

What Does God Authorize In Worship?

Bobby Liddell, Editor

1990 Bellview Lectures

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Fifteenth Annual
Bellview Lectures
Pensacola, Florida

May 9-13, 1990

What Does God Authorize In Worship?

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DEDICATION



Hairston and Inez Brantley

This book, containing the lectures delivered in the Fifteenth Annual Bellview Lectures, May 9-13, 1990, Pensacola, Florida, is gratefully dedicated to Hairston and Inez Brantley.

Hairston Brantley and his family were greatly instrumental in the beginning of the congregation of the Lord's church in the Bellview community. He served as the first minister of the Bellview congregation and continues to this date to preach here on a substitute basis. He was appointed as one of the first elders at Bellview in 1965 and continues to serve faithfully in that position at the age of 79 years. Brother Brantley has applied his physical abilities with his hands for almost 40 years to build and maintain an adequate meeting place for this congregation. He and sister Brantley have served as teachers down through the years. Two of their sons now serve faithfully as deacons at Bellview. Brother and sister Brantley's devotion to the cause of Christ here in the Bellview community has been, and continues to be acknowledged by all who know them. Brother and sister Brantley were firm supporters and promoters of the Bellview Preacher Training School and the annual lectureships which are continuing after the closing of the school.

Although we believe that all glory belongs to God, we do not hesitate to recognize the accomplishments of brother and sister Brantley in the Lord's cause at Bellview by dedicating this book to them.

Bill Gallaher, elder,
Fred Stancliff, elder,
Bellview Church of Christ

PREFACE

The failure of the religious world lies largely in its disrespect for the authority of God, especially in the realm of worship. The resulting influence of the world upon certain members of the Lord's church, who wish the blood bought body to be like the religious organizations round about them, has resulted in departures from that authorized by God for acceptable worship. We have selected "What Does God Authorize In Worship?" as the theme of the Fifteenth Annual Bellview Lectures in hope of encouraging all to hear and heed God's Word in this important area that all might forsake the damnable wickedness of unauthorized worship to worship as true members of the Lord's church in agreement with the Lord's will.

"God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Jesus spoke these words to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well almost two thousand years ago. Today, these words still ring true, guide the righteous, warn the erring, and remain as the basis of judgment upon all (John 12:48). Our Heavenly Father will not accept all that men offer as "worship" regardless of how sincere, elaborate, costly or pleasing to men the "worship" might be. God will only receive that worship which man offers in spirit (in the proper attitude of heart) and in truth (according to His truth, the Word of God [John 17:17]); that is, only that worship which God has authorized.

How shall we know what God has authorized in worship? The only source from which such knowledge may be obtained is the Bible. Man can neither determine from nature nor from himself the mind of God, but our loving God has revealed His will for man through the holy book (1 Cor. 2:9-13). He has given man the where, the what, the when and the how of approved worship. We offer the twenty-eight chapters of this book to emphasize God's authority, what He, through His Word, has authorized in worship, and the application of His Word about worship to the crown of His creation, man.

Thanks to those who have labored many hours and graciously have prepared the manuscripts for this book. We selected each brother because of their dedication to the truth and for their ability to proclaim faithfully the truth in love. Thanks also to the bishops of

the Bellview church, Hairston Brantley, Bill Gallaher, and Fred Stancliff who oversee the work of the Bellview church and this lectureship. The members of the Bellview church are also to be commended for their joyful sacrifice in presenting these lectures for fifteen years. Only eternity shall reveal the extent of the good influence exerted by these lectures upon individuals, churches and the brotherhood.

We send forth this collection of lectures on “What Does God Authorize In Worship?” with the hope and prayer that it shall be a source for good in the lives of all who read it. We hope for it a wide distribution that it may instruct and encourage the faithful and call the erring back to worship “in spirit and in truth.” To God, whom the faithful serve in Christ, be all the glory and praise.

*Bobby Liddell, Director
February 22, 1990*

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ASCERTAINING BIBLE AUTHORITY FOR ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

Roy Deaver



Roy Deaver grew up in Longview, Texas. He graduated from Freed-Hardeman College, Abilene Christian University and National Christian University. He began preaching in 1940 and did local work for many years. He is the founder and former Director of Brown Trail Preacher Training School; founding President of Fort Worth Christian College and Academy; Vice-President and Professor in Tennessee Bible College; and worked with the Bellview Church of Christ and the Bellview Preacher Training School (1985-1986). He is currently an Instructor in the Southwest School of Biblical Studies. He is a well-known debater, author, editor and publisher of Biblical Notes for eighteen years. He is assistant editor of Firm Foundation. He and his wife, the former Wilms Ruth Gibson, have three sons.

INTRODUCTORY

According to the rationale mailed to me by brother Bobby Liddell I am to deal with the topic **ASCERTAINING BIBLE AUTHORITY FOR ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP**.

Though I am to present three lessons, these are actually three parts of one basic lesson. First, I am to deal with **HOW GOD ESTABLISHES AUTHORITY**. Second, I am to stress **HOW MAN MUST RESPECT BIBLE AUTHORITY AND BE GOVERNED BY IT**. And third, I am to make application of the points in lessons one and two, to the matter of **ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP**.

I will “tread lightly” in the area of “expediency,” since brother Liddell was careful to tell me that brother Flavil Nichols will be dealing with “expediency.”

When we make reference to “the Bible” we are referring to “the Book.” It is the only source to which we can go to learn satisfactorily about God, the Christ, the Holy Spirit, man, the scheme for man’s redemption, sin, satan, salvation, the gospel, the church, angels, the

judgment, heaven, hell. The very words “the Bible” thus imply that it is authoritative, that it is something mighty special; that without hesitancy and without apology it deals completely with the greatest thoughts and concepts and principles ever to challenge the minds of men.

The Bible itself sets forth its powerful claim that it is a miraculous product, that it came from God, that God revealed the sacred message to certain men who spake it and who wrote it down in words selected by the Holy Spirit (cf., I Cor. 2:9-13; Eph. 3:1-5). But, the Bible’s own claim with regard to its inspiration, nature, and purpose is another study. However, its inspiration, its nature, and its purpose all relate directly to our present study. In fact, this is the foundation upon which we must build.

So, let us proceed to glance at the matter of—

HOW GOD ESTABLISHES BIBLE AUTHORITY

In our study we keep in mind that human beings do not (and cannot) establish Bible authority. This is God’s business. It is God who establishes the authority. It is the responsibility of men to ASCERTAIN THAT AUTHORITY to discover what God has authorized, what God has not authorized, and to give utmost respect to this divine authority.

1. God authorizes by EXAMPLE. The dictionary defines “example” as being: “That which is to be followed, or imitated; a pattern.” I call attention to this definition in order to stress that an “example” IS to be followed or imitated. An example IS BINDING. Literally thousands of times during the past twenty years the question has been asked. “When is an example binding?” Obviously, if the definition is correct, then this is the wrong question. If it is an “example,” then it IS BINDING; if it is NOT BINDING, then it is NOT AN EXAMPLE!

The correct question is: WHEN DOES THE BIBLE ACCOUNT OF AN ACTION CONSTITUTE AN EXAMPLE?

At this point I need to explain the sense in which I am using the word “binding” in relationship to examples. (1) Some things are “binding” (and are thus examples) in the sense that they MUST be done (these are DEMANDED; there is nothing optional—these facts

being made clear by due consideration of the totality of the Bible teaching on the subject at hand); and (2) some things are “binding” (and are thus examples) in the sense that they **MAY BE DONE** (these are authorized; they may be done, but they may be left undone).

For instance, I am **COMMANDED** to observe the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:24-25). I am instructed (by precept and by example) to observe it on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). There is no option here. I am authorized (by example) to observe the Lord’s Supper in an “upper chamber” with “many lights.” This is “binding” only in the sense that I am allowed or permitted to do it. It is optional. I learn from other passages that the place is not the important thing, and I, therefore, conclude that the “upper chamber” is an optional matter.

Further, I am **COMMANDED** to give—as I have been prospered. This is a **MUST** matter. I must not fall short of giving as I have been prospered.

But, in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 I am taught by example that I **MAY EXCEED** giving as I have been prospered. The Macedonian brethren gave “beyond their power.”

Did Paul refer to these brethren as an **EXAMPLE** for the brethren in Corinth? Is this an **EXAMPLE** for me? Is this account of this action binding on me? If so, in **WHAT SENSE** is it binding? Does it teach that I **MUST** upon every Lord’s Day give beyond my power? Or, does it teach that I **MAY** give beyond my power? How does the **EXAMPLE** “fit in” with the **COMMAND**?

If the New Testament makes it plain that “going” is the essential matter, and that the method is optional, and if the New Testament records (with approval) that Paul travelled by ship—then I conclude that Paul’s travelling by ship is an example for me (and is thus binding upon me) in the sense that I **MAY** travel by ship. But, I may travel by plane also.

Whether an “example” is **BINDING** in the sense that it **MUST** be done, or in the sense that it **MAY** be done has to be determined by proper consideration of the **TOTALITY** of the Bible teaching on the point at hand.

Also, we must be aware of negative “examples.” God records for us illustrations of things we ARE NOT TO DO and things we ARE NOT TO BE. Thayer, in discussing TUPOS, speaks of “a dissuasive example, pattern of warning to others.” Thayer cites 1 Corinthians 10:6,11 (page 632). Thayer says further. “... plul. of ruinous events which serve as admonitions or warnings to others.”

In this connection, here is another point which is so very, very important. The fact alone of the Bible account of an action does not mean necessarily that the account of that action is intended to constitute an example. It is very important that we consider “actions classified”—the fact that there are different kinds of actions.

(1) The Bible records actions which were sinful. Judas betrayed the Lord. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit. Peter bowed to human lawmakers.

(2) The Bible records actions which were right when performed, but which would be wrong if we imitated those actions now. The early church, for approximately ten years, refused to preach the gospel to Gentiles. Paul, Acts 21, acted in such fashion as to demonstrate that he himself walked orderly, “keeping the law.”

(3) In the New Testament we have records of actions which were TEMPORARY and OBLIGATORY. Early Christians were commanded to “desire earnestly spiritual gifts,” but spiritual gifts were temporary. Early disciples confirmed the word by signs, but miracles were temporary.

(4) The New Testament records actions which were TEMPORARY and OPTIONAL. Paul circumcised Timothy “...because of the Jews that were in those parts: for they all knew that his father was a Greek” (Acts 16:3). The apostles preached DAILY in the temple (Acts 5:42).

(5) We have records of actions which were PERMANENT and OPTIONAL. The Macedonian brethren gave “beyond their power” (2 Cor. 8:3). This they were not required to do, but were allowed to do, and the principle of “going the second mile” is a permanent part of Christianity.

(6) We have records of actions which were PERMANENT and OBLIGATORY. The early Christians were obligated to give of their means. They were required to observe the Lord's, Supper.

Obviously, only the actions which were OPTIONAL and PERMANENT, and/or OBLIGATORY and PERMANENT have any relationship to present-day Christianity. When we find in the New Testament the account of an action (1) which was manifestly RIGHT within itself, (2) which was either OPTIONAL or OBLIGATORY, and (3) which related to a PERMANENT element of Christianity—then we have authority for imitating that action. (PERSONAL NOTE: This material on “actions classified” grew out of my privilege studies with brother Thomas B. Warren, many years ago. My experience is that the importance of this point is seldom recognized.)

Perhaps it should be stressed here that an example DOES NOT EXCLUDE. An example authorizes travelling by boat, but does not exclude travelling by car. Acts 20:7 authorizes the observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. The point which makes it sinful to observe the Supper on Thursday night is the fact that THERE IS NO AUTHORITY FOR IT! Several verses show our obligation to SING in Christian worship. The thing which makes it wrong to use the mechanical instrument is the fact that THERE IS NO AUTHORITY FOR IT! The sacred principle of “walking by faith” necessarily demands our respecting the silence of the Scriptures.

Determining when the account of an action constitutes an example requires: (1) application of the principles of Biblical HERMENEUTICS, (2) application of the principles of LOGIC, and (3) due consideration of the TOTALITY of the Bible teaching with regard to the subject at hand.

2. God authorizes by IMPLICATION. In this context, brethren have often spoken of “inference,” but “inference” relates to “implication.” “Inference” is a subdivision of “implication.” “Inference” deals with correct reasoning, but correct reasoning (in this context) with regard to what God has implied.

Every thing the Bible teaches it teaches either explicitly or implicitly. And that which it teaches implicitly is just as true, just as authoritative, just as binding, as that which it teaches explicitly.

We are concerned about reasoning correctly with regard to that which God has IMPLIED in His EXPLICIT statements. And the authority inherent in that which is implied lies not in the fact that I have reasoned correctly with regard to. an explicit statement, but in the fact that GOD HAS IMPLIED IT!

When an action, fact, or teaching is absolutely DEMANDED by the explicit statement or statements, then that action, that fact, or that teaching is a matter of IMPLICATION. I am not talking (writing) about pure ASSUMPTIONS, but about that which is DEMANDED by the EXPLICIT statement.

For example, I am authorized to teach that in his becoming a Christian, Saul of Tarsus did in fact repent of his sins. But, we have no explicit statement that he repented. We reason as follows: If (A) it is the case that no person can become a Christian without repenting of his sins; and if (B) it is the case that Saul of Tarsus did become a Christian; then (C) it is the case that Saul of Tarsus, in his becoming a Christian, did repent of his sins.

We affirm the (A) and would set forth the proof. We affirm the (B) and would set out the proof This would give us the truthfulness of the conjunction made of conjuncts A and B. Therefore, (C)—it IS the case that Saul of Tarsus, in becoming a Christian, did repent of his sins. But, this fact is taught IMPLICITLY, not EXPLICITLY.

When Geometry sets forth EXPLICITLY the axiom that “the whole of anything is the sum of its parts,” then Geometry sets forth IMPLICITLY (1) that the whole of anything is larger than any of its parts, and (2) that a part of anything is smaller than the whole to which it relates. And, that which is here taught IMPLICITLY is just as true as is that which is taught EXPLICITLY.

Just so it is with the Word of God. In dealing with “inference” we are dealing with IMPLICATION. The Bible authorizes by IMPLICATION.

3. The Bible authorizes by DIRECT STATEMENT. It is tremendously INACCURATE for one to say: “Approved example, neces-

sary inference, and command.” I am concerned at this point with the word “command.” It is NOT sufficient to cover the situation. Rather, “command” is a part of a larger area of study which we here designate by the words “direct statement.”

Obviously, in this lesson we do not have the time (or the space) to discuss this tremendously important matter. I can only refer you to my book, ASCERTAINING BIBLE AUTHORITY, pages 59 and 60. These “direct statements” must be classified upon the basis of MOOD and NATURE. We stress that this classification is not made arbitrarily. Rather, it is made necessarily, in the light of the Greek New Testament. It is simply a matter of recognizing what we actually have in the Greek New Testament.

The grammar of the Greek New Testament has four moods: indicative, imperative, subjunctive, and optative. Basically, mood indicates the relationship of the action (indicated in the verb) to the realm of reality. Is the action REAL? or is it only POTENTIAL? The indicative mood shows the action is real. The imperative, the subjunctive, and the optative moods indicate that the action is only potential. A statement in the INDICATIVE mood may be (as to its NATURE) (1) declarative, as Mark 16:16; of (2) interrogative, as in Romans 6:1. A statement in the SUBJUNCTIVE mood may be (1) hortatory, as in Hebrews 6:1; (2) conditional, as in Colossians 3:1 (there are several different kinds of conditions); (3) prohibitory, (4) deliberative, or (5) final. A statement in the IMPERATIVE mood may be: (1) mandatory (command), as in Acts 16:31; (2) mandatory-permissive, as in Acts 2:38; or (3) prohibitory. A statement in the OPTATIVE mood indicates a wish, or wishing, as in Romans 6:2 (God forbid—literally, “May it not be so”) This statement in the optative mood authorizes me to teach that we are not to teach that we are to continue in sin that grace may abound.

This gives us eleven different kinds of statements. A “mandatory” statement (a COMMAND) is only ONE of these ELEVEN! Thus, the word “command” relates to an area in which there are (as to nature) ELEVEN different kinds of statements, and it covers ONE OUT OF THE ELEVEN! I have no right to disregard the other TEN!

There are many “direct statements” in the Bible which cannot be properly used in seeking to ascertain Bible authority in relationship to our obligations. But the fact remains that there ARE direct statements which do set forth Bible authority. Certainly I am not authorized to teach that the man whom the Lord healed was born in sin, just because the Jews said that he was (John 9:34).

4. The Bible authorizes by EXPEDIENCY. Our obligations are set forth in consideration of example, implication, and direct statement. But, in the carrying out of any obligation there is an area of “expediency.” Every obligation which God ever gave involved (involves) expediency.

Since another speaker will be dealing with “expediency,” I shall simply set forth a bare outline. Expediency involves human judgment. Expediency is that which “expedites” there is in an “expediency” an inherent notion of advantage. “Expediency” relates to a God-given obligation. Where there is no obligation, there can be NO EXPEDIENCY.

So far as concerns obligations of the local church, an expedient is that which is in harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures, in which there is inherent advantage, coming within the realm of divinely authorized exercise of human judgment, which may be selected by the elders in carrying out an obligation of the congregation, which obligation is set forth by example, or by implication, or by direct statement.

Next, I want to consider with you—

HOW MAN MUST RESPECT BIBLE AUTHORITY, AND BE GOVERNED BY IT

1. First, I want us to reemphasize the fact that the New Testament is our “pattern” for life, our guide to eternity. In these studies we are working upon the basis of three fundamental propositions: (1) God IS; (2) the Bible is the Word of God; and (3) God has given us the Bible to guide us in this life and to take us to heaven when this life is over. Each of these propositions is provable, but it does not come within the scope of the present study to not forth the proof. Our special concern right now relates to proposition #3—God has given us the Bible as our guide. It is our pillar of cloud, and our pillar of

fire. We are to move as it authorizes. When and where it does not authorize, we are to “be still.” It is our guide, our rule-book, our “pattern.”

Many of us are presently taking lots of criticism from the liberals because we believe and teach that the New Testament is our “pattern.” We are ridiculed and berated severely because of our “pattern theology.” Well, I take this criticism as a compliment. My “theology” is definitely “pattern” theology. I believe and I preach that the New Testament is our all-sufficient pattern in one’s becoming a child of God, in our service and worship in this life, and it is all-sufficient to take us to glory when this life is over.

Remember Paul. To the Ephesian elders he said: “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). It will guide us and direct us and will take us to heaven.

Recently I engaged in public, oral debate with a brother who hates, detests, abhors, and abominates the idea that the Now Testament is our “pattern.” He is willing to tolerate anything and everybody except those who regard the New Testament as being our “pattern.” He is willing to tolerate anything and everybody excepting those who are not willing to tolerate that kind of toleration.

Consider Noah. As is recorded in Genesis 6, God instructed Noah to build the ark. The “wickedness of man was great in the earth” and God determined to destroy man and beast and creeping things, and fowls of the air. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” In view of the coming flood, God appeared to Noah, and placed upon him the obligation to build the ark. God specified the material out of which the ark was to be built, and He gave the exact dimensions for it. God thus gave Noah a definite “pattern” for building. In Genesis 6:22 the Record says: “Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he.”

Consider Moses. In Exodus 25 God instructed Moses with reference to building the tabernacle. Multitudinous details and specifications were prescribed. A definite pattern was given to Moses. Moses was warned of God: “And look that thou make them after their

pattern, which was showed thee in the mount” (Exod. 25:40). In Hebrews 8:5 the Holy Spirit refers to God’s warning to Moses, “when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount.” In Exodus 40:16 we have the reading: “Thus did Moses according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.”

Just as God gave Noah the pattern for building the ark, and just as God gave Moses the pattern for building the tabernacle, so God has given the pattern for Christian character (attitudes and conduct) and the pattern for the church (organization, name, doctrine, worship, plan of salvation and mission). And just as Noah was obligated to build according to the pattern, and just as Moses was obligated to build according to the pattern—so we are obligated (and privileged) to build according to the divine pattern, the New Testament.

God, who made man, and who best knows man, and who best knows what is best for man, has always retained to Himself the right to govern man. And, the divine rule-book which He seeks to govern man now is the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The New Testament is the pattern.

2. Second, I want us to reemphasize the great, basic authority principle.

In Colossians 3:17 Paul says: “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father, through Him.” “In the name of the Lord” means by the authority of the Lord, as the Lord authorized (Acts 4:7-10). Men are obligated (and privileged) to “walk by faith” (2 Cor. 5:7). The sacred standard by which the Christian is governed is the standard of faith. In Romans 10:17 Paul declares that “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Obviously then, the Christian walks by that which comes by hearing the word of God. If faith comes by hearing the word of God, then where there is no word of God there can be no faith. And where there is no faith, there is no pleasing God (Heb. 11:6). It is imperative that we be concerned about Bible authority, and about how to ASCERTAIN Bible authority.

Now, especially in the light of the previous material, I want us to look at the matter of—

BIBLE AUTHORITY AND ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

1. A Message from Malachi. In Malachi 1:10-14 we have the following reading. "Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, saith Jehovah of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye profane it, in that ye say, The table of Jehovah is polluted, and the fruit thereof, even its food, is contemptible. Ye say also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith Jehovah of hosts; and ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye bring the offering: should I accept this at your hand? saith Jehovah. But cursed be the deceiver, who hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a blemished thing; for I am a great King, saith Jehovah of hosts, and my name is terrible among the Gentiles."

In this reading God continues to speak to the priests. God says: (1) It would be better for the temple doors to be shut, than for hypocritical and vain worship to continue. (2) I have no pleasure in you. (3) I will not accept an offering from your hand. (4) I intend for my name to be honored and respected among all the nations, and for pure worship to be offered everywhere; but YOU profane my name, and YOU engage in sinful worship. (5) You say: "The Lord's table is polluted; its food is contemptible; what a weariness-what a burden-it is to worship. (6) You have sniffed at it. (7) You have brought to me that which was taken by violence, and lame, and sick. (8) I will not accept it from your hand. (9) Cursed be the cheating deceiver who has a male in his flock, and vows to offer it, and yet sacrifices a blemished and diseased thing. (10) I am a great King, and my name is held in reverence among the nations.

These observations:

- (1) The fact that one worships does not mean that he worships acceptably to God.
- (2) Hypocritical worship is worse than no worship.

(3) The basic question in worship is: Not “What will please us?” but “What will please God?”

(4) It is important to note that there are some people from whom God will not accept worship.

(5) There is such a thing as “vain worship.” Vain worship will not be accepted by God.

(6) God had rather see this church building closed, than to see the people engaged in vain worship.

(7) God intends that among all the nations His name in to be respected, and His worship pure. There is in this passage a prophetic glimpse at the universality of the gospel of Christ.

(8) “Vain worship” is “profane” worship (verses 10,12).

(9) It is false doctrine that the divine prescriptions for acceptable worship may be disregarded or disrespected without tragic consequences.

(10) There is something wrong—and we are not really worshipping—when worship has become a wearisome thing, a drudgery, a burden. David said: “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord” (Psa. 122:1).

(11) Men may, and often do, SNIFF at what God has prescribed. But “sniffing at it” does not change it!

(12) False worshippers may succeed in deceiving themselves, but they cannot deceive God. Cf. Acts 5:1-11.

2. There are different kinds of worship. There is vain worship, as talked about by the Lord in Matthew 15:9. “Vain” is the translation of the Greek word MATAN, which means “to no purpose.” It accomplishes nothing. Several things could cause worship to be “vain”: there could be the improper attitude upon the part of the worshipper. There could be absence of divine authority for that engaged in. There could be hypocrisy’ in the heart of the worshipper. There could be the “teaching for doctrine commandments of men,” Matthew 15:9. There could be improper relationship between husband and wife, 1 Peter 3:7.

There is ignorant worship, as referred to by Paul in Acts 17:23.

There is true worship, and thus there is false worship, as discussed by the Lord in John 4:23.

There is “will worship,” Colossians 2:23. “Will worship” is the translation of the Greek “ethelothraskeia,” which means: “worship which one devises and prescribes for himself, contrary to the contents and nature of the faith which ought to be directed to Christ; said of misdirected zeal and practices of ascetics: Col. 2:23” (Thayer, page 168).

And, there is polluted/contemptible worship: “But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible” (Mal. 1:12).

3. Now, we are especially concerned about TRUE worship, worship ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. To this kind of worship the Lord made reference when he said in John 4:24, “God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

Herein, the Lord set forth the great, basic standard for scriptural, acceptable-to-God worship. Worship, to be acceptable to God, (1) must be directed to God; (2) must be engaged in in the right spirit, the right attitude, the right disposition of heart/mind; and (3) must be “in truth”—that is, it must be authorized by the Word of God (John 17:17). The Lord prayed: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

Worship, therefore, must involve the proper OBJECT, the proper ATTITUDE, and the proper AUTHORITY.

Obviously, the worship of the early church conformed to this standard. And, based upon this standard, the worship of the early church involved certain specifics. Let’s note these specifics.

(1) In scriptural worship there is teaching. A preacher proclaims God’s message. Those assembled listen, learn, and apply the lessons learned to their own lives.

(2) In scriptural worship there is singing. Christians are commanded to sing. Singing expresses joy, glorifies God, teaches and admonishes those who participate. See Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16. We do not use mechanical instrumental music in our worship simply because there is no Bible authority for such.

(3) In scriptural worship there is fervent prayer. The New Testament emphasizes the value of prayer. Christians are taught to pray,

and Christians appreciate the wonderful privilege of prayer. Cf. Acts 2:42; James 5:15-16; 1 Thess. 5:17.

(4) In scriptural worship, on each Lord's Day, Christians observe the Lord's Supper. This was the practice of the early church (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1,2), and to be a true Church of the Christ we must likewise observe the Lord's Supper every first day of the week.

(5) Also, in scriptural worship, on each Lord's day, there is to be the giving of our means. This giving, as prescribed by the Scriptures, takes place on every Lord's Day, as is required by 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, and in view of the sacred principles set forth in 1 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9. This is God's financial plan for meeting the needs of each local congregation, for getting the gospel to the whole world, and for taking care of benevolent needs.

CONCLUSION

Brethren, I appreciate the opportunity to be with you and to participate in this great lectureship. I am grateful for the accomplishments of the Bellview Lectureship through the many years. I am thankful for the Bellview Church, and its firm stand for the gospel.

May God help us always (1) to give proper attention to the matter of HOW GOD AUTHORIZES, and (2) to the matter of RESPECTING BIBLE AUTHORITY and BEING GOVERNED BY BIBLE AUTHORITY. And (3) May God help us always to keep the worship PURE-to respect the sacred standard for acceptable worship, and to practice the specific acts which God has authorized for acceptable worship.

ARE THERE ESSENTIALS AND EXPEDIENTS IN WORSHIP?

Flavil H. Nichols



Flavil Nichols has been preaching almost 56 years, having preached his first sermon when he was 16 years old. Since May 1, 1989, he has been retired from local responsibilities, but preaches in revivals, speaks on lectureships, and fills other special engagements. Prior to that for 5 1/2 years he was minister of the Sixth Avenue church in Jasper, Alabama, where he yet resides. The oldest son of Matilda Nichols and the late Gus Nichols, Flavil was born near Jasper, Alabama. A graduate of Freed-Hardeman College, he later attended what is now the University of North Alabama, in Florence. His wife, the former Mary Elizabeth Hardin, and he have two children and three grandchildren, and celebrated their Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary last November. He has preached in 21 states and three foreign countries, and has done local work with churches in Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky. His articles have been published in several gospel papers. He served two different terms as Editor of Words Of Truth, a weekly journal begun by his father in 1962.

SOME DEFINITIONS

Worship is “reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power; also an act of expressing such reverence.” An *essential* is “something basic, necessary, indispensable, or unavoidable.” An *expedient* is something “suitable for achieving a particular end;... dictated by practical or prudent motives;...a means to an end” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, G & C Merriam, 1981).

Essentials and *expedients* are not the same. “All things” which were lawful for others were lawful for Paul also (1 Cor. 6:12); but not all things were expedient for him, although those same things might have been expedient for others. For example, it was equally as lawful for Paul to marry as it was for “Cephas” (Peter) to do so (1 Cor. 9:4-5). It would have been lawful for Paul to “forbear working” or cease making tents (Acts 18:3; 20:33-35), and to be supported full-time by the church—with adequate support from the church to provide for his wife [and children!] also (1 Cor. 9:6-18)!

But he did not use his “right” to marry, nor his right to a full-time adequate salary, viewing those “lawful” matters as not “expedient” for him, saying: “This I do for the gospel’s sake” (v. 23).

WORSHIP IS COMMANDED

Our Lord said, “Thou shalt worship specifying that our worship is to be directed to God, and “him only” (Matt. 4:10). We are not to worship men or angels (Acts 10:25-26; Rev. 22:8-9). Our worship is further restricted by the Savior who demands that it “must” be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). “In spirit” means that the worshiper is sincere; the adoration expressed is not pretended, but such expression comes from the heart (or spirit) of man. Jesus, who demands that our worship be also “in truth,” said to God the Father, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17); hence each “item” or “ingredient” of our worship “must” be authorized in the word of God.

Worship is not merely the sentiment of one’s mind—it is not just a mental attitude. Adoration is not “worship” until it is “EXPRESSED,” nor is “homage” worship until it is “PAID.” Therefore some “items,” “acts,” or “actions” are required—“essential”—in “worship” (expressing adoration of, or paying homage to, God).

CHRIST HAS ALL AUTHORITY

Before his ascension Jesus declared, “All power” [A.S.V.: “authority”] is given unto me, both in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). God the Father “gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body” (Eph. 1:22-23). Therefore it is of utmost importance that we “obey” the commandments of the Lord, for he saves only those who “obey” him (Heb. 5:8-9). We are “under the law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21), and are to “fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Regarding Christ, Moses foretold that “him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22-23). God the Father said: “Hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). Christ has given a law; we must obey him.

HOW THE BIBLE TEACHES

The Bible teaches some things: (1) by direct statement (for example: “There is one body,” Eph. 4:4); (2) by direct command (as, “Repent and be baptized,” Acts 2:38); (3) by necessary implication (the very fact that Jesus “went up straightway out of the water,” Matthew 3:16, necessarily implies that he first went down into the water); and (4) by approved examples of things under “specific” authority, things “bound” on them (Matt. 16:19).

Many “approved examples” are NOT binding on us! If the example illustrates something that was optional, something that was not bound on them, it is not a binding example. How could a thing be bound on us if it were not bound on *them*??? Some erroneously have taught that all “*uniform* examples” are binding on us. But, not so: (1) The only approved example we have of one’s confessing his faith in Christ prior to baptism was at the “water’s edge”—or at least in “sight” of the water (Acts 8:36-39). This does not prohibit one’s confessing his faith in his own home, and going to the baptizing place to be baptized—without making another confession there. (2) The only recorded examples of eating the Lord’s supper occurred in an “upper” room (Mark 14:14,15; Acts 20:7-8). But this does not prohibit eating it in the basement, or on the ground floor. for there is no background command requiring *them* to eat it “upstairs.”

In Acts 2:44-46 the funds received from the sale of 44 possessions and goods” seem to have been disbursed by the individuals who sold them; in Acts 4:34-35 the prices received were laid “at the apostles’ feet;” while in Acts 6 seven men were appointed “over this business.” Each of these is an “approved apostolic example”—but not all of them could possibly be binding on us. The truth is that not all of them were binding on the Jerusalem church.

When Paul ordained elders (Acts 14:23) “they prayed with fasting.” But this does not bind fasting on us today when elders are appointed. There is not a hint anywhere that it must be done this way. When the Holy Spirit said “Separate” me Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1-4), the church at Antioch did this “when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them” (Acts 13:14). But the Holy Spirit did not say do it this way; the method of “separating” them

was optional with *them*, hence it is not bound on *us*. The apostle Paul Preached until midnight (Acts 20:7-8)-and kept on talking “till break of day” (v. 11). But this no more binds long sermons on us than it necessitates the preacher’s departure at daybreak, as Paul did (v. 11)!

An example—even an approved apostolic example!—is not binding on us when it is an example of what was done under generic authority—for such expedients were not bound on them (Matt. 16:19).

Others in this series have been assigned topics dealing with how to ascertain Bible authority, the day for public worship, et al. Therefore it should be sufficient for me to simply reiterate the fact that Christ has given a law which we must obey.

LIBERALISM TRIFLES WITH SPECIFIC COMMANDS

“Liberalism” trifles with the law of Christ, setting aside specific commands of God. Since “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4), let us look at some Old Testament examples. God said for Israel to get fire off the altar to bum incense (Lev. 16:12). Nadab and Abihu offered “strange fire,” which he had not commanded them (Lev. 10:1-3). They were “Liberalists,” and died in their sin! King Saul set aside God’s specific command to “utterly destroy the Amalekites,” and all their possessions, sparing King Agag and the best of the cattle (1 Sam. 15:1:23). He also was a “Liberalist.”

SIN TO MAKE LAWS FOR GOD

God himself has made all the laws we need. His law is perfect (James 1:21-25). It is presumptuous sin for man to try to mend God’s law (Psa. 17:7; 19:13-14; Rev. 22:18-19). I quote from my father, the late Gus Nichols:

We must do the thing which the Lord commands us to do; and if he commands us to do a thing in a certain way then *the way to do it* becomes part of the divine law and must be respected a’s well as the doing of the THING commanded (Matt. 28:20) (*The Way Of Truth*, Vol. II, No. 45, Nov. 17,1961).

It is also important that we do not *make laws* where God made none. One would be adding to the word of God if he binds where

God did not bind, regulates what God did not regulate, and if he speaks with authority where God is silent. Such would be adding man's own law to God's law. Hear Gus Nichols again on this point:

**BUT WHERE NO LAW IS
THERE MUST BE LIBERTY**

When God commands the doing of a certain thing, but does not legislate as to how it must be done, this means he has left the way or method of doing it to human judgment, and it is a matter of expediency. No man may legislate for God where he was silent. Such human laws would be additions to God's word; and it is as sinful to make laws for God as it is to break the laws which God himself made (ibid).

**DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ESSENTIALS
AND EXPEDIENTS ILLUSTRATED**

When Jesus told his apostles to "Go" (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15), they were free to use any expedient method of going. Whatever method they chose to "go" at one time was not bound on them at another time; for they might walk on land, or ride a ship across the sea. Since such "expedients" were not "bound" on *them*, certainly they are not "bound" on us! We do not have to use the same methods of travel *they* used, because the apostles themselves did not *have to* use them. If they were not bound on *them*, how could they be bound on us.?

**FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK:
ESSENTIALS AND EXPEDIENTS**

The law of Christ requires saints to assemble for worship (Heb. 10:25). Under the Holy Spirit's direction through the apostles the New Testament church met for worship on the first day of the week: "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..." (Acts 20:7). But Christ did not specify which HOUR of the first day whether it be early in the day, midday, or late in the day. No man has a right to make his preference a law bound on others.

THE ASSEMBLY: ESSENTIALS AND EXPEDIENTS

The Holy Spirit directs "the whole church" to "come together into one place" (1 Cor. 14:23). Such an assembly necessitates an agreed-upon time, and place. Common sense would suggest that it should

be an adequate and a proper place, where all things may be done “decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). The command to assemble includes the authority to rent facilities, “borrow” a meeting place, or to buy land and build a church house, secure a proper deed to it, hold it in trust by “trustees,” pave the parking lot, provide restrooms, offices, classrooms, chalkboards, baptistry, dressing rooms, etc. None of these is “essential,” but all of them may be “expedients.”

TEACHING: ESSENTIALS AND EXPEDIENTS

Another essential is that we “teach all nations, baptizing them” (Matt. 28:18-20). [The book of Acts grew out of this part of the Great Commission!] But after they are baptized we are to teach “them to observe all things whatsoever I have said unto you” (Matt. 28:20). [The remainder of the New Testament—22 books!—grew out of this part!]. Hobbyists would make laws against Bible classes, uninspired literature, charts and other visual aids, teaching by radio or TV. They think they knock a “home-run” when they demand Book, Chapter, and Verse *specifying* these things. But the truth is that these are EXPEDIENTS to do the NECESSARY THING, which is to “TEACH” the word of God.

PRAYER: ESSENTIALS AND EXPEDIENTS

Prayer is another “item” of worship in the New Testament church (Acts 2:42). There are some “essential” prerequisites to acceptable prayer. (1) We must pray to God the Father, not to Jesus, et al. Jesus said, “Pray to thy Father” (Matt. 6:6), and “In that day ye shall ask me nothing” (John 16:23). (2) We must pray in Christ’s name—whether we SAY we are doing so or not: “Verily, Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (John 16:23; note also Col. 3:17). (3) We must pray “according to his will” (1 John 5:14). (4) We must believe in prayer, asking “in faith” (James 1:5-8). Any “god” who cannot hear prayers, and bless one because he prayed, similarly could not hear profanity or blasphemy, nor punish one because of that insulting affront. (5) All acceptable prayer must be in an obedient spirit. “Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22). Jesus asked,

“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

(6) From 1 Timothy 2:8-15 we learn also that women are not to “usurp authority over the man.” Not only is this an apostolic directive, but it is also based upon three Bible facts: (a) God’s created order is that “man” (or mankind) is “head of,” or over, “woman” (or womankind); (b) man was created prior to woman; and (c) woman was made “for” man, not vice versa (1 Cor. 11:3-12). The Holy Bible says: “I will therefore that MEN” [the Greek ANER designates not the human race, but “to distinguish a man from a woman”—Thayer, p. 451] “pray everywhere...” while in the same chapter we read that a woman is not to “usurp (ASV: “exercise”) authority over the man” (1 Tim. 2:8,12). For a woman to lead in public prayer is a violation of the word of God.

