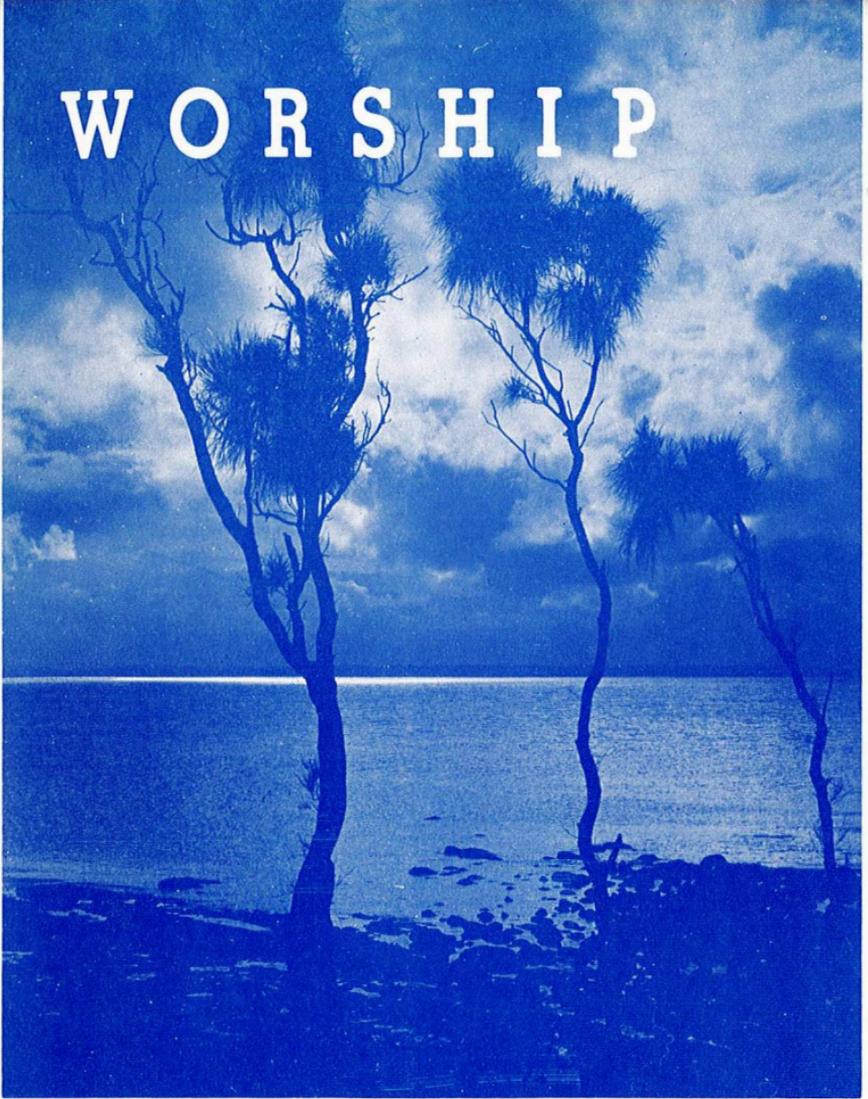


# WORSHIP



BY PRINCIPAL BREED



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## THE CHURCH'S WORSHIP



Attention will first be given to several matters which concern the first of the fundamental relations of life, namely, relation to God. It is not, of course, implied that any part of life is unrelated to God, but some departments of life exhibit that relation more definitely. In worship the emphasis upon the 'God-relationship' is very strong indeed. Various aspects of worship will be considered, and the matter which it seems desirable to study will be laid out under several heads.

Worship has two main parts, spiritual and material: these will be treated as: *I. Its Nature*, and *II. Its Form*. With regard to the former, the chief points are: *1. Its spirituality*: a. Public worship; b. Family worship; c. Private worship. *2. Its truth*: a. False worship of false gods; b. False worship of the true God; c. True worship of the true God.

With regard to the latter, the chief points are:- *1. Form and order of service*: a. Parts of the service; b. Posture of the worshippers; c. Participation of the worshippers. *2. Accompaniments of worship*: a. The place — architecture; b. Church music; c. Dress — of officiating minister, and of the worshippers.

Let no one think that any of the above questions are trivial and of no consequence. ALL the foregoing matters *matter* — that is why they are called "matters." Matter means substance, and there is substance in all these points for serious thinking. In

worship, the worshipper is dealing with God, and to God, *nothing* is trivial in the absolute sense. True, the various features of worship are not all important in the same way. The number of hymns used at a service is of less moment than the nature of the hymns. Nevertheless, everything is of importance in its own way, and in its own relations. There are many men occupying pulpits who would do well to secure some other situation until they have learned the nature and value of worship. The same holds true of many church officers, sidesmen and pew-holders.

