship the Father, and (ii) those who worship Him in spirit (the Spirit) and in truth. This must surely be ‘the new worship’, and its locale is ‘neither on this mountain [Samaria] nor in Jerusalem’, but is the New Temple, the people of God.

CONCLUSION: THE IMPLICATIONS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP FOR TRUE EVANGELISM

We come now to the crux of our study. If our thesis, that worship draws to salvation as well as follows it, is tenable, then we deduce that:

- (a) ontologically .all men (persons, humanity) have a drive for worship;
- (b) without pure fulfilment of that drive a person lives in existential deprivation, incongruency, and so suffers

untold misery and doom. The functional denial of man’s essential affinity with God’ comes from his refusal to worship God ‘in spirit and truth’ in the context of the wrath and judgement of God which is upon him because he has refused to acknowledge God;

- (c) the opportunity for worship has been provided by God—even in the face of the fall of the human race— and such worship is based on God’s grace and man’s (responsive) faith;
- (d) God has provided covenantal worship to Israel in the context of the Temple, providing for Israel to be the matrix of Messiah, and in Jesus—that Messiah—has redeemed man so that he may now worship Him as Father, and such worship has been ordained, and is assisted by the Holy Spirit in this present (church) era.

If, then, this proposition is tenable, it must mean that the church is the locale for all true worship. In one sense, then, all true worship is evangelistic, if not wholly evangelism as such.* If what man most needs is to worship God, and if the church—the New Temple—is the place, context, and

* I confess that I do not like the word ‘evangelism’. I just do not like words with ‘ism’ on the end. The New Testament certainly speaks of ‘the good news’ and ‘proclaiming’, and these are pretty well synonymous, but I believe our image of ‘evangelism’ comes from contemporary practices and ideas of what constitutes an evangelist. For example, the New Testament sees the Gospel as an edict (proclamation) which has to be obeyed. Far more is spoken of ‘testimony’ and ‘witness’ than of evangelizing—as such. I believe that if we witnessed to Christ through ‘the word of God and the testimony of Jesus’ we would be closer to the New Testament idea of true proclamation. I have no desire to see us using worship as an evangelizing technique.

channel of that worship, then the appeal to man's ontological and existential drive—and existential need—is the most dynamic of all appeals.

The intention of this present study is not to practicalize this principle of worship as it is inseparably linked to proclamation—as also proclamation is to it—but simply to point out that the history of the church—both in apostolic and post-apostolic times—has borne witness to this very principle. Doubtless we need to—indeed are driven to—examine the soteriological nature of the sacraments, and the context of worship as the primary situation for Gospel proclamation, but we cannot merely utilize worship for proclamation. We need to worship because that is what God demands and we need.

We need to enquire into a number of things. It is noticeable that current evangelism has the practice of proclaiming the word of God within the context of worship. Is this by design, accident, or an ontological intuition? By this I mean that we often hold a 'service' in which we sing and pray in what is frequently an artificial manner, considering that we are directing our attention to people outside the faith. It must also seem strange to them. This is not to decry the normal worship, life and service into which a person may come, and being in it may be deeply affected. This would surely be authentic, especially as—in a true sense—the New Temple is everywhere, for it is composed of 'living stones' organically bonded, and such 'stones' give expression to worship by the lives they live.

The Temple—to change the metaphor—laps upon the vast shores of humanity, and powerfully and livingly affects it, even to effecting salvation, and liberating that same idolatrous humanity into the true worship of the

Father. By this we mean that the Temple is composed of persons who have been redeemed and who worship God as their Creator, Father, and Redeemer. These persons are the palpable, warm and living New Temple, and wherever they meet their fellow human beings, they bring their lives, which are those of worship and service to God, and so of honour, and service to their fellow man.

This is true proclamation. This is what releases man out of his existential guilt, his dislocation and awryness, into the peace and joy which comes from returning to the living and redeeming God. To proclaim the evangel is so to have seen God and His action, and so to have been wrought upon by it, that we must be with Him in His redeeming action as it reaches out to the farthest shores of humanity, where lap the oceans of eternity.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Living in the Realm of Worship and Service

THE TEMPLE OF GOD IN HISTORY AND HUMAN LIFE

WE have seen that worship of the true God is essential to authentic human living. We have realized that it is the ontological need for God which drives us to idolatry, or despair, or to God Himself. We are never merely moving towards that which is new, but rather we are going home. The heavenly Father meets us ‘afar off’, for He is the One who ever seeks us to worship Him. He has drawn us, rather than we have drawn near to Him. The bitterness and enmity of sin have kept us away, but there has always been the holy Temple, the place where God resides, whether it be in the heart of the faithful Abel—since every man of faith is a temple of God—or whether it be in the corporate people of God, and that Temple stands as a silent witness to God’s presence in the world He has created. Often because man thinks it is not

there he has to create it. At worst he knows it is there and in his pride and rage creates his own temple, i.e. gives his body to the idols or the demons. At best he longs for true worship, and true being.

THE REALITY OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Israel was the nation which was priestly, prophetic and royal. It was ‘a kingdom of priests’, and its ministry was prophetic. The prophets spoke not only to the nation of Israel, but to all the nations—not that those nations were listening. It is in this context that we must understand it as the worshipping community.

When we seek to study the matter of worship—especially in the New Testament—then we are faced with the fact that the church is at once the community of the faithful and the body of Christ, and that Christ is the Head of the church. Everything relates to him although he is unseen to human sight. The Spirit strengthens us in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in the heart by faith. His indwelling is personal to each member of his body, and it is general to all the body. Because he is the True Prophet, Priest and King, then the whole community expresses his prophetic, priestly and royal nature. It is at once the prophetic, priestly and royal community. In the context of its prophetic, priestly and royal ministry it worships God, serves within the community, and honours and serves the human Face. Israel—as we saw—was the priest nation *among* all nations, and (so) for all the nations (Exod. 19:545). It was the Temple bearing silent witness. The church is the New

Temple (I Pet. 2:4-10) beating powerful witness to God—through Christ—of His Being as Creator, Father, King and Redeemer. Its worship is significant. There is one place in all the world to which the world can come—'the house of prayer [and worship] for all nations'. In the ultimate, that New Temple v,411 be seen in its full being as the Holy City.

THE PRESENT LIVING WORSHIP

It is difficult for us after almost two thousand years to understand the worship of the early church. We have had so many developments and changes—liturgical and nonliturgical—that it would be difficult for us to determine general principles, let alone relate them back to the original apostolic worship. From one point of view—because of our history—we see a complexity of worshipping patterns, and from another point of view a rich treasury of the devotions and services of the servants of the Lord.

What we can discover are the constraints of worship in the people of Israel, their Tabernacle, Temple and community, and the things the early church inherited. These older elements flowed in simultaneously with the strong surge that came with this era of Messiah, i.e. the revelation of the Father by the Son, and the present ministry of the Spirit. It is these latter elements which assist us to have a richer devotional understanding of God, enhancing our practice of worship, and our functional service towards God and man.

We live horizontally in the community of Christ, but our life comes from the vertical, from the Father who

seeks us to worship Him. Christ is our High Priest who represents us to the Father, and the Father to us. Through Christ the Head, within the life of the body, worship ascends to the Father, and honour spreads out to all humanity. Our life must be in the horizontal-vertical context all the time. Our worship will fluctuate in its quality accordingly as we are subject to the Spirit who continually reveals the Father and the Son to us. Our relationship with both Father and Son is an established one, but the experience of it remains dependent upon the Spirit. If we are filled by him, walk in him, and are subject to him, then our worship will be true. The Spirit—as we have seen many times—is the Spirit of worship.

THE CONSTRAINTS OF WORSHIP IN OLD AND NEW ISRAEL

God's gifts to Israel and the church are the context and constraint of true worship

Romans 9:4-5 tells us the old *charismata*, namely 'the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises', were given to Israel, and 'to them belong the patriarchs, and...the Christ'. As we have already observed, these are the basic *charismata* of the new community—the church. They are also both the context and the constraint of true worship. The new *charismata*—the gifts of the Spirit—help to enhance that worship.

Adoption or *sons hip* brings us to worship of the Father (John 4:20-24; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:4-7; cf. I Thess. 1:1;

II Thess. 1:1). To worship as sons is not to worship as slaves. The glory in Israel was the presence of the Lord, symbolized by the candelabra as God was worshipped by the congregation—through the priests—in the Holy Place. In the New Covenant this glory is seen ‘in the face of Jesus Christ’ (II Cor. 4:6), for Christ is ‘a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of [his] people Israel’. In the New Israel Christ is the present glory of God. Contemplation of Him—through the Spirit—is the worship which brings personal transformation to the devotee (*cf.* II Cor. 3:18).

Israel knew many covenants, such as the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, and the Davidic, but they were all really of the one piece. Because Ezekiel 37:24-28 embodies the ideas of ‘Davidic’, ‘peace’, and ‘everlasting’, along with the ideas of God’s sanctuary and dwelling being in His people, and because this passage has its present fulfilment in Ephesians 2:19-21, and its eschatological fulfilment in the church as the Bride and Holy City (Rev. 21:1-4), therefore the church can be said, also, to have the covenants. These are contained in the New Covenant which Christ announced on the night of his betrayal (Matt. 26:28; *cf.* Jet. 31:31-34). Covenant strongly carries with it the idea of worship, a rich concept brought out so strongly in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The *giving of the law* may at first sight not seem a *charisma* of the new people of God, but references to ‘the law of Christ’ (John 13:34; 15:12; I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2) indicate that it is; The so-called ‘old law’ is shown to be new and fresh and dynamic (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-14; James 1:22-25; 2:8-12). Indeed whilst the law under the old regime carried a dreadful penalty and condemnation,

yet grace has taken this away, and the law shines with a new lustre. Paul could say with the writer of Psalm 1, ‘I delight in the law of God after the inward man.’ We note that the *aw* and *worship* are most intimately connected. The law was the mode of life and obedience set for the worshipper (Deut. 4:544), and because the worshipper loved God (Deut. 6:44; 10:12; 11:13; 30:6), he therefore obeyed and worshipped God (Deut. 10:12—11:1). The principle of law and worship is the same in the New Testament as in the Old Testament.

The *worship*, of course, is what we are discussing throughout our whole book, so that we have already dealt with it in great measure. We have seen at some length that the new age and era of worship has come with Christ who has shown the Father so that God is to be worshipped as Father. The coming of the Spirit has initiated this new worship of the God Who has been revealed so richly as Redeemer. So many new *charismata* have been given to enhance this worship, to give it a new freedom, and an even greater joy, but all must be seen as the gifts of God. The new *worship* comes as fresh endowment by God.

No less important are *the promises*. On the one hand, all God’s promises find their Yes in him—Christ (II Cor. 1:20)—i.e. the ancient promises of God have been fulfilled in Christ. On the other hand, that body of promises not yet fulfilled will be fulfilled. It is this assurance that causes God’s people to worship in *hope*. All worship is carried out in faith, hope and love, and these three are inseparable.

One powerful incentive for worship in the life of Christ’s community is its continuity with the children of

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the *patriarchs*. They see themselves as ‘men of faith... with Abraham who had faith’. Abraham is their father, and so God is their Father.

Finally, the great possession of the church is *Christ*. We have seen that he is Vine to its branches, Shepherd to its flock, Husband to its Bride, Head to its body, and Lord and Saviour to its community. As we will see, he is the one who heads up its worship.

COVENANT IS ALWAYS THE WELLSPRING OF WORSHIP

By covenant God dwells with His people. He promised the patriarchs, ‘I will be your God.’ He promised Israel, ‘I will make my abode among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people’ (Lev. 26:11-12). ‘I will be your God and you shall be my people’ is the theme or signature statement of the covenant.

Covenant meant grace to Israel. The fact that God had delivered Israel was His constraint upon them to worship Him, and obey the law. They worshipped because they were liberated. Giving them the law was a rich act of grace, such as no other nation had known. The modes of worship were not ‘off the cuff’—the inventions, innovations or mavericks of inventive worshippers. Such sacrifices as the burnt offerings, the peace offerings, the sin and guilt offerings were structured to meet the demands of God’s holiness and the needs of sinful people who—being sinful—yet desired to ‘worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness’. These sacrifices were all significant, embodying—as they did—the principles of acknowledged guilt,

repentance and faith on the part of the worshippers, as also of grace on the part of God through atonement by propitiation, bringing relief from guilt to the worshipper, thus establishing him in reconciliation, peace and fellowship. We can almost speak about ‘ontological worship’.

In this sense the worship situations of Mosaic and New Covenants are one in principle. In both it could be said to God, ‘Thou... inhabitest the praise of thy people’ (Ps. 22:3, AV), or, ‘You...make your home in the praises of Israel’ (JB). Ezekiel 37:26-27 has it—in regard to covenant—I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My dwelling place will be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’. So in the New Covenant, with Christ as Mediator of that Covenant, God dwells in the church, for it is a ‘dwelling place of God in the Spirit’. Worship, then, naturally arises from this context and constraint, as it arose from a similar—though perhaps less dynamic—one under the Mosaic Covenant.

Again I draw attention to the sad fact that I face when writing this sort of material, and which many a reader faces when reading it, namely that our constant examination of the material, and our analysis of it, can cause us to miss the most vital elements of it. If we miss seeing and sensing the existential and experiential elements of a people liberated from bondage, of a people endowed with a most glorious law, and with the true beauty of worship—given in that much of it would appear drastic, awful, and fearfully dramatic to us—then we will miss the most personal element of it. Because worship is in the context of grace—of God not only deigning to reveal Himself to man but of setting about to redeem him from his guilt and shame and rehabilitate him in His image—then the whole

subject of worship is immensely personal and richly significant. We need to pull ourselves up every so often and—setting aside our analytical exercises—contemplate these great verities.

WORSHIP IS IN THE *CONTEXT OF SERVICE TO GOD AND MAN*

We have seen that some of the main words in both the Old and New Testaments have the idea of both worship and service. To serve God is to worship Him, and to worship Him is to serve Him. Likewise to serve man is to honour him, and to honour him is to serve him.

Worship is really honouring God fight up to the hilt. It is so being taken by His greatness, His holiness and love that we cannot but fear Him, stand in awe of Him and love Him. This is why we worship Him, and then our view of man—the image of God—is so heightened that we cannot but honour him. In worshipping God and honouring man, we find our true being.

The difficulty of serving

This does not have to be pointed out to us. We seek to be independent, and feel we lose our autonomy when we serve others. We appear to lose dignity. Yet this is an illusion. Jesus pointed out that God has always been Servant to His creation—'My Father has always been working.' Working seems to be an occupation distasteful to proud humans. He himself came not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many. He pointed out that the greatest amongst men are those who serve

Serving enjoined for human dignity

God's law has always had two elements, loving God and loving man, i.e. worshipping and serving God and honouring and serving one's neighbour. Even love is summed up in one word, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' Paul had said, 'By love serve one another.'

Israel knew this principle. The laws of the covenant were merciful. They were gracious above all contemporary laws of other nations. Had Israel not been through the pain of being a people in bondage, a people suffering as strangers, rejected cruelly by a nation such as Moab, then there would have been much they could never have understood. Leviticus 19—to take just one chapter—is a fine paradigm for social justice. Part of the harvest was to be left for 'the poor and sojourner'.

Cruelty was forbidden on many scores, care for neighbours was enjoined, the poor were to be considered, the physically handicapped were to be treated graciously: 'You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.' Likewise old age must be honoured: 'You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.' To this kind of thought the writer of Proverbs was to add many similar sentiments and injunctions, one of them being, 'He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honours him.'

No less emphasized in the New Testament is kindness, social care of the needy, and love for the neighbour. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost certainly brought the new worship 'in the Spirit', but such worship simultaneously

expressed itself in love and care for the brethren—hence the daily distribution to widows and the needy. The brethren in Antioch ministered to the church in Palestine when a famine threatened. The brethren in Europe collected for the saints in Jerusalem who were poor. Hospitality was given to the needy, especially the persecuted. ‘Do good unto all men’ had to do with ‘Have love for all men’,* and the discerning of another’s needs and the supplying those needs from one’s bounty was the true principle of serving. Paul could say, ‘Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others,’ and this went with ‘Count others better than yourself.’

THE RICHNESS OF THE COMMUNITY OF

For the solitary person, the freelance operator, the free-standing person, the richness of living in a community is not known. Individualism is a curse man brings upon himself. Community is the context of true living, but then it has to be that kind of community which is genuine and loving. There is no true community without love, and in

* The wider issues of social justice, social action, and social concern are not treated here. Today the social gospel takes the attention of so many. The drive for working out ‘Liberation theology’ has drawn many Christians into seeking to change the lot of people under oppression. These ways of relieving distress among the oppressed are not to be frowned upon, but the question is far too wide to deal with in our book; nevertheless we must first understand what is man’s deepest need, i.e. the knowledge of God, and life lived in Him. With the pain of fallenness, of being out of kilter with God and His creation, and with the dread of life beyond death—let alone the human tragedy of broken relationships and personal failure—man needs to be ministered to at the level of his mind and spirit. Even where he is reasonably fed, clothed and provided with his needs, man is not satisfied. True social concern starts at this point without ignoring the other. Man must be drawn, primarily, into God’s love.

order to be that proper community Christ’s people have continually to live under grace—loving, forgiving, being forgiven, being loved, and serving also by grace.

Again it is a matter of personal human relationships. One is free only in the knowledge that God loves one, and that one loves his neighbours and is loved by them. The dynamics of such love are explored—and enjoined—time and again, by the apostles. ‘The love which you have to all the saints’ is a sign of healthy community.

We see, then, that worship towards God depends upon service towards men, as also service towards men depends on worship of God. Worship of God springs from His love in creation, providence and redemption, causing us to adore Him.

THE PERVASIVE TEMPLE IN THE HUMAN COMMUNITY

‘Their sound has gone out into all the earth,’ Paul claimed as he quoted Psalm 19, but he was speaking of the utterance of the Gospel. Some see it as what they call ‘general revelation’, and some as the truth common to the interior knowledge of all men. Others see it as a miracle of proclamation. It does not much matter: we simply know the knowledge of God is universal, however much men may not wish to know it, and however much they may seek to oppose and suppress it.

What we know is that where true worship obtains, where men and women of the authentic worship-community live, there their witness goes out and is seen. It may not be liked, but it is there. The Temple is everywhere.