But there are some *expedients* pertaining also to prayer, such as: How many prayers shall we pray in one service? How long should we pray? Shall we kneel? sit? or stand? Shall one who leads the prayer use a microphone? Shall all say “amen” (1 Cor. 14:16) *aloud*? For all to lead prayers aloud at the same time violates the divine directive to speak “one by one” (1 Cor. 14:31-33), and is not “orderly” (v. 40).

THE COMMUNION: ESSENTIALS AND EXPEDIENTS

The Lord’s Supper is another specified “essential” in the law of Christ. He said, “This do ye...” (1 Cor. 11:25), which means simply: “You do this.” He specified the bread, and the fruit of the vine, and that it be eaten in remembrance of his body and blood (Matt. 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19-20). The Lord’s table, said Jesus, is “in my kingdom” (Luke 22:29-30)—which makes every premillennialist who eats it inconsistent! Since the new birth is essential to entering the Lord’s kingdom (John 3:1.6), only those who have been born I again have the right to eat at his table. In eating it we “show the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor. 11:26)-which demonstrates that his “kingdom” is NOT something to be established AFTER his second coming! From Acts 20:7 we see that “the communion”

(1 Cor. 10:16) is to be eaten up the “first day” of the week. These matters are not optional, they are “essential.”

However, there are “expedients” pertaining to the Lord’s table: What hour of the first day shall we eat it? Shall we sit, stand, recline, or kneel? May we put the bread on a plate (or plates)? What size piece of bread shall I eat? Shall we close our eyes during communion? May we pour the fruit of the vine into individual vessels from which to drink? Must the table have cloths? It is sinful for any of us to legislate our preferences where God left matters “loosed” (Matt. 16:19)? Such homemade laws become “doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

THE COLLECTION: ESSENTIALS AND EXPEDIENTS

An apostolic “order” requires a collection (1 Cor. 16:1-2). When shall we give in worship? “Upon the first day of the week.” Who should give? “Every one of you.” How much should each give? “As God has prospered him.” “He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity” [A.S.V.: “liberality”] (Rom. 12:8). Our giving is to be planned, or “purposed,” in the heart, and is not to be done “grudgingly, nor of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). These are some “essentials” of acceptable giving.

It may be “expedient” to use collection baskets, and for each to give by check. No one can scripturally give for, in lieu of, another; however we must not confuse putting it into the basket with the actual “giving.” One who is preaching elsewhere may send by another his regular gift to his home congregation; or a child may drop into the basket—deliver—the gift of his mother or father. Or, it may be “expedient” for a husband (or wife) to DELIVER the gift of a whole family. it is “expedient” for the church to have a bonded treasurer to keep the records, write checks, and make reports to the church. In helping the eldership to plan the expenditures, it may be “expedient” for the members to tell them how much they plan to give, thus purpose cards are “expedients.”

SINGING: ESSENTIALS AND EXPEDIENTS

Congregational singing is commanded. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 cannot be obeyed when one is alone—these passages

demand at least two (or more) together, for they specify singing “one to another” (A.S.V.). Prophetically our Savior was represented as saying, “In the midst of the church” (ASV: “congregation”) will I SING praise unto thee” (Heb. 2:12). Just as he eats the Lord’s supper with us (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25), so he also sings with us. But this is not possible if we do not sing!

(1) One “essential” which God specifies is that we sing “psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs” which “teach and admonish.” (2) It is “essential” also that we make “melody,” or have “grace,” in our “hearts” to accompany what we sing with our voices.

(1) The song book, with its modern four-part harmony, is an “expedient.” (2) One of the qualities of music is pitch; but God has not legislated how to get the pitch. One may guess at it, hum to find it, sing the scale, or use a tuning fork or pitch pipe. This is a matter of “expediency.” (3) It is “expedient” to have a song leader, to start all singers at the same time, and to aid in singing at the same pace. (4) Another “expedient” is how loud, or soft, to sing; (5) Another is how many songs to use in one service; and (6) How many stanzas of each.

ADDITIONS VERSUS LEGITIMATE “EXPEDIENTS”

Whatever “aide” in doing the thing commanded may be “expedient.” But a mechanical instrument of music is not an “aid”—it is an ADDITION! God did not say “PLAY”; instead, he said “SING.” No other kind of music added to the SINGING is authorized. To introduce an instrument and call it an “Aid,” is a false argument, a grievous error. Mechanical instruments are not legitimate “aids,” or “expedientes”; they are unscriptural *additions*, and thus are sinful! There can be no “expedient” way to do an UNSCRIP-TURAL thing!

Neither are mechanical instruments of music parallel with the song book, or with a pitch pipe. When one uses a song book (with its lines and spaces and shaped notes, and fourpart harmony!), or a pitch pipe, he does exactly what-and only what—the Lord authorized: he SINGS. But when one uses a mechanical instrument of music, he does something the Lord does NOT authorize—he PLAYS!

There can be no scripturally “expedient” way to do an unscriptural or *unauthorized* thing!

SIN TO TRIFLE WITH GENERIC LAW

For the past third of a century the church has been plagued with brethren who trifled with God’s generic law, in the realm of expedients, substituting their own homemade laws. Such would change the law of expediency into specific commandments. Jesus condemned those who “made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (Matt 15:6), declaring that the doctrines and commandments of men made their worship vain (verses 1-9; see also Mark 7:3-13).

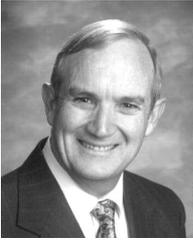
The Pharisees and Herodians took counsel how they might destroy Jesus for healing a man’s withered hand on the sabbath day (Mark 3:1-6). They were guilty of adding to the sabbath command their own homemade laws against healing or doing good on the sabbath day.

There is no law of God which requires a man to marry, or not to marry. (Of course, if he does not marry he has no right to live as if he were married!) But the Holy Spirit said that when men made a law “forbidding to marry,” it became the “doctrine of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

This is also true of eating meats: a meat-eater may be a Christian, the same as a vegetarian. No vegetarian has a right to “judge” another who eats meat (Col. 2:14-16), nor vice versa (1 Cor. 8:8; Rom. 14:3). If one makes a law “commanding to abstain from meats,” such a law is a “doctrine of devils” (2 Tim. 4:1-3).

WORSHIP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT PERIOD

Curtis. A. Cates



Curtis A. Cates was born in Phenix City, Alabama. He was graduated from Alabama Christian High School; Alabama Christian College, A.A., B.S.; Livingston University, B.S., Samford University, M.S.; and Alabama Christian School of Religion, M.R.E., M.Th. Having earned the doctorate from the University of Alabama, he did further graduate study in Abilene Christian University.

Brother Cates married Annette Bingham on October 29, 1960. They have two children, Curtis A. (Andy), Jr., and Daniel F., also a preacher.

For nearly twenty years, Curtis A. Cates has been training gospel preachers. He was three years a professor in the Alabama Christian College; served as Dean of the College, Columbia Christian College, Portland, Oregon; and served as professor and Academic Vice President of the Alabama Christian School of Religion for twelve years. He has served the Memphis School of Preaching as director since August, 1982.

Perhaps never since the first century has the study of what constitutes acceptable worship to God been more critically needed than today. Thus, this writer extends enthusiastic commendation to brother Bobby Liddell, Lectureship Director, and to the Bellview elders and congregation for presenting this great theme, "What Does God Authorize In Worship?"

One can see God's demands for acceptable worship during' the Old Testament period, as well as during the New. When he speaks, he expects people to listen. One who does not give strict heed is called a "fool" (Psm. 14:1).

INTRODUCTION

In the Patriarchal and Mosaic Dispensations, one can observe both authorized and unauthorized worship. As today, many who even claimed to worship Jehovah had little true spirituality; their lives and their worship demonstrated little reverence for the Lord. Perverted people engaged in perverted worship (Jer. 10:23). Instead of allowing

God to direct their lives and prescribe their worship, they lived by their own presumptuous and self-centered wills and worshipped in ways dictated by their own subjective and speculative desires and motives.

Pleasing God the Creator was far from the motivation of man; He was not always the object of their worship. And, often, instead of God's having been the "audience," man became the audience. Likely, to some, the criticism was then, as now, "I did not get anything out of the worship." Instead of going to worship, they went to the worship assemblies to be entertained, to be spectators, to see performances. Did they assemble to offer sacrifices, to glorify, and to lift up praise to God? Was their worship man-centered, or God-centered? One requirement of worship is [and always has been] that the worshipper pour forth praise to God out of a pure heart [the proper attitude, or in spirit].

Another requirement of acceptable worship is [and always has been] that the worshipper pour forth praise to God in an acceptable, authorized way [the proper time, place and acts, or in truth]. Many have affirmed the false doctrine that worship depends *only* upon the attitude of heart, but not upon *when* one worships [the authorized time], or *where* one worships [the authorized place], or *how* one worships [the authorized acts].

Worship is a very vital, central, and essential part of man's relationship with his Maker. Through it he demonstrates his love for, pays homage to, and enters into a close fellowship with God. There is more to worship than just sitting in a building, or going through the motions, or even acting pious. The importance of worship is seen virtually from Genesis 1 through, Revelation 22. The word "worship" in its various forms appears nearly 200 times in the Bible. Worship is an obligation, an exalted privilege, and a great blessing! Since those things in the Old Testament were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4) and since "...all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11), let us now examine "worship in the Old Testament Period."

IS ALL WORSHIP ACCEPTABLE TO GOD?

Though man is by his very nature a worshipful creature, apart from God's revelation he is perverted. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

Man has always been a religious being. Every civilization and nation has had its own god(s) and altar(s). [Even the atheistic humanist has a religion; he worships man.] This writer doubts that a nation has ever existed which did not worship something or someone. And, just as the righteous become more and more like Jehovah, who revealed himself in his word, the adherents of idolatry become more like the objects which they adore. When man abandons revelation and inspiration and seeks to answer the most important questions of life, he always ends in perversion (Rom. 1:18ff), in perverted religion. The way of idolatry is always downward, becoming more and more corrupt—morally, ethically, socially, et al. Only where the light of the Gospel message shines is mankind able to overcome such degradation.

That which man supremely reverences, loves, and obeys is his "god," the object of his worship. He may determine that he will not worship Jehovah, but something or someone is going to have priority in his life. Something is going to have his supreme allegiance, is going to fill the vacuum in his heart and life that is left when he does not reverence God. Man needs to worship (Psm. 96:1-9); he has that yearning. "For the Lord is great, and, greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens" (Psm. 96:4,5). "...he hath set eternity in their heart" (Eccl. 3:11 ASV). Man has a feeling for the sacred. Man's "sense of ought" and his conscience points to the existence of the Almighty.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

The word "worship" originally came from the Anglo-Saxon *weorthscipe*, from *weorth* (worthy, honorable), and *scipe* (ship), developing later into *worship* and still later into worship (attributing worth to a thing or person). Of course, supreme honor is to be

given to God, for he alone has superlative worth; he solely is “worthy of praise.”

In the Old Testament, the word *hishahawah* (*shahah*) literally indicates “a bowing down,” “to prostrate” oneself, representing how the Hebrew considered his approach to God’s august presence. “And it came to pass, that when Abraham’s servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth” (Gen. 24:52). “And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever” (2 Chron. 7:3). “And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped” (2 Chron. 29:29). The corresponding Greek word is *proskuneo*, (to kiss toward), indicating “to do obeisance,” “to prostrate,” “to show deep respect.” Though the name of God alone is great (Mal. 1:11,12), though he alone is God (1 Kings 18:21ff), and though he alone is to be worshipped (1 Tim. 2:8), not all God’s offspring worship him, amazingly and regrettably. They “...change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever” (Rom. 1:25).

Worship is thus composed of certain specified, specific, prescribed activities in which the Christian draws near to and communes in heart and spirit with his Creator (John 4:24). Man’s own spirit reaches out to God, whom he praises as the embodiment and source of life, strength, righteousness, love, and grace. The redeemed praise and magnify God for his great and matchless gift of his only begotten Son (John 3:16), whereby he is saved. He seeks every opportunity to pour out the deepest gratitude of his adoring, reverential attitude of heart. Though he must worship according to the divine pattern, that worship is not “mechanical” nor is it “material” and with “machinery.” The worship is divinely prescribed to appeal to the spirit, not to the flesh.

The astute Bible student can observe that not all one does is worship, which perversion of God’s teaching would permit anything and everything to be done in worship; there would be nothing which

is unauthorized. [The next step to concluding that everything one does is worship is to categorize the following as acceptable: clapping and shouting, testifying and witnessing, women preachers, choirs, mechanical instrumental music, etc., etc.] Another chapter in this volume deals with the aforementioned false averment.

GOD ALONE IS WORTHY OF PRAISE

Dire consequences await those who deny God's worth, whether in word or in practice! "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other, gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish" (Deut. 8:19). This warning was to the Jews; it is no different today. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to [idols], nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a *jealous* God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that *hate me*" (Exod. 20:5). Why is God jealous of his great Name? Why is he alone worthy of worship?

God is the only true, living God, who speaks through his Son in this present age (Heb. 1:1-3) and through the Spirit of truth (2 Pet. 1:21; John 16:13). Unlike idols who were/are numerous and are nothing (1 Cor. 10:19), God is real (Dan. 2:28) and is one Lord (Deut. 6:4). Thus, the Lord told Satan, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10), quoting Deuteronomy 6:13,14. He is the great "I am" (Exod. 3:14), the only self-existent, eternal, all powerful Being; thus, he commanded, "I am the Lord thy God,... Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:2,3).

God is holy. "Give unto the Lord the glory due his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth" (Psm. 96:8,9). Why? "For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised" (Psm. 96:4). "Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy" (Psm. 99:9).

God is the Creator. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), as well as man in his image (Gen. 1:26,27). And, it is he who sustains us (Acts 17:25-29). We are his offspring; he is our Father (Heb. 12:9). "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is

he that hath made us, and not we ourselves,... Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (Psm. 100:3,4). “Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:... I am the Lord: that is my name and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images” (Isa. 42:5,8).

God is love. He furnishes man with every good physical and spiritual blessing. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jas. 1:17). The Psalmist wrote, “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof” (Psm. 50:10-12).

Immediately after Adam and Eve rebelled in the beautiful Garden of Eden, and were thus cast out and separated from God, God revealed his plan of human redemption (Gen. 3:15). From the first bloody sacrifices until the sacrificial blood flowed like rivers at the tabernacle and at the temple, the Lord was moving in love toward Calvary. Oh, how his huge heart of love must have been grieved every time an innocent animal was killed, thinking of the gift of his only begotten Son, of whom the blood of bulls and goats was a type. Think of the Christ, “...Who in the days of his flesh, when he offered up prayers and supplications [in the Garden of Gethsemane] with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared” (Heb. 5:7); yet, he still endured the cross because of the joy of knowing that by his death we could be saved (Heb. 12:1,2; 5:8,9). What great love to give the Christ (John 3:16) and for Christ to give his life (Rom. 5:8) for you and me (Heb. 2:9)! “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

God deserves our worship. Through the Psalmist he urged, “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.... Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart”

(Psm. 95:6-8). “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands” (Psm. 100:1). “But 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,” the Lord said (John 4:23). The angel told John, “Worship God” (Rev. 22:8,9). Question—How can we please God, if he desires our worship?

BUT, SOME WILL NOT WORSHIP GOD!

Man apart from God and from his word worships objects which are not worthy of praise. *One*, some have chosen to worship rocks, trees, rivers, and other inanimate objects. Called “animism,” this religion gives “spirits” to these substances, and people reverence and bow down to them. *Two*, others have worshipped the sun and other heavenly bodies (such as planets). The Egyptians, for example, worshipped the Ammon-ra, the sun god. The people of Lystra said about Paul and Barnabas, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker” (Acts 14:11-15). Of course, Paul and Barnabas refused the worship, directing their minds to “the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.” Job refused to kiss the hand (do obeisance) toward the sun or the moon, for to do such [practice astrology] would be to “deny God” (Job 31:26-28). *Three*, still others have worshipped men, such as the emperor or the king, in certain countries. In Egypt, the Pharaohs were worshipped; in the Roman Empire, the Caesars; in Japan, the Emperors: in Catholicism, the popes. Peter refused to be worshipped (Acts 10:25,26), as did Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:15) and as did the angels (Rev. 22:8,9). *Four*, even others have worshipped demons, the—departed spirits of wicked men (Acts 17:22, literally “demonfearing”; cf. 1 Cor. 10:20; 1 Tim. 4:1). *Five*, others have worshipped their houses and lands (Luke 12:15ff; 1 Tim. 6:6-10; Col. 3:5; Matt. 6:24); family members, such as children, parents, or mates (Luke 14:26); their own lives (Matt. 16:24-26); gods of wood, stone, or metal (Exod. 20:4; Acts 17:16; 19:24-28); and even Satan himself, in a formal way.

Some of the forms or rituals of false worship have included: sacrifices (both animal and human), dances, chants, prayers, sexual per-

version, food offerings, incense, exorcism, adoration of medals and images, bowing down literally to images and/or men), etc. Anything between us and God must be renounced and abandoned.

The Bible speaks of vain worship. “But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). Some supremely love and reverence and gratify their own appetites. “Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil. 3:19). They neither care for nor give heed to the divine pattern of life (Phil. 3:16). Any attempt to coerce or joke people into obedience and into worship is vain (John 6:60ff). Christ gave his followers words, not gimmicks (John 17:8). The materialistic, self-centered, uninterested soul who has to be given entertainment and excitement in order to “follow the Lord” will sell out, as did Judas (John 12:4-8). What it takes to get “converts,” it takes to keep them, especially when trials come. “And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:9). “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).

WHAT MUST BE THE WORSHIPPER’S ATTITUDE?

Great responsibility has always rested upon the worshipper, in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Not only must one have the right object, but he must have certain attitudes.

First, the true worshipper feels the desire to worship. “Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and the heaven” (Psm. 148:12,13). “When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday” (Psm. 42:4). David exclaimed, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord” (Psm. 122:1). Man needs to realize his need for his maker and thirst for him. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” (Psm. 42:1,2). Job cried, “Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his’ seat!” (Job 23:3).

Second, the true worshipper feels profound gratitude for the wonderful grace of God. He seeks every opportunity to acknowledge his dependence upon God and his awareness that without God's blessings, he could not live. "O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us" (Psm. 117:1,2). "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Psm. 116:12). "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people" (Psm. 116:14). "Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever" (Psm. 106:1).

Third, the true worshipper feels reverence in and worships God from the heart. It is genuine; the emotions are involved. "Whenever I remember these things [what God has done for me and that my soul pants after God], I pour out my soul in me" (Psm. 42:4). "Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord" (1 Chron. 16:8-12). "...him shall ye fear [reverence], and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice" (2 Kings 17:36). "I will give thee thanks with my whole heart: Before the gods will I sing praises unto thee" (Psm. 138:1). The worshipper is not passive in his worship, awaiting some entertainment or mystical uplift to result from the "performance" of the song leader, the preacher, et al. We actively lift up praise and adoration to God within his prescribed way out of a heart filled with reverence, gratitude, confession, praise, and supplication.

Forth, the true worshipper realizes that God is close at hand. Unlike many who think that God is so remote that he cannot see, know, or be concerned with our needs, thoughts, prayers, and joys, men need to realize that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him [through his word, of course], though he be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). With the Israelites, God's glory filled the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34-38), from whence he spoke to the people (Lev. 1:1). Here we see the marvel of his condescension; he would later dwell among the people when the Word would tabernacle in the flesh (John 1:1-3,14) and when he would dwell in his holy temple, the church (1 Cor. 3:16,17). He is with his people in the worship (Matt. 26:28,29; 1 Cor. 10:16-21;

11:23ff). The righteous people of the Old Testament walked with God, building a close relationship with him [not the type of “buddy-buddy,” “daddy” relationship as some shallow, flippant souls would aver today]. Study the faith and reverence demonstrated in the worship of Abraham, Moses, David, et al. Enoch walked with God; David was a man after God’s own heart; Daniel was greatly beloved.

WHAT ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRUE WORSHIPPER?

True worshippers in every age of the world have been a people of God’s own possession, a peculiar people (1 Pet. 2:9). Having been chosen by God, they no longer belonged/belong to themselves. “...we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Psm. 100:3). What is the state or condition of the true worshipper?

One, they are wise, inasmuch as they listen to God. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). His word is their chart and compass. They are poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3); they readily acknowledge that “the way of man is not in himself it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). They “...wait upon the Lord” (Isa. 40:31). They do not argue with God, but reverence him by listening and submitting to his teaching. “But the Lord is in his holy temple. let all the earth keep silence before him” (Hab. 2:20). Indeed, they realize keenly their need to seek the Lord. “And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord” (Zech. 8:21,22).

Two, they draw near to the Lord not only in heart but also in life. Since sin separates from God (Isa. 59:1,2), man must return to God through humble obedience and reformation of life, blessed by God’s grace. God will not hear one who persists in sin and regards sin in his heart. “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psm. 66:16-18). We must daily walk with the Lord. God rejected the worship of Israel when they walked in sin;

their sacrifices wearied him. Thus, God pleaded, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge I the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isa. 1:16,17). How could sincere, reverent praise flow from corrupt hearts and lives? How could God accept their “worship”? A life with God produces a heart more and more “attuned for praise.” Rebels do not/cannot praise God acceptably.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE WORSHIP?

Without question or dispute, God has always defined what constitutes acceptable worship; this has *not* been left to man’s discretion. Man apart from God (and thus apart from his divine revelation) has always been perverted. Further more, human reason has always produced perverted religions and perverted worship. Those who professed/profess to be people of God have been united only when they adhered strictly to his divine pattern in thought, words, teaching, and practice; the fruits of departure from God’s pattern have inevitably been division-sectarianism, denominationalism. Read Exodus 29:38-46; note the authority of God’s pattern to the Israelites. Observe such phrases as “Now this is that which thou shalt offer...,” “The one lamb thou shalt....,” “...and shall do...unto the Lord.” “This shall be...throughout your generations...,” “I am the Lord their God.” No man-devised, human-conceived worship, carried out no matter how piously and no matter how impressively and beautifully is acceptable to God. Just because it meets man’s enthusiastic, sincere approval does not guarantee God’s approval! Many Old Testament “worshippers” learned that the hard way.

The verdict upon *Cain* was that God had “no respect” for his presumptuous offering; it was rejected (Gen. 4:5). God’s verdict upon *Aaron and the people of Israel* when they fashioned the golden calf was, “Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may’ consume them” (Exod. 32:10). His verdict upon *Nadab and Abihu* when they offered strange fire, “which he commanded not,” was, “...there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord” (Lev. 10:2).

The Lord's verdict upon *Jeroboams*'s false religion and worship was, "Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out" (1 Kings 13:3). His verdict upon *Israels* insincere, worldly lives and perverted worship was, "Woe unto you..." (Amos 5:18; 6: 1; Cf. Amos 7:Iff). God's verdict upon the sectarian *Pharisees*, hypocrites was, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). He would/shall root up every perverted religion (Matt 15:13).

To worship in any way other than according to God's pattern was under the old law (and is today under the law of Christ) to disregard the truth of God and to violate his precepts. "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth" (Psm. 119:142). To worship other than according to the truth, God's law, is perverted worship. "Thou art near, O Lord, and all thy commandments are truth" (Psm. 119:151). Not to worship according to the divine pattern is to engage in unacceptable worship (John 4:23,24; 8:32; 17:17); it is to reject God's authority and to sin. It is to be rejected. The one who failed/fails to worship God on his terms fails to respect his name. "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Exod. 20:24). Since God puts his name (authority) on the things commanded (Col. 3:17), to do things in worship not authorized by God or to omit things he commands is to sin and to be rejected, lost eternally unless one repents, ceases the practice, comes out of the perversion, and practices pure and undefiled religion.

HOW DOES ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP MEET MAN'S NEEDS?

Great blessings result from scriptural worship. 1. It brings great joy and strength (Psm. 138:2,3). The heart has longings which can be fulfilled in no other way. Man is not complete without worshipping God. In Solomon's pursuit of what brings true happiness, his conclusion was, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

2. Worship strengthens the worshipper. God will continue to be God whether we worship him or not. He stated, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee" (Psm. 50:12). It is we who need him and the strength from his word, from fellowship with his people, from praising his high and holy name.

3. Worship encourages others. The Jews were to meet at one tabernacle [not, many] and at one temple. This promoted unity. Otherwise, they would have gone off in countless directions, and only the devil would have been the winner. God's people are to assemble together today in each con (Heb. 10:24,25). Mutual edification is a vital part of our assembly, as it was in the Old Testament.

CONCLUSION

Worship to God has always been an indispensable part of the life of the child of God. This chapter has sought to discuss the principles of acceptable worship in the Old Testament. Though the old law was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14-16; Rom. 1:14; 2 Cor. 3, et al.), many lessons can be gained by a study of worship in the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4).

Man must worship. He must worship God, in the, God-prescribed manner, with the right attitude of reverence. He must worship in the way God said worship, because God has all authority. Worship which is unauthorized will cause a person to be lost, and not to worship God will cause a person to be lost.

"Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at, the remembrance of his holiness" (Psm. 30:4).

THE DEVELOPMENT AND INFLUENCE OF SYNAGOGUE WORSHIP

Rex A. Turner, Sr.



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INTRODUCTION

The subject assigned for this hour is: “The Development and Effect of Synagogue Worship.” Generally speaking, students of the Bible associate the synagogue with the Old Testament Scriptures, but the word “synagogue” does not appear [with one exception, Psa. 74:81] in the Old Testament text. The term is derived from the Greek and means “to gather,” “to gather together,” “to bring together.” The Hebrew equivalence is “assembly” and “convocation.”

While the term “synagogue” is Greek in origin, it is used specifically of an institution that developed among the Hebrew people. The “synagogue” became a most unusual and far-reaching institution, and its influence in both Hebrew and Gentile society is exceeded only by the church of the Lord.

BACKGROUND HISTORY

The background history which ultimately gave rise to the synagogue as an institution, necessarily embraces the following:

The Period of the United Kingdom

Israel at first consisted of twelve tribes. In time, the people demanded a king so as to be like the nations about them. God, in his anger, gave them a king. There was first, Saul, then David, and then Solomon—with reigns of forty years each—a total of 120 years. Then God divided the kingdom of Israel.

The Period of the Divided Kingdom

God divided the kingdom of Israel because there is strength in unity for evil just as there is strength in unity for good. Solomon, the king who prayed: “Give thy servant...an understanding heart to judge thy people”...had become the greatest king of all the earth, but in time he became so sensually involved with his foreign wives and concubines that he actually built high places for Chemosh, the god of the nation of Moab, and for Molech, the god of the nation of Ammon; “and so did for all his wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods” (1 Kings 11:1-8). “Jehovah was angry with Solomon”...and said, “I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant....Howbeit, I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant’s sake, and for Jerusalem’s sake which I have chosen” (1 Kings 11:9-13).

Now, “Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor....and it came to pass at that time, when Jeroboam went out of “Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah [clad in a new garwent]...laid hand on him, and rent it [his new garment) in twelve pieces; and said to Jeroboam, Take ten pieces [ten tribes]....I will take thee, and thou shalt reign as my soul desireth, and thou shalt be king over Israel” (1 Kings 11:28-37). Thus, there came to be two nations—the nation of Judah, consisting of two tribes [Judah and Benjamin], and the nation of Israel, consisting of the remaining ten tribes.

In time, there were three carryings away of Israel into Assyrian captivity, as follows:

The first carrying away of Israel was during the reign of Pekah, king of Israel. Tilgath-pilneser, king of Assyria, came up against Israel and carried away the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-

tribe of Manasseh, “and brought them unto Halah, and Habor and Hara, and to the river of Gozan” (1 Chron. 5:23-26; 2 Chron. 28:5).

The second carrying away of Israel was during the reign of Hoshea, king of Israel. At the commencement of his reign, Shalmaneser came up against Israel, and Hoshea became Shalmaneser’s servant. Shalmaneser was the first to make Hoshea subject and tributary to Assyria.

The third carrying away of Israel was also during the reign of king Hoshea—in the sixth year of his reign [2 Kings 17:4]—as a matter of record. Shalmaneser found conspiracy in Hoshea. Hoshea had refused to make further tributary payments to Assyria. Shalmaneser, upon his having been informed of Hoshea’s refusal to make further payments, had Hoshea arrested and imprisoned and put into chains. Samaria was under siege for three years and in the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medea” (2 Kings 17:5,6).

The Period of the Kingdom of Judaa

In time, there were three carryings away of Judah into Babylonian captivity.

The first carrying away of Judah into Babylonian captivity came at the point when General Nebuchadnezzar left to attend the funeral of his father, King Naboplassar. Nebuchadnezzar directed that youths of the seed royal be carried to Babylon. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were included in that carrying away (Dan. 1:6).

The second carrying away to Babylon included king Jehoiachin/Coniah along with his family, and including mighty men of valor, princesses, craftsmen, and smiths—all these were included in the second carrying away to Babylon. They were placed on the river Chebar. Ezekiel was among that number. (Ezek. 1:1-3; Jer. 22; 2 Chron. 36:9-10; 2 Kings 24:8-17).

The third and last carrying away was effected during the reign of Zedekiah/Mattaniah. The house of Jehovah was burned with fire, the walls were broken down, the great houses were burned, and only the poorest of the land were left. King Zedekiah was carried to Riblah. His sons were slain before his eyes, and then his eyes were put out, and he was bound in fetters and carried to Babylon (2 Kings 25:6).

THE RISE OF THE SYNAGOGUE WORSHIP

Some are bound to ask: “Why all this recitation of history? What possibly could such a recitation of history have to do with the subject: ‘The Development and Effect of Synagogue Worship?’” The case is that the history just briefly reviewed, or recited, is imperative for a study of and an appreciation for the “development and effect of synagogue worship.”

There were no synagogues prior to the period of the Babylonian Captivity. As pointed up at the outset of this lecture, the term “synagogue” does not appear in the Old Testament text. The synagogue truly belongs to a new period of history. Over an extended period of time Israel, as a nation, began to join the heathen nations in their idolatries. In turn, God sent prophets among them to deter them from their evil course. From time to time, God gave his people “the bread of adversity and the water of affliction” (Isa. 30:20), but the time came when adversities and afflictions no longer deterred those Israelites from their idolatrous course. In time, as already recited, God divided his nation, and there came to be the nation of Judah and the nation of Israel. Israel, in time, was carried into Assyrian captivity. Though Judah was knowledgeable of the outcome of their fellow Israelites, they followed their brethren’s sinful course. As a last resort, so to speak, God determined for his people, Judah, “the furnace of affliction” (Isa. 48:10). Jeremiah reported: “The word of Jehovah came unto me the second time, saying, what seest thou? and I said, I see a burning caldron: and the face thereof is from the north. Then Jehovah said unto me, out of the north evil [that is, punishment] shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land” (Jer. 1:13,14). The point to be pressed is that the caldron which God had chosen was none other than the nation of Babylon.

The furnace of affliction, or boiling caldron, was Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar had been chosen to administer that caldron. In short, Nebuchadnezzar stoked that caldron when he instructed that a number of bright young men be castrated and carried to Babylon. The number included Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Nebuchadnezzar, further, stoked that caldron when he ordered that king Jehoiachin/ Coniah, and including the prophet Ezekiel, together with a company of Jews, be carried to Babylon.

In the meantime, Jeremiah reported to Zedekiah, who succeeded Coniah to the throne: “Thus saith Jehovah...then thy soul shall live, and thy house. But if thou will not go forth...then shall this city be given into the hands of the Chaldeans, and they shall bum it with fire:” (Jer. 38:17-23). Zedekiah feared to go forth because of the evil mind-set of his own brethren. Thus, “the anger of Jehovah did come to pass in Jerusalem and Judah until he had cast them out from his presence” (Jer. 52:3).

From Nebuchadnezzar’s point of view, he, with a vengeance, heavily stoked the fire of that Babylonian caldron by directing his army utterly to destroy the city of Jerusalem. “Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard...burned the house of Jehovah, and the king’s house and all of the houses of Jerusalem” (Jer. 52:12,13). “The army of the Chaldean’s...break down the walls of Jerusalem round about” (Jer. 52:14). The king Zedekiah was “carried...unto the king of Babylon to Riblah”....“And the king of Babylon slow the sons of Zedekiah before his [Zedekiah’s] eyes; and he put out the eyes of Zedekiah: and the king of Babylon bound him in fetters, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death” (Jer. 52:8-11).

A summary of this historical overview necessarily includes the following:

1. Jehovah God set a caldron in Babylon for the purpose of boiling idolatry out of his people, since every other effort had failed, including the prophets who rose up early, and continued until late, in their preaching against idolatry.
2. Jehovah God chose Nebuchadnezzar, a very religious and talented man to administer that caldron.
3. Jehovah God was not only genuinely interested in his people the Jews, but he was just as genuinely interested in all peoples.
4. Jehovah God not only had in view the boiling of idolatry out of his people, but also he had in view the fulness of time when he would send his Son to earth to die for all men, whether Jew or Gentile.

To such ends, Jehovah God chose to raise up four world empires in order that each empire might make its distinct contribution to the fulness of time—namely, Babylon, MedoPersia, Greece, and Rome.

Each empire arose in its own time and made its distinct contribution to that fulness of time. Those special contributions were as follows:

1. Babylon's unique contribution was the Hebrew or Jewish synagogue.
2. Medo-Persia's contribution was the principle and place of law and order.
3. Greece's contribution was a high universal language.
4. Rome's contribution was a worldwide enforced peace, good roads—"all roads lead to Rome"—and the high principle and protection of the Roman government for its free born citizens.

While each of the four world empires made a significant contribution to the fulness of time, no contribution was more significant and more overwhelming than Babylon's synagogues of Jews. Those Jews were literally scattered throughout the countries, and wherever a few of those dislocated Jews came to reside, [in time, the limitation was defined as ten families] they invariably met on each sabbath day to pray to and give worship unto their God. They were done with the worship of idolatrous gods. Through their trying and unfortunate experiences, and/or through the trying and unfortunate experiences of their parents, they had learned the hard way that there is no power or virtue in stock or stone or system of superstition.

With respect to Babylon's contribution, the synagogue, the case is that those Jews were done with idolatry. The Jewish communities [synagogues] together with their oracles [the law of Moses], and with the presence of their prophets and teachers, were determined that they would never again bow down to idols [mere stocks and stones] forever.

The extent to which those Jews were scattered throughout the countries is beyond imagination. Consider *that annual memorable, Pentecost day* on which "there came from heaven a sound as of a rushing of a mighty wind and, it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues, parting asunder, like as of fire: and it sat upon each one of them [the apostles]. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:14).

Now, the point of this recital is to press the fact of how that Jews had come from such long distances, and from so many far away

countries [let the person who doubts check the maps]—from Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans, and Arabians. The presence of those Jews and proselytes, [Gentile converts to the Jew's God] is nothing short of amazing. One may be certain that those Jews who came to Jerusalem for that Pentecostal observance, left multitudes of their fellow Jews behind! How did they come to live in all those far away places? The answer resounds, through Nebuchadnezzar's stoking, with a vengeance, the boiling caldron in Babylon. To be remembered is the fact that in that period of time there were no fast speeding trains, buses, and airplanes; but those Jews who had been scattered throughout the then inhabitable earth knew about their Pentecost day, and they had made great effort to be present for that occasion. Providence had prevailed in behalf of both Jews and Gentiles.

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE SYNAGOGUE
ORDER OF WORSHIP TO THE NEW TESTAMENT
ORDER OF WORSHIP**

The Jews Worshipped In Their Synagogues.

The synagogue order of worship consisted of the following characteristics:

For one consideration, the Jews who were scattered throughout all those nations met for worship each week, and that upon a certain day of each week, the seventh or sabbath day. For another consideration, the items, or acts of worship, consisted of oral readings from the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms; of prayers, of the singing of psalms [there was no mechanical instrument used in the synagogue as an accompaniment to their singing]; and a lesson of exhortation. One reading from Acts will serve to confirm the fact of the sermon or exhortation, and other matters as well. The reading is as follows: "Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia:...But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers [elders] of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

And Paul stood up, and beckoning with the hand,” proceeded to speak (Acts 13:13-16). For a third consideration, an offering or collection was made each sabbath for the poor and for the financial operation of the synagogue. For a fourth consideration, each synagogue had a ruler and/or elders—that is, men of age, experience, and dedication—who supervised the spiritual affairs of the membership of the respective synagogue.

Thus through the special providence of God the Christians had but two adjustments to make in their order of worship, namely: (1) a change in the day set for worship—that is, a change from the sabbath day to the first day of the week, the Lord’s day; and (2) the addition of their eating or partaking of the Lord’s supper—a supper which Jesus introduced to his disciples on the night of his betrayal and which he eats with his disciples each Lord’s day.

The account of that supper reads as follows: “Now when even was come, he was sitting at meat with the twelve disciples;...And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. *But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom*” (Matt. 26:20-29). Matthew then added: “And when they [that is, Jesus and his apostles] had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives” (Matt. 26:30).

