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WORSHIP THE KING!



A Series of Studies
Leading to
Worship in the Reformed Church

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Box A 16

Worship the King!

Six Studies
For Camps, Conferences,
Churches, and Bible Classes

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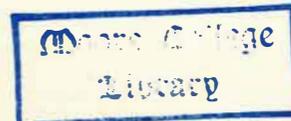
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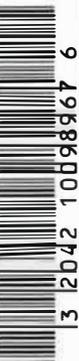
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FOREWORD

THERE is to-day a marked revival of interest in worship, and that interest is growing steadily, even in unexpected quarters. Men are seeking for their public worship more beautiful buildings, worthier hymns, and nobler music. They are searching ancient books of prayer for new materials that will enrich their united devotions. It is felt also that the training of youth in worship deserves more attention than it has ever received.

This booklet has been written by a group of ministers who have been educated in different schools, but who have all felt the necessity for studying this supremely important subject. It is hoped that the examination of the scripture basis of worship may make our approach to God more intelligent and fruitful. Those who use the Studies are urged always to read with care the Bible passages that are set down.

J. C. JAMIESON.

SECOND EDITION.

The Board of Religious Education is issuing this Second Edition to meet the demands of Fellowships and Bible Classes.

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CONFERENCE PRAYER



"O God, who clothest Thyself with light as with a garment, and makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise Thee, mercifully grant that, as by Thy created light we perceive the wonders of Thy universe, so by the uncreated Light of Thy Spirit we may discern the adorable majesty of Thy Being, and that, our hearts and minds being illumined by His presence, we may walk in Thy paths without stumbling, until at last all shadows flee away and in Thy perfect Light we see light, who, with the Son and Holy Spirit, art God for everlasting. Amen."

— Dean Matthews.

STUDY 1.

Worship in the Old Testament

DAILY READINGS.

1. Exodus 29: 38-46.
2. Leviticus 16: 15-22.
3. Leviticus 1: 9; 3: 1, 2.
4. Leviticus 4: 13-21.
5. Amos 5: 21-24.
6. Micah 6: 6-8.
7. Isaiah 1: 10-17.

Scope of the Study.

To attempt to describe "worship in the Old Testament" in the space of one study is to attempt the impossible. The Old Testament represents at least one thousand years of Hebrew national and religious life, a period long enough surely, for tremendous changes to have taken place in the religious thought and experience, and therefore in the worship, of the people. It would be possible, of course, to pick out what appears to us to be the noblest form of worship in the Old Testament and to say, "Here we have all that we need to concern ourselves with, so far as that worship is concerned. Inasmuch as all the rest belongs to lower and cruder forms of worship, we can afford to disregard it."

To do that is not as easy as it appears. First of all, we should have to decide what is the highest expression of Hebrew worship. Shall we find it in the developed ritual of the Temple in Jerusalem, with its priests and elaborate sacrifices, or in the writings of the prophets, those religious geniuses of the nation, or in the Psalms, with their outstanding spirituality? Each and all of these have been regarded as providing the high-water mark of Old Testament worship. Furthermore, because we study the Old Testament in order that we may get from it guidance as to

how we ourselves ought to worship, it would be wrong for us to neglect the lower phases of its worship, because we can learn almost as much from wrong as from correct forms. Hence it will be necessary for us to make a fairly wide survey of Old Testament worship.

Old Testament Worship is National in Character.

Whatever definition of worship may be given in these studies, it is sufficient for our purpose to define it as the **outward expression in word and action of inner religious feeling.** Worship is the outcome of experience. Now, what characterises the religion of the Old Testament is the fact that it is so strongly national. From the time of Moses onward we find that, underlying the religious experience of the men and women of the Old Testament, is the idea of the covenant by which they have become the people of Jehovah, and He has become their God. All their worship is within the consciousness of this covenant, and is inspired by the wonder of it. They worshipped as Israelites, and as Israelites only. It would not be putting it too strongly to say that in his worship no Hebrew could escape from the thought that he was one of a people bound to its God by a national pledge or covenant. It was almost impossible for him to worship merely as a man. (One of the things for which a true Jew to-day still gives daily thanks, is that God has not made him a heathen, i.e., a non-Jew.)

All his worship was designed to keep him within the covenant of Israel, and to ensure its blessings to him. Outside that covenant, he would feel cut off from his God and unable truly to worship Him. We notice how even such an intensely individual psalm as Psalm 73 begins with the affirmation, "Surely God is good to Israel, even to such as are pure in heart." This fact should never be forgotten when we study the worship in the Old Testament; and, even though we take over its great forms of expression in the words of psalmist or prophet, and make them our own, we should remember how national they are in character.

The Temple and Worship.

When we think of Hebrew worship, we think naturally of the worship in the Temple. But we have to remember that there were two temples in the Old Testament—the one built by Solomon and destroyed at the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., and the other built not long after the return from the Exile in 520-516 B.C. The first Temple was not the only, or even the chief, place of worship up to the Exile. In the Northern Kingdom there were a number of sanctuaries like Bethel, Gilgal, and Dan, which were crowded with worshippers; while in the Southern Kingdom worship went on at numerous country shrines and in the "high places," as well as in the Temple itself.

The type of worship practised in all these places was not of a very pure or elevated kind; some of it was sheer paganism. As we shall see later, it frequently came under criticism and condemnation by the great prophets. When we remember that, for a very long time, the first Temple was regarded by the various kings of Judah as their royal chapel, we can understand why its worship was not very spiritual. It was too much under the domination of the king and his court.

In the case of the second Temple, the situation was quite different. It was the one place where sacrificial worship was permitted. The whole priesthood was centred there; and, under the priests, the elaborate ritual described in the Book of Leviticus was put into operation. Worship in this Temple must have been particularly solemn and impressive; and it is not to be wondered at that the Jewish people developed a great and abiding love for it. Indications of this are to be found in such Psalms as 27, 84, and 122.

"The worship of the Temple centred in the **daily morning and evening sacrifices.** In the period after the Exile, it was the chief task of the priests 'to offer burnt-offerings unto Jehovah upon the altar of burnt-offering continually morning and evening, even according to all that is written in the law of Jehovah.'

"Notwithstanding the great development of individual religion, it was primarily through this sacrifice for the

whole community that the Israelite approached God. There were, of course, many private offerings in addition; but Israel's daily worship centred in this great act, as the worship of the whole year centred in the Day of Atonement. We must remember that the Temple had a unique place after the Exile. In it, and through it, the nation's whole worship was brought to a focus" (H. W. Robinson). We have a description of a Temple service in 2 Chron. 29: 26-30. (Though the Chronicler associates this service with King Hezekiah, the ritual must have been that, not of the first, but of the second Temple.)

The Book of Psalms, as we possess it now, played a great part in the Temple worship. It is usual to describe this Book as the hymn book of the second Temple. That is not quite correct, for some of the psalms really formed the service which was recited by the priests in the course of worship. An example of this is to be found in Psalm 20, where, on the occasion of entry into war, the king, as the leader of the people, is commended to the favour of Jehovah at a national service. The words of this Psalm are recited by the priest while the burnt-offering is being offered. Other Psalms are better regarded as part of the "anthem book" of the Levitical choirs. Many of them, however, are the prayers and praises of individuals.

Because they so unerringly expressed the needs and longings of men in general, they were taken over and included in the Temple hymn-book; and, being so preserved, they have become part of the hymn-book of the Christian Church as well. If we desire to understand the motive and to catch the spirit of Old Testament worship, we shall do it best by reading and rereading the Psalms.

Sacrifice in Worship.

Mention has frequently been made of offerings and sacrifices. This brings up the whole question of sacrificial worship. It is obvious to every reader of the Old Testament that sacrifices had an important place in the worship of Israel. Of special importance were the animal sacrifices. Of these there were four main types—the thank—or

"peace"—offering, the burnt-offering, the sin-offering, and the guilt-offering.