The house of worship for nations has been set in the midst of the earth, and rumours of it are over all the world.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Worship Under the New Covenant

THE NEW WORSHIP

We have said many times that the worship of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant was changed with the coming of Christ. The Old Testament Scriptures themselves had prophesied such a change, Christ had confirmed these prophecies, and indicated some of the lines of the new worship. The coming of the Spirit had introduced it. Even so, the new worship had both continuity and discontinuity with the old. It had continuity in that the principles of adoration, praise and prayer were not innovative, but followed well-worn lines of tradition. It had discontinuity in that the sacrificial cultus was passing away. It had continuity in that Israel had always had a high priest, but discontinuity in that Christ was the new, true High Priest, but of another order than the old Aaronic order. Whilst the old order certainly was related to the ministry of the Holy Spirit (cf. Heb. 9:8), the new order depended entirely upon the work of the Spirit.

THE GENESIS OF THE NEW WORSHIP

The Holy Spirit brought the truth of the Father and the Son to the new community, as Christ had predicted he would (John 16:12-15; I Cor. 2:8-14; cf. Phil. 3:3; Gal. 4:6). He revealed the truth of the Father and the Son and brought the power of the Gospel to light. He also poured the love of God into the hearts of believers, which resulted in their having a love for God and their fellow believers.

A major factor that was powerful in the new community was that of justification. We constantly underestimate the vast and continuous effort in human living which goes into self-justification, i.e. self-vindication. Religion, too, is primarily occupied with this exercise. To be relieved—by justification and forgiveness—of this compulsive labour means we are free in relationship to God and man, and so worship is unhampered by guilt. Indeed, it is stimulated by freedom from it.

The shape of the new community took place at Pentecost. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, the truth of God and His Gospel came to the new community. We have seen enough already to know that worship flowed not merely from some high and supernatural inspiration of the Spirit but by the Spirit's revelation of God's grace (cf. Rom. 12:1; Heb. 9:14; Rev. 7:14). True worship thus flowed.

THE NEW WORSHIP FROM THE SPIRIT

This was soon seen in 'the shape' of their functional operations: 'they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the

prayers' (Acts 2:42). We need to look at the origin and nature of these four things:

(a) **The apostles' teaching.** The apostles had been taught by the Lord, although they grasped little of what he was saying. However, he promised the Spirit would (i) bring back to their remembrance what he—Jesus—had said to them, (ii) teach them all things, thus leading them into the truth, and (iii) convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement.

All this had happened with the coming of the Spirit. The apostles' teaching (the apostolic doctrine) was born that day. This now became the authoritative truth for the church for the age which stretches from Pentecost to the Parousia. The teaching was—and is—authoritative for all matters of faith, life and practice. In one sense, it replaces the whole law and cultus of the former (Mosaic) covenant.

(b) **The fellowship.** This covers the practical unity they came to know in one day, but which continued strongly, not only in Jerusalem but in the places to which the apostolic band took the Gospel. It is seen in the sharing of their goods, their oneness of heart, soul and mind. It really was the miracle of the era of the Spirit. Keeping in mind that all who acceded to the Gospel on the day of Pentecost had repented, been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, we can be sure a most dynamic situation obtained. This fellowship was (is) unique, far transcending the congregational life of the former covenant.

(c) **The breaking of bread.** Most would understand this as referring to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, though centred so naturally within a meal. As they 'broke

bread from house to house' this would include the remembrance meal, redolent as it was with the dynamic assurance of forgiveness, and the unity of the new body—the church.

(d) **The prayers.** These were prayers for which they gathered at the hours of prayer at the Temple. This is clear from many references in the Acts. The Temple was still their centre of worship, although they fellowshipped within homes.

OTHER ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

BAPTISM

Baptism was the means of entering the church, as well as being regenerated by the Gospel and the Spirit, so that the minimal ritual that it contained would be significant. We have little description regarding it, although the New Testament certainly gives enough teaching about its meaning. We gather nothing regarding the modes of baptism from the accounts of Acts 2:41; 8:12; 9:18; 10:48; 16:33 and 19:8. Acts 8:10-39 shows that Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch both went down into the water and came up out of the water. We would gather from Acts 2:38 that those baptized would have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, presumably around the time of baptism in water. That this did not happen in Acts with the Samaritans does not mean the non-reception of the Spirit at that point would be normative for other occasions, since the reception of the Spirit was at that time linked with being admitted—as Samaritans—into the Kingdom of God.*

* Much of the debate about whether a believer receives the Spirit prior to the rite of water baptism, during it, or following it, is of no great point. Romans 8:9-11 (cf. I Cor. 2:14) makes it clear that when one believes one receives the Spirit. The case (cont next page)

The teaching of the Epistles certainly appears to indicate immersion as the mode of baptism (cf. Rom. 6:1-4; Col. 2:12-13), and the rite as one of washing (I Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:22) which brought the forgiveness (Acts 2:38) and cleansing away of sins, thus effecting a purified (Acts 22:16; I Pet. 1:22; 3:21; cf. Heb. 9:14).

THE LORD'S SUPPER

We have noted the probability that 'the breaking of bread' mentioned in Acts 2:42 and 46 was the simple celebration of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:20). Again, we are told nothing about it in the Acts, either as to mode or significance. The Gospels show its enactment, and link it both with the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and the ultimate (eschatological) Messianic banquet of the Kingdom (Matt. 26:27-29; Mark 14:24-25; Luke 22: 28-30).

Paul speaks of the *agape* or fellowship meal, generally called 'the love feast', and this either preceded the celebration of the Lord's Supper or the Supper took place within it. The elements Paul notes are (i) the blessing of the elements (I Cor. 10:16; cf. 11:24), i.e. the thanksgiving (cf. I Tim. 4:4-5; cf. Luke 24:30; Luke 22:17, 19); (ii) the unity indicated by the one loaf (I Cor. 10:16-17; cf. 11:29); (iii) the remembrance (*anamnesis*) of the death; (iv) the salvific proclamation (I Cor. 11:26), and (v) the looking to

of the Samaritans is not normative for all times since they were a people outside the Kingdom (cf. John 4:20-24), and in Acts 8—through the laying on of hands of the apostles, and only through such—they receive the Spirit, which is the sign and seal of their admission to the Kingdom. We would presume that following that initial principal happening other Samaritans who believed would be in the position of the Jews who had Acts 2:38 addressed to them.

the return of Christ, i.e. ‘until he comes’ (I Cor. 11:26; cf. Matt. 26:29). On the basis of these things Paul warns against an unworthy participation in the Supper.

Different patterns of worship

It has been suggested that the worship such as we find in the Lord’s Supper is different from that of the worship described in I Corinthians 14. We certainly discover a variety of worship situations, such as the ones described in Acts 2—the home meals, the prayers at the Temple (2:46; 4:1; 5:12), participation in the synagogue gatherings (cf. Acts 6:8-10; 13:15ff.; 14: 1, etc.), prayer and worship in the homes (Acts 12:5, 12; 13:1-3; cf. Rom. 16:5), teaching situations (Acts 11:22-26; 20:7-12), the worship described in Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16; Philippians 3:3; I Corinthians 14; Hebrews 12:18-29; 13:15-16; I Peter 2:4-5; cf. I Peter 4:10-11.

Authority in the apostolic church

The church had a structure, and in it was contained that authority by which it operated. *Firstly Christ was the Head of the church.* He was not absent from his church (cf. Matt. 28:20), but present through the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-23; Eph. 3:16; cf. Rom. 8:9-11). In fact, when Paul persecuted Jesus he persecuted the church—Christ’s body. Christ had given his fullness to the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 2:9), remaining its Head. That was the overall authority; but over him, too, was the Father (I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 4:6; cf. I Thess. I: 1; 2:1). The lives of all believers

were seen to be hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). For the main part, the authority of God and of Christ was unseen.

The second authority was what we call apostolic, i.e. the ministry and leadership of the apostles. They had ‘apostleship’ (eg. Rom. 1:5) which was directly given to them by Christ. Primarily it was the authority of the word which they were to proclaim. It was the authority of the truth which they undoubtedly possessed, and which determined the faith and practice of the early church. Their truth was the interpretation of the events of Christ in the light of the Old Testament, and the interpretation of the Old Testament in the light of the events of Christ, the two elements together forming a new third element, namely the apostolic doctrine. Without tracing the elements of the Gospel they proclaimed, without studying in detail the teaching that was given to the new churches and consequent pastoral situations, it is difficult for us to realize the nature of the new corpus of teaching which was theirs. It was virtually that body of teaching which replaced— although it did not vie with—the corpus of teaching Israel had received under the former (Mosaic) covenant. It is no wonder that the established leadership of Israel—the Sanhedrin—rejected the new teaching as both radical and heretical.

The *apostolic authority* was further expressed in the ministries of ‘prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher’ (Eph. 4:11). They, too, taught the apostolic word, and what they said—deriving as it did from the apostles—was regarded as truth to be received and obeyed. If we can understand the *charisma* of Christ to be his life given to the body (Rom. 6:23), then we can understand that they

were Christ to the body,* for through them Christ worked out his life and will in the congregation. We have said that Jesus was not gone from the new congregation but—as Messiah—was in its midst by the Spirit, and through the gifts of his ministry distributed to, and through, the body (Eph. 4: 7-11; cf. I Cor. 12:4ff.). The so-called old charismata which we have seen in Romans 9:4-5 were passed on to the new community, and with them the new charismata which we meet with in the New Testament. Since it was in the context of teaching and the ministry of the gifts that the church lived, it is essential that we have this background as we seek to understand the worship of the early church.

The local church structure

Within the congregation were the elders and the deacons. The elders were called variously ‘overseers’ (i.e. ‘bishops’), ‘leaders’, ‘those that are over you’, ‘those that have the rule’, ‘those keeping watch’ (Acts 20:17, 28; I Thess. 5:12; I Tim. 3:2f.; 5:17f.; Titus 1:5f.; Heb. 13:7, 17). It would appear that elders approximated to ‘pastors and teachers’ (Eph. 4:11). Elders were to have oversight of the flock and be ‘apt to teach’. ‘Pastor’ means ‘a shepherd’, and the ministry of a shepherd was to oversee, protect, feed and tend the flock of God (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:14).

* We must understand that the church, being the body of Christ, was given his fullness (Eph. 1:22-23; cf. 4:7ff.), i.e. all ministries and all gifts derived (derive) from him. In fact they were (are) his fullness (*pleroma*). Romans 6:23 says that the *charisma* of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. All his life was imparted to the church, and so we can—and must—speak of all ministries and all gifts as deriving from him, i.e. from his very life, his own fullness. Whilst in 1 Corinthians 12 these gifts are spoken of as being the gifts of the Spirit, correctly speaking they are the gifts of Christ distributed by the Spirit.

It seems that the deacons were to attend to practical matters which concerned the welfare of people. Older women were to teach younger women, including wives. Marital and familial life was the immediate concern of the new congregation (cf. I Tim. 5:1ff.).

THE COMMUNITY OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS

During the great events of liberation from Egypt, the Israelites knew the intervention of God with signs and wonders. Their God was ‘the living God’, i.e. the God who acted. The inception of the nation through liberation, the receiving of the covenantal *charismata*, and the establishment of the community in Canaan was such that their worship life and practice arose from it. Likewise with the church in the New Testament. It was liberated from the bondage of the law, sin, death and the hostile world system by means of Christ. Thus its worship arose from gratitude and love (cf. Rom. 12:1; Heb. 9:14).

Israel looked back and praised God for what He had done. Yet it seemed that it was the one eventful time to which they looked back,* for Moses was gone, David was gone, and so they looked to what had been done. The

* If God did not go on working signs in Israel, some felt He had deserted them. On one occasion Gideon appeared to protest that God had stopped doing such works: ‘where are all his wonderful deeds which our fathers recounted to us, saying, "Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" but now the Lord has cast us off’ (Judges 6:11-18). For some this insecurity made them demand signs of God. At a later point in Israel’s history God stated that He had—in fact—never ceased to work. Jeremiah said, ‘[God] who hast shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel, and all mankind’ (Jer. 32:20).

church did not look back. Their Head--Christ--was present. God kept attesting to the Word He preached by the hands of the apostles (Acts 14:3; cf. Acts 4:29-30). The church was not looking back to a miraculous era. It was living in it! Christ the Head kept on working. Out of this, then, was their praise and worship. Of course there is another sense in which the church does look back, i.e. to the events of Christ, yet Christ is still with his church (Matt. 28:20).

At the same time, the act of baptism was—and is—in some sense a re-enactment of the events of the Cross and the Resurrection (Rom. 6:14), and brought the benefits of those events to the baptismal candidate. The constant celebration of the Lord's supper was—and is—what we may call 'realist-dynamic' in that it did not have a bare remembrance of the event of the Cross, but a dynamic or efficacious remembrance. Every 'showing forth of his death' brought fresh reassurance and renewed faith-participation in that salvific work.

The place of the word of God in all this was (is) primary. No sacrament is *ex opere operato* efficacious. The mere addition of the word to the elements of water in baptism or of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper achieves nothing. The elements are the means of grace of the word, for they are part of that saving word. They are not things in themselves. Worship is always in the presence of God, and by His evocation, not ours.

No codification of worship

Eager liturgiologists scan the Jewish temple worship of the day, the worship of the Dead Sea sectarian communi-

ties, and the worship of the synagogue, in order to formulate early Christian worship. Doubtless there are many useful vestiges from these sources, and some indications of early worship, but the matter can scarcely be codified. When Paul said, 'We do not lord it over your faith' (II Cor. 1:24; I Cor. 3:5f.; I Pet. 5:3), he was enunciating the freedom the community had within itself. The law in Israel was called '*torah*', meaning 'instruction', and not 'legislation'. We mean there was not an *imposition* of a certain set order, although a set order may well have grown up in time.

There was, then, a certain freedom, but since order and not confusion was the guiding principle (I Cor. 14:33) the early worship may have followed much along the synagogue lines of prayers, songs, lections and commentaries (sermons). At the same time, I Corinthians 14 (cf. Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17) indicates that the use of the *charismata* was part of this early dynamic worship, in which case the worship was certainly not set in a liturgical frame.* Even so, this very chapter enjoins order as against confusion, and the proper use of gifts as against an untrammelled employment of them.

What we are not told is the actual nature of leadership in worship. Since the elders were wise and mature people, and because they were 'apt to teach', they must have taken a prominent part in worship, and it seems likely they saw to it that the use of the gifts was authentic and one of good order. One writer speaks of charismatic meetings

* Ernst Kasemann, in his *Essays on New Testament Themes* (SCM Press, London, 1971, pp. 67-94) develops in the essay 'Ministry and Community in the New Testament' the function of the *charismata* in the life of the community, and their function and use in the worship of the church.

becoming ‘chaotic informality’,** and suggests that there was some form of internal check on this chaos by the prophets, when prophesying was the matter in question. Certainly there were principles by which these gifts were to be used.

CONCLUSION ON THE WORSHIP OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Because worship is worship of God and serving Him, and because it is at the same time the honouring of all mankind and the serving of it, we are obliged to see that we have scarcely touched the edge of the subject of this chapter, i.e. worship in the early church. Even so, we have seen that the church was the worshipping-serving community. The reality and the quality of its worship is of a high quality since it—and it alone—worshipped (and now worships) ‘the living God’ (Heb. 9:14). Whilst God is gracious enough to reveal Himself, yet His judgements and His ways are still inscrutable (Rom. 11:33). Even so, the redemption He has effected has powerfully launched the redeemed into true worship, prayer and service.

THE WORD, THE HEAD, AND THE WORSHIP

Doubtless the forms and modes of such worship will vary in different generations because of prevailing customs, cultural factors and other mores, but the basic worship

will be the same—inspired by the creating, living and redeeming God.

What should concern us is whether the word which brought the revelation of God, and proclaimed His saving work, and which became ‘the word of his grace, which was able to build... up’ the early believers, is still the prime mover in initiating true worship. History has shown us that when we move away from ‘the rock from which we were hewn’, then the principles behind our worship change. The thrust of the word and the Spirit, and abiding in the presence of Christ the Head as the early church knew these, can easily give way to other thrusts. Current anthropological and sociological luggage can be taken on board. Humanism can gain the ascendancy. Worship is then influenced by social and subjective categories of an experiential nature. That which once received its Divine impetus from the great holiness of God can become wholly horizontal, and this at the level of humanistic experiment and endeavour. The horizontal is that to which we gravitate in the natural, but we need to see the horizontal in the light of the vertical, for that is true worship.

* C. F. D. Moule. *Worship in the New Testament*, Lutterworth, London, 1964, p. 63.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Christ, the True Worshipper

JESUS—MAN OF WORSHIP

PAUL said, ‘For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh’ (Phil. 3:3). He was saying, (i) ‘We worship [serve] God in our spirits’ (cf. Rom. 1:9); (ii) ‘Our worship is not fleshly, but spiritual’; (iii) ‘We boast only in Christ, for he is all our glory.’ Doubtless Paul is inferring that when we offer spiritual worship it is by the Holy Spirit, in conformity with Jesus’ words of John 4:21-24 when he said, ‘the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit [Spirit] and truth.’

What Christ told the Samaritan woman primarily applied to himself. Jesus was wholly dependent upon the Spirit for everything he was as man, and for everything he did. At the outset of his ministry he said, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...’ John the Baptist testified to this reality: ‘I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven and it remained on him.’ In Luke 10:21 we read that when he addressed the Father in prayer and praise he did so by the

Holy Spirit: ‘In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank thee, Father..." ‘

JESUS WORSHIPPED THE FATHER IN THE TEMPLE

We have seen many times that Jesus frequented the Temple, calling it variously ‘my Father’s house’, ‘the house of prayer’, ‘a house of prayer for all the nations’. By ‘prayer’ he meant ‘worship’. He chided his parents for not seeking him in the Temple (Luke 2:49-50). In one sense Jesus could be called ‘the true circumcision’, for as regards the law he was circumcised the eighth day, and was a true Jew—as Paul put it: ‘He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal.’ Some commentators have explained the term ‘the circumcision of Christ’ (Col. 2:11) to mean that we were circumcised when he was circumcised, and that that circumcision was spiritual as much as it was literal to him.

Whatever we may make of these things, Christ was truly born under the law, and fulfilled its requirements, and since Paul applies Christ’s obedience to us in Romans 5:12-21, then so have we fulfilled the law. His obedience has become our obedience.

JESUS-IN WORSHIP OF GOD—REFUSED THE WORSHIP OF THE DEVIL

The Temptation is extremely important, for it must be seen as Jesus’ pure worship of God. He had been led by the Spirit into this experience of testing, and his answer to Satan’s temptations was ‘It is written!’ It is true that Satan sought to use the Scripture, but this was ignored by Christ.