Jesus Preached in Those Synagogues:

The relationship which Jesus sustained to the synagogue, and its order of worship, had a great bearing on the rise of the New Testament order of worship as it developed out of the synagogue worship. One very pertinent point is that Jesus visited and taught in the synagogues throughout Palestine and Galilee. John records how that Jesus answered the high priest by saying: “I have spoken openly to the world; *I ever taught in synagogues*, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and in secret spake I nothing” (John 18:20). Matthew recorded how that “Jesus went about *in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues*, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 4:23). In another place Matthew wrote: “And coming into *his own*

country [Nazareth] he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said...Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary?" (Matt. 13:54-55). Mark records how that Jesus taught in the synagogue at Capernaum, as follows: "And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he [Jesus] entered into the synagogue and taught" (Mark 1:21). Luke also wrote of how that Jesus taught in the synagogues of Galilee, as follows: "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee:...And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all" (Luke 4:14-15). In another place, Luke not only wrote of how that Jesus taught in the synagogues, but he also left on record a sermon which Jesus preached in the synagogue at Nazareth. That sermon reads as follows:

And he [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor.

He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind,

To set at liberty them that are bruised,

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, *To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears*" (Luke 4:16-21).

Jesus Sang in Those Synagogues:

Another very pertinent fact is that Jesus not only taught in the synagogues of Palestine and Galilee but he also sang the praises of the Father in those synagogues or congregations. For one point of emphasis, who would dare contend that Jesus remained silent while the rest of the congregation sang the praises of the Father? For another point of emphasis, David prophesied concerning Jesus: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, In the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise" (Heb. 2:12). Jesus went from synagogue to synagogue declaring the name of his Father, and in the midst of those congregations Jesus joined them in their congregational praise

to God. There is absolutely no indication here that Jesus merely sang a solo in one of the respective congregations, as certain leaders of the Christian Church at Jesus to contend. The necessary inference is in with his brethren in their singing praises unto the Father.

The case is that the words of Hebrews 2:12 are a quotation from the Psalms. In the psalm David was led by the Spirit to write: “For dogs have compassed me: A company of evil doers have enclosed me; They pierced my hands and my feet...They part my garments among them, And upon my vesture do they cast lots” (Psa. 22:16-18). Within that same frame of reference, David was moved to write: “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: In the midst of the assembly will I praise thee” (Psa. 22:22). David was a type of the Christ; and as David often sang the praises of the Father in “the midst of, or in conjunction with, his brethren; just so, Jesus, the antitype of David, sang the praises of the Father ‘in the midst of the numerous synagogues of Israel which he visited while he was on earth. The necessary inference is that in the church, the antitype of the synagogue, Christians should sing the praise of Jehovah in the midst of the congregation when assembled for worship, and especially for the appointed Lord’s day worship.

One of the chief leaders of the Christian Church has observed, with respect to Hebrews 2:12, “This is a prophetic reference to our Lord singing a solo. A congregation is present but it does not sing.” Did Jesus sing only that once in all those synagogues which he visited? Did Jesus sing on only one occasion and that then he sang a solo? How far will men go to support an unscriptural practice?

The author of the Hebrews epistle urged his Hebrew brethren “let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh” (Heb. 10:24-25). In keeping with this urgent plea, the Hebrews writer continued his urging. He wrote: “Through him [Jesus] then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name” (Heb. 13:15). Relative to this very explicit urging that Christians offer to God a sacrifice—the fruit of lips [“lips”], what a plurality is necessarily implied—the Hebrews writer urged the brethren: “not

forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh” (Heb. 10:25). That day was the first day of the week. Those meetings were regularly held on each first day of the week—the day on which Christ arose from the dead. What a day that resurrection day was! What a testimony the first day of the week bears to all mankind! What a day that first day is for the assembling of Christians! What a day the first day is for multitudes to blend their “lips” in praise to God!

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, God’s providence prevailed when he raised up prophets among his people to instruct them in righteousness and to warn them against sins of all sorts and specifically against the fatal sin of idolatry.

Then, God’s providence prevailed when he gave his people “the bread of adversity and the water of affliction,” and his providence further prevailed when he determined for those people the furnace of affliction—*Babylon the boiling caldron*.

Further, God’s providence prevailed when he chose the young king Nebuchadnezzar to fire that boiling caldron; and his providence continued to prevail when he raised up in succession four world empires to the end that each empire would make its distinct contributions to the “fulness of the time” when he [God] would set up a kingdom—his kingdom—which would never be destroyed.

Still further, God’s providence continued to prevail when he provided that the pattern of worship in his kingdom, the church, would develop normally through the order of the synagogue worship, and thus necessitating only a change in the day for worship, and the addition of the observance of the Lord’s Supper by the saints.

THE PRIESTHOOD BEING CHANGED, HAS THE WORSHIP CHANGED?

Jerry L. Martin



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The title of this lesson expresses an assumption. It assumes you know something about the Old Testament law (the law of Moses) and its priesthood (Levitical). It also assumes you know that the Old Testament law and its priesthood has been changed. Yet unless one has studied and rightly divided the word of God he would know neither. He would not be able to comprehend nor understand passages which confirm such facts; passages such as Hebrews 7:11-14,

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need *was there* that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

The entire eighth chapter of this same book is a confirmation that the Old Testament laws, the tabernacle, the priesthood and ceremonies were “examples” or “shadows” of “a more excellent ministry” and “a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (vs.

6). All these instructions were to assure that all things were done “according to the pattern” (vs. 5). Hebrews 9 details the “ordinances” and “sanctuary” or place of divine service under the “first covenant” and then expresses the contrast.

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth (vss. 11-17).

In order not to assume too much let us spend a little time reviewing the background of the Old Testament priesthood. This can only be done properly by going back to the Old Testament. Moses received a law detailing how the children of Israel were to live and worship pleasing to God. In order to be assured that God would dwell among them Moses was given explicit instructions as to how his dwelling place should be built in Exodus 25-27. It was to be built “after their pattern” which was showed Moses in the mountain (Ex. 25:40). Having designed a place of worship (the tabernacle) he then chose the tribe of Levi to be the people to see that the ceremonies or acts of worship in this place are carried out according to the prescribed pattern (Ex. 28). They would be known as priests (28:1). A priest is one who offers sacrifices and has the charge of things pertaining thereto. God’s choice of the tribe of Levi was miraculously confirmed in Numbers 17 which left no doubt that they were the priestly tribe. The high priest came from this tribe and through the family of Aaron specifically.

The book of Leviticus means “pertaining to the Levites” and gives in minute detail their duties in preparation for worship. It explains how an imperfect people could worship and have fellowship with a

Holy God. The priests, in particular, were to be examples to the people in the area of holiness. They were required by God to “be ye holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7). This book contains eighty-seven references to the need for holiness. Sacrifices were required as atonement for the sine and imperfections of the people. The priests had regulations that governed the various sacrifices and offerings. It was their duty to see that they were offered properly.

PERSONAL SACRIFICES

1. *The Burnt Offering* (Lev. 1). It set forth the holiness of God, the awesome nature of sin and the necessity of propitiation. This sacrifice was a shadow of the presentation of one’s self as a living sacrifice and emphasizes that meaningful religion is personal and individual.

2. *The Meat Offering* (Lev. 2). This offering was a reminder of God’s goodness and an indication of one’s thankfulness to God for his provisions.

3. *The Peace Offering* (Lev. 3). This represented access to and communion with God. In this offering one sees the fellowship and brotherhood that was to exist between the priests and the worshippers.

4. *The Sin and Trespass Offering* (Lev. 4-6). This was an occasion for the priest to remind himself and the people of the justice of God in dealing with willful sins. The worshipper was taught that restitution had to be made and the penalty for sin had to be paid. The sacrifice itself was a sign of sorrow and penitence of heart. It was a continual reminder of how sin affects the one who sins, how it affects others, and how it affects one’s relationship with God.

The priest’s faithfulness in carrying out divine instructions concerning numerous offerings was imperative in order for the worshipper to see the holiness, accessibility, goodness, mercy and justice of God. In Christ, one sees these qualities clearly.

PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE

The greatest of the days the priests were required to officiate was the Day of Atonement detailed in Leviticus 16. On this day the sine of the people were confessed, sacrifices were offered and atonement for sins made. This day was the only time the High priest was

allowed to go into the Most Holy Place, where the blood of animals was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. It was also on this famous day that the priests officiated in the Scapegoat arrangement that was a shadow of the coming of our Redeemer. John the Immerser used this background when introducing the supremacy of Christianity in John 1:29 as he presents Christ to the world for the first time, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” We should ever be thankful for the new and living way made possible by the blood of Christ. “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:24-26). These thoughts are continued in Hebrews 10:1-20. We are no longer dependent on animal sacrifices made by a sinful priest. The things recorded concerning the Old Testament priests were just shadows of glory divine, as shown in Hebrews 7:23-28:

And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to *continue* by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

PREPARATORY SACRIFICES

Leviticus 23 records three great Jewish days all pointing to the then-coming Redeemer. The priests were to see that these days were kept punctually and properly. Each foreshadowed blessings we have in Christ.

1. *Passover* was held as a remembrance of the Lord passing over the first-born in Egypt (Ex. 12). Christ is our passover according to I Corinthians 5:7.

2. *Pentecost* was a special day held as a reminder to the Israelites of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. It provided a powerful and fitting occasion for the giving of the New Law of Christ as recorded in Acts 2. Note: three thousand were slain at the giving of the law of Moses because of sin (Ex. 32:28), and three thousand were saved from their sins at the giving of the law of Christ (Acts 2:41-47).

3. *Feast of the Tabernacle* was a reminder of Jehovah's providential care for the seed of Abraham in the wilderness. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). It is important that we remember they "...did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:3,4).

In addition to these special feast days the priests had regular duties in the tabernacle that foreshadowed the intimate relationship the Christian would be privileged to experience in his worship to God under the law of Christ. When one sees the painstaking preparation and consistent practice required of the Old Testament priests in their worship he learns to take the instructions for proper Christian worship more seriously.

The Levitical priest was under the penalty of death if he failed to make proper preparation before entering the place of worship or if he failed to perform properly the required acts of worship. Each priest was required to cleanse himself before entering the tabernacle to perform service unto God as priest (Ex. 29:4). After their entire bodies were washed they were consecrated by blood being placed on the tip of their right ears, and on their right thumbs, and on their right feet (Ex. 29:20; Lev. 8:22,23). Before we can be the beneficiaries of the blood of Christ under the new covenant, we too must have "our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22). This washing is accomplished when we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26,27). We then "...as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5).

Those properly cleansed were privileged to express their intimate relationship with God by sacred acts of worship. They would keep the light in the tabernacle trimmed and replenished with oil so it would burn continually. It provided their only source of light by which to worship. In Christian worship we can only worship God by the light of his word (John 4:24; 2 Cor. 4:4). The priest of Old replaced the loaves on the table of shewbread each Sabbath and ate the old bread. We, as royal priests under Christ break bread and drink of the fruit of the vine as a memorial to his death each first day of the week (Acts 20:7). The burning of incense by the Levitical priest was a type of the Christian's prayers and praise to God (Col. 3:16,17; Eph. 5:19,10; Heb. 13:15). When the Old Testament priests placed costly frankincense on the loaves offered in worship they typified the Christian giving cheerfully and sacrificially every first day of the week (2 Cor. 9:6,7; 1 Cor. 16:2). Each part of worship is designed to glorify God and strengthen the worshipper. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron "...I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3).

PUNISHMENT OF PRESUMPTUOUS PRIESTS

Those who changed, altered, perverted, trifled with or took lightly God's commands for acceptable worship in any way received sure punishment. Let's look at a couple of examples.

The first and probably most familiar example is seen in these words, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censor, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1,2).

A similar, yet even more shocking irreverence was shown by Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli the High Priest (1 Sam. 2). These young men used the priesthood for their own gain. They took for themselves the portion of sacrifice that was to be offered to God (vss. 12-16). They were known to be with women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation (vs. 22). "Wherefore the sin of the young man was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord" (vs. 17). Because of their sins the

Lord's people were made to transgress (vs. 24). Eli was told his house would be cut off from being priests because he honoured his sons above God (vs. 34). The Lord then said "And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall according to that which is in mine heart and in my and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever" (vs. 35).

Every Christian is a priest under the new law and has the assurance that his iniquities will be remembered against him no more (Heb. 10:17). We can draw near God in worship with "full assurance of faith" because Jesus, as our High Priest, has offered his blood for us (Heb. 10:19-22). In order to be faithful priests we must "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (Heb. 10:23). Any neglect of our privilege to worship God regularly and properly will bring the punishment of God on us as surely as it was brought on those who were negligent under the Old priesthood. Notice Hebrews 10:26-31:

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He **that despised Mom' law** died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

PRIESTHOOD AND ITS CHANGES

My friend, the priesthood has changed and therefore, there has been of necessity a change of the law (Heb. 7:12). There is a change in the people, place and prescription of worship. To verify and certify the change, God sent his Son, "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). This privilege is no longer limited to a tribe or family of people but can be enjoyed by all who are willing to be purified by his word (1 Pet. 1:22). God's desire is summed up in these words, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34,35). The place of worship is no longer limited to Jerusalem or any other city. In speaking to the Samaritan woman in John 4, Jesus signified that worship would be a world-wide privilege under the new law. “Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But 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” (vss. 21-23).

The prescription for worship is simple yet imperative. The worshipper must recognize God as the only true object of his worship. He then must freely, willingly and joyously express his worship by doing all, yet only that which God has directed him to do (John 4:24). For one to worship as man directs would make his worship vain (Matt. 15:8,9). For one to worship in tabernacles (churches) designed and built by men, to honour men, is to close his ears to heaven’s voice (Matt. 17:2-5).

May each Christian recognize that he is part of “...a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people,” and, therefore “...should show forth praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

FOUR TYPES OF WORSHIP

William S. Cline



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In this lesson we will discuss four kinds of worship, with special emphasis on what the Bible says about true worship. Actually, it is a lesson that deeply involves Bible authority. 1 Corinthians 4:6 teaches us that we are not to go beyond the things that are written or not to go beyond the things authorized. For the most part, man has done precisely what the passage forbids. He has done any and every thing his heart has desired when it came to worship. What pleases man, instead of what pleases God, is normally the standard upon which most worship is based.

Besides the many passages which discuss false worship, I wish to note two which certainly imply the possibility and the existence of the same. In Matthew 4:10 we read, "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Here we have stated the necessity of worship and the object of worship. Scores of passages state the object of worship, and any time one worships someone or something other than Jehovah his worship is false. In John 4:24 we read, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." In this passage we have the object of worship and the manner of worship, in spirit and truth. If men violate either of these, then those who so violate the passage engage in false wor-

ship. Beginning in 1 Kings 12:25, we read of one of the appalling acts of Jeroboam, king of Israel. He set up calves of gold at Dan and Bethel and told the people to worship there instead of going to Jerusalem to worship. In this he changed the object of worship, the place of worship, the time of worship, and the access of worship. It is not uncommon for men to do the same evil thing today that Jeroboam did in the long ago. In so doing their worship is false and unacceptable to God.

THE BIBLE STRESSES THE NECESSITY OF TOTAL OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD

In Genesis 4:3-7 we have the account of the worship of Cain and Abel. God accepted Abel's worship but rejected Cain's. Why? Because one did the will of the Lord while the other chose to disobey God's instructions. We know that God told them what to offer as sacrifice from the reading found in Hebrews 11:4. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." "By faith" is the key. That simply means that Abel was told what to do, believed and obeyed the instructions. Furthermore, Cain was also told what to do, but for some reason chose not to fully obey the instructions of the Lord. As a consequence of his conduct, God rejected his worship. God plainly told him, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen. 4:7). Partial obedience is .not worthy of any good report of any kind at all. Instead of being any part good, it is cold, hard disobedience.

In Leviticus 10:1-2 we read of another of the many examples which press the point we are making: the Bible places great emphasis upon total obedience, and never gives praise for partial obedience. Nadab and Abihu were sons of Aaron, the high priest of God, yet they did not obey God's instructions in offering the incense. God destroyed them because of their sinful act. Read carefully the account of their sin and God's attitude toward them:

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered

strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace. And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp. So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said. And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled. And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses (Lev. 10:1-7).

Note that these sons of Aaron were not to be given a normal burial and that the normal custom of mourning was not to be carried out. Why? Because they, with a high hand, had disobeyed the commandments of the Lord. God never has and never will allow such disobedience to go unnoticed and unpunished.

To further illustrate the point under consideration, that God demands total, complete obedience, look at 2 Samuel 6:67. "And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God." What was the problem? The ark of God was not to be touched by human hands, but in an effort to keep it from falling off the cart, Uzzah stayed it with his hand. Most would argue that the situation should have allowed such touching and that God was out of line when he struck Uzzah dead. But hardly is that the case. Regardless of the situation, never does a situation, no matter what the circumstances, allow one to violate a law of God. Surely this is a most valuable lesson we can learn from Uzzah.

In Hebrews 5:8-9 we see the importance of obedience. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Christ is the author of salvation but only to those who obey him. Notice 2 John 9-11.

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” No man can go beyond the doctrine of Christ with regard to any matter. To violate his word is to place one’s self outside the grace and fellowship of Almighty God.

It is often the case that men trust in sincerity instead of obedience. They conduct their relationship with God on the basis that if they are sincere in what they do, then careful and complete obedience is not necessary. In recording the evil deeds of the wicked king Ahaz, who began to reign in Jerusalem when he was twenty years old, the Bible says, “But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel” (2 Kings 16:3). In the book of 2 Chronicles 28:3, the record says, “Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.” The difference to note is that Chronicles says that he burnt “children” whereas Kings says “son.” It is thought that “children” is the more accurate rendering. How could anyone do such a thing? That is a hard question to answer. However, somewhere in the answer there must be given consideration for the devotion and sincerity of the individual who would cause his own flesh and blood to be burned or sacrificed in the fire. But, no matter how devout and sincere, such was an abomination before God.

The practice of burning children came from the Phoenecians. The Moabites, Ammonites, and others followed them. They justified the sacrificing of their own children *on* the principle that man must offer the dearest and most precious thing to him to worship his god and to appease the anger of his god. Quite naturally the first born son would be considered the dearest thing to a man and thus children were cast into the sacrificial fires. Some have supposed that such was just a figurative ceremony where they dedicated the child to the

service of the gods and the child was not actually sacrificed. However, such is not the truth. Both sacred and secular writings show that these people actually sacrificed children. In addition to the two above passages, I offer the following. “They have built also the high places of Baal, to bum their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind” (Jer. 19:5). “That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?” (Ezek. 16:21).

Diodorus Siculus described a ceremony at Carthage in which a child was sacrificed to the gods. An image of metal, a human figure with a bulls head, was heated to red hot by fire within the figure. On its outstretched arms they placed the child. From there it rolled or fell into the fiery lap below. The crying was drowned out by the blowing of flutes and the beating of kettle drums.

Ahaz, and others like him, may have been sincere when they placed their children in the fire, but their sincerity did not make their worship acceptable.

THE BIBLE IDENTIFIES FALSE WORSHIP

The Bible speaks of Ignorant worship. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be “saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:1-3).

The Bible speaks of Will worship. In Colossians 2:18-23 we read:

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed

a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh (Col. 2:18-23).

Will worship is exactly what it sounds like. It is worship that pleases the participant. It is doing what the worshipper wants to do. One Bible student said that it is solely a matter of the heart and expresses itself, not by divine law, but by the will of the worshipper. He is the sole authority to resort to whatever expressions of worship he desires. Note this reading in the book of Amos:

Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God (Amos 4:4-5).

Notice the phrase, “For this liketh you.” The point God was making was that these people did these things, not because God commanded them, but because they liked to do them. The obvious conclusion was: if they did not like to do these things then they would not do them, no matter what God said.

The Bible speaks of Vain worship. Actually, all worship which is not according to divine instruction is vain worship. However, in a special way, the Bible speaks of worship ordered after the commandments of men and not the commandments of God as vain worship. Note Matthew 15:7-9: “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

THE BIBLE IDENTIFIES TRUE WORSHIP

The Bible speaks of avenues of true worship. It deals with “what” men are to do to please God in worship. They are to study the Bible (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:11).

Men are to pray (Acts 2:42; James 4:3; 1 Tim. 2:8). They are to give as God has prospered them (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8,9). Worshipers of God are to sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Note: there is no authority for humming in Christian worship. Christians also worship God by eating the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7,11).

The Bible also speaks of attitudes of true worship. This deals with “how” we are to worship God. In Luke 18 we have the account of two men who went to worship God. Note the reading:

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other- for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:10-14).

If we learn nothing else from this passage, let us; be careful to learn that when we approach God our attitude is important. God rejected one of these men because of his attitude. He was in the right place, at the right time, for the correct purpose, but he was rejected because of his attitude.

There are some priceless and valuable lessons we can learn ,from the above passage. For example, we may assemble in the place of worship, with those worshipping and never engage in acceptable worship. Many services, are to some, nothing more than a talk-a-thon, a gum chewing contest, nap time, time for personal grooming, courting time, time for fun and games from “meet me at the water fountain” to “I went to the rest room more times that you did.” We should also learn from this passage the seriousness of worship. This is shown by the fact that we are to direct our worship toward Jehovah. It is also shown by God’s revelation concerning worship (John 4:23-24). Further, Hebrews 12:28 speaks of our serving God with “reverence and godly fear.” 1 Corinthians 11:29 points out that we may worship in an “unworthy manner.” Let us learn to be careful in our worship!

In our Bible study we are to be careful of “what” we hear (Mark 4:24) and of “how” we hear (Luke 8:18). In prayer we are to be careful of how we pray, for what we pray, and our attitude (1 Cor. 14:15; James 4:3; Luke 18:10-14). In giving we are to be truthful (Acts 5:1-11) and beware of covetousness (2 Cor. 9:7). In singing we must sing truth with the proper purpose and understanding (1 Cor.

14:15; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). Furthermore, in the Lord's supper we must be careful of what we eat and how we conduct ourselves during the supper. Our concentration is most important as we look in at least four different ways. We look retrospectively, introspectively, circum-spectly, and prospectively.

CONCLUSION

The Bible identifies true and false worship. Every Christian should be thankful that we are told what we must do to worship God acceptably and how we must do it.

A basic attitude of reverence and respect must be instilled in our hearts. We must have respect for God and respect for his divine word. We must have respect for how the Bible authorizes and carefully follow the Bible in our worship. If we do not then our worship will not be acceptable. "But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20).

ATTITUDES TOWARD WORSHIP IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Winfred Clark



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system of Athens, Alabama.

This lesson will address itself to a study of those attitudes which are found in the book of Acts. Not all will enjoy God's approval and neither will all face condemnation.

One will find the words, "worship, worshipped, worshippeth, and worshipper" a total of 13 times in the book of Acts. Of course there are more cases of that which is called worship within the book, but these have to do with the word as used in the KJV.

It will become very obvious as one proceeds through the book that he will find various kinds of worship. For example one will find those who worship according to the law. This would be true in the case of the eunuch (Acts 8:27). One would also find cases where men would worship men. Cases in point would be Cornelius and his attempt to worship Peter (Acts 10:25). This sort of thing was repeated by those men of Lystra in their attempt to worship Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:13-18). There will also be found the idol worship in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-27). This was also found by Paul in the city of Athens (Acts 17:23-24). Add to all of this the fact that Paul would speak of the way he worshipped (Acts 24:14).

Yes, we would conclude that one could and would find various kinds of worship referred to in the book of Acts. But, this does not

mean that all of these were endorsed by inspired men. It does not mean that all of these should serve as a pattern for us today.

What attitudes then do we see towards worship in this book? We are already aware of the fact that some are good but some are not. Thus by contrast we may be able to see the attitude which God will approve. What attitudes will we find described and how will they show themselves?

WHAT ATTITUDE DO WE FIND TOWARDS THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIP?

When one takes into account the fact that the Jews were the ones who were the first members to the church, there should be no question as to how important they would consider the matter of worship. They would surely come from a background where worship was very important to them. Wasn't this the kind of attitude one would see in the large gathering in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:1)? One can go back to the Old Testament and see why these Jews are in the city at that time (Lev. 23:15-21). In those verses, time and again, you will find the term "unto the Lord." You will also find that they were to "offer." That means they were to offer to God. Why are they there? Was it not out of respect? Isn't it because they see the importance of worship? It thus is clearly seen that those who first became Christians knew something of the importance of worship.

One can see how important some thought it was by the distance they traveled and the effort they put forth in order to be at the place of worship. Take for example, the eunuch. The record of this is found in Acts 8. We learn that he is of Ethiopia, but he has come to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8:27). There can be no doubt about the importance he would place on worship. A man would not travel that far if he did not think it was important. The very fact that he would put forth that amount of effort shows how important he considers worship to be.

Take the occasion in Troas as recorded in Acts 20. Here you will find Paul abiding in the city of Troas for a period of seven days. That would enable him to be present "when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). This surely has to do with the Lord's supper for he would not have to wait seven days to eat a common

meal with those who were Christians. Paul thought it was important for him to be present on the Lord's day, or first day of the week.

One must also take note of the fact that Luke will detail what occurs at that meeting. This shows the importance he would attach to such a meeting. But we can plainly see that this was for the purpose of worship.

All of this will at least show us something of the attitude concerning the importance of worship as, found in the book of Acts.

WHAT ATTITUDE DO WE FIND CONCERNING PROPER WORSHIP?

One cannot read the book of Acts without seeing that it is enough to just do something called worship but that such must be done properly. The record of Acts will show us that man is not a law unto himself when it comes to worship.

We discover a case of mistaken worship in Acts 10. This involves the case of Cornelius and Peter. You will read of Peter's coming to a place where Cornelius, a Gentile, met him. When this Gentile centurion met him, he fell down and worshipped him (Acts 10:25). This, no doubt, was in all sincerity and honesty. He meant to show his profound respect for one who would come to tell him what he ought to do. But, what will be the reaction of Peter? Will he accept such? No, not at all. He will say, "Stand up; I myself am a man" (Acts 10:26). Peter would refuse all such for he knew that such belongs only to God. Peter would surely be one of those who would have knowledge of the words of Jesus on this subject. Remember the Lord had said to Satan, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy, God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). Peter, and all others, would know that the worship of man is not proper. Such would be contrary to the will of the Lord.

Such an attitude toward worship would surely preclude one's bowing in worship to one called the pope or any other man. Yes, Peter was a saint but not one to be worshipped. He would not endorse such but those who claim him as the first pope have no problem along this line. Of course Peter was not the first pope in spite of the claim.

One is again introduced to such worship as he comes to the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Lystra. This occurs on the first missionary

journey. When Paul healed a man who was I crippled there were those from an idolatrous background that would worship them. They would even give Paul and Barnabas names to fit their idolatry, for they would call Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul would be called Mercurius (Acts 14:12). They consider them to have “come down to us in the likeness of men” (Acts 14:11). Those who were connected with the worship of Jupiter were about to offer sacrifices to them. Now, what was the reaction of Paul and Barnabas to such conduct? Would they approach worship as something that really was not important? Would they just allow this matter to pass as though of no consequence? Not at all. “They rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God” (Acts 14:14-15). Rather than giving their endorsement to such worship they would tell them to turn from such. They were in the business of trying to have men worship God, not men.

Again we find an attitude manifested toward proper worship in the city of Athens. Here Paul found himself alone and when he was given opportunity to preach to the people, you will find him dealing with their worship. An he stood in the middle of Mars hill, he had some things to say like, “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:22-23). He will go on to tell something of the nature of God and the fact that he is not worshipped with man’s hands. We can thus see Paul’s attitude toward such worship, or that which is called worship. He will refer to this as ignorant worship. For one thing, they are advertising their ignorance. They are saying they do not know God. But this is the kind of thing Paul was seeking to lead these folks out of. Wouldn’t we say that such should be done? Shouldn’t Paul have done so? Would it have been right for him to have allowed them to continue in such without warning them?

Would it not be right today to try and lead men out of error concerning worship? Isn’t this the attitude Paul had? If it was right for him wouldn’t it be right for us? if it would be wrong for him to

ignore such and not try to teach them, wouldn't it be wrong for us if we failed to teach as we should on this very vital topic? You know the answers to these questions.

One could go on and talk of the kind of worship taking place in Ephesus where you found the worshippers of Diana (Acts 19). This would all fit into the kind of worship that we have found before to be improper.

But take a look at such passages as Acts 2:42, 11:26-29, 20:7, 24:14. What do these have to say about worship? What attitude do these express? These give us some insight to the early church in worship.

Notice that it is said, "And they continued steadfastly" (Acts 2:42). This surely tells us something about their attitude toward worship. This became a continuous thing with them. It was not a matter of their being in and out. Worship was to them something that did not need to be interrupted. They would keep it up. You would not find these people forsaking the assembly as some did later (Heb. 10:25). These would be like those of Antioch, "they assembled themselves with the church" (Acts 11:26). They would not be of the group that would think they could worship just as well out under a tree alone as they could with their brethren. Such folks as these would want to meet with those of like precious faith and so should Christians today.

It is also said, "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). They would consider teaching to be involved in their worship. This was later true of what occurs at Troas (Acts 20:7). When that group met to break bread Paul preached. I know some would say this is incidental, but not so. It was incidental that Paul preached but if he had not been there teaching would surely have been involved in the worship. Jesus indicated that teaching can be a part of worship when he said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Notice that Jesus said they were worshipping, teaching.

Not only would the apostles' teaching be a part of the worship but that which was taught by the apostles would regulate the worship. It would be highly inconsistent to engage in the teaching of the apostles in the worship itself and then ignore what the apostles would

have to say concerning such. For example. We have a statement concerning singing, here Paul said, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Couldn't one say what the apostle had to say concerning such in the act of worship? Would he then be consistent to ignore such and substitute the piano or organ? How could one be consistent in retaining the teaching in worship and yet ignore that which the teaching has to say concerning worship? Suppose one adds to that which the apostles taught? Wouldn't that place a person in the position of being over an apostle and his teaching?

Yes, when they "continue in the apostles' teaching" they will retain such in the worship but will also follow such teaching concerning this worship.

They will also continue steadfastly in "fellowship" (Acts 2:42). This will no doubt include the idea of their contributing of their money. They would not seek to divorce this from the worship to God. It is clear from the writing of Paul that such was to be included. Listen as he says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1-2). In so doing these would have fellowship. They would be joint participants.

One finds a very commendable attitude toward such as was demonstrated by the church at Antioch. Remember that Paul and Barnabas assembled for a year with the church in that city. While there, one stood up that was a prophet and talked about a drought, which Luke says came to pass. When this was known one needs to see what their attitude toward giving was. It is said, "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren in Judea: Which also they did" (Acts 11:28-30). You have to admire an attitude like that. Such is surely commendable and not to be ignored.

It is said in Acts 2:42, that they also continued steadfastly in "the breaking of bread." This is not a common meal but the breaking of the bread. That is the breaking of a certain kind of bread. Here we

see their attitude toward the Lord's supper. Remember again that the apostles were present when this supper was instituted. They knew exactly what the Lord said and did. They knew they were to do this in remembrance of him (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Such would be of great importance them.

When you move to the meeting at Troas you will find them meeting "on the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7). Didn't Paul wait seven days for that day? If one could just observe the Lord's supper any time and anywhere why did Paul wait? Those folks came together "to break bread." They knew the Lord's supper was a part of the worship. If we had the same attitude toward worship that they had when would we observe the Lord's supper? Would we think of observing it on just any occasion or at any time? Not with this approved apostolic example, the "new hermeneutics" notwithstanding. If you moved into Troas when would you expect them to meet to "break bread"? Do you think you could predict when they "break bread"? If you could how could you? Wouldn't you know what their attitude would be concerning this? You know you could and would.

Remember that they also continued steadfastly in "Prayers" (Acts 2:42). There is no doubt about prayers being involved in the worship of the early church. But there is also another side to this matter. There is no doubt about the leader of the public prayers. As one listens to Paul in his writings to Timothy he will find all doubts about this matter solved completely. In 1 Timothy, chapter two, Paul will deal with the matter of prayer in worship. He will talk about the kinds of prayers, the extent of those prayers and then tell you who is to pray under these situations. Notice, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8). Now at this point it might be good to see what he says about the women in such a setting. What is her position relative to the man? Listen as he says, "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Is it possible for a woman to retain the posture outlined by Paul and at the same time lead a public prayer? If we therefore are going to continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine in worship we are surely going to have to

abide by such teaching as this in worship. We cannot be consistent and do otherwise.

But remember that Paul let us know something about his attitude toward worship when he made his speech before Felix. He said, "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers" (Acts 24:14). Just what is Paul's attitude toward worship in this place? Well, for one thing he is saying there is a way to worship God. If there is a way to worship then it follows that not all man does is worship for then every way would be worship. But there is also seen a difference in the way he worshipped and that of the Jews. Yes, to Paul, there was a restricted way to worship and clearly the book of Acts shows this to be the case.

WHAT IS THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE BENEFITS OF WORSHIP?

All of us know that God has never told us anything to do that was not for our good. It is always for our benefit. Would not those described by Acts 2:42 derive great benefit from their worship? They would be mutually exhorted by the apostolic teaching. This would result in the spiritual and moral reinforcement of one another. Their joint participation would help them to see that they are by no means alone. They would know that there are those of like precious faith who are willing to help. They would receive strength and encouragement from the singing. This would teach and admonish, as we all know from our services today. When they meet to remember the Lord's death they would all be brought closer together and closer to the Lord when they think of his return to take them home. Their prayers would equally sustain them and bring them all together before the throne of the Father. Think of that prayer prayed by the holy band of believers when they had been threatened and then met together (Acts 4:21-31). When that prayer was over there is no doubt about their attitude. They would go forth to serve if it meant dying.

Yes, the book of Acts will set forth many attitudes toward worship. We hope our study of these may prove to be profitable.

THE RESTORATION OF WORSHIP ACCORDING TO GOD'S PATTERN

B. C. Carr



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As we look at the subject assigned, it is apparent that there are at least two things that are inferred. First, it is implied that there must be a pattern which has been authorized by our God. Anything therefore, which is not according to his approval must be regarded as a departure. In the second place, there is the implication that there has been apostasy, hence the need for restoration. It should be accepted by all that both of these propositions are true, therefore we can get to our task of setting forth evidence in developing our theme. Let us begin by setting forth some explanations as to why such departure takes place. It should not be surprising to the, Bible student to find departures from God's pattern. Had there never been such, the word of God would be untrue. Paul warned that there should be a falling away (2 Thess. 2:3).

SOME REASONS FOR APOSTASY IN WORSHIP

The Power of custom and tradition. Many have been influenced more by custom than by a "thus saith the Lord." When in the wilderness, after leaving Egypt, Moses went up into the mountain to receive the Law from God. While Aaron and the Israelites waited, they

grew impatient, saying they knew not what had happened to Moses. Accordingly they built the golden calf and worshipped it, saying: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. 32:4). You see the influence of Egypt was still with them and they turned back to their former way of life. In Jesus' day, the scribes and Pharisees were guilty of placing tradition above the commandments of God. This is seen as they try to bind the washing of hands as a religious ceremony (Matt. 15:1-9).

Absence of the knowledge of God. When men do not know the will of God concerning worship, they are prone to do that which is contrary to his will or else they fail to worship at all.

Wicked kings had ignored the Law of God before the good king Josiah came upon the scene. They had corrupted and perverted the worship of God. Josiah began a reform by going back to the word of God. Josiah had the altar at Bethel destroyed and broke down the high places. He restored the passover by saying, "Keep the passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant" (2 Kings 23:21). There had not been kept such a passover since the Judges ruled over Israel (2 Kings 23:22). During the captivity in Babylon the children of God had not worshipped according to the law. Upon their return to Jerusalem Ezra proceeded to restore true worship. This was not a new religion. They were simply restoring that which had been forsaken because of an ignorance of the Law of God.

A desire to please men (self) rather than obey God. Men have long done in worship what they like. Some justify what they do in worship simply because they like what they do (the use of instrumental music in worship).

In First Corinthians 11 we read of the corruption of the Lord's Supper. These were more concerned with their fleshly desires than spiritual worship. They disregarded the feelings of others. Paul severely rebukes them. This attitude is seen in men who want to be like those round about them. Even today we see things in the church done simply because those about us are doing them. We need to ask for the authority from the word of God.

False interpretations (hermeneutics). This often means reading into a passage what one wants to see. This leads to extreme positions. The Jews were guilty of this in the days of Jesus. They were concerned about swearing, but they interpreted such prohibitions so as to make swearing by the gold of the temple as being worse than swearing against the temple itself. They believed in tithing, yet they applied this to the most minute things while ignoring weightier matters. They believed in cleaning the outside of the cup and platter but were not so careful about the inside. Jesus called them hypocrites (Matt. 23:16-28). Such attitudes are still *found in* the church today.

Man rationalize rather than walk by faith. This may very well have been the cause of Cain's worship not being respected by God (Gen. 4:5). We find that God did respect Abel's offering. The Hebrews writer tells us that Abel offered by faith (Heb. 11:4). Since faith comes by the hearing of the word of God (Rom. 10:17), we conclude that Abel did that which was authorized by God. Church history reveals that about 1100 A.D. there arose the threat of SCHOLASTICISM, which means the method of thinking worked out by certain scholars to place new meaning to certain practices, based upon reason. These did not seek to teach new doctrines so much as to reach conclusions based upon human wisdom.¹ We see some of this today by those in places of higher education.

Actions directed by convenience and popularity rather than truth. Such was surely the case with Jeroboam when he set up calf worship in Bethel and Dan rather than have the people go to Jerusalem as commanded (1 Kings 12:25-30). Jeroboam made his appeal upon convenience and ease. He did become popular and the masses followed him. People like to hear approval of what they would like to do in the first Place. We need to remember, however, that this thing became a sin. After this, many of the evil kings were likened to Jeroboam, who caused the people to sin.