The first two were particularly prominent in worship before the Exile, and were of a joyous character. The first was in the nature of a communal feast, the significant idea being communion between Jehovah and His worshippers—a crude representation of something which Christians experience in the Lord's Supper. The second had, as its underlying thought, dedication or consecration to Jehovah—another element in the Lord's Supper. The last two, sin-offering and guilt-offering, were especially characteristic of worship after the Exile (when the sense of sin had greatly developed), and had for their main purpose the atonement of sin. This sacrificial worship reached its climax in the solemn service of the Day of Atonement.

Sacrifice appears to be a universal idea and practice in the worship of mankind; and it is not surprising that it should play such a big part in Hebrew worship. What is surprising is that there arose, on the part of some of the psalmists and the great prophets before the Exile, strong criticism and even condemnation of sacrificial worship. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah unite in this criticism. (Read Amos 5; Hosea 6; Isaiah 1; Micah 6; and Jeremiah 7, and compare Psalm 40, Psalm 50, Psalm 51.) Probably the most ironical comment on sacrifice is the taunt of Amos, "Come to Bethel and **transgress** (not worship); to Gilgal and multiply **transgression**" (Amos 4: 4, 5).

Mercy and Not Sacrifice.

What was the prophet's objection to sacrificial worship? It was just this, that the sacrificial system could so easily make religion impersonal, external, and mechanical, and divorce it from moral requirements in living and conduct. Time and time again, the prophets pointed out that, alongside the enthusiastic and ostentatious "worship" of the sanctuaries (sacrifices and all the other outward formalities), there existed the sins of intemperance, immorality, crooked justice, and the most cruel and extortionate treatment of poor and helpless people. The "worshippers"

acted as though all that Jehovah required of them was a sufficient number of sacrifices, and not moral and humane action. They deluded themselves into thinking that, if they did all that the ritual demanded, it did not matter what kind of lives they lived.

Now, all errors of worship arise from wrong thoughts about God. The people whom the prophets condemned were thinking of God as One whose favour could be bought with gifts, not as One who Himself was just and fair, and who, therefore, required just and fair conduct from His worshippers. The prophets really criticised and condemned on the same grounds as Jesus did in His day (Matt. 7: 21ff).

So strong was the prophets' hostility to the outward, unethical worship which they saw round them—worship unrelated to conduct—that some of them, like Jeremiah, could contemplate without regret the destruction of the Temple and the abolition of all sacrificial worship. In Jeremiah's eyes, the Exile would be helpful to, and not destructive of, true religion. In a foreign land, away from priests and Temple, the Jewish people would learn that religion was personal and spiritual, something between God and the individual. In Babylon they would find that God was as near to them as in the Temple in Jerusalem, if not actually nearer. (See Jeremiah 29: 4-14.) This passage, along with Psalm 139: 1-12, is the Old Testament approach to our Lord's own liberating statement about the nature of true worship (John 4: 23, 24).

Prayer and Worship.

Prayer, of course, is an essential part of worship. There is much prayer in the Old Testament; but to do it justice would require a special study. We have in the Old Testament a great many instances of individuals at prayer, and many fine examples of actual prayers. There is also much corporate or public prayer. But prayer develops with spiritual religion, and it is in the Psalms that we have the best examples of prayer. In fact the Psalms have provided ideas and expressions of prayer for all times and for all circumstances.

Assignments.

1. How does worship depend on the worshipper's idea of God?
2. Can worship ever be entirely individualistic?
3. What are (1) the good, and (2) the bad, points about a ritualistic type of worship (one which uses set forms of prayer, etc.)?
4. Why did the prophets criticise the worship of the sanctuaries and of the Temple? What did they demand in true worship?
5. Estimate the value of the Psalms for private and public worship.

STUDY 2.

Worship in the Four Gospels

DAILY READINGS.

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Jeremiah 7. 1-11. | 5. Luke 18: 9-14. |
| 2. Matthew 9: 10-17. | 6. John 4: 19-24. |
| 3. Luke 4: 15-19. | 7. Mark 14: 22-24. |
| 4. Luke 11: 5-13. | |

Worship in the Four Gospels has for its background the Jerusalem Temple and also the many local synagogues.

The Temple represented a priestly movement to centralise worship in Jerusalem, in order to cleanse public worship of the additions which had come to it from heathen sources, and to assert the sole claim of Jehovah to all the homage of the nation. But in actual fact, the Temple worship tended to substitute ritual for religion. The Temple itself became a kind of fetish, as though it possessed some magical power, and its sacrifices were held to be essential for the existence of religion. To go through the sacrificial rites correctly was considered to answer God's demands for right living, or, at least, to be enough to turn aside His wrath; and thus every-day conduct was divorced from religion, or, rather, religion from every-day conduct. In other words, **religion was no longer ethical.**

In Jeremiah's day, the prophet felt compelled to protest in God's name, "Trust not in these misleading words, 'The palace of the Lord, the palace of the Lord, the palace of the Lord, is all this!' What? Steal and murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and sacrifice to Baal; and then come and stand before Me in this house and say, 'We are delivered': in order to perpetrate all these abomination! Is it a robbers' den that you make My house for?"

Verily as such do I also regard it, saith the Lord. But go now to My sanctuary which was in Shiloh, where I placed My name at first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now because you do all these deeds, I will do to this house, in which you trust, as I did to Shiloh: I will cast you out from My presence as I cast out your brethren, the whole seed of Ephraim."

And Jesus in His day, while valuing the Temple and its worship, felt the need of cleansing the building from its impurities. (See Matt. 21: 12-17; Mark 11: 15-19, and Luke 19: 45-48.) His ideal for the Temple was that it should be **a house of prayer, for all nations**; but it had been made narrowly national, and a robbers' den. How like Jeremiah! The unholy traffic in sacrificial animals and in the incidental money-changing offended Jesus, but His real protest was against that of which this traffic was the sign or symbol—the whole sacrificial system. His zealous and courageous act was an emphatic way of saying that He had no use for the Temple sacrifices; that they were not necessary to religion's existence, nor to its highest expression, worship. And it is most significant that His one reference to the Temple system was to quote Hosea (6: 6), "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt. 9: 13).

But that does not mean that He would have agreed with Whittier's sentiment:

"We bring no ghastly holocaust,
We pile no graven stone;
He serves Thee best who loves the most
His brothers and Thy own.
Thy litanies, sweet offices
Of love and gratitude;
Thy sacramental liturgies,
The joy of doing good."

There is a place, surely, for temples made with hands, and the forms of a service. "The joy of doing good" is the result of worship; and wherever God's people meet in fellowship, to exercise that highest activity of the soul, a building is ordinarily necessary, and orderly forms of worship.

The local *synagogues* touched the lives of the people much more intimately than did the Temple in their capital city, which many were never able to visit. Jesus made His first pilgrimage to Jerusalem when He was twelve years old, but He had worshipped the Father long before that, in the synagogue at Nazareth; and He never lost His childhood's habit—the public worship of God. It ought to interest us to know something of the nature of synagogue worship.

It was divided into two parts, devotions and instruction. The first part consisted of the recital of prayers, the reading of the Scriptures, and, later, the singing of Psalms. The prayers were sometimes read by the leader alone, and sometimes were repeated jointly. The reading fell into two parts: the Law and the Prophets, the latter being read only at Sabbath morning worship. The Law was read according to a fixed plan of readings, twice over in seven years, but the lessons from the Prophets were selected by the reader. Thus, when Jesus read the lesson in His home synagogue at Nazareth, He made His selection from the prophecy of Isaiah. (See Luke 4: 16-20.)

It would almost appear that our Lord **expressly required only private worship**, as when He warned His disciples against any parade of piety, by praying "in the *synagogues* and in the corners of the streets," and bade them enter into their "inner chamber" and pray to their "Father which is in secret." See Matt. 6: 5, 6.)

(By the way, Professor J. Alexander Findlay, of Didsbury College, Manchester, and a Cato Lecturer in Melbourne beautifully paraphrases these words: "When you pray, you are not to go about it like the people who air their piety, you know how fond they are of engaging in prayer for the edification of onlookers. They get what they want—a reputation for devotion; but God, your Father, has nothing to do with that kind of thing. When any one of you is drawn to pray, he will do well to go apart and retire into himself, there holding converse with God who dwells in secret places; his Father, from whom no secrets are hid, will Himself reward him.")

