

The True Worship

by J. S. Blackburn

London: Central Bible Truth Depot Ltd.,
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Prologue

The hour comes and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. John 4:23.

Ritualistic worship made its first real impact on me when, by a strange series of circumstances, and contrary to all my habits, I found myself in one of Europe's famous mediaeval cathedrals while Choral Mass was being celebrated. The Cathedral Church of St. Rombold at Malines in Belgium is the seat of an archbishop, and is a most beautiful and imposing edifice. The soaring pillars of the vaulted nave, the clustered columns at the transept crossing, the branching tracery of the clerestory windows and the still figures and deep colours of the stained glass combine to give an air of solemn, timeless other-worldliness which prepares one's senses for further impressions. Ever before the eye is the church's great art treasure, the altar piece by Van Dyck depicting the Crucifixion. There hangs the Saviour between the thieves and there is Mary Magdalene standing by the cross, the living representation of passionate grief.

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No choir was visible, but with clearness pure and sweet the weaving threads of counterpoint echoed and re-echoed in the stone vaults of choir and nave. No rhythm marked the time: the strands of timeless melody rose and fell, crossed and re-crossed, grew loud and soft. Very little imagination was needed to believe that this was indeed the celestial music itself, the voices of angels at the gate of heaven.

Against this background of colour and music the service proceeded. The air was heavy with incense, and the gorgeous vestments of the chanting priests completed a consummately designed and executed impact on the senses, and therefore on the mind, to produce a sensuous effect intended to be conducive to worship.

The impression made on me by all this was intensified by its utter contrast with all I had known and shared in all my life as corporate worship. The points of contrast presented themselves one by one to my thoughts. Instead of the great building having everything that art and man's device could contrive to make it in a material and sensuous way worthy of God, I knew the simplest of buildings within and without devoid of ornament of any kind, having neither cross nor

symbol to proclaim them houses of God. There I had known no priest, clergy nor minister as a separate class and with special powers and privileges; any man might speak in his prayer or praise or hymn. There all was spontaneous and extempore: there was no instrumental music—indeed no music at all in the sophisticated and trained sense. When no person felt the urge to open his mouth, there was silence.

My earliest memories included observing these gatherings of men and women of all ages, classes and rank in society, sitting silent and with eyes closed until someone was moved to speak. I soon learned that their eyes were closed for the deliberate purpose of excluding the diversions of sense, so that there might be less to impair the inner activity of mind, heart and spirit opened up to God. What they said in prayer and worship followed no liturgy; it was the free rising of the spirit in worship. What any person said was eagerly followed by the others, and quiet murmurs of agreement and support were constantly to be heard. The substance of their prayers was permeated with Bible allusions and quotations. These people knew their Bibles intimately and thoroughly, and the quiet responses to the speaker showed that by the

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shared knowledge of this one Book, heart answered to heart and spirit to spirit, moved by these allusions. Above all, it seemed that the Persons they addressed and spoke about in prayer and worship were Persons they knew, the Father and the Son, and with whom they simply knew themselves to be in a settled relationship never to be broken.

All this centred round the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. At the appropriate time any man who felt moved to do so gave thanks, and the loaf of ordinary bread and the cup of wine were handled by all in exact conformity with Luke 22:17.

Awareness of so striking a contrast as that described above was among the first impressions leading me to a lifelong interest in trying to understand the "way of God more perfectly" in what concerns the true Christian worship. For our guidance and instruction on this as on all other matters of real concern, we have no other source of illumination than God and the word of His grace. It is to the Law and the Testimony, to the Scriptures of Truth we must turn, and thus will be fulfilled the Saviour's promise that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all the Truth.

No one will question that the ritualistic worship described owes much to an Old Testament religion. The ground plan of the church comprising chancel, nave and porch, corresponds to the Jews' Temple with its Holy of Holies, Holy Place, and Outer Court or Porch. In both, the inner sanctuary contains an altar. The division of the worshipping people into High Priest, Priests and Levites corresponds to Bishop, Priests and Deacons. In both, the priests are clothed with garments of glory and beauty: the central part of each ritual is a sacrifice, and the priests have exclusive privileges in connection with the sacrifice. Both kinds of service proceed to the accompaniment of music and incense.

It is at the same time equally clear that the ritualistic worship shares with the true New Testament worship this constant dependence on allusions to Old Testament worship. It is worth while to set out this point in some detail, for it can be easily overlooked, and clearly it must be given full weight in any serious enquiry concerning the true worship.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy,

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which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16-17). "What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, 'I will dwell in them ...; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (2 Cor. 6:16). "Now therefore ye ... are built upon the foundation ... Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together grows to an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing" (Acts 17:24-25).

"We have ... an high priest, who is set on the right hand. ... of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man ... There are priests that offer gifts according to the law: who serve to the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:1-5). "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us ... priests to God and His Father" (Rev. 1:5-6). "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15).

"We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Heb. 13:10). "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:20-22).

A candid enquirer will notice, in reflecting on these quotations, that although the terms used are terms derived immediately from Old Testament worship (temple, priest, altar, sacrifice, the holiest), yet these terms are frequently employed to point a contrast rather than an exact parallel. They seem to say, we do have a priest, but quite a different kind of priest: we do have a sacrifice, but a new kind of sacrifice. Wherein lie the parallels and wherein exactly lie the contrasts between Old Testament and Christian worship?

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These are the questions which help render more specific our study. In the pages which follow, these are the questions for which we shall try to find answers in the Word of God.

There is one New Testament passage, heading this chapter, which seems to gather within its brief compass all the allusions already noted and at the same to give in the words of the Saviour Himself the essentials of the answer we seek. This passage forms the basis of our study: and we shall seek to bring out from the whole range of Scripture some measure of the fulness of meaning contained in every one of the Saviour's words recorded in John 4:20-24. Read them now and observe how they take us to the very heart of the matter.

"The woman says to him ... Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and you say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus says to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes, when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship you know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit

and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The two examples with which we began represented extremes on a scale of rite and ceremony, of symbol and sense. Another, partly over-lapping, dimension of practice in connection with worship, might be called that of a liberal modernism. Recently, immediately after the news I heard from the B.B.C. the beginning of "An Act of Worship for schools". It began, so the announcer said, with Cesar Franck's Violin Sonata in A Major, and would end with more Cesar Franck. It included a very nice hymn descriptive of the Saviour's sacrifice, and a prayer that we might become more like Him. It is very common in Britain to read a permanent notice outside a church inviting all to come and worship. A significant variation on this theme is to be found in a book emanating from the Tractarian Movement of 110 years ago, noting the attractions of the gin-palace and cheap music-hall, and, since these were so popular and depended on light and music and histrionics for their appeal, that is

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indeed a benighted outlook which neglects to use these means to allure the man-in-the-street to worship God.

Underlying the three examples thus drawn together is the belief, common to all, that every child at school can be called to worship: that one of the invitations appropriately to be addressed to any man-in-the-street is the invitation to worship or to be taught the forms of worship. These instances naturally raise the question whether it be true that anyone can be taught to worship God. That there is a worship other than the true worship is witnessed by the quotation from John 4, in which we shall seek to find the answers to our questions. To the Samaritan the Lord said, "You worship you know not what." The Scriptures do accord the name worship to something based on ignorance and not on knowledge—to something quite apart from the true worship. With this agrees Acts 17, "Whom therefore you ignorantly worship." Thus it is also clear that for the true worship all are not qualified. Part of our enquiry will be to find the qualifications, but is it not immediately apparent that the true worshippers know salvation, have passed

through the initiatory cleansing, and above all know the Person worshipped?

We have hitherto been thinking in terms of a desire for knowledge and understanding arising from observation of the varied practices of Christians and we have by this been led to the fourth chapter of John's Gospel: and there all such signposts are eclipsed when we seriously confront the depth and urgency of the quest of God which breathes through the words of Jesus. For what we find there shining forth and meeting our search for knowledge and understanding is nothing less than the quest of God the Father. "For the Father seeks such to worship Him". In our experience as Christians we have to do first with the quest of the Son of Man, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Only through the activity of the seeking Saviour can we be numbered among those capable of the true worship: and we would never wish to move away from the activity of the Saviour's present seeking love. It is never open to us to choose to be devoted to one more than the other of these two Divine quests. A heart and mind truly renewed by the Word and the Spirit

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will sense to the full the commanding imperative of these two great facts: the Son of Man seeking the lost, and the Father seeking worshippers. if in the pages which follow we concentrate attention on the latter, this is never to be taken as diminishing the former. The Gospel must ever be paramount among the holy things about which the true Christian ministers to the Lord.

Forth from His eternal glory with the Father, out from the love wherewith the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world, the Son of God has come. He has come to seek and to save the lost: this quest has led Him of necessity by Calvary. But beyond it there lies this other quest: through Him the Father is seeking worshippers. Only the coming of the Son could reveal the Father. Only His sacrifice could open a new and living way by which we can enter into His presence. The true worship, then, is something beyond the worship of Almighty God: even beyond the worship of Jehovah. The true worship is to worship the FATHER, revealed in Christ the Son. If we have begun to grasp the significance of this central passage, then in the inner chambers of love and devotion, we shall have been

moved to desire above all things to respond to this seeking of the Father; and we shall search the Scriptures so that by the Spirit's illumination we may learn how to be among the true worshippers who worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

The Bible Words and their Meaning

Five times in the Revelation John records a moment of ecstatic climax, when the dwellers in heaven, seeing the things of earth in the light of heaven, prostrate themselves in the presence of God's throne, and in this act symbolize their worship. In the introductory vision of God on His throne, twenty-four elders are seen, clothed in white, wearing golden crowns and seated each upon his throne. At moments of climax in this tremendous vision—the thanksgiving of the cherubim; the Lamb taking the book out of the right hand of God, the appearance in heaven of the vast crowd of the redeemed; the arrival of the world-kingdom of God and His Christ; and the overthrow of Babylon, the false church—they suddenly rise from their thrones, fling themselves on their faces before God's throne and cast their crowns before Him. Thus dramatically and symbolically they take an attitude intensely expressive of their recognition of the supreme greatness of God relative to themselves and seen by themselves. Their attitude expresses their acknowledgement of the rightness of the fact that all

blessing, all honour, all glory, all power is in the hand of God, while they themselves hide their faces in the dust.

The scene described exactly presents the meaning of the Bible word basic to our theme, proskuneo. Its simple original meaning is to prostrate oneself before another, and for the purpose of this study we shall use the English word worship as the exact equivalent of the New Testament word proskuneo. Perhaps the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament had primary reference to the bodily attitude described, but in the setting of John 4 we may simply begin with the thought that worship is an attitude of spirit, taken by man realising the presence of God revealed. In the true worship in spirit and in truth, the worship of the Father, warm and living overtones of love and relationship are added to this basic thought, but here is our beginning, a concept which clearly differentiates worship from thanksgiving, praise, prayer, or service, but indicates also how closely related are each of these actions. We can thank, praise, or serve an equal, but worship is due to God alone. When we do thank, praise, or serve Him, while there is in these actions addressed to God an element of recognising

His greatness and awful glory, this element is not the central purpose and content of these actions as it is in the case of worship.

Perhaps at this point reference should be made to those minor and subsidiary cases in which worship is addressed to men. In addressing the mayor as "Your Worship", we know very well that worship belongs to God alone. This is a minor, archaic, and exceptional usage. So it is in Scripture. Those cases in which it is doubtful whether the speaker in the Gospels really intended to attribute deity to Jesus are examples of this kind. In the parable of the two debtors, the first debtor "fell down and worshipped" the king. Here the expression is evidently equivalent to "did homage". The full New Testament significance is clear in the last chapter of the Revelation. John is twice moved to fall down and worship the angel who explained to him the vision. He is quite sternly forbidden, and the angel's injunction "Worship God" obviously means that worship is due to God alone.