Accepting wrong source of authority for what we do. When the Catholic Church began to equate tradition with the word of God, they apostatized more and more. They did not have to have scriptural authority. It was enough to say it is tradition. The same could be said for man-made creeds in denominations today.

APOSTASY IN WORSHIP BY CATHOLICISM

The Lord's Supper: the real presence. This is a dogma that says the real body and blood of Jesus are present in the Supper. Their argument is that Jesus said, "This is my body and this is my blood." He did not say that it represents his body and blood. James Cardinal Gibbons is quoted as saying, "Among the various dogmas of the Catholic Church there is none which rests upon stronger scriptural authority than the doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist."² This means when a Catholic eats the Supper he is not eating bread and drinking wine, but rather, he is eating the literal flesh and drinking the literal blood of Jesus. "Considered as a Sacrament, the Eucharist is the true body and blood of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine."³

Transubstantiation. This doctrine states, "It is not enough to confess Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. The Council of Trent requires us to further confess the change of the whole substance of the bread into the body and the wine into the blood of Christ, only the appearance of bread and wine remaining."⁴ When the priest consecrates the emblems, the transformation takes place. The comparison is made to Jesus turning water into wine (John 2). It is said, they did not drink water, but wine.

Must be without sin to eat the Supper. In order for one to partake of the Supper with profit, it was taught that one must be without stain of mortal sin on the soul. This was based upon a faulty interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:28, "Let a man prove himself." There are still those in the church who refuse to eat the Supper if they have sinned.

Withholding the cup from the laity. Reasons for the practice are given as follows: The difficulty of reserving species of wine; the danger of spilling; the inconvenience of distribution; practical profession of faith in the Presence of Christ whole and entire under either species alone.⁵ Gibbons says, "The church teaches that Christ is contained whole and entire under each species; so that whoever communicates under the forms of bread or wine receives not a mutilated sacrament or a divided Savior, but shares in the whole sacrament as fully as if he had participated in both forms."⁶

Worship of Images. The Iconoclastic controversy is said to have contributed more than any single factor in dividing the Eastern and Western Churches in the schism of 1054. Images and pictures of Christ, the Apostles, saints and martyrs crowded the churches long before the seventh century. "The original intention was to instruct the uneducated in Christian truth but they soon became the object of undue veneration. Bowing down before the images and kissing them became quite common. Images were asked to act as sponsors, and coloring-matter scraped from them was mixed with bread and wine in the sacrament. Often Images were actually worshipped."⁷

John of Damascus was a great champion of Image worship. "God, he declared, is present in the images as He is in the Lord's Supper... Christ is not a real Christ unless he is pictured or portrayed."⁸ In this we see how that false reasoning in one instance (the Lord's Supper) leads to false conclusions in other cases.

Worship of Mary. In an article by Catholic authorities it is stated, "The object of this article is to sum up and justify the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church in her devotion to the blessed Virgin."⁹ Catholics claim that they have two instances of Mary's interposition from heaven in favor of Christians on earth."¹⁰ They further state, "It would be vain to deny that devotion to the blessed virgin was far less prominent in ancient than in modern times."¹¹ We see their admission. Many have heard prayers addressed to the blessed Virgin. This of course is contrary to what the Bible teaches concerning God as the object of our devotion.

Prayer. The invocation of saints. The Council of Trent teaches that, "The saints reigning with Christ offer their prayers for men to God; that it is good and useful to call upon them with supplication, and, in order to obtain benefits from God through Jesus Christ, who above is our Redeemer and Saviour, to have recourse to their prayers, help, and aid."¹² Their practice is supposed to be justified by appealing to James 5:16 which says that the prayers of a righteous man avail much. They reason that a dead righteous man is aware of what is going on here on earth. He should not cease to exercise charity toward others because he is dead. It is further stated that angels in

heaven rejoice over repentant sinners (Luke 15:7), hence they must keep up with our affairs.¹³

Singing. "Public singing in the church service was restricted to the choir of priests, the congregation joining in responses only."¹⁴ In discussing Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 an interesting view is set forth. "We do not believe that St. Paul in the passage just quoted refers to the use of psalms and hymns in public worship. The context appears to show that he has in view the private intercourse of social greeting of Christians and desires to point out the kind of joy and mirth which should accompany them."¹⁵ We are made to wonder if some present day brethren have taken their cue from this interpretation.

Preaching the sermon. "The Roman Mass gradually replaced the sermon as the main part of services."¹⁶ It is doubtful that much Bible was preached. In A.D. 1224 for the first time the Bible was forbidden to the "Laity." The Council of Toulouse decreed the following: "We forbid also the permitting of the laity to have the books of the old and new testaments, unless any should wish, from a feeling of devotion to have a psalter or breviary of divine service; but we must strictly forbid them to have the above mentioned books in the vulgar tongue."¹⁷

Giving. Tithing it; taught by the Catholic Church. "Tithes were originally paid to the Bishops, but with the erection of separate benefices the right to them passed to the parish priest, in whom it is now vested by the Cannon Law of the Church. Exemption from tithe may be obtained by Papal privilege, by prescription, by custom or by convention."¹⁸ This is a far cry from the giving taught in the New Testament.

REACTION OF THE REFORMERS

Space will not allow us to trace every reaction to every false doctrine and practice in worship. We shall therefore strive to look at a few typical cases of some of the leaders that we might discern their approach and attitudes.

"Someone has said that John Wyclif was the morning star of the Reformation; John Hus and Hieronymus of Prague were its first Martyrs; Savanarola was its great prophet; and, it may be added,

Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin were the great reformers,”¹⁹ Let’s take a look at some of the things these men did.”

Martin Luther. In his opposition to the cold formalism of the Catholic Church Luther did not think that an external form of worship should be enjoined; he distinguishes between the necessary and the free in churchly forms by their effects. Prayer, the Lord’s Supper and preaching are necessary to edification; but the time, place and mode have no part in edification and are free.²⁰

Luther as the first German Professor to make use of his mother tongue. He simplified religious language and laid it much closer to the common people. His sermons were based upon the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible and not on Scholastic Theology. He gave them the bread of life instead of the straw of philosophy and legend.²¹

Luther taught the general priesthood of all believers. God is accessible to every Christian without the mediation of the priest or the church. He believed the Bible is the only source and standard for faith and life. He also believed the Bible must be interpreted by the aid of the Holy Spirit. Luther gave the world the open Bible. He felt that each person should be able to read and study for himself. This did much to break the shackles of Catholicism and point to the proper source of authority for matters religious.

Luther changed the worship of the church. He removed the Sacrifice of the Mass and opposed the thought of meritorious church attendance. The sermon was substituted for the Mass. The preaching became the central factor in the worship. Congregational singing was made the second factor. He composed many hymns.²²

Ulrich Zwingli. Zwingli rejected the real presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. He taught that the words, “This is my body,” must mean “This signifies my body.” Luther held to the literal interpretation.²³ Religion was for Zwingli a system of morals, a philosophy of Christ. By 1518 he was elected chief Pastor of the Great Minister Church of Zurich. By this time he recognized the Bible as absolute authority in matters of faith and life.²⁴ He was fully convinced that the church needed a thorough moral reformation, and the way to effect it was to place the word of God in its entirety upon the candlestick.

Luther retained rites and ceremonies of the Medieval Church which were not positively anti-Scriptural. This caused him to retain Images, altars, ornaments of the church, organs, church bells and the like. Zwingli used the Bible as a code of laws, rejecting everything not expressly enjoined in Scripture.²⁵ These two approaches to the Bible continue with us to this day.

With Zwingli the authority of the Gospel was substituted for the authority of the Church. He attacked the primacy of the Pope, the worship of saints, merits of good works, fasts, festivals, pilgrimages, monastic orders, auricular confession and many other things practiced by the Roman Church.²⁶

Zwingli debated his views in 1524. As a result all pictures were removed from churches, the relics, crucifixes, altars, candles, clerical robes and other ornaments were removed. Latin chants and songs, the playing of the organs, and the ringing of church bells were abolished. Zwingli had abolished every church practice not expressly commanded in the New Testament.²⁷ The views of Zwingli to a great extent set the tone for the Restoration Movement.

John Calvin. Zwinglianism was practically absorbed by Calvinism. Calvin had an aristocratic bearing which distinguished him from Luther and Zwingli. His fellow students called him the "Accusative Case," because he censored their faults. He had a fondness for logic. His father caused him to study law which no doubt helped him later in life when he turned to religion. Calvin thought the all-powerful will of God practically forced him into absolute obedience to the Divine Will.²⁸

Calvin was greatly influenced by William Farel who had already started a Reformation. "In May 1536, the citizens took a solemn oath to cast off the Roman doctrine and live according to the Gospel. Saint worship and the reading of the Mass were abolished and forbidden, and images and relics were removed from churches."²⁹

Calvin insisted that unworthy persons should not be permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper. On Easter Day, 1538, Calvin and others refused to serve the Supper because of prevailing immorality and also because it was a Popish holiday.³⁰

Calvin, like Luther and Zwingli, accepted the Bible as the sole rule of faith and life. He rejected the Real Presence of the body and blood, and Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation, the elect participated in the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual sense, but the non-elect only partook of bread and wine.

Calvin introduced the simple church service at Strasbourg. He discarded everything savored by the Catholic Church, including pictures, images, vestments, bells, candles and the like. Preaching took the most important place in the service. The Lord's Supper was administered four times a year. He introduced congregational singing and abolished Christmas and Easter.³¹ Attendance at public worship was enforced.

ATTITUDES OF THE RESTORATION LEADERS

Many valuable lessons had been learned from those in the Reformation Movement. Perhaps Calvinism lingered longer as a source of influence upon the men of the Restoration. One of the greatest benefits, no doubt, was the return to the scriptures and a firm rejection of the authority of the Catholic Church.

Space will not permit us to examine very much of their work. Indeed to do so would take volumes. We have willfully omitted references to many reformatory acts, trying to focus upon worship in each case. It may be surprising to some to find that so little is said about worship in Restoration history in view of all the volumes that have been written. By emphasizing attitudes we can pretty well tell how they applied the principles to everything they did including worship.

The Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell in 1809 as been called the Magna Charta of the Restoration Movement. Four basic points are: (1) The Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice. (2) Sectarianism is evil, as the church is essentially one. (3) Division results as people neglect the revealed word and introduce human innovations. (4) Human expedience must not be given a place of authority in the church. The emphasis was placed on the necessity of restoring the original ordinance in the church.³²

James O'Kelly believed in the congregational form of church government. He favored the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. One of his contributions was to point men back to the Bible.

Thomas Campbell believed that God was to be worshipped as, "It is written" rather than according to an act of Parliament.³³ He encouraged members of different Presbyterian Churches to come together to eat the Lord's Supper.³⁴

Alexander Campbell followed closely in his father's steps, having arrived at certain conclusions by his own studies. The motto, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; and where the Bible is silent, we are silent," became an important rule in helping the Restoration leaders resolve many problems. Following this attitude, the men of the restoration regarded the Bible as a blueprint or pattern. If it is not, we have no way of determining what is right or wrong. Of course this disturbs the "non-legalistic" brethren.

Sermons. The Pioneer preachers knew the Bible. They spoke extemporaneously. They believed the power to be in the truth spoken, not in pulpit antics. It was common for a sermon to last two or three hours. Their lessons were characterized by boldness and sometimes humor.

Alexander Campbell said about reading sermons "It made one embarrassed as if he was corseted."³⁵ Although there were exceptions, these restorers preferred expository preaching. Their preaching was powerful. Once when Moses Lard preached on the prodigal son's return home he caused the worshippers to turn to the rear of the auditorium to see if he were entering.³⁶

Singing. Singing was not always good. Dr. Pinkerton who preached at Midway, Kentucky, introduced the Melodeon on the basis that their singing would scare the rats away. Vocal music, however characterized the early restoration congregations for about fifty years.

Early song books had no notes. The words were used to different tunes. Elias Smith is said to have published the first song book of the times. Alexander Campbell also wrote songs. Walter Scott encouraged singing schools. Alexander Campbell opposed instrumental music, choirs, singing schools and the use of musical notes.³⁷ The

early restorers Campbell, Scott, Richardson and Lard opposed the instrument saying it was an addition rather than an aid.

Prayer. The elders presided during the worship period. Worship was opened by the congregation kneeling in prayer, which was led by an elder or one appointed. The holy kiss and feet washing were observed on Sunday evenings.³⁸ Alexander Campbell thought that kneeling in prayer was always to be preferred.

Lord's Supper. In the middle of the day they shared a love feast and enjoyed a temporal meal. The Lord's Supper was observed in the afternoon. Alexander Campbell wrote that, "When strangers are present, the members should sit together, as this is helpful in dispensing the elements, and that it is easy to bypass some members if they are scattered over the house."³⁹

Some brethren believed Acts 2:42 was a pattern for the worship order. Among these were Francis Emmons of Noblesville, Iowa. Fifty years later Alfred Elmore in 1886 thought the order in Acts 2:42 was binding. Alexander Campbell disagreed through the pages of the *Millennial Harbinger*. He thought this would make worship a liturgy—a ritual form. He advocated liberty as to the order.⁴⁰

HAVE WE RESTORED NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP?

Maybe we should answer both yes and no. Generally speaking I believe among churches of Christ true worship according to New Testament pattern has been restored today. However this does not mean that true worship has been locked in so as to prevent future departures. It is somewhat like repentance, it must be constantly updated. We have had our problems throughout the years struggling with a multitude of problems in worship such as: Fermented or unfermented wine, unleavened bread or crackers, individual communion cups, more than one communion service on the Lord's Day, Lord's Supper on week day, the posture of prayer, who should eat the Supper, covering heads of women in prayer, teaching in classes, women teachers, Sunday Schools, tuning forks, round or shaped notes, use of literature, and many more such things.

In all of these for the most part we have said, "Let's go back to the Bible." Whether we have always realized it or not, we have been

following in the steps of the restorers in finding solutions to our problems in” worship.

As new storm clouds arise to threaten the purity of our devotions to God, may we always go back to the Bible for a “Thus saith the Lord.” In that last day when we stand before our Maker we must be judged by his word (John 12:48).

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³⁵Phillips, p. 72.

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SHALL WE WORSHIP IN TRUTH AND/OR BY TRADITION?

Dub McClish



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INTRODUCTION

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers 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). These words from our Lord to the woman at Jacob’s well set before us the significance of the entire subject of worship and particularly of the subject of this chapter. The Lord made it plain that God desires two things concerning worship: (1) true worshipers and (2) true worship.

The study of this subject necessarily involves the definition of the following terms: (1) worship, (2) Truth, and (3) tradition. This subject also raises some questions for our consideration: (1) Are Truth and tradition contradictory? (2) Is worship by tradition wrong? (3) Is the Lord’s church “hopelessly bound by tradition?”

DEFINITION OF WORSHIP

The meaning of “worship” has become perverted in the minds of many in recent years by false teaching and misinformation. It has become popular to define it as merely an attitude or emotion rather than any specific act or acts. It is immediately apparent that if this

is true men are free to do almost anything they choose in the name of “worship” to God and it will be acceptable, as long as they claim an attitude of sincere reverence and devotion. Whether or not this view was originated by those who desired a justification for the use of mechanical instruments in worship may be impossible to determine, but they have certainly made this use of it. In the Highers-Blakely Debate (April 12-15, 1988, Neosho, MO), Given O. Blakely of the Independent Christian Church denied that worship consisted of certain acts or elements and that worship is regulated by Scripture. Rather, he affirmed that the sincere person in Christ could not worship wrongly!¹ Obviously, by this view using instruments in worship would be acceptable to God.

Another fallacy that is based upon the misconception that worship is merely an attitude or emotion is that everything the Christian does is worship, from washing dishes to putting gas in the car. Those who would turn the worship assembly into a “party” or a performance by professional musicians or entertainers would justify these corruptions by the same erroneous concept of worship.

The very definitions of the words (both Hebrew and Greek) translated “worship” refute the foolish idea that worship is a mere attitude or emotion. The standard lexicons tell us that these words connote such things as bowing down before, venerating, revering, serving, esteeming, doing obeisance to, kissing toward a higher person. In a footnote on Matthew 2:2 and similar verses, the American Standard Version (1901) translators recognized that worship involves action. On the word “worship” in the text, it comments: “The Greek word denotes an *act* of reverence whether paid to a creature...or to the Creator...” (emphasis, DM).

Furthermore, descriptions of worship in Scripture clearly show that certain acts constitute worship while others do not. Dozens of times in the Old Testament we read that someone bowed his head, bowed himself to the earth, or fell on his face “and worshiped the Lord” (e.g., Gen. 24:26,52; Ex. 4:31; Josh. 5:14; Psa. 95:6; et al.). The same idea is continued in the New Testament as men fell down before the Lord, held him by the feet, or bowed their knees in worship to him (Matt. 2:11; 18:26; 28:9; Mark 15:19; et al.).

When Abraham took Isaac to the mountain to offer him as a sacrifice, he said to his servants at the foot of the mountain, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship” (Gen. 22:5). Abraham understood two things about the meaning of worship that many moderns have missed: (1) Worship was more than an emotion or an attitude; indeed, he had a reverent attitude before he left home or he would not have taken the painful journey God commanded. (2) Not everything he did constituted worship. Preparing for the journey and making the journey to the place of sacrifice did not constitute worship, but what he would do in the mountain (offer a sacrifice) did.

By no means should anyone conclude that attitude and emotion are excluded from true worship. Contrariwise, the “true worshiper” which the Father seeks is the genuine worshiper—one whose heart is in his devotional acts. This is the meaning of worshiping God “in spirit” in the passage with which we began. Not only is the body to be doing the acts ordained by Christ for acceptable worship of Deity, but man’s spirit must be involved. However, merely claiming to have a spirit of reverence does not constitute true worship. In fact, one belies the claim of a reverent spirit if he ignores or rejects the acts of worship ordained by God. True worship may therefore be defined as sincere devotion to God that expresses reverence and godly fear by means of spiritual acts ordained by God.

DEFINITION OF TRUTH

A consideration of the meaning of “Truth” is now appropriate. Jesus said that men must worship God “in truth” (John 4:23-24). What did he mean by “truth”? The word translated “truth” in this and many other passages is *aletheia*. When used objectively, as it is here, Thayer says it means “the truth, as taught in the Christian religion, respecting God and the execution of his purposes through Christ, and respecting the duties of man....”² This common use of “the Truth” in the New Testament is simply another way of referring to the revealed will of God through Christ. Jesus brought the Truth which he heard from God (John 8:40). He identified the Word of his Father as the Truth (John 17:17). Thus we read of “the word of truth” (1 Cor. 6:7; 2 Tim. 2:15; Jas. 1:18), which is identified as “the gospel of your salvation” (Eph. 1:13; cf. Col. 1:5). The lost are those who

obey not the gospel” in 2 Thessalonians 1:8, but in Romans 2:8 they are those who “do not obey the truth,” thus making the Truth the same as the Gospel. “Truth” is simply another word for “Gospel” or the “Word of God” in John 4:23-24.

What did Jesus mean when he said we must worship God “in truth”? The most obvious meaning is “according to the Truth.” In other words, our worship must conform to the teaching of Christ concerning how God desires to be worshiped. This means that in worship (as in all other things we say and do) we must do only that which is authorized by Christ (Col. 3:17). When we have learned what the New Testament apostles and prophets taught the saints to do in worship and when we see what acts of worship were done by the first century church with apostolic approval, we shall know what constitutes worship according to Truth for all remaining time. No man has the right to suggest that God can be pleased with the offering of any additional or any fewer acts of worship than those specified in the Gospel. Men dare not make substitution for or alteration of the God-ordained acts of worship. He seeks true worshipers who will worship him according to his own revealed Truth. Kittell states it very well in his comments on John 4:23-24: “This is an indication that such worship can take place only as determined by the revelation accomplished in Jesus (v. 25f), and consequently as determined by the Revealer who is the only way of access to God (1:18; 14:6).”³

DEFINITION OF TRADITION

“Tradition” is the translation of *paradosis*, meaning to hand down or hand over. It refers to those things that have come to us from those who have gone before us. Tradition is a neutral word, connoting neither good nor evil in itself. There are at least three categories of tradition, all of which deserve our attention: First, there are the inspired “traditions,” which represent the Word which was revealed to the apostles and which they “handed down” to those who came after them, including us. Paul referred to “traditions” in this way to the Corinthians: “Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:2, ASV).⁴ Paul referred to traditions in the same way twice

more: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thess. 2:15); “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thess. 3:6). Obviously, Paul was making reference to the inspired Word of God which he had taught them in person and by letter. These traditions were most certainly to be observed and those who refused to do so were no longer to remain in fellowship.

Second is a class of “traditions” that is always mentioned with warning and/or condemnation. These are religious traditions that proceed from men and that are in conflict with the Word of God. Thus, Jesus soundly condemned “the traditions of the elders.”⁵ “But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?...Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (Matt. 15:3,6; cf. Mark 7:3-8,13). Paul wrote of the time when he once followed those very traditions of his fathers with exceeding zeal (Gal. 1:14). He warned that we should take care not to let ourselves be spoiled through philosophy and vain deceits, “after the tradition of men...and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8). Clearly, human traditions that contradict the Word of God must be avoided. They will cause one to reject God’s Word in their favor and will ultimately cause the soul to be lost.

Third, there are those human traditions that do not conflict with God’s Word, but that fall into the realm of expediency or option in carrying out God’s commands concerning worship. We may refer to these as “innocent traditions.” God ordains that we assemble each Lord’s day to worship him and he tells us what acts are pleasing to him (prayer, singing, partaking of the Lord’s supper, giving as we have been prospered, and studying his Word), but he has not told us how many prayers to pray or how many songs to sing. Further, he has not told us in what order or arrangement to place these things, nor what time of day to meet. Human “traditions” of this kind are innocent and harmless as long as it is remembered that they are human

rather than Divine. They become wrong only when they are bound as if they were Divine law.

It should be apparent that when anyone refers to “tradition” in religion he must be careful to understand that the word is used in various ways and that one’s attitude toward “tradition” will depend upon which kind of “tradition” is under consideration.

ARE TRUTH AND TRADITION CONTRADICTIONARY?

As seen from the definition of various kinds of traditions given above, the answer may be “yes” or “no.” If the tradition by which one worships is that which was given to us by the inspired men, then it is itself the Truth. We not only may or shall, but must worship God by tradition in this sense, for it is Divine law.

However, not even all human tradition contradicts Divine Truth. As already noticed, some human traditions in worship merely involve the innocent arrangements for implementing the commands of God and are therefore not in conflict with Truth. However, those human traditions that cause one to go beyond or fall short of God’s Word and/or those that are elevated to the level of Scripture are most certainly contradictory to Truth and must be scrupulously avoided.

IS WORSHIP BY TRADITION WRONG?

The correct answer to this question hinges on the kind of tradition one has in mind. If the tradition being considered is merely the long-established, handed-down arrangement for doing what God has commanded us to do, which neither violates nor alters God’s Word, then we do no wrong in observing such tradition. That the arrangements are human in origin and have been handed down to us from previous generations (and to that extent are “human traditions”) does not make them sinful.

These arrangements differ from place to place. In some Places the church observes the Lord’s supper before the sermon, but in other places afterward. One congregation may have a Scripture reading before the first song, while another may not. Some congregations meet at 10:00 a.m. for worship while others meet at 11:00 a.m. All of these various arrangements (and many others) are likely the result of “tradition”—that which has been done by those who came before

them, passing it down to the present generation, perhaps through several generations.

However, those human traditions in religion that change the acts God has specified for us when we worship, and thus contradict the Truth, are most certainly wrong. The use of instruments in worship are not merely a traditional “arrangement” to carry out the command to sing. Use of mechanical instruments constitutes an addition to the worship of God which runs beyond what God has authorized. The observance of “Ash Wednesday,” “Good Friday,” “Easter,” “Lent,” and similar festivals which are unheard of and unauthorized in Holy Writ are in conflict with the simple observance of the Lord’s day every week. The denominational versions of the Lord’s supper that call for its observance on days other than the first day of the week and on the first day of the week once a month or once a quarter are rooted in unscriptural human traditions. The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and the observance of their “Lord’s supper” in connection with weddings and funerals further illustrate tradition that is sinful. These and many similar practices are in conflict with the Truth and illustrate the kind of tradition that renders worship a vain exercise in religiosity.

Tradition may also be made to contradict Truth when an otherwise innocent human tradition is elevated to the level of Divine obligation. This is what occurred many years ago when some brethren decided that the human tradition of using only one cup for the fruit of the vine was, after all, the only way it could be done. They insisted on keeping this tradition to the point of dividing many churches over it. One would be just as wrong to take the human tradition of beginning the Sunday morning worship with two songs, a prayer, and a third song and insist that this was the only arrangement that was pleasing to God. Both the denominational practices mentioned earlier and such practices among our brethren as those just mentioned are condemned in the words of the Lord to the scribes and Pharisees: “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:9).

We may summarize this section by saying that the traditions that cause us to be wrong in our worship are those that either change the

Word of God or that elevate human tradition to the level of Divine Truth.

IS THE LORD'S CHURCH "HOPELESSLY BOUND BY TRADITION"?

This charge has long been made by certain critics within the church who are intent on overhauling it in every respect. The question implies that tradition is a terrible, odious, restrictive thing and the church is enslaved by it. If brethren are generally bound by human "tradition" in the sense of the doctrines and practices that violate and supplant God's Word, then I would add my voice of concern to theirs. But are they charging that we are bound by denominational tradition? What do they mean by "tradition" in this charge? There are at least two means of discerning the answer to this question: (1) observing the source of the charge and (2) observing the things to which these critics are opposed.

Just who are those making this charge? The charge comes almost without exception from those liberal sophisticates who have abandoned (if they ever possessed it) the ideal of New Testament Christianity. There have always been some of these around, but they started gaining respectability about 25 years ago through the pages of *Mission Magazine*. Their ilk are now in the pulpits of some of "our" largest congregations and behind the lecterns in practically all of "our" colleges and universities. The fact that the charge of "tradition" comes from those who have made or who are making a reputation for themselves by their heterodoxy ought to raise a red flag in the mind of every lover of the Truth. It does not take much reading of or listening to these brethren to see what constitutes the "tradition" which they so much despise and from which they would so eagerly "free" the Lord's people!

Now, what are the terrible "traditions" against which these folk (both men and women) are railing? One thing they have in mind is anything that has been done the same way for a "long time" (which to them may be two consecutive Sundays!). They cannot stand that which is consistent and regular. They want to constantly change things about the church, particularly the worship. They believe there

is virtue in change, in “shaking things up,” just for the sake of change.

Perhaps I can best illustrate this by relating some experiences I have had with some of them. Almost 20 years ago I had a troubled and brief (seven months) stint with a church in which the elders appointed a “worship committee” to plan the order of worship each week. They placed some men on the committee (including one elder) who thought that everything about the worship needed to be shaken up—every week. If we started with a song one week, we had to start with something different the next week. They tried splitting the sermon time on Sunday morning among two other fellows and me, just to be different. They tried singing during the collection and singing during the Lord’s supper. They tried responsive readings. They wanted to do away with the invitation altogether.

One committee member (with hearty praise from the liberal elder on the committee) wanted to have the Lord’s supper during Bible classes so we could all sit in a circle and face each other (“How can you commune with the back of someone’s head?” he reasoned.) It was like a circus every Sunday and required a detailed printed program to have any idea of what was coming next. While my strong objections to such foolishness did not prevent all of it, the elders finally got enough flak from various members that they returned to some degree of sanity and order (only out of policy, rather than principle, unfortunately). It was a terribly upsetting experience for those who loved God and his Word and it was all but impossible to worship because of the uncertainty of what was going to be done from one Sunday to the next. The folks who pushed for these childish changes were convinced that the church was “hopelessly bound by tradition.”

It was predictable that this outcry against “tradition” in worship was really only a beginning point. Those fellows were “testing the waters” concerning the worship assemblies. That congregation has continued to hire liberal preachers and attract liberal members and move more and more leftward. From reading its bulletin now it is hardly distinguishable from a Methodist Church in its terminology and its practices. Those brethren made the fatal mistake of confusing

worship done in a decent and orderly fashion a Cor. 14:40) on a continued basis with being “hopelessly bound by tradition.” I suppose they never considered the fact that by their own “reasoning,” changing the order of worship every week was in fact creating a new type of the very “tradition” they were opposing—a “tradition” of changing things every week!

As mentioned in the case above, the identification of a simple, consistent, and orderly program of worship each Lord’s day with enslavement to “tradition” was really just the first level of attack. When such folk see that there is not enough strength in the eldership to stop them and there is even encouragement of their aims within the eldership, their moves become increasingly bolder. If the preacher in the congregation objects to their work they will see that he moves on “for the good of the church” and is replaced with someone who will support them or at least not oppose them. What happened in that one church has occurred in the same or similar form in hundreds of others in the past two decades. After 20 years (sometimes less) it has finally dawned on some of the older saints in such churches that the congregation of which they are members is now encouraging and doing the very things it was adamantly opposing a few years before! Alas, by that time it is too late to change its direction.

You will now hear many of these liberals including far more fundamental things in their definition of the “traditions” that allegedly have a stranglehold on the church. Many of them are now strongly inveighing against any pattern concept for the church, nor can they be content for others to hold to such an outmoded “tradition.” Such things as insisting on Divine authority for what we practice and preach, on the Scriptural organization of the church, on the Scriptural steps in the plan of salvation,⁶ and on the five Scriptural acts of congregational worship are among the “traditions” that are so odious to them. Refusing to allow women in the pulpit and in the eldership and deaconship and insisting upon congregational singing without mechanical instruments in worship are further “traditions” from which some of these radicals would free the church!

They would now openly foist upon us a “new hermeneutic” (which is really no more than the “old hermeneutic” of liberal theology).⁷ They would have us throw out the plain meaning of the words of the Bible and the necessity of reasoning correctly to understand those words. Instead, they would have us “read between the lines” for the “spiritual” meaning in them. They have “progressed” far beyond seeking any direct statements, obligatory examples, or implications in Scripture by which to determine God-ordained doctrine and practice. Book, chapter, and verse preaching is a subject of ridicule to these fellows.

They have “outgrown” all of these “shackles” and some of them are compassing sea and land with evangelistic zeal to make as many double-damned proselytes as possible (Matt. 23:15). To them the church is merely a denomination and a pretty sorry one at that. They feel called of God to make it a better denomination and are working almost feverishly to bring about changes that will in fact reduce the church to sectarian status. A few years ago those who became disenchanted with the Lord’s way would go on into a denominational body of their own free will or be forced to. The younger generation of gainsayers have put us on notice that they are not about to get out, but that they will stay and work like termites from within to eat away the faith of as many as possible and to make the church over according to their own ideals. Tragically, there are many preaching and teaching positions where they are handsomely remunerated while they dispense their theological poison and the number of these positions seems to be increasing.

It is a great irony that those who are crying, “the church is hopelessly bound by tradition” are the very ones who will enslave the church to destructive tradition where they have their way. They are the ones who are crying for the introduction of instrumental music, choirs, women preachers and elders, and such like. They are the ones who want “high church” ritual in our worship assemblies. They are the ones who say that we can learn much about worship from the Lutherans, the Pentecostals, or even the Roman Catholics.⁸ These old denominations and their practices are the very epitome of the kind of human traditions that render worship vain! Verily, it is when these

praters against the Truth have their way that the church becomes “hopelessly bound by tradition!”

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the “tradition” that liberalism finds intolerable is comprised of the very things the Lord commands us and/or permits us to do in complying with his Divine will.

The practice of worshipping in a long-standing, set format which others before us have followed (assuming it conforms to the Scriptural pattern for worship, of course) does not mean that we are “hopelessly bound by tradition.” Both the Lord and Paul hardly had such an innocent arrangement in mind when they so strongly condemned the traditions of men (Mark 7:13; Col. 2:8)! The charge that the church is “hopelessly bound by tradition” is no more than a deceptive excuse to do away with well-founded and expedient arrangements for carrying out the Lord’s instructions and the instructions themselves, and in their place inserting all sorts of innovations and inventions based on anti-scriptural tradition and philosophy. Let us never shrink from carrying out the inspired traditions that are set forth in the New Testament in all things, including our worship of God and his Son.

ENDNOTES

¹Alan E. Highers and Given O. Blakely, *The Highers-Blakely Debate on Instrumental Music in Worship* (Denton, TX: Valid Pub., Inc., 1988), pp. 38,45-46,61-64, et al.

²Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York, NY: American Book Co., n.d.), p. 26.

³Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), 1:246-47.

⁴Curiously, the KJV rendered *paradosis* “ordinances” in this passage. The ASV rendering, “traditions,” is consistent with the other occurrences of *paradosis* in the New Testament.

⁵The reader is cautioned against confusing the “elders” among the apostate Jews during the earthly life of Jesus (cf. Matt. 15:2) with his provision for “elders” in every congregation of His church (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; et al.).

⁶I recently listened to a taped sermon of one of these firebrands who credited Walter Scott, the nineteenth century pioneer preacher, with the five step plan of salvation. He further told us how Scott came up with it—he happened to have four fingers and thumb on his hand. This erudite historian went on to inform his audience that if Scott had possessed six or four digits on his hand he would have had that many steps in his plan

and we would now be either “six steppers” or “four-steppers”!

⁷Thomas Olbricht (Pepperdine University) and Leonard Allen (Abilene Christian University) forthrightly advocated the abandonment of the rational hermeneutic which has brought about the restoration of primitive Christianity in the annual Preachers’ and Church Leaders’ Forum at Freed-Hardeman College, October 14, 1989. At the same time they unabashedly defended the adoption of an irrational “new hermeneutic” that denies the importance of doctrine and exalts “piety.” My question is, “Can a person be pious who ignores the doctrine of Christ?”

⁸Wesley Reagan is a case in point. He was a “liberal when liberal wasn’t cool,” some 25 years ago. While preaching for the liberal Burke Rd. congregation in Pasadena, TX he attended a denominational conference on worship and wrote in his bulletin that we could learn a lot from the denominations. One of his associates at Burke Rd. for a year or two was Jim Bevis, one of the original directors of the old “Campus Evangelism” movement, the forerunner of Crossroadsism. Reagan took his own advice so well that he is now an ordained Methodist preacher. Apparently, Bevis also took Reagan’s advice. He is now a Pentecostal preacher and was last year proclaimed an “apostle” by Don Finto!

CAN A CHRISTIAN WORSHIP ACCEPTABLY IN OR WITH A DENOMINATION?

Andrew M. Connally



Andrew M. Connally married his childhood sweetheart, Claudene Franklin. They have four children, and six grandchildren. He attended four Christian Colleges and has three degrees, a B.A., M.A. and PhD.

Brother and sister Connally have spent much of their lives pioneering the work of the Lord in Malawi and Tanzania, East Africa. They founded and built Chimala Mission and Hospital in Tanzania in 1962. This was the first hospital built by Churches of Christ any where in the world. It is presently overseen by the elders of the Seagoville Church and the Connallys are still vitally involved in the Chimala work. In fact, Brother and sister Connally now devote full time to this effort.

Brother Connally was a teacher for the Brown Trail School of Preaching for over eleven years. He has and is holding meetings and lectureships across America and writes for the Spiritual Sword, Firm Foundation and several other papers as well. Brother Connally has had several debates, one in print is on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage, The Connally-Hicks Debate.

Brethren and friends, denominationalism is of the devil and all who remain in such till death will be lost! Notice what our Lord has said:

Then there came to Jesus from Jerusalem Pharisees and scribes, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. And he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandments of God because of your tradition? For God said, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God, he shall not honor his father. And ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This People honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men. And he called to him the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth

the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man. Then came the disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone.- they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit. And Peter answered and said unto him, Declare unto us the parable (Matt. 15:1-15).

There are several significant points in this passage:

One, our Lord warned that there are religious people who “transgress the commandment of God because of [their] tradition.” Two, there are those “who have made void the word of God because of [their] tradition.” Three, there are people who claim they are “honoring God” while they practice “vain worship,” “teaching as their doctrine the precepts of men.” Fourthly, many hearing these truths become “offended.” Fifthly, there are those disciples who are more concerned over those “offended” than they are over God! Sixthly, our Lord stated that all plants (churches) not planted by the Father shall be rooted up! And finally all such blind guides who lead blind followers are going to be lost, unequivocally, irretrievably lost!

We doubt seriously that any stronger indictment of human denominations has ever been written.

A parallel passage to the above is found in Matthew 7:21-23, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Here the scene is the Judgment and the people are expecting Salvation based on three reasons:

First, they are “calling on the name of the Lord.” Secondly, they had taught “by thy name” and “by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works.” But they are rejected. Notice why: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.” It is evident the “will of the Father” is one thing, while their actions *did not*, and we repeat, *did not* fit the will of the Father! This is a true picture of denominationalism in our day. They are busy

worshipping the Lord, they have their “good works going” and they did accomplish things, but neighbor, it was all according to “their will,” and not the Father’s!

It is very evident from only these two passages something is radically wrong with denominationalism. Surely it is not, their sincerity, for they called on God, they worshipped God, they did it all by the name of the Lord, so if sincerity is not the question, what is?! It is plain to see they did everything without God’s will (authority), and their will (authority) was the mitigating circumstance. Let us notice why worship in a denomination is not acceptable to God.

DENOMINATIONS ARE OF HUMAN ORIGIN AND EXIST WITHOUT THE AUTHORITY OF GOD

There is only one body (Eph. 4:4). “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling,” and that one body is the church of Christ (Cf. Eph. 1:23), “which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” Jesus built only one church (Matt. 16:18). “And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.” God planned it in eternity (Eph. 3:10-11). “To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in them heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord,” and Christ built it in time (Acts 2:47). “Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them (them church) day by day those that were saved.”