Our Lord's teaching on prayer has to do mostly with personal prayer, and He encourages individual faith with regard to the things for which we ask (Luke 11: 5-13). This emphasis on private, personal prayer led the late Dr. Alexander Whyte of Edinburgh to declare, "public prayer is an unnatural act." (But see his sermon on "The Secret Burden," in his "Lord, Teach Us to Pray," in which he rightly declares that, if we fail to practise private prayer, the prayers we hear from the pulpit will help us little.) And public prayer is an unnatural act, in this sense, that we can never express the deepest things of the soul in the presence of another, save God.

But our Lord did commend **united** prayer for a common end—the reconciliation and restoration of "the difficult brother." (See Matt. 18: 19, 20, but also verses 15-18.) Admittedly, it is not congregational prayer that is here thought of, but a "prayer meeting," where two is a quorum, because two always means three before long, and three is the perfect number. Let the **wronged** brother seek someone who loves him, but who also loves the **wrong-doer**, and let them together pray to God, who has a solution of every humanly insoluble problem.

Yet, it is gloriously true that wherever there are three poor people praying, there is the Church. The Church is there, because Christ is there, who alone makes the Church in its many expressions, universal and local. Moreover, our Lord's response to His disciples' request, "Lord, teach us to pray," indicates that He assumed they took part in public worship. (See Matt. 6: 9-13; Luke 11: 1-4.) **The prayer He gave them is a fellowship prayer—"Our" and "us," not "my" and "me."**

Further, His own practice shows His belief in the necessity of united public worship. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he entered, as **his custom was**, into the synagogue on the sabbath day." With Him, public worship was habitual. He felt "routine observances" to be "indispensable," as Horace Bushnell puts it. Therefore, He did not need to **command** a universal practice which He sanctioned by Himself following it. Instead, He

left us an example, that we should follow in His steps. "As his custom was"—is it our custom?

His most significant utterance was made to a Samaritan woman. (See John 4: 19-24.) According to Jesus, there are no places holy in themselves, whether Jerusalem or Rome, Bethlehem or Geneva. Holiness is a quality belonging only to persons; to God, to angels, to men. Yet there is a sense in which places become holy, in their association with holy men and women, by the use to which holy men and women put them.

"Jesus, where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy-seat;
Where'er they seek Thee, Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

The realised Presence of God makes places holy, whether Jerusalem or Rome, Bethlehem or Geneva, or where *you* worship.

The true worship is spiritual, "in spirit," and not merely formal, however necessary forms may be. It is not sufficient that words should fly up, while thoughts remain below. Spirit with Spirit must meet. There must be holy traffic on that shining ladder which God lets down from heaven, that men may climb out of their loneliness, weariness, sinfulness, out of their failures and sorrows, into the immortal fellowship of saints and angels, and of God, the Lord of all. And the true worship must be in harmony with the Divine character.

"In truth." Belief in God is important, but it is of prime importance that we believe in the true God, for, as is our God, so shall our worship be. Our Christian worship is our response, in gladness and gratitude, to His loving approach to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the offering of ourselves to Him, casting ourselves on the Divine clemency; and, consequently, our self-dedication to do His will. "For such the Father also seeketh to be his worshippers."

In this connection, our Lord's parable of the two worshippers is full of instruction. (See Luke 18: 9-14.) The scene is laid in the Temple. Then, He did not despise the

sacred edifice? No! It was to Him a venerable shrine. And surely He must have sung and meant:

"I joyed when 'To the house of God
Go up,' they said to me."

But the two worshippers differed vastly. To one man God was real, the knowledge of whose glory he had read in the face of Christ Jesus. He was desperate for God, who alone stood between him and despair. So he flung his soul upon God: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." He had the spirit of true worship, and went home with a great peace in his heart, forgiven.

The other did not really worship God, but only an image of God; not a metal, but a mental, one. Actually, he never got past himself. He engaged in a little soliloquising, and metaphorically patted himself on the back. He lacked the spirit of true worship, and returned home well wadded in self-righteousness, self-satisfaction, self-complacency, self-sufficiency. The results were so different, because the men were so different. One got all he hoped for—God. The other got just what he expected and deserved—nothing! It is a parable that will repay close study.

No examination of "Worship in the Four Gospels" would be complete without a visit to the Upper Room, where Jesus began the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This is more especially true, because our modern Christian worship is based upon the worship of the synagogue and of the Upper Room. (See Matt. 26: 26-29; Mark 14: 22-25; Luke 22: 18-20.)

At the end of His last meal with the disciples, our Lord took the common elements of bread and wine, and, with prayer, gave them sacramental meaning, holy meaning, as symbols of His broken body and shed blood. "This is my body, my blood." (Compare 2 Sam. 23: 16, 17.) The water was as blood to David. It represented blood.

To the disciples in the Upper Room, the bread represented, in the hands of the Lord of the Table, His own broken body, and the wine, His own shed blood. "This do,

in remembrance of me." The Holy Supper was intended to be an act of remembrance, a **Commemoration**.

And more, for symbols stand for something real. The Lord is really present in His Sacrament, not in the elements, but in the Sacrament, in all that is said and done in His name. He is real to hearts that give Him room and bid Him welcome, as in faith they receive the symbols of His body and blood. Therefore, the Lord's Supper is a **Communion**, as well as a Commemoration.

But can any man come into the banqueting house of His Lord, whose banner over him is love, and then go out and play the traitor? Well, Judas did it. But who wishes to be classed with Judas? He who truly sits down with his Lord and his Lord's people at the Holy Table will feel bound thereby with such vows as it is a shame not to be bound by. Thus, his act of Commemoration becomes an act of **Consecration**, as well as an act of Communion. Commemoration, Communion, Consecration.

The Holy Supper in the Upper Room is the climax of "Worship in the Four Gospels"; and surely no one can study this subject without asking himself whether he has any living personal relationship with the Lord of the Table.

Assignments.

1. Baron von Hügel says, "Religion is adoration," but Whittier says, "To worship rightly is to love each other, each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer." Is either statement complete in itself or is each needed to complete the other? On the other hand, does von Hügel's definition include Whittier's?

2. If worship is the soul's response to the amazing, satisfying revelation of the God of Love in Christ Jesus, a response which expresses itself in self-offering, what would you say to anyone who protested that he had ceased to go to some church because he **got nothing** from it?

3. If Jesus resolutely kept up the habit of public worship, is a Christian justified in going to church only when he feels like it? What probably happens when one neglects,

even once, such a simple habit as winding up one's watch before going to bed?

4. If the Lord's Supper is the highest point of Christian worship, does not a Christian withhold something from his Lord, and also impoverish his own soul, by failing to take his place at the Lord's Table?

STUDY 3.

Worship in the Early Church

DAILY READINGS.

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Acts 2: 37-47. | 5. 1 Cor. 16: 1-8. |
| 2. Acts 3: 1-11. | 6. Revelation 1: 3-18. |
| 3. Acts 20: 1-12. | 7. Hebrews 4: 12-16. |
| 4. 1 Cor. 11: 17-34. | |

1. The Beginnings of Christian Worship.

The Christian Church, as a distinctive society, began with the events of Pentecost. We get a glimpse of its worship at that time in Acts 2: 42, 46, 47, where we read, "They devoted themselves to the instruction given by the Apostles and to fellowship, breaking bread and praying together . . . Day after day they resorted with one accord to the temple and broke bread together in their own homes; they ate with a glad and simple heart, praising God and looked on with favour by all the people" (Moffatt).

Two things stand out clearly here. The first is that the Christians in Jerusalem continued at first to attend the Temple worship. The second is that they had meetings in private houses, where they "broke bread" and prayed together. And here we have an indication of the two sources from which distinctively Christian worship arose. It was a blend of a Jewish element and of certain practices which had as their centre the "breaking of bread."

2. The Synagogue and the Upper Room.

(a) **The Synagogue.** We know it was Jesus' own custom, as it was the custom of all good Jews in His day, to attend the worship in the synagogue, wherever He might happen to be. The early Christian disciples were Jews, and they

would naturally continue at first to worship in the synagogue; and those (or at least some of them) in Jerusalem also attended the Temple sacrifices and prayers. The elements of synagogue worship were (and still are) scripture reading, explanation of scripture, prayer, and praise (the same elements that characterise an ordinary Protestant service to-day). So Christian worship began as half Jewish in form.