The Devil sought to move Jesus to worship him in exchange for rulership of the kingdoms of this world, but Jesus said, 'It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." 'Jesus, then, was the true worshipper, the true servant of God.

IN KEEPING THE LAW, JESUS WAS TRULY WORSHIPPING AND SERVING GOD

We saw that under the Mosaic Covenant true worship and obedience to the law were of the one piece, so that when Israel worshipped God it served Him, and its service was the keeping of the law, though not merely as a legal or a legalistic exercise. The law has never been merely the keeping of precepts. It is dynamic in that it answers to the nature of God, of man, and of creation, so that the true worshipper grows as he serves, moving towards personal, spiritual and moral maturation. Christ, then, made it clear that he had not come to abrogate the law (Matt. 5:17-18), but to keep it, and keep it he did.

When Paul said that 'Christ is the end of the law' (Rom. 10:4), he did not mean that 'the law of God' was finished as such, but that Christ finished the law as a (seeming) means of justification.* Whilst it is true that *Jewish* law--

* This verse is quite controverted. Some commentators see it as meaning that whereas the law has always confronted man with condemnation, yet since Christ has obeyed, then that finishes the demand for obedience—Christ having rendered that obedience. Others see it as saying that the law has been fulfilled by Christ and so is no longer operative, i.e. law has been disbanded. Some would say this is the disbandment of *Jewish* law, but not of *moral* law. Yet others would say that the law—known either as *Jewish* or *moral*—has been replaced by 'the law of Christ', and see that as meaning 'the law of love'. It seems to me that Paul sees no disbandment of God's law, but that the law never had been intended to serve as a way—or means—of justification (Gal. 2:16 17; Acts 13:38 39; Gal. 3:10), and Christ has

especially its laws of sacrifice—was fulfilled by Christ, and so no longer obtained for the worshipper of God, yet Paul spoke strongly of 'the law of God', and said that we must fulfil it (Rom. 8:4), though not, of course, as it being a means—and so a way—of justification!

CHRIST'S PASSIVE AND ACTIVE OBEDIENCE WERE TRUE WORSHIP

Some theologians speak of Christ's *passive* (Latin *patoir*:. suffer, submit) and *active* obedience. His passive obedience constitutes his compliance in doing the redemptive work His Father commanded him to do, and his active obedience was that life of obedience to the law of God, keeping in mind that it was filial obedience to the Father. 'I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart' (Ps. 40:8; Heb. 10:7) is the principle of obedience which covers both passive and active obedience. That 'he learned obedience through the things he suffered', and 'became obedient unto death, even death on a cross', was an obedience he carried out, not only for himself, but for us. Thus Paul says, 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous' (Rom. 5:19).

From the point of view of Christ's being the True Worshipper, we can see his keeping of the law was perfect,

shown that only by faith can a person be justified. Thus he means, 'The question of law as a way of justifying oneself has been finished by Christ through his redemptive work of the Cross'. The context of Romans 10:4 surely confirms this. The matter of believers fulfilling 'the righteous demands of the law' is certainly raised in Romans 8:14, but then 'the law of God' is not to be fulfilled for the purpose of justification (since indeed we are already justified), but for its own sake (cf. Ps. 1; 19; 119), because it is God's law, and the heart of the believer delights in it (Ps. 1:2; Rom. 7:22).

so that his serving and worship were also perfect. If on the one hand we see his active obedience and know that he delights to do the will of God, and so catches up all the delights that are expressed in the three Psalms we have nominated—1, 19 and 119—, then to study these Psalms is to see the intrinsic delight there is in obedience to law. If on the other hand we see his passive obedience, then we must understand his intention of fulfilling the work of the Cross ‘for the joy that was set before him’. Even so, his passage towards the Cross was not an easy one. He was constrained until it was accomplished. He saw the nature of the Cross, and his humanity must have felt the test and tension of it. In the garden of Gethsemane he knew intense sorrow, though we doubt that it was so much from anticipation of the Cross as it was from the fact that he might perish in the garden without accomplishing the redemptive death on the Cross (cf. Matt. 26:38-39; Heb. 5:7-8).

The actual work of the Cross was enormously demanding. He was numbered with the transgressors, identified with them, suffered for them and as them, and bore their sins in his body on the Tree, finally propitiating the guilt, thus bringing forgiveness of sins, and justification from the law to the elect. His final offering up of his spirit to the Father closed that chapter of his obedience. What man had never rendered to God he did: (i) in *active obedience* to His law and will, and beyond that, (ii) in *passive obedience* for the redemption of the world—a demand never made upon man, by nature of the case. By this he has become the True Worshipper. He alone of all mankind has rendered true worship. He is thus the Lord of all worship.

ALL TRUE WORSHIP IS THROUGH CHRIST THE TRUE WORSHIPPER

Our thesis in this section is that Christ has offered the only true worship mankind has offered, and that only in him and through him can mankind now worship. For this to be so, we need to see that (i) Christ identified with us, becoming as us before God in the work of redemption; (ii) he has identified us with himself, so that we are in him, and therefore all that we do is in him, and by him. This—if it were so—would mean we must abide in Christ and do his will as he is Head and Lord of us, in which case our worship will be authentic. All of this must presuppose the Father acting towards us in and through the Son, the Son acting towards us in and through the Spirit, and the Spirit acting within us to make us one in the Father and the Son, and to aid us in abiding in our Head and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Christ was and is the true humanity

There is no need here to assert or seek to prove Christ’s true humanity, for that must be taken as being so. No one ever doubted his humanity, even if they would have refused to accept his Deity. The necessity for true humanity can be seen from many Scriptures which explain his incarnation, and two elements of these can be seen in Hebrews 2:14-15 and 17-18. In these he became man in order—by his death—to liberate man from Satan’s bondage, and also ‘he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make expiation [propitiation] for the

sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted'. Many other New Testament Scriptures insist that he was truly man. We will now see that Christ was one with man in his life, and in his death.

Christ one with man in his life

The writer of Hebrews said, 'For he who sanctifies [i.e. Christ] and those who are sanctified have *all one origin* [are all one]. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren.' In his birth he came truly as man. In his baptism he identified with the human race: 'It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' 'All righteousness' is not the act of ritual baptism, but is the doing of all righteousness, i.e. the will of God—something man had never done. Thus he became man in order to render the obedience they had failed to do, but in order to do that he had to be one with man, and this he surely was.

Christ one with man in his death

John's baptism was that of repentance and was for sinners. Jesus in this baptism identified himself with sinners, and so identified sinners with himself. From then onwards everything is 'in Christ'. From one point of view he is the Head of his people, i.e. 'those whom God has given me', and is thus the Shepherd of the flock, the Vine which incorporates the branches, and from another point of view is accounted as all sinners. '[He] was numbered with the transgressors' (Isa. 53:12; Luke 22:37; Mark 15:28) is a dramatic and all-embracing statement, for it must

speak of the entire work which God began at his baptism, and completed in the Atonement. 'God made him to be sin' can mean no less than He made him to be one with sinners, and so he died that a Barabbas might go free, taking his place in the midst of malefactors—'he was made curse for us'. Indeed he was lifted up as a snake (John 3:14). 'Our old humanity [*anthropos*] was crucified with him' says no less than that he entered into all that was—and is—decadent humanity, before destroying its power (of guilt) in his death. 'The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all' identified him with us as much as it was also said, 'We thus judge, that if one died for all, then did all die', i.e. Christ was made one with us, that we might be one with him—in his death. Hence the constant refrain in the Epistles, 'You died with him.' Hence, too, the statements that if we died with him we shall also live with him. Both speak of a double identification—he with us, we with him.

If, then, he identified with us in his death, and identified us with him in that act, so, too, in his resurrection were we still one with him. Paul even insisted that God 'raised us up *with* him, and made us sit *with* him in the heavenly places *in* Christ Jesus'.

Christ is one with his elect people in his present work and ministry

CHRIST'S PEOPLE IN THE WRITING OF JOHN

When Christ said he was the good Shepherd, he also said that the sheep hear the voice of their shepherd and follow him. He added that he had other sheep which were not of the Palestinian fold and these he would also bring,

for they would heed his voice, and there would be ‘one flock and one shepherd’. He also spoke of ‘those whom the Father has given me’ (John 6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:2, 6, 9, 24). Those whom the Father has given him are those whom Christ took up into his Cross, down into his Tomb, out in his Resurrection—those have been seated with him in heavenly places.

We cannot understand Christ’s oneness with his people if we do not read—time and again—the seventeenth chapter of John. It has well been called ‘the High-Priestly Prayer’, for such it is. Jesus is one with his people towards God, and one with God towards his people. Again his command that they should avail themselves of this oneness with him is seen in John 15, where the principle of abiding is set forth. As branches they must be one with the Vine and so produce fruit Likewise in John’s Letters abiding in God is a strong theme (cf. I John 3:24; 4:13, 16).

IN THE EPISTLES ALL IS *CHRIST*

In the Pauline Epistles everything is in Christ, *through* Christ, *with* Christ, and by Christ God has blessed His people with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. They were chosen in him before time, to be holy, to be sons of God, to be forgiven their sins, to be to God’s glory (Eph. 1:3-14). Salvation is in Christ alone (Acts 4:12). He is made to them ‘God’s wisdom in righteousness, sanctification and redemption’ (I Cor. 1:30). In Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and this fullness (*pleroma*) is that from which his people live. They are filled full in him (Col. 1:19; 2:9), for in him are ‘hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’. As we have seen, they have been crucified, buried and raised with him, and so have the

fruits of his salvation-work. His obedience has made many righteous—these being his followers.

What we need to note here is that Christ has made a new humanity (Eph. 2:11-18). In fact he is the new humanity. Our humanity has been regenerated within his new humanity (II Cor. 5:17). Regeneration is linked with adoption, i.e. the new sonship that is ours in the Son. This, too, is linked with being his brothers, so that we are one with him in the family of God. Again, Christ is ‘the last Adam’, and as such is a ‘life-giving spirit’, and his great gift will be our ultimate glorification—the grace that will appear at the revelation of him—Christ (I Pet. 1:13).

CHRIST THE *TRUE* WORSHIPPER IS THE *TRUE* HIGH PRIEST OF THE NEW SANCTUARY

Having seen that Christ has identified himself with us, and us with himself, we see, now, that we have nothing apart from Christ. We do not receive some spiritual commodities from him, which we then utilize for ourselves by ourselves, but rather we have everything in him, and only in him. Outside of him we have nothing but the things called ‘transient’ (II Cor. 4:18). In fact, outside of Christ there is nothing, since the Father has designed that *all things* should be summed up in him (Eph. 1:9-11), filled up by him (Eph. 4:10), reconciled through him (Col. 1:20), which will be ‘the times of refreshing’, i.e. ‘the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets’ (Acts 3:19-20).

This must mean that everything we do must surely be in him. We saw that all he did in his lifetime was for us,

since he did those things as us (Rom. 5:19). We saw, too, in John 17, that he interceded for us in a High-Priestly ministry. From Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25 we see that this intercession is still proceeding. This then brings us to the present ministry he has for us, particularly as portrayed by the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews.

CHRIST OUR *TRUE* LEADER IN ALL WORSHIP

In Hebrews 13:15-16 the writer says, '*Through him* [Christ]/et us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.' Worship, then, is offered through Christ. This is the case in I Peter 2:5, where it is written, 'be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. In Colossians 3:17 Paul enjoins, 'And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.' From these references we see that praise, spiritual sacrifices, and thanksgiving are all through Christ.

In John 14:13 Christ said, 'If you ask anything in my name, I will do it'. In John 16:23-24 he said, 'In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.' In 15:7 he had said, 'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.' He added

(verse 16), 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.' It is clear from these statements in John's Gospel that prayer is made to the Father in the name of the Son. John 14:6 may cover a wider area, but it certainly applies also to the situation of prayer: 'no one comes to the Father but by me'. Prayer, as we have seen, is not confined to petition but is a word which covers the broadest scope of worship.

THE HIGH-PRIESTLY INTERCESSION OF JESUS

We have looked at the magnificent prayer of John 17. It has been likened to the prayer that the high priest offered for the people at the time of the annual Feast of the Atonement, a prayer offered prior to the sacrifice. How apt the thought is for Christ's offering of himself, for he was both Priest and Victim. Jesus had previously prayed for Peter that his faith should not fail, and this, too, was intercession.

Paul also speaks of Christ's intercession in Romans 8:34, saying that he is at the right hand of God interceding for us. Doubtless that intercession—sometimes translated 'intervention'—makes sure that nothing shall separate us from the love of God. In the Epistle to the Hebrews this intercession proceeds from him, but it has an addition of thought: 'he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them'. The same 'through him' as we have seen in our first paragraph above is here mentioned. Christ mediates our prayer in his own intercession. In

Hebrews 4:14-16 we see Christ as ‘a great high priest who has passed through the heavens’, and so with confidence (boldness) we can ‘draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need’. Again, in Hebrews (9:11-24) Christ has entered into the heavenly sanctuary ‘to appear in the presence of God on our behalf’.

ACCESS A VITAL MATTER

Access to God in one sense is almost inconceivable. How can a man approach the Ineffable? We have seen the amazing fact that God seeks us to worship Him, something which only makes sense in the light of God being love. When we think of access we may think mainly of privilege, but it goes beyond this. Access is important to man; without it he will never be truly man, for his humanity finds its fullness only in union with God. It is a rich matter of life to have access to God.

The idea of access to God is present in Romans 5:2, where Paul says, ‘Through him we have access into this grace wherein we stand.’ Access to God is no mean thing. In Ephesians 3:11 Paul speaks of having access to God through Christ, ‘by whom we have boldness and confidence of *access* through *our* faith in him’. In Ephesians 2:18 he had said, ‘through him’ [Christ] we both [Jew and Gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father.’ Later—in relation to prayer—Paul speaks of Christ *mediating the prayers of the church* (I Tim. 2:1-5), saying, ‘For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.’ John, too, was conscious of the mediating Christ when he said, ‘if anyone does sin, we

have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ We have, then, ample Scriptures to show us that *there is never a time when we approach God on our own*. We approach Him through Christ our Great High Priest; we pray in his name; we abide in him and know the Father’s mind and will through him. We offer up all worship through him.

THE SPIRIT, CHRIST, AND INTERCESSION

In all of this the Spirit is the Spirit of worship. It is he who causes Christ to dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17), who helps us to abide in Christ, and to know that we are abiding in him (I John 3:24; 4:13). Because of the truth he brings, we know the Son and the Father and can worship appropriately. In Romans 8:26-27 there is a statement of Paul which helps us to understand the nature and intimacy of true intercession:

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

This must mean (i) we believers do not really know how to pray as we ought, because of our weakness; (ii) the Spirit makes appropriate intercession for us; (iii) God is always searching the hearts of men, and when He hears what the Spirit says, he takes it for what the petitioner would have it be. In other words, the *Spirit prays as we ought to pray, and God accepts it as our very prayer*.

This, then, tells what happens when Christ intercedes for us. The prayers we would have go up—though we may be ignorant of how they ought to be—Christ takes and offers them up to the Father, where they are accepted. This all explains his ministry as High Priest, our need to abide in him, our need to ask in his name, and not to come in our own name. It explains how our praise, spiritual sacrifices and thanksgiving reach the Father, who has given us both Son and Holy Spirit to aid us in our worship.

EVALUATION OF CHRIST'S TRUE WORSHIP AND HIS INTERCESSION

A true understanding of this chapter should lay a true foundation for authentic worship, for true praise and adoration, and for supplication and intercession. Knowing we have one advocate, mediator, intercessor and High Priest who is as intimate with us in our very depths as is the Spirit, we should then be encouraged to new and rich experiences of worship, prayer and intercession.

To know we are not left alone; to know that we do not have to toil at intercession on our own; to know that both Son and Spirit assist us in worship, praise, prayer and intercession is indeed marvellously heartening. To know we have everything in Christ is to desire to abide in him, and live under his loving High-Priestly ministrations.

He who is High Priest towards man for God, is also High Priest for God towards man.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Personal Worship

ALL WORSHIP IS PERSONAL

WORSHIP is at once personal and corporate. If we distinguish between the personal which has as its mind-set 'I, along with all the rest', and individualism which has as its mind-set 'I, over and against the rest', then we can see that what is personal is good, and that which is individualistic is not. In corporate worship the person is enriched because one is no less personal being with others, but indeed one is enriched and matured by such relationships. The warm, living Body of Christ is rich because all joints and ligaments not only hold the Body together, but supply it with life from its resources which lie in the Head (cf. Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19). In this corporate context the person is not lonely, and because of it can be free to be personal with God.

ALL WORSHIP IS IN THE HEAD

This we have seen in our last chapter. We have said that one does not go to God apart from Christ and his Spirit.

Even so, the presence and mediation of Christ is not an intrusion to a personal approach to the Father. One comes to the Father by Christ who is The Way. Christ and the Spirit are there to aid us in using the *access* they have provided, for the Son brings us to sonship of the Father, and the Spirit, being ‘the Spirit of His Son’, causes us to cry—even involuntarily—‘Abba! Father!’ Thus we do not dispense with Christ as the Head, but rather are brought by him to full understanding and expression of worship of the Father. This is because He is Son, and we are sons in his Sonship. It is because the Spirit is at once ‘the Spirit of your Father’, and ‘the Spirit of the Son’. The presence and work of the Spirit, as we have seen, is most intimate, but the Spirit does not obtrude. The devotee is still able to worship the Father without interruption, or loss of nearness to God.

WORSHIP IS PRIMARILY WORSHIP OF THE FATHER

‘Enter into your closet’

In Matthew 6:118 Jesus speaks of the personal intimacy one can have with the Father. He speaks of true piety, of appropriate giving to those in need, of true prayer and of genuine forgiveness of others. Ten times he mentions ‘your Father’. The whole passage speaks of a personal relationship with the Father, hence the term ‘your Father’, and ‘your heavenly Father’. Perhaps most intimate is, ‘when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you’. Here, if anywhere, is intimacy.

The human spirit—the whole human person—requires this intimacy. It is clear from the theme of meditation— especially in the Old Testament—that each person must have both space and time in which to ruminate. His intake of ideas, experiences and relationships requires some situation in which he can sort them out, and—in a sense— tidy up the significant data that has come to him. Because he is heart and mind, body and will, he needs the wisdom that God gives via His word and His Spirit. This time for contemplation is needed, not as a separate and privatized individual but as one who has personal access to God, and has come for the grace of such personal closeness, such immediate proximity to God. Later we will look at some of the human utterances that plead for such intimacy, or express their gratitude for it, but we all know that our humanity wavers without it, and is unfulfilled in its absence.