Human denominations wear unscriptural names, teach unscriptural doctrines and worship in unscriptural ways. Anyone who compares them to the one true church can substantiate each of these points.

God forbids doing anything in religion that is not authorized by the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting

partaketh of his evil work.” Since God does not authorize denominations then God *forbids* denominationalism! if men follow the Bible and the Bible only then no denominations could exist. Think about this!

DENOMINATIONS WEAR UNSCRIPTURAL NAMES

The church is found in our New Testament and it has various designations to describe its nature. Notice: It is the family of God, the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” It is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). “Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” It is the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). “Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you.” It is the church of God (1 Cor. 1:1-2). “Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours.” It is the church (Acts 8:1). “And Saul was consenting unto hill death. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

It has various designations to describe the nature of the individuals who make up the church. They are disciples (Acts 11:26). “And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” These disciples were called Christians (Acts 11:26). They are saints (1 Cor. 1:2). “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours.” They are sons and daughters of God (2 Cor. 6:18). “And will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters.” They are an elect race, a royal priesthood and a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9). “But ye are an elect race,

a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." All such designations of individuals or congregations are divinely named and such names can be worn in honor and with great dignity. Now where does that leave the names of the denominationalist? Completely without divine authority. In fact, to wear any other name than those given by God is to dishonor God! Think about this!

DENOMINATIONS TEACH AN UNSCRIPTURAL PLAN OF SALVATION

The church and the church only teaches the truth concerning God's plan of Salvation. Jesus demands faith in him as the promised Messiah (John 8:24). "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe I am he, ye shall die in your sins." He also demands repentance of all men everywhere (Acts 17:30-31). "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; wherefore he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." He also demands the new birth of water and the spirit (John 3:3-5). "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This is baptism in Christ's name for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." By this very action God adds one to the saved, the church (Acts 2:47). "Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them (the church) day by day those that were saved."

Now where does this leave the denominationalists who teach Salvation at the point of faith without further acts of obedience? (Cf.

James 2:24). “Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.” What of those who teach infant baptism, baptism of those *alreadysaved* or being baptized for the remission of sins but bowing to the authority of Joseph Smith or anyone else save Jesus Christ? Neighbor, Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18). “And Jesus came unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth,” and this leaves salvation in the name of no other (Acts 4:12). “And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.” Christ is God’s final authority, period (Heb. 1:1-2). “God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.” Think about it!

DENOMINATIONALISTS TEACH AND PRACTICE UNSCRIPTURAL WORSHIP

The church is commanded by God to worship in Spirit and Truth (John 4:24). “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” To do otherwise is to reject the authority of Christ. Men are sanctified by truth (John 17:17). “Sanctify them in truth; thy word is truth.” They must adhere to the word (1 Pet. 4:11). “If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen,” and recognize it will judge them at the last great day (John 12:48). “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I speak, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

This means each item of our worship must be authorized by God’s word. The singing is to be from the heart without mechanical instruments accompanying (Eph. 5:19). “Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord”; (Col. 3:16), “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with

grace in your hearts unto God.” This forever silences those who would do otherwise. If a man is led by the Bible then scriptural singing involves psalms, hymns and spiritual songs—none other qualify! All from the heart without the sound of a mechanical instrument!

The Communion is upon the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). “And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight.” It is in the assembly (1 Cor. 11:20). “When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord’s Supper” and it is to be limited to unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (Matt. 26:26-29).

The prayers and doctrine are to be continued in (Acts 2:42). “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

The contribution is bound upon the first day of the week. It is personal and for the work of God (1 Cor. 16:1-2). “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may, prosper, that no collections be made when I come.” Other opportunities for good cannot be ignored, but the Sunday contribution is bound by God’s decree.

Now, what of denominational worship? It violates every principle involved in true worship. Singing is with instrumental music, communion is a hit-and-miss affair! Prayers often include violations of God’s word and teaching. It is all too often according to denominational error! Contributions are based on tithing which died at the cross, being a part of Moses’ law. Think about it!

Now, how in the world could a child of God be acceptable to God, living, working, supporting and worshipping in a denomination? It is impossible. No Christian should ever be found worshipping in a denomination. For, *it is sin!*

All such efforts to tolerate the doctrinal sins found in our congregations are but attempts ultimately to tolerate denominational error and cross denominational lines. Which lines God has expressly forbidden.

Let us read it and weep, my brethren, for God is watching.

“And will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having there these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 6:18-7:1) Don’t you think we should quit trying to merge the church with denominations and quit fraternizing with them before we are lost with them? “For if the blind lead the blind they both shall fall into the pit.”

WHAT DAY HAS GOD AUTHORIZED FOR CHRISTIAN WORSHIP?

Jerri Manasco



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The Christian is devotedly concerned about his worship to God. Because of the goodness, patience, grace, providence, and patience of God, the believer wants to pay homage to the God he loves. Jesus says there is the right way to worship God, namely in spirit and truth (John 4:23,24). Other lectures in this series deal with the authority we have for worship as we seek to do those things that please God. Just as important as the study of the items of worship is the consideration of the appointed DAY for worship! Is there an appointed day for worship? If so, what is it and how do we know it?

No one denies that Christians can worship anywhere and any time! The Christian looks forward to all the opportunities to lift his voice to his God. Paul and Silas sang and prayed in prison (Acts 16:25). They could have done this anywhere. There may be daily services or we may have services several times a week. Our “busy” life today argues against such practice, but it would not be wrong. But we must clearly recognize that there is one day of the week that is not optional; it is the day God has appointed for Christians to assemble. We must comply with that.

Someone may lift the cry, “Legalistic rule” when we insist on the divine appointed day! This cry of “legalism” seems to be fashionable now. Well, was it legalism for the inspired penman to insist on attendance at the assembly (Heb. 10:25)? Is it legalism for Christians to honor formal assemblies for the purpose of worshipping God? Of course not! If therefore God has set a day for his worship, is it legalism to accept the New Testament practice?

God’s people in Old Testament times were quite impressed with their day of worship and remembrance. There were holy days and assembly days specified quite clearly by the Lord. Rather than go into a detailed discussion of these, the reader is encouraged to study these scriptures relative to this subject: Isaiah 1:12,15; Amos 5:21; Leviticus 23:2,3,4,7,8,21,36; Nehemiah 8:18; Exodus 12:16; Numbers 28:18,25,26; 29:1,7,12; and others.

It is well known that God enjoined the keeping of the sabbath upon the Jews. The seventh day of the week was the day set aside for those people. “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8). “Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings” (Lev. 23:3). One of the reasons for God’s judgment upon Israel and their carrying away was their disregard of the sabbath day (Neh. 13:15-22; Ex. 31:14; Isa. 58:13; Ezek. 20:12,13). Designed as a day of remembrance for Israel’s deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 5:12-15), and solemnized by the Lord stamping it with the title, “my holy day” (Isa. 58:13), Israel defiled it.

Does the Bible teach that *Christians* must keep the sabbath? Sabbatarians (Seventh Day Adventists, etc.) maintain that the sabbath of Exodus 20:8-11 remains in effect. To make such contention, one must overlook the fact that the law in which the sabbath was required is done away in Christ, and the New Testament sealed by Christ’s blood is in force now (Heb. 8:6-13; Matt. 26:28; Col. 2:14-17). The sabbatarian literature would lead one to believe that the sabbath is *the* key in one’s relationship with God. This centrality of the sabbath is basic to their teaching, but the glaring *lack* of central emphasis in the apostles’ teaching is a strong “hint” that God must

not put the stress on the sabbath that the sabbatarians place on it today.

As with every error the sabbatarians must remove scripture from context and misapply it to foster their teaching. Generally the starting place for sabbatarianism is Genesis 2:2-3, where it is said that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day. Three things are evident, though: (1) It is not said that God told Adam to keep the sabbath day; (2) The sabbath is not mentioned in Genesis elsewhere; (3) The text does not say when or why God sanctified that day. The first mention of the sabbath was made to Israel by God in the wilderness of Sin as Israel was on their way to Sinai (Ex. 16:23). A little later God gave the sabbath law at Sinai in the tables of the decalogue (Ex. 20:8-11). This is all consistent with Nehemiah's statement that God "made known to them [i.e., Israel] thy holy sabbath" (Neh. 9:14). The fact that Isaiah (58:12,13) and Jeremiah (17:22-27) were critical of those who broke the sabbath is accounted for on the simple ground that these prophets (and all the Old Testament prophets) lived under the law of the sabbath!

Did Jesus keep the sabbath? Of course he did (Luke 4:16). Why did he keep the sabbath? He lived under the law of the Sabbath (Gal. 4:4; Matt 5:17-18). Did Paul keep the sabbath? Perhaps as an unconverted Pharisee he did (Phil. 3:4-6). But what about all those occasions in the book of Acts when Paul entered the synagogue to preach? Well, to reach his Jewish peers he had to go *where* they were *when* they were assembled. Can sabbatarians produce scripture(s) that shows that Paul considered the sabbath as a holy day for Christians? I can show that Paul preached in the marketplace and met "*daily*" with any who would meet to discuss the truth he was preaching; does that prove anything beyond the fact that Paul took advantage of every expedient to preach the gospel? (Acts 17:17).

There are objections to first day of the week observance that are raised by sabbatarians. For instance, it is contended that the word "Sunday" does not appear in the Bible! Neither does the word "Saturday." The word "sabbath" in the Bible and so is the phrase, "first day of the week." The fact that "Sunday" is named for a pagan deity is seized as an objection to Sunday worship. Being "the day of

the Sun,” surely Sunday cannot be God’s day! Of course, every day of the week has pagan connotations. Monday is named for the moon; Tuesday is named for the Norse god Tieu; etc. Saturday was named for the god Saturn. Certainly the heathen saw some value in honoring their duties by such memorials; God can do the same by choosing the day he wants for us to use.

That the New Testament has no *command* to observe Sunday is often cast at those of us who worship on Sunday. Two observations are in order: first, there is no command in the New Testament to observe the sabbath! Second, the practice of the New Testament saints, which we will deal with later, is evidence enough of the Lord’s designated day. Sunday-keepers are reminded by sabbatarians that no New Testament text teaches Christians to abstain from labor on the first day of the week, as the sabbath demanded. Could it be that the purpose of the New Testament day of worship differs from the sabbath in some way? The Lord’s day is a memorial to Christ, not a remembrance of Israel’s deliverance from bondage.

What about the idea that the sabbath was a “perpetual” covenant? Exodus 31:16 said the sabbath was perpetual. Yet the Old Testament priesthood and the Hebrew day of atonement were perpetual (Ex. 29:9; Lev. 23:31). These were removed and are no longer valid (Heb. 7:12; 10:1-10). Frequently the sabbatarian will quote (but misapply) Malachi 3:6, “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Sabbatarians reason like this: Since God changes not, then he has not changed the sabbath law. This text, however, has no bearing on the sabbath question. For one thing, this verse is not a discussion of the importance of the sabbath. Malachi is simply showing that God’s *character* does not change. This is used to verify God’s kindness to Israel. Furthermore, Hebrews 7:12 tells us that God *did* change at least two things: the law and the priesthood!

In this discussion it is vital to know whence came the emphasis on the first day of the week rather than the sabbath. Those who deny the Sunday emphasis argue that there is no place in the Bible where God changed the day from sabbath to Sunday. To this we must ask if there has to be a scripture that says, in *specific terms*, “I the Lord

have hereby changed my day from Sabbath to Sunday?" The New Testament has some reason for mentioning the "first day of the week," and we will shortly consider that.

Did the Catholic Church change the day? Sabbatarians claim that she did. The *Maryknoll Catholic Dictionary*, in an article on "Sunday," says, "The first day of the week, the Lord's Day, the day set aside for the worship of God, the day which weekly commemorates the resurrection of Christ. *It was a day set aside by the apostles* in place of the Jewish Sabbath." (EMPHASIS MINE, JM). A footnote in the Douay version (1914 edition) on Acts 20:7 agrees that the first day of the week was kept by the early church. The Catholic Church claims to be the apostolic church, but she makes no claim to changing the day of worship centuries after the apostolic times!

Did a Roman emperor change the day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday? It is claimed by sabbatarians that Constantine issued a mandate requiring Sunday to be observed by all Christians, thus presumptuously invalidating the Lord's Sabbath! The facts are not in agreement with this theory. By the time of Constantine the Christians had begun to gain some degree of respectability. Constantine, influenced by several circumstances, issued edicts of toleration and legal recognition of Christians. After generations of sporadic persecution, the Christians had a champion in high places in Roman hierarchy. In 311 A.D. and 313 A.D. this emperor issued an edict making Sunday a legal holiday. In other words, he *legitimized but did not legislate* the Christian day of worship! Since the days of the apostles Christians worshipped on Sunday. Constantine merely recognized that right!

There are some well meaning but mistaken people who refer to Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. Several able Bible expositors mention the Christian Sabbath in their writings, perhaps due to a misunderstanding of the design of the Lord's day and the unwillingness to totally accept the abrogation of the law. The New Testament never speaks of the Christian Sabbath. The New Testament has no legislation similar to that in the Old Testament sabbath law.

Some pertinent observations by able men are in order. "Sunday... as the day of special worship is a Christian institution and must be

sharply distinguished from the sabbath. Nor were the OT sabbath regulations transferred to the Lords day as a ‘Christian Sabbath’... No ‘sabbath’ observance was stipulated in the demands upon Gentile Christians in Acts 15:28-29.”¹ “For the first three centuries of the Christian era the first day of the week was never confounded with the sabbath; the confusion of the Jewish and Christian institutions was due to declension from apostolic teaching.”² There was “no renewal of any sabbath rules or transfer of them to Sunday...for Gentile converts. No observance of a particular ‘day of rest’ is contained among the ‘necessary things’ of Acts 15:28,29, nor is any such precept found among all the varied moral directions given in the whole epistolary literature.”³

The first day of the week, the Lord’s day, is not the sabbath. There is quite a difference between *seventh* day and first day! The Old Testament repeatedly stresses the seventh day while the New Testament clearly speaks of the first day of the week (Ex. 20:10; etc.; 1 Cor. 16:2). The resurrection record makes it plain that the sabbath and the first day of the week are separate days. “In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week...”(Matt. 28:1). Mark says the sabbath was past when the women came to the tomb early the first day of the week (Mark 16:1,2).

The scriptures testify that the early Christians did *something* on the first day of the week. One who reads his Bible will certainly come across 1 Corinthians 16:2 and Acts 20:7. Now, where is the scripture that says, “On the sabbath when the disciples came together to break bread?” Where is the verse that says, “On the sabbath let every one of you lay by him in store?”

The apostles did a good job communicating the Lord’s will to the early saints. The apostles were to make known the New Testament way (see Matthew 16:19; John 16:13-14; etc.). These men “bound and loosed” as the Lord directed, and it is obvious that the first day of the week was part of that binding and loosing. The meeting at Troas in Acts 20:7 is set upon by sabbatarians who contend that that meeting was a special one and the local circumstances would be unknown to other Christians elsewhere. However, Paul wrote to the

church in Corinth teaching them to lay by in store on the first day of the week, and in that same verse he says he told the churches of Galatia the same thing (1 Cor. 16:2). This hardly seems compatible with a “local custom” theory! The early church followed the “apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42). Did apostles err in allowing the Christians to observe Sunday? NO! The first day of the week was and is the day held common by Christians.

One writer noted that the use of the phrase “first day of the week” as in 1 Corinthians 16:2 and Acts 20:7 and by the “Four Evangelists” (i.e., Matthew 28:1) is not accidental but shows that it was “the fixed Christian base.”⁴ Another writer of the nineteenth century said, “The hints [of first day of the week worship] are not numerous; but they are sufficiently distinct.”⁵ “Sunday was fixed as the day for Christian worship by general apostolic practice....”⁶ “The celebration of the Lord’s Day in memory of the resurrection of Christ dates undoubtedly from the apostolic age. Nothing short of apostolic precedent can account for the universal religious observance in the churches of the second century. There is no dissenting voice. This custom is confirmed by the testimonies of the earliest post-apostolic writers, as Barnabas, Ignatius, and Justin Martyr.”⁷

The “post-apostolic writers” appealed to are not inspired men certainly, but the fact is their testimony confirms that Sunday worship is not an innovation of times later than the apostles. Generations before Constantine, Christians met and worshipped one post-resurrection appearances of Jesus provide solid ground for first day meetings. John’s record of these reveals the continuity of the Lord’s appearances to his disciples on the first day of the week (John 20:1, 19,26). This provides good precedent for us!

Why do we refer to the first day of the week as the Lord’s day? We do so because it is the inspired designation of the day. The earliest *recorded* use of the expression is from John’s Patmos pen in Revelation 1:10. Note that I said this is the first *recorded* use of the phrase. Surely those Christians to whom he wrote knew what day he was referring to, for he used the term casually as though he assumed they would understand.

The “Lord’s day” is meaningful to the Christian. The word “Lord’s” is an adjective defining this as Christ’s day. Jesus is Lord (Acts 2:36). He had designated his day and we have no choice but to accept it. This is a virtual memorial day for the believer, for that day, the Lord’s day, is the day memorialized by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Luke 24:1-21; Mark 16:9). When one reflects upon the importance of the resurrection of Christ, he is made more conscious of just how meaningful the Lord’s day is. Mark carefully these scriptures: Romans 1:14; Acts 13:32-35; Matthew 12:38-40; Acts 2:22-36. These will help us to know why the Lord’s day is so great a bass for us.

Why do Christians recognize Sunday as the day of worship? It is because the Lord so requires! They who cling to the sabbath have too many difficulties to confront. They must deal with the mention of the first day of the week in the New Testament. They must face the continuity of Lord’s day worship in the centuries prior to Constantine. They must contend with the absence of a sabbath command in the New Testament. Yes, Sunday, the first day of the week, is the Lord’s day.

ENDNOTES

¹Zondervan *Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, article “Lord’s Day,” pp. 490,491.

²Vine, W. E., *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, article, “Sabbath,” p. 984.

³Burton, Scott Eastman, “Lord’s Day,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1939, vol. III, p. 1920.

⁴Ibid., p. 1919.

⁵Dabney, Robert L., *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Zondervan Publishing House, p. 392.

⁶ISBE, p. 1902.

⁷Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church*, Wm. B. Eerdmann’s Publishig Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., pp. 201, 202.

DOES ONE SIN WHEN HE CHOOSES NOT TO ASSEMBLE WITH THE SAINTS TO WORSHIP?

Bobby Duncan



Bobby Duncan was born in Jacksonville, Alabama, in 1934. He was baptized by Joe S. Hyde in 1945, and began preaching in 1951. He has attended Freed-Hardeman College, Jacksonville State, Birmingham-Southern, and Alabama Christian School of Religion, B.A., M.A. He has done local evangelistic work with only three churches: Munford, Alabama (1956-1958), Sixth Avenue, Jasper, Alabama (1978-19133), and Adamsville, Alabama (1958-1976 and 1983-present). Bobby has conducted daily radio and television programs and edited **WORDS OF TRUTH** for seven and one-half years. He now edits **VIGIL**, a monthly publication begun by himself and the Adamsville church in 1973. He has preached in numerous meetings and lectures and has authored: **THE ELDERS WHICH ARE AMONG YOU**, **THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE**; and **THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST**. He is married to the former Lois Ann Elliott and they have two children, Mrs. Raymond E (Jill) Wallace and Robert Timothy Duncan,

It is a genuine pleasure to be invited to speak on this lectureship on the subject which has been assigned. I consider this subject to be of great importance, though I realize I might have been prejudiced by having parents like John and Mattie Duncan and growing up in the little church in Jacksonville, Alabama. We thought nothing of driving thirty-five or forty miles one way in a ton-and-a-half flatbed truck to attend a gospel meeting, and we did it night after night throughout the summer months. I guess that's one reason I have such little understanding of people who just do not think attending the services is important.

Please notice in the very outset of this lecture that we are not dealing with those who, because of sickness or some other legitimate reason, cannot be present for all the assemblies. And when I use the word *cannot*, I am not talking about a physical impossibility. It is physically possible for one who has the Asian Flu, and a fever of 102 degrees, to get out of bed and attend the services. But such

would be neither practical nor sensible. It is physically possible for a mother to leave a sick baby at home alone and be present for the assembly, but it is not practical or sensible or right for her to do so. Many people work shift work in the steel mills, or the coal mines, or in hospitals or nursing homes, or with the police force, or the fire department, or the railroads, or the bus lines and airlines, or the power company, or the gas company, or any number of other businesses and occupations. Some of them work a Sunday shift and miss either Sunday morning or Sunday night. Some work the evening shift and are absent from Bible study on Wednesday night. They do not prefer it that way, and they do not love their jobs more than they love the Lord and his church. It would be physically possible for them to refuse to work those shifts, but not possible from a practical standpoint. These situations are not the kind under consideration in this lecture. We are considering rather those people who, as a matter of choice and preference, are absent from the assemblies. They simply choose not to come.

These people may rationalize their decision not to attend. Perhaps they are just too busy. But are they busy doing something they have chosen to do, but which could have been done at a different time? Or is it something they would not have chosen to do at all if it interfered with something else they really were interested in? Have they merely chosen to do something else rather than assemble with the saints? When people make such choices, do they sin in so doing? That is the question we are discussing in this lecture.

In connection with those who work shift work, this matter of preference needs to be emphasized. Most of us have no trouble with one's missing a service of the church because of his having to work. But occasionally something like this happens: The foreman calls on Saturday, and says, "Duncan, would you like to make some time-and-a-half? We need two or three men to work tomorrow, and I just thought I would give you a chance at it before I call anybody else." My job security is not at stake, and I am not depending for my livelihood on such overtime. It is a matter of preference and choice. If I choose not to attend the assemblies under such circumstances,

do I sin? As I see it, that is the question to be discussed in this lecture.

In case you have not already guessed, I believe this question can be correctly answered only in the affirmative; yes, it is a sin when one chooses not to assemble with the saints to worship. My reasons for this conclusion are many. I will give you twelve of them—a dozen reasons why one sins by choosing not to assemble with the saints for worship.

Reason number one is this: Choosing not to assemble with the saints to worship demonstrates one's contempt for spiritual things. Romans 8:1 says: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Verse 6 says: “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” If one chooses not to assemble with the saints to worship, would you say he is spiritually minded, or carnally minded? Look at another passage: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:7,8).

Some time ago I saw this question in a church bulletin: “If Christianity were illegal, and you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” I sincerely believe it would be difficult to convict one of being a Christian who demonstrates his contempt for the church by choosing not to assemble with the saints for worship.

Reason number two: Choosing not to assemble with the saints for worship involves choosing not to do that which is known to be good James 4:17 says: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” I have never talked to an individual who denied believing it would be good for one to attend all the services of the church. Would you deny that? Would you agree that one who chooses to assemble with the saints for worship makes a good choice? Would you criticize him for that decision? I doubt it. I doubt anyone here would say that one should ever choose, as a matter of preference, not to assemble with the saints to worship. It

is always good to go to church. One who knows that, and then chooses not to go, sins by such a choice.

Reason number three. Choosing not to assemble with the saints for worship is choosing not to give and receive needed provocation in living the Christian life. Hebrews 10:24 and 25 admonish: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” There are a number of ways one might encourage others to be faithful in good works and sincere in love for God and the brethren, but the one way specified here is by attending all the services. In doing so, we both give and receive the kind of encouragement we need to help us grow and develop as children of God. Some years ago, someone did a study that led to the conclusion that only about one out of seven people who are baptized into Christ remain faithful; six out of seven fall by the wayside. If a new convert, a babe in Christ, should ask me to name the one thing he should do to help him be faithful, I would name the thing named by the writer to the Hebrews. I would tell him to attend every service of the church. I know faithfulness involves more than just attending the services, but if I could only name one thing it would be attending the services. You see, if he attends all the services, he will learn about all the other things he needs to do, and will be encouraged to do them. If he fails to attend the services, he can never hope to grow and develop into a mature Christian.

Another passage emphasizes the fact that, from our gathering together to worship, we are edified. “Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Cor. 14:26). This is in a context where the apostle is discussing the proper way for Christians to conduct themselves during public worship. One rule he lays down is simply that all things be done unto edifying. The Greek construction suggests purpose, that is, everything done in the assembly is for the purpose of edifying those who worship. While our worship is directed toward God, God has designed our worship so that it will edify us. Choosing not to worship is choosing not to give and receive edification we all need to live the Christian life.

Reason number four is also found in Hebrews 10:25. Choosing not to assemble with the saints for worship is a violation of an explicit command of God. It is doing the very thing God said not to do. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” I know what the word *for-saking* means in this passage. And there is nothing in the original language indicate one cannot forsake the assembling without quitting altogether! In fact, the language indicates otherwise. Look at it again: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, the manner of some is....” The American Standard Version says, “as the custom of some is.” The Revised Standard Version says, “as is the habit of some.” The New Berkeley Version says, “as is habitual with some.” The writer is not here talking about something some had done in the past—quit assembling altogether, he is rather talking about something that was their manner, their custom, their habit at the time he wrote. If a man has quit assembling altogether, you would not say he has a habit of forsaking the assembling of the saints, or that his custom is to forsake the assembling. You would say he has already forsaken Christ and his church.

Why would it be wrong to quit assembling altogether? Why would it be wrong to miss every service of the church? The answer is, because it would be wrong to miss one service. If it is not wrong to miss one service, then it's not wrong to miss two. And if it's not wrong to miss two, then it's not wrong to miss ten. And if it's not wrong to miss ten, then it's not wrong to miss a hundred. And if it's not wrong to miss a hundred, then it's not wrong to miss a thousand. If it's wrong to miss a thousand services in succession, it's only because it is wrong to miss one. Choosing to miss one service violates the command of Hebrews 10:25.

Reason number five: Choosing not to assemble with the saints for worship contributes to ignorance. God said: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hoe. 4:6). The Bible teaches we are to give diligence to add knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5). And the last verse in this same epistle says, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Ignorance is a terrible

condition, especially ignorance of the will of God. Ignorance was one of the things that crucified the Lord. Peter said, in Acts 3:17: “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.” In Romans 10:3, Paul talked about some who were ignorant of God’s righteousness, and went about to establish their own righteousness. At least twice in First Corinthians and once in Romans the apostle expressed his desire that brethren not be ignorant with reference to certain aspects of the gospel of Christ. Ignorance is responsible for so much of the infidelity and unfaithfulness on the part of God’s children. One way of helping avoid ignorance is by assembling with the saints on a regular basis.

Let us suppose two fifteen-year-old boys obey the gospel at the same time. One is in a family whose attendance at church is limited to the Sunday morning worship hour; the other is a member of a family who never misses a service. The habits of church attendance these boys develop in their teens stay with them through life; one goes to church one hour a week, and the other goes about four hours a week, plus gospel meetings and the like. If each boy learns one truth for each hour he spends in Bible school and in worship, at the end of the first year the first boy will have learned 52 new things, while the second will have learned 208. In ten years the first will have learned 520 things, but the second will have learned more than 2000. If they both live to age seventy, the first will have learned 2860 things, and the second will have learned 11,440, or 8,580 more than the first. If these two were to stand side by side in the judgment, which one would you rather be? And remember, please, that this is the difference just attending the services makes.

Reason number six: Choosing not to worship with the saints sets a bad example. Paul wrote to Timothy: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

A little girl with shining eyes
Her little face aglow,
Said: “Daddy, it is almost time
For Bible school. Let’s go!
They teach us there of Jesus’ love,

Of how he died for all
 Upon the cruel cross to save
 Those who on him call.”
 “Oh, no,” said Daddy, “not today.
 I’ve worked hard all this week,
 And I must have one day of rest.
 I’m going to the creek.
 For there I can relax and rest,
 And fishing’s fine, they say.
 So run along; don’t bother me.
 We’ll go to church some day.”
 Months and years have passed away,
 But Daddy hears that plea no more:
 “Let’s go to Bible school.”
 Those childhood days are o’er.
 And now that Daddy’s growing old,
 When life is almost through,
 He finds the time to go to church,
 But what does daughter do?
 She says: “Oh, Daddy, not today!
 I stayed up most all night,
 And I’ve just got to have some sleep.
 Besides, I look a fright.”
 Then Daddy lifts a trembling hand
 To brush away his tears,
 As again he hears a pleading voice
 Distinctly through the years.
 He sees a small girl’s smiling face
 Upturned with eyes -aglow,
 As she says: “We time for Bible school.
 Please Daddy, won’t you go?”
 (Author unknown)

If you do not assemble with the saints on a regular basis, do you want those you love most to follow your example? Remember: “For none of us liveth to himself, and no’ man dieth to himself” (Rom. 14:7).

Reason number seven: Choosing not to assemble with the saints discourages the faithful. Some may think the faithful never get discouraged, but even the great apostle Paul became discouraged. He was encouraged, however, by the coming together of the brethren to

meet him at Appiiforum and The Three Taverns (Acts 28:15). When 350 people worship on Sunday morning, and then only 225 come back on Sunday night, and maybe 175 on Wednesday night, it's discouraging. On the other hand, one of the most encouraging things about church work is good attendance. I'm not talking about setting attendance goals and reaching them on a given Sunday morning, though there's nothing wrong with that. I'm talking about faithful and regular attendance at all the services by all the members of a congregation. It is an encouraging thing when a church can count about as many people on Wednesday nights as it counts on Sunday mornings. It is discouraging when some simply choose not to be present.

Reason number eight: Choosing not to assemble with the saints is a failure to let one's light shine. In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus said:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

A few years ago, in a certain Alabama town, an older gentleman—we will call him brother Walker—who had been unfaithful for about forty years was restored. He was attending every service of the church and living as best he could according to the will of the Lord. He was usually one of the first ones to arrive at the meetinghouse for any service. The church was beginning a gospel meeting on a certain Sunday in the spring of the year; it just happened that turkey season was to open on Thursday of that week, and brother Walker was a turkey hunter. When the local preacher arrived at the meetinghouse on Sunday morning, brother Walker met him at the steps, and said, "I'm going to attend every service of this meeting, morning and night, until Thursday, and then on Thursday I'm going after that big gobbler." The preacher suggested to brother Walker that he wait until after the closing of the meeting to go turkey hunt-

ing. He pointed out the importance of the meeting, and the fact it was a great opportunity that should not be neglected, and that the gobbler would probably still be there when the meeting was over. Guess what happened! Brother Walker arrived at the meetinghouse for the morning service on Thursday in time to see two of the elders drive past the building pulling their boat. Question: Were those elders letting their light shine by going fishing instead of attending the meeting that day? Now, let it be said to the credit of those two elders that when they realized they had done wrong, they repented and made confessions. But they dimmed their Christian lights by choosing to go fishing instead of assembling with the saints that day.

Reason number nine: When one chooses not to assemble with the saints, he demonstrates that his priorities are not properly arranged. Jesus said: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). Can one who is a member of the body of Christ, by any stretch of the imagination, think he is seeking God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness ahead of everything else in the world, when he prefers and chooses not to assemble when the saints come together for worship? Can he convince his children that God comes first in his life, when those children know he chooses not to be present for worship? What do his neighbors think about the matter? When they know the church is gathered together on Sunday night, or Wednesday night, or during a gospel meeting, but they see him at home, or at a ball game, or in the shopping mall, would they say he considers the kingdom of God the most important thing in the world? Listen carefully, friends: Even if that man’s failure to attend the services were not a sin, his attitude toward the importance of God and spiritual things would be a sin. His non-attendance would be a demonstration of that sinful attitude.

Reason number ten: Choosing not to assemble with the saints for worship is an affront to God personally. I mean by that, that while all sins are against God, some are indirectly against him, and others are directly against him. The first four of the Ten Commandments have to do with man’s relation to God; the last six have to do with man’s relation to his fellow man. When Jesus was asked about the

great commandment in the law, his reply was: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37). In second place was the command to love one’s neighbor as he loved himself. If loving God supremely is the first and great commandment, then it would seem that a failure to love God would be the greatest sin one could commit. If love for our fellow man takes second place to loving God, then it would seem that a sin directly against God would be worse than sins against our fellow man.

As we have already seen, when one chooses not to assemble with the saints, he sins against his fellow man, but in a more direct sense he sins against God. The man who picked up sticks on the sabbath day sinned directly against God (Num. 15). The sin of Nadab and Abihu was a sin directly against God (Lev. 10). The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was a sin directly against God (Acts 5). These serve to let us know how serious a thing it is to sin against God, and especially if we sin directly against God. When one chooses not to assemble with the saints, he sins directly against God.

Reason number eleven: One who chooses not to assemble with the saints for worship does so according to intent and purpose. Some sins are committed unintentionally, through the weakness of the flesh, or through ignorance. The faithful Christian does not live a perfectly sinless life, but he does not plan to sin. John wrote: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:8-10). While this passage shows that even the faithful do not live above sin, we must recognize a difference between the sins of the faithful and the sins of those who sin presumptuously, according to plan and purpose, and without compunction. Those who choose not to worship with the saints usually know they should, and they could if they would, but they plan not to do so. One of the things that makes Jezebel, the wicked wife of Ahab, so repulsive to us is that she plotted and planned her sins. Her sins were cold and calculated, and not committed through weakness or ignorance.

Reason number twelve: Choosing not to assemble with the saints is the only thing it would take to destroy the church from the face of the earth, if everyone did it. If one member of the church can, as a matter of preference and choice, not assemble with the saints for worship without committing any sin, then two can. And if two can, then ten can. And if ten can, a hundred can. And if a hundred can, then all can. The only reason it would be wrong for all to forego the appointed assembly is that it is wrong for one to do it. If it is not a sin for one not to assemble with the saints for worship, then it would not be a sin to do away with the assemblies altogether, and to destroy the church of Christ from the face of the earth.

Yes, my dearly beloved, when one, as a matter of preference and choice, does not assemble with the saints when they gather for worship, he sins. Those who are guilty of such sin need to repent, and make a public confession—the sin of nonattending is a public sin—and pray for God’s pardon.

I would emphasize that what we have said about choosing not to assemble with the saints for worship would apply just as much on Wednesday night or Sunday night as on Sunday morning. The late beloved brother Gus Nichols, a great gospel preacher, was also somewhat of a poet. In one of his poems, he used irony to show how ridiculous it is for one to insist on the importance of being present on Sunday morning, and then make a practice of not attending on Sunday night. I think that poem will serve as a fitting conclusion to this lecture.

NOT ON SUNDAY NIGHT

by Gus Nichols

I love the church that Jesus bought
And know that it is right.

I go there every Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.

I love to sing the songs of God,
Such worship must be right.
This I do on Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.

I love to hear the gospel, too;
It gives me pure delight.

I hear it every Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.
May God bless our preacher, too,
And give him power and might.
And put a sinner in my place
On next Sunday night.
I'd go through mud, even snow,
Do anything that's right,
To be at church on Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.
Let all the others be on hand
To worship God aright.
But I just want my easy chair
And comforts Sunday night.
I know I really need more strength
To keep me in the fight.
For help I came on Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.
True, the church can save the world
If its pure light shines bright.
I help it shine on Sunday morn,
But not on Sunday night.
Yes, all of us must surely die;
I hope I'll be doing right.
So may I die on Sunday morn,
And not on Sunday night.

HAS GOD AUTHORIZED DIFFERENT ROLES FOR MEN AND WOMEN IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP?

H. A. (Buster) Dobbs



H. A. (Buster) Dobbs was born and reared in Houston, Texas. He attended the university of Houston and South Texas College of Law. Buster is married to Martha DeWoody Dobbs and they have three children and eight grandchildren. His years of preaching have centered in Houston and he now works with the Fleetwood church. He is co-owner and Associate Editor of the **Firm Foundation**. He gives much of his time to speaking on lectureship and gospel meetings as well as to writing and working with congregations that have special needs.

Do you know the names of Tryphena and Tryphosa? How about Persis, do you know her? These are the names of godly women who, according to the apostle Paul, “labored much in the Lord” (Rom. 16:12).

From the beginning of creation, we read in the Bible of women who performed heroic service. The names rise up to bring to remembrance the grand place that women have in the scheme of things. We think of Eve, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Jochebed, Rahab, Ruth, Naomi, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Esther, Huldah, Anna, Elizabeth, Mary, Martha, Dorcas, Priscilla, Phebe, Rhoda, Lydia, Lois, Eunice, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis.

It could be said of all these lovely women, as it was said of Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis, that they labored much. We have an innumerable host of women in the church today who labor much in the Lord. The word translated “labored much” emphasizes the valuable service of these great women. The word means “wearied out.”

Jesus, after long, hard hours of work in Jerusalem, and a difficult, tiring journey, was wearied” and “sat thus” by the well (John 4:6). It is said of fishermen, who had worked to the full extent of their strength, and who said, we have “toiled” all night and have taken nothing (Luke 5:5). The word means hard work to the point of exhaustion.

We honor the noble women of all ages who are tireless in their service to God. We cannot overestimate the important place women fill in the church, in the home, and in the community. They often do their indispensable work without much notice.

Women, who have done so much for the church and the home, have been less concerned about “women’s rights” than they have been about women’s duties. They have been faithful to their sometimes thankless chores, and have been oblivious to position and power. Their Dorcas-like-humility endears them to the heart of God, and makes their service all the more effective.

Pushy women, on the other hand, seeking place and authority, striving for dominance, are a disservice to their kind. From Jezebel to Herodias all such power-grubbing women have been a discredit to their gender.

The command to wives is good advice for all women. The good character of holy women is conspicuous.

...beholding your chaste behavior coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Peter 3:1-4).