The true worshippers of the living God *are bound* to a certain kind of worship. “. . . they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth,” John 4:24. Note that *must* — it is vital. Hence the Lord declares that the true worshippers are sought by the Father, John 4:23. The verb “seek” in this passage is the same as in Luke 19:10, “. . . the Son of man is come to ‘seek’ and to save . . .” The Father seeks the true worshippers, just as the Son seeks the lost. As there is nothing trivial about the salvation of the lost, so there is nothing trivial about true worship.

The profoundest fellowship possible is to be experienced in true worship. The keenest and most satisfying joy of which human nature is capable: the greatest source of comfort and the sturdiest encouragement are all found in true worship.

## I. WORSHIP — ITS NATURE



### 1. ITS SPIRITUALITY

“The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth,” John 4:23, 24. In this language God’s great Son lays down for all time the nature of real worship — *it is spiritual*. Since the true worshippers *must* worship in spirit, it follows that any kind of worship that lacks spirituality is not really worship at all. The angels and the redeemed host worship God. The disciples worshipped God in an upper room. The apostles worshipped by a river side. Abraham worshipped on a mountain. Jonah worshipped in the depth of the sea. In each of these cases the *form* of worship was evidently different, but one common element was present in all, namely, *spirituality*.

The absolute necessity of spiritual worship is based upon the nature of God. He is a Spirit, and hence cannot be worshipped by men’s hands, Acts 17:25, but only when the intent of the human spirit is concerned. Moreover, the intent of the soul is truly concerned only when the Holy Spirit Himself resides within. The ‘we’ in Phil.3:3, “which worship God in the spirit” are the ‘saints’ of Phil.1:1. The true worshippers are sought by the Father: but those whom the Father seeks are His children. Hence these alone can really worship God.

The verb used in John 4, is "proskuneo." 'Pros' implies motion towards, and 'kuneo' means to kiss; so that the force of the term is 'to kiss towards,' 'to kiss the hand to.' There are many professing worshippers who throw kisses to God, while their hearts are enslaved by carnal things. Could the weeds of hypocrisy grow ranker than that?

The spirituality of worship brings comfort to God's child when a victim of enforced absence from the meeting place, for the spirit can worship God still. The afflicted saint lying on a bed of pain can still worship God since worship is spiritual. Not so the man who withdraws his presence from public worship with the excuse that he 'can worship God in his own home.' The man who wilfully disobeys Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . .", is not in a worshipping spirit.

In view of the spiritual nature of worship it becomes evident that no worship can be offered while contemplating the latest milliner's creation in the other pew; or trying to catch the eye and the smirk of the other 'worshipper'; or thinking over the last business appointment; or wondering whether the gas was turned out at home. Roving eyes and wandering thoughts are mutual friends.

The true worshippers, who are set on the glory of the Lord, are ever stirred by the rallying call of the ages: "Oh worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him all the earth." Thus do they bow before Him in reverent awe and loving adoration. Thus do they enter into the wondrous fellowship of their God, and hear the words of forgiveness and assurance so sweetly spoken, while their spirit seems in heaven to stay. Glorious foretaste of eternal days!

#### (a) PUBLIC WORSHIP

This term means worship performed in public by an assembly of worshippers. Since the true worshippers are bound by divine injunction to spiritual worship, it follows that public worship must be an expression of spirituality. That is to be its guiding principle. Whatever cannot be fairly interpreted as an expression of spirituality, or seems in any way to be inconsistent with Holy

Scripture, is to be eliminated. This spiritual inward worship consists of the feelings of love, admiration, confidence, and submission to the Deity as the Supreme Being. Where there is this true spiritual worship there will be, of necessity, an outward reverence expressing itself in some 'form' of service. Nothing, however, can take the place of spirituality. No beauty of architecture and no magnificence of music can atone for lack of spirituality.

Public worship is obligatory. This is declared by Scripture precept, and Scripture example. The words of Hebrews 10:25, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," are but an echo of the ancient commandment of the Lord, "Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger . . . that they may hear . . . learn, and fear the Lord your God," Deut.31:12. The examples of our Lord and of His apostles likewise bear clear testimony to the Divine will in this matter. Public worship is not optional. The wilful sinning of Hebrews 10:26 is intimately connected with absence from public worship. The terms 'judgment' and 'fiery indignation' are used in this passage. Every absence from Divine worship must be accounted for.