‘ABBA! FATHER!’

Prayer is to the Father. Jesus said, ‘Pray then like this: "Our Father..." ‘ The Spirit inspires such worship (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15-17). Such worship is most personal. In the closet the most intimate of all worship takes place, for the Father and His child are together. The prayer is family prayer, but when a parent talks especially to one child, then the intimacy is genuine. As we have seen, the Father initiates such worship. This, then, is the time when God as Father becomes more and more known, when there is dialogue, or—better still—colloquy. So the Father is known, is praised, is loved, and is importuned. The domestic joy—that of Father and son, through the Son and the

Spirit of the Father and Son—transcends the unfilial loneliness of a privatized and lonely soul.

‘ABBA! FATHER!’—FAMILY PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Since God is ‘the God and Father of us all’, our worship is not only single and personal but familial and corporate. It is always ‘*your* Father’ and ‘*our* Father’ (Matt. 6:9; 23:9; Eph. 1:2; 4:6; Gal. 4:54; Rom. 8:15). Indeed, we cannot pray without each other and apart from each other. We pray as one, and not only supportive of the rest, but *by* the rest of the worshippers, we are the community of prayer.

WORSHIP IS INDISPENSABLE TO THE CHILD OF GOD

The need of intimacy

One must see God—if only by faith—in order to worship. The hope of seeing Him face to face is an aid to present worship by faith. Seeing God by faith evokes many elements of response. Perhaps the greatest is praise. Man is made to render praise to the Most High God. His stature reaches its proper height in this exercise.

THE IMMEDIACY OF GOD

In the early portion of this book we saw the tremendous awe and joy that human persons knew when some heavenly visitant came from God. Jacob knew deep awe as he watched the heavenly traffic of angels. The significance of such a vision was not lost on him. The personal yearning for God knows both humble astonishment and fulfilment when the devotee bows before his Creator, Father, King,

and Redeemer. Access is a great gift of grace. The coming of the Holy Spirit brought the immediacy of God in a new worship. Tradition always tends to liturgical expression in worship, and whilst that may not be wrong, and perhaps is most desirable, yet the freshness and wonder of coming to know God through Christ gives birth to a worship which may be called ‘spontaneous’ and ‘charismatic’. The soul leaps in delight and is full of joy in His presence. This may be seen as ‘the first fine careless rapture’, but an endeavour to capture it and utilize it will be sure to fail. The thrust to living praise and worship will remain, for it is an ontological ‘constant’, it is breath to the spirit, it is the continuing constraint. The sense and awareness of immediacy may fluctuate, but the reality of it remains, for it is extrinsic to man himself.

THE UTILITY OF WORSHIP

It is rare worship that dwells long on God’s excellencies. We saw that God’s visitations to His servants—especially the prophets—were with a view to giving them service amongst His people. Likewise the personal worshipper has something to give to God, and much to receive from Him. He gives praise and receives grace. That grace is essential to his life. He does not simply *use* God. but importunes Him for the requisites of life and ministry. This world is a harsh one where evil would destroy the saints of God, and prevent their saving proclamation, and for this reason man comes ‘for grace in time of need’. Ministry is an integral part of worship, and a person—without grace—is deprived of that action which is satisfying and fulfilling to him. Worship, then, can be called a utility, or, as some would say, ‘a means of grace’. If it is a

means of grace, then worship is not merely utilitarian. It is a utility which we need, and without which we would be bereft of true functional living. We will now look at the reason for this last statement.

WORSHIP IS BOTH THE HOME AND BATTLEGROUND OF FAITH

The desire of the devotee's heart

Judaic and Christian history are both filled with a fine treasury of devotion. The child of God finds himself at home before the One who is love. Worship is not second but first nature to him. God had told Israel He would dwell among them, and He did so in and at the mercy seat between the two cherubim. In regard to the Temple He told Solomon, 'I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there for ever: my eyes and my heart will be there for all time.'

The worshipper, then, wished to be in his spiritual home—the house of God. The structure of that house was functional, with the sanctuary as its head, the courts of worship as its body, and all with the form that made it 'home' to the worshipper. So much so did he understand it thus that many of the Psalms speak about it with tender affection:

One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after;
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to enquire in his temple.

And now my head shall be lifted up
above my enemies round about me;
and I will offer in his tent sacrifices
with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the Lord (Ps. 27:4, 6)
O Lord, who shall sojourn in thy tent?
Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?
He who walks blamelessly, and does what is right... (Ps. 15:12a)
Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart... (Ps. 24:3, 4a)
Let me dwell in thy tent for ever!
Oh to be safe under the shelter of thy wings! (Ps. 61:4)
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
for ever (Ps. 23:6)
How lovely is thy dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, yea, faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and flesh sing for joy
to the living God.
Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at thy altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in thy house,
ever singing thy praise! (Ps. 84:14)
O God, thou art my God, I seek thee,
my soul thirsts for thee,
my flesh faints for thee
as in a dry and weary land where no water is.
So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary,

beholding thy power and glory.
 Because thy steadfast love is better than life,
 my lips will praise thee.
 So I will bless thee as long as I live;
 I will lift up my hands and call on thy name. (Ps. 63:1-4)

Even so, the Psalmist is not limited to the house of worship. He worships anywhere:

My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat,
 and my mouth praises thee with joyful lips,
 when I think of thee upon my bed,
 and meditate on thee in the watches of the night;
 for thou hast been my help,
 and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy.
 My soul clings to thee;
 thy right hand upholds me. (Ps. 63:5-8)

Exiled in a foreign land, he aches for a worship encounter with God, and thinks back on the Temple and the wonderful days of worship:

As a hart longs
 for flowing streams,
 so longs my soul
 for thee, O God.
 My soul thirsts for God,
 for the living God.
 When shall I come and behold
 the face of God?
 My tears have been my food
 day and night,
 while men say to me continually,
 'Where is your God?'
 These things I remember,
 as I pour out my soul:
 how I went with the throng,
 and led them in procession to the house of God,

with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
 a multitude keeping festival. (Ps. 42:15)

The worshipper is one who personally meditates upon God and His salvation: 'For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him'; 'My soul waits for the Lord; he is my help and shield'. He prays, 'Lead me in thy truth, and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation; for thee I wait all the day long,' and to all of this God answers, 'Those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.'

ENCOUNTERING GOD PERSONALLY IN AWE AND JOY

Jacob wrestled with the angel of God. Wakened out of his self-centred regard and freed from the moral torpor which had surrounded him, this son of Isaac fought the man of God for blessing. Likewise many of the psalmists battled with God. So do others of the saints, but it is a battle which brings forth joy, for it spells doom to the sloth of the flesh, and life to the true spirit of man. Not only the history of Israel but the history of the Christian people has brought forth a treasury of worship and praise, of adoration and prayer, of meditation and deep devotion, and all has come out of this rich conflict which first disturbs, and then stirs the spirit. Israel's Psalter, itself, would take a lifetime to read in detail and expound in depth. Two thousand years of the life in the church has brought a wealth of beautiful *hymns—cardiphonia*, 'the utterances of the heart'. It also has a rich treasury of prayers, liturgies, and traditions of worship, whether consciously shaped or flowing from spontaneity. If Christianity and its Gospel had nothing else to show, surely the wealth of this treasury would vindicate it.

The point about saying this is that prayer and worship are personal. Rarely can an expression of personal devotion be corporate. Whilst doubtless inspired by the whole company of the faithful, yet, in the last analysis, praise, worship, songs and prayers spring from a heart to God. Doubtless such worship was born in the Body—the Church—but a relationship with God is a one-to-one thing. We see now the conflicts, crises, and experiences which arise when a person is in the presence of God.

THE PLACE OF WORSHIP IS THE PLACE OF MANY AND GREAT CONFLICTS

In the sixteenth century the great missionary Francis Xavier sang his love for God, to God:

My God, I love Thee—not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Are lost eternally.
E'en so I love Thee, and will love,
And in Thy praise will sing;
Because Thou art my loving God
And my eternal King.

It would be difficult for anyone to so love God unless God's love had first gripped him. God is His own reward and we go into His presence because—whether we admit it or not—we are nothing without Him. Thus in the twelfth century Bernard of Clairvaux sang his love:

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

But what to those who find?
Ah, this Nor tongue, nor pen can show:
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know.

The truth is that we must come to Him and be strengthened in His love. Our love must flow more freely because only in that way can we be so gripped that we can fight off the idols which would claim us. John said, 'And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.' Immediately after writing this, John added, 'Little children keep yourselves from idols.' John knew the choice was between being gripped by the love of God, and being possessed by the idols.

How quick we are to worship—to give worth to—the things we can see, the things which please our senses, and for which faith is not needed. Each time, then, that we come in personal worship, we find our minds going back over the years, around and about, over and under, as we fight past memories of sin and failure, of wretchedness and defeat. We need to gaze by faith upon Him, and to receive freshening in love, in joy, and in peace. Like Jacob we have our nights of conflict. We beg off the suffering, we pity ourselves for the persecution we receive, we visualize the rejection that will come even from our friends if we venture into new and holy acts of faith.

WORSHIP AND THE CONFLICT

Inside the circle there is nothing we cannot work out in His presence. Our guilts and shames are met afresh with

the cleansing and healing of redemption. Our past is given back to us purified and refined. Our present fears are swept away by love. In that holy intimacy with the Father we can weep, confess our failures, talk about the problems that face us, gather strength to be steady and sturdy again for the moment when we have to face human distress, human evil and secularity, when we have to go out into the wilderness of men's actions and thoughts and tempers. Worship for us is no spiritual luxury. It is the time we need so desperately, and from which we can come with sufficient serenity. Having lived in worship within that time, we can now serve Him and our fellow-creatures out of that time, and by reason of that time. Worship becomes extended beyond the sanctuary into the world where it is needed.

These elements we have just mentioned find powerful expression in the Psalms. In Psalm 73 the worshipper was both baffled and angry: 'When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was stupid and ignorant, I was like a beast toward thee.' He talked of his anger at the wicked flourishing, and said, 'But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end.' Only in the sanctuary—at worship—did he understand. Having expressed his anger and bitterness, he concluded,

Nevertheless I am continually with thee;
 thou dost hold my fight hand.
 Thou dost guide me with thy counsel,
 and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory.
 Whom have I in heaven but thee?
 And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides thee.
 My heart and my flesh may fail,
 but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.

An even more poignant Psalm is 88. In it there seems not to be one word of hope. From beginning to end the devotee sees not even one glimmer of light. Yet it is perhaps one of the most valuable of all the Psalms. There is no negotiation with God. The worshipper simply cries out in pain and darkness. He says, 'Every day I call upon thee, O Lord; I spread out my hands to thee.' The very fact that he addresses God as 'O Lord my God' means that he sees God as his God. In this he does not waver. How valuable, then, for others of us who go through this lonely and terrifying experience! Hence we see that worship is not simply a time of sweet abiding, and gentle holiness. The interaction of us with God, and of Him with us, tells how powerful is worship, and—as we keep saying—how indispensable. If God seeks us to worship Him, then He does not remain silent, passive, and inactive towards us. There is a dialectic, there is dialogue and there is colloquy. Acts issue from worship, even though they do not appear immediately. Promise and patience go together, for God is working in worship.

WORSHIP AND THE BATTLE

Outside that holy circle of worship stand the dark powers, brooding and waiting, talons ready to seize, fiery darts of accusation poised for penetration and deep pain. So we gaze at God with faith and terror mixed. We cry out to know Him better and be stronger in Him. The prophets knew this. So did the men of God such as Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and Whitefield. Paul was always striving for his churches. Luther spent four hours each morning. John Knox stained the

walls of his room with his sweat and tears. Rutherford wrote out his soul in his letters, for all men to see it plainly. Worship for them was not easy, but then what else could they do? Where could they go but to Him? And where can we go? How find ease of our pain?

In the place of worship they learned the way of intercession. These men were not involved in the constriction of sectarianism. They—like Daniel—wept for their people, and sought to change the very nations in which they lived. Some—less known than they, but no less worshipful— fought with God for the ignorant tribes of the lands to which they went, and with which they identified.

Outside that holy circle of worship, great powers of evil and mean powers of darkness wait to threaten or to deceive, and even to seduce. Inside that circle we must worship. We ourselves are the very temples of God, and together we constitute the Temple of God, and this is the holy ground. Worship maintains the Temple, as the Temple maintains the worship.

THE JOY OF BATTLE AND OF GOD

Out of it all, then, and within it, is the incessant devotion that battles and weeps and prays, the devotion that sings its songs of incredible joy, that raises its paeans of exquisite melody, and which finds the wonder of that faith-union with God which surpasses human words and telling.

Thee will I love, my strength, my tower,
Thee will I love, my joy, my crown,
Thee will I love with all my power,
In all Thy works and Thee alone;
Thee will I love, till the pure fire
Fill my whole soul with chaste desire.

These last words were written by Johann Scheffler in the seventeenth century. To them I would wish to add some of my own, written in the twentieth century:

Abba! Abba! Father God!
You have filled us with Your love,
Abba! Abba! You are dear:
How we feel Your presence near.
Thou great Heart—Eternal Love—
Pour upon us from above
Freedom from each bond and chain,
That we may be Yours again.
As that son returned from sin
To the father's arms of love,
So we turn, O Lord, to Thee,
Ever in Thy Home to be.
In the night-time of our soul,
You have healed and made us whole:
You have banished pain and dread,
With Your hand our spirits fed.

All the longings of our heart
Bid us from this life depart
That our eyes Your glory see,
That we may be one with Thee.
Abba! Abba! Father dear,
You will bring us yet more near;
Take us to Your heart of love,
Make us one with You above.

CONCLUSION TO PERSONAL WORSHIP

When we are corporately present in worship, the warmth and context of the Body greatly aids us personally. When personally we seek God's face and His will, then we are

helped to strengthen the corporate worship. In the latter there is a certain Body consciousness. We are—naturally enough—alert, and even sensitive in the presence of others, albeit they are brethren, and we are members to members. No doubt this is one reason our liturgies grow, constantly shaping themselves into something more than they were at the beginning.

What keeps us from being shaped and patterned overmuch by such forms of worship is the fact that we meet Him without these liturgies, when we enter the closet. There—by faith—it is ‘face to face’, and our secret heart opens to Him, and He dwells with us in our temples, intimate, warm, and loving. This is why we must never exchange personal worship for that which is wholly corporate, nor—for that matter—ought we ever to exchange that which is the worship of the Body for that which is personal and singular in number.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Corporate Worship

ALL WORSHIP IS PERSONAL, THOUGH NOT MERELY INDIVIDUALISTIC

WORSHIP is no less personal because it is corporate. Man as a person is intended to be social, i.e. each person is part of the great body of humanity. In the church the social situation is more truly defined and functional than it is in the world. The human race is ontologically one, and only sin will draw it away from that. As we have said previously, individualism is a drawing away from our natural interrelationship with others, but true personal being is both expressed and engendered in interrelationships, sharing in the entire human race—insofar as that is possible. When we say ‘the human race is ontologically one,’ we are drawing upon Paul’s thought in Acts 17:26, ‘he made from one [*ex enos*: some manuscripts have *haimotos*, i.e. ‘one blood’ or ‘bloods’ after *enos*] every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth.’ This statement has its origin in the Genesis account of Man’s creation (Gen. 1:26ff.; cf. 5:1f.), i.e. the primal Man—the first couple—and this thought is pursued by Paul in Romans 5:12-21.

The story of the building of Babel, the confusion of tongues and the scattering of the people, would have no great point apart from the solidary nature of the human race. Nor would Paul's proposition of Christ's obedience in Romans 5:12ff. have any point, since there his obedience is accounted to all who are 'in Christ'.

At the same time, we must remember the relational rift that came to humanity because of the fall of Man—the primal couple. The death of Abel came because of two different expressions of worship—in sacrifice. Of course, the different expressions came from differing views of God. The birth of Seth hailed a renewal of the Abel principle for worship, at least in the eyes of Eve, who saw him as a substitute for Abel (Gen. 4:25-26). In the time of Seth's son, 'men began to call upon the name of the Lord', a statement which tells us men began to worship God. This tells us also that mankind knew a division, i.e. that of 'the sons of God'—the true worshippers—and others, i.e. those who were not true worshippers. Some exegetes see 'the sons of God' of Genesis 6:2 as the Sethites, and 'the daughters of men' as the others who did not call on the name of the Lord, probably being the idolaters to whom Paul refers in Romans 1:21-25. Whatever the case may have been, human history—biblically considered—has made it clear that there is the division of the body of true worshippers and the body of false or idolatrous worshippers.

THE CORPORATE PEOPLE OF GOD

To speak about 'a people' is to talk about a corporate entity. Genesis 10 has been called 'the roll-call of the

nations', whilst Genesis 11 traces more particularly the history of the Shemites (Semites). The call of Abraham by God brought his descendants—particularly through Isaac and Jacob—into covenant relationship with God. The saga of Jacob and his family—'the children of Israel'—is the saga of covenant. Under Moses, Israel is developed as a 'kingdom of priests' (Exod. 19:5-6), i.e. a worshipping nation with its rich sacrificial and ritual cultus, all centred in the Temple. Thus we come to 'the church [*qahal*, i.e. *ekklesia*] in the wilderness (Acts 7:38), the congregation of which Stephen spoke. We draw the conclusion that in the principle of covenant, corporate worship finds its true basis, ethos, and place. Whilst Stephen seems to have rebuked Israel for undue emphasis on the Temple, pointing out that 'the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands', yet Israel's worship was given by God (Rom. 9:4-5), however much it may have been misused. Thus the study of Israel's worship is the study of a people who are joined together as one in the worship of the Most High.

THE NEW TRUE CORPORATE WORSHIP OF THE NEW COVENANT

We have noted both continuity and discontinuity regarding the new people of God—born at Pentecost—and the older people of God, i.e. Israel. Pentecost was the day when the church was born: born crucified and born resurrected. We have noted that the new people was composed of Jews who acknowledged Jesus as Messiah and who had been baptized into his name (Chapter 22, 'Worship

Under the New Covenant', pp. 211-223). Worship remained in the environs of the Temple, but was also carried on in homes, especially in 'table fellowship', i.e. the practice of hospitality, in which also the Lord's Supper was celebrated. Materials abound which help us to trace the influence of Temple and synagogue upon early Christian worship*. In addition we have resources in the Epistles which indicate the spontaneous and charismatic nature of worship as against the more formalized practices of the Temple and the synagogue.