The righteous conduct of saintly ladies is beheld by men and seen of God. The heavenly father who knows of the quiet, vigorous service shall reward openly, and praise profusely.

WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

The matter of women participating in the public worship services of the church is not something that has just come up recently for discussion. It was talked and written about in the first century, and has been studied with interest in just about every subsequent generation. It is not a new thing, as some may suppose.

Redeemed women are to participate in the public worship of the church. It is not optional. Every member of the body of Christ is to worship the king.

The participation may be inaudible, or it may be spoken, but whether heard or unheard, it is real. When the whole church is assembled together for worship, a brother may direct our thoughts in prayer, and all the rest may be silent, but all participate in the prayer. A brother directs the singing, and all who are physically able to do so join in the activity. A brother teaches the Bible, and all listen, learn, and thereby partake of the words that are spirit and life. All eat the bread, drink the cup, and lay by in store. Each man, each woman, each boy, each girl must be included in the acts of worship. Not everyone makes an audible sound in every act of worship, but everyone must be involved. There is no provision for a proxy in the worship of God.

There have always been denominations that have used women in leading and directing public worship. This, in modern times, has been especially true of the “pentecostal” type religious bodies. These groups have had women preachers, song leaders, and prayer leaders for many years. Men and women who are knowledgeable in the teaching of the New Testament realize that the practise of women leading in public worship is sinful—contrary to sound doctrine. Good Bible students know that it is wrong—a transgression of divine law—for women to direct public worship.

Lately many people in various religious bodies, in the mistaken belief they are promoting women’s rights, have begun to agitate for women to lead in public worship. Some have ordained women preachers, educational directors, song leaders, and even women bishops. There are a few congregations of the churches of Christ that have recommended using women to direct worship, and some of these have carried out the practise. At present, the number of churches of Christ seeking to invoke women leading in the public worship of the church is very small, and confined to those groups that seek to liberate themselves from the strict teaching of the Bible.

The question has been resubmitted for discussion and study, and we cheerfully accept the opportunity to reaffirm the teaching of the

New Testament on this matter. We are not talking about women singing or praying. We are discussing whether it is proper for women to lead singing, lead prayers, preach sermons, and otherwise direct public worship.

ARGUMENTS FAVORING WOMEN DIRECTING PUBLIC WORSHIP CONSIDERED

Gifts: It is argued that women have certain God-given talents. Women must use these gifts, it is said, or they are faithless. Therefore to forbid a woman to use her abilities fully in the work and worship of the church is wrong. We are told that “Jesus claimed the gifts of women for the kingdom of God.” One advocate of women directing the worship of the church wrote, “We should discuss this matter in the context of gifts and not personal rights...we need to encourage the giving of those gifts in the life and worship of the church.”

No inspired writer of the New Testament ever made such an argument. If the reasoning is valid, then it would follow that a woman with the ability to administer should be an elder, and a sister with public speaking talent should be a preacher. If a wife claims superior management ability to her husband, should she replace him as the head of the house? Is it right to set aside the divine order simply because someone may, or may not, have a particular gift? Who is to be obeyed—God or man?

Tradition: The question of women not being allowed to direct the public worship of the saints is presented as merely a tradition of the church. We have apostolic tradition, and church tradition; the former is binding, and the latter is vain. It is said, women not leading singing, and prayers in worship is equal to the custom of either opening gifts on Christmas eve, or waiting until Christmas morning. This type reasoning demotes the whole question to a matter of human preference and prejudice. It overlooks the truth that God has spoken on the question of a woman having authority over a man.

Binding or not binding: It is suggested that some of the teaching of the New Testament is to be taken every day, like vitamins, but other words of God are to be taken only occasionally, like penicillin.

The suggestion denies that the Bible is relevant all the time. We are to live by “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” It is not true that any word of God is frivolous, and is to be spasmodically obeyed. This argument rests on the delusion that the commands and words of the Bible can be divided into two categories—major and minor. The major things of the Bible are to be observed and kept, and the minor things may be safely ignored. This teaching plays fast and loose with revelation, and puts humans in the position of God, and God in the position of a jester. Any human endeavor that must begin with discounting the words of God, and justifying disobedience to divine rules, is rebellion and not sacrifice. It smacks of the devil’s own lie when he said to Eve, “Yea, hath God said...?” Man is not wiser than God.

Male or female: It is argued that in the beginning of the gospel there was a bias by men against women, just as Jews often prejudged Gentiles. The idea is absurd! To maintain the notion is to accuse Jehovah, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles of unfairness. No inspired person ever approved any brand of raw partiality.

Miscellaneous matters: In attempting to justify women leading the worship service in public assemblies, some say that Miriam led a song of rejoicing; Huldah received a message from Jehovah and sent it to the king of Israel; Anna, the prophetess, saw the baby Jesus in the temple “and gave thanks unto God, and spake of him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38); Mary Magdalene reported the missing body of Jesus to the disciples; Lydia, Phebe, Prisca, and the four virgin daughters of Phillip are mentioned favorably in the New Testament; Deborah was a judge in old Israel.

Miriam took the women apart and spoke to them; men were not present (Exod. 15:20); Huldah maintained an attitude of respectful submission in reporting the word of the Lord in a private conversation (2 Kings 22:14-20). Anna was in the temple every day. Where was she? In the court of the women! That is where the women always were! She spoke to women who were looking for redemption of Jerusalem, not men. Mary Magdalene simply made a report to the disciples. There is not one tiny bit of evidence that Lydia, Phebe,

Prisca, or the four daughters of Phillip ever taught over a man, or led in public worship. These women could teach other women, and children, and in doing so would be prophesying. We know that Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos (Acts 18:26), but we do not know what role each played in the teaching process. It is not inconceivable that Priscilla kept herself in a supportive role, while Aquila carried the main burden of the teaching. This arrangement would be in harmony with all else the Bible tells us about the relationship between men and women. Besides, Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and taught him privately, not in a public forum. It is wrong to base a conclusion on assumptions when the conclusion is in violent contrast to Bible rules and principles.

That leaves us with the solitary case of Deborah (Judges 4 and 5). Deborah was a judge in Israel. Her function was in civil government. If her example authorizes any action for the church today, it would come closer to sanctioning female elders than approving female song leaders. She did not lead men in worship of God. She wrote a psalm of deliverance, but all women may write songs. Deborah, like Huldah, simply delivered a message for Jehovah. She went with Barak to battle, but Barak directed the troops and gained the victory (Judges 4:14-16). It is wresting the scriptures to attempt to prove from the case of Deborah that God intends for women to lead prayers, and singing, and preach sermons, especially in view of the strong prohibitions against such in the Bible.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

“Scripture is our yardstick in all things.” We are not only to stand on the scriptures but are also to stand under the scriptures. What the Bible teaches on this subject is the final word.

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul has a section on worship. It begins with the eleventh chapter and ends at the fourteenth chapter. In this segment the apostle deals with the question of whether it is right for women to direct public worship. He also deals with other abuses of worship in the Corinthian church. Paul wrote, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is

God” (1 Cor. 11:3). This is the apostle’s introduction to his section on worship. It is as if he had said, Let’s get it right on the first tee box! Christ is the head of man; man is the head of woman; and Jehovah is the head of Christ. Whatever this means, it applies all the time. There is no time when Christ is not the head of man! There is no time when Jehovah is not the head of Christ. There is no time when man is not the head of the woman!

One proponent of women leading public worship pointed to Paul’s statement, “But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head...” (1 Cor. 11:5). This champion of women directing public worship pointed out that Paul did not tell the women of Corinth not to pray or prophesy in the assembly with men present, but only told them to keep their veil on! To prophecy was to preach. This man is advocating women preachers!

In the acorn stage of this teaching about women leading worship it may appear to be a simple matter of couples serving the Lord’s Supper together, or a woman reading a verse of scripture at the end of the service, but when the thing is full-grown it will include women serving as both elders and preachers.

Paul did tell the women of Corinth to quit their practice of preaching and leading prayer in the assembly. Remember, this section on worship must be taken as a whole. Before Paul finished with the subject he specifically told the women to keep silent during preaching in the assembly.

Paul says that a woman unveiled in public is a dishonor to her head. Her head is the man. For a woman to be unveiled was to disgrace her husband. The veil covered the entire upper portion of the body. To cast it off was to imitate the prostitutes in idol temples. Therefore Paul says if the woman is unveiled, “let her also be shorn” (v. 6). The punishment of Harlots included shaving off their hair. Paul is using very strong language in order to express absolute disapproval of what the women in the church at Corinth were doing.

The apostle lays it down by his apostolic authority that the women are to “keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak...” (1 Cor. 14:34). The women could sing. To

sing in to speak (Eph. 5:19). In singing, women teach and admonish (Col. 3:16-17). However when preaching, teaching, and revelation are in progress (vv. 26-33), women are to be absolutely silent.

Paul wrote, "But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness" (1 Tim. 2:12). Women, are not to teach over a man! Women may teach, a man, but they may not teach over a man! Women may sing, and in singing they speak, and in their speaking they teach and admonish. Women are not to lead the singing, for to do so would put them in a position of having dominion over a man. This would also be true of leading a prayer, or reading a verse of scripture, in the assembly of the saints. Women may not teach a man if such teaching places them in dominion over the man. The man is the head of the woman (1 Cor. 11:3).

Paul gives two reasons for forbidding a woman to teach over a man. First, Adam was formed and then Eve (1 Tim. 2:13). Someone has said that if the order of creation is important, then the animals, being created before man, would be over man. Such specious reasoning is an attempt to escape the obvious import of the passage. An inspired apostle made the comment about Adam being formed before Eve, and it cannot be lightly brushed aside. The Bible is plainly pointing out that Eve was a help meet for Adam. Monkeys being created before man means nothing because man is not a help meet for monkeys.

Second, "Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled, hath fallen into transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). When God assigned punishment to the sinful pair in Eden, he said to the woman, "And thy desire shall be unto thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16).

Husbands rule over wives (Gen. 3:16). The man is the head of the woman (1 Cor 11:3). Women are to be silent during preaching, teaching, and revelation in public assemblies of the church (1 Cor. 14:34). Women are not to teach over a man. Women may not lead or direct any part of the worship of the church (1 Tim. 2:11-15).

CONCLUSION

Women have an important role to play in the home, in the church, and in the community. Women are equal to men in every area, except in physical strength. However God has appointed that men are to direct and govern the affairs of the home and the church. Women make a priceless contribution, especially in refinement, beauty, and spiritual tone. Her wisdom and good taste enrich both the home and the church.

Men and women are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28), but the distinction between the two is still there, and it is divinely ordained that man is the head of the woman, and that women are not to teach over men. To transgress this Bibl rule is to sin against God. “Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4).

PRAYER AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Ray Peters



Ray Peters was born in Pensacola, Florida in 1943. Ray has been married to the former Judy Baker for nearly twenty-seven years. They have one son, Michael, age 15. Brother Peters attended two years at Pensacola Junior College, and in 1966 graduated from Valdosta State College in Valdosta, Georgia with a B. S. degree in History Education. He is a 1969 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching, and has a Master's Degree In Bible from Alabama School of Religion. Ray began preaching in 1965, and has preached full-time for congregations in Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, Florida, Arkansas, and Alabama. He has done mission work in Canada, the Virgin

Islands, and is presently engaged in full-time mission work for Southeast Asia.

The man, whose sight Jesus had restored, exclaimed, “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth” (John 9:31). Although the man who uttered these words was not inspired, it is a true statement that God does not hear flagrant sinners. In the King James Translation the Greek word *theosbes* is translated “worshipper,” and only occurs here in the New Testament. It could be translated “*a pious*, or God fearing man.” The kindred noun to *theosbes* is found in 1 Timothy 2:10 and is translated “godliness.” The point in John 9:31 and the defense of the healed man, was that this man, Jesus, had to be of God to have done this mighty deed. Also, it is a “godly” man who prays and is the “kind” of person that our Heavenly Father will hear and answer.

With these thoughts before us, we are ready to consider the lesson, “Prayer and Christian Worship.” This is a very important study, because prayer is the most widely practiced, least understood, and therefore the most abused act of worship or religious rite. In our study a consideration of: (1) The Petitions, (2) The Petitioner and (3) The Premiums of Prayer, will be set forth.

THE PETITIONS

It is not the design of this lesson, and time and space will not allow, to consider all the aspects of prayer, but simply prayer and Christian worship. The examples of individual and private prayers to the Father are great in number in the Bible and each should be observing such as our Saviour did, (Matt. 26:36). Paul commanded, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER. Let it be emphasized at the very outset what a great privilege it is to have the right of prayer. The first and highest prerogative conferred by God to man, is the opportunity to listen to the Father speak, through his Word (Isa. 1:2; Prov. 28:9). This does not disparage or distract from prayer to say it is the second greatest privilege afforded to God's children, whereby his children can talk to their Heavenly Father (Prov. 15:8,29; Rev. 5:8). Nor is it intended to suggest that prayer is not as important as the other items in paying homage to God in worship. It is through the wonderful Word of God that one learns how to become a child of God and to be qualified to approach the heavenly Father in a petition. It is an honor to be able to go to the presence and before the Throne of the Majesty on High, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb.4:16).

THE PRESCRIPTION OF A PETITION. A prescription" is "A rule or principle governing conduct, action, and procedure." So, what is the "procedure" to be followed in a petition or prayer. To help better understand the different "procedures" or "kinds" of prayers, it will be helpful to notice the various Greek words, both verbs and nouns, which are translated "pray" or "prayer." First, the verbs: (1) "Euchomai"—"To speak out loud. To wish or vow," such as, "Now I Pray to God that ye do no evil" (2 Cor. 13:7; also, Acts 26:29; Jas. 5:16); (2) "Proseuchomai"—It is restricted to prayer to God in the New Testament, "...pray for them which despitefully use you" (Matt. 5:44); (3) "Erotao"—"To ask or request a person to do something"; (4) "Aiteo"—"To ask for something be given (not done)," commonly used of an inferior addressing a superior; (5) "Deomai"—"To want, lack, or need; then to make known one's

need; hence, to supplicate, beseech”; (6) “Parakateo”—“To call aside, appeal to (by way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort or instruction).” Next, and most commonly used, are the noun forms: (1) “Euche”—“A prayer or vow made to God”; (2) “Proseuche”—A general term used for prayer to God, “Having regard to the power of him who is invoked and giving prominence to personal devotion”; (3) “Deesis”—“A petition for a special object, having regard to our necessity rather than to God’s sufficiency to supply it giving prominence to personal need”; (4) “Enteuxis”—“Confiding access to God, giving prominence to childlike confidence in prayer; occurring only in 1 Timothy 2:1; 4:5”; (5) “Aitema”—“A specific petition for a particular thing occurring only in Luke 23:24, Philippians 4:6 and 1 John 5:15” (*The Companion Bible, Appendix*, page 164).

The apostle Paul declared, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6). In this passage there are the terms, “proseuche,” which is translated “prayers,” and is a general term; “deesei,” a petition for a special object, and “aitemata,” a specific appeal for a respective something. Another word that appears in Philippians 4:6, that was not pointed out earlier on, is the word “eucharistis,” which is translated, “thanksgiving.”

With the above material before us, what have we learned? Well, that there is what might be termed a general prayer and specific prayers. Therefore, the procedure of a “general prayer” and a “specific petition” will differ. In our worship services the terms such as “opening prayer,” “closing prayer” or “dismissal prayer” are used. There are the prayers to be spoken at the Lord’s Table: for the Bread, and for the Fruit of the Vine. There are those that will object to the practice of having a prayer of thanksgiving before the collection or contribution is taken. The objection is offered upon the basis that there is no New Testament example for such an act.

Of course the question could be asked, “What kind of petitions and how many can be offered in worship?” Paul exhorted that our “supplications with THANKSGIVING” are to be made known to God. Should not Christians be thankful for the blessings that God has so richly given us? The “opening prayer” could very well be a

“general prayer,” one that will cover various areas and not just one specific thing. Whereas, when one “blesses” or gives “thanks” the Bread and the Fruit of the Vine, he is to do just that, and not pray for brother or sister Doe who is sick and in the hospital, for world peace, etc. Also, the “closing prayer” is not to be a recapitulation of the preacher’s sermon, but just what is asked of the person and that is to “dismiss” the brethren.

THE POINTS OF THE PETITION. Our attention is now on the general petition and its makeup. The pattern to be followed in this is the “Model Prayer,” and not a ritualistic form, that Jesus gave and which is recorded in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4. In Luke’s account we are informed, “one of his disciples said unto him, Lord teach us to pray,” and in Matthew’s account, Jesus replied, “After this MANNER therefore pray (proseuchesis)...” The length of the model prayer in Matthew’s account is sixty-nine words. The late and beloved Gus Nichols used to say, in commenting about those leading in prayer, “If you are behind in your praying, Please pray before you come to the services!” In this general model prayer there is the “address.” This is a controversial and much discussed point, but it is my conviction that the address or approach is to be to the Father. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:14). It is to be respectful as Jesus said, “Our Father...hallowed be thy name” (Matt. 6:9). If one will turn to John 17, what is rightfully known as the “Lord’s Prayer,” one will notice such phrases as “Holy Father” and “O Righteous Father.” Such statements as “Old Man,” “Big Daddy” and such like are blasphemous and should never be used when approaching the Throne of Grace, as they have been in some places in the past. While it is true that, in a sense, the address is to the Godhead, Jesus approached THE FATHER and he also said, “And I will pray the Father...” (John 14:16). It is to be “in the name of Jesus” (John 14:14). There in the feature of “Praise” as Jesus said, “Hallowed (holy) be thy name.” The element of “request” is proper as Jesus asked, “Thy kingdom come.” We do not ask for that today because the kingdom/church has come. He also solicited for the “daily provisions of life” when he said, “Give us this day our daily bread.” This certainly

does not preclude one's working for his food, (2 Thess. 3:10). Jesus requested many things of the Father for his disciples in John 17. Our Lord also solicited the Heavenly Father for the "glory" he had before the world was (John 17:5). Therefore, the petition may be for the needs of others as well as for one's own needs. The point of "Thanksgiving" stands out in the Lord's petition. He was "thankful" that the Father had given him the disciples. Paul pointed out that our entreaties are to be characterized by thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6).

Last, but surely not the least in importance, the property of "confession" should be present in a petition. Our Lord Jesus did not sin, but taught his disciples and us that we do sin and are in need of forgiveness (Rom. 3:23). Matthew's account says, "forgive us our debts," whereas Luke's chronicle states, "forgive us our sins" (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4). 1 John 1:9 informs us that, "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

A quick analysis of the Model Prayer reveals the procedure to be followed in prayer. It was brief, only sixty-nine words, and the words were simple and understandable. The scope of the prayer included man's needs, both physical and spiritual. In its approach it was very direct and not vague. The address was to God the Father. There were three petitions that concerned Heavenly things and four appeals for earthly effects.

PITFALLS IN PRAYER. There is obviously a right way to pray and many wrong ways. The disciples were wise in asking Jesus, "teach us to pray," and each of us make the same request. If one is not properly instructed in how to pray one will "ask amiss" (Jas. 4:3); that is, incorrectly or wrongly. And even though one is appropriately taught he can still petition wrongly. Of course, these pitfalls apply to public as well as private prayers. The failure to ask in faith, (Matt 21:22; Jas. 1:5-8); to lack humility, (Luke 18:10-14); to fail to be reverent, (Heb. 12:28-29); not being obedient, (John 15:8; 9:31; Jas. 5:16); omitting sincerity, (Matt. 6:5); the neglect of submission, (Matt. 26:36-39); to lack thankfulness, (Phil. 4:6-7); and not to have a forgiving spirit, are some of the things that will hinder a prayer.

THE PETITIONER

PURITY IN THE PETITIONER (1 Tim. 5:22). Much time has been spent on the petition, but the petitioner or the one praying is just as important. That is what our basic text points out, “Now we know that God heareth not sinners” (John 9:31). One must be in a praying relationship with the Father. The one that is called upon to lead a prayer should not be one that is unfaithful in attendance or in everyday life. As was pointed out in the *PITFALLS OF PRAYER*, not being obedient, which is the same as sinning, hinders prayer. David exclaimed, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa. 66:18). The Lord does not require “sinless perfection” of a person to qualify one to pray, but one cannot let “sin reign in [our] mortal bodies” (Rom. 6:12). The practice of asking one to wait on the Lord’s Table, lead the singing, or teach a class, “to make one faithful” is absurdly wrong and it is likewise preposterous and wickedness to invite one to lead a prayer for the same purpose. The one petitioning the Father should be one that is: faithful, humble, reverent, obedient, sincere, submissive, thankful, and has a forgiving spirit. He should not be one that is marked as being indifferent, prideful, and basically having a bad attitude. What a blight against the church to use such a person to try and lead the congregation in prayer! David, as he prayed to the Father in regard to the deceitful, said, “let his prayer become sin” (Psa. 109:7). To invite one who is deceitful in his Christian life to lead a prayer, is to have one lead whose prayer is “sin,” and it amounts to having sin in the worship! Therefore, it is sinful to ask such a person to lead a prayer. Brethren, these things ought not to be.

PREPARATION FOR THE PETITION. It is a great privilege to have the avenue of prayer and it is an even greater right to lead a group of Christians in a petition before the Father. It is something that should not be taken lightly. To do so properly and effectually will take some preparation, especially for one who is a novice and young in the faith. I will never forget being asked to have the first prayer in the Sunday morning worship services. It had been only three weeks since I had obeyed the Gospel. One of the deacons approached me and asked me a week ahead of time. The whole

week was spent in study preparing for the prayer and I even wrote out the prayer. I prepared my heart and attitude for this great event. It is not suggested that preparation has to be done in this fashion, but some preparation and forethought needs to be made. You may feel that a novice or new convert should not be asked to lead a prayer, but I would ask, “Why, upon what basis and how long must one wait?” If one properly prepares oneself, and is faithful, in my view, it is perfectly all right. One has to start sometime. I agree that a training class would be best, and I have conducted such, for one to go through before leading a public prayer. But if there is not one, take the New Testament, or give a book, such as this lectureship book with a lesson on prayer, to a man that is a new convert and let him study. In whatever way it is done, some preparation and forethought needs to be made, whether one is a new convert or a long time member.

PRAYING THE PRAYER. An instructor I once had said, “You shall not be known for your much speaking. This applies also to our leading in prayer. Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they, “for a pretence make long prayer” (Matt. 23:14). The prayer and petition should be long enough to cover its intent, but unnecessary adjectives should be left out. A prayer does not have to be “flowery” and “pompous” to be pleasing to God. Shun being dramatic, be yourself. A prayer does not have to be “eternal” in length to be spiritual. We must realize that it is not a teaching agent and avoid teaching and preaching when leading a prayer. Use one’s natural voice in praying and do not use the “holy tone” sound, but be sure to speak up loudly, clearly, and distinctly. If one cannot be heard or understood, how can the congregation say “Amen” (1 Cor. 14:16)? In requests to the Father one must not sound like he is begging just for “things” from God. Be sure and eschew “vain repetitions” (Matt. 6:7). The attitude of Christ is to be manifested when he prayed, “nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). Never lose sight of the fact that one is leading the prayer for the congregation.

THE PREMIUMS OF PRAYER

POWER IN PRAYER. It is a fact that there is a premium, reward, or a dividend that comes from a proper prayer. That is what

James stated, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas. 5:16). A literal translation of the passage is, “There it; power in prayer!” We have all heard the saying, “Prayer changes things,” and that is what is meant by the “premiums of prayer.” This is true whether it a public prayer or whether one is in the “closet” praying (Matt. 6:6). In answering prayer, a miracle is not needed but God works through natural means. It is fundamental and basic that one understands that prayer is not a form of “spiritual gymnastics,” a sort of “dumb-bell” exercise! It is not an effort to soothe the spirit of the prayer, calm his anxieties, or the ones hearing the prayer. Prayer is communion with God and understanding this will make God real and close, our petitions invigorated and our faith strengthened to endure trials, sufferings, disappointments, and great sorrow.

PROGRESS IN PRAYER. Prayer is the soul’s media of teaching God. In 1886, the great Atlantic phone cable was laid, and there was joy and celebration on both sides of the ocean because great progress had been made. A dividend of the connection was progress and growth, not only in the U.S., but also in the world. It is the same way with prayer. Because there is a medium through which one can talk to the Heavenly Father, there will be growth. In proper prayer, whether private or public, there is growth. Given that one is sincere, what one prays for they will also work for, and if it is in accord with the Father’s Will (1 John 3:22; 5:14) it will be successful. A congregation that has men leading the prayers who petition the Lord “persistently” for a good harvest of souls, for the missionaries, both foreign and in the U.S., and the congregation to be fervent in service to the Lord, will be a congregation where brethren will work toward those ends. The Lord’s hearing of that prayer(s), (1 John 5:15), will “open doors of opportunity” and the brethren will give of their time, talent, and money to get the job done. The church in Jerusalem was such a praying church. Peter was in prison, “but prayer was made **WITHOUT CEASING OF THE CHURCH UNTO GOD FOR HIM**” (Acts 12:5), and he was delivered. Also, we are informed again, “where many were gathered together praying” (Acts 12:12), and that Peter knocked at the door where the church was gathered, because

the Lord answered the prayer of the saints. Oftentimes it may be that the reason the church is not growing or making progress is because, as James points out, “yet ye have not, BECAUSE YE ASK NOT” (Jas. 4:2).

PARDON IN PRAYER. The Psalmist declared, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psa. 32:1). It is a great premium, whether it be in a private or a public petition to gain forgiveness of one’s sins. We are constantly in need of forgiveness (Rom. 3:23; Job 13:23). In the public prayer in the assembly, each one present is joining with the one leading the prayer, to go before the Throne of Almighty God. Just think of the power and the influence as each is imploring the Heavenly Father for the releasing of sins (1 John 1:7-10). But if there is something that requires a public confession for one to be forgiven, maybe one will reflect on that fact, during the prayer, and respond and get their life right with God when the invitation is extended. It is very clear that the “unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9) and in prayer, “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7), and makes one whole. What a grand and glorious occasion it is to pray and have pardon! Lets guard against taking it for granted.

PARTICIPATION IN PRAYER. Before our lesson is brought to a close just a few thoughts on each member participating in the prayer being lead in worship. Let each be reminded “you are praying also” and you are not just a spectator! Also, do not let your mind wander. We are before the Throne of God and we are, together with the one leading, petitioning the Heavenly Father.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, realizing that prayer is a vital part of one’s worship unto God, it is imperative that prayer is properly understood. This involved considering what constituted a prayer and the different kinds of prayer, a noticing of the one who has the privilege of leading a congregation before the throne of Grace; being assured of the blessings that incur from petitioning the Heavenly Father; and that each is participating in the prayer being lead.

If you are not a child of God, why not become one now by believing (John 8:24), repenting (Luke 13:3), confessing (Matt. 10:32), and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16) and enjoy the privilege of prayer.

If you are an unfaithful Christian, make restitution now, that your prayers will not be hindered (1 Pet. 3:7). If you are a male Christian, prepare yourself to be used in the work of leading the church before God's Throne.

SINGING AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Noah A. Hackworth



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INTRODUCTION

Once again it is a genuine pleasure to be in Pensacola, Florida as a part of the 1990 Bellview lectureship. The entire Bellview congregation with its elders and preachers is to be commended for this work of faith and labor of love (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3). Great lectureships such as this are contributing immeasurably to the perpetuation of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus (cf. Eph. 4:21). Because this audience is filled with seasoned preachers, experienced elders and knowledgeable members it would be extremely difficult to introduce any “new truth” on any Bible subject, let alone one with which Christians are familiar. Actually there is no such thing as “new truth.” It has been said that one might as well call newly-dug gold “new gold” as to call “newly-discovered” truth “new truth.” The Holy Spirit has not revealed “one particle” of additional truth since the last inspired writer laid down his pen. We therefore are not concerned with something “new” as the Athenians were (Acts 17:21), but rather with the presentation of what the New Testament says about singing as an act of Christian worship.

THE AUTHORITY OF GOD

One of the distinctive features of the Christian System, as Alexander Campbell called it, is that it is authoritative. Authority means “The right to command and to enforce obedience; the right to act” (cf. John 1:11-12). God, because he is the Sovereign of the universe as well as the Creator of mankind, has the undeniable “right to command and enforce” obedience, which he does through love (cf. John 14:15). Whatever, then, is done in homage paid to God through the ascended Christ, must be authorized by him. “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17). Belgian writer S. Van Mierlo explains:

Modern theologians condemn “authoritarian religions” and will not permit any authority outside of man to be imposed on men. But they themselves and up with this kind of religion. For if all Scripture in not inspired of God, if it is in large measure made up of documents of doubtful value, brought together by unknown authors, the believer not versed in criticism going to make up his mind? How will he understand where the Bible is simply giving the human opinions of certain august personages? So each man has to consult the theologians to find out what texts he can have confidence in and how he is supposed to regard them. But since these critics often differ among themselves, he will have to decide on one among them. Thus the selected one will become the voice of authority. So it turns out that while the authority of God is rejected, that of man is accepted....¹

The problem with many is that they do not understand the concept of authority. If one is walking down the hall and sees a sign on a door that says “Authorized Personnel,” what does it mean? If one is driving down the street and sees a driveway with a sign in it that says “Authorized Vehicles,” what does it mean? There is not one person in this assembly who does not know how to react in these kinds of situations. An individual would automatically know whether he could pass through the door or enter the driveway. To fail to understand the implications of authority makes it more difficult to understand when something is authorized by God and when it is not.

THE AUTHORITY OF SILENCE

According to the Sacred Text there were certain well defined occasions upon which silence was definitely imposed (cf. Hab. 2:20;

1 Cor. 14:28; 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12). Why, then, should we think it a strange thing to recognize its authority? That we do not truly respect the authority of the Bible unless we respect its silence is a contention that does not admit of doubt. In fact, we are forbidden by apostolic instruction (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9) to “go beyond that which is written” or “beyond the teaching of Christ.” To do so is to deprive ourselves of any semblance of authority for what we say or do (cf. Col. 3:17). And should this be the case, to whom shall we give account for our actions? A perversion of this principle is the assumption that the silence of the Bible grants the right to proceed with the action or activity. Not so! Attitudes toward the silence of the Scriptures are effectively demonstrated by Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1564). Luther wanted “to retain in the church all that was not expressly contradicted in the scriptures, while Zwingli wanted to abolish all that could not be proved by scripture.”² As far as Luther was concerned “he saw at a glance where his rule of interpretation on other subjects must inevitably lead him on this point.”³ In the case of Zwingli he “...reduced the church ‘to extreme simplicity; pictures and statues were removed from the churches...organs were banished...’”⁴ Subsequent to his arrival in America (ca. 1807), Thomas Campbell, near the end of a speech, reportedly said, “That rule, my highly respected hearers, is this, that where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”⁵ In a description of the attitudes that would characterize the advocates of the Great Restoration Movement, Robert Richardson, in *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, said:

Thus the silence of the Bible was to be respected equally with its revelations, which were by Divine authority declared to be able to “make the man of God perfect and thoroughly furnished unto every good work.” Anything more, than “the whole counsel of God” would be a dangerous deficiency. Simply, reverentially, confidingly, they would speak of Bible things in Bible words, adding nothing thereto and omitting nothing given by inspiration.⁶

GOD AUTHORIZES SINGING

At this point we have only one thing to prove: God authorizes singing. Remembering that one way to establish biblical authority

is by direct statement, we submit the following passages which authorize singing.

Matthew 26:30 "...they had sung a hymn..."

Mark 14:26 "...they had sung a hymn..."

Acts 16:25 "...and singing hymns..."

Romans 15:9 "...sing unto thy name..."

1 Corinthians 14:15 "...sing with the spirit..."

Ephesians 5:19 "...singing and making melody..."

Colossians 3:16 "...singing with grace..."

Hebrews 2:12 "...will I sing thy praise..."

Hebrews 13:15 "...the fruit of the lips..."

James 5:13 "...let him sing praise..."

Surely no one will deny that these passages authorize nging. And at least two of them show that it is a command. And remember, where there is a command there is the authority. First, Ephesians 5:18-19, "...But be filled with the spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." The grammatical make-up of this passage is extremely important. "...For the active participle in connexion with an imperative, either declares the manner in which the imperative shall be obeyed, or explains the meaning of the command. To this I have not found an exception: for example, 'Cleanse the house, sweeping it.' 'Cleanse the garment, washing it,' shews the manner in which the command is to be obeyed, or explains the meaning of it"... "This rule has passed through a fiery trial. I have only been more fully convinced of its generality and value. There is no rule in the English syntax more general in its application. I would only add that the participle does not always express everything in the command; but it always points out something emphatically in the intention of the imperative, and without which the injunction cannot be suitably and fully performed."⁷ This is an imperative sentence, hence it carries the force of a command. The subject of the sentence is "you" (understood). The command is "be filled." The sense is: you be filled with the spirit. "Speaking," "singing," and "making melody" are participles which show how the imperative is to be obeyed. The participles expressed by the imperative are a part of the command:

hence, “singing” is a part of the command, “be filled as expressed by the passage.⁸

Next, Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” “The imperative in this verse is ‘let,’ with the subject ‘you’ understood—(‘you let’)—followed by the participles ‘teaching’ and ‘admonishing’ and ‘singing,’ which limit the subject of the imperative verb no ‘let.’”⁹ Contradicting those who charge that there is no command for singing in the New Testament are these two, powerful passages: Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-19. They go “unanswered” by the advocates of instrumental music in worship. To attempt to avoid the thrust of the Colossian and Ephesian passages regarding singing is nothing less than a failing effort to “strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel” (Matt. 23:24, ASV). Shades of twentieth-century Phariseeism!

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

The only ones known to this writer who deny that congregational singing is authorized in the New Testament are the ones who advocate instrumental music in the worship of God; and they apparently have been doing so for many years. However, their opposition to congregational singing has seemingly been rather obscure until more recent times. But regarding singing there are only two ways it can be done; either individually or collectively. Either one sings “solo” or accompanied by others. But why would one want to sing alone unless he is alone? If singing is authorized by the New Testament, and it is (shown above), and one is authorized to do it, why aren’t two? And if two, why not an entire congregation? But that we may leave nothing to the imagination, let’s see if the New Testament authorizes congregational singing.

It must be remembered that the church is commanded to assemble (Heb. 10:25), and the only way this point can be denied is to deny that Hebrews 10:25 is a command. Next, this command applied to all New Testament congregations. Next, both First and Second Corinthians were written to “the church of God which is at Corinth” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1). “The church at Corinth, consisting of

those who were a sanctified” and “called to be saints,” was in the habit of “gathering together” (1 Cor. 5:4) or “coming together” (11:17-20; 14:23-26; 16:2). And it is a matter of fact that in the assemblies of the Corinthian church a number of things were done including the singing of psalms. “What is it then? 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” (14:15). Where were the psalms sung In the church!

Next, both the Ephesian and Colossian Epistles were written to the respective churches. The former consisted of the saints at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus (1:1); the latter consisted of the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse (1:2). Did these churches ever, “Meet or come together”? If not, how would they have followed apostolic instruction to lay by in store or eat the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week? But what else did they do? Ephesians 5:19 says they were to “sing and make melody in their hearts.” Colossians 3:16 says they were to “sing with grace in their hearts to the Lord.” When did they do this? When the congregations were dispersed and every saint had gone to his own house? Ridiculous! They sang when they were together in worship. And no man can prove otherwise. Added to this is the fact that “speaking one to another” and “admonishing one another” are reciprocal and demand an assembly. “Each other” in both passages translates a pronoun (eautois) which is reflexive in nature, hence requiring “a response.” In order for the Colossians and the Ephesians to carry out Paul’s instructions concerning these matters, the saints in these respective places would have to assemble together. M. C. Kurfees states:

This clearly and definitely presents one of the divine purposes of the music appointed for Christian worship. It is to be music that instructs, music which communicates ideas from one to another, and which admonishes those engaged in it to right living. Nothing must interfere with this divine purpose. Any music which fails at this point and to whatever extent it thus fails, is not pleasing to God, not being embraced within, not plainly excluded from, the scope of the divine command.¹⁰

William Barclay adds:

It is interesting here to see that from the beginning the Church was a singing Church. The Church inherited that from the Jews, for Philo tells us that often the Jews would spend the whole night in hymns and songs. One of the first descriptions of a Church service which we possess is that of Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia, who sent a report of the activities of the Christians to Trajan the Roman Emperor. In that report he said, "They meet at dawn to sing a hymn to Christ as God." The gratitude of the Church has always gone up to God in Christian praise and Christian song.¹¹

Next, Hebrews 2:12 says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise." This is a quotation from Psalm 22:22, and refers to Christ. It affirms an action on his part in the midst of his brethren, no doubt in the synagogue. As others have observed Jesus frequented the synagogues. He preached in them. Why then is it difficult to understand that he obviously sang with his brethren in them also? "This, therefore, proves what the apostle intended—that the Messiah was among them as his brethren; that he spoke to them as such; and that he mingled in their devotions as one of their number."¹²

Last, Hebrews 13:15, "Through him then let us offer up sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name." The two questions to be asked concerning this passage are: (1) by whom were the instructions of this passage carried out? and (2) when? The most reasonable answer is: they were carried out by the recipients of the Hebrews epistle wherever and whenever they assembled (cf. 10:25). There is no valid reason for thinking otherwise. Lyman Coleman says:

The prevailing mode of singing during the first three centuries was congregational. The whole congregation united their voices in the sacred song of praise, in strains suited to their ability. Their music, if such it could be called, was, of a kind of recitative or chant. The charm of their sacred music was not in the harmony of sweet sounds, but in the melody of the heart...But, however this may be, the most ancient and most common mode of singing was confessedly for the whole assembly; men, women and children blend their voices in their songs of praise in the great congregation. Such is the testimony of Hilary, of Augustin and Chrysostom. "Formerly all came together and united in their songs, as is still our custom." "Men and women, the aged and the young, were distinguished only by their skill in singing, for the spirit

which led the voice of each one blended all in one harmonious melody.”¹³

THE CASE AGAINST INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP

What is the apparent reason for denying that the New Testament authorizes congregational singing? Those who do so do not deny that the early church assembled (Heb. 10:25); that it had the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7); that it had preaching (Acts 20:7); or that it took up a collection (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:2); but that it sang “as a corporate body” (congregationally) is emphatically denied. Why? The reason seems to be the desire to retain the mechanical instrument in worship. The argument runs like this: even though the New Testament does not authorize congregational singing (a contention lacking in proof) it is still acceptable. So even if instrumental music is unauthorized it is also acceptable. The only problem is that the argument is false. Instrumental music is not authorized in the New Testament, but congregational singing is (previously shown). Gospel preachers have debated this issue many times, and in many cases circles have been drawn on the blackboard and the instrument advocates have been asked (challenged) to put the passage of scripture that authorizes instrumental music in worship inside the circle; to this very day, all the circles have gone empty. Why? Because no such scripture exists. Moses E. Lard says:

Now in the light of the foregoing principles what defense can be urged for the introduction into some of our congregations of instrumental music? The answer which thunders into my ear from every page of the New Testament is, none. Did Christ ever appoint it? did the apostles ever sanction it? or did any one of the primitive churches ever use it? Never. In what light then must we view him who attempts to introduce it into the churches of Christ of the present day? I answer, as an insulter of the authority of Christ, and as a defiant and impious innovator on the simplicity and purity of the ancient worship.¹⁴

WHAT ABOUT HAND CLAPPING, HUMMING, CHOIRS, VOCAL BANDS AND OTHER SPECIAL EFFECTS?