The purpose and design of public worship is threefold. First, it is the public adoration of the Triune God as the Lord of the universe; the Creator of mankind; and the Head of the Church. Second, it is the communion of believers as a congregation for the mutual strength and common blessing which belongs to this means of grace. Third, it is the church's witness to the outside world of faith in Jesus Christ.

This threefold design has one great end — the glory of God. The whole of religion and its accompanying worship is for the glory of God. It is not first for man's sake, and then for the Lord. It is entirely for God, although man finds therein his good also. It is because this fact is lost sight of, that worship has become so diverse and formal. Worship that is designed first to please the worshipper misses entirely its true purpose. The first consideration in planning public worship is not, 'What do the worshippers want?' It is, 'What does God demand?' The 'tone' of a public service is made or marred as the worshippers aim or fail to aim, at the glory of the Lord. That worship becomes

burdensome and its exercises tiresome is shocking proof that the churches have fallen far from spirituality. Heartless hymns; forced prayers; indolent worshippers – are these the things for which Christ bled and died?

#### (b) FAMILY WORSHIP

The home, with its family, is a Divine institution. It is not an invention of man. From it all our human social life has unfolded. The ancient Roman and Grecian nations, which despised family life, crumbled and passed away. From the Israelites the beauty of the family passed over into the Christian Church, and in every land where the gospel was truly planted, the home came to have a sacred significance. The home is more highly esteemed in Christian countries than in pagan countries: in Protestant lands than in Romish lands.

In some continental countries today, few people are at home after the midday meal in good weather, but the populace flock to the Squares and streets. On the other hand, in lands like Holland and Scotland, where the Reformation left a deep impression, the home came to be valued as a refuge and solace from the world. From the cares of the day, God's people gladly turn to their homes for comfort and rest.

It is when the home, through its godlessness has lost its true character, that people incline more and more to places of amusement, the club, and the public-house, in their pathetic endeavours to escape from daily care *and* home.

In one way alone can the home become what it should be, that is by due recognition of God in family worship. Only so can the home be saved from becoming itself a little copy of the world. Only so can the home become an island in the world-sea; an oasis in a desert of Christless glamour.

Our Lord spoke of the Father's House of many Mansions. Of old time God was pleased to dwell in a House on Zion. He even condescended to be a house Himself unto His people; "Be thou O God, a strong house unto me, for me to dwell in," Psalm 31:2 (Dutch version) 'The Scriptures make it plain that the honour of the house is allied to the honour of God, and how the "curse of

the Lord is in the house," Proverbs 3:33, when the soul wanders off, and abandons God.

One result of the Reformation upon public worship was to emphasise preaching – and rightly. It is left to family worship to emphasise the devotional side of worship. The members of the family are separated during the day. They return at even from the turmoil of the world and its many risks, and find so much to lay before the Lord *as a family*. In many homes in Holland the Scriptures are read after every meal. At least once, at the close of the day, the family should gather around the Word in prayer. For lack of this Christian home-life, England is becoming decadent, and children are supposing that God and worship belong to the place of worship, and have nothing to do with their homes. Jacob cried, "This is the gate of heaven;" and 'this' might be every Christian home, did people but love God and their homes enough!

#### (c) PRIVATE WORSHIP

The first worship performed on earth was private devotion. Before the Lord God gave Eve to Adam, the only worship existing upon earth was the worship rendered by man alone. This means that private devotion is the fundamental type of all true worship. If the family or the congregation had been essential for the *nature* of worship, then Adam, by himself, could not have worshipped. The history of worship begins with Adam; becomes family worship with the arrival of Eve; and develops into public worship with the coming of families. All through this history, private devotion remains the basic type of real worship, and consequently a company of people worships only to the extent that the individuals concerned adore God in their own hearts. Hence it is easily possible for some members of a company to render no worship at all, for while they may take part in the outward exercises of the service, their hearts may be otherwise engaged. Personal worship is the essential type, just as spirit and truth are the essential characteristics.

It will now be seen that worship rendered in private by the individual is an essential for the Christian life. There is no sub-

stitute for private devotion, just as there is no substitute for family or congregational worship. Neither can one form of worship deputise for another form. Just as listening to a broadcast service is no *substitute* for public worship, so public or family worship is no substitute for private devotion. This most personal and intimate form of worship is essential for the spiritual health and development of the child of God. Persons whose attendance at public worship gradually diminishes are invariably persons who have neglected private devotion. It is by private devotion alone that spirituality can be properly developed and deepened. This was the case with the disciples of our Lord. What He taught in public, He expounded in private to His followers. How many present-day disciples get on to their knees about the sermons they hear? Is it not more the fashion to hear a discourse, commend or criticise it, and then let it go at that?