ENTRANCE INTO THE NEW COMMUNITY OF WORSHIP

In Chapter 22 we looked briefly at the matter of baptism, the initiation ceremony into the *ekklesia*, and the simple elements of its ritual were noted. Now we seek to look at baptism as the entrance into the worshipping community. If we commence with the simplest indications of the meaning of baptism it should prove helpful.

Christ's baptism

Jesus deliberately took 'the baptism of repentance', as John called it. Not being sinful, there seemed to be no need for him to do this. The baptism proved, however, to be his identification with sinners, i.e. declaring himself to be at

* It is not the purpose of this present volume to cover the development of worship from the time of the apostles up to the present day. This has been ably done by others, and titles listed under the Bibliography will direct readers to such treatments.

one with the sinful community. In this sense baptism was a form of entrance, a declaration that he was one with the sinful human race. At least this is how it has been interpreted by many. From the Godward point of view it was Jesus being declared as Messiah, as the King—the Leader —of the Messianic community. The use of both Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1 confirms this. This would mean that all who were baptized into Christ would be inducted into his community (cf. Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 41, 42).

John's baptism

John's baptism was that of repentance with a view to the coming of the Kingdom of God, and the forgiveness of sins. Linked with this was the promise of being baptized with (in) the Holy Spirit, i.e. coming under the outpouring of the Spirit which John said would come through Jesus. Whilst all of this is true, we can also gather that baptism was virtually an entrance into the community of those anticipating the coming of the Kingdom. Loosely, this could be called 'the community of John' (cf. John 3:22-30, 4:1-2; Acts 19:1-6). Baptism was certainly the mark of, and entrance into, the community of the teacher. There may have been many secret or uncommitted followers of a teacher, but baptism signified that one was a disciple of the person in whose name baptism had been executed. This is seen in Matthew 28:19, 'Go therefore and make *disciples* of all nations, *baptizing* them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. In Acts 2:38 one is baptized into the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The leaving of John to join Jesus

meant transferring from one community to another (John 1:35-41; cf. Acts 19:1-6).

Christian baptism

From Matthew 28:19 we gather baptism means ‘into’ the Name of the Triune God, i.e. identification with God. Whilst in the Acts the formula is ‘into Christ’ or ‘into the name of Christ’* (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12ff.; 16:14ff.; 16:33f.; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16), it is nevertheless into God, and so means into the community of God. Christ is the one who baptizes, although the agency is the church: ‘For by [or, in] one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.’† Whilst there is often some confusion about ‘baptism into water’, and ‘baptism into [by, with] the Spirit’ (Acts 1:5, 8; I Cor. 12: 13), the baptism is ‘one baptism’ (Eph. 4:5), for ‘Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not

* The idea of being baptized into the Triune Name has long fascinated the Christian church. If I remember correctly, it was Origen who saw that man was created in the image of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, i.e. that there is that in us which corresponds to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Likewise it is fascinating to think that in baptism the one baptized is identified with the Triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—whom he rejected in Adam. The relational significance of this fact is immense.

† Two interpretations are possible: (i) that the Spirit is the baptizer, i.e. ‘By one Spirit we were all baptized’, the ‘by’ (*en*) meaning the Spirit baptizes; or (ii) ‘In one Spirit we were all baptized’, indicating an agent who is not the Spirit, i.e. it is Christ who is the baptizer. Commentators differ, some seeing the Greek *en* as an instrumental dative, and others as a locative dative, but it does seem that ‘and all were made to drink of one Spirit’ indicates an agent who is not the Spirit and that the one agent both baptizes and makes to drink, in which case it would be Christ. If this is the case then the dative is locative, and not instrumental. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit is merely the element in which the person is baptized, for it means it is the Spirit who effects incorporation into the body of Christ, and indeed includes in that work the other aspects of his regenerating work, that work which we have described above.

belong to him’. It is clear that Christ baptizes into (or, with) the Spirit, so that he must be the baptizer into water, albeit the church is the physical agent of that ritual.

The significance of baptism is seen in that it brings forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), cleanses one from impurity (Acts 22:16; I Pet. 3:21; Acts 10:47; 15:8-9), effects the cutting away of the fleshly life (Col. 2:11-12), puts off the old life and puts on the new, even Christ himself (Col. 2:9-13; Gal. 3:26-29), as one puts off an old garment and puts on a new one.

As the ritual of entering discipleship signifies identification with a new teacher or community, so baptism signifies union and identification with Christ in his death (crucifixion), his burial, his resurrection and (so) emergence into new life. This is the teaching of Romans 6:1-10 and Colossians 2:11-13. One, then, is not merely in the new community but is identified with the Head, whose interrelationships with all members of the body is a foregone and functional fact. This is seen by the fact that at Pentecost all who believed in Christ were baptized in his name, were forgiven their sins, and received the gift of the Spirit. Being the Spirit of love, fellowship and unity, the new community embarked on a venture wholly new in human history.

THE FRUITS OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

The Book of the Acts shows us the new community as a close-knit community (cf. Col. 2:2; Acts 4:32), all going through the grace of God in baptism—all being forgiven, justified, cleansed, regenerated, sanctified, adopted, and all sharing in the action of the Cross, knowing their total

crucifixion with Christ—as though they were one with him as he bore their sins, their griefs and their sorrows. Again they were one with him in his descent into death, and one with him in his resurrection. The community—composed as it was of such baptized persons—could be little less than unique in human annals. A moral fire had gone through them that by nature of the case could not be experienced in any other religion, faith or philosophy. This most radical and dynamic entrance into the community also sealed them for ‘the day of the Lord’—resurrection, the ‘end things’ of the judgements, of heaven, the new heavens and the new earth, the Holy City, and other such events. That is why—time and again—the Epistles direct them to look back to their baptism and to what it accomplished. That is why it is impossible to find a believer who dared or cared to remain unbaptized. Baptism was generally simple, but it was mandatory. It was a time of joy. Men and women—via its ministration—came out of darkness into the wonderful light of God. They were integrally, functionally, and wonderfully inducted into Christ, made members of their new Lord, and members one of another. Out of the seeming tragedy of Calvary—and via the Resurrection—the greatest miracle of all time had taken place, never to be reversed but to obtain for ever.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD’S SLIPPER FOR THE NEW COMMUNITY

We have also touched on this sacrament (or ordinance) in Chapter 22 (p. 215). There we have noted the order of the

Lord’s Supper as we can glean it from Paul’s setting it out in I Corinthians 11:23-32. Because it was instituted in the context of the Passover meal, we perceive its covenantal links. It was in the context of the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34, i.e. the forgiveness of sins. In the covenant with Israel the Passover was a reminder of liberation from Egypt, and the victory of God. Likewise the Lord’s Supper signifies the liberation which comes from the forgiveness of sins. As the Passover pointed to the new land they were to possess, so the Lord’s Supper is eschatological, looking to the spiritual Canaan and the ultimate Messianic banquet—the Kingdom banquet at the consummation of this present age. Indeed it was during the Last Supper that the disciples had had the Kingdom appointed to them.

The Lord’s Supper was a community sacrament. Not to discern the Lord’s Body as given for them was virtually not to discern the nature of the Body of Christ—the Church. This being the case, one was in danger of judgement, i.e. of sickness, and in some cases sickness unto death (I Cor. 11:27-32). All this spoke of the seriousness of Christian fellowship and unity. Thus the Lord’s Supper was a dynamic constraint to true living in the community. The fellowship, love and unity of the Spirit mattered much. Much of this was because the remembrance (*anamnesis*) of Christ’s death and passion was dynamical, conveying present experiences of forgiveness and love, and therefore making vital to all the love and unity of the Spirit. The hope engendered by the Lord’s death and resurrection means that the community was constantly urged to look forward to the victory that is to come, i.e. resurrection to eternal life, and the new age of glorification

and true priestly worship. We see, then, that the same themes occupy both baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The constant celebration of the Lord's Supper means that a service of manual nature keeps alive to human sense and experience the reality of God in His actions of grace. As worship always springs from grace, so it continues to be effective as it lives under that grace. The sacraments are the means grace uses to renew and establish (constrain) the redeemed community, for both speak of God's past redemptive act, His present application of that redemption, and His future consummation of it.

THE NATURE OF CORPORATE WORSHIP

In our previous chapter we looked at the principles of personal worship. The same principles which inspire it, inspire corporate worship. We saw that at the time of his most personal endeavours in worship the believer knows his interrelationships with others of the Body. Even in the physical absence of his brothers and sisters, the believer knows their oneness with him and his oneness with them. In that sense he does not worship in a privatized way. Even so, he knows the intimacy of being in his closet with his Father, and through the unseen—but not unknown—mediation of Christ and the Spirit, he speaks with that Father. So, too, the whole church is in the presence of the Father, via the Lord of the church and the Spirit of prayer and worship.

We now may look at some of the elements which constitute the worship of God's people. They are the principles by which the worship of God has always been

conducted—whether singly personal, or corporately personal.

WORSHIP AND CONFESSION

The church lives in access

Isaiah 59:2 tells us that our sins have separated us from God, but Romans 5:12 tells us that the access once lost through sin has been regained: 'Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand'. Paul (Eph. 3:11 12) speaks of 'Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him'. Again Paul says, 'through him [Christ] we both [Jew and Gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father.' The writer of Hebrews exhorts,

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (10:19 22).

Access means we are in His presence, but being in His presence has great effects, and of these we now speak. However, before we do this we must recognize that since all of our life is worship and all of it is service, then we must not confine worship either to the personal closet or to the meeting of the congregation. The principles of confession, praise and worship, prayer as petition and intercession and worship as praise, must obtain in every area of our lives, and at all times.

Confessing God

Primarily confession* in the Scriptures is confession—that is, acknowledgment—of God and His great nature. The Reformers emphasized the fact that man came into the presence of God as a sinner, but the promises of grace first occupied their liturgies. Man needed to see God in His holiness before he could confess his sin. This is the principle behind the confession of the Psalmist:

Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord!
 Lord, hear my voice!
 Let thy ears be attentive
 to the voice of my supplications!
 If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,
 Lord, who could stand?
 But *there is forgiveness with thee,*
 that thou *mayest be feared.*

Not until he saw this could he understand grace. So, in the Scriptures, almost all of confession is confession of the Being and nature of God, both in holiness and grace. Confession has been classified into the following categories:

- (a) Doxological confession, i.e. the confession of God in praise and worship.
- (b) Identification confession, i.e. confessing one's relationship with God and one's obedience to Him.
- (c) National confession, i.e. the people coming in repentance to God and confessing their sins to Him.
- (d) Saving confession, i.e. the nation (eg. Israel from Egypt) or a person (eg. David from judgement for his sin—

* The vast subject of confession is further developed in *The Question and Comfort of Confession*, NCPI, 1981.

Ps. 51) confessing that God had saved them, either from their enemies and oppressors, or from sin, death or disaster. In the Old Testament this would mean an awareness of salvation, and in the New Testament of God's saving grace in Christ

- (e) Personal confession, i.e. (i) personal confession of the nature of God, and/or (ii) confession to God of one's sins.
- (f) Credal confession, i.e. what one (or the community) believes as regarding the nature and action of God. In the Old Testament this would be seen in many statements concerning who God is, and what He has done, does and will do. In the New Testament there are many credal statements within its text. In the history of the church there are those branches or denominations which are called 'confessions' because they hold to certain creeds, i.e. 'confessions'.
- (g) Ecclesiastical confession, i.e. the confession of one's sins to the nation (OT), or the confession of one's sins to the church (NT). Almost all of these elements of confession will be present in corporate worship, although not always at the one time.

CONFESSING GOD AND CONFESSING SIN

Confession will depend greatly on where the church is in its experience at the particular time of worship. What we should understand is that contemplation of God should precede any confession of sin and sins. It is necessary to see God in His holiness, in His greatness, in His sovereignty, and in His love and grace. No doubt we are

anxious as quickly as possible to allay our fears and dreads which come from guilt, and so we may think confession of sins is a primary matter. In fact as we ponder God's holiness the true sense of our sinfulness will come. When we see His love as Father, and saving power as Redeemer, we will be encouraged to believe He has dealt with the sin and guilt which dogs and bedevils our consciences.

THE IMPOTENCE OF PENANCE

When it comes to confessing our sins* we should beware lest we fall into the trap of doing penance. Penance—a sacrament which became established in post-apostolic times—has three elements: (i) contrition, (ii) confession, and (iii) satisfaction. Penance assumes one has to suffer in some sense for one's sins, or—at the least—to do something to prove that the penitent is truly contrite. Confession (Gr. *homologeo*, *exomologeo*) is simply 'to acknowledge', ie. to come out honestly and uncringingly before God with what we have done. This may or may not carry with it emotions of contrition. Certainly we cannot give God satisfaction for the wrong we have done, since Christ has already done that. Of course, we need to be genuine in confession. Once having acknowledged, we should cease to concentrate or harp on the matter. We are not forgiven because we have confessed so much as we have confessed because we have been forgiven.*

What we must never forget is the enormous power of guilt. It is this upon which Satan fastens, alarming men up

* See *The Question and Comfort of Confession*, esp. pp. 4,6, 11 12. Also see the booklet—*If We Say We Have No Sin*. NCPI, 1987.

to dread and fear of God, even where grace has already liberated them. The great apostolic cry 'There is no condemnation!' or the promise of Christ that the believer 'shall not come under condemnation', requires that worshiper to fight the battle of faith against the stinging accusation of the devil and his spirits. The place of worship, then, is where a man may bare his soul before God and cry out, and work out the triumph of faith. It is when men and women can fight this battle together, for one another, and against the Accuser, that confession brings its great comfort and its prodigious joy.

WORSHIP AND THE WORKOUT

As we worship and praise we are confessing His nature, and we can come to be released, and the very worship edifies us and encourages us. In our previous chapter we have said that worship is not only adoration of God, but it is the working out before Him of who and what we are; it is the playing out of fear, conflicts, and confusions. It is drawing from Him that strength which enables us to go on. In the midst of all this we will confess our weakness, and our need, as also His grace in forgiveness and His power to strengthen us.

Because worship is the home and battleground of faith, and because Christ is our Head and the Holy Spirit the one who empowers us, everything is worked out in worship, not only personally, but corporately. As we contemplate God and meditate on Him, His sovereignty, His works, His law and His salvation, then we have our gratitude and love increased, and we are further equipped for

the living of life, and for battling against the evil which opposes, and seeks to defeat God and us.

By 'God and us' we mean the God Who has created His universe, Who has His plan for it, and Who is pursuing that plan. Dark forces hate that plan, and loathe His use of Christ and his church in fulfilling it. For this reason, we have said, worship is essential. We must be with Him. We must adore Him. We must see Him as the church can see Him. We must know Him. We must be expanded in His love and grow in needed wisdom. Others may work out of the talents they have, the skills they have learned, the wisdom of the mind as it moves them, but we know ourselves to be helpless of ourselves before the powers of darkness. Our coming before God is not to implore Him, to move and prompt Him and to use Him to work that which we think is good for the universe. It is to come to know His mind, to be commanded by Him into doing the things He would have us do. It is to draw strength from Him. It is to listen to His wisdom. It is to be counselled by Him, rebuked, reformed, encouraged, transformed more and more into His likeness, and to be more and more into His character, so that the family image and likeness will emerge, and His plan be more and more fulfilled.

This is the 'work-out' which we must have before Him, and this is the reason for our worship. When, in our previous chapter we saw how this work-out constitutes a battle for the believer, and is an exercise of anguish for the devotee, then it is in corporate worship that we discover we do *not battle alone*. We are human beings together, and—at that—redeemed human beings. We are interrelated, interlinked, members one of another. We are a corporate being whose Head is Christ, whose family Head

is God as Father. We are one strong unit which is unconquerable, but we need to be one together. In this we are reminded of the early church as it was of one heart, one soul and one mind, and came together for prayer, fellowship, the breaking of bread and learning more and more the apostolic doctrine, and by remembering this we follow the way of our fathers in worshipping together, in proclaiming together, and in waging war together against the dark enemy.

WORSHIP AND THE POWER AND PLACE OF PRAISE

We have said—above—that confession is generally praise of God,* for we confess what He is. What He is is seen from what He has done, and is doing. It is also seen in what He promises, and the latter is the basis of genuine hope. So the people of God have adored Him down through the ages. The celestials never cease in such adoration, and in a way the true terrestrials also never cease. They pray without ceasing, and they praise without ceasing.

Worship arises out of praise, and praise proceeds out of worship. Worship is the exercise of seeing God and knowing Who and What He is, and so being moved to adoration consonant with that revelation. The things for which His creatures praise Him are His creation which is a marvel, the government of the creation which requires His incessant attention and management, His providence of life and necessities for that creation—necessities which

* As with confession, so with praise, the theme is so vast as to demand fuller treatment. See my Living Faith Study (No. 23), 'Praise and Music in the Scriptures', NCPI, 1978.

minister to all departments of its being—and the great salvation which first saves it from the depredations of evil powers, self, and exploitive human beings, and the dark death which would bring it to corruption. He is also praised because His justice is worked out to the last detail. Injustice does not go unrequited and evil can find itself no final lair where it is safe. Praise rises to God in heaven and earth because that salvation and that judgement will ultimately accomplish the total renewal of all things.

The simple but deep saying, ‘Thou... inhabitest the praises of Israel’, tells us that God makes His home where His people praise Him. Of course, He makes His home first in His sanctuary, and so it is there His people praise Him (II Chron. 7:16). His sanctuary is the home of His people. Each heart is His temple (II Cor. 6:16), and together all the hearts of His elect constitute His full sanctuary (I Cor. 3:16; cf. Eph. 2:18-22; I Pet. 2:4f.).

Praise is indeed—for His people—a most glorifying and edifying experience.

WORSHIP AND THE WORD OF GOD

Our next chapter takes up the whole matter of worship and the word of God, so that we will not here deal with it specifically. Colossians 3:16 exhorts,

Let the word of God dwell in you richly, [as you] teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and [as you] sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

The idea of the word of God dwelling in us is both personal and corporate. Storing up that word for all situations

and contingencies (cf. Ps. 119:11; 37:31; 40:8) sets the basis for true worship and service. Colossians 3:16 parallels Ephesians 5:18—‘Go on being filled with the Spirit’—for one filled with the Spirit is also endued with the word of God. The word and the worship are inseparable.