Regarding the above-mentioned things my first question is, why? Why such things should be included in a worship service of the Lord’s church is a question of no little importance, one that is being

pondered by concerned brethren all over the country. The “why” of such things indicates to many brethren the introduction of “special effects” calculated to enhance worship. The entertainment world (movies, concerts, comedy) puts a great deal of emphasis on special effects, and some of the Lord’s people are beginning to do the same thing. Some how the feeling that worship must be entertaining has gotten into the minds of good people. Some have found themselves “going to church more, but enjoying it less”; so efforts are being put forth to add the “missing thing,” not only in worship but in everyday life. Pentecostalism here we come!

Choirs and choral groups. Many years ago in a congregation of the church in Northern California, at a singing service, one of the congregations in the area was represented by a choral group. They approached the front of the auditorium with long, black, flowing robes, members began “humming” while the leader fell to his knees, clasped his hands, lifted his eyes toward the ceiling and began “moaning” and “wailing.” He became so emotional that his eyes “rolled up in his head.” It was quite a spectacle. Fortunately, the hosting congregation had the good judgment not to tolerate such a “dramatic presentation.” In fact, all group singing was discontinued. What was the motivation behind such a performance? Nothing but the addition of “special effects” designed to play on the emotions of the audience. Since when do we need such things to “enhance” worship? Such artistic displays only appeal to the sensual part of us, but brethren, choirs do not provide for reciprocation. How can we afford to let someone else do our singing for us? Can we really afford to fall for such maneuvers?

Humming. Vocal bands. Hand clapping. What is wrong with humming. Well, for one thing it is not singing. Singing and humming are two different acts. The former is authorized (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), the latter is not. Singing consists of words that are spoken in order that those who are participating may be “taught” and “admonished.” Humming cannot fulfill this obligation. What will be next? Once the door is opened, all sorts of “deviations” and “variations” will become grievous problems for which there will be no easy solution. Vocal bands are unnecessary sounds added to the worship

service for effect. But if the advocates of such “additions” do not really believe in instrumental music in worship, and they say they do not, why try to get as close to the sound of an instrument as possible? People will be listening more to the “vocal sounds” rather than concentrating on what is being said. Brethren, it doesn’t make sense! A vocal band has about as much relation to New Testament worship as the North Pole does to a goose nest. Some of us still haven’t learned not to go beyond the things that are written (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6). Again, it comes back to what the word actually authorizes and our attitude toward it. The precedent for instruction from the written word is given by Jesus himself: “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31). As for the clapping of the hands in worship, it offers absolutely nothing conducive to worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24). There is nothing more powerful, more convincing than congregational singing that is designed to motivate the Christian and persuade the sinner. Are we trying to please men or God? This is the most important question.

ENDNOTES

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³J. W. Shepherd, *The Church, The Failing Away, and The Restoration*, Gospel Advocate, Nashville, 1961, p. 115.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁵Homer Hailey, *Attitudes and Consequences*, Old Path & Book Club, Rosemead, 1952, p. 52.

⁶Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Vol 1, Gospel Advocate, Nashville, 1956, p. 237.

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¹¹William Barclay, *The Letters To The Philippians, Colossians, And Thessalonians*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1959, p. 191.

¹²Albert Barnes, *Barnes On the New Testament, Hebrews*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1955, p. 68.

¹³Lyman Coleman, *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, pp. 329-330, quoted in J. W. Shepherd, *Church, Falling Away And Restoration*, Gospel Advocate, Nashville, 1961, p. 41.

¹⁴Moses E. Lard, *Lard's Quarterly*, Vol. 1, Old Paths Book Club, Rosemead, 1952, p. 331.

GIVING AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

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The question of our lectureship, “What Does God Authorize In Worship?” should prerequisite any other in the hearts and minds of sincere Christians who are desirous of pleasing God. For an acceptance of God’s divine authority, including in our worship, or a rejection of it will ultimately determine that man’s eternal fate. Thus we begin our discussion of what God authorizes in worship and specifically in the area of giving and the Christian worship.

INTRODUCTION

Any such discussion pertinent to New Testament giving naturally begins with Paul’s treatise of 1 Corinthians 16. Here, in relative simplicity, Paul divulges God’s perfect plan for giving and the Christian worship. Very plainly Paul says,

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

From this inspired text we notice several major premises concerning giving. (1) It is an individual matter. (2) It is to be done once a week. (3) It is to be a purposed amount. (4) It is to be relative to the individual’s personal prosperity. (5) Our giving must be for a

definite purpose. (6) This is God's will. After a consideration of these points we conclude that man, even with all his computerized wizardry, could never devise a more perfect plan either in simplicity or results.

As we consider this plan through the apostle Paul we first must notice several word usages. For instance, Paul's usage of the word "order." This word comes from the Greek word which signifies, according to Vine, that which has been arranged in order. As an officer gives orders to his troops so does God, through Paul, give orders to the church concerning the collection of funds for the furtherance of his cause. However, we also must realize that these orders carry duality of purpose. Not only is this giving needed to support the poor in their position but it is also needed as a portion of the overall plan for securing God's salvation. In regard to this, Paul would later write, "I speak not by commandment but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove I the sincerity of your love" (2 Cor. 8:8). Paul pictures Christian giving, not only as our obligation to God's command, but also as a display of sincere Christian love. Paul's "order" concerning our giving must be recognized as a duty inscribed on the hearts of Christians and those who cry "It is not the action but the spirit of the action" have not opened their hearts to the totality of God's revelation on this matter. To fear God and keep his commandments remains the conclusion of the matter regarding our giving or any other aspect of Christian response. Regardless of the good that comes from our giving, the caring for the poor, the sending of missionaries, or any other good and acceptable thing, regardless of that, the overriding theme of acceptable giving is to please the Father and fulfill his command. This is the order that Paul portrays and the order that all Christians must heed and consider.

But still, as we begin this discussion and as we attempt to seek insight into acceptable giving we also need to consider incorrect approaches to this obligation. One incorrect attitude could be easily illustrated by considering a child who is extra sweet to his parents just before his birthday or Christmas. His reasoning is most obvious. He feels that in some way his sweetness will obligate his parents to

more or nicer gifts when the occasion of giving presents itself. Some must feel that their contribution, in some way, obligates God to render them special blessings even to the extent of salvation but man can never bribe the favors of the Almighty. It is not just the gift but also the attitude of giving that defines God's abundant mercy. As Paul would also say, "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7) which applies equally to soul and spirit. Also, there is the incorrect attitude of the "manpleasers" as demonstrated in the arrogance of the First Century Pharisees. Their duty was not seen toward God but rather seen as an opportunity to call attention to themselves. Still others incorrectly give out of passing emotions or as an appeasement for a guilty conscience. In some way they must feel that this alone will rectify any problem that they might have in the eyes of the Lord. Furthermore, in recent times we have seen elders and preachers encouraging "painless giving" because of the government's generous allowances on bur income taxes; however, any reason for giving other than those outlined in scripture are anti-scriptural in purpose and design. Again we must consider the question of our lectureship, "What does God authorize in worship?"

Acceptable Christian giving must be seen as an acceptance of and compliance with God's plan and command. This must not only be the prevailing reason for our giving but also the only reason. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). Ever so simply he stated, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15), and "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). Duty and obligation to the will of the Father, love and concern for the needs of his will, these are the primary and all-inclusive reasons for Christian giving. What more could we desire than to demonstrate our love for Christ and to be called his friend by our simple obedience to his command? You know, for years we laughed and joked about the denominational view of raising money with their bingo games, religious taxation, paid socials, dinners and dances but in the last several years we have seen many of our own brethren jumping on this absurd "gimmick"

bandwagon with their own brand of “Church Bazaars,” “Church Garage Sales,” etc. Begging for sellable merchandise and pushing peanuts with our noses to raise money is not now and has never been God’s design for the support of his kingdom. Also, the over-emotional appeals, as we see in the side shows of the Tel-evangelists, has no place in the Lord’s church either. Christ is not a beggar on our doorstep but rather Lord of all lords and King of all kings. Christians must never stoop to such gimmickry and carnival-type dupery in our giving. Not only is it ludicrous in the sight of men but it is in direct opposition to the commands of God.

As in all other areas and aspects of Christianity, God’s way is not only the best way, it is the only way to please him and all the promotional and emotional slight of hands in man’s bag of tricks cannot produce the results desired in acceptable Christian giving. Brethren, we alone have the responsibility as well as the privilege of financially supporting the physical aspects of the Lord’s work. Denominationalists, heathens, nor anyone else has been commissioned to this, lofty purpose. Just as Christ is the perfect Savior, his salvation the perfect offer, his bride the perfect association, his word the perfect guide, his design for the financial gathering for the physical aspects of the work is perfect in all it entails. As we have often heard, his design is universal in application, his plan is workable and complete, it pays the highest dividends, and involves the least amount of risk.

“UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK”

Everything a Christian needs to know about acceptable giving is found in Paul’s words of long ago. From correct attitude to correct time and everything in between is adequately covered. Concerning time Paul says, “Upon the first day of the week” (1 Cor. 16:2). The implication and indication of Paul’s message is too simple to be misunderstood. Our giving, according to inspiration, must be regular, punctual, and periodic. How regrettable that closer attention was not made to the ancient manuscripts as they translated “upon the first day of the week.” Without question it should be rendered with the prefacing word “every” which corresponds with the Greek word “kata” which is found in the foundational phrase. Thus the com-

mandment to give indicates every first day of the week. This, in God's wisdom, would remove much of the possibilities toward covetousness by requiring periodic rather than spasmodic giving. "Upon the first day of the week" that is the day our Lord arose from the tomb, the day the church came into being, the day saints are to gather together to partake of the Lord's Supper, and is also the day that each Christian who earns a living faces the obligation to contribute to the Lord's work. He should give to the congregation where his local membership rests considering that this is one of the hinges upon which local autonomy rests and also that this local giving links the giver with the divine truth concerning a Christian's submission to local elders (Acts 20:7; Heb. 13:17). With the Bible as our guide and expediency as a purpose each Christian will see that his offering makes its way to the congregation's treasury as God commands. Thereby the financial needs of the congregation can be met and the work of the Lord's church can move ever onward. However, offerings other than those a Christian has purposed in his heart (2 Cor. 9:7) toward the local work can and should be made to other Christian-oriented and scriptural works. As opportunity arises to financially assist other needed efforts let us feel that obligation as well using Galatians 6:10 as our guide to faith and practice.

"LET EVERY ONE OF YOU"

As in every family, members of the Lord's family must shoulder their own responsibilities toward God's commands. Each one who works for wages must realize and accept their charge before the Father. Here is where attitude begins to play an intricate part in acceptable giving. Remembering that we "all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10) shows that the privilege of giving is also an individual obligation. Making accusations of others and pointing suspicious fingers does not remove the Christian's requirements before the Father. My opinion is that each family member should share in the privilege of giving. When we consider that giving is an act of our worshipping God then should not all who desire to worship also contribute? Liberality, we realize, is a learned trait and unless parents teach in word and prove in action it might be a hard lesson. for some to accept. If we demonstrate to our

children that giving “little” or giving “nothing” is common with us and acceptable in our eyes then this will serve as the guideline our children might carry forever. As the poet so aptly wrote, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day” could not have captured the essence of Christian giving any clearer. To see a father pay \$50 or \$100 for an evening of family entertainment and then sheepishly slip \$5 into the collection tray shows a child a living “proof-text” that he will never forget. Or when they see the family contribution wane because some new item of pleasure has found its way into the family budget they will recognize that giving might be important but frills and “things” are often more important. Again we see that attitude in giving is an essential to acceptable giving.

“IN STORE”

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse” (Mal. 3:10). This statement from the Old Testament penman displays the fact that God has always required a place be designated for the gathering of his goods. We also know that the Jews of Jesus’ day recognized this fact and they also had a treasury because on one occasion Jesus used this as his forum (John 8:20). It is natural, therefore, for us to continue this practice in the Christian dispensation. Brother J. W. McGarvey commented thusly,

“In store” literally means “into the treasury” and the phrase “by him” may be taken as the neuter reflexive pronoun, and may be rendered with equal correctness “by itself.” If each man had laid by in his own house, all these scattered collections would have had to be gathered after Paul’s arrival, which was the very thing he forbade.

The point that God through Paul is trying to make is that our offerings must be easily accessible for its needed purpose. The example of the Jerusalem offering shows a place of accessibility as “at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:35). The gift the brethren in Philippi sent to aid Paul in his need was sent by the congregation. A diligent study of the text of Philippians proves this is the case and this gathering for the poor saints in Jerusalem that Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 8 was also done through the local congregation. All of these offerings were gathered in one place and sent together to address a special need. This single gathering will also add order and effectiveness to the work. A group working effectively together will

always function on a larger and more periodic way than individuals working on their own. Again, however, as we have previously mentioned this congregational “in store” should not keep the individual Christian from seeking more opportunities to financially assist a worthwhile effort. A Christian’s first obligation in his giving is to the local treasury and his supplemental giving is a special virtue. A congregation has specific financial requirements that must be met by the members of that congregation, therefore, a central gathering point needs to be implemented. Remember also, our giving is not to the treasury but to Christ. But Christ’s storehouse remains today the local treasury. Our offerings go to Christ but they need to go through the collection tray. In this way the individual can meet his obligation to the Father as well as the congregation can meet her obligation toward the physical needs of the work.

AS GOD HATH PROSPERED HIM

Prior to any acceptable giving one must come to the realization that God truly is the giver of every “good and every perfect gift” (Jas. 1:17). Without this realization the worshipping of God in our giving is hollow and meaningless. “Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17) is the bottom line of our thoughts and intents. As one author idealized, “Without God’s wonderful blessings we would be nothing, having nothing, and thereby do nothing.”

Our submissiveness to his commands, in this case regarding our giving, acknowledges our total dependence on his divine intervention. Our prosperity, to whatever degree we attain, remains totally at his pleasure. With this as our attitude we can fully relate and understand Moses’ bold proclamation of Deuteronomy 15:10 when he said, “Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thine hand unto.” So greatly he has prospered us. Above all nations on the earth he has prospered us. Yet, how sad to see the lacking of gratitude as reflected many times in our giving. What we have, what we spend, what we store away is still from God’s benevolent hand and as the Psalmist so beautifully said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” (Psa. 103:2).

Another point that needs to be made under this heading takes its thrust from 2 Corinthians 9:7 where Paul shows the beginning point of Christian giving is in the heart. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give." Acceptable giving requires adequate planning and adequate planning will culminate in a definite sum. God's plans is requisite of thought, prayer, consideration, and contemplation. Our heart-purposing brings us to a certain amount which we freely return to the Lord's usage. Giving must be purposed and not impulsive. God offered us his very best (John 3:16) and will not be satisfied with our financial crumbs and leftovers. Impulsive giving violates both the spirit and the letter of God's law. The congregation in Corinth planned and gathered their giving a year in advance and because of this insight he commended them to all.

Christian giving must be carefully planned and prayerfully offered on the basis of personal income. The congregation's median salary nor any other criteria should enter into thought but his earnings only. "As God hath prospered him" is the only credible evidence needed in determining giving. All service to God is more effective if effectively planned and this is the foundation of this phrase. Our giving is to come out of our budget first rather than "if there is any left."

But what about the final amount? I suppose there have been more questions raised over the final total than in all other areas of giving together because the law of Christ does not include a figure or percentage to use. We know that the Jews used, by law, the tithe as their means of calculation but tithing did not make its way into the New Testament structure. We know the scribes and Pharisees tithed and Jesus said our righteousness must "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. 5:20) which is strong indication that the tithe (10%) is simply a starting point for Christians in all aspects of righteousness. Our total is based, not on a calculated tithe, but on sincere adoration and devotion to the Father, his Son, and the work of the church. Because of this we are to contribute weekly and not "weakly." "As God hath prospered him." This word "prospered" relates to any and all income whether that be salary, sales, divi-

dends, interest, etc. It applies to the gross and not the adjustment as some would have us believe. As always, as, Solomon said, we must “Honour the Lord with thy substance” (Prov. 3:9).

Tithing of the Old Law failed to reach one component that God desires in our giving and that is faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6) which holds true regardless of the act or intent of worship.

CONCLUSION

It is never enough to simply do God’s will. An in all other areas of service and worship we must have the right attitude and aptitude to reach the right altitude. As in all our worship our giving must be done “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Just as we must pray in the correct manner and attitude, sing, teach, etc., we also must give in the correct manner and attitude. Our giving must be graciously given rather than grudgingly, it likewise must be willingly done and not by necessity, and also with the spirit of exhortation rather than in the spirit of despondency. Cheerful out of a willing giving mind sets Christian giving apart from taxation or tithe binding. The giving of the First Century is characterized with eager anticipation as exemplified in the Macedonians. They enjoyed the privilege of giving back a portion of the Lord’s abundance.

What does God authorize in our giving? This question, as now seen, does prerequisite any other in our desire to please and be found pleasing to the Father. In giving, it is our acceptance and compliance to his will that distinguishes us in his sight. Not that we might give more than someone else but that we give with the correct attitude and in the correct manner as set forth by him. Faithfulness to this pattern brings joy unspeakable, blessings innumerable, and a position of honor around the throne of God. We miss his point if we see it any other way.

Back to Malachi for our concluding scripture. “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 3:10). But notice now his concluding promise, “If I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Our offerings to God on the first day of the week, required of every member who desires to worship God, must be seen as a privilege and an obligation before the Father. It needs to be placed “in store” and come from the prosperity that we have. It must not be viewed as insurance for a rainy day but rather an earnest of good things to come. But does our giving come from “living sacrifices” (Rom. 12:1) who truly desire to hear him say “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”? Remember, we must do well in order to be well done.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Joe Gilmore



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We are discussing one of the acts of the public worship of the Lord's supper. The Lord's supper is strictly a New Testament institution and should not be confused with any of the Old Testament altars or services. No one ever thought of the Lord's supper until Jesus spoke of it. "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:26-28). Jesus selected the Lord's supper as a monument. He tenderly requested his disciples, "this do in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24).

The institution of the Lord's supper is one of the most significant institutions connected with the Christian religion. It was instituted by Jesus prior to his crucifixion. It is not a physical feast (1 Cor. 11:20-30). It is a spiritual communion with Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). The Bible calls this memorial feast: "the Lord's supper" (1 Cor. 11:20); "the Lord's table" (1 Cor. 10:21); "communion" (1 Cor. 10:16); and "the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16). The titles "sacrament" and "mass" do not appear in the

Bible. Preachers who speak as the "oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11) do not use these titles.

What does the Lord's supper mean to you? Do you have proper concern for this requirement of the Lord? When we assemble around the Lord's table, we should look upward in gratitude, backward in memory of the suffering Savior, outward in declaring to the world the Savior's dying love, forward in anticipation, and inward in self-inspection.

TWO MEMORIAL INSTITUTIONS

We read in the Bible of two memorial institutions. One is called "Passover" (Exo. 12:14) and the other is called "Lord's supper" (1 Cor. 11:20). Both memorials were instituted before the events became facts. The story of the passover is recorded in Exodus 13:8,9. "And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt." Beginning with the time of the delivery of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, the Passover supper was observed by the Jews, in memory of the terrible night when death passed over their homes in Egypt, but claimed the life of the first born in each Egyptian family. In the evening when Christ last met with his disciples at the Passover supper, he instituted a new memorial (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). This new memorial is to be observed in memory of him who is our Passover Lamb. The Lord's supper had its beginning the night Jesus was betrayed. It began before Christ established his church.

The Passover supper originated in Egypt the night the Israelites were to march from bondage to freedom. The Lord's supper originated the night Jesus was betrayed to die to free men from the bondage of sin. The second time the Passover supper was observed, it was in the wilderness. It was a memorial supper. The second time the Lord's supper was observed, it was in the kingdom in memory of Christ who died for us. The Passover supper was observed annually through the Jewish age. It ended at the cross of Christ. The

Lord's supper is observed weekly, on the first day of the week until the Lord makes his second advent to our world. This will be at the end of time.

This memorial feast is a lasting monument. It was given over 1900 years ago and it still stands. What other monument has so stood the test of time? Men have built monuments of stone, steel and bronze, but many of them have rusted and crumbled; while the simple monument of the Lord's supper remains as much today as when it was first instituted by our Savior in Jerusalem. The Bible says, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). Hence as long as the seasons continue, the grain will grow from which we make the unleavened bread and the vine will produce its fruit. So as long as this earth will stand we shall continue to have the emblems used in the Lord's supper. Therefore each Lord's day when Christians meet for the observance of the Lord's supper, there is the "unveiling" of the most appropriate and precious monument that has ever been viewed by man.

The Lord's supper increases our love for Jesus. The picture of our fathers and mothers in our homes refreshes our hearts with their blessed memory each day of our lives. Likewise it when we eat of the bread and drink of the cup of the Lord our love for him abounds more and more.

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS DIFFERENT FROM A COMMON MEAL

What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?" (1 Cor. 11:22). There are some things that can be practiced by Christians in their homes that may not be acceptable in worship services. For something to be a vital part of Christian worship it must be expressly taught in the New Testament. Instrumental music may be permitted in the home, but it is not acceptable in the worship of the Lord. What we have in our homes must be morally right but in the church it must be scripturally right. The Lord's supper, like vocal music, is an act of religious devotion that is different from that which may be had in ordinary daily activities in the home.

THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The purpose of this holy communion is threefold: First, it is a memorial service Jesus, in instituting this memorial feast, said, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19), it is a memorial institution of the life of Christ, with special emphasis on his death; it includes the whole of the Christian scheme of redemption, even to the coming of Christ. The Lord's supper is to Christ what a monument in a cemetery to the life of the body therein buried. It is a memorial institution that proclaims the Lord's death till he comes. Second, it is a means of spiritual nourishment. Jesus said; "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink hid blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). In this statement, Jesus had in mind more than the Lord's supper, but the Lord's supper was certainly included. Third, the Lord's supper is a proclamation. Not every Christian can be a public preacher. Yet every Christian can preach a sermon the act of observing the Lord's supper.

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS A PROCLAMATION

"Ye do shew (proclaim) the Lord's death" (1 Cor. 11:26). The Lord's supper is primarily a memorial or remembrance of the Saviour's death. Christ, on the eve before his death, made sure that his disciples would have a memento by which to remember him. It is precious to the Christian. It is a *remembrance* of the *past*. Nations commemorate events of national importance by expressive symbolism. America has her Independence Day and Decoration Day. Other nations have national holidays peculiar to their national history. Medals are awarded to celebrate heroism. Statues are found on the mounds of world-famed battlefields. Pageants and festivity transmit from one generation to another the memory of notable days and noble deeds. Both God and man long to be remembered. Jesus in instituting the Lord's supper gave a lasting memorial by which he is to be remembered each first day of the week by his disciples. What are we to remember in this feast? It is "the Lord's death." Yet there is much more involved than to merely announce our belief that Jesus died on a cross 1900 years ago. This a sinful or wicked man might do. We should proclaim that Jesus died "for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). Upon this fact rests our hope for the remission of sins. Jesus

announced to his disciples, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).

The Lord’s supper is a feast to proclaim a *recognition* of the *PRESENT*. “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup” (1 Cor. 11:26). This passage suggests three things: First, the first advent of our Lord in the days of his humiliation. Second, the coming advent of our Lord in glory. Third, between these two advents there is a distinctive ceremony in commemoration of both. “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,” that is present; “Ye proclaim the Lord’s death,” that is past; “Till he come,” that is future. Hence Christ was present in the days of his historical life under conditions of bodily humiliation. He will be present after his second coming under conditions of glorification, but between the two, Jesus is present with his people in a spiritual manner, in the memorial service. “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup.” How often? Who shall decide? If we are to be governed by the opinions of men we will never decide. The early church came together upon the first day of the week to celebrate this memorial feast. “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7). Here Luke, the inspired historian declares that the church at Troas came together “to break bread.” The church did not come together to hear Paul preach. The Corinthians were taught to contribute of their means upon this day (1 Cor. 16:2).

The expression “Till he come” (1 Cor. 11:26) signifies that the Lord’s supper was not intended to be a thing for one generation only. It is to be a precious and hallowed memorial until the end of time. One generation after another will perish from the face of the earth, customs, manners and languages may change, but this precious feast shall continue until the Lord comes again. Here is a *regard* for the *future*. The observance of the Lord’s supper not only proclaims the—gospel of the Lord’s death, but also the great gospel of the second coming of Christ. This is the center of the Christian’s hope. What is the motive that prompts one to put flowers upon a grave? It is to keep memory green. Why would one want to keep

memory green? It is because you are loo forward as well as backward. We are convinced that days are ahead. We are expecting a reunion. Hence observance of the Lord's supper confirms our faith in the certainty of Christ's coming again. We proclaim to the world our faith in his words when he said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2,3).

In the Lord's supper Jesus has left us a picture of his sufferings. Just follow him through Gethsemane, his betrayal, his arrest, his five trials, and his crucifixion. It was his dying request that we do this "in remembrance" of him (Luke 22:19). Would you think of neglecting it?

THE ELEMENTS THAT CONSTITUTE THE LORDS SUPPER

The elements are two in number. The unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine are perishable materials. In all the history of man we never find the erection of a memorial for any purpose out of such perishable materials. Endurable materials are selected by men for monuments. But God selected weak and perishable things when it came to erecting a monument for his Son. This shows the Divine Mind. There is no place where man can live that he cannot possess the material from which unleavened bread is made, and the fruit of the vine. Hence, the grain grows and so does the vine wherever man lives. The elements of the Lord's supper can be found everywhere.

Will any kind of bread be acceptable to use on the Lord's table? Will a slice of potato bread do, or a corn cake be acceptable? All kinds of bread are in two classifications leavened and unleavened. God selected unleavened bread for the Lord's table. Unleavened bread was used when the Lord said, "Take, eat; this is my body" (Matt. 26:26). Unleavened bread was the only kind of bread used in the Passover feast. The feast of the Passover is spoken of in the Bible as "The day of unleavened bread" (Luke 22:7). The feast of the Passover is called the "feast of unleavened bread" (Luke 22:1). Jesus kept the law. He even fulfilled it. He used only unleavened bread. Unleavened bread was used in this feast as is stated many

times in the Bible (Ex. 13:6,7; Ex. 12:15-21). Jesus sent his disciples to prepare for the Passover, and since no bread but unleavened could be used during the Passover it is certain that the bread on the Lord's table was unleavened bread.

When Bible writers speak of the drink in the Lord's supper they refer to the "fruit of the vine" (Matt. 26:29), "the pure blood of the grape" (Deut. 32:14).

THE FREQUENCY IN OBSERVING THIS SUPPER

There are those who remind us that the disciples are not said to have observed the Lord's supper every first day of the week. Just here we would like to raise a few questions regarding this matter. In Acts 20:7, we learn that the purpose of the meeting of the disciples on the first day of the week was to break bread, or observe the Lord's supper. From 1 Corinthians 16:2, we learn that they met on the first day of every week. Since the disciples met on the first day of every week, and the purpose of these first day of the week meetings was the observance of the Lord's supper, are we not safe in concluding that they ate the Lord's supper on the first day of every week? May we not reasonably infer that they did that for which they met, each time they met? Since it was the practice of the early church to eat the Lord's supper on the first day of the week, on the first day of which week did they do so, if not on the first day of each week? Under the law of Moses, the Jews were commanded to "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). The command did not say, "every sabbath day" but every one understood that such was its meaning except one man. This man soon found out that God meant every sabbath (Num. 15:32-36).

The language, "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them" (Acts 20:7) clearly indicated that the meeting on the first day of the week was a regular practice, while Paul's preaching to them was incidental. In a parallel sentence, we might say, "On the 4th day of July, when the American people meet to celebrate their independence, the President made a speech." From this language one would at once conclude that it is the practice of the American people to assemble on the 4th day of each July to celebrate their independ-

ence. From the language, "Upon the first day of the" week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Pa preached unto them," we conclude that it was the practice the disciples to meet for that purpose on the first day of each week. The early Christians followed the directions of men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They wanted to please the Lord.

All of the early church Historians who deal with the question of when to partake tell us that the early church observed the Lord's supper on the first day of each week. The departure from this practice was but one of the steps in the apostasy predicted by the New Testament writers.

Over 1900 years ago our Lord went away to prepare a place for us. Before going away he gave us the bread and the cup as a picture of his blood and body which were given for us. We cannot look upon this picture without recalling the great sacrifice he made for us before going away. We look forward to his coming again. For more than three centuries after he went away the church observed the supper in memory of every Lord's day. The picture was kept constantly before them. But after a few years had passed the bride grew careless, and became unfaithful. By and by the emblems of Christ's body and blood were set forth only on rare occasions. We should not wonder then that the love of many has waxed cold.

WHO MAY PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S SUPPERT

The Lord has placed his table in his kingdom. The Lord said to his apostles, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:29,30). One cannot enter that kingdom except through the new birth. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Only those who have entered the kingdom through the new birth have a right to the table of the Lord that is in his kingdom. The Lord has done his own restricting. Only heavenly subjects can partake of it. The new birth consists of the terms of the Great Commission, namely: faith, repentance, and baptism in the name of Christ for the remission of sins. Only people who have obeyed the gospel have a right to partake of the communion. All others are excluded from

partaking. However, the Lord has not made us guards over the supper. We are to be grateful communicants.

We see that there is no problem in learning to whom this supper was given. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the *disciples*, and said: take eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to *them*, saying: Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:26-28). There are three kinds of disciples mentioned in the New Testament, the disciples of Moses; the disciples of John and the disciples of Jesus. The disciples of the Lord were the ones to whom the Lord’s supper was given. The disciples of denominationalism are not eligible to commune with Christ.

The members of the church of God in Corinth were given the Lord’s supper (1 Cor. 11:23). They were sanctified, called to be saints, they purified their souls by obeying the truth (1 Pet. 1:23-25). All who call upon the name of the Lord in every place are the ones that have the privilege of communing with Christ Jesus. These Corinthians had been begotten by the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15); they were new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17); they were washed, sanctified and justified (1 Cor. 6:9-11); they belonged to God (1 Cor. 3:23); they were people that heard, believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8); they knew Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:2).

HOW SHOULD WE PARTAKE?

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Cor. 11:27-29). The word “unworthily” is an adverb of manner. Paul is discussing the manner of partaking the Lord’s supper, and not the character of the one partaking it. Very often the idea is expressed that one must be worthy of the blood of Christ before he can partake the Lord’s supper. If this should be the case, one could never be worthy! But it is not individual worth that is considered. It is the manner of partaking. That manner must be

worthy! In partaking we must “discern the Lord’s body” (1 Cor. 11:29).

SOME ABUSES OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

There are those in the religious world who refer to the Lord’s supper as a sacrament. Sacrament is not a word employed by the Holy Spirit. It is not found in the Bible. Therefore, we cannot use it and speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11).

A few refer to the Lord’s supper today as being a love feast. We have no authority from the Lord to so speak of the communion. The Lord’s supper is a communion with Christ, not with each other. We must refuse to use the language of men in referring to the Lord’s supper.

The word “eucharist” cannot be applied to the Lord’s supper. The word is from the Greek and means a giving of thanks. Christians cannot use this word because the Lord’s supper is a memorial to the Lord and is not used in the Bible. The Holy Spirit uses the word “communion.” “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 10:16)? The word “communion” means partnership, fellowship. Those partaking of this feast are in fellowship with the Lord. This is a *communion* with Christ, not with Christians. It is not the design of the Lord’s supper to express or show communion with each other.

Some members contend for the use of only one container in observing the Lord’s supper. They cannot conceive of a normal person disputing the use of but one literal cup. “And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of [ex] it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of [ex] this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:27-29). Mark uses almost the same words (Mark 14:22,23). In both passages the preposition “of” is translated from the Greek “ex,” which, means “out of,” and not from “ek,” which means “of” They drank “out of” the cup. The container was a necessary incidental. A container is necessary when a liquid is used. What was it that represented his

blood? It was not the vessel, but was the “fruit of the vine.” The Lord used a figure of speech, metonymy, by which he uses “the cup” to mean the liquid in the cup. Gibbon, the historian, describes the demolishing of churches by the Emperor Diocletian, who began to reign in A.D. 284, in which they salvaged from the church at Cirta, Numidia, “six cups,” with other things used in the worship. This was less than two centuries from John’s death. This indicates a plurality of containers. The New Testament does not specify “one” container. Some brethren are so cautious about the external, they neglect the spiritual and higher meaning of worship.

Singing during the communion service is a new human tradition. The Lord’s supper is a memorial service, not a praise service. The early Christians practiced the same thing in every congregation. “For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17). The communion is distinct from the song service. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s supper the singing came after the observance of the same. There was no singing during the supper. “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives” (Matt. 26:30).

The Roman Catholic doctrine of “transubstantiation” is another abuse of the Lord’s supper. This doctrine is another departure from New Testament teaching. It takes a lot of superstition to accept this doctrine. No priest can make God out of a little flour and water. No man today can perform miracles such as would be necessary to change bread to the flesh of Christ and the fruit of the vine to the blood of Christ. The word “transubstantiation” comes from the Latin. “Trans” means over or across and “substantia” means substance. Catholics believe that in what they call the “mass” the bread is changed into the literal flesh of Jesus and the fruit of the vine is changed into the literal blood of Jesus. This position is wrong from many standpoints. Christ would have to be sacrificed anew every time the “mass” is observed. But the Bible shows Christ was offered just once on the cross (Heb. 9:12,26,27,28). Jesus is not now suffering as a sacrifice for sin. The Lord’s supper is a “memorial” of

that one sacrifice. It is not a reenactment of it. When the Lord's supper is observed Christ is remembered (1 Cor. 11:24,25)! If Jesus is eaten he cannot be remembered. The fruit of the vine is not changed into blood either. Eating of blood is strictly forbidden (Acts 15:29). If a priest could actually change the fruit of the vine into blood every one who drank it would be under a curse. We do not eat the body of the Lord, we discern it. When Jesus held the bread in his hands his disciples knew it was not the body literally, because he was with them when he made the statement. No miracle takes place in observing the Lord's supper. Every miracle of the New Testament is discernable to the senses. When Jesus turned water into wine at the Cana wedding feast taste, smell and sight attested it was wine. A chemical analysis would have declared it wine. When Lazarus was raised, he rejoined relatives and friends and was known by sight to them (John 11). The lame man knew he was healed. His friends recognized he was healed (Acts 3). In the Catholic "mass" does sight tell us that before us is actually the flesh of the body of Christ? Is it flesh to touch and to smell? Would a chemical test show it to be flesh? The idea suggested that this flesh and blood of our Lord enters our digestive tract as does any other food and a part of which becomes excretia is revolting! Any uneaten portion would see corruption. This is contrary to Bible teaching. "Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa. 16:10); "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27). When Jesus instituted the Lord's supper he "took *bread*, and blessed it, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take (this bread) eat; *this* is my body" (Matt. 26:27). Paul. says, "That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took *bread*: and when he had given thanks, he brake *it* and said, Take, eat: this (bread) is my body, which is broken for you...For as often as ye eat this *bread*, and drink this *cup*, ye do shew (proclaim) the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:24,26), "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this *bread*, and drink this *cup* of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27). It was *bread* when taken, *bread* when blessed, and *bread* when it was eaten. It was *not* changed into the actual flesh of

Jesus. Jesus did say “This is my body.” But this is figurative language. Notice this parallel language: “The seven good kine *are* seven years; and the seven good ears *are* seven years: the dream is one” (Gen. 41:26). Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s dream. Does this mean that seven cows are literally seven years? No, the seven cows pictured seven years. In the same way *bread* is the picture of the Lord’s body. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, “Thou art this head of gold” (Dan. 2:38). The head of gold represented the king. Paul says “That rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4). The rock was simply a picture of Christ. When Jesus said, “This is my blood,” the same style of speech was employed. It was not the literal blood of Jesus, but a representative (picture) of it. Jesus is called “The *express image* of his (Father’s) person (substance)” (Heb. 1:3). Can a person be the person of himself? Jesus was not his own Father, but an image or picture of his Father. The “fruit of the vine” is not the literal blood of Christ. It is a perfect picture of the blood of Christ.