It has already been remarked that all this is closely paralleled by a consideration of the principal Old Testament word signifying worship. There is the same emphasis on the

bodily posture as in the Revelation, and the images of that book find many parallels in the Old Testament. Abraham's nameless servant bowed his head and worshipped, and also Moses (Ex. 34:8). Joshua, realising the presence of God in the vision of the warrior with drawn sword, "fell on his face ... and did worship."

Thus, our first light on the nature of worship comes from the root meaning of the Bible words employed. We have by this been led to see that, whatever may have to be added by later considerations, the primary thought in worship is that of man, often at special moments of vision, taking in heart and spirit an attitude of acknowledgement of the "worth-ship" of God as at the time revealed and known. We shall see how, in the true worship, which is the worship of the Father revealed in the Son, this is the adoring recognition and appreciation of all the treasures of the Divine Love vouchsafed by the Spirit to the believing heart.

The sentences in which the Samaritan woman introduced the subject take us a step further in our search for the meaning of worship. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain" she said, as the conversation proceeded, "and ye say, that in

Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Some have considered that she was taking evading action as a defence against an assault on her conscience. That her conscience was reached there can be no doubt, but the serious way her words were taken up by the Lord and the literally epoch-making import of the revelations given her, leave no doubt of her sincerity, and indeed that the searching, all-seeing eye of Jesus saw, not only a conscience aroused, but also the awakening of a new life in her which could receive and in the end would understand something of the meaning of His answers. In the interchange of question and answer, as He spoke the burning words revealing the Father's quest, the well of water in her, so newly given, was indeed springing up into everlasting life.

The sentences imply a particular picture intended by the word worship. The Lord took up her statements and added to them. Whatever worship is, the true worship of the future would be in spirit and in truth instead of "in this mountain" or "at Jerusalem"; and it would be addressed to God under His true Name, the Father, instead of His earlier Name, Jehovah. For the moment, however, our concern is with the

light here cast on the real meaning of worship. There is not a word to imply that the Lord disagreed with the meaning she had in using the word. What was that meaning? Or, to frame the question in another way, what did take place "in this mountain" and "in Jerusalem"? She called it worship, and the Lord agreed that it was so.

The opening of the Gospel of Luke contains some delightful specimens of story-telling. "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into Jehovah's temple. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of Jehovah standing on the right side of the altar." The purpose of the narrative is, of course, to tell what the angel said and its results, but a most interesting light is cast upon what took place "at Jerusalem," and which both the Samaritan woman and the Lord named "worship." Note the elements composing the scene: a priest and the priest's

office, incense, the temple, the altar, and all in honour of Jehovah.

The twenty-four courses of the priesthood, of which the course of Abia (or Abijah) was the eighth, were instituted by David, as recorded in 1 Chronicles 24. In the Gospel times each course exercised the priest's office in the temple of the Lord for one week at a time, and each day's services were taken by one or more families of the course. On any particular day, for both the morning and evening sacrifices, four lots were cast and by these the individual priests were chosen to prepare the altar, to kill the sacrifice, to offer the incense, and finally to burn the sacrifice on the altar. The third lot, to offer the incense, was the most coveted and could fall to any priest only once in his lifetime. This was the lot which fell to Zacharias on that great day when the angel of the Lord appeared and spoke to him about the birth of John Baptist. For our present purpose, we must note that though the reference to a sacrifice is not explicit, the word "lot" inescapably includes in the scene the sacrifice which had just been killed and was about to be burned on the altar.

There is no direct Scripture evidence regarding the Samaritan worship "in this mountain," Mount Gerizim. For two hundred years a temple stood there in which the pentateuchal system of sacrifices was carried on by a Samaritan priesthood. This is doubtless the worship to which the woman referred, although it has been thought that she was speaking about Abraham and Jacob, both of whom erected altars and offered sacrifices at Shechem or Sychar.

It is thus clear that in the phrases "our fathers worshipped" and "men ought to worship," the word worship is equivalent to a system of priesthood and sacrifice, and so also the Lord employed it when He went on to describe the true worship.

Exactly similar further considerations apply to the usual Old Testament word for worship and its meaning. Abraham said to the young men who had so far accompanied Isaac and himself "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." What was intended by Abraham's word "worship" is immediately apparent. "Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. ...

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there ... and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering. ... So Abraham returned."

The New Testament and Christian counterpart of this meaning which we have now reached is given in 1 Peter 2:5. It is one of the great Scriptures dealing with the true worship and must have the closest attention later. For the moment it will suffice to quote it. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Here is the New Testament system of priesthood and sacrifice, the true worship in spirit and in truth.

At this point let us summarise what we have learned about the central Bible word *proskuneo*, worship. From the word itself in derivation, the meaning is an attitude of mind, heart and spirit taken by man at the moments when he realises the presence of God revealed. From a consideration of the use of the word in John 4 and elsewhere, a greater precision of meaning emerges, and this is a system of priesthood and sacrifice.

Brief mention must be made of other Bible words so closely akin to *proskuneo* that to omit them from our consideration would render it seriously incomplete. In the English Bible, *latreuo* and *latreia* are sometimes translated worship. Fundamentally they mean serve and service; but certain examples show clearly that the service of the sanctuary is what is primarily intended. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Heb. 13:10). "They ... serve Him day and night in His temple" (Rev. 7:15). "Present your bodies a ... sacrifice ... which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). "The priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God" (Heb. 9:6). This usage is so closely akin to *proskuneo*, likewise implying a system of priesthood and sacrifice, that we shall have occasion to refer to it again.

One other Bible word will contribute to our study. Blessing (*eulogia* and *eulogeo*) is often given a special meaning when addressed to God, and this meaning is nearly allied to worship and priestly service. The first Bible priest was Melchizedek, of whom we read in Genesis 14. He came out to meet the victorious Abram, and not only blessed Abram,

but also blessed God. This dual blessing, coming out from God to men, and then rising from men to God in response, is seen very beautifully in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us." To bless means to "speak good." God's speaking good regarding His people has enriched them beyond all man's golden dreams; it has given them all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Our speaking good to God cannot and does not enrich Him, but such a response to God the Father from His children, answering to His love and giving Him his true place, ever rises as a sweet savour to Him. Blessing, in the special sense of rising from His children in response to the love of God the Father, is thus something very close to worship. In the Revelation, blessing ever rises in connection with the worship of those who, in heaven, prostrate themselves before Him that sits upon the throne and before the Lamb.

The Priesthood of Christ

Both the systems of priesthood and sacrifice which the Bible calls worship are made to depend on a High Priest. The continuance among the people of the tabernacle and its worship hung on the high priest's action on the Day of Atonement. In the true worship introduced in Hebrews 10:19-22 we have the boldness to enter into the holiest because we have a High Priest and because of what He has done. In neither case could the worship begin or continue without the existence and work of the High Priest. Christ's presence there in the heavenly sanctuary is the "nail in a sure place", "the anchor within the veil", on which the true worship depends.

In this chapter, therefore, we enter on the privilege and joy of considering our great High Priest. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the ... High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. (Hebrews 3:1). The same call comes also at the end of the epistle, "Consider Him" (Hebrews 12:3). Indeed it is in this epistle exclusively that the truth of the Priesthood of Christ is expounded. (In this chapter references are to Hebrews unless otherwise

stated). The epistle leads on step by step until we arrive in 10:22 at the call to the true worship which is the result in action of the great range of truth concerning our High Priest set out in the body of the epistle. The same note is touched again in the closing words. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Heb. 13:10). "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually" (Heb. 13:15).

It is easy to see why this subject should form the substance of a letter addressed to Hebrew Christians of the earliest times. They were evidently labouring under the reproach that in becoming Christians they would lose everything. In Christianity (so their opponents said), there was no sanctuary, no altar, no sacrifice, and above all, no priest. The purpose of the epistle is to assure these Hebrew Christians that we do possess a great High Priest (Heb. 4:14). We do possess an altar (Heb. 13:10).

A similar reproach is brought by the modern devotees of a ritualistic worship. A visitor travelled forty miles to see a Waldensian pastor in Italy to hear more about "the religion"

which the pastor preached over the radio. After some conversation, they visited his simple church together.

"But what is it you worship?" said the visitor, looking round in surprise, "no candles, no sanctuary, no altar, no Christ. Ah, I see what you worship" (pointing to the large Bible), "you worship the Book."

The pastor mildly disclaimed this suggestion, but presented him with a Bible. Some time afterwards, the pastor was leaving Italy for England, and the day before he left, the same visitor arrived again.

"I heard you were going to England," he said, "and I thought I must come and say goodbye, and thank you for the Book—for it has taught me that it is not the Book you worship, but the Man in the Book."

The particular importance of the truth of the priesthood of Christ to those who have been the devotees of a ritualistic worship is clear; but is this truth equally important for other Gentile Christians? They never had an earthly sanctuary and a God-appointed high priest and could not therefore lose these favours. If we reflect on the needs to be met by this

truth, however, we shall see how much we Gentile believers need the service of our High Priest. The two great purposes of the service of Christ as High Priest are to help our weaknesses (succour in Heb. 2:18 and infirmities in Heb. 4:15) and to sustain our worship. So long as we continue with this need, standing related to this privilege, we shall continue to stand greatly in need of priestly service.

So long as we possess a High Priest, why do we need to know about it? Co-operative action in any matter is only possible if there is understanding. In face of the problem of a broken-down car, action is required; but it would be of small use to blow the horn or switch on the lights. Action, to be effective and useful, must cooperate with the true principle of action of the mechanism, and this depends on knowledge and understanding. The epistle to the Hebrews is to give us understanding as to the present service of our High Priest, so that by co-operative action we may enter into the fulness of the blessing and privilege available in Him. Indeed, we must face the fact that understanding the Priesthood of Christ belongs to Christian maturity. It is strong meat for those of full age, as well as milk for the

babes in Christ. There is nothing here to divert a Christian who is a babe in Christ from making a beginning in the understanding of Christ's priesthood, but the majority of the persons reading these lines will have been on the Christian pathway for several years, and it is a serious reflection that insofar as we feel reluctance to enter and advance and grow in this truth, we come under the lament of Heb. 5:11 to 6:1. Are we dull of hearing when for the time we have been on the way we ought to be teachers? Then one of the great calls which reaches us from this epistle is: "Let us go on to maturity ... show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end ... that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

The predominant picture of Christ presented in Hebrews sees Him seated in heaven. This thought springs first from Psalm 110:1. "The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." It is joined with Psalm 2:7 to form the twin pillars on which the teaching of the epistle is built. The one attests Christ's deity and sonship: the other the place of His present priestly service. Then, by a mixture of likeness and contrast, the

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statement of Psalm 110:1 is fused and blended with the actions and positions of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, to produce the picture of Christ, our great High Priest, probably wearing His garments of glory and beauty, seated in the heavenly sanctuary during the great arch of time which bridges the period which separates His first coming for sacrifice from His second coming for salvation. This is the splendid view in mind when the writer calls us, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling to consider Him.

Since so much depends on the ritual of the great Day of Atonement, some careful attention must be given to this, as described in Leviticus 16. Although certain important actions are repeated, we shall consider at the moment only Leviticus 16:11-14 and 20-22. Aaron was first to slay the sin offering; then, for the only occasion in Israel's year, to lift the veil and enter into the Holiest. His first action there was to put sweet incense on coals of fire from the altar, thus filling the sanctuary with a cloud of incense, "that he die not". He was then to sprinkle the blood of the sin offering on and before the mercy-seat on the ark, thus making a

propitiation before God for his own sins and later for those of the people, and indeed for the sanctuary itself. When these sacrificial actions were finished, Aaron came out, confessed the sins of the people over the head of a live goat, which then bore them away into a land of forgetfulness.