PATTERNS OF WORSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCH

We have covered something of this in Chapter 22, and in our present chapter we have described worship in terms of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but we need to look at general worship in greater detail, for it is true corporate devotion expressed.

TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

By ‘traditional’ we mean those elements which followed on from Temple and synagogue worship. Whatever participation the Christians may have had in the sacrificial cultus before the Temple was destroyed in AD 70, the Epistle to the Hebrews shows it to have been abrogated by the New Covenant. The offering of spiritual sacrifices (I Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-16; cf. Rom. 15:16; Phil. 2:17) was certainly part of the inheritance of Temple worship, but the form of those sacrifices was changed. As we have seen, the traditional worship of the synagogue must have formed much of the basis of early Christian worship, that is, prayers, lections and commentary teaching. Doubtless many of the worship songs and Psalms of the Old Testament would also form part of the worship of the new community. Yet the so-called traditional elements seem to be few since the church was primarily charismatic in its worship.

CHARISMATIC ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

When we say ‘charismatic’ we are not envisaging a type of worship which is necessarily formless and even chaotic, and anyone and everyone doing what he or she will. We are thinking, now, of worship on its widest scale, namely that the church has all the fullness (*pleroma*) of Christ, for that *pleroma* is the *charisma* of Christ himself (Rom. 6:23). We mean that the life of the church is the life of Christ, and that life is not merely a sustaining life but a dynamic one which is ever moving forward (I Cor. 15:24-28), so that the whole body moves with it, fulfilling the will of its Head, Christ the Lord. Its whole life is witness, and not merely social *being*. Being the church is not an end in itself, and worship is not something which occupies it as an exercise. Thus Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, praise and adoration are all focused on Christ, and the plan of his Father. They are not forms of worship but the very essence and reality of it.

It is not, then, that worship is charismatic because the Spirit is present and inspires it, but because the Spirit activates the ministries of gifts whereby the church strengthens itself from the Head through all its members, and presses on to fulfil the will of God. Its praise and thanksgiving really have no point apart from this thrust and service, otherwise the church becomes inlooking, and a community apart from the reality of life in this world. Its serving of the world is not primarily a social one in the sense of social justice and social action, but a social one in the sense that it witnesses to Christ—being Christ outworking his will through the body—and brings redemption to man.

The exercise of trying to determine the format or pattern of early church worship is, then, a fruitless one. In fact it actually evades us until we enter the *ethos* or life of it, in which case it can become intelligible. We have seen that worship is undertaken in many *places*, yet the places are really *situations*, and worship takes its shape, colour and significance from these situations. For example, we see the early Christians gathering at the Temple at the times of the prayers, but they are a dynamic community, effecting the healing of the lame, ‘telling all the words of this life’, doing signs and wonders and having favour with all the people, whilst also being taken into custody by the Sanhedrin. They eat and drink from house to house, having fellowship and celebrating the Lord’s Supper, whilst also bringing the daily ministrations of food and necessities to the needy brethren. The apostolic band participates in synagogue worship and delivers homilies, the Christians meet in houses, praying for Peter in prison, or hearing the Spirit of God initiate missionary ministry to Asia Minor and Europe. How difficult, then, it is to speak of ‘a pattern’ of worship—as such.

What is greatly missing from our understanding is the true ethos of the church, i.e. its unity and unanimity in the Spirit. We have long ago accepted the principle of denominations, which should really be labelled ‘sects’. We see no great sin in being Lutheran, Baptist, Anglican or Pentecostal. We adapt to certain forms of denominational worship, and are inclined to think of them as authentic in themselves, i.e. true patterns and forms of worship. What we must be missing is the oneness of the early church. Without attempting to idealize that oneness, we must agree that when many churches (sects) live in one area they cannot

be knowing the mind of Christ in the terms of his dynamic *pleroma* as it works itself (himself) out in the arena of history. Only when we have that, sense that, and live in that, can we attempt to understand ‘patterns’, in which case they probably would not figure, anyway.

When, then, we come to what we call ‘charismatic worship’,* we must not be reductionist. Things such as prophecy, the use of lessons, revelations, tongues and interpretations are not to be seen in a closed situation in which they would appear to obtain, but in the widest of all scenes—Christ’s operations within creation to the uttermost parts of the earth, in the cause of the Kingdom by the proclamation of the Gospel, i.e. the witness of the body of Christ. Unfortunately we read back into the New Testament our mild and cordial worship of the gentle Sunday morning, or even the somewhat Dionysian ecstatic worship sometimes called ‘charismatic’.

If, then, we take an overview of worship in the Acts, we will notice the fact of it only appears as it relates to what we have said above—the movement of the Gospel in Jerusalem, and from it to the ends of the earth. This gives

* The term ‘charismatic’ is used variously in our day. It generally refers to a type of worship and action which has grown up with what is termed ‘the Renewal Movement’. It is a movement which urges the reception and use of the gifts of the Spirit, as seen in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 to 14 and other parts of the New Testament. Generally the view of people who are called ‘charismatics’ is that the gifts used in the apostolic eras obtain for today. Some charismatics do not believe that all which purports to be gifts is necessarily so. It is not our place to enter this debate, but it seems evident to me that much that is claimed to be gifts can be explained on natural grounds. At the same time I do not see why gifts should be any less necessary or beneficial in this day than in the apostolic age. One ought not to reject all gifts because of certain unacceptable practices which are called ‘using the gifts’. I think we ought to ponder the primary task of the church—to proclaim Christ, his Cross, Resurrection and Ascension—and not seek to use the gifts as novelties, diversions from the main issue, and as portraying the only real action of Christ and the Spirit.

sense to the prayer and worship occasions. When in Acts they pray for boldness in utterance for the apostles and themselves receive the outpouring of the Spirit, when they are praying for Peter in prison, or are receiving the command of the Spirit for the Gospel-invasion of other lands, then worship has its true rationale. When Paul speaks to the elders at Miletus and prays with them, or when at Tyre they kneel on the beach together or at Caesarea weep with Paul who is bound for Rome—these are the situations when worship is not merely a devotional exercise but an expression of the living Body before its Lord.

CONCLUSION TO ‘CORPORATE WORSHIP’

Our investigations into corporate worship are not those of an archaeologist or of a curator of an ecclesiastical museum, but rather of the community of Christ in this present age seeking to discover afresh for itself what the early church knew and practised. We may well discover vestiges of old hymns and liturgies in the New Testament writings. We may find indications of credal statements, expressions of worship and praise, but we will not know much until we discover the heart of the matter—the dynamic of Christ, of his word and the Spirit as they energize, motivate, and enable the church to be Christ in the world in the day of his power. This new day of his power belongs to us—as to him—and it is that we must discover. That will not only authenticate our worship—if that be needed—but will assure us we are not ignorant of the will of God.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

The Word and Worship

THE WORD OF GOD AND THE WORSHIP OF MAN

The word of creation

IT was the word of God which brought creation into being (Heb. 1:2-3; 11:3; Ps. 33:6-9; 148:5-6). The Logos—which later became incarnated—was called ‘the Word’ (John 1:1-3; I John 1:1-3). Through him all things were created and sustained (Col. 1:15-17), i.e. by ‘the word of his power’. All things began with the word, and they continue with the word and through the word.

The word of covenant

The word of covenant began with God’s promise to Abraham. This word was carried down through Isaac and Jacob to all Israel; It became a verified word of covenant through a ritual (cf. Exod. 24), and was accompanied by the word of the law (cf. Deut. 33:1-5). The word of covenant for Israel was the law and the prophets.

The word of law

Law was to be the *modus operandi* of Israel, especially in its worship (cf. Rom. 9:4-5). A study of Psalms 1, 19 and 119—to name only a few—shows us that worship, service and obedience were inseparably linked. It is difficult to know how Israel would have conversed with God without the law. It was their point of dialogue and colloquy, i.e. prayer and worship. The law showed God’s nature, and it showed man how to be man. That is what we mean by *modus operandi*.

The prophetic word

Linked with the word of covenant and of law was the prophetic word. It is impossible to think of Israel’s worship-service apart from the word which was at once covenantal, of law, and prophetic. The covenant people thought in terms of the acts God had done, the things He was doing, their modes of living under Him, and His promises for the future. Prophecy had a way of reminding the nation of the living God, confronting it afresh with the peerless law of its King, and both warning and encouraging the people in regard to its future. Such understandings are of the substance of worship.

Man the non-communicative creature

The truth is that man never seeks God in order to worship Him (Ps. 14:1-2), but God does seek man to worship Him (John 4:23). God chooses to communicate Himself to man through many media, although man

steadfastly refuses to listen (Rom. 1:21-28). God spoke to the primal couple, and to their children Cain and Abel. They also spoke to Him, though with differences in attitude. Abel as a prophet spoke the word of God to his fellow creatures. The angry Cain carried on dialogue and curiously enough this was on the matter of worship, and we may even say, 'At the time of worship.' There were prophets of God before the time, even, of Abraham, i.e. Abel, Enoch and Noah. Our point is that God has always talked to man. Had there been no word from God, either direct, through angelic visitants, or the word to and through the prophets, then man would have lacked revelation. Because of the Fall man needs continual revelation, either in a deposit of the word—sacred writings—or through the prophets speaking to his time. The prophets of both Testaments have given us a deposit of revelation as contained in the sacred writings.

Through God's word, then, man is enabled to know God. Knowing Him, he is able to give Him His worth through direct worship and in actively serving Him.

If we are thinking of formalized worship, we may think of Judaism and Christianity with its use of lections in temple, synagogue and church worship. These readings of Scripture are not of themselves dynamic. They were written in living situations and draw their meanings from those events. At the same time, their principles are suited for all similar situations. We must understand the word of God to be creative, providential, treating the principle of law, covenantal in promise and requirement, redemptive,

sanctifying, and ultimately renewing, i.e. glorifying, as it commands the new heavens and the new earth. Now it is just these elements we have written here that provide the constant dialogue between man and God, and God and man in worship. The word of God is stored in the heart (Ps. 119:11; 37:31; 40:8; cf. Luke 2:19, 51) for constant reference. Whatever may be the law in a man's heart given to him in creation, it is certainly blurred when it comes to the matter of human conscience. Man's illusion that he knows good and evil takes him down many bypaths. The only moral and spiritual frame of reference man has is God's law (Ps. 119:105; cf. Rom. 1:18ff.; I Tim. 1:8-11). The clear statement of the law, the corrections and exhortations of the prophets, the Gospel events of Christ, the apostolic teaching in Acts and the Epistles, along with the eschatological teaching of John's Apocalypse, all combine to keep the worshipper fresh in the mind of God and of Christ, and so knowing what God is about as God, and how to live in the present age.

THE NATURE OF WORDLESS WORSHIP

There is, of course, no such thing as 'wordless worship'. Whilst man is a thinking creature he will have words in his heart, mind and imagination. He will think his thoughts before God or his idols. He has, then, some 'scripture'. He does not worship wordlessly. The true value of worship will be linked with the word which comes to him, whether written as the Scriptures and read by him, or stored up in the heart and referred to by him, or heard from preaching

and teaching and understood by him. Since worship is giving God His worth, then the devotee must continually be refreshed in the worth of God. Whilst it may be true that worship can sometimes be within utter silence, that does not mean it is wordless. Since the word of God cannot be separated from God, then it means His word is always Him speaking to us, even to acting within us and upon us. 'Be it unto thy servant even according to thy word,' is the true power of God's speech.

THE NATURE OF WORDFUL WORSHIP

The rediscovery of the book of the law in the time of Josiah — whatever 'the book' may have been—caused a radical reform to be carried out by the king. Not only had Israel departed into grievous idolatry, but the true worship of the Temple had been missing. The book of the law spoke afresh to the people of Josiah's time, i.e. the people of the covenant. At a later time Hosea (4:1-6) spoke of there being no knowledge of God in the land and that with terrible consequences. He stated, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.' Lack of knowledge can come from not having God's word or law in possession, or it can come from rejecting the word of God as it is spoken. Life, worship and service are dependent upon true knowledge.

In the New Covenant, knowledge of God comes through His love and forgiveness: 'they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest... for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' Call it the word of the Cross, the word of forgiveness or the word of love, it is still the word, and it brings true knowledge to

man, i.e. knowledge of God.

Worship—we observe again—was born afresh by the Spirit at Pentecost, but it was worship which came with the word. Firstly it was the one hundred and twenty on whom the Spirit came who spoke and worshipped, telling 'the wonderful works of God', and then it was Peter who gave his discourse. It was so when the man was healed at the Gate Beautiful, and then when the apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin. When the apostles were put in prison, the angel released them, saying, 'Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.' The apostles recognized their call to give themselves 'to prayer and to the ministry of the word', and Stephen also addressed the Sanhedrin with a long sermon.

In reporting the above comments on the word, we are not making a case for the use of the word in worship, for that is either the case or it is not. What we are saying is that worship was born of the word, and the word was an integral part of it, for the reasons stated above, i.e. knowledge of God came through the word, and only those who have this knowledge can give 'reasonable worship' (Rom. 12:1, *logiken latreian*).

Just as Jesus was asked to read the lection in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30) and gave his commentary upon the set passage, so Paul—by invitation— followed the lections of law and prophecy with the word of teaching (Acts 13:13-41). We have reason to believe the early church would have used the Scriptures in this way. Even so, the use of God's word was a charismatic one.

When we say that the use of God's word was a charismatic one, we mean that there was no utterance of the word—whether

kerugmatic (proclamatory), didactic (teaching), *paranaetic* (hortatory, i.e. exhortation) or worshipful, which was not given by the Spirit. Paul's statement of I Thessalonians 1:5, 'for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction', does not imply that the Gospel can be delivered without power, the Spirit and full conviction. Paul would say that if ever such a thing happened then it would not be the Gospel. There is not a gospel that is true without the Spirit. In fact, in Paul's reckoning nothing is authentic without the Spirit. He tells the Thessalonians, 'when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.' This true word of God is dynamic—it is 'at work in you believers'. Thus in Acts the word grows, increases, multiplies and expands. In Colossians 3:16 the worshippers are urged, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, [as you] teach and admonish one another in all wisdom and [as you] sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your heart to God'. In Ephesians 5:18-20 we have the same sequence of worship, but in this latter case the heart is filled with the Spirit. Thus the heart filled with 'the word' and the heart filled with 'the Holy Spirit' are equivalents. In I Corinthians 2:1-5 the *kerugmatic* word is delivered only through the Holy Spirit, and in I Peter 1:12 the *kerugmatic* word is preached 'through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven'.

We are driven to conclude that no authentic act or word of the apostolic church was apart from the Holy Spirit, any more than it was apart from the word of God. Surely, then, all this is summed up as being the new worship in the Spirit (John 4:20f.; Phil. 3:3). This, however, is not to say that such worship was absent from Israel. The psalms and songs in Israel's history were the source of teaching and learning, of worship and praise, and undoubtedly arose from the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit.

According to chapters 12 and 14 of I Corinthians, the word of God came through in 'a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation'. In Ephesians 5:18-20 psalms and hymns and spiritual songs were addressed to one another, so that they too were the word of teaching. It seems it was impossible for worship to be without the word. As we have noted in our rubric above, Paul advised, 'let the word of Christ dwell in you richly [as you] teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and [as you] sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God' (Col. 3:16). Doubtless the apostles taught during the times of worship, as also the evangelists, and the prophets, to say nothing of the pastors and teachers.

If to the above we add all the occasions when teaching took place, then we have a considerable use of the word. In his Letters Paul often refers to what he has already taught his readers. We know he taught at great length in Ephesus and Corinth. We know that Timothy and Silas taught the Thessalonians, as Epaphras did the Colossians. For the most part, the Epistles were read in the churches (eg. Col. 4:16), and Revelation chapters 2 and 3 endorse this custom. In the pastoral Epistles Paul exhorts both Timothy and Titus to constantly teach the word of God. We know, too, that the elders were to be 'apt to teach', and the deacons to 'hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience'. They could scarcely refrain, then, from teaching this!

We must, of course, understand that 'apt to teach' does not necessarily mean what we would today think it meant. It would not be just theological reasoning, the impartation of dogmatics, or even exposition of portions of Scripture.

The rabbinic commentaries on the lections were intended to be practical, related to the lives of the hearers, and good instruction in the way of living. So, too, the elders would have followed the apostles in showing the word of God to be His message for them for the moment. As Paul put it, this word was ‘profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work’ (II Tim. 3:16-17). Paul’s purpose is stated in,

preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths (II Tim. 4:24; cf. I Tim. 2:12).

THE PRESENT PLACE OF THE SERMON IN WORSHIP AND SERVICE

If we recognize that the way in which we use the sermon today may not parallel that of the apostolic times, we can nevertheless evaluate its present usefulness. The modes, manners and place of the sermon have changed over the many Christian generations, but it is fair to say that from the beginning the preaching of the word of God has held a prominent place in the life and worship of the church. Today there is often an unspoken battle between ‘high pulpits and low lecterns’*. The days of the Reformers, the Puritans and later the Evangelicals were often times when

See the essay ‘High Pulpit—Low Lectern’ in my book *This Building Fair*. NCPI, 1988.

the sermon took central place in worship. Generally there were high pulpits given to emphasizing the prominence of the Scriptures. In some Presbyterian churches the Bible—large and prominent itself—was carried in on a great velvet cushion, and placed centrally in the service. The preacher ascended the pulpit with great solemnity. His discourses* were not short. In some Scottish churches the pulpit was in three tiers and so three discourses took place, interspersed with hymns and prayers. Many and varied were such customs. It is said that the saying ‘The weakest go to the wall’ arose when pews and chairs did not exist in church buildings and people stood for all the worship—including the long sermons. Those who could not stand for long would have to support themselves by leaning on the wall!

The low lectern of modern times has combined prayer desk and pulpit in a friendly and intimate demonstration of intercourse between the worship leader and the congregation. Congregational participation in reading lections and conducting the worship has greatly increased, probably being closer to New Testament custom. There is no need for us to evaluate ‘high pulpits and low lecterns’. Authority of proclamation can obtain in both when the preacher is a person of the word. More sacramental congregations of the ‘Catholic’ tradition place the Lord’s Table as central, and the Holy Communion as the richest form of worship. Their liturgies are derived for the most

* In Acts there are not sermons as we would understand them today. They were more discourses, i.e. statements were made, argued in dialogue and verified by the preacher, mainly from the OT writings. This method is coming back into use in many places. It has probably always been this way in open-air discourses such as used by men like Howell Harris, the Wesleys and George Whitefield.

part from the Scriptures, and so the liturgies are themselves a proclamation of the word of God, rightly, of course, both understood and heeded.