The *personal* nature of private worship is at once its glory and its wonder. None would care to say in public, all they say to God in private! It is in the secret chamber that the intimacy of God's friendship is thus to be learned. Quite apart from any human relation, there is the question of what God's child is in himself as God sees him. This matter can be elucidated only in secret adoration of the Lord. Besides, there are so many wondrous benefits to enter into, as the soul grows in grace. Through lack of this knowledge, there are so many poor, shallow, earth-bound Christians who are not one whit happier than any child of the world. The church of today is menaced by a host of spiritual consumptives for whom there is no isolation hospital.

## II. WORSHIP — ITS FORM



### 1. FORM AND ORDER OF SERVICE

#### (a) PARTS OF THE SERVICE

It has already been noticed that worship has two aspects, the inward, and the outward. The former consists of the feelings of love, admiration, and submission to the Deity as the Supreme Being. The latter consists of the manifestations of the former in speech, posture and action. Thus our Lord in times of worship, "lifted up his eyes", John 17:1; "kneeled down", Luke 22:41; "fell on his face", Matt.26:39. These actions were all outward manifestations of His inward adoration of God.

Whenever the inner spirit of worship exists, some outer 'form' of worship will accompany it. No one form of worship can be laid down as alone right. Spirituality is to remain the principle characteristic, and no form which obscures that fact can be acknowledged. Aesthetic emotion stirred by outer conditions is not to be mistaken for spiritual fervour. If true spirituality is present, the form of worship will be reverent and fitting. Neither the Bible, nor the Reformed Faith hangs a 'form' like a halter, about the neck of the worshipper. The form of worship is governed by the examples of Scripture, and by the general injunction of 1 Corinthians 14:26 and 40, ". . . when ye come together . . . let all things be done unto edifying. . . . Let all things be done decently and in order" (literally 'according to arrangement').

The parts of true worship are not left to the fancy of men, but are shown in the Scriptures. In this connection five essentials can be traced in the New Testament. 1. *Preaching*, 2 Timothy 4:2, 'Preach the Word'; Matthew 28:19, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations'; and Mark 16:15, '... Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel'. 2. *Reading of Scripture*, Luke 4:16, '... and stood up for to read'; Acts 13:15, 'and after the reading of the law'; Col.4:16, 'And when this epistle is read among you'; 1 Thess. 5:27, 'I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren'; 2 Timothy 4:13, "Bring . . . and the books, but especially the parchments'. 3. *Praise*, 1 Corinthians 14:15, " . . . I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also'; Eph.5:19, 'speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord'. 4. *Prayer*, 1 Timothy 2:1, 'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men'. 5. *Administration of Ordinances*, Matthew 28:19, 20, '... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, 'For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he break it, and said, take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come'. On a wider view there could be added, Observance of the Lord's Day, and a duly Appointed Ministry. Acts 20:7, 'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them . . . ' and in 1 Corinthians 16:2, 'Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come'. Luke 10:1, 'After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come'. Acts 14:23, 'And when they had ordained them elders in every

church . . .'; Titus 1:5, 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee'. It is evident, then, that the church must give attention to all the foregoing. Not that every one of these parts must be present on every occasion, but that each must receive due regard in church life and worship.

The amount of attention given to any of the parts of worship will depend upon circumstances, and the prompting of the Spirit. Jesus sometimes spent a whole night in prayer, and Paul spent a whole night in preaching. In times of special stress, prayer becomes more desired. In times of ignorance, as at the Reformation, instruction and preaching must be emphasised. Always must thanksgiving abound. Note Mark 14:26, 'And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives'; 2 Corinthians 4:15, 'For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God'; Philippians 4:6, 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God'; Colossians 4:2, 'Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving'. Spiritually-minded persons, who are walking in the fellowship of the Lord, know almost instinctively when the outward form of their worship is suited to their spiritual attitude, and pleasing to the great Head of the Church.