The meaning of all this is not less broad, long, deep, and high, not less instinct with the love that never fails, because it is plain and clear as interpreted in Hebrews 9 and 10. At His first coming, the blessed Christ offered Himself without spot to God. After His resurrection and at the moment of His ascension, He entered into the heavenly sanctuary in the power and blessing of the blood of His sacrifice, and He is about to appear a second time. His earthly people Israel will then look on Him whom they pierced, confess their sins in the language of Isaiah 53, and their transgressions will be forgiven and remembered no more.

The Spirit of God in Hebrews seizes on this moment, when Christ our great High Priest is inside the sanctuary of heaven, points out the contrasts with the shadows of Leviticus 16, and fixes our gaze upon Him, seated because the work of sacrifice is finished once for all. Probably also

they have had a right instinct who have thought and taught of Him there, in another contrast with the shadows of the law, wearing His garments of glory and beauty.

"He sits in heaven, their great High Priest,
And bears their names upon His breast."

It is this view of Christ, let us repeat, which the writer has in mind in concluding: "having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near" as holy worshippers; and thus we consider Him now.

The essential and characteristic garment of the high priest when he was wearing the garments of glory and beauty, was a kind of waistcoat called the ephod. Inseparably attached to this were the shoulder stones and breastplate on which were engraved the names of the children of Israel, and also the Urim and Thummim. In the description of the garments of glory and beauty in Exodus 28, the ephod occupies 25 out of 34 verses. In its construction threads of two kinds were intricately interwoven. One kind consisted of threads of metallic gold, and the other of ordinary spun threads of blue, purple, scarlet, and shining white. "They did beat the gold

into thin plates, and cut it into threads, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet and in the byssus with cunning work" (Ex. 39:3).

In the language of the typical teaching of Scripture, the ephod seemed to be saying that only when He shall come, in whom the pure gold of fulness of deity has taken in one Person the lovely colours of perfect manhood, will the people of God have the real Priest of God's thought. It is in fulfilment of this type that these two themes form the subjects of the opening chapters of Hebrews. Chapter 1 presents the Divine Son, and Chapter 2 Him who was made in all things like the men who are His brethren, sin apart. Upon the foundation formed by these two great truths is built the structure supporting the true worship, and indeed the fabric of Christianity itself.

Special attention is drawn to Hebrews 1:8: "Unto the Son He says, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." This verse unquestionably teaches a Sonship in deity for ever and ever. It is sometimes said that the words "Eternal Son" do not occur in Scripture, in order to question the truth they contain. This is mere slavery to words. A Divine Sonship is

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a Sonship which belongs to Christ's deity: a Sonship which belongs to deity means a Sonship pre-existent before the Incarnation, and is thus exactly equivalent to an eternal Sonship. Hebrews 1 proclaims the Divine Sonship of Christ, and this is the gold of the ephod.

In Hebrews 2 we learn that this same Person, by inheritance so much above angels, was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. He entered that rank in the scale of being which belongs to man; and being without sin was such a Man that it was suitable for "all wreaths of empire" to meet on Him. Thus into the background formed by the shining white of His spotless manhood, are worked the blue and the purple and the scarlet, as well as the gold.

That part of Christ's present priestly service which is first considered in this epistle follows immediately on this truth of His Person. It is evident that among the taunts made against the Hebrew Christians was the suggestion that if it were true that so exalted a Person was their priest, then He was too high, too remote, to sympathise with their weakness. This accounts for the negative form in which we are assured of His help. It is not true that our High Priest

"cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Since He is both God and man; since He has reached in God's throne and in the suffering of death the extremes of power and of love, what miracles of sympathy, help, and comfort can be beyond our expectation from such a Priest? What can be achieved by paraphrase in the realm of Bible translation is exemplified in this verse. The straightforward translation would be "sympathise with our weaknesses". With how perfect a tact is this translated in the Authorised Version: "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Ridout here calls attention to the last words of Mr. Standfast as he was crossing the river of death in a great calm: "Wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too." "To follow His steps" is indeed the life set before us, but here is the succour needed to do it. The Son of God, passing through this world beforehand as His people's Forerunner, has sought out before His entrance into the heavenly sanctuary the footsteps of trial where they would have to tread: weariness, loneliness, hunger, treachery of foes and desertion by friends, lack of understanding and sympathy,

apparent failure. There He has put His feet, in order that He may now be able to send help from the sanctuary exactly suited to their need. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

This foundation truth about His Person is also needed for our understanding of the order or principle of succession of His Priesthood. The Aaronic principle of succession was from father to son. On this principle Christ would not be a priest since He was not descended from Aaron. Nor would His priesthood be such as is needed by many sons on their way to glory. Another priest meets us long before Aaron on the page of Scripture, Melchisedec, of whom we read in Genesis 14. In a book where every man's genealogy, date of birth, and years of life are detailed exactly, the striking thing about Melchisedec is that he appears in the story without descent, without beginning and end of life, and therefore abiding a priest continually. Not until He came, who could really abide a priest continually, was there another priest after his order or succession. Only the Son of God, in

resurrection, sitting at God's right hand can be the promised priest after the order of Melchisedec.

The present priestly service of Christ as it concerns the true worship which is our main theme, is reached where we began this chapter, in Hebrews 10:19-22: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

First, let us note the closing words of this quotation, in which we have the actual exhortation in the now familiar form, "Let us draw near." Those to whom such an invitation can be addressed are described as persons whose hearts are sprinkled with blood and whose bodies are washed with water. This is obviously figurative language, and takes up the story of Exodus 29, the ritual by which Aaron the high priest, and his sons, the priests, entered on their service. The writer of Hebrews will not name all the brethren priests,

because he will not allow any other reference to impair the uniqueness and majesty of Christ's Priesthood; but he is nevertheless designating all the brethren priests just as plainly as the language of Old Testament types can do so. By this, therefore, our way is pointed to our next chapter on the priesthood of all believers.

We who in our day read these words are here invited to take up the priestly privilege of worship because we are priests. Nevertheless that supreme privilege is made to depend on our High Priest over God's house, upon His perfect sacrifice, and upon His Person and Presence in the Holiest.

When, in the chapters leading up to the final goal we are now considering, Hebrews describes in detail the earthly sanctuary and the material sacrifices, the two purposes of this imposing system are given. It was intended to serve "to the example and shadow of heavenly things;" and equally to "signify that the way into the holiest" was not yet revealed. The Holiest of all typifies the presence of God in heaven itself. Mark well the contrast intended in our verse: "Having ... boldness to enter into the holiest." Every material accompaniment of the idea of approach to God is obliterated

at a stroke. All is spiritual. It is the very presence of God that the true worshippers enter, a sanctuary not made with hands.

Then the dependence of our access upon the one finished sacrifice of Calvary is indicated in the words, "by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Hebrews 9 and 10 point the contrast with the sacrifices offered by the priests under the law. They offered many sacrifices, showing by their very repetition that they could never take away sins, and could never, therefore, open up the way into the holiest. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." They stood; He sat down; and here is the justification for the expression, the finished work of Christ. It is because the finished work of sacrifice is behind Him that He sits down, and that we can enter there.

Such are the truly great themes which occupy us: our great High Priest, and the heavenly sanctuary which is now the place of His service; and because of His finished sacrifice, our privilege of entrance into that most holy place. They are

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sufficient to engage every power of the renewed mind and heart. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, bring you to maturity in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Heb. 13:20-21)

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In the whole range of Christian faith and practice, there is no point at which greater confusion exists than on the subject of the priesthood of all believers. We cannot escape at this point from attempting to unravel some of the threads, in order to free the Scripture Truth from these entanglements, and to exhibit it so that all may see who will.

Since, as we have seen, the New Testament worship at every point follows the pattern of the Old, we must return first to the Old Testament to obtain a basic outline. Leviticus was the priest's book, and there the facts can readily be seen. The priests were such by birth. From Exodus 19:6 we learn that God's original intention was that all His people should be priests, but from Exodus 28:1 that Aaron and his sons were set apart for the priest's office. The high priest was personally chosen and named by God. All others were priests by being his descendants.

The priest's privilege was the whole service of the sanctuary, but in particular all that had to be done to present to God the sacrifices after they had been brought and killed by the

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offerer. Thus their lives were passed in nearness to God, and in presenting to Him what was pleasing in His sight. Portions of the animals sacrificed were allocated to the priests for food, and they were thus sustained for their service by what God named "My offering, and My bread for My sacrifice". They shared with Jehovah their God the food of His table.

The two key texts in the New Testament are short enough to be quoted in full. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). "To whom coming, ... Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices ..." (1 Peter 2:5).

Some of the meaning of these Scriptures will be made clear if two questions are now stated:

1. What is a priest's true work?
2. How do people become priests?

1. The function of the priests for the true worship is stated in the passage last quoted. It is to offer sacrifices. Their work

as priests is not prayer, nor sympathy, nor intercession; it is not primarily presenting their bodies, though all these things priests will do. The New Testament priesthood is "to offer up ... sacrifices," and no other Scripture takes away from the simple force of this one.

A good deal of confusion stems from the history of the word priest in English, as well as in other modern languages. The three ancient orders had scriptural names, episkopos, presbuteros, and diakonos, but used in a decidedly non-scriptural way. These titles passed with little change into English as bishops, presbyters and deacons, and presbyter became further simplified, perhaps through prester, to priest. By derivation therefore, it means presbyter or elder. By the time the Bible came to be translated into English, the idea had arisen that Christian presbyters had a sacrifice to offer. Thus the word priest was employed for those who offered sacrifices in the Old Testament. When our evangelical brethren in the episcopal churches maintain that priest simply means elder, they are historically right, but wrong scripturally. The ritualists are perfectly right scripturally when they use the name to signify a person qualified to offer

sacrifice. The sad thing in either case is that through this history, in the English Bible the ministry of oversight and government is thus confused with the ministry of the sanctuary and of sacrifice. In the New Testament the priesthood is absolutely distinct from the overseeing ministry, and its purpose is sacrifice.

The offerings of New Testament priests are not, however, material sacrifices, and here, of course, is the essential point at which we must part company with the tenets of all ritualistic worship. The dreadful error of the mass is that in it there purports to be a repetition of the sacrifice of our Saviour on the cross. The truth is that His sacrifice is unique. It can never be repeated, for by "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ... He offered one sacrifice for sins for ever (and) sat down on the right hand of God."

Here we must give special attention to the repetition in 1 Peter 2:5 of the word "spiritual". It is a spiritual house, and the priests offer spiritual sacrifices. These are facts in the spiritual and unseen world, and not in the material and visible realm. In Israel there was a house of God made with hands, and material sacrifices consisting of animals, meal,

oil, and wine, and ritualistic religion is an outdated imitation in these respects. In the true worship, the house of God is not made with hands. It is a spiritual house. In the true worship, the sacrifices are not of the material order. They are spiritual sacrifices. In what these spiritual sacrifices consist is a question lying very near the heart of our subject, and it will occupy our attention in a later chapter. Can it be believed in spite of all this, that the material garments of beauty worn by Israel's priests are to be matched by material garments of beauty for the true worship? Or that the other sensible accompaniments of the Old Testament worship (incense, music, attention to bodily posture in relation to a material sanctuary), are to be matched by sensible, material equivalents in the true worship? Let us note with humility, reverence, and obedience that in these Scriptures the Spirit of God has made a clean sweep of everything sensible and material and made with hands, and has unmistakably located these conditions and actions in the spiritual realm, in the inner, unseen part of our being, the spirit, where we can approach and hold converse with the God who is a Spirit. In Hebrews 6:1-2 material washings and sacrificial details belong to the childhood stage of God's people, and the call

is to leave them and proceed to full growth, which the writer connects with a true understanding of priesthood.