We need then make no plea for retaining the sermon, or even for extending it from a mini-utterance of some five to ten minutes. Yet the use of the sermon is a subject all of its own and needs to be explored.* Paul has little time for eloquence as a thing in itself, or for human ways of presenting the truth (I Cor. 1:17; 2:3-5; 4:If.; I Thess. 1:5; II Cor. 4:1 f.). Even so, preaching can be a developed skill, an attained art without affecting the truth of the word preached. When it is a presentation of the word of God (I Thess. 2:13), then it is a vital—if not the most vital—part of worship. A Eutychus may fall asleep through it (Acts 20:9), but that does not condemn its length. Many may listen but not hear, but that does not put it out of court- History has shown us that great preachers such as Paul, Chrysostom, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Howell Harris, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards and others have transformed the lives of countless people, have reformed nations, and changed the course of history. No, we cannot dispense with the sermon. Its day has not ended, and in another way of speaking it may yet to be seen in all its power.

So then, we see that worship without the word is not true worship. We need the knowledge of God and His wisdom to be brought to us continually. We need the unceasing confrontation of that word as much as the constantly renewed revelation of God and His truth that

* For a fuller treatment of the subject, see my book *True Preaching: The, Agony and the Ecstasy*, NCPI, 1988.

it brings. Then our worship will be more informed, more reasonable, more spiritual, and more truthful.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The Pursuit of True Worship

WORSHIP AND THE WILL OF GOD

The will of God and worship are closely linked. When Paul said, 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification,' we might say he was speaking of God's particular will as it related to the holiness of a believer. This will is seen in passages such as Ephesians 1:34, I Peter 1:2 and I Thessalonians 2:13. God particularly wills His people to be pure. There are many other particular things that God wills (cf. Rom. 1:10; I Cor. 1:1; 4:19), but what is primary is God's will for His creation, a matter we will examine in our next section. Two passages directly link worship and God's will, namely Romans 12:12 and Ephesians 5:17-21. In the first Paul says that as we worship we are transformed and test out the will of God, and in the second that we should be wise, knowing the will of God, and then being filled with the Holy Spirit we will truly worship. At this point we will not examine these two references. We will proceed to looking at the will of God for His creation.

GOD'S WILL FOR CREATION

The celestial creatures and elders worship God, saying, 'Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou didst create all things, and *by thy will* they existed and were created.' It was God's will to bring all creation into being. However, before He created God had planned that all things would happen according to His will. This planning or wisdom is called 'the counsel of his will' (Eph. 1:11) or 'the eternal purpose' (Eph. 3:11). It is linked with a passage such as Isaiah 46:8-13, and in particular with verse 11, 'I have purposed, and I will do it'. In Isaiah 48:3 the same principle is stated.

In the Ephesian Letter Paul speaks of 'the mystery of his will'. This will is 'his purpose which he set forth in Christ', namely to head up all things in Christ (1:9-10). This will is also that both Jews and Gentiles should be to the praise of His glory (1:11-14). In 3:11 God's will is 'the mystery of Christ'. Thus Paul can speak of 'the plan of the mystery'. All of these statements bring us to see that from creation onwards God has been working out His plan, i.e. 'the counsel of his will'. In other words, all history is moving towards that climax which God has planned for it. This is clearly seen in Revelation 10:17, where the mighty angel announces that 'in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, *the mystery of God*, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled'. We conclude, then, that the plan of God—the 'mystery', 'the mystery of his will', 'the mystery of Christ', 'the counsel of his will', 'the eternal purpose'—is that purpose God has ever had for His creation, namely (i) its creation, (ii) its redemption, and (iii) its ultimate glorification.

THE REVELATION OF GOD'S WILL IN HISTORY

Revelation 10:7 speaks of 'the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets'. Daniel 9:6 and 10 are Daniel's confession that Israel had not listened 'to thy servants the prophets'. Amos 3:7 states plainly that 'Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets', and of course the prophets told it to the people. Indeed, 'Where there is no prophecy the people perish [cast off restraint]'. In Zechariah 1:6 God says, 'But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers?' Paul averred that the 'mystery of Christ... was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.' All this mystery is to be fulfilled at the blowing of the seventh trumpet, and certainly in Revelation 1 t:15 18 this is what happens:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.' And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying,
 'We give thanks to thee, Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and begun to reign.
 The nations raged, but thy wrath came,
 and the time for the dead to be judged,
 for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints,
 and those who fear thy name, both small and great,
 and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.'

All of this tells us that God's plan for the ages issues in the triumph of Christ, and the defeat of the kingdom(s) of this world. It results in the defeat of God's enemies, and

the enthronement of Messiah. Creation is saved from destruction. God's holiness is vindicated. As Paul points to the will of God, it comports with the Book of the Revelation. Indeed I Corinthians 15:24-28 is really a precis of the Book of the Revelation. In Ephesians and Colossians Paul shows the mystery of Christ—the plan of God—is to head up (sum up, unify) all things in Christ, to fill up all things, and to reconcile all things. What God did at creation, by the word, and through the Word (the *Logos*), i.e. the Son, He now recapitulates through the Son. This has always been His plan.

Within that primary will of God are all the things that He has willed. For example, He has willed the prophets to reveal His plan; He has willed the coming of the Son, the passion, death, resurrection and ascension. He has willed the birth of the church. Paul speaks of being an apostle by the will of God; and so on. He—God—has willed the eschatological (ultimate) things such as the glorification of man and the creation.

ALL HISTORY IS SALVATION HISTORY

'Salvation History' (*Heilsgeschichte*) is a term used by theologians to assert that God's work in salvation is that which happens—i.e. is rooted—in the events and course of history, and when seen from the biblical point of view of faith then all history is in some sense or another 'salvation history'*, i.e. all history is God's process of effecting

* There is another use of the term as it is used by Karl Barth and his followers, who see the salvation events such as incarnation and redemption 'as taking place in a supra-historical sphere, inaccessible to secular historical research and known only to faith' (article '*Heilsgeschichte*' in *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. A. Richardson, SCM 1969).

salvation. If this is so, then it is simply another way of saying all history is the outworking of the will of God. Non-biblical presentations and interpretations of history differ greatly from the *Heilsgeschichte* view or system.

When, then, we say that all history is salvation history, we mean that all history is action. It is moving, as Tennyson describes it, in

One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

If history is forward moving, it is also fulfilled in ‘the far-off divine event’, i.e. in the *eschaton*. This means that God is ‘the living God’, i.e. the God who is always acting. For Him to be the One ‘who was, and is, and is to come’, He must be the One who always acts. His people, then, act with Him. Their very reason for being is that action. As they worship they thus ‘give worth’ to Him as the God who is always acting, and acting purposively. No moment of time is outside of Him, His will, His purpose and His goal. That is why His people are always purposeful. No action of theirs is pointless. Their *worship of God is always in the action: the action is the reason for worship, and the worship is also with a view to the action!!*

WORSHIP AND ACTION IN HISTORY

Primal and antediluvian worship

Whatever was worship in the primal Eden must have arisen from creation. In Revelation 4:11 this fact of creation motivates the celestials to worship. Man’s action was

to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth, having dominion over it. Worship vanished with a refusal to fulfil this action. Man became the centre of his own worship. Cain could not really worship God, but Abel could. He was a prophet, in the action of God. His offering ‘by faith’ was an act of witness. Many of the antediluvians worshipped by faith, ‘calling on the name of the Lord’, but others did not. Their worship was doubtless directed to gods and idols, and so was undoubtedly, therefore, dynamic.

The worship of *Noah* and *his family* was given in the constant of action by the living God—preparation of the ark, descent from the ark into a new life, and this with thankfulness (Gen. 8:20-21)—and this very worship led to the covenant promise that God would restore for always the rhythm of ‘seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night’.

Covenantal worship

When we come to *Abraham*, the note on which our book began is again sounded, i.e. that God has encounters with man. Yet, as we saw then, such encounters were—and are—not merely so that man might have pure worship so much as God meets with His people with a view to further action. Abraham certainly responded in action. He left familiar surroundings and his known way of life to seek ‘the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God’. His was the action of covenant, and ‘as he grew strong in faith he gave glory to God’. Worship event succeeded worship event, and all in the context of covenant. So also with Isaac, and even more so with Jacob.

Exodus 4:22 and kindred references show us that God desired the worship (service) of Israel. It was in regard to this worship that God did signs and wonders and eventually freed Israel from Egypt. They worshipped Him in the Passover, and when He freed them they worshipped Him perpetually in that feast. Indeed the great acts of God—acts generally linked with the reality of creation—called forth further feasts so that Israel became a nation of worship—'a kingdom of priests'.

Israel, worship and acts

The history of Israel is the heart of salvation history. Israel—the nation of worship—was the matrix of world salvation. All its acts in history are significant for the nation. Its worship of God made it strong; its idolatry almost destroyed it. As the nations were and are judged by their relationship to Abraham, so the nations of the world are seen biblically in the light of their attitude to Israel. The idolatrous nations fall under God's judgement—He demands true worship. Everything, then, pivoted around worship, that is, both acts and worship were inseparably interrelated.

The living Tabernacle

The Tabernacle in Israel signified that the living dwelt with them, but then He dwelt dynamically. The Tabernacle was also designed for movement, for journeying, for pilgrimage. It was the Tent of His Presence, and the Tent of Testimony. We miss this significance if we read back into Israel's history a regular, traditional worship,

much the same as we may have on any or every Sunday morning! In this latter worship our acts may be by rote, be a ritual, be a prepared and planned programme, and so be static for the most part, not anticipating dynamic action in the time of worship, or as preparation for dynamic action beyond it.

Not so with Israel. The feasts were acts of memory and rituals of faith-anticipation. They remembered with realist-dynamic memory the great acts God had done. They composed many a hymn and Psalm around such acts. They vivified their living by the assurance that He was—and is—'the God who acts'. The Passover was not a dead event to their memory. Pentecost was linked with the harvest, but not prosaically. The Feast of Booths 'Tabernacles'—had the history of action behind it. Indeed no sacrifice was merely a ritual, merely prosaic. All worship was linked with action.

The dynamics of memory and hope

Even in the Exile Israelites could live again in dream-memory the great days of the Exodus, the memorable days of Israel under its judges and kings—the glorious kingdom of David and of Solomon. Yet such were not mere memories. They linked with the great prophetic promises when the Davidic kingdom would be restored, when it would have a splendour not hitherto known. Just as the law came with splendour (Deut. 33:15; cf. Heb. 12:18-21), so the new and eschatological worship would come with even more brilliant splendour. Israel was always between dynamic memory and powerful hope based on the promises of God.

CHRIST, THE KINGDOM, AND THE NEW WORSHIP

Just as God appeared to His servants—the prophets, priests and kings—giving them visions of Himself, but commanding them to actions, so in the New Testament worship and action were joined together. It was so in the birth narratives relating to Mary and Joseph, Zechariah, Elizabeth and John, Simeon and Anna, to the worship of the shepherds and the Magi, the baptism brought first by John and then by Jesus. If the worship in Temple and synagogue lacked the dynamic it ought to have had, this staid equanimity was disturbed by the ministry of Christ. His worship to his Father in secret brought its powerful fruits before the people in the proclamation of the word, in loving healings, strong exorcisms, and denunciation of false worship and service. Symbolically he cleansed the Temple at the initiation and completion of his ministry. He had no worship apart from action, and no action apart from worship.

THE CHURCH, ITS WORSHIP AND ACTION

We have said much about the new worship of the Spirit brought about by redemption through Christ. We see the worship of the new people of God break out at Pentecost and begin the action of God. Nothing remains static. Whilst they worship at the Temple they are proclaiming the word, disturbing the *status quo* with their Gospel of grace, their proclamation of Messiah and his Kingdom. They do not deliberately incite their enemies to action, but it is an instinctive knee-jerk reaction. Persecution sends many off to preach the Gospel in other places.

Prayer and worship ensue, and action issues from them. We have traced this worship and its outcome. We can also see that worship never becomes a merely static operation. It issues in service, as service itself is always linked with worship.

A feature of the worship in heaven is that it is never revealed as being an end in itself. As we have seen, worship is initiated by seeing the very nature of God, by His acts of creation and redemption, by His justice in history— vindicating His Being by the judgements He brings—by his defeat of Satan and all evil powers, and by avenging the blood of the martyrs and the saints. If we can talk about ‘the liturgy of marriage’, then that celebration is one of the most powerful acts of history, and it—in turn—leads on to the opening of the Holy City to all the nations. In this City God and the Lamb constitute the Temple, as they also constitute the Throne—the place of all action and authority. Attending them are not only the worshipping celestial creatures but also the new ‘kingdom of priests’, i.e. the royal priests who are a kingdom of priests unto their God. It would seem, then, that eternity is all worship and service, that there is nothing that is merely repetitive in it. The whole creation—now regenerated and glorified— worships the living God.

THE QUIET WORSHIP

It seems undeniable that worship is not present without action, as action ought not to be without worship. What then of what we call ‘quiet worship’? Is it not without action? First let us define ‘quiet worship’. By this we do not mean dull, traditional, prosaic, and desultory, any more

than we would applaud worship which is not quiet but pitched high, is strained, loud, noisy, raucous, demonstrative, triumphalist, blatant and aggressive. By 'quiet' we mean calm, simple, and unmanipulated. We mean that it may be so quiet as to seem harmless and ineffective. This need not necessarily be the case. Such quietness may speak of genuine peace, love and faith. It may be a time when worshippers can contemplate God and His word. It may be a time of teaching, of spiritual feeding upon the truth, of inner transformation by reason of the Spirit's working. All kinds of things can happen.

This being the case, the worship will have come out of an experience—or experiences—of God. The worship will certainly lead to action, if indeed it is not happening within such action. The sacrament of Baptism will be a strong reminder—an *anamnesis*—of the mighty event of the Cross and Resurrection, and will minister powerfully to faith. Likewise the Lord's Supper will be a present proclamation of the death of Christ, and of his coming again. Both sacraments may be conducted quietly yet they will speak powerfully. The grace of God will grip and effect the worshippers. Likewise the proclamation of the word will be as bread to the hungry, as water to the thirsty. By such worship the spirits of mortal beings grow strong.

Christ is in the midst of worshippers of the Father— whatever. He said he would be where two or three are gathered together in his name. The church is said always to be 'in the Father'. It is the present Holy Spirit who powerfully effects the anamnesis—'he shall...bring all things to your remembrance'. The gratitude and praise in the hearts of the devotees will well up in singing, however quiet or traditional it may be. It may sound strange to

those of happy, hearty, and hasty spirit. It may even sound dull, yet it may be the expression of truly mature devotion to God. It may be a witness to the steady faithfulness of God, and of a quiet heart in His people.

Doubtless we all have certain predilections when it comes to the matter of worship, certain understandings which we would make out to be ontological. We must admit other understandings into the range of true worship. Whether quiet or hearty, whether liturgical or non-liturgical, whether simple or whether highly adorned, we must allow that others who worship in different ways may be as sincere as we are. We must, however, see that true worship issues from the word of God, and is linked with the action of God—His acts in this world.

THE RENEWAL OR REVIVAL OF WORSHIP

Vitalizing attempts to renew the church

Much has been researched, written and practised in regard to worship over these past few decades. Some have thought that a revival of the church might come through renewed or revised liturgies. It is certain that liturgies teach as they are used, but the question is one of the source and origin of such formulated worship. Doubtless liturgies have grown out of spiritual fullness, out of the word of God, and out of the fellowship and the proclamatory action of Christ's people. In some cases they are used too formally, and in others too haphazardly and even with the unfortunate fraction of their complete form. It is doubtful whether liturgies, of themselves, could effect a revival of faith.

Others see a renewal in worship by the use of ‘body-worship’, i.e. involving all members in some form of worship participation. From having only one leader in all things there are now often many leaders in many things. The service is often parcelled out in a democratic distribution. Some congregations have a sharing form of service, either in a typical ‘encounter’ format, or in more intimate ‘house church’ gatherings. The present charismatic forms that worship takes—and they are many—encourage the use of the gifts of the Spirit, and provided these are genuine, and the use of them does not become an end in itself, this form of worship can be quite stimulating. Again, it will not necessarily lead to a revival of the church, although it is often claimed that this is the revival of the church. Leaders of this kind of worship know how much it can be done by skilful leadership rather than be—of itself—spontaneous.

Authentic renewal or revival of the church

In the light of what we have discovered, i.e. that worship springs from and leads to God’s action in history, then the church must be in the stream of such to be vital and alive. The question is, ‘How many congregations understand the nature of salvation history?’ How many comprehend the action of God in (i) election; (ii) ‘the plan of the mystery’, ‘the mystery of his will’, ‘the counsel of his will’, ‘the mystery of Christ’, ‘the eternal purpose’, ‘the mystery of God’; and (iii) the glorification of man and creation? Should they not, then, be tutored in these things, since the writers of Scripture certainly had this view of Him ‘who is and who was and who is to come’, i.e. the God who controls

all history and shapes it up to its destined end. If congregations do not know the destiny of creation, then from what source can authentic hope spring?

The first step must be to teach along such lines. The Thessalonian church began with such teaching (1 Thess. 1:10). It would seem that all churches were so tutored. They were given the biblical world-view and time-view, and worked within that framework of Divine thinking. They had some comprehension of apocalyptic. Even with such comprehension there must be the understanding that proclaiming the Gospel is the life and purpose of the church, that it is the witness to Christ, and the fulfilling of the plan of God. The mere *rationale* of proclamation will not be enough to move the church to action. It will take more than that. Redeemed men will want to redeem men. The miracle of salvation will bring its own constraint to save others.

All truth comes to us today from the word of the Scriptures, opened to us by the Spirit (cf. Luke 24:44; John 16:12 - 15), and comprehended in the historic stream of the life of the church. Therefore a revival of the church—the worship-and-action, the action-and-worship dialectic— will not obtain without a reformation of biblical teaching, the personal experience of repentance and faith, the revelation of the immense grace of God, and the sense of need of that grace, as well as the appropriation of it.

The word of God in the revival of the church

In practice what is the preaching of the word of God? Harmless homilies? Topical tidbits? Communication of information which is biblical, moral, social, and spiritual?

Exhortation to good living, social justice and social action — including the present ethical issues? Or is it the teaching of the eternities—the proclamation of Christ, his redemptive and reigning Lordship, the great issues of righteousness, truth, holiness, goodness and love? Does it embrace the state of man and the need for repentance and faith? Does it speak of the new birth, of the new creation, of participation in God’s redemptive plan for the world? Does it portray the plan of God for history, the schema of God for winning the nations and defeating the massive evil which confronts us in our own generation? Does it envisage the triumphant telos—the victory of God at the consummation of the age? Is the great power of the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension so presented that men and women tremble before God and become regenerated in His sight?