And not only was the form of it partly Jewish, but at first the contents as well. In synagogue worship, the reading of the Word was central, so the early Christians read the same Old Testament scriptures, sang the same psalms, and prayed the same prayers as their Jewish brethren. It was not long, however, before they began also to use new scriptures alongside the old. They added letters and memoirs of the Apostles and others, collections of the sayings and acts of Jesus, and, finally, the Apocalypse or Revelation, making up what we now call the New Testament. They composed hymns of their own, examples of which are to be found in the Benedictus, the Magnificat, and the Nunc Dimittis. (See the "Revised Church Hymnary," 714, 715, 716.) A further development was that they offered their prayers to God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This introduced a new spirit and a new emphasis into the "service of the Word," as well as some new material, yet the synagogue form of their devotions remained.

(b) **The Upper Room.** The second element in the worship of the Christians was something distinctive. It was derived from the experiences in that Upper Room where Jesus gathered the Twelve about Him at their last meal together.

It was the practice for small groups of male Jews to gather for a religious meal (known as a Kiddu'sh) on the evening or late afternoon preceding the Sabbath (which began at sunset) or any of the Jewish religious festivals, such as the Passover. They met, with a president, in a private house, and religious topics were discussed. Just when the Sabbath (or festival) was about to begin, the

president took a cup of wine and said over it a benediction, for what was known as the "sanctification of the day."

The Last Supper seems to have been the last of the common meals of this sort which Jesus shared with His disciples—the one in preparation for the Passover. After His death the disciples evidently continued the practice of the common meal. The references to "breaking of bread" in Acts 2 indicate this. It would seem that the whole meal had religious meaning and those who took part in it were marked out thereby as "Christians." It was a brotherhood meal—the pledge and symbol of a common life and common faith, and it recalled and renewed the table-fellowship of the disciples with one another and with their Lord.

It appears that the unique meaning given by Jesus to the Last Supper was only gradually realised by the Church, under the leading of the Spirit. The disciples did not at first understand the full depth of meaning which Jesus had put into His words and actions on that night of parting. As this came more and more to be understood, they tended to place more emphasis on the actual words and actions of Jesus, and to make the repetition of these the central feature in their common meals.

This tendency was probably helped on by the occurrence of abuses of a grave kind which began to mar these fellowship meals—particularly drunkenness, gluttony, and selfishness. Evidence of these abuses is found in 1 Cor. 11: 17-34, and in Jude, verse 12. The meal is now referred to as the "Lord's Supper," and it will be noticed how, in the Corinthian passage, Paul stresses the central importance of the words and actions of Jesus as they had been communicated to him (vv. 23-25). In the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, written later than Paul's day, the same emphasis is found. One way of checking the abuses would be to dissociate the central words and actions (which were now regarded as the significant elements) from the meal, and make them the climax of an act of worship (such as had apparently always been carried on when they met for their common meal).

This is what actually happened (but not until after the close of the New Testament period, i.e., after about 100 A.D.); and the memorial rite consisting of the repetition of the words and actions of Jesus, prayers of thanksgiving, etc., and the partaking of bread and wine, then became widely known as the Eucharist (a name derived from the Greek word "eucharistein," meaning "to give thanks"). In the New Testament itself, however, although we can see the tendency in this direction, the central sacramental rite (the repetition of the words and actions of Jesus) always formed part of a common meal, which Paul names the "Lord's Supper," and Jude calls a "love-feast."

It will be noticed that in the references to the "breaking of bread" (Act 2: 42, 46) there is no mention of the cup of wine or of the commemoration of Jesus' death; whereas in Paul's description (1 Cor. 11: 23-25) both of these are prominent. The points of emphasis are evidently changing.

It was from these two roots, then, the synagogue and the Upper Room, that Christian worship was derived; and the distinctive character thus given to it has marked it ever since.

3. Times and Places of Worship.

We are not told precisely how often the Christians gathered for worship, nor at what hour they met. From Acts 2: 46, however, and from some references in later Christian writings, outside the New Testament, it seems probable that they met daily for worship and "breaking of bread"; and there is good reason also for thinking that it was in the evening they gathered, after the day's work was done. At first there seems to have been no singling out of "Sunday" as a special day of worship; but later this was so (1 Cor. 16: 2; Rev. 1: 10). "Sunday" (or rather, the first day of the week) came to be regarded as peculiarly the Christian day of worship.

We have already seen that the first Christians (at any rate some of them in Jerusalem) gathered for public worship in the Temple; and it can be taken as certain that most, if not all, of them also attended synagogue services in Jerusalem—that being the usual Jewish custom (Acts 22:

19; 26: 11). In other parts of Palestine, and in the Gentile towns elsewhere, the followers of Christ also joined in synagogue worship, until the controversy between Paul and the Jewish authorities over Law observance resulted in a breach between the Christians and the synagogue (Acts 9: 20; 13: 5, 14, 15). They then had to find some other public place of worship, or else confine themselves to worshipping in private. At Ephesus, Paul hired a hall in which to lecture (Acts 19: 8-10), and it is probable that this building would also be used for worship. But more usually, during the New Testament period, the Christians (Jewish and Gentile) gathered in private houses (Acts 2: 46; 20: 7-11; Rom. 16: 5; 1 Cor. 16: 9; Philemon 2).

4. Distinctive Notes of Early Worship.

It is important, if we are to have any just appreciation of early Christian worship, that we should understand the spirit which inspired and characterised it. Several of the more distinctive notes may be referred to briefly.

1. **Sense of Fellowship.** There was in the early churches an intense warmth of fellowship. The Christians felt and acted as though they were a band of brothers. The bond of fellowship was the Spirit of the risen and exalted Christ in their hearts and in their meetings. They were brothers in Christ. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"—that was the spirit of their gatherings. Each church or group was a "Fellowship of the Spirit"—a fellowship of one with another and of all with Christ, bound together by His Spirit (Phil. 2: 1; Eph. 4: 3; 2 Cor. 13: 13; 1 Cor. 1: 9).

2. **Joy.** "Joy," "rejoice," "praise," are among the commonest expressions on the lips of the early Christians. They found joy in their fellowship one with another and with Christ; in release from sin, bondage to the Law, the tyranny of death, the dominion of Satan and his hordes of sinister spirits; in the hope of Christ's early returning; in the sense of forgiveness and reconciliation with God. "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice," writes Paul to the Philippians (4: 4), and this note must have found exultant expression in worship. Their joy was

not mere emotionalism either, but a holy joy—joy tinged with awe (Rom. 5: 2; Phil. 2: 16; 3: 3; 1 Pet. 1: 8).

3. **Enthusiasm.** Worship was enthusiastic. There was nothing cold or formal about it. It could hardly be otherwise, when the worshippers felt themselves to be so directly God-inspired, so Spirit-filled. At times (especially when it issued in "speaking with tongues"), this enthusiasm led to somewhat disorderly worship, not really helpful for the up-building of Christian character, and Paul found it necessary to urge restraint and the wise direction of this enthusiasm along more orderly paths (1 Cor. 14: 1-14). Yet he would have been the last to try to repress the spirit of enthusiasm itself. No doubt the eager expectation of their Lord's early return to earth, to usher in the completion of His Kingdom, helped to maintain this enthusiasm. This same hope was also a source of their joy (Acts 2: 41-47; 19: 17-20; Phil. 1: 12-14; 2: 14-18; 1 Cor. 16: 22. NOTE: The word "Maranatha" means "Come, O Lord." Compare Rev. 22: 20).

4. **Freedom.** Although the Christians inherited from the Jewish synagogue certain forms of prayer and sacred song, as well as the custom of reading and explaining scripture, their own worship at first did not take any fixed form. This was only to be expected, when the consciousness of the Spirit's guidance was so vivid and strong. The result was freedom and diversity in worship, different centres even developing in different ways. There is nothing strange about this: it follows naturally from the idea of Spirit-guided Christian liberty, which Paul preached. (See, e.g., Gal. 5: 1, 16, 25.) In fact great advantages flowed from this early freedom of worship. Among other things, it kept the worship flexible, and thus easily adaptable to different localities and races, and in the long run it greatly enriched the heritage of worship handed on to later ages.