2. In an earlier chapter we made an approach to the subject of the priesthood of all believers by noticing in Hebrews 10:19-22 that those who now have the privilege, withheld from the sons of Aaron, of entrance into the holiest, are those who have passed through an initiatory experience described in terms of the cleansing of the priests prescribed in Exodus 29. All question is removed by 1 Peter 2:2-5. Here all that we have noted about the Old Testament priests is brought to bear on all believers. "Ye are ... a holy priesthood." The new priests are also to be priests by birth, the new birth. "Being born again ... by the word of God (1:23). "As new-born babes" (2:2). That this refers to original conversion, is confirmed immediately; "if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, ... ye ... are a holy priesthood" (2:3-5). Everyone who has been born again, who has come to Christ, is a member of the only true New Testament priesthood.

The initiatory rites of Exodus 29 included, prior to investment with the garments of priesthood, a double

cleansing, first by blood, and then by water. The spiritual experience corresponding to this lies behind the entrance into priesthood of every believer in the Lord Jesus. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). This is our first cleansing; and His words teach His disciples also how they were cleansed by water: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you," and "he that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John 15:3; 13:10). Thus our double cleansing is by the precious blood of Christ, and by the Word of God.

Still in detailed accord with the type, the Lord also describes in John 13:10 an often-to-be repeated washing, in contrast to the once-for-all washing at conversion, and which was needed to remove the daily defilements of the way. In such picture-language we are reminded of the spiritual exercises by means of which the Lord maintains His people in that sanctification without which they would not be in a condition to engage in their priestly privilege. Thus, in the Christian priesthood of all believers there is what corresponds both to the once-for-all washing of the priests at

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their consecration, and the daily washing at the laver as they approached the sanctuary (Ex. 30:18-20).

The practical significance of these truths is brought out most clearly if we use them to test faith and action. We have seen that everyone who, in Bible language, has been re-born, and has passed in through the door of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, forms part of this holy priesthood. It is perfectly clear, on the contrary, that no one who has not been the subject of these cleansing acts of God in Christ has any part or lot in the true worship. The contrary notion that anyone can and should be taught to worship is not confined to the B.B.C. The following quotation is taken from a journal, sound, edifying and vigorous on general evangelical truth, where it appears without correction. "A serious objection is raised by those who point out that many of the children whom we lead in worship are in fact unregenerate; how can they praise God? Here, we must remember that the whole earth is called upon to praise God, and our children are surely included in this. Indeed, our Lord showed an especial love and concern for children."* At the most sympathetic estimate, this remark

represents such a dilution of the meaning of the word 'worship' as to render it practically useless. In the light of Scripture, the unregenerate child is simply incapable of the true worship.** He has no life in the Spirit, and has nothing to bring which is acceptable to God, although it is so wonderfully true that he is an object of the love of God. If the worship being taught him is not the true worship, then it should not be taught. Our Christian service towards the children, therefore, is not to teach them to worship, but to show them the way of life through the love of God, so that through repentance and faith they may become children of God. Then, please God, but not till then, they will be capable of becoming, as did the Samaritan woman, spiritual worshippers.

* Paper reported in "The Christian Graduate", June 1959, p. 74.

** This is not to say that children cannot praise God, as indeed they did in Matt. 21:15-16 Nor is a criticism implied of "prayers" in the home, in schools and in the armed forces. The point is simply that to call such prayers worship, represents a dilution of the word we are seeking to understand.}

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On the other hand, practically the whole of Christendom is permeated with practices which imply that a separate ministerial class, analogous to the priesthood in Israel has privileges and functions, distinct from, and superior to, the usually admitted priesthood of all believers. This becomes explicit in the episcopal churches with a separate class named priests.

Having so far sketched the answers given by Scripture to the two questions enumerated, it is at this point of the greatest importance to state and face the question, a fundamental one, underlying all that has been said. Over what area of faith and practice are Christians to act in obedience to the authority of Scripture?

A recent powerful statement on the authority of Scripture emanating from the evangelical section of the Anglican Church reads as follows:

"The teaching of the written Scriptures is the Word which God spoke and speaks to His Church, and is finally authoritative for life and faith ... It contains all that the Church needs to know in this world for its guidance in the

way of salvation and service ... Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, who caused it to be written, has been given to the Church to cause believers to recognize it for the divine Word that it is, and to enable them to interpret it rightly and understand its meaning. ... The Bible, therefore, does not need to be supplemented and interpreted by tradition. ... Instead, it demands to sit in judgment ... the words of men must be tried by the Word of God."*

* Fundamentalism and the Word of God, J. I. Packer, pp. 47, 48.

This is a faultless statement of our faith relative to the authority of Holy Scripture, and would be subscribed by all evangelical Christians in whatever communion. Let this admirable statement be compared, however, with another utterance of evangelicals, the findings of the Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen in September 1962. There is a fine affirmation that forms of priestly sacrifice, other than Christ's one sacrifice for sin, are now spiritual and are to be offered in Christ equally by all His people. Later, we meet the following: we value "for ourselves the

historic episcopate as a form of Church order of proved worth, and ... regard it as un-Anglican to press it on others".

There is here not even a claim that the historic episcopate is scriptural. Its virtue is that it is of "proved worth", and the criterion is what is "un-Anglican": and by this statement, office in the Church (in ways which in practice impinge on worship) is put outside the realm where we obey the Word of God without its needing to be "supplemented by and interpreted by tradition". I know very well that it will be answered that the Bible does not give a complete system of Church government. Be it so, but this is a poor reason for not even attempting to act on what it does give.

In the almighty providence of God, the Reformers were His instruments for uncovering the truth, overlaid during centuries of darkness, that the Bible is the sole authority for the way of salvation through justification by faith alone. They did not (not even Calvin), proceed to an entire reliance on the Word of God, even so far as it goes, for what concerns worship and the Church. In that same providence, this latter part of the great work of recovery was reserved for A. N. Groves and J. N. Darby. The folk whose simple

service was described in the Prologue were in fact attempting this great act of faith. They go all the way with our beloved brethren of the evangelical communions on the authority of the Word of God, but their distinctive position and witness is that they go this great step beyond. They are cutting adrift from centuries of tradition, and extending the principle of acting on the Word of God as sole authority and guide in worship and in the Church, as well as for evangelical truth. They not only believe, but also act on the Bible truth of the spiritual priesthood of all believers. The only priority here is that which can be given by lives lived in the love of God and by growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy" (Psalm 43:3-4).

Spiritual Sacrifices

"A spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices." Over against the material sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual, Peter's Epistle presents the spiritual sacrifices of the true worship. The material sacrifices were types or shadows—accurate outlines without substance—of the spiritual sacrifices. What, then, are these spiritual sacrifices? In them must be the very substance of what the true worshippers bring to God.

Four antitypes of the Levitical sacrifices are described in the New Testament. One of these stands above the others as the great sacrifice, "towering o'er the wrecks of time", when Christ by the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. This sacrifice stands for ever apart and unique; it will be the subject of the song of the redeemed in heaven, when there is glory to God in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen. This sacrifice of Calvary is His work alone, and no other can share in it.

Next might be placed the passage in Romans 12:1 "I beseech you ... to present your bodies a living sacrifice,

holy, acceptable to God." The tense implies, not a continuous or often repeated sacrifice, but a once-for-all decision, motivated by the mercies of God, previously explained. The meaning here is not stated to be the work of a priestly family, offering in worship, but uses the concept of sacrifice to portray the irrevocable way in which it is the believer's privilege to yield his body for God's use. This sacrifice will accompany sincere worship, but it could hardly be the spiritual worship itself.

Hebrews 13:16 presents an important subsidiary application of the idea of sacrifice, in doing good and giving for the needs of others.

For the present purpose, the habitual employment of the spiritual house, the Christian priesthood, is the subject of 1 Peter 2:5. What do the Levitical passages themselves, illuminated by other parts of Scripture, yield as we meditate upon them? We proceed to a conclusion by four steps.

1. Those sacrifices which could be brought as a willing response to God, in contrast to those commanded for sins and trespasses, bear several marks of a distinctive

character. Associated with them were indications that they were offered to bring something pleasurable to God. The first of these indications is the repeated statement that they were "for a sweet savour" to Jehovah. We are not to suppose that burning animals were intrinsically pleasing to God, but in the scheme of redemption they were a sweet savour to God because of their typical significance. Certain accompaniments of the sacrifices also suggest a fragrance and sweetness rising to Him. On the meal offering was put frankincense; and when the moment of offering arrived, though only a handful of the meal was burned as an offering, the burning must include "all the frankincense thereof". Moreover, certain actions connected with the sacrifices vividly portray a presentation before Jehovah to give Him pleasure. Parts of the peace offerings were "waved" and "heaved" before Him, as though He wished to linger, with His people at peace with Himself, prolonging His delight in the offering. Thus the Levitical commandments bear the character of being designed to represent what was pleasurable to the Lord.

2. Is there the faintest doubt in Scripture where the Father's pleasure is centred? In eternity and across the whole arch of time, the Scripture speaks with one voice that "the Father's full delight is centred in His Son." Hear the voice of the Son, speaking as that wisdom, whom the Lord possessed in the beginning of His way, before His works of old: "When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, ... and I was daily His delight" (Prov. 8:30). Of Him who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the Lord calls, "Behold My Servant, ... Mine elect, in whom My soul delights" (Isa. 42:1). At His baptism, and also at His transfiguration, lo, a voice from heaven: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17 and 17:5). His giving Himself ... "an offering and a sacrifice to God (was) a sweet smelling savour" (Eph. 5:1).
3. After his delight in a person, nothing gives the lover so much pleasure as hearing the beloved praised. It is balm to a parent's ear to hear a child spoken well of. This is probably the meaning of Hebrews 13:15: "By Him

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(Jesus) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, praising His name." The sacrifice of praise to God derives its fragrance to Him from the sweet savour of the Name of Jesus. It is thus pleasurable to the Father for His people to commune with Him, sharing His delight in His Well-Beloved Son.

4. If the spiritual sacrifices consist in the priests of the spiritual house communing with the Father in the sense of telling over and sharing with Him His delight in Christ, the Levitical sacrifices themselves concentrate attention upon His death. The central substance of Christian worship is thus speaking to the Father in the power of the Spirit about the fragrance of that obedient sacrifice, when the Son offered Himself a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour. All the intricate detail of the Levitical system, apparently so dull in itself, springs to life when we see it as speaking of the delight with which God takes minute account of the work of Christ. The various offerings present the special points of view

from which that unique sacrifice is viewed in God's sight.

Having reached by these steps an understanding of the meaning of the spiritual sacrifices, it is indeed worth while to dwell a little on these special points of view. Each of the "sweet savour" offerings described in Leviticus 1 to 7 with such rich variety of detail, possesses one distinctive feature which provides a starting point by determining its special meaning. These distinctive features are: in the burnt offering, that it was wholly for God because all burned on the altar: in the meal offering, that there was no blood, no life given: and in the peace offering, that the priest and the offerer shared the food provided.

The burnt offering came first in God's order. In it the death of Christ, although an atonement for sin, is seen as devoted to glorifying God. In the world where God was dishonoured by man's disobedience, God has been honoured and glorified by the obedience of Christ Jesus. Christ was found in death through obedience to God, in contrast with Adam, who was found in death through disobedience to God. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and

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became obedient to death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). The smoke of every burnt offering rising from Israel's altars, little though the worshippers knew it, spoke to God of Him who would say, "Lo, I come (replacing the sacrifices of the law), to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). The privilege of the true worshippers in this, the Spirit's day, is to penetrate to the real meaning of these burnt offerings, leave them behind as God has left them behind, and commune with Him in worship about the reality, the true Burnt Offering.

The meal offering was never offered alone because "without shedding of blood is no remission", but it speaks of the sweet savour rising to God, from every thought, word, and deed in the earthly life of Jesus. The fine, pure, even textured flour, burnt on the altar with all the frankincense, reminds us that the perfections of Jesus were His delight and the remembrance of this before Him is one of the spiritual sacrifices.