Without these striking verities our worship will always be dull and prosaic. It will be horizontal in its dimension, cut off from the vertical. When our worship is in the midst of these verities, the action of the living God, and when it is given to the redemption of man and the sharing of spiritual power with the nations, then the church will be revived. Then its worship will be on the truly grand scale. In times of revival a fresh flood of the Spirit and the Gospel breaks forth, and cities, towns, districts, villages and hamlets are inundated. Worship is at last a reality. It is the source and cause of action, as action is also the source and cause of true worship. All God’s acts—past, present and future, actual and sacramental—are vividly alive to the spirits of men and women. They are caught in a joyous and true worship of the living God.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

True Worship and the Eschaton

WORSHIP AND THE WILL OF GOD

WE have seen that God is the living God —the One who acts. Prayer and worship are fellowship with God in His action—the fulfilling of His plan in history. Thus worship is God in action, and we, for our part, fellowship with Him in that action. Action leads to worship, worship is action, and worship leads to action. To refuse to worship God is to be in some other action, for our worship will surely be directed somewhere, and it will be somewhere other than to God. To be bent upon worship of God will take us on in maturity as we ‘press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus’. In one way the prize is to ‘see Him face to face’, in another it is to be ‘mature in Christ’. It is to be finally— and utterly—released into pure worship, full fellowship with the living God.

NO ULTIMATE TERMINUS

Eschatology is the study or doctrine of ‘the last things’, i.e. of the close of this age which is brought about by the appearing of Christ, at which point in history there will be the final judgements, ‘the regeneration’ (Matt. 19:28) or forming of the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21:15; Isa. 65:17 25). This time will be linked with the resurrection from the dead of the people of God, the punishment of evil powers and the finally impenitent of humanity. Heaven will reign supreme in the affairs of creation, and hell will be the lot of all things evil—a situation known as ‘the second death’. The saints of God—the church—will be glorified, and will constitute for ever ‘a kingdom of priests’, i.e. royal priesthood which will serve God and creation in true worship and service.

All this will not constitute a terminus, i.e. a climax which sets things for ever in a rigid pattern so that what we now call ‘the future’ will simply be a matter of repetitive action. To the Greek the idea of ‘eternal’ (*aionios*) was ‘the ages upon the ages’, that is, ‘aeon upon aeon’. Each age or aeon is seen as dynamic. The symbol pictures in the Book of the Revelation are the throne, the temple, the holy city, and such like. Whilst God is immutable, He is not static. The throne, temple, and holy city are dynamic. We can, then, expect constant action, a flow of perpetual worship having equally unceasing action of the purest kind. If we may speak of eternity being a terminus, then it is only in the sense that when we alight at a terminus we have reached our destination. Having alighted, we then go about the business that occupies in and at that terminus. It is the entrance into even richer and more purposive action.

WORSHIPPING IN THE ESCHATON

Abel—and with him all the men and women of faith—looked to ‘a better country, that is, a heavenly one’. Their thinking was always eschatological. In one sense man has always lived in an eschaton, has always anticipated the ultimate. His age has always been the penultimate aeon, the age before the ultimate aeon. Because of this, history has been open-ended to him, or—better still—the end is in the hand of God. People of faith have always been the people of hope. Whilst love works through faith, yet faith and love exist in hope and are powerful by means of it.

Two things face the believing man in the eschaton in which he lives. The first is that he knows that ‘the form [fashion] of this world is passing away’, and the second is that the powers of evil are using their massive powers to change the curve of time, seeking to make it swerve away from its telos or goal. Tennyson’s beautiful statement,

One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves,

is not quite the biblical view. Predestination certainly sets the destination, but the movement towards that destination, i.e. the history of the human race (salvation history), is not so much teleological as it is eschatological. It is not the fact of the *telos* achieved that is significant so much as (i) the manner in which it is achieved, and (ii) the dynamic nature of the *telos* itself. The telos is not merely achieved by the *fiat* of God, or the dogged persistence of God, so much as it comes to fulfilment by that action of

God which is through Christ the Messiah with his people, along with the obedient celestial creatures who assist in the struggle. It is in the face of opposing evil powers that the Kingdom of God comes to its irreversible victory.

History, then, is the conflict of personal evil forces against the forces of God. The *telos* is not so much the desirable goal as it is the purpose of God through the moral and spiritual work-out of history. It is the vindication, the theodicy of God, but a working out which utterly establishes the character of the redeemed, the nature of His Kingdom, and the verity and dynamic of the future.

This being the case, eschatological worship can be seen to have two phases, (i) the present phase in which worship is always in the context of moral conflict, and (ii) the worship beyond this worship, the full eschatological worship in the presence of God and the exclusion of defeated evil. In one sense we can talk of the present eschaton, and the eschaton beyond this eschaton.

The worship of faith

To speak of 'the worship of faith' is to say two things:

- (a) we walk by faith and not by sight. That is, hope gives us a sight of things to come, and so we are drawn on in faithfulness to move towards that end and presently to work with that goal in sight;
- (b) faith is the constant battle we fight against the insinuating accusations of evil powers, i.e. doubts which would destroy our faith, weaken our worship, and paralyse our true endeavours.

Worship, then, is carried on only in faith, and in the face of the unceasing struggle with evil powers. We can rightly call this worship the *action* of faith.

THE CONFLICT OF ESCHATOLOGICAL WORSHIP

By 'conflict' we mean that Satan is seeking to attain to the highest place of worship—to be worshipped as God in the Temple of God. His 'hope' is that he will succeed. He has sought to shape history after his compulsive passion to be admired in and by the saints—an event reserved exclusively for Christ (II Thess. 1:10). His strategy for this achievement is worked through the beast, the second beast, and the false prophet. He creates and utilizes the 'mother of harlots'—the unholy city of Babylon. Whatever we understand by this unholy trinity of dragon, beast and unholy spirit, and whatever the nature of the unholy city, we see the delusive nature of this ante-ontological system. In the light—or darkness—of this evil system, worship is always against this evil, as it is for God. Worship must be from God so as to be against evil. Worship must always be operative in the presence of evil. It must always be in the ethos of conflict.

When we translate this theological understanding into praxis—the practice of true life—then we see that our eschatological living is always in the form of battle. Doubtless the fruit of the Spirit is the means by which we can live and operate, for without love, peace and joy—along with their concomitants—we would be overcome with dread, despair, and hopelessness. In practice we face the rivalry of Satan as he seeks to undo God and establish his own

righteousness in history. The vital question is, ‘Do we do good that evil may be vanquished?’ Our reply to this question determines the modes of our operations.

Worship and works

In agreeing that worship and works are in the one bundle, we need to see firstly the emphasis upon works in the apostolic teaching, and then something of its outworking. To do good works would then be to worship in truth. We must, of course, beware of seeing such works as a separate entity. Only those works done within—and as part of—the will of God are of real value. Works, worship, and the will of God are the one entity. The doing of good works is a basic—if not major—teaching of the New Testament. Jesus told us to let our light so shine before men that they would see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. Paul told us that God had beforehand prepared the works we are to walk in, and had prepared us to be able to walk in them. Christ told each of the seven churches, ‘I know your works.’ He had told his apostles that they would do greater works than he had done. Such works would not be confined to signs and wonders. All signs and wonders are works, but not all works are signs and wonders. The doing of such works will be an offence to the system of the dragon, the beast, and the unholy woman—Babylon.

The nature of the works (I)

The works we are to do are of various kinds. The works that Christ did—and which he continues to do through

us—include preaching the Gospel to the poor, proclaiming release to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, setting at liberty the oppressed, and proclaiming the year of liberation by the Lord (Luke 4:18-19). Peter affirmed this in Acts 10:38, ‘doing good and healing [curing] all that were oppressed by the devil’. In the Gospels he exorcises demons, heals the sick, cleanses the lepers, and brings relief of forgiveness to people troubled by their sins. He also gives teaching which corrects wrong thinking and wrong practices. He proclaims the Kingdom of God by these works and words (cf. Matt. 4:23 25; 12:28), and then goes to the Cross where he effects the Atonement and thus makes open the way for his followers to do ‘greater works’. The apostles followed on, doing the things he had done, but having the Gospel of salvation to proclaim, by which people could enter into eternal life. This proclamation was sometimes attended by signs and wonders and the use of the gifts of Christ and the Spirit.

Works within the life of the church were those we have just mentioned, and also works of compassion and care. True religion was to visit the orphans and widows, to remember the poor, to effect distribution of goods to those who did not have them, to pastor the flock of God, feeding, tending and guarding it. From the Book of the Revelation we gather that works were holding to pure doctrine, rejecting heresies, testing out false apostles and prophets, rebuking evil, facing persecution, and doing all these things in love—Christ’s love. The doing of such things constituted direct opposition to evil powers—the dragon, the beasts, the false prophet, and Babylon. In this way work and worship were the one. To refuse to worship the beast was a good work. To refuse to have his mark was

a good work. To proclaim the truth in the face of such evil was also a true work. All of these works can be summed up by, 'bearing witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ'; 'keeping the commandments of God and bearing testimony to Jesus'. Because of the anger and persecution aroused by such witness, Christians were martyred, but the word of encouragement was, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth... that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds [works] follow them.'

The works, then, are not lost, but accrue to the faithful as rewards on the day of Christ. The faithful have both worshipped and served.

The nature of the works (II)

A most difficult of questions to solve presents itself. 'In the light of the suffering of this world, is the church committed to bring relief to persons, families and nations, and if so what kind of relief and help is appropriate to the Christian Gospel?' In other words, are social action, social welfare, and social justice the direct responsibility of the church of Christ? We need to address ourselves most thoughtfully to this question. Most find the direct solution through the parable of the sheep and goats, in Matthew 25:31-46. It would seem that whatever we do for another human being in the way of pity, compassion and help, we are really doing to Christ. Such an interpretation knows no bounds in its outworking. The church is bound to do all things for all men.

There is, however, another interpretation, namely that Jesus, here, is confining the doing of works to the brethren

who are proclaiming the Gospel. They are 'the least of these my brethren'. When Jesus told Mary Magdalene to report to his *brethren* (John 20:17) it was the first time he had called the apostles his brethren. In I John 3:10-22 John is speaking of brethren, i.e. those who are believers, and says that if a person sees his brother has need and that person closes his heart of compassion when he could help, then he is wholly unloving. In Matthew 23:8-10 Jesus applied the term 'brethren' to the covenant community: 'you are all brethren', i.e. 'No one is your teacher but God, no one is your master but Christ, no one your Father but God, and that makes you *brethren*.' It may sound like special pleading to limit this term to the faithful, but to do so is surely biblical. If this claim is true, then Jesus in the parable of the sheep and goats was speaking about doing good to the proclaimers of the Gospel. In any case, it is clear that the sheep and the goats were not brethren! *Brethren* is, of course, a term for the members of the church, both in the Acts and the Epistles.

There can be no question about it. In the New Testament the church is hard put to look after its own, let alone others. It was a poor community, composed of many slaves, and there were not many wise, powerful, or of noble birth (I Cor. 1:26-28). Indeed there were many who were weak and despised and of no reputation. Paul advised, 'do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.' This does not mean there is partiality exercised, but recognition that the Christian community was generally rejected by the world and had to make its own way. There can be no doubt that Christians were to love all men (I Thess. 3:12), and to pray for them all (I Tim. 2:15; I Pet. 2:16-17). Even so, there is no

general direction to undertake universal social welfare, social service, social action and social justice. It does not even seem to be implied.

The nature of the works (111)

The truth of the Scriptures is that all men are to do good to all men. This is implicit in the mandate that God gave to man: to be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth and have dominion over it. Insofar as members of Christ's community are human beings, they have a responsibility to all human beings. Those outside of Christ's community have the same responsibility. For Israel the principle of care for others—eg. the poor, the handicapped and the strangers—is set out in Leviticus 19 and other places. It is confined to the perimeter in which the nation lived.

If we establish the fact that insofar as is possible we ought to help others, then we do not reject responsibility for the human race. Just what we ought to do, and how and when we ought to do it, is a most complex matter. Our motives for what we do ought to be looked at, i.e. whether we are simply active in 'do-gooding', are justifying ourselves, are seeking fame, are seeking to make a guilt pay-off, and other similar things. If we wait for our motives to be pure we shall probably never do anything, so let us do what seems to be good. We need, however, to take certain factors into consideration.

What do we understand in this last age by the wrath and judgements of God? In Romans 1:18-32 man lies under the active wrath of God. Whilst it is his own rebellion and evil which brings him to misery, yet God is active in giving man up to his own evil, and this is His

active wrath (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). The Book of the Revelation shows us three sets of judgements under the headings of 'the seven seals', 'the seven trumpets', and 'the seven bowls'. Is it possible that in this aeon we are simply seeing the wretched condition of men and women through the eyes of human compassion, and not alert to the judgements with which God may be visiting the world? What ought we to do in the face of these judgements?

Again, is it possible that much of our passion for social justice has its roots in our own indignation with man, and even with God? Is it also possible that we do not trust God's sovereignty in the world, and we are seeking to do what we think He ought to do but is failing to accomplish? Are we even attempting to 'play God', being judges, passing sentence, and seeking to rectify what God seems impotent or reluctant to do? These are certainly not easy questions to answer, but the problem is compounded by our insistence that we know what is needed, and what we ought to do.

The need, then, of true worship and genuine prayer is very evident. Our so-called 'good works' may turn out to be hasty and premature works, they may be ill-advised in the light of God's plan. They may cause more harm than the relative good they may do. Christians may embark on certain ventures of good works, and become so absorbed in them that the major good work—that of redeeming men and women from their moral, spiritual, emotional and mental agony—may be neglected. So then, to pray and worship is to keep ourselves in the mind of Christ and

* See my booklet *The Justice—Men and the Great Rage* NCPI 1985. This essay is also found in 'God and the Ghosttown, NCPI, 1984.

the will of God, and despite all criticism to do only His will. If this involves us in social concern, social welfare, social action and social justice, then we will know it is no fad, of course, but a work of God.

DOING GOOD, SERVING GOD AND ALL MEN, IN THIS ESCHATON

The elements by which we work in this age are faith, hope, and love. We need not expand on the nature of these things. We simply need to see that in worshipping, doing good works, and fighting the spiritual warfare we must never depart from them. The weapons we use are spiritual, i.e. are not political or carnal (II Cot. 10:34). Likewise we must not use the resources God has given us in an unspiritual manner. In I Corinthians 13:1-3 Paul speaks of the use of spiritual gifts without love, and concludes that they are nothing, and accomplish nothing. In Romans 12:14-21 Paul sets out a way of thinking and living which defeats the evil which attacks us, but does it by love, and not by attempting to get justice:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Here we are to extend our love to all men by good works, though not in the role of a reformer or one seeking to obtain justice. It is important that we know this, otherwise our reactions to persecutors and the forces of evil will cause us to use their methods against them. In worship and service we are to submit to evil rather than fight it with such weapons. In relation to this principle we should look at Daniel chapter 7, where the beasts—as in the Revelation—seek to subdue the saints. In 7:21-22 a horn of the fourth beast 'made war with the saints, and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgement was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom'. In 7:25 the fourth beast 'shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High... and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time'. Ultimately the saints shall be given the kingdom of the Most High, prevailing over the fourth beast.

There is a parallel to this in the Book of the Revelation. In 13:5-10 the beast is given authority for forty-two months, i.e. three and a half years, or 'a time, two times, and half a time'. It was allowed to make war on the saints and conquer them. Then, 'If any one is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if any one slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain', which appears to mean that the saints must submit to prison and not retaliate, even if it means their death. To use the sword is to die by it. The exhortation is then given, 'Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints'. In other words, the saints must accept their temporary defeat at the hands of the beast but maintain their integrity. Ultimately they will inherit the Kingdom of God.

This, then, is the context of worship and service in the present aeon, the eschaton that is upon us. We must worship whilst we battle, battle whilst we worship. Our battle is one of faith, and it is a spiritual and moral one, in which we serve the creation and refuse allegiance to the dark powers. No wonder, then, that every day we face terrors and can easily be confused. On the one hand we see the needs of the world which we pity, and on the other hand its terrible cruelties and evil. We understand prophetically the judgements of God and the Lamb, and the need for these in righteous history; yet we are tempted to intervene and help those under judgement. It is no small wonder that we need the Father exonerating us, the Son—at the right hand of God—intervening for us against evil powers, and the Spirit interceding within us. We can see afresh the process of worship and action. We come from action to worship; we worship; we go from worship to action. That is the continuing course of our operations. That is what the counsel of God—His will and purpose—is all about

It is in this context we worship and serve the Most High. By doing the deeds He has appointed for us we shall prevail.

WORSHIP IN THE ULTIMATE ESCHATON

We have said that there is an eschaton beyond the eschaton. Of course history is a whole, and there are not eschatons, but there is the eternal *telos* beyond the last days, which is the fruit of the past and present epochs. We have seen a number of times in our book that the end is

the substance of our hope. We shall see Him face to face, i.e. God and the Lamb. We will have seen the defeat of Satan and his powers, the judgements on such powers and evil men. We will have seen history sealed off from further rebellion and insurrection. Peace will reign, as in the glorious pictures of the Old Testament when men

shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

for at this time,

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
and the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall feed;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.
They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

The redeemed saints shall be decked out as is the Son himself, for all shall be like him. They will have glory like his, and their resurrected bodies will be of the same glory, and they shall be pure and substantial. The Day of the Marriage will send its glory down through eternity, for the glorious Bride and the noble Warrior-King—the Bridegroom—will come to inseparable union and marvellous fruitage. The Father-King and the Son-King shall inhabit

the throne of grace and love. The Holy City will open its gates to His elect—the true citizens of eternity—and there they shall worship, for God and the Lamb will be the Temple. All will be light. The nations shall surge forward into the City and the Kingdom. The River of Life will flow incessantly and the Tree of Life yield its fruit regularly to satisfy the nations, whilst the leaves of the Tree will be for the healing of the nations.

There shall be no night there, for God and the Lamb are the light of the City.

All creation shall bow in wonder, in trembling joy and in irrepressible adoration. There—and for ever—our worship will be perfected. From it shall proceed the glorious action of eternity.

No wonder the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' and no wonder, too, that we cry, 'Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!'

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