#### (b) POSTURE OF THE WORSHIPPERS

Everything relating to the form of worship is to be governed by the nature of worship. This has already been determined as spiritual. If the nature of worship is right, the form of worship will be right also. Where there is spirituality there will also be reverent and suitable posture. There is, however, no one form prescribed in Holy Scripture. Various postures of the worshippers are noted in the Scriptures in various circumstances. The chief of these are:-

*STANDING*. Abraham stood before the Lord when interceding for Sodom, Genesis 18:22. At the giving of the Law, the people stood, Exodus 20:18-21. At the removal of the Tabernacle the

people stood and worshipped in their tent doors, Exodus 33:8-10. The congregation stood before the Lord at the time of the sin-offering, Leviticus 9:5. Solomon stood to pray at the dedication of the Temple, 1 Kings 8:22, and also kneeled, 2 Chronicles 6:13. The Pharisee, and the publican both stood for prayer, Luke 18:11, 13.

**KNEELING.** The Psalmist's call to worship is a call to kneel before God, Psalm 95:6. Ezra kneeled to intreat God, Ezra 9:5. Daniel kneeled in prayer, Daniel 6:10. So also did our Lord, Luke 22:41; Stephen, Acts 7:60; Peter, Acts 9:40; and Paul, Acts 20:36.

**SITTING.** The Israelites in seeking the Lord sat before Him, Judges 20, 26, and David also sat before the Lord, 1 Chronicles 17:16.

It will be remembered that our Lord stood up to read the Scriptures, and sat down to expound them, Luke 4:16, 20-21; also that the following gestures are mentioned in particular circumstances; stretching forth the hands, bowing the head, weeping, and falling upon the face. It is manifest that these gestures and postures are not unconnected with custom and temperament. The removal of the shoes from the feet in the East, corresponds to the removal of the hat from the head in the West, although these two gestures are by no means identical in significance.

A comparison and analysis of the foregoing Scriptures seems to justify the following comments. The posture of standing may be taken as expressive of alertness and readiness in worship; kneeling, of humility and intercession; sitting, of expectancy and waiting before God. God's children are free in these matters so long as spirituality is steadfastly maintained. Thus, while in England a congregation often stands for praise, and sits for prayer; in Holland it is usual to stand for prayer, and sit for praise. Justin Martyr (second century) says of early Christian worship, "All stand up and pray." In Holy Scripture prayer is connected with standing and kneeling. There is no Scripture warrant for sitting during prayer. Sitting, in the above passages, may mean no more than humility, and it is not said that the people sat when actually in prayer. Those denominations, therefore, which prescribe kneeling as the posture for prayer, are

justified by the Book.

This does not mean that sitting for prayer is *necessarily* irreverent. A person who is sufficiently spiritual could pray well in any posture, but let none take it for granted that they are sufficiently spiritual! On the other hand, human nature being what it is, a sitting posture is perhaps the least conducive to reverence. At any rate, roving eyes, turning heads, and lolling bodies, are not suggestive of intent beseeching of the Lord. Of course, kneeling in prayer can be equally a mockery of true worship, if the heart is not praying.

It does not follow from the foregoing, that it would be wise to introduce kneeling in our services. Unhappily, when such changes are introduced, it is impossible to foresee what other *undesirable* changes may come in their wake.

Similar criticisms could be passed upon the indulgence of sitting during praise. The writer's observations, at home and abroad, suggest that a sitting posture encourages some to give up singing entirely. Let all worshippers, then, satisfy themselves that their posture in worship is reverent and pleasing to the Lord God.

#### EXERCISE

Imagine the following: A Nonconformist service, with the minister in prayer. Some members of the congregation with closed eyes and bowed heads, sincerely entering into the prayer. Others searching with their eyes for the origin of a draught; others counting the company; others studying certain other members; others whispering; others in various attitudes of repose. What does the Lord think of it all as He looks down upon the scene? What will God do about it?

#### (c) PARTICIPATION OF THE WORSHIPPERS

Public worship should mean worship rendered by the public, of the assembled congregation. This is expressed by the term "congregational worship." A form of worship in which the assembled people have little or no part is not congregational worship. From the nature of the case, it is impossible for worship to be rendered by proxy.

The New Testament Scriptures demonstrate the original simplicity of Christian worship, and indicate that the worshippers had a general participation in the service. Of the first local church in Jerusalem it is said, "they continued steadfastly in . . . doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," Acts 2:42.

A similar congregational order of service existed in the church after apostolic times. When Pliny the younger entered upon his proconsulship of Bithynia in A.D. 110, he found the number of the Christians so great, and the heathen worship so seriously undermined, that he exerted himself to suppress the new religion. Under the application of torture, he could find out nothing worse about the Christians than that they were accustomed to meet together, before dawn, to sing hymns to Christ as their God, to pledge themselves to abstain from every form of evil, to commit no adultery or theft, to falsify no word, and to betray no trust. Later in the day, they met together again for a harmless supper.