5. **Objectivity.** In some branches of Protestantism (our own not excluded), there has been a tendency to treat worship as "subjective," i.e., chiefly concerned with the worshipper's own interests, thoughts, and feelings. Such was not the case with early Christian worship. The gaze

of the worshipper was, so to speak, not inward, but outward—outward and upward upon its Divine Object—upon God and Jesus Christ, His exalted Son. This worship was “objective,” and marked chiefly by adoring contemplation, thankfulness, and praise. Further, the note of objectivity, in a somewhat different sense, was also present in the feeling that something actual, something objective, happened in the act of worship, as between man and God; an offering of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise was being made by man to God; and it was of this that they were most conscious as they worshipped.

5. What Was Included in Early Worship?

It may be useful to end our study by giving a summary of what was probably included in worship about the end of the early Christian period. Unfortunately, the detailed references to worship in the New Testament are few, and they do not tell us nearly all that we should wish to know. To get anything like a comprehensive picture, it is necessary to use a good deal of imagination and to piece together the New Testament references, in the light of what Christian worship became at a later period—say in the second or third centuries. When we do this, we get, for the period about 100 A.D., a result something like the following:

Derived from the Synagogue: Scripture readings (1 Tim. 4: 13); psalms and hymns (Eph. 5: 19); common prayers (Acts 2: 42); the people’s Amens (1 Cor. 14: 16); a sermon or explanation of scripture (Acts 20: 7); a confession of faith, not necessarily a fixed form like a creed (1 Cor. 15: 1-4; 1 Tim. 6: 12); and perhaps almsgiving (1 Cor. 16: 1-2; 2 Cor. 9: 10-13).

Derived from the Upper Room (Last Supper) and usually joined to the above: The Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11: 23-25; Mark 14: 22-24; Luke 22: 19, 20); prayer, probably including thanksgiving (1 Cor. 11: 24; 14: 16), remembrance of our Lord’s death and resurrection (1 Cor. 11: 23-26), intercession (John 17), and perhaps the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6: 9-13). Probably there was singing in this part of the service.

The men were bare-headed and the women covered (1 Cor. 11: 6, 7). The attitude of prayer seems to have been standing, with arms outstretched and palms upward, as was the Jewish custom (1 Tim. 2: 8; Ps. 134: 2).

(Note: The above summary is adapted from Dr. W. D. Maxwell’s “Outline of Christian Worship.”)

From Acts 1: 12-14 and 12: 12, it appears as though there were also informal gatherings for prayer, with no “breaking of bread.”

Nothing has been said about the music to which the psalms and hymns were sung; and for the good reason that nothing is known for certain about it. The most that can be said is that it was probably like a “recitative” or chant, without harmony, and with a range of only a few notes.

Assignments.

1. How much influence did the synagogue have upon the Christian way of worship?
2. What were the chief ideas in the Lord’s Supper?
3. What did the Early Church feel about times and places for united worship?
4. What is meant by objectivity in worship?
5. What would impress us, if we could step into the worship meetings of the Early Church? Would they have anything which is partly missing in our worship? How should we try to regain it?

STUDY 4.

Worship—Its Place and Value

DAILY READINGS.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. 1 Samuel 15: 25-31. | 5. Col. 1: 12-24. |
| 2. Isaiah 6: 1-8. | 6. Ephesians 3: 14-21. |
| 3. Psalm 95. | 7. Revelation 4: 11; 22: |
| 4. Psalm 96. | 1-5. |

Worship, for the Christian Church and for the member within it, is the supremely important duty. It is not something which the member and the Church may do, along with other equally important things; it is the first duty and highest privilege. Out of true worship come all abiding and inspiring things. The Church which has lost the reality, the mystery, wonder, and awe of worship, has no Gospel, no "good news" to declare. Such a Church is a poor emaciated body, from which the life-blood has gone. Its people may stir themselves with some worthy idealism and be earnest in an endeavour to show how truth should affect daily living, but it will be a burdened effort against overwhelming odds, at best only partially successful, unless the Church abides in the awe and the hallowed mystery of adoration. A splendid passage from A. G. Hebert is worth noticing:

"Christian worship is in the first place, and above all, the worship of God, the acknowledgment by the rational creature of the sovereignty of the Creator to whom he belongs, and for whose glory he exists. With worship goes confession of faith in God as Creator, the Redeemer, the Life-giver—'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath

visited and redeemed his people.' This worship or adoration is the collective act of the Church, and is the confession and common faith with regard to the foundation on which the universe and human society rests: it is also the personal act of each individual, the charter of his freedom as a child of God . . . 'O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker.'"

Might we not ask if here indeed lies the weakness of our Reformed Church to-day? Some Churches have not adequately kept before their members the great and solemn reality of that worship which has learned to hold mystic fellowship with the Risen Lord and the unseen company of heaven. True and adoring worship before the presence of the Son of God is very different from that subjective practice whose attention is turned primarily to the worshipper, and so often makes him merely a member of an audience.

Too frequently the attitude of mind is that of going, in perfect sincerity, to get something; to receive a stimulus from a preacher or a choir, or from encouraging words which at times members of the congregation sing to one another. But surely the heart that is to receive must first come with the note of adoration predominant; not getting but offering praise and thanksgiving, the giving of oneself wholly to God. "What shall I say, my God, my holy joy?" said Augustine. "I come to adore His splendour and fling myself and all I have at His feet." That is the attitude by which the soul is admitted to the secret place of God.

We remember that great chapter which describes the call of Isaiah. The cherubim, we note, had six wings, four of which were used in reverence and worship, and only two in the actual work of flying. The wings of flight will be weak indeed, unless strength is derived from true worship. "Worthy art thou to receive glory and honour and power, for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were and are created." That is an expression of the worship of the early Church. With that God-ward out-reaching desire of a hushed and joyous soul, contrast much of our common worship to-day.

Of course, we must recognise that worship has an individual and solitary side as well as its corporate or united acts. Indeed, the reality of united worship and its living witness to the holy will largely depend on the true fellowship which the individual child of God holds with the Father. "Set apart," says Bossuet, "a certain amount of time morning and evening. Adore Him with all the capacity you have, yet without anxiety as to the degree of your success—strive to adore and let that suffice." "Revival," wrote Evelyn Underhill, "has always come through persons for whom an adoring and realistic attitude toward God and a total self-giving to God's purpose have been the first interest in life." **THE SOURCE OF POWER IS DEVOTION WITHIN THE HEART.**

It must be seen, however, that this becomes effective only in association with others who are embraced within the fellowship of the Spirit of God. "Christian worship is never a solitary undertaking. The worshipper, however lonely in appearance, comes before God as a member of a great family, part of the communion of saints in heaven and on earth."

The disciple is a child of God to whom God will speak, whom He will embrace in holy love, but it must be remembered that he is a member of Christ's Body (the Church), whose interests must come before everything else. Any attempt to discount the need of public worship finds no support in the New Testament. We find Jesus in the Temple as a boy. He worshipped in the synagogue services, joined in the set prayers and responses, and listened to the reading of the Law and the Prophets. "Corporate worship," writes Rattenbury, "is inevitable if the Christian life is to be lived in the richness of which it is capable. . . . it is indeed inevitable if the faith is to be maintained at all."

"Whatever the life of religion be, eternally it must be a life of worship, all its parts pointing toward God with constant elevation. . . . We come out of the world for that purpose alone. We do not come out of the world merely under the idea that by an association we may be able to

accomplish certain plans that may commend themselves to us. We come out of the world in order that we may give ourselves to the worship of God—yield up body and soul with all their faculties in the great complex act of worship" (R. M. Benson). Such worship, taking hold of the whole life, leads the soul into the holy of holies where are revealed the deep things of God. The worshipper is in touch with the sources of life and his own life is made rich and strong in consequence. It is a supernatural action, and the life of the Church is to be thought of as one God-ward stream of adoration, supplication, and sacrificial love. Christian redemption is so much more than individual. Christian worship is not merely individual meditation, but the common worship of the whole Body, the Church, whose members learn the meaning of the common life which is in their Lord.