The peace offering represents that same unique sacrifice considered as the basis on which we can be reconciled to God, and, at peace with Him, share the food of His table.

The grades of each sacrifice (a bullock, a lamb, or even a bird) are of great interest to all who look for help to be active worshippers. The offerer's wealth determined what grade he could bring. While each grade was equally acceptable to God, the worshipper's diligence in private in acquiring wealth provided the substance of what he could bring to the door of the tabernacle as an offering to God. For the Christian worshipper, it is not earthly wealth which is in question, but the wealth in spiritual things acquired by diligence in secret. In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom, knowledge and love, and it is growth in grace and in the knowledge of Him which enriches our capacity for bringing to God whatever delights Him. A picture of this is found in Psalm 45:1. "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King." The things we make, in secret prayer and meditation on Christ form the spiritual substance suitable to be brought as a spiritual sacrifice to God.

To some readers, this view of the teaching of Scripture on worship will be so complete a novelty as to be difficult to grasp. To share in such worship is, however, an experience

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which has come to be for thousands of Christians in many lands, the very heart of Christian faith and practice. The reason for the strangeness with which these thoughts will appear to many, is the totally different understanding of the meaning of worship which prevails. To many true believers the word worship describes the totality of the parts of public services, including prayers, hymns, Scripture reading, and sermon as conducted by the president. There is, moreover, a great revival of interest in liturgy, or set forms of prayer for public "worship". This is largely connected with the ecumenical movement, and indeed the liturgical tendency is spreading far outside the traditionally ritualistic communions. Little attention need be given beyond noticing it here, for the very simple reason that its supports are admittedly outside the New Testament. Few would claim anything in the New Testament itself, independent of tradition, to support liturgical practices, although many believe, on flimsy evidence, that parts of the New Testament actually are rudimentary liturgies.

This point is illustrated by a quotation from T. S. Garrett of the Church of South India. "One reason why the accounts of

the Lord's Supper which we have in the Synoptic Gospels and 1 Corinthians 11 tell us so little detail about this event is that they have already been given a liturgical form before their inclusion in these written books. The language is liturgical in character ... clearly quoting a traditional narrative already used in the worship of the Church ... There is much to be said for the view that parts of the New Testament were composed for liturgical reading". How can we know that these are liturgical passages? Here is the answer. "All this is interpreting details in the New Testament in the light of what we know of Eucharistic worship in the second and third centuries: but if these conjectures are correct, there is in the New Testament at an earlier stage of its development that same dynamic combination of liturgical order and charismatic freedom which seems to have been characteristic of the fluid eucharistic rites of the pre-Nicene Church."* To see certain passages as liturgical is thus conjectural, based on tradition.

* "Christian Worship T. S. Garrett, 1961. Pp. 35-37.

Many a true believer, in repeating by rote from the Missal or the Book of Common Prayer, "O Lamb of God that takest

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away the sins of the world" will be in heart and spirit offering up a spiritual sacrifice, and, pray God, these pages may help some to do so. Nevertheless such a person is rather in the position of a person driving a car with all the brakes applied, since all around is designed to encourage an Old Testament worship, and he has to go clean against the stream in offering worship in spirit and in truth. A fixed liturgy removes altogether the rich variety of that free utterance of what each has made "touching the King". What has been gained in its place is a form of lovely words of venerable and dignified antiquity. The appeal of these is not denied, but must be resisted strong in faith, if we are not to sell obedience to the authority of the Word of God for human tradition.

When we come to consider the subject of hymns and worship, out of the store of hymns specially written for such worship, perhaps the best examples can be given of presenting the fragrance of Christ as the substance of worship. One such may well bring this present chapter to a close.

Blest God and Father, in Thy sight

We bow and own Thy grace;
We worship in the glorious light,
Which shines in Jesus' face.

The glories of His work we bring —
Thee glorified we see;
His deep perfections gladly sing,
And tell them forth to Thee.

He fills Thy presence, fully known
To Thee alone His worth;
But in our hearts Thy light has shone,
As sons of heavenly birth.

Lord Jesus Christ, we praise Thy name
In God the Father's ear;
And worship Thee, Thou holy Lamb,
Whose blood has brought us near.

The Psalmists' Joy in God

A study of the directions in the Law for the conduct of Israel's worship has provided a starting-point in previous chapters; but where can a glimpse be obtained of the spirit

in which, even though only in an ideal case, these directions were carried out? Much of the worship of the ancient world was licentious in the extreme. By contrast, Israel was called to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Did this mean that their worship was morose, sombre, gloomy and dismal? Such a glimpse is obtainable in the Psalms, and it will be found that nowhere in Scripture is joy in God given such exuberant, even ecstatic, expression as in the psalmists' dilations on the temple worship. In "Reflections on the Psalms" C. S. Lewis has given this personal witness: "The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express that same delight in God which made David dance. I am not saying that this is so pure or so profound a thing as the love of God reached by the greatest Christian saints. ... But I am not comparing it with that, I am comparing it with the merely dutiful 'church-going' and laborious 'saying our prayers', to which most of us are, thank God not always, but often, reduced. Against that, it stands out as something astonishingly robust, virile, and spontaneous ; something we may regard with an innocent envy and may hope to be infected by as we read. ... It has all the cheerful spontaneity of a natural, even a physical, desire. It is gay and jocund.

They are glad and rejoice. Their fingers itch for ... the lute and the harp—wake up, lute and harp—let's have a song, bring the tambourine, bring the 'merry harp with the lute', we're going to sing merrily and make a cheerful noise." There are, as always, many contrasts, as well as parallels, between all this and the true worship, but let us agree that such joy in God is infectious, and pray that we may catch the infection.

It will now be scarcely necessary to point out that all the details of physical and material accompaniments in and through which they could joy in God and so be moved to enter His house as worshippers, have their counterpart in the spiritual things of Christian worship. Harp, lute, and psaltery are replaced by making melody in our hearts to the Lord. He no longer dwells in temples made with hands. His house is the Church; there His Name is set, and His people assembled in His Name compose it.

The three chief distinctions to be made are that a finished redemption was still in the future: that God was not fully revealed: and that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. All these awaited the greatest of all events, the coming and the

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sacrifice of the Son. When the Psalmists put into words their joy in God, it was joy in Jehovah, for only in this Name had God thus far revealed Himself. Now, in Christianity, God is known and worshipped as the Father; His people are in settled relationship with Him on the ground of a finished redemption; and the Holy Spirit has been given and is the power for such worship. Nevertheless, the Psalmists' joy in Israel's God, Jehovah, is a very lovely thing and worthy to be noted in more detail. If in Christianity we have seen and believed the supreme tokens of the love of God, there is but greater reason to joy in Him.

None of their needs is so pressing as the hunger and thirst they feel for God. "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps. 42:1-2). None of their petitions is so urgent as their cry for Himself, because this experience is in the highest degree joyous. "O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy" (Ps. 43:3-4). The metrical

version has seized the idea in a most attractive way: "Then will I to God's altar go, to God my chiefest joy."

This delight in God led to a corresponding delight in His House, the Temple, and this finds frequent expression in the Psalms. "One thing have I desired 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" (Ps. 27:4). It is in the Lord's House that His "fair beauty" is seen. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy House; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures" (Ps. 36:8).

It can hardly be supposed, however, that when they sing about the House of the Lord their thoughts and aspirations were exhausted by the contemplation of the Temple at Jerusalem. When in Psalm 23 David sings: "And I will dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever," he surely did not mean that the Temple would be his everlasting home. He was in fact coming very near to Israel's version of the Father's house of many mansions promised by the Lord Jesus to His disciples in John 14:2. Similarly, as we read the Psalms and catch the infection, there is awakened within us

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a kind of blend, compounded of desire after God fully revealed as the Father; desire for renewal and intensification of the experience of His presence in His house, the Church; and also of longing for the everlasting enjoyment of Himself in His home in heaven.

The setting of some Psalms symbolises in a very striking way the fact that this joy in God moves to worship and permeates worship. An essential element in the system of priesthood and sacrifice which was Israel's worship was the command that three times a year "all your males shall appear before Me in Zion". At these seasons every man in Israel made the journey to Jerusalem to appear before Jehovah in Zion. These were the feasts of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Everywhere throughout the land at these times would be found joyous bands of pilgrims journeying to appear in Zion. Many would have previous experiences of the joys of Zion, and were longing and thirsting for a renewed experience of the courts of the Lord. Such a Psalm is Psalm 84.

Its three sections, marked by 'Selah', contain three beatitudes. The first section (vv. 1-4) shows the happiness of

being in God's house: the second (vv. 5-9), the blessedness of experience on the way to His house : and the third (vv. 9-12), the incomparable good of trusting in the Lord. Once again the metrical version has seized the feeling: "How lovely is Thy dwelling-place, O Lord of Hosts to me." Soul, heart and flesh sing for joy (R.V.) to the living God. All this is centred on the altar. There the weak and defenceless find a home. The place of sacrifice is the place of safety. Though the way there may be a vale of tears, faith makes it a well, and they go from strength to strength whose strength is in the Lord. It has been thought that the meaning of verse 5 is "Blessed is the man ... in whose heart are the highways (to Zion)". It will be worth while to pause at this point and allow the significance of this beatitude to make its full impact. It is all a question of what is in the heart. In this case there is a heart set on the road to Zion's worship. How has this come about? The answer is that his treasure is there, and "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

To Israelites who had fallen far from the position of the singer in Psalm 84, the Lord addresses the revealing words

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"This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Matt. 15:8). It is sobering to realise how near we all often come to the condition when these words are literally true of us. For the writers of these Psalms, their joy in God was their treasure, and therefore their hearts were seeking Him, and therefore their feet were in the way of worship. How can this joy in God be increased? For every true believer experiences, though in tiny measure, joy in God: the question is not how to create, but how to increase it.

One view of the first five chapters of the Epistle to the Romans sees them as the conducting of a soul from a false joy in God in 2:17 to a true joy in God in 5:11. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of (or joy in) God" (Rom. 2:17).

This is all brought to nothing. In its place comes justification by faith and the love of God so that "we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:11). These thoughts lead us to believe that learning of God, His wrath against sin, His righteousness to justify, His grace to plan our blessing through Christ, His forbearance for the

remission of sins, are among the means whereby true joy in God is increased.

In the Psalms themselves, it is often previous experience of seeing the beauty of the Lord in His house which is the source of desire for a renewing of it. "My soul thirsts for Thee ... to see Thy power and glory, so as I have seen Thee in the Sanctuary" (Ps. 63:1-2). "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday" (Ps. 42:4). Thus every experience of the joy of the Lord is a stimulus to seek it increasingly.

"The highways to Zion" are no longer earthly roads by which a sanctuary is approached. For us they represent a spiritual preparation for worship, but it ever remains true, understood in this way, "Blessed is the man ... in whose heart are the highways to Zion", and these pages only serve their purpose insofar as they help towards this end.

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At this point we must recall to mind the Saviour's conversation with the woman of Samaria in John 4, in which is found His central teaching on worship. Hitherto we have lingered on verses 20 to 22. The worship "in this mountain" and "at Jerusalem" were by Him compared and contrasted with that new worship to which He was directing her thoughts. For us also, in previous chapters, the systems of priesthood and sacrifice in which these two traditions of worship consisted have provided pictures by which, when illuminated by His Spirit, we approach an understanding of the true worship. Within the framework thus provided, several features of the true worship have become clearer to us. Nevertheless we must now return to that one great and simple characteristic which it is here the Lord's concern to present. Three times the later verses refer to this fact, that the true worship is the worship of the Father, and His quest is for such worshippers. "The hour comes, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. ... The hour comes, and now is, when the true

worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him."