Justin Martyr A.D. 165, in his first Apology says that on the day called Sunday, all the Christians in a neighbourhood meet together in one place, and listen to the reading of the Scriptures and to a sermon exhorting them to holy living. Prayers are offered to which the people respond with audible 'Amens,' and the Supper is observed.

Quite early in the Christian era, however, the original simplicity of worship began to be lost. With the passage of the years, the Supper became the central point of worship, and around this an ornate ritual grew up, so that the ordinance became less and less a service for the people.

Again, church singing was at first an exercise in which all took part. This was elaborated into choral singing which, like that at Milan, became, in the judgment of Augustine, too artificial and dramatic. The effect of this change was to exclude people from taking part, and thus congregational singing perished.

By the time the Reformation came, worship was hardly more than a religious performance witnessed by the people. Preaching was almost non-existent; prayers were gabbled in Latin; and responses sung by a choir—while the people looked on at what was scarcely different from a 'sacred concert.' The Reformation was, from this point of view, a return to a simpler and more

congregational form of worship, and the separating from the Church of England of the 'Dissenters,' in the sixteenth century, was a similar movement.

But old influences are at work! There is always a tendency for churches to elaborate their worship, and this always results in a departure from the congregational principle. Let all worshippers remember, that no one can worship *for* them. If they are to worship at all, they must personally worship. Even the part taken by the minister is not really his alone. The people can enter feelingly into the reading and exposition of the Scriptures. So also with the public prayer. Worshippers must realize, that they are not present merely to be prayed *for*, but to pray *with* their minister, as he leads their thoughts in suitable petitions.

The highest kind of worship possible, is the worship of the saints above, and that is *congregational worship*, Revelation 4:5,7.

## 2. WORSHIP — ITS ACCOMPANIMENTS

### (a) THE PLACE — ARCHITECTURE

If what has been said of the nature of worship is correct, then spirituality is the primary necessity, and architecture must take a subordinate place. Fellowship with God has been experienced in services held in a barn, independently of the bare surroundings; and fellowship with God has been experienced in St. Paul's Cathedral, independently of the beautiful surroundings.

Nevertheless, history shows that there is a relation between worship and architecture. The more ornate the form of worship has become, the more elaborate has become the architecture of religious buildings. It is manifest that for the early Christians no architectural problems existed, since they had no special places of worship, but met for the most part in their own homes, Acts 2:46, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house . . ."; Acts 20:7,8, "And upon the first day of the week when the disciples were gathered together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, . . .". "And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were

gathered together." Also in Romans 16:5, "Likewise greet the church that is in their house . . ." and in 1 Corinthians 16:19, ". . . Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." When special buildings came to be erected for Christian worship, it was natural that their style should tend to follow that of the public buildings already familiar, while at the same time avoiding the appearance of pagan temples.

Separate places of Christian worship existed in the third century, but they were of a very frail character. By the time of Constantine, however, two distinct types of architecture appeared, by the above-mentioned tendency. These were the Basilican and the Byzantine. Roman Christianity followed the style of the Roman basilica — a public building used for business and law. Greek Christianity tended toward the cupola form of building. The former was rectangular with three aisles, divided by pillars. In the rear was a semicircular part where cases were heard, while the main hall was used as a bourse or exchange. The latter (the cupola) was a domed building often circular in ground plan. From these types other styles of architecture developed in the course of years, and it was always in the direction of greater elaboration according as an increasing ritual demanded.

An altar required a special place separated from the congregation. With an altar a priesthood was necessary, and convenience for their ceremonial. The introduction of choirs meant accommodation for them. The separation of the sexes needed special arrangement. And so on.

The Reformation brought a return to more simplicity of worship, and hence simpler buildings. The Puritans revolted almost entirely from all suggestion of ornateness. With the revival of preaching, the pulpit became of chief importance, and the rest of the building was disposed accordingly. Now the Reformed faith was (and is) Calvinistic, and Calvinism claims *every realm of life for God*. Therefore, the realm of art is to be devoted to God, and architecture must seek to honour God. Hence arises the principle that two extremes are to be avoided. Nothing that God made was ugly or lacking in beauty, and the erecting of an ugly place of worship would be an insult to God and a flagrant disregard of the Divine order — Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things

are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, . . .". On the other hand, a gorgeous and lavish ornamentation not only goes beyond the demands of spirituality, but also ignores the fact that "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands . . .". Acts 17:24,25.