And what may the worshipping Church accomplish? Its thanksgiving ascends to the throne of God and joins with that of the heavenly hosts; by its supplication and confession the souls of its members are restored and filled with all the resources of God. In its wonderful ministry of intercession, the world is being won for Christ and the Kingdom advanced. In hearing the Word of God, its members are built up and strengthened. At its heart are the Sacraments with their Divine message, especially the wondrous Sacrament of Holy Communion, which is not only a rite of commemoration, but the chief act of worship, and that great act wherein Christ gives Himself to His faithful people, that they may be built up in one Holy Faith. The soul that does not worship dies like a branch cut off from the body of the tree. Let us notice two great quotations from Evelyn Underhill:

"From the first there was in Christian devotion to Christ a note of mystery, astonishment, and awe. The amazement and even fear which fell on the first followers, the sense of contact with One who was in the world and yet not of it, are repeated experiences of the early Church. His spirit, His presence, the mysterious communion of the faithful with their invisible Lord, who was at once the Shepherd of their souls and the food of eternal life—'Christ in us and

we in Christ,' Paul's sudden exultant declarations of union with the Divine Love; John's discussion on the bread of life—all these suggest a vividly experienced reality, a new disclosure, under veils, of the deep things of God, which calls out the utmost adoring love of the believer, exceeding the resources of speech."

But the worshipping life of the Church—Christ's Body—is not merely a collection of services and sacraments. "Deeply considered," this writer goes on to say, "it is not merely the sacrificial life of Christ Himself, the Word indwelling in the Church, gathering in His eternal priestly action the small Godward movements of all the broken and the meek. The corporate worship is not simply that of an assembly of individuals who believe the same things, and therefore unite in doing the same things. It is the Real in its own right, an action transcending and embracing all the separate souls taking part in it. The individual as such dies to his separate selfhood on entering the Divine Society, 'is buried in baptism,' and is reborn a living cell in the mystical Body of Christ."

People who have such a conception of worship, and who practise it, become radiant with joy. The Christian disciple is thus purified and transformed. It is not the mere acceptance of an ethical programme, a set of rules for good conduct, but the power of the Living God through Jesus Christ possessing Him. He is liberated and redeemed. It is not with tardy steps of duty that such a one goes to worship, but with the hastened steps of joy and thanksgiving, and when he turns to the world it is as one whose face shines, because he has held communion with God. When once a soul tastes of this true worship, he will never be satisfied only with bursts of eloquence from the pulpit or songs from a choir. His soul thirsts for God, for the living God—that he might appear before Him.

The Church will never have a true standard of values nor an illumined mind until it takes its people in constant worship into the secret place, and lights in their hearts a fire from the altar of God.

Assignments.

1. Has worship in the Reformed Church become too subjective? That is, do we use too frequently hymns whose words are addressed not to God but to one another? Do we think too much, not of what we hope to give to God, but of what we hope to get for ourselves, from the preaching and the singing?
2. How far will private devotion and preparation of the heart of individual members affect the quality of their united worship?
3. Have we failed to realise the supreme need of corporate (united) worship, both for ourselves and for the advance of the Kingdom of God?
4. Do we think of Holy Communion sufficiently—
 - (a) As worship and adoration of the Lord who is present?
 - (b) As not only a commemoration but also a thanksgiving?

STUDY 5.

Hindrances and Helps

DAILY READINGS.

1. Psalm 122.
2. Psalm 51: 6-17.
3. Acts 4: 23-33.
4. Acts 13: 1-4.
5. Ephesians 2: 18-22;
6: 18.
6. Hebrews 4: 12-16.
7. Revelation 5: 6-14.

What is Worship? The word "worship" (really "worth-ship") means giving another his worth or due. Worship is focussing the mind upon God, and going out of ourselves to God in adoration and self-surrender. In Christian worship we approach God through Christ, inspired by gratitude for His salvation. The central act commemorates Christ's reconciling Cross. The New Song declares, "Thou art worthy . . . for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (Matt. 26: 28; Heb. 10: 19; Rev. 5: 9).

Worship is much more than coming to Church and sharing in an impressive ceremony. There may be the actions of worship without the worship, as there may be in a home the kiss without love and loyalty. Worship involves a realisation of God, a break with sin, and adoring self-giving to God (Ps. 66: 18; Matt. 5: 23, 24).

Hindrances. Worship is the highest flight of the human spirit, and therefore needs a constant war against impediments, some of which we shall mention.

1. Men may be absorbed in a subjective religion, engrossed in their own spiritual experiences.
2. We may be interested more in our own good deeds than in what God is, and does, and gives. Worship is self-forgetting.

3. Through prejudice against set prayers, we may miss the enrichment which comes through a well-planned service and the free use of ancient liturgies along with our own prayers.

4. We may devote so much thought to externals, to buildings and forms, that we lose the spontaneity of heart-worship, "the language of the soul."

"Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,

In all the pomp of method, and of art,

Where men display to congregations wide

Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!"

5. The failure to combine private and public worship. Worship should be interwoven with daily life, as was the case with the Hebrew steward, and Brother Lawrence in his kitchen (Gen. 24: 24-28, 48-52). But many of the greatest experiences come in corporate worship around the "mercy seat" (Ex. 25: 22; Psalm 73: 17; Acts 2: 1; 13: 2; 22: 17, 18). The surging waves of Pentecost more often sweep over groups than individuals. Unless, like our Lord, we meet God in solitude, our united worship will be feeble. Each is essential for the vitality of the other.

6. Unconfessed and unforsaken sin (Is. 59: 1, 2).

7. Surrender to circumstances. While we should always work for beautiful services in a beautiful setting, we must train ourselves to worship in unideal circumstances, in a bleak bedroom, or in a crude meeting with jarring music. If we realise God vividly enough, the prison cell or the hard rock of the desert will become "the house of God" and "the gate of heaven." Circumstances may make worship less easy, but only sin makes worship impossible. In His presence everything is possible.

Let us beware also lest we hinder other people in their approach to God. A choir conductor obtruding himself on the service, a speaker repeating pious phrases, a member lounging languidly in his pew, may all divert attention from the Unseen. "The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him."

The **attitude** of reverence will suggest and stimulate the inner spirit in ourselves and others. If we show reverence

and concentration, we will begin to feel reverence and concentration. We should beware also of easy familiarity and lack of awe in addressing God. Our Master said, "Holy Father," and "Lord of heaven and earth" (Psalm 95: 6; Heb. 12: 28, 29; John 17: 11; Luke 10: 21).

Helps for Worship.

1. First and foremost, among the helps to better worship, is the **outward look, the movement of mind and soul towards GOD**, the cultivation of an **objective** religion. Meditation upon the great Facts, the great Events, the great Realities of our faith, is necessary in order that our worship be deep-rooted. Devotion must feed upon facts if the fire is to burn steadily within us. "While I was musing, the fire burned." Special attention should be given to the Lord's Supper, because it brings us face to face with our Living Lord and His redeeming death.

It is well to observe the Christian Year with its recurring stress upon the incarnation of our Lord, His great sacrifice and triumphant resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the birth of the Church. Any neglect of the Christian Year means impoverishment of the spiritual life. Following season by season the great events of our Lord's life takes our minds off ourselves and "the present situation," and defeats monotony by calling forth a wide range of thought and heart-response. Changing aspects of the love and action of God are in turn made real to us, and fresh use is found for our rich heritage of history, poetry, and liturgy. First, then the outward and upward look.

2. Seek to **visualise** the hymns and prayers used in the house of God. Paul said he would pray and sing "with the understanding." Hymns and prayers may be used without the imagination realising the **ideas** in them. "Words without thoughts never to heaven go." The Lord's Prayer may be a meaningless routine, but what inspiration there is in it, if each clause is pictured out as it is repeated. "Thy . . . kingdom . . . come. Thy . . . will . . . be done." The

persistent practice of following the meaning of prayer and song with a devout imagination will revolutionise worship. It is our realisation more than our ritual that gives dynamic to our service in the sanctuary. "Mighty moods are created by majestic visions."