In such words as these, "the hour comes," the Lord Jesus introduces things which heaven and earth, men and angels, should stop to consider. "Father, the hour is come" He said, when the hour of His cross drew near.

The hour of the cross is past, though never to be forgotten. The hour in which we live is the hour in which the Father is seeking worshippers.

The true worshippers worship the Father, and this we shall consider in some detail. But what of the Son, who uttered these words? What shall be done to the Man whom the king delights to honour? In the following chapter of John's Gospel there is light on this question. The Father has made certain dispositions "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honours not the Son honours not the Father which has sent Him" (John 5:23). To the same effect is another passage which has already yielded us instruction; it presents the worship of heaven, where they say, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to Him

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that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:13). Two persons are here distinguished yet connected as the joint object of heaven's worship. Indeed the purpose of this part of the vision is to show that the Lamb who was slain is now sharing the honours due only to God. "He that sits on the throne" is the subject of the Revelation, chapter 4. He is the Creator. The seven Spirits of God ever burn before His throne. As in Isaiah's vision, the seraphim ceaselessly adore Him. By Him and for His pleasure were all things created. The person thus presented (although it is not the idiom of the Revelation so to name Him), is the Father. In chapter 5 there is introduced "in the midst of the throne," and sharing the honours accorded to it, a Lamb fresh from the slaughter. The person thus presented is the Son, and when, in the vision they bring their worship to "Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb," they are fulfilling the divine imperative of John 5:23; they are honouring the Son even as they honour the Father.

What moves the dwellers in heaven to worship? It is the appearance before their gaze of the Lamb, bearing the marks of His passion, which leads them unerringly to worship the

Father and the Son: and this should surely prepare us for the fact that the contemplation of Christ in the Lord's Supper, where the loaf and the cup are to His people as the marks of His passion, can only rightly lead to worship, the worship of the Father, and of the Son joined with Him in the place of supreme honour.

Returning to John 4, verse 23 is central to the whole study in which we are now engaged: "the true worshippers worship the Father." First, let us notice the contrast intended by the introduction of this Name. It is the real essence of the contrast between Old and New Testaments, between Judaism and Christianity. It must be obvious to all that the Names under which God has revealed Himself to His chosen saints form a subject of the highest importance and interest. It is impossible to read the Scriptures dealing with these names without seeing that they mark the stages of a progressive self-revelation of Himself by God, and that the knowledge of God imparted to the saints in the names themselves was in the highest degree strengthening, comforting, and sustaining for their faith. The key verses are Exodus 6:2-3: "And God spake to Moses and said to him, 'I

am Jehovah: and I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, by the name of El Shaddai, but by My name Jehovah was I not known to them'." The account of the fuller revelation to Moses is found in Exodus 33:18 - 34:8: "And (Moses) said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory And Jehovah said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passes by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand, while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see My back ... but My face shall not be seen ... and Jehovah descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Jehovah ... and Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." Pondering these two quotations, it is plain that although each name when revealed was sufficient for the faith of the saints receiving it, there is nevertheless an immense accession of blessing and privilege associated with each revelation. The idea of progress is unmistakable. The revelation of the name of Jehovah was a great and glorious advance on the revelation of the name of El Shaddai, yet the narrative contains

implicitly the fact that even this revelation was not final: "Thou shalt see My back: My face shall not be seen."

A difficulty is presented by the frequent occurrence of the name Jehovah in the Bible narrative prior to Exodus 6, and in particular by Genesis 4:26: "then began men to call on the name of Jehovah." This is true even of the Abraham story. These earlier occurrences of the name of Jehovah can only mean that Moses in writing the story, used the name he knew without intending to imply that the name was known and understood in these earlier times.

The name El Shaddai is introduced in Genesis 17:1, and its meaning emphasizes the power of God for provision or destruction. The name Jehovah is proclaimed in Exodus 34:6-7, and is a great step forward since it adds truth about the character of God. He is merciful and gracious, forgiving transgressions, but visiting iniquity. When, however, we come to the New Testament, these names are entirely superseded, and never occur except in quotations. They are indeed so far outshone by the revelation of the Name which awaited no less an event than the coming of the Son, that like the stars in the sunshine they vanish from sight. God is

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one, and nothing made known in the earlier names is lost or absent from the revelation made by God the Son when He said to the Father, "I have disclosed Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me." Neither the worship of El Shaddai nor that of Jehovah was the true worship. The true worship only became possible with the coming of the Son, revealing the Father, imparting His Spirit, and seeking those who would worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

The word "true" is in itself a certain confirmation of the finality of the revelation of the Father. In this Gospel of John, apart from the expression "the true worshippers," there are four examples of its use: the true Light (John 1:9); the true Bread (John 6:32); the true Vine (John 15:1); the true God (John 17:3). In these examples the word signifies the substance in contrast with the shadow; the final rather than the temporary; the complete instead of the partial. In each case what is of Israel (including John Baptist) and therefore partial, shadowy, and incomplete, stands in contrast with what Christ has brought; and in the last and greatest is the final and complete revelation of God as the Father in

distinction from the partial revelations of Himself under His Old Testament names.

This brings us to dwell on the content or meaning of the name of Father. In it is disclosed the last secret of the depths of God, never to be superseded, never to be outshone, for it is the light that shines in the eternal home of God. In this name of glory we learn, not only God's power, as in El Shaddai, not only His character, as in Jehovah, but the last secret, which is that His essential nature is a relationship of love. That relationship is primarily between the Father and the Son, but such a revelation offers the gift of relationship with God to men. Men are not to be only in covenant relations with God, but "to as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God" (John 1:12).

It would be natural to feel astonishment at the fact that when, in the progress of divine revelation the hour has come to represent in a word, in a name, the essential nature of the eternal God, that word, that name, should be found lying at hand, and well known to men. There is no speech nor language where its voice is not heard. Even when the Holy

Scriptures are to be translated into some barbarous tongue presenting all kinds of difficulty to the translator, the word required to represent the most profound of truths, the essential nature of God, the word "Father" is always familiar, always available, always understood. Further reflection enables us to see that such surprise is in fact inverting the truth. Known to God are all His ways from the beginning. He did not wait for the need to find the word. Ephesians 3:14-15, in a less familiar translation reads, "I bow my knees to the Father, of whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named." When God, as yet unrevealed, came to create man, He did so in His own image and likeness. An essential element in the image and likeness of God is that He implanted in man's nature a relationship which was the image and likeness of His own. In man's nature is written this relationship of love, fatherhood, and therefore he possesses the name to describe it. The same considerations apply to that other relationship of love which had a place in the heart and counsel of God, the Man and the Bride. The truth is that in these relationships and the names for them, established by God in the beginning, are the very patterns of eternal truth. It remains true also that the things

of God knows no man; only when the Spirit came was the meaning of these relationships and names lifted into the new dimension.

It is then consciously to the Father, by the Spirit, that the true worship is addressed by His children; and nothing short of this is the true worship. In Him is the source of that river of love which has flowed by Calvary. Bound up in the same bundle of life with the Father and the Son the saints begin the worship which will never end.

Where shall words be found of the quality and power to open the understanding and kindle the heart to a real involvement in this great matter? In a story of His resurrection, the Saviour accomplished just this for His disciples. "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45) and His words made their hearts burn within them while He talked with them. In John 4 also we have been listening to His voice, and this is sufficient, if heard aright, to open our understanding and kindle our hearts in response to the Father's quest. Of His own also He says, "I will declare Thy

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name to My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing
praise to Thee" (Heb. 2:12).

The Lord's Supper

Perhaps the one subject of agreement by Christian writers of all points of view on worship is that the Lord's Supper is the centre for true Christian worship. What is much more important is that this statement is strictly true to Scripture; "the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16).

It cannot be doubted that the worship of individuals is acceptable to God. The worship of Abraham and in many Psalms exemplifies this. Whenever a Christian's heart, moved by thoughts of the loveliness of Christ, rises to the Father in responsive love and gratitude, there is true worship. Nevertheless, the centring of the Old Testament worship on the tabernacle and the temple, as well as the essential plurality of the holy priesthood in 1 Peter 2:5, lead to the conclusion that the full intention of God is seen in collective rather than individual worship.

The expression "the cup of blessing" is often misunderstood, being taken to mean blessing from God coming down to His people. This meaning is often linked by contrast with the

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Saviour's cup of sorrow when He said "the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" and when in Gethsemane He prayed, with sweat as great drops of blood falling down to the ground, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." It is indeed true, and will never be forgotten, that His people have received the blessing because He bore the sorrow, but this is not the meaning of the expression "the cup of blessing". Here we are to understand blessing rising to God from His people. That this is the meaning is clear from two considerations. First, the explanatory phrase which follows, "which we bless", shows that the Spirit of God intends blessing by the worshippers, and not blessing to them. Second, "the cup of blessing which we bless" is evidently intended as a parallel with the Jews' cup of blessing, and this unquestionably refers to blessing rising to God. The Passover Service as celebrated in the apostles' time included a Cup of Blessing, so named because in taking this cup they uttered the words, "Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God". Over "the cup of blessing which we bless" arise blessing and worship to the Father and the Son. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"

(Ephesians 1:3). "Thou art worthy ... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (Revelation 5:9).

The Breaking of Bread is twice considered in 1 Corinthians, in 10:16-17 and 21 under the title "the Lord's Table", and again in 11:20 to 34 under the title "the Lord's Supper". The latter passage forms a unity with the following chapters extending from 11:17 to 14:40, and this section is very important for our subject since it describes the kind of gathering in which the Lord's Supper is partaken, and therefore the kind of gathering which is the setting for the true worship. The section comprising 1 Corinthians 11:17 to 14:40 is shown to be a unity principally by the recurring phrase, "in (the) church" or "in assembly". We begin at 11:18 ("when ye are come together in assembly") and pass to the same phrase in 14:19 ("in assembly I had rather speak five words with my understanding") in 14:28 ("let him keep silence in assembly") and in 14:35 ("it is a shame for a woman to speak in assembly"). Also the word "speaking", very frequent in chapter 14, is there an expansion on the same word in 12:3 ("no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calls Jesus accursed") and in 13:1 ("though I speak with the

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tongues of men and of angels"). The frequent repetition of these two phrases suggests the title for the whole section, "Speaking in assembly".

Principally from 14:15 and 16 we know what were the activities appropriate to meeting "in assembly." They were prophecy, tongues, prayer, singing, blessing, giving thanks, teaching, revelation, interpretation. It would surely be quite wrong to conclude that, because prophecy for edification is shown to be superior to tongues, the gathering described is for edification. The activities mentioned seem rather to indicate that the New Testament gathering generally, for many purposes, was of this kind, and that the Lord's Supper was one of the principal purposes for which such gatherings were held. In such gatherings for the purpose of the Lord's Supper, blessing, giving thanks and singing would doubtless be prominent, though others of the list might have a place.

It is very interesting to note the tests by which all that takes place in assembly is to be judged. In chapter 14 these tests are employed to compare prophecy with tongues, to the detriment of tongues. In verses 3 to 5 the test is, Does it edify? In verses 6 to 12 the question to be answered is, Is it

clear in meaning? And in verses 13 to 20, Is the understanding of the speaker satisfyingly involved? Above all, in chapter 13 the test is, Have I love?

The characteristics of such a gathering (the setting for the Lord's Supper, and therefore for collective worship) are assembled in verses 26 to 40. Every man may contribute in any of the activities named, according to what the Spirit gives. Everything must be judged by the tests described. Women are commanded to be silent. Everything must be decent and orderly; for example, two persons are not to speak at once, and a speaker must not lose control of himself in a trance.

Such is the framework established by the Spirit of God for His activities in the Church, for eating and drinking the Lord's Supper, for blessing and exalting the Lord Jesus, and for the worship of the Father. It is idle to maintain that Scripture leaves this matter open. The matter could not well be given more explicitly or in greater detail. 1 Corinthians 14 is a dead letter to so many Christians because it conflicts with the deeply ingrained habits of Christendom, not because its meaning is obscure.