When the "beauty of holiness" pervades the worship, the beauty of simplicity will pervade the building.

## (b) CHURCH MUSIC

Having in mind still, the true nature of worship, it follows that music, like other accompaniments of worship must be kept subservient to the main principle of spirituality. This principle is violated when music is made the chief feature of worship. In this question of music, as in all other matters, the Scriptures must be regarded as authoritative.

The Old Testament makes very many references to music, both of the human voice and of various percussion, stringed and wind instruments. David himself was an inventor of musical instruments. This is mentioned in Amos 6:5, ". . . and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David." A company of 4,000 persons who sang the praises of God is noted in 1 Chronicles 23:5, ". . . and four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith," while in 2 Chronicles 5:12-14, singers and instruments including 120 trumpeters, united in praise to God. On this occasion the glory of the Lord filled the house (v.14). Similarly, in the days of Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 29:25-30, the same combination was used by the commandment of the Lord (v.25), "And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets."

It has been objected that the musical arrangements of the Old Testament, have no place in the New Testament dispensation. This objection is based upon the assumption that music and musical instruments in the Old Testament were types of some aspects of Christ's work, and consequently passed away with the

rest of the Mosaic ritual, when the antitype had come. Part at least of the answer seems to be that without straining Scripture, it is very difficult to find a New Testament passage that declares the typical nature of music, or that explains what music is typical of. It is even more difficult to understand why music is reintroduced in the Revelation which treats for the most part of events that followed the death of Christ, if religious music passed away with that death.

The fundamental nature of true praise evidently remains the same in every age. It is never the instrument by itself that praises God, but the player who so expresses himself. The 'grand amen,' in the 'Lost Chord,' did not come from the 'soul' of the organ, since an organ has no soul, but from the soul of the player. The organ is nothing more than a 'kist o' whistles,' as the Scotch would say. What, indeed, is the human 'voice box' but a musical instrument with which the soul expresses itself? Unaccompanied singing, if it is without meaning, is just as vain as the formal sound of any other instrument.

At the same time, the use of musical instruments in public worship brings a grave danger and responsibility which is not to be overlooked by spiritual worshippers. For if the voice alone can be mere formal worship, how much is the formality increased by the addition of other instruments? We claim every realm of life for the glory of God, and demand that every gift and faculty be used to His praise, and consequently bring the gift of music to His feet, but — let music ever be kept resolutely subordinate to spirituality.

Some attention ought also to be given to the significance of the distinction between 'secular' and 'sacred' as applied to music. Manifestly, music considered in itself is neither secular nor sacred; neither holy nor unholy. No moral colour attaches to mere sound. The foregoing terms distinguish the uses to which music may be put, and also the types of music which the uses tend to produce. As an illustration, one has only to put side by side in the mind, the stately majesty of a Dutch or Scotch psalm, and the modern inverted rhythm of syncopation. Besides, if music is an expression of feeling, then a godly composer and a worldly composer will of necessity produce different types of music since their respective dispositions are widely different. Syncopation is a typical

expression of the light, flippant temperament of the average worldly person. It is not surprising if Christian people find jazz offensive to their spiritual natures, nor is it surprising if worldly people find 'sacred' music hard to endure. On the other hand, if Christian people find themselves possessing a sneaking regard for syncopation, they might, at least, ask themselves why! Again, if dispositions produce types of music, similarly music produces instruments suitable to its type. The more or less dignified rhythm of divine praise seems suitably expressed by the sustained note of an organ, and hence this instrument has predominated in church music. In the same way, modern rhythms have produced their own instruments, such as the saxophone, which is designed for its own type of music. This broad distinction of instruments according to their use answers the question that was once put, "Would it be right for a dance band to lead the singing in a place of worship?" Of course, one instrument is no more right than another — considered in itself, but no spiritual person would desire to follow the lead of an instrument whose design, compass, and timbrel brought with it the atmosphere of the world.

Finally, the contribution made to music by Calvinism should never be forgotten. It was Calvinism that emancipated music from tutelage of the Roman Church, and whilst it adopted the melodies of the people, it returned those melodies to the people purified by Christian seriousness. It was Bourgeois, at Geneva, who first had the courage to exchange the eight Gregorian modes for the two of major and minor, and introduced other changes which have remained ever since. His Calvinistic colleague, Goudimel, noticed that in church singing, the higher voices of the children outstripped the tenor, which had till then held the leading part. Accordingly, he gave the leading part of the soprano — a change which has ever since been maintained. The influence of Calvinism was a very positive one, due to its spiritual worship of God.