3. We must make full use of all the elements of worship, putting our whole soul into each as they occur in succession. What, then, should worship include?

(a) The **realisation of God** as the Living Father. We must take time to say to our hearts, "God is real. God is here. I am going to deal with God."

(b) **Adoration and Praise**. If our hearts do not rise to adore and praise Him who is infinite in wisdom, and in glory beyond imagination, worship has hardly begun. We must seek to catch the spirit of Rev. 1: 5, 6; 5: 11, 12; 1 Tim. 6: 16.

(c) **Thanksgiving**. We praise God for what He is. We thank Him for what He has done (Psalm 103: 1-5; 107: 8).

(d) **Confession of Sin**. We see the pure white glory of God, then we see our own failures and drag them into the light, to seek forgiveness and deliverance (Is. 6: 5-7; 1 John 1: 9).

(e) **Surrender to God**. The ancient worshipper presented a lamb or other sacrifice. We present our very selves, a "living sacrifice." This is our "reasonable service," that is, worship performed by the "reason," spiritual worship. "So present all your faculties to Him as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to Him—a spiritual mode of worship" (Rom. 12: 1, Weymouth). With the dedication of ourselves would go the presentation of our gifts. "We worship God by giving as He hath prospered us." The offering must be an act of **worship to God** (Psalm 96: 8, 9), not some money carelessly contributed to a good cause. Let us ever remember that there is no substitute in worship for our present dedication to God and His will.

(f) **Petition and Intercession** will inevitably follow, as we enter into the eternal purposes of God.

(g) **Receiving the Word of God.** The converts of Pentecost "devoted themselves to the instruction given by the Apostles." But men say, "We come to Church to worship God, and not to hear a sermon." Certainly the preacher may intrude into the sacred hour some passing theory of the age, instead of the eternal message of God. Nevertheless, to bow the soul to the Word of God is an act of worship. The Anglican Prayer Book rightly places this among the elements of worship: "We assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at His hands, to set forth His most holy praise, to **hear His most holy Word**, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul." We find our Lord in the synagogue worship, reading and explaining the Scriptures (Luke 4: 15, 16). The Apostles followed His example. The Word is no echo of the past, but a present and dynamic message spoken by God now, through scripture, song, sacrament, and sermon. Let us receive in the spirit of worship the Word of God which works effectively in the believing heart. Examine Acts 13: 2; 14: 1; 10: 44; 11: 14; 1 Thess. 2: 13.

Due attention to these varied elements will greatly widen and deepen our devotional life and the service of the Church.

4. Rely upon the **inspiration of the Holy Spirit**. He has been given to help our infirmities, and we are never more weak than when seeking to rise to the throne of God (Rom. 8: 26). The Holy Spirit's aid is needed in preaching. He is needed equally in prayer. We must pray "in the Spirit" (Eph. 6: 18; Jude 20). We come to the Father through the merits and mediation of the Son, and by the illumination and energy of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2: 18). A mark of the true Christian is that he "worships by the Spirit." "We are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3: 3, R.V.) At the beginning of the service definitely ask the Spirit's aid for realisation and concentration and direction.

"Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire;
Let us Thine influence prove."

5. Worship in the spirit of expectation.

"My soul, wait thou only upon God,
For my expectation is from Him."

Believe that **something is going to happen** because our worship is a response to a movement from God. Christ is in our midst as we gather together, and something divine passes over into the worshipping soul (Matt. 18: 20; Rev. 2: 1). The winds of heaven blow through our minds and we see things small and great in their true perspective.

We should come to the Lord's House and the Lord's Table confidently expecting to meet the Lord, to hear His voice, and to receive His power (Ex. 25: 22).

"And heaven comes down our souls to greet,
And glory crowns the mercy seat."

Personal.

1. The first step is to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and through Him to make a definite break with the old life. There must be cleansing before communion, and forgiveness before fellowship. When the priest entered the Tabernacle, he came to the altar of burnt-offering and the laver (signifying dedication and cleansing), before he drew nigh to the inner place of worship. Undoubtedly attendance at worship and private prayer will help the undecided to make the great venture. The house of God is the chief birthplace of souls, but we must press on to the **personal acceptance** of Christ and His offer of cleansing from sin and power to live a new life. We shall worship with the "New Song" when we can say with conviction, "Christ has delivered me from my sins and brought me into His Kingdom (Col. 1: 13, 14; Psalm 40: 1-3; Rev. 5: 9). That "great transaction" can take place this very hour.

2. Let us seek to be God-conscious and God-centred in all our services:

"Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him" (Acts 12: 5). "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5: 19, 20).

WORSHIP THE KING.

"THOU art the King of Glory, O Christ;
THOU art the everlasting Son of the Father."

"Day by day we magnify THEE
And we worship Thy Name ever, world without end."

Assignments.

1. Which elements in worship are you most tempted to neglect? What is distinctive in **Christian** worship?
2. What have you found the biggest hindrances to real worship? How are you overcoming them?
3. How may (a) scripture and (b) imagination help us in worship?
4. Could you describe several things which would make our corporate worship more helpful?
5. What is your chief resolution as the result of these studies?

STUDY 6.

Worship in the Reformed Church

DAILY READINGS.

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Matt. 7: 13-23. | 5. Galatians 1: 3-12. |
| 2. Matt. 23: 1-12, 23-26. | 6. Galatians 2: 11-21. |
| 3. 1 Cor. 13. | 7. Hebrews 10: 11-25. |
| 4. 1 Cor. 14: 14-20. | |

The Reformed Church is not a new Church started in the sixteenth century. It is the Catholic Church of our Lord, "re-formed" on the original lines, cleansed from alien additions, and restored as nearly as possible to New Testament principles with regard to doctrine, worship, government, and moral standards.

Protestant worship is not something inferior to that of the Greek or Roman Churches. We recognise gladly the vast contribution of the Roman Church to the world's welfare and the splendid loyalty of its saints and martyrs to our common faith and Lord. But the test of any worship is not the amount of colourful ceremony in it, but the extent to which it brings the worshipper into vital union with God, and transforms his daily life. Whoever does not rise from his worship a better man has not worshipped rightly. "By their fruits ye shall know them," said our Lord. Judged by this test, the simple and profound worship of the Reformed and other Protestant Churches is quite as effective as the elaborate ceremonial of sacerdotal or priestly Churches. Witness the Waldenses, Huguenots, Puritans, Covenanters. The facts amply prove that the more direct and simple the worship, the deeper the moral influence on the life of the worshippers.

Non-Sacerdotal. Reformed worship and all true Protestant worship is non-sacerdotal. In this it is simply a return to the priestless and democratic religion of the New Testament. That great scholar, Bishop Lightfoot, said, "Above all, it has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man, by whose intervention alone God is reconciled and man forgiven. Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To Him immediately he is responsible, and from Him directly he obtains pardon and draws strength. . . . For in this respect Christianity stands apart from all the older religions of the world."

Whence the Priest? The priest idea crept in over the long years from the religions that were dominant around the Mediterranean. Dr. Angus says of these religions, "They lent themselves too easily to externalism by an exaggerated importance of ritualism; they awakened a religious exaltation such as has rarely appeared in religious history, but with which ethical considerations were not a primary interest; they confused the physical symbol and the religious experience."

Thus, from an atmosphere soaked in priestcraft and magic, there gradually evolved the Roman system. The Re-formed Church threw off these alien elements, and sought to worship God in spirit and in truth without any human mediator intervening, in a religion of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Every believer was a priest with equal right to approach God. Every home was a place of worship where "the priest-like father reads the sacred page," and leads the family to the Throne of God ("The Cotter's Saturday Night," by Burns). Indeed, the priesthood of all believers is the fundamental principle of Reformed worship, as it was in the New Testament age (Matt. 23: 8-12; Heb. 10: 11-25; 1 Pet. 2: 5-9).