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It remains to notice how closely these features are connected with what has previously been said about worship as a system of priesthood and sacrifice. For this divinely formed company, for whose gatherings these chapters are the commandments of the Lord, is the spiritual house of which Peter speaks, the holy priesthood ordained to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is to call to mind the one great sacrifice of Calvary: by this remembrance there are formed in the minds and hearts of the participants those thoughts of the love of Christ shown in death for the glory of God and His people's salvation which become substance for spiritual sacrifices. Just as, following that sacrifice, the Lord Jesus says in resurrection, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise to Thee", so the saints in assembly, guided, directed and empowered by the Spirit, pass from the contemplation of Christ in death to the realisation of His resurrection, and so to the worship of the Father and the Son. On the morning of the resurrection, with an urgency which would brook no delay, the Lord sent to the assembled disciples the message, "My Father and your Father ... My God and your God" (John 20:17). Immediately following His death He moves to

engage His disciples with the Father; so in like manner the remembrance of His death leads to the worship of the Father. We have already seen how this is pictured in Revelation 5. The vision of the Lamb as it had been slain leads the dwellers in heaven to give blessing and worship to Him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb.

Hymns and Singing

Hymn-singing in English by the congregation at public services is a practice of comparatively recent growth. Only two centuries ago their introduction was the occasion of tumultuous opposition. In Aberdeen such hymns were first heard in the middle of the eighteenth century. They were sung at a church-parade by soldiers temporarily stationed there. The result was violent dispute between those who were devoted to the Calvinist view that only Scripture should be sung in church and the others who wished to introduce other hymns. The former resolved to stop the new practice, now strongly supported by students, and hired youngsters to sit at the front and sing loudly out of tune. The rival factions, "slow singers and quick singers," contended so lustily that the service ended in uproar.

Hymns had indeed been sung in Christian assemblies from the earliest times. It is held by many that Luke 1:46-54 (the Magnificat), Luke 2:29-32 (Nunc dimittis), Ephesians 5:15, 1 Timothy 3:16, and 6:15 and 16 were Christian hymns before incorporation in the respective books and epistles. This, however, seems to be almost pure speculation. Pliny,

the Roman governor of Bithynia, reporting to the Emperor Trajan on his enquiries concerning the practices of the people called Christians in A.D. 112, informs him that when the Christians assembled they sang hymns to Christ "as to a God." Similar language is used by a third century writer quoted by Eusebius: "hymns and odes such as from the beginning were written by believers, hymns to the Christ, the Word of God, calling Him God." In the Middle Ages singing of hymns (Greek and Latin), was mainly practised by priests as part of their daily offices.

The Reformation brought a great change, and congregational hymn-singing flourished. Luther composed many hymns, but Calvin permitted only Scripture, mainly the Book of Psalms. In Britain congregational singing was at first confined to Psalms, but eventually hymns were introduced, with events like the one described above. The people of Britain are, therefore, heirs of a hymn-singing tradition which makes hymn-singing as part of Christian worship appear natural. As in other elements of Christian tradition, what now confronts us is a mixture of true and false, Scripture and habit, and a careful examination of the

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Word is required to enquire what is the place of hymns and singing in the New Testament worship. We shall not in this place be concerned with the use of hymns in evangelistic work, but will confine ourselves to the part to be played by hymns in the true worship, that is, when the Church is "come together in one place" for the purpose of worship.

Three passages deal with the subject of singing. These are:

1. Ephesians 5:19 (with Colossians 3:16), illustrated by James 5:13 and Acts 16:25.
2. 1 Corinthians 14:15, perhaps illustrated by Matthew 26:30 (with Mark 14:26), and Hebrews 2:12.
3. Revelation 5:9; 14:3; and 15:3.

1. Ephesians 5:19, literally rendered, reads "be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves (i.e., to one another) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your hearts to the Lord". This refers to the Christian life in general, and not particularly to assemblies. It seems to say that Christians are to be, in joy and sorrow, a singing people. It is naturally of great interest to examine the three words, psalms, hymns and songs. On this point, as on so

many others, Trench's "Synonyms of the New Testament" is very illuminating. "When some expositors refuse even to attempt to distinguish between them, urging that St. Paul had certainly no intention of classifying the different forms of Christian poetry, this statement, no doubt, is true; but neither, on the other hand would he have used, where there is evidently no temptation to rhetorical amplification, three words, if one would have equally served his turn ... each must have had a meaning which belonged to it more, and by a better right, than it belonged to either of the others; and this it may be possible to seize, even while it is quite impossible with perfect strictness to distribute under these three heads Christian poetry as it existed in the Apostolic age."

Psalms were, in the Old Testament, songs sung with the accompaniment of plucked instruments. Trench does not doubt that the psalms of Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 (and probably 1 Corinthians 14) were the inspired Psalms of the Old Testament Canon. This interpretation, however, we must decisively reject. Naturally all Catholic, Anglican and Reformed (Presbyterian) commentators interpret the word in

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this sense, and are now bound to do so since for centuries the Book of Psalms from the Old Testament has been sung in their assemblies. If this fact stood alone, it might be impressive, but it does not stand alone. It is one element in the settled system of carrying over the details of the Old Testament worship into Christianity. In its buildings, its priesthood, its sacrifices, its incense and its music, the historic Church is Judaism carried over; and the use of the Book of Psalms from the Old Testament as a vehicle of Christian worship is one further item in this picture. The Old Testament Psalms cannot be vehicles of the true worship because in them worship is directed to Jehovah and not to the Father and the Son; because a finished redemption was not known; and because the imprecatory Psalms are quite out of keeping with the spirit of the New Testament. For these reasons the psalms of Ephesians 5:19 cannot be the Psalms of the Old Testament. They must be psalms composed for the purposes of Christian worship.

On hymns, Trench says, "It was the essence of a Greek hymn that it should be addressed to, or otherwise in praise of, a god ... when the word 'hymn' was assumed into the

language of the Church, this essential distinction clung to it still. A 'psalm' might be ... the story of man's deliverance or a commemoration of mercies received; and of a 'spiritual song' much the same could be said; but a 'hymn' must always be ... a direct address of praise and glory to God."

A song means anything sung, and "by itself might mean any kind of song, as of battle, or of harvest." The addition of the description "spiritual" means that "they were composed by spiritual men and moved in the sphere of spiritual things."

Perhaps the matter will be best understood if, taking account of the explanations given, but from a slightly different point of view, we conclude that each of the three words, psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, covers the whole range of Christian expression. The first (psalms) draws attention to the fact that Christian feeling expressed itself in compositions which were musical; the second (hymns) that they were in praise of God; and the third (spiritual songs), that also they were sung with the voice.

Some have attempted to make out that since the verb "to psalm" (1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; James 5:13),

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is given in a certain popular concordance with the meaning "to sing praise with a musical instrument", it is necessarily implied that instrumental accompaniment is appropriate to singing in Christian worship. It has been so universally common to use instrumental accompaniment with singing in Christian worship that familiarity with it prevents our seeing what a far cry such a practice is from Scripture truth. The verb "to psalm" means "to pluck or twang a string with the finger." In its original use the string was a bowstring, but later a musical string. The only shred of Scripture evidence available to be called in support of using musical accompaniment in Christian worship, is the original meaning of this word, and the evidence is quite as strong for using bows and arrows as musical instruments. The word "lunatic" originally meant a person affected by the phases of the moon, but when we use the word in the twentieth century, we make no reference to the moon; the word is still used, but has entirely lost the original connection. Similarly, the use of the word "to psalm" in the New Testament of itself proves nothing at all about the use of musical instruments. In the Old Testament, instrumental music was explicitly authorised for the temple worship, and

considerable detail given about the instruments used and the players: "an instrument of ten strings" (Psalm 92:3): "upon the harp will I praise Thee" (Psalm 43:4): "song in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries and harps, for the service of the house of God" (1 Chron. 25:6): and numerous other references. When we contrast this with the total absence of such details in the New Testament, it can only be concluded that instruments were not used in the New Testament churches. Indeed, they would hinder by diverting attention from the inward spiritual activity essential to the true worship. The recognition of these facts is not confined to one communion. They have always been recognised by some, notably certain monastic orders in the Middle Ages and by the early Presbyterians in modern times. "Be filled with the Spirit ... singing and psalming with your hearts" means that in such songs, the player is the Holy Spirit, and His instrument the believer's heart.

2. Whereas Ephesians 5:19 deals with the Christian's life and behaviour in a general way, 1 Corinthians 14:15 is on the other hand directly concerned with our theme of collective Christian worship. This is to be understood from

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its position in the section 11:17 to 14:40, commented on in the previous chapter, and also from the close association of singing and blessing or worship. "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupies the room of the unlearned say 'Amen' at thy giving of thanks?" Since so much has been said diminishing the importance of the purely musical side of worship, the question will be asked, "Why sing at all?" The answer is that here in these verses, explicitly in the setting of the true worship, singing is given its place, and this is sufficient answer. Recognition of the supreme place of the Spirit of God in such singing, and attention to the fact that it is to be singing with the heart, with the spirit, and with the understanding also, will on the one hand guard against giving undue prominence to the purely musical element, and will also exclude the production of a cacophonous dirge.

3. The third group of passages, dealing with singing in the Revelation, is extremely interesting, confirming as it does that so much of what we have learned in this study of the true worship is symbolised in the vision of the worship of

heaven as it passed before the eyes and ears of the seer. The song they sing in heaven is a new song, because it is directed to Him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb.

Having thus briefly reviewed the relevant Scripture, we conclude that hymns are required for the true worship. They will have to be new in the sense that every language as it develops needs its own hymns: but they must be old in that their content must be in keeping with all that we have learned about the true worship. It is intensely interesting to consider hymn-books relative to the particular point of substance for the worship of the Father. An inspection of the range of hymn-books available will show that an important part of the unique contribution made by "Hymns for the Little Flock" is that it provides hymns composed for this purpose. It is equally true, and simple justice to acknowledge, that these hymns, under God, are uniquely owed to the work of J. N. Darby and his school. There was, in his long life of labour in the service of Christ, a distinct period in which he became aware of the absence of, and hence the need for, hymns in English expressing worship to

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the Father. Time devoted to imbibing the spirit of such hymns will not be spent in vain.

The first great need is that of address, not to Jehovah, not to the Lord only, but to the Father. "I bow my knees to the Father" (Eph. 3:14). Along with this goes all joy and peace in believing, which is founded on the assurance of relationship with the Father through the blood of Christ.

Father, Thy name our souls would bless,
As children taught by grace,
Lift up our hearts in righteousness,
And joy before Thy face.

One of the best examples is by E. H. Chater:

God and Father, we adore Thee,
Now revealed in Christ the Son,
Joying in Thy holy presence
Through the work that He has done.

Filled with praise we bow before Thee,
Thou art evermore the same,
With adoring hearts we bless Thee,
Magnify Thy holy name.

Worship, honour, praise and glory,
Would we render to Thee;
Heights unsearched and depths unfathomed
In Thy wondrous love we see.

Prominent in several of these hymns is the thought of the particular part of the Father, as distinct from those of the Son and the Spirit, in that the Father is the Source or Fount of love and of all good.

Blest Father, infinite in grace,
Source of eternal joy;
Thou lead'st our hearts to that blest place,
Where rest's without alloy.

Or the following verse by E. Rubie:

Our Father, we praise Thee,
Thou source of all blessing,
The Son has revealed Thee
In fulness of light.
We joy in Thy presence,
We worship before Thee,

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In love and all blameless,
In holiness bright.

The faith and love which realise the place of children with a Father, lead these hymn-writers to move often in the realm of the Father's purposes.