### (c) THE DRESS OF THE WORSHIPPERS

In this country, and in some others, a long established custom exists, of wearing one's 'best clothes' on Sunday. From one point of view this may be an advantage, in that it tends to emphasise

the special nature of the Lord's day. It is well for children and others to have that special nature impressed upon their minds. On the other hand, there is an accompanying danger, since human nature tends to take advantage of the opportunity, to regard Sunday as 'dressing up' day, and to fill places of worship with amateur mannequins.

The origin of the custom of a distinctive dress for the minister (such as vestments, or the collar) has its roots in history, but *not* in Scripture. Any reader will search the New Testament in vain for the slightest hint that the minister was to dress in any way different from the ordinary person of his time. Indeed, when Christ sent out His disciples He forbade the use of a second coat, Matthew 10:10, "Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes . . .", so there was no question of a 'best' one for the Sabbath!

The idea of special garb for the minister grew as the early church became more and more corrupt. As the minister became to be regarded as a sacrificing priest, so a special dress to distinguish such a high and holy being became necessary, till at last no worship was deemed possible unless the priest possessed, and at times wore his amice, surplice, crozier, apparel, chasuble, orphrey, maniple, dalmatic, tunic, alb, stole, cope, morse, girdle, and biretta etc. Contrast all this with the simple clothing of the Lord which consisted of the common articles of dress as used by the ordinary person of His time.

The commonly used 'black' of our present-day ministers, is the usual dress of thousands of city workers — it is not a ministerial monopoly. It is favoured by the minister as being of no colour at all, and therefore 'quiet', unassuming, and noncommittal.

Finally, it should be evident that the same principle must govern the dress of the worshippers as regulates the dress of the minister. In other words, the ordinary dress of the period, provided it creates no special attention, is all that is required for the time and place of worship. But in dealing with dress, are we not dealing with externals, and is not worship a spiritual matter? Then does dress matter? Apparently, most worshippers think so! Obviously, if the worshippers are really spiritual persons, then their dress will be such as becomes those who are wholly intent upon seeking the Lord. This fact exposes the impiousness of some

so-called ministers who have invited their people to attend worship in hiking shorts, and beach pyjamas.

Such passages of Scripture as 1 Timothy 2:9, 10, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." 1 Peter 3:3, 4, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," and James 2:2, 3, "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, stand there, or sit here . . ." seem to imply a threefold responsibility. First, there is responsibility to God. Worship has for its aim the glory of God, and the seeking of His mercy. God has no wish to see our finery, nor is He moved by neglect in this respect. (Matthew 6:16, 18), "Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." There is no ground of acceptance with God, save the merits of Jesus Christ. Hence any assumed neglect, or any inclination to 'dress up' when approaching God is to belie the professed intention, and to come perilously near to mocking the Knower of hearts.

Secondly, there is a responsibility to the other worshippers. A person who hinders another's worship is not guiltless. Even the most spiritual of Christians will confess how easily the mind can be moved away from the attitude of worship. If the dress of one worshipper stirs the admiration or the indignation of another worshipper, then the latter's mind has been forced away from its holy purpose, and the former is guilty of casting a stumbling block in the way of true worship.

Thirdly, there is a responsibility to one's self. It is only with great humility that one can come to God, making an understanding use of the publican's prayer, and there is no consistency between this attitude of heart and devotion to one's dress. Either by studied neglect, or by deliberate smartness, encouragement is given to the pride which is resident in every fallen sinner, so that not only is the blessing of divine fellowship missed, but God's holy ordinance of worship is threatened with degradation.

W. A. Darlington, a dramatic critic, tells how at theatrical 'first nights,' many actresses will attend arrayed in splendour, and deliberately enter late so as to draw attention to themselves. He says, "you may see her prinking and preening herself anxiously outside the door, before sailing in with a grand air of aloofness...". After careful observation of congregations in several denominations, both in this country and abroad, and after consultations with other ministers, the writer is not able to say that the foregoing spirit is never found in places of worship. Where such an attitude does exist, the holy repugnance it must stir in the very heart of God, defies description. No denunciation can be too complete, and no criticism too scathing for the person, if such there be, who draws the attention that should be fixed upon the Crucified.

The foregoing essays have been written in hope that the sincere believer will find in them some help towards making a way through a rather complicated aspect of modern life.