The Reformation was a great revival of religion, in which man-made barriers between man and God were swept away, and every believer had restored to him the right of direct fellowship with God. God was no Eastern Potentate who

could be approached only through "officials," but a Father whose inner room was ever open to His children.

The Real Presence. We believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament, but His Presence is in the service as a whole and not in the bread and wine. Some think that the consecration by the priest changes the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. But we believe the bread and wine remain bread and wine, though set apart to perform a most sacred function. The spiritual benefit is in the service, which makes Christ and His saving work more real to us, and thus opens our hearts to His presence and power.

The Communion is a "visible word," speaking to the eye as the sermon speaks to the ear, encouraging us to realise and appropriate the offered Christ, to make Him ours, even as we assimilate the bread and wine, and so make them part of our very life. Bishop Barnes, a modern Anglican scholar, says, "**The root principle of idolatry is belief in a deity localised in material objects through the invocation of a priest.** In opposition to any such types of belief, it must be affirmed that a Sacrament is a psychological process, in the course of which the believer makes contact with God or the spiritual world. Thus the whole service of Holy Communion is the Sacrament."

An ancient Presbyterian scholar, Bruce of Edinburgh, in like manner said, "It would be asked, 'Wherefore are Sacraments annexed, seeing we get no more in the Sacrament than in the Word?' Thy heart cannot wist nor imagine a greater gift than to have the Son of God, who is the King of heaven and earth. And therefore I say, what new things wouldst thou have? The Sacrament is appointed that we may get a better grip of Christ than we get in the simple Word."

Here we are the guests of the Living Lord Himself. Here we pledge our loyalty to Him and our loyalty to His people. Here in corporate witness we proclaim to men His atoning death. Here again by faith we see His Cross and His coming triumph, and are caught up in the vast stream of the holy fellowship of all the centuries (1 Cor. 11: 23-26. Compare R.V.). Here, above all, God reveals Himself to the silent and

waiting soul, and bestows His own life, as the vine pours sap into the branches.

The tendency of human nature to superstition and magic is so strong (witness current superstitions) that in every time of weakened faith even good men clutch at some material of magical support. We can easily see, therefore, how the simple and moving Fellowship Meal and Memorial Feast of the Early Church developed into the semi-magical ceremonial of the later centuries. We shall need to guard against this tendency in subtle forms

Table or Pulpit Central? In Reformed Worship, should the Table or the Pulpit occupy the central place in the House of God? Gunther Dehn says in "Man and Revelation," "The Reformers made a decisive break when they relinquished the central element in the Roman Catholic Mass and put the sermon in its place. In the Mass the central act is the consecration, the eucharistic miracle. That is what attracts the Roman Catholic to his Church" At the heart of Roman worship stands the altar, at the heart of Reformed Worship stands the Word. "Of the Divine Service," says Luther, "the greatest and most important portion is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God." Calvin said, "The right administration of the sacraments is not without the word. For whatsoever profit we reap by the supper, the word is requisite." We come to Church, as the Anglican Prayer Book says, "to hear His most holy Word." The pulpit is the throne of the Word of God. It stands to exhibit and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, His Cross and way of living.

The contrast, therefore, between Pulpit and Table, Sermon and Sacrament, is a false one. "Primarily and essentially the Sacrament is Christ Himself, thus giving Himself to be the life of His believing people" (Carnegie Simpson in "The Evangelical Church Catholic," Lecture Three). That is exactly what the Scripture does. (See Shorter Catechism, questions 89-91.) Scripture and Sermon present and convey Christ in words. The Sacrament presents and conveys Christ in symbols and actions. Both are effective only so far as there is a believing response from mind and heart. Hence, Sacrament and Sermon are complementary and not

competitive. Both Pulpit and Table should have due honour. Placing the Table in the centre (as was done at Geneva) need not be a turning back to sub-Christian ideas. It can be a visible reminder that the Church is no mere lecture-hall, but the guardian of the Gospel of salvation through the sacrifice of the Son of God, and also a continual call to a life of fellowship and service in the spirit of that Cross.

Liturgy or Free Prayer? Some Churches restrict their ministers to a definite liturgy, a collection of set forms of prayer with responses. Others feel that they must be free to pray as the Spirit of God and the needs of the age suggest. Others desire to combine liturgical and "free" prayer as the occasion demands. John Wesley said, "As I know no forms that suit all occasions, I am often under the necessity of praying extempore." He, however, drew up a Prayer Book for the Methodists in America.

Presbyterian Churches are not of necessity opposed to a liturgy. Aided by the older books of Farel and Bucer, Calvin while in Strassburg (1538-1541) drew up for the French congregation there a Liturgy and Book of Psalms. John Knox drew up a Service Book modelled on Calvin's Liturgy, and it was used in Scotland, along with free prayer, for eighty years. The minister was encouraged to pray "either in these words following, or like in effect." Again the Liturgy says, "The minister prayeth for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, as the same shall move his heart, and so proceedeth to the Sermon; using after the Sermon this Prayer following, or such like."

When a riot broke out in St. Giles' Cathedral in 1637 against the Prayer Book imposed by the King, the objection was not to read prayers as such. Indeed, that morning at 8 o'clock Patrick Henderson had read prayers in St. Giles' from Knox's Liturgy, as he had been doing both on Sunday and week mornings. The objection was to a Book suspected of Popish leanings being imposed illegally, without the authority of the Church.

The American Presbyterian and other Churches have optional liturgies. At the same time, the tradition of the Reformed Church is to demand a minister capable of fram-

ing his own service, and to desire freedom to follow the guidance of the Spirit of God in every special circumstance. In hours of spiritual awakening no liturgy would be adequate. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." Beauty and order are most desirable, but we must not sacrifice spontaneity, freshness, and warmth. Sameness may easily pass into mechanical repetition. Liturgy or no liturgy, corporate prayer requires careful preparation, and surely also the wise use of the devotional treasures of the Universal Church. There must be freedom as well as order, freedom to learn from others what is most helpful in the Sanctuary.

The same open mind must be preserved with regard to Church architecture. We agree with Peden, the Covenanter, in saying, "I will tell you where the Church is. It is wherever a praying young man or young woman is at a dykeside in Scotland: that's where the Church is." At the same time, no building can be too beautiful, no music too noble, and no service too exalted for the worship of God.

Why a Church? Protestant worship requires a living Church. The Church is no "humanistic" organisation, but a Fellowship of redeemed and worshipping people. It is the creation of God, born from above, sustained from above, and perfected above. Even now the vast majority of its members are before the throne, worshipping Him who died and is alive for evermore (Eph. 5: 25-27). The Church is essential for real corporate worship, just as corporate worship is essential for the life of the Church. (See "Vital Elements of Public Worship," by Rattenbury.)

Positive and Not Negative. Reformed worship must be positive and actively related to life. Opposition to Romanism does not make one a Protestant. There are millions of anti-Catholics who are much further away from our principles than the Roman Catholics themselves are. The true Protestant, in good will to all men, loves the Church, cherishes the fellowship of the Holy Table, worships with the mind rather than with sensuous emotion, and bows his whole being before the Majesty of the Lord.

In Scripture and Sacrament the genuine Protestant hears God speaking to his soul, and in glad

self-surrender goes out to obey that Voice in all the varied relationships of life. The Voice of the Living God speaking in the Scriptures was the discovery which created the Reformation. That discovery of God and His Word and His Worship must be made by everyone who desires to be a practising Protestant.

"We praise Thee, O God;

We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord."

"To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Literature. We have already mentioned excellent books by Rattenbury (Methodist) and Carnegie Simpson (Presbyterian). See also "The Presbyterian Churches," by Moffatt, chapters 8 and 10.

Assignments.

1. A man says, "I come to Church to worship God, not to hear a sermon." How would you answer him?
2. Stanley Jones says that religion is first of all "the life of God in the soul. Religion means realisation. If not, religion soon means ritual, and that means death. The early disciples had little ritual, but mighty realisation." How far do you agree?
3. Why do we call our Church the "Reformed" Church? What are the marks of a true Protestant?
4. What are the outstanding features of Protestant worship?
5. Which of these elements are being neglected by youth to-day? How can we get them restored to their proper place?

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