And is it so! we shall be like Thy Son,
Is this the grace which He for us has won?
Father of glory, thought beyond all thought,
In glory to His own blest likeness brought.

Perhaps the loveliest are the following two verses from separate hymns by A. Carruthers and T. Willey respectively:

His Father, and our Father,
His God and ours Thou art;
And He is Thy Beloved,
The gladness of Thy heart.
We're His, in joy He brings us
To share His part and place;
To know Thy love and favour,
The shining of Thy face.

Thine eternal, gracious purpose,

Now to us in Christ is shown,
Purpose fraught with richest blessing,
For the sons Thou hadst foreknown.
Brought to rest within the circle,
Where love's treasures are displayed,
There we drink the living waters,
Taste the joys that never fade.

The central theme of the pleasure of the Father in Christ and His sacrifice is embedded in several of the hymns already quoted. It is prominent in Mary Bowly's hymn which begins:

By Thee, O God, invited,
We look unto the Son,
In whom Thy soul delighted,
Who all Thy will has done;
And by the one chief treasure
Thy bosom freely gave,
Thine own pure love we measure,
Thy willing mind to save.

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The characteristic and very wonderful burden of J. N. Darby's hymns addressed to the Father is the blissful contemplation of the fulfilment and perfection of the true worship in heaven:

Grateful incense this, ascending
Ever to the Father's throne;
Ev'ry knee to Jesus bending,
All the mind in heaven is one.

All the Father's counsels claiming
Equal honours to the Son,
All the Son's effulgence beaming,
Makes the Father's glory known.

By the Spirit all pervading,
Hosts unnumbered round the Lamb,
Crowned with light and joy unfading,
Hail Him as the great "I AM."

The hymns quoted do not display a general level of high excellence as poetry. Indeed, in his preface to the edition of 1881 Darby wrote, "Something, at least, of the spirit of poetry (is needed for a hymn-book), though not poetry itself,

which is objectionable, as merely the spirit and imagination of man." Yet in spite of himself, his hymns provide several examples of the wedding of the purest spirituality in the fellowship of the Father and the Son with the most exalted expression. Where, in all the realm of hymnody can be equalled these two verses in his hymn beginning "Rest of the saints above"?

But who that glorious blaze
Of living light shall tell,
Where all His brightness God displays,
And the Lamb's glories dwell?

God and the Lamb shall there
The light and temple be,
And radiant hosts for ever share
The unveiled mystery.

"In Spirit" and "By the Spirit"

The essentially spiritual nature of the activity called the true worship must now be given special consideration. One of the most renowned stories of the ancient world is that of how Pompey, commissioned from Rome by the Senate to pacify the East, came from his victory over the Seleucid to Jerusalem. While there, he insisted, against all the entreaties of a terrified priesthood, on entering the temple's inner sanctuary. He approached the curtains. He was about to encounter the most famous god of the ancient world, Jehovah of Israel, in His shrine. With sword drawn, he pulled aside the curtains, and found—nothing! The sanctuary was empty. Alone among all the temples of the world, there was no idol or image in the Temple of Jehovah. Although for the time then present, His dwelling place was a house of stone and gold, of beauty and glory, it was even then true that God is a spirit; and when the true worship came, the splendour of an earthly sanctuary would disappear, and that worship is seen to be an entirely spiritual activity.

Two sentences in particular present the essential spirituality of the true worship: John 4:24, "they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit" ("in truth" has been previously considered); and Philippians 3:3, "worship by the Spirit of God" (R.V.). The former expression, "in spirit", presents the location or place of the true worship in distinction from Jerusalem or Gerizim: "by the Spirit of God" states the unique power for it.

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Thus the woman poses the question, in what place should men worship? In His immediate answer Jesus makes two distinctions. He distinguishes the Jewish from the Samaritan worship in that the former was in an important sense a genuine worship of the God of the Bible, based on a real knowledge of that God revealed: whereas the latter was a spurious worship based on ignorance of God. Jesus also distinguishes both these—at Jerusalem and Gerizim—from the worship for which the hour had already struck, when the true worshippers would worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the

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Jewish and Samaritan worship were alike in that they both consisted in a system of priesthood and sacrifice, but at this moment we concentrate on the fact that they had also in common the idea of an earthly location solely appropriate to worship. The Lord's answer sweeps away the whole concept of an earthly sanctuary, even when, as at Jerusalem, it had been for former times the ordinance of Jehovah the God of Israel.

The Jewish Christians addressed in Hebrews were taunted with having no priest, no sanctuary, no altar. The Spirit of God, in that epistle does not answer that priests would appear with garments of glory and beauty; that earthly sanctuaries of imposing magnificence and valid sanctity would eventually appear for the Christian company. He replies that they did already possess a High Priest, never to be superseded, but He was in heaven, and hence not visible on earth at all: they did possess an altar, but of an entirely spiritual kind. In answer to the woman's question, the Saviour did not say that the day would dawn when Malines Cathedral would be built (and all the churches from the humblest village church to St. Peter's itself); He spoke of the

hour already come, when the place of the true worship would be in human spirits, born of the Spirit, and where the well of the Spirit would be springing up into everlasting life. With these words He obliterated for ever the whole notion of an earthly sanctuary, and firmly and finally located the true worship in the spirits of redeemed men and women.

The reason for this is given. It is that God is a spirit, and the worship of their hearts must answer to the nature of God. In the previous chapter of this Gospel it is said, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." What, in the believer, is born of God, is not of the nature of flesh, but of spirit; it does not belong to the material part of man, but to the spiritual part. It is a creative act of God relating to man's spirit, and here is the realm in which worship rises to God. In a great cathedral, the eye of God rests on, and the ear of God is open to, what is taking place in the spirits of the worshippers, and all the trappings of an earthly sanctuary are simply disobedience to Him. They do not and cannot, assist. They can only hinder, by encouraging something other than the true worship in spirit and in truth.

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"My spirit prays," says Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:14. In the Church he prays and sings and blesses with his spirit, with his understanding, and with his heart. Indeed, it would be appropriate at this point to recall how all that has gone before has prepared us for this emphasis on the location of worship in the spirits of men and women. We saw that worship is "an attitude of spirit, taken by man realising the presence of God revealed." The sacrifices of the true worship are spiritual sacrifices, and one chapter was devoted to enquiring what these sacrifices are.

Let us consider again the gathering for the Lord's Supper described in the Prologue. In such a gathering, they are either active in heart and spirit, engaged with the Father and the Son, the love of God and the blood of Christ, or there is nothing. Every external and material thing has been deliberately reduced to a cypher. The loaf and the cup proclaim themselves not to be looked at, but to be the appointed means whereby what they represent forms the meditation of the spirits of those assembled. To contemplate this presents a challenge to all who attempt what these men and women attempted. The beam of attention, as it is with

the eye and heart of God, is entirely concentrated on what is taking place in the spirits of the worshippers. Every moment in which we have to say "No infant's changing pleasure is like my wandering mind," represents a victory for the tempter.

F. W. Grant has left us a striking comment on Abraham and Lot. "When we would be with Him, in our seasons of habitual or special devotion, how often do we ... realise the intrusion of other thoughts—unwelcome as, to Lot, were the men of Sodom. We are apt ... to seek to silence conscience with the thought that they are unwelcome, as if this relieved us from responsibility about them ... But why had Abraham no such intruders? The thoughts that throng upon us when we would gladly be free—at the Lord's Table ...—have we no responsibility for these? The effort to obtain what when obtained we can so little retain, while other things flock in with so little effort, does it not reveal the fact of where we are permitting our hearts to settle down?" There is indeed a limitless wealth of substance, in connection with the Father and the Son, to occupy the spirits of the redeemed both now and for ever in adoring contemplations and the glory and

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beauty of Christ, and His title to everlasting glory and blessing through the blood of His sacrifice. To us, as to the first disciples the Lord asks, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?"

In the second place the essentially spiritual nature of the true worship is connected with the fact that the Spirit of God is its sole energising power. "We worship by the Spirit of God."

In John 7:37-38 there is a reference to thirsting and drinking and living water: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The explanation follows: "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." This explanation doubtless applies also to the similar references in John 4:13-14: "Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water

springing up into everlasting life." Thus we have here two directions of the Spirit's flow in the believer, "springing up" and "flowing out." For the moment, great as is the importance of an outflow to the thirsty world around, we must concentrate on the "springing up", for the Saviour leads directly on to explain that this springing up is in the true worship. Worship is the springing up of the Holy Spirit in believers. The same Person and power which satisfies the thirsty spirit, empowers the satisfied spirit to rise up in worship to the Father.

On this note we bring to an end our study of the words of Jesus to the woman at Sychar's well. Christian worship is the outflow to the Father of hearts and spirits that have found their delight by the Spirit in the Father and in the Son. "By (Christ), says the apostle, we have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18). No power other than the Holy Spirit is adequate for such worship; but the Holy Spirit has been given, for Jesus has been glorified in heaven. Great as is the privilege and opportunity to engage in the true worship, the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit in believers and in the Church is equal to it, and will continue so to the

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end. Though distractions and diversions are so numerous and so plausible, this is a context in which it remains true that "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all" (1 Cor. 12:4-6). He it is who has put a new song into our mouths, even praise to our God; and He it is by whose touch the strains of this song will never end.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen."

Epilogue

It is inescapable that there should be a brief return to the note of personal experience struck in the Prologue.

The description in the Prologue of a simple assembly for worship would be recognised as true to life by anyone who knew such gatherings first-hand. It must nevertheless be conceded that the description was also in some measure idealised. It would be less than candid to attempt to conceal the fact that in a lifetime of association with such gatherings there has been a good deal of disillusionment, both at the level of externals and at that of the inner spirit. A variety of diction, intelligence and education makes heavy demands on patience, understanding and love on the part of each and all. A truly free expression is difficult to preserve, and a fixed and esoteric framework of vocabulary and speech can become as binding as any liturgy. The cacophonous dirge, at times and in places, is only too much in evidence. A hymn-book used in an open form of service can become perilously near to being a prayer book.

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It is, of course, at the level of the inner spirit animating the worshippers that the real problem lies. The fact is that if services are controlled by a fixed organisation with an elite trained to perform the externals, then this organisation completely masks fluctuations and variations in the spiritual love and devotion of the individuals composing the mass of the gathering. The services can proceed decently and in order if spiritual life is totally absent. If, on the other hand, all support of a fixed order for services is deliberately removed, and everything is made to depend on individuals being moved and empowered by the Spirit of God, then every weakening, every fluctuation, in the spirituality of the members betrays itself immediately. If what is "in spirit" and "by the Spirit" is absent or enfeebled, then it might well be said that the members of such gatherings are of all men most miserable.

Since it makes such demands on spirituality, is it worthwhile to continue the attempt to obey the Word of God in the conduct of corporate worship? Why not capitulate to expediency and venerable antiquity?

This is the question I have tried to answer from the Scriptures in the preceding pages. The answer must be in the affirmative, for two reasons, first because it is according to the truth of God's Word, and second because of the great spiritual gain from doing so. For the first, I underline the paragraphs at the end of chapter four, and especially the sentence, "they are cutting adrift from centuries of tradition, and extending the principle of acting on the Word of God as sole authority and guide in ministry and in the Church, as well as in evangelical truth." When once I see that such conduct of worship alone fulfils the sound evangelical principle of obedience to and conformity with the Word of God, then, like Luther, I can do no other. Obeying the Word of God is not an optional extra.

For the second, I refer again to chapter five, and repeat the sentences, "the sacrifice of praise to God derives its fragrance to Him from the sweet savour of the name of Jesus. It is thus pleasurable to the Father for His people to commune with Him, sharing His delight in His well-beloved Son." "That which we have seen and heard declare we to you, that ye also may share with us: and truly our sharing is

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with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." This is indeed the celestial music: this is fulness of joy.