CONCLUSION

The Lord’s table is the longest table in the world. To it come those of every land and tongue who have obeyed Christ. The Lord’s supper presents the Christian with the beautiful privilege of communing with the sufferings of Christ and proclaiming his faith in the Son of God. If he fails to commune, he fails to preach his “weekly sermon.”

Jesus died for the world, and the world’s greatest benefactor said, “do this in remembrance of me.” Let us go back to Christ and the simple observance of the *supper* as he instituted it!

PREACHING AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Alton Hayes



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Worship is generally misunderstood today. Numerous false teachings have arisen relative to worship. Some affirm, “Everything we do is worship.” If such is the case one may worship God by accident, while cutting his lawn, washing his car, etc. We deny this strongly! Others state, “Nothing is worship—one simply goes through the motions because God has commanded.” This too is foreign to the teaching of Holy Writ. We hear others say, “Today the church doesn’t need formalism and organization. Just let the preacher tell what is on his heart.” Why is it the church of the first century could avoid formalism yet enjoyed the preaching and teaching of God’s word? Another extreme has been reached where we are told, “Preaching is not a part of Christian worship.” In fact some will affirm, “There are not any ‘acts’ of worship.” Should this be true, our discussion of “Preaching And Christian Worship” will be an absolute waste of time. After all, if preaching has no place in our worship, it is of little benefit in a discussion along the line of worship.

As one may ascertain, we do not believe the thoughts set forth to be true with the scriptures. This writer continues to believe in the importance of preaching to those who are not yet Christians to

convert them, but also believes in the presentation of the inspired word to edify and uplift Christians in their worship of God. However, misunderstandings of the subjects of “Worship,” “Preaching,” and “Preaching And Christian Worship” demand a careful study.

It is with these thoughts in mind, along with a desire to know the truth of God’s word, we prayerfully and carefully look at “Preaching And Christian Worship.”

AUTHORIZATION OF WORSHIP

A general statement which will most assuredly hold true is, “If one is to please God he must comply to God’s authority.” To submit to God is to submit to the authority of his word. The command to follow God’s word is set forth throughout the pages of inspiration. God commanded Israel, “Ye shall not *add unto the word* which I command you, neither shall ye *diminish ought from it*, that ye may *keep the commandments of the Lord your God* which I commanded you” (Deut. 4:2, emphasis mine AH). Again Inspiration records, “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:6). As John recorded the final words of Revelation he wrote,

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

These three passages and many others warn of an attitude of heart which would cause one to reject the Divine word of God and accept the teachings of man. This comes in two avenues: (1) adding to the word of God, or (2) subtracting from the word of God. Yet, when it comes to the authority of the Bible, (in general), and the worship of God, (specifically), man has rejected the authority of God through the ages. Therefore we have additions and subtractions in God’s word and in his worship.

Perhaps the Bible is not accepted as authority because man does not realize the importance of following its teaching. Paul wrote of God’s word, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is *the power of God* unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the

Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16, emphasis mine, AH). Concerning the phrase “the power of God” in the Greek, Robinson has written, “This Paul knew by much experience. He had seen the dynamite of God at work.”¹ When we realize the authority and power of the dynamite of God we too shall handle it properly.

We must accept the authority of the scriptures because of their inspiration. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Of the word THEOPNEUSTOS translated “inspired” Vine wrote,

inspired by God (*Theos*, God, *pneo*, to breathe), is used in 2 Tim. 3:16, of the Scriptures as distinct from non inspired writings. Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale and the Great Bible have the rendering “inspired of God.”²

When we accept the Bible as “the God-breathed” word we, have no problem accepting it as authority in worship.

Again humanity must accept the Bible as authority because of the place in The Judgment these words hold. Christ said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: *the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him* in the last day” (John 12:48, emphasis mine AH). Not one of us would want to be judged by a traffic law we did not know existed, why then should we choose to be ignorant of the word by which the Judge of all the universe will judge our eternal destiny? Isn’t our eternal destiny more important than compliance with a law of man?

The account of Cain and Abel as they both strove to worship shows us the importance of following God’s word in worship. Genesis 4:1-5 states,

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

Should we take only the account of Moses in Genesis we would wonder why God had respect unto Abel and his offering and did not have respect for Cain and his offering. However, the Holy Spirit reveals for us in Hebrews, “*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh*” (Heb. 11:4, emphasis mine AH). Abel’s worship pleased God because of his faith, but from whence did this faith come? Again the Bible will answer, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Therefore, even though the word of God does not set forth in certain terms what God had instructed Cain and Abel in their worship we know they were told how to worship. Only then could it be by biblical faith. Abel because of his faithful obedience to God was righteous. Cain was not righteous because of his lack of faith that led to his unacceptable worship.

To a great extent, the problems which are witnessed today concerning worship are caused by those who will not allow the Bible to be the final authority. Agreement on and unity in worship will come only when we faithfully follow God’s word.

APPROPRIATENESS OF PREACHING

Under our last heading we noted the authority for doing things of a religious nature comes from God’s inspired word. With this thought in mind, let’s now turn to the matter of preaching. By thus doing we shall discover the answer to the question, “Does God authorize preaching in his word?”

Before Christ ascended back to heaven he gave the “marching orders” of the church—the Great Commission. Matthew recorded,

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

Mark’s account states,

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and in baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15-16).

The physician Luke wrote,

And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sine should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46,47).

Therefore, by these examples Christ gave his approval (yea, commanded), for his followers to preach.

Many great men are spoken of on the pages of inspiration as being preachers. The apostles were preachers. They carried out a portion of the Great Commission in Acts 2. Peter's sermon in that chapter is a masterpiece of what preaching should be. Oftentimes the importance of gospel preaching may be lost because of a failure to see the real purposes behind preaching. A simple examination of Peter's sermon in Acts 2 plainly portrays many purposes of preaching. The purposes of preaching from this sermon can be, listed in the following manner. (1) A purpose of preaching is to discuss and explain the scriptures. Approximately one-half of what Peter said was a quotation of scriptures. (2) A purpose of preaching is to disturb the listeners. The hearers on Pentecost "were pricked in their heart" (Acts 2:37). (3) Another purpose of preaching is to present Christ as man's only hope. Peter's preaching can best be described as "Christ-centered." Until man learns he has no hope without Christ the preaching of the gospel means nothing to him. (4) The next purpose we can note for preaching is to produce conviction. These "were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). One who honestly hears gospel preaching will have conviction in his life. (5) A purpose of preaching is to cause men to think and to ask questions. The preaching of the gospel is not to "brainwash" or "make robots" of anyone. These reasoned they had the sinless Son of God and were lost. The only question they could ask was, "...what shall we do?" (6) To cause men to receive the word of God is yet another purpose of preaching as set forth in Acts. Verse forty-one states. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized...."

(7) Another purpose for preaching is to lead men into the Lord's church. Those who heard and obeyed the gospel as the apostles preached were added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:41,47). One will only be a member of the Lord's church and nothing else when he is obedient to gospel preaching. (8) Men are told how to be saved when the gospel is preached. Peter told these, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). When the gospel is preached today and people submit to it the same purpose will be met. (9) A purpose of preaching is to produce unity among Christians. Luke records, "And all that believed were together..." (Acts 2:44). The cry for unity which we hear today will come only when the gospel is preached and accepted. (10) The next purpose of preaching we shall notice is to help Christians grow. These "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Growth will come only when Christians are firmly grounded in God's word (Heb. 5:12-14). (11) The final purpose we shall note for preaching is to produce unconditional surrender to the Lord. Verse forty-five tells us of these Christians, "And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." They were willing to give their all. When we hear God's word and submit to it we will surrender all we have to him.

There are many more great preachers spoken of in the Bible. Paul's preaching is noted at Troas for in Acts 20:7 it is stated, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, *Paul preached unto them*, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7, emphasis mine AH). Matthew recorded of John the Immerser, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:1-2). Luke wrote of the early Christians that "they were all scattered abroad" by persecution, but then he states, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:1,4). The Savior was a preacher (Matt. 4:17). Someone has well said, "God had only one son and he was a preacher." This is only a

partial listing of great men spoken of by inspiration as doing the work of a preacher.

As we think about the Bible setting forth the appropriateness of preaching we must realize the *type of preaching* which is appropriate. Nothing could be plainer from the scriptures. The word of God is to be preached. Paul pointed to the importance of preaching the gospel in the Roman epistle,

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and now shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? an it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (Rom. 10:12-15).

This same apostle also realized the necessity of living as properly as he preached; so, he said, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). A failure to properly preach will, cause one to be accursed, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). In Paul’s writings to Timothy we have an older preacher writing to a younger preacher. Part of the important (yea, inspired), advice given by Paul was,

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

By the preaching of God’s holy word the elder preacher said, “...for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16). So-called preaching which omits the word of God cannot save. It is terribly important for the preacher and hearer that the inspired word be taught.

Examining the word of God, we not only learn there is a preaching which is commanded we also learn there is a preaching which is condemned. Jesus referred to this preaching as “your tradition,” a heartless religion, and “the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:1-9). Paul also spoke of this type of preaching,

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Obviously Paul leaves no doubt what is to be done with those who are “destitute of the truth.” He states “...from such withdraw thyself” In his second epistle to Timothy, Paul said that those who were not preaching the word were preaching “fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Anything that is not according to the word of truth is a fairytale. He also warned the brethren at Colosse, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8). This preaching will condemn both preacher and hearer.

ACTIONS OF WORSHIP

So far we have noticed the only authority man has for worship is God’s inspired word and the appropriate type of preaching is that spoken of in the same word. Under this heading we shall draw these two together and look at acts of worship, with preaching being noticed especially. This is surely pertinent to our discussion because of the many misunderstandings relative to preaching and worship. These misunderstandings cause some even to deny the fact there is a single act or action in worship. But to answer this difficulty again we must ask, “What say the scriptures?”

Nehemiah the prophet records an event in the eighth chapter of the book that bears his name. In this chapter Ezra read and expounded the law. The passage under consideration states,

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the

congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kalita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading (Neh. 8:1-8).

Certain points can be gleaned from this passage concerning the reading and exposition of scriptures (preaching), worship. (1) The hearers gave an attentive listening to the law from the morning until midday (verse 3). This was approximately six to seven hours. They were hungering after the truths of God's word. Hearers today must listen to the truth with the same attitude. (2) Those listening paid proper reverence to the law by their standing as the law was to be read (verse 5). No man is ready to receive the word of God until he is first ready to reverence it. (3) Inspiration states worship was offered in this service (verse 6). If these were able to worship by a reading and study of the law, why can't we worship in the same manner today? Are we to have any less of a worshipful attitude toward the teaching and preaching of God's holy word? (4) The law was taught in such a way as to give understanding and give sense to the writings. It is necessary to give sense and understanding to the word of God today. Is this not exactly what happened with the Ethiopian nobleman and Philip?

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said,

How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him (Acts 8:29-31).

One cannot read this passage in Nehemiah without seeing worship and the preaching of God's word joined together.

This writer has a real problem with the mockery made of the "five acts of worship." In an attitude of "anything goes" liberal thinkers(?) deny any acts in the worship of God. This will include the proclamation of Holy Writ as well. However, one passage of scripture can easily answer these and their false objection. Jesus travelled to the city of Sychar in John 4. It was there he met a woman of Samaria at Jacob's well. After a discussion of living water and the woman's marital situation, the woman asked Jesus, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4:20). With this simple statement of inquiry the Savior teaches us volumes about worship,

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But 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 4:21-24).

Now, what insight does this discussion give us in relationship to acts in worship? Look carefully again at verse 24. This verse tells us there is both *attitude* and *action* in worship. God is to be worshipped "in spirit"—the proper attitude. He also to be worshipped "in truth"—the proper actions. David Lipscomb wrote,

They who worship God must worship with the spirit or the soul and in truth. A spiritual being like God can be pleased with worship only when it comes from the heart and all worship to him must be guided by truth.³

Jesus set forth plainly that there are truths or actions to be followed. To deny this is to deny the very words of the Savior. Let those who mock "five acts" of worship know they are not mocking men who teach these truths, but the God who gave these truths.

CONCLUSION

How important the preaching of the truth is! Yet, when we realize the study of God's word is included in our worship to God

it becomes even more important. May we never allow anyone to drive us away from these truths. By seeing the AUTHORIZATION OF WORSHIP, (God's word is the only source of authority); the APPROPRIATENESS OF PREACHING, (God's word sets forth proper preaching); and the ACTIONS OF WORSHIP, (there are indeed five actions set forth in our worship to God), we will hold firmly to the truth.

ENDNOTES

¹Archibald Thomas Robertson, A.M., D.D., LL.D., Litt.D, *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. IV (Nashville: Broad an Press, 1931), p. 326.

²W. E. Vine, M.A., *An Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), p. 263.

³David Lipscomb, *A Commentary On The Gospel According To John* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1971), p. 63.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING OUR WORSHIP

Foy L. Smith



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The theme of worship is just about as old as mankind's sojourn here on earth. There is not a single time during all Bible history that man was not commanded to worship. So prone is man to worship that he has been called by some "the worshipping animal." While he does have animal instincts in some ways, he was created above all lower life and given complete dominion over them. From the lowliest creature that inhabits the earth to the greatest and even most ferocious, man has dominion over them all. They all fear him because the Divine Creator made it that way. Man worships as instinctively as animals do the various things that characterize them. Man was created a bit lower than angels, yet above all other life on earth (Heb. 2:7-9). We were listening to one of our favorite doctors on TV news recently. Someone called in and asked about a back problem. The doctor replied, "Man is prone to have back trouble because he was not made in the beginning to walk upright." We appreciate so many things about this doctor, we were sorry to hear him make a statement that plays completely into the hands of the, evolutionists. This theory, because it has never been, nor will it ever be proved to be a fact, goes a long way when accepted in destroying true worship.

Just as animals look up to man, knowing he has dominion over them, man looks up to God who has dominion over him.

In the Bible, man is told who and how to worship. He, if not taught these important facts, will create his own gods and worship them. In a faraway South American jungle a small group of people was found a few years ago. They lived so deep in a jungle they had never seen a white man. They saw the sun and moon as these planets peeped through the heavy foliage of the jungle. They worshipped these strange “gods.” They worshipped instinctively. Man, if not taught, I repeat, will worship the same way. When Abraham said, “...I and the lad will go yonder and worship” (Gen. 22:5), we have the first mention of the word “worship” in the Bible. Abraham, believing God and wanting to please him, soon to face the great test of his life, found comfort and strength in worship. True worship can be our greatest source of strength today when great trials and sorrows press upon us. When God created man, he gave him the ability to choose, ability that lower life does not have. Man lives by something more than instinct. Having this freedom of choice, one of man’s greatest blessings, man had to be warned early in the morning of beginnings, “For thou shalt worship no other god” (Exo. 34:14). From the beginning man has been prone to worship gods other than the true God. Jesus taught in the mount of temptation, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). Man has always been prone to worship the “creature” rather than “the Creator” (Rom. 1:25).

Every great Bible character was a worshipper of God. Abraham “bowed down his head, and worshipped God” (Gen. 24:26). Verse 52 says that “Abraham’s servant...worshipped the Lord.” Gideon worshipped (Judg. 7:15), and so did Hannah and Samuel (1 Sam. 1:19,28). Job worshipped (Job 1:20), David worshipped (2 Sam. 12:20). We are told that the congregation bowed down and worshipped the Lord (2 Chron. 29:28). In the New Testament a leper came and worshipped him (Matt. 8:2), a certain ruler worshipped him (Matt. 9:18), a woman came and worshipped him (Matt. 15:25), and further we learn that the disciples worshipped him (Luke 24:52), and Lydia and Justus, and even the angels (Acts 16:14; 18:7; Rev.

7:11). These, of course, were not all acts of worship—some were attitudes of worship.

It is also interesting to notice where different ones worshipped God. Abraham and Isaac worshipped God at the foot of the Mount before the sacrifice of Isaac; Daniel prayed “toward Jerusalem” (Dan. 6:10), and the people had to journey to the holy city once per year for special worship and sacrifices. The disciples worshipped Jesus in the upper chamber, and the Publican and Pharisee worshipped in the temple (Luke 18). Lydia worshipped by the seaside (Acts 16). And on and on we could go Jesus, however, taught that people would no longer have to go to a certain mountain or to a certain city, but wherever they could worship “in spirit and in truth” such worship would be acceptable to the Father (John 4:24).

About as good a definition as we can find of worship simply says, “Worship is paying divine homage to God.” Herein, I really believe, is possibly our greatest failure in our worship. Because we cannot behold God with our physical eyes we conclude that he is not present at all. Can any of us behold the wind? No! But we do not deny the wind. We see its effect very strongly on turbulent days. This very week as I write these sentences, we are having our Santa Ana winds. They blow from the direction of Arizona, east of us. There have been gales up to eighty-five miles per hour. Trucks—eighteen-wheelers—weighing twenty thousand pounds have been turned over on their sides. Turned over by a force they could not even see, but it was there. Can we see either hot or cold? We see the results just like we see the results of the wind. We do not deny their existence. Just so, with our natural eyes we do not see the great power—greatest of all powers that we properly and correctly call God, but we believe in him if we believe anything at all. God is everywhere but his habitat is in heaven (Job 22:14). We love him, respect him, adore him and pay him homage. This is the true spirit of worship.

With this Father we need not fear. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...I will fear no evil” (Psa. 23). If we know him we will trust him, and if we trust him we will worship and pay him homage. He is our protector, and “underneath are the everlasting

arms” (Deut. 33:27). We fail worship him, I verily believe, because we do not trust him. The story is told by an old pioneer preacher about the man who stumbled on a dark night—totally dark—and fell over a cliff, he thought. He grabbed a bush and held on for dear life. In the total darkness he perceived that there could well be a thousand-foot drop into an abyss of death. He held and held until all strength was gone, and when he could hold no longer and fell, he fell exactly six inches! In a way understandable to a point, but beyond that all his fear was for nothing. Sometimes we do not believe the “everlasting arms” are beneath to catch us. We are not to presume that God will protect us when we act foolishly, but we are not to have little; faith when he says he will always be there when we do our best, to protect us and to bear us up. This is deserving of our deepest homage, our sincerest worship. I am well aware that I cannot dwell all of my time on the foregoing comments since our theme deals with improving our worship, but the matters already mentioned can certainly contribute to more successful worship. I shall now discuss a number of things which I believe will greatly improve our worship. I will discuss nothing new—maybe I can come up from a different direction in a few of my comments and the overall good will be improved worship when we come together. Let us, therefore, pay our attention to some things which I believe will improve our worship.

PREPARATION

It is a tragic fact that the average person spends much more time preparing to do most anything else than he does to worship the Lord. Under the old law people consecrated themselves for service (2 Chron. 29:31). They devoted not only themselves, but their possessions to the service of their true God, Jehovah. They consecrated themselves (Ezek. I 43:26), and they consecrated their service (1 Chron. 29:5). They would consecrate themselves when they went to the special feasts. They made preparations for the feasts; in other words, they got ready. How different the average service in the Lord’s church would be today if we as worshippers really prepared ourselves—if we got ready. Someone said the best investment for a good service on Lord’s Day morning would be to get to bed early on

Saturday night. If we wait until early Sunday morning to start getting ready we have waited too late to really have our minds and bodies ready for the good the service can offer us. A late Saturday night movie, up early next morning trying to bathe the children, dressing, shaving, washing hair, trying to pick out what the family is going to wear, settling family arguments, catching the news headlines; with all this going on, do we really think our hearts and minds will be ready for worship when we get to the meeting house? Things ought to be so completed on Saturday night that all we have to do when we get up next morning is to dress (we can even do our bathing on Saturday night), dress the children, eat a light breakfast and get in the car and go. “Well, it’s not that way at our house!” you may exclaim. Now I can understand this perfectly. It wasn’t perfect at our house either, but it could have been better. And it can be better at your house, too. In more ways than one the Lord said over and over, “Prepare yourselves and come to the feast!” He says the same thing to us today. Many Christian brethren spend much more time preparing to go fishing or hunting than they do to go to the assembly of the saints. And many a sister prepares herself much more thoroughly to go to the weekly “cackle-club” than to go to the worship in the Lord’s house when worship time comes. I’d better be careful here—men have their “cackle-clubs” too! Nothing will take the place of adequate preparation for a wonderful and acceptable period of worship to the Lord.

FAITHFUL ATTENDANCE

This is a matter that the average one of us takes for granted. We suppose everyone will be there, and it doesn’t happen that way. If the average employee treated his (or her) work the same way that employee treats the Lord’s command to “not forsake the assembling of yourselves together” (Heb. 10:25), that employee would not last three days on his (or her) particular job! This is a long sentence—granted! But we get the point, don’t we? This is a nightmare to the preacher—trying to get the members to faithfully attend the services. It seems that everything else comes first when the Lord’s work must be first or not at all (Matt. 6:33). We need to think about, our influence on our own families and on others. “Well, what if I am

not there?" many belligerently ask. A man walked three miles one gloomy Sunday morning in order to attend worship. A neighbor said, "I don't have to do that. I can worship in my fields or anywhere else." "Yes," the faithful man replied, "but no one will suspect you of it!" The don't care attitude so many have today will be cause enough to destroy them forever from the presence of the Lord.

REVERENCE

I am often made to wonder why God allows me to worship him at all, with the attitudes I sometimes have. Do I act like I think God ought to compliment himself that I have favored him by my presence? Who is the one favored and complimented by my attendance and reverent attitude? Just who is the one direly in need of help? We know who that one is and it isn't the Lord! Maybe we just need to sit down and really think it over—who is God and who isn't? David said, "Stand in awe and sin not" (Psa. 4:4). He further said, "My heart standeth in awe of thy word" (Psa. 119:161). We are told on one occasion when Jesus was present, that "all the people were amazed and glorified God" (Mark 2:12). One of the first songs I learned to lead when just a boy is one I still love just as much:

"I stand amazed in the presence,
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how he could love me,
A sinner condemned, unclean!"

The average service today is everything but one of reverence. "How many fat hogs do you think you will market this year?" one brother was heard to ask another as he started to his lips with the communion bread. My wife and I sat behind a woman in church not far from where I sit right at this moment, and where through the years I have done a lot of preaching. I noticed she was very wrapped up in reading something. When we stood I could see the title of the paperback she held in her hand. Want to know what it was? Get ready for this: LADY CHATTERLY'S LOVER. When she turned and spoke to us after the service I was tempted to ask, "And how are you, Sister Chatterly?" We don't have to be dead-pans when we worship. There can be a time when a bit of humor is much in order, but we need to know when and how our various responses should

be. We are not at a disaster meeting on one hand, or a carnival on the other. There is no contradiction between being joyful and being reverent. Being reverent doesn't mean that we have to get down on our knees every time we pray, but it is my strong conviction that we have forgotten the power and influence getting on our knees can have, and in the right way too. "Oh, come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Psa. 95:6). I like this. Kneeling when we can, and I know that we often cannot conveniently do so, makes a good impression concerning reverence. Two good men had a business together. One was named HEAD, the other named HART. One day HART died, and people sadly said, "the business has HEAD but no HART." Oh, how often does our worship have lots of HEAD and hardly any HEART at all!

HUMILITY

There is a difference between true Bible humility and our constantly eating what is commonly called "humble-pie." Now I hope and trust that I practice humility, yet I well know that I do not always practice it as I should. If I am not careful, and sometimes I am not, I can have a very caustic tongue; boy, can I ever fight back and when I do I nearly always regret such actions. I sometimes say that I will eat humble-pie with anyone, but I will eat a piece and then let him eat a piece. I refuse to gorge myself on the whole pie. In other words, this business of being humble works in more than just one direction. Arrogant people are their own worst enemies. The proud haughty look is a thing the Lord says he hates (Prov. 6:17).

We need to be aware that words change some as years go by. My dear mother didn't believe that the word "proud" could be used in any good way. It was always wrong to be proud. I didn't argue with her, for she was so right usually, I just didn't feel like it was that important. Having no pride today is often equated with having no ambition, or not caring how one looks or what people may think about him. I believe there are right and wrong usages of this word. Sometimes, as S. T. Coleridge said, "pride apes humility." Another said, "When you come to Jesus he will never send you away empty, unless you are so full of self there is no room left for anything else." Solomon said, "Before honor humility" (Prov. 15:33). The apostle

Paul served the Lord “with all humility of mind” (Acts 20:19). One of the most outstanding examples in all the Bible of self-centeredness is in the case of the Pharisee in Luke 18. Humility of the right kind can add great strength and dignity to our worship. Here is another important thing which I believe will greatly improve our worship.

SIMPLICITY

One of the outstanding features of New Testament worship is its simplicity. Worship is never improved by a lot of “hoopla” and pageantry. The Lord’s Supper is beautiful, the very central theme of our Lord’s Day worship, with every thing else seeming to revolve around it. Some have turned it into cold, ritual formalism, and to many it has taken on a meaning completely foreign to the New Testament portrayal of what it was and what it always must be. We do not need man-made crucifixes, elaborately adorned altars, candles, incense, and cold, lifeless statues all around to correctly represent what the Lord’s Supper means. We have just what they had the night Jesus instituted the Supper in the upper room (Matt. 26:26-29). We still use the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, just like they did that sad night shortly before Jesus was taken away to be unjustly tried and then put to death. As long as seasons come and go, as long as God gives us sunshine and rain, and the productive seasons, we will have these beautiful emblems representing our Lord’s death for all mankind. The only way we can improve this part of our worship is to improve our minds and attitudes toward it. This is not a time to plan trips or whisper business. Years ago a man sat near the back and listened to a football game on a small radio, thinking no one heard. But many did. Even I did! Finally, when he realized others were hearing, he turned it off.

The truly beautiful things in life are always the simple things, someone said. And this gets no argument from me. When I was in college I was “exposed” to Rigdon’s Grammar. Oh my! Mercy me! The way Rigdon defined the eight parts of speech was unbelievable. I liked the old definitions that simply and understandably got to the point—“A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing.” Now I could halfway understand that. Rigdon must surely have been mad

at the whole world when he wrote his grammar! With some, worship is like that grammar book. It is technical and complicated. But not New Testament worship, which is beautiful and meaningful because it is simple and plain, and when carried out with Christian dignity there is nothing fabricated by man that will touch it. We can always improve our carrying out of the Lord's commands involving Lord's day worship, but no improvement can be made on the acts of worship. For a few minutes that we spend gathered "around" the Lord's table as some have expressed it, we need to put forth great effort to have our minds centered on things divine, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:1,2). Some of the big liberals who are out today trying to destroy every identifying mark of the New Testament church can make fun of "the five acts of worship" to the delight of their half-converted followers, but the truth remains. There are five stipulated acts to be performed when we assemble on the Lord's day. We sing, pray, instruct, eat the Lord's Supper, and give of our means. We challenge these liberals to disprove this order. They can make fun to the delight of the gullibles who listen, but they cannot gainsay the truth involved. We can stand or fall as an assembled body as the result of our attitudes toward this period of worship. It grieves us to see the careless attitude so many have toward the assembly of the saints on that one all-important day, the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10). We cannot possibly improve on WHAT to do. Our improvements must be on HOW we do it.

IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

As was often stated by one of our greatest preachers of the past, the religious world is constantly in search of something new, not something true. However, truth has always been the divine measuring rod and still is. If it is not true, being new will accomplish destruction only. It is growing increasingly harder to find loyal congregations over the brotherhood that still demand the truth only. Before the religious situation can improve there must be a complete return to the "old paths" (Jer. 6:16). Many of us who are older perhaps will not live to see that return, but a return will come if God stays the end of the world. When we talk about worship our minds always go to John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him

must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Our worship can be improved if we emphasize strongly again that when we assemble and listen to the proclaimed word, we are listening to God speak through earthly messengers. So many take exception to what the word says, seeming to think they are only the words of the teacher or preacher. They are spoken by earthlings but they are words from God as surely as if God had himself broken his silence and audibly uttered them. Would such realization help us in our listening, our response to the improving of our worship? If not, nothing would.

I can think of hardly anything that would improve our worship as much at this particular time, as to, really get down to the serious business of “making melody in our hearts unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). To be perfectly frank, the song service in the average congregation over the land stinks! Shocking statement? It is true. There is such drawing power in a great song service. When the song leader is poorly prepared and the congregation sits in the pews like a bunch of mutes (no reflection here), what can we expect but a horrible song service? And a horrible “worship” service often follows. We in the Lord’s church must strive harder than anyone else to have a lively, spirited song service. We have no mechanical instruments to cover our blunders. The current saying says that the show is not over until the fat lady sings! Well, even when she sings and makes a fat mess of it, her mistakes are often drowned out by the organist just playing a lot louder. But we have nothing of a mechanical nature to drown out our mistakes. We produce or we fall flat. And our visitors and non-members go away in everything but a complimentary mood. We have certainly not helped our worship. The Bible doesn’t say that part of the congregation should sing, it says that all must sing. “Well, I can’t sing. I can’t even carry a tune!” Well, brother, sister, try. You just may do better than you think. Your singing is first unto the Lord, and then people do hear it, but you will be judged by the effort you put forth and by the spirit of your effort. “But, I can’t carry a tune very good!” Well, again, just try, and your not so skilled voice will be blended into the voices of those who are more expert. But they will not be worshipping the Lord any more than you are. When you sing unto the Lord though your voice may

not sound exactly like you want it to, I guarantee you that it will sound good to the Lord. “Oh, but my voice just tires out if I sing much!” You know, when I was out preaching in so many gospel meetings all over America for seventeen long years, I would sit on the platform during the song service and I would silently sound every word in the song. A brother asked me once, “Why do you not sing like everyone else?” I told him that I was saving my voice—that I had to preach most all of the nights in the year. But I got to thinking about it. I was wrong and that brother’s friendly criticism was right. I started singing. And I wanted people to see me as I sang. It would encourage them, and it did not hurt my voice. I concluded what I had always known—God expects the preacher to sing too! Again, I can call nothing to mind that will improve our worship and do more good than a truly great song service. And now we come to one of the last things I will mention—it is last but not least.

OUR GIVING

Is there any possible way for us to glorify God any more than in our giving? The word giving described Jesus from the time he came into this world until he went back to be with the heavenly hosts again. It was an act of giving that brought him into the world in the first place (Phil. 2:5-11). Every way in which he turned on earth was characterized by his giving something, and finally he gave himself. No man could take his life from him. He laid it down freely (John 15:13). If we follow Jesus in our giving, will not this improve our worship? We can never give to the ultimate like he did, but we can try. There are so many things we can give, not the least of which is our money. Many glorify themselves, their families and their friends by giving extravagantly to them. Then they criticize anyone who suggests that they glorify God in their giving to him, that such an one is a religious fanatic of some kind, and if he is a preacher, then he is just preaching for money and not for the souls of the men and women who are lost. This only shows how perverted and judgmental some can be. When we speak of giving at least ten percent of our income to the Lord, many infuriated. What if God turned it around? What if he kept nine dollars and gave us only one? Or kept ninety and gave us only ten? Could we make it? Well, he is not that unfair. But

we often are! “Give the church ten percent of all I make? Why, I’d go broke!” Friend, you are broke already and Just don’t know it! Someone wrote these lines:

“What shall I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would give him a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
But such as I have I give him—
I give him my heart.”

This is all that God expects of us—that we give what we have. This is all that Peter and John could promise the lame man who begged at the gate (Acts 3:1-9). It is the Christian’s business in this life to improve all his services to God, they all have to begin with his attitude toward worship. When we improve our worship, our homage to God, we improve every facet of our lives.

HOW SHALL WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO WORSHIP?

Stephen P. Waller



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Steve was baptized in May, 1959, and began preaching while still a senior in high school in 1966. He is married to Susan Clemmons of Florence, Alabama and has two daughters, Amy and Tricia. He has been working with the West End congregation in St. Louis since August, 1988.

I am grateful for the opportunity to once again have a small part in the Bellview lectures. We appreciate the eldership of this very good congregation and their preacher, Bobby Liddell. As one considers the dangers, errors, and problems which exist in the Lord's church today, one can appreciate the theme of this lectureship. In many quarters there is a lack of respect for the authority of the Scriptures, a lack of respect for the silence of the Scriptures, and a serious problem in the matter of hermeneutics. The theme, "What Does God Authorize In Worship?", is indeed timely.

The subject, "How Shall We Teach Our Children To Worship?", is a vital matter. The psalmist wrote, "Lo, children are a heritage of Jehovah" (Psa. 127:3). Our children are given to us by the Lord. They are so dear and precious, and God has entrusted their very lives and souls into our hands for a short time upon the earth. Our children reflect the training and attitudes which they receive at home from their parents, at school from their teachers, in the activities of the church from church leaders, and from their peers. Parents, church leaders, Christian adults, and others who may have an influence upon

our young people must come to recognize the serious nature of the subject before us.

THE NEED TO TRAIN OUR CHILDREN TO WORSHIP GOD ACCEPTABLY

It is important that we recognize the need to train our! ‘ children to worship God acceptably. The need can first be seen from the standpoint of the positive high and noble goals and purposes of such training. The purposes for training children to worship God acceptably are manifold. Our purpose should be to help our children to love and desire the highest spiritual plane-to know and love God supremely. Jesus taught, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Matt. 22:37-38). Jesus! prayer for the apostles and his desire for all his disciples was, “And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the” only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus, Christ” (John 17:3). We need to convey the joy which is a part of honoring God in true worship. Proper training in worship is necessary in order for children to learn what it, means to reverence God. It is important to learn to express their love, honor, gratitude, and desires unto the Almighty. If our children are going to worship God they must be trained to worship in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24), and they must learn that New Testament worship is always to be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). Someday, many of our children will be the elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, mothers, fathers, and leaders in the church. If they learn to respect God’s will in the matter of acceptable worship while they are young, and if such is nurtured and cultivated, they will observe to do that which pleases God. And, in turn, they will teach and train others who follow them (2 Tim. 2:2). Proper training in acceptable worship is essential to the saving of the souls of our children.

From the negative view, our children need to be trained properly in acceptable worship because there are so many perversions and innovations which have crept into the worship of the church. Things that are different, novel, fun, and sensational have been introduced and have taken hold in many young minds. Much of what has been introduced which is unscriptural has been allowed or promoted by

those who are older and know better. Consider some of the errors we now face in some congregations: women are leading the various activities of public worship where men are present, songs are sung which teach doctrines that are in direct contradiction to the Scriptures, irreverent disruptive behavior is allowed, failure to assemble regularly is popular, non-Christians are being asked to lead in some capacity in worship services, known false teachers are allowed a public platform in some congregations, humming rather than singing is permitted, handclapping, applause following a sermon or Bible talk, simultaneous acts of worship are attempted (singing while trying to partake of the bread and fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper, etc.), mimicking the sounds of mechanical instruments of music with the voice while others are attempting to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is being more widely practiced and accepted (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Adults who are entrusted with the teaching, training and guiding of young people have a very sober responsibility to see to it that such teaching and training is in complete accord with the Bible. Paul wrote, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). This includes proper training so far as behavior is concerned as well as how properly to do what God requires when worshipping him, whether in a church building, at a devotional, in a Bible class, chapel service, or wherever it may be. Such worship must always be scriptural. Jesus taught, "And whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (Mark 9:42).

When people gather to sing songs (psalms, hymns and spiritual songs), engage in prayer, and read Scripture, be admonished and exhorted from the Bible, partake of the Lord's Supper, and give of their income unto God, they have gathered to *worship*. Worship to God *must always be "in spirit and truth"* (John 4:23-24). Such worship is to be *directed unto God*, not merely directed to whet or satisfy our sensual appetites or our subjective minds. This applies to young people as well as to adults! God makes no exceptions in this matter!

Over the past few years it has come to light that in some situations involving worship in which young people participate, and where some take a leadership role, serious violations of God's law concerning worship have taken place. In some circumstances the leaders have been adults who know better than to lead young people in a pathway that leads to certain doom. It is a fact that young people of accountable age can be lost just as certainly as can adults! Adults who are supposed to be guiding our youth must also bear the weight of responsibility in these matters. Please note some of the current violations of Scripture which have occurred in some gatherings:

(1) Non-Christian boys of accountable age are not only allowed, but are asked to take a leading role such as reading Scripture aloud, leading public prayer, etc. How can this be allowed when a non-Christian's prayer is an abomination before God? "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Prov. 28:9). "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter 3:12, KJV).

(2) Girls are asked to lead singing from where they sit. If a boy who is trying to lead a song cannot get it started, he will ask a girl or several girls to start it for him. One or more girls do so, then continue to lead. Paul wrote, "But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness" (1 Tim. 2:12). Such activities as described are a violation of Paul's command, "But let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). What young people learn to do early in life often carries over into adulthood.

(3) Personal testimony is given high priority over the testimony of God's word. So many gatherings now, including those in which adults participate involves, "Sharing what Christ has done with your life." Personal testimony is exalted above Scripture. Well-told stories are the "order of the day." Whatever happened to the testimony of God? Whatever happened to *inspired* testimony? Does not inspired testimony carry more weight or influence than human feelings about our own personal "experiences"? The stories of conversion in the New Testament and the remarks made about the lives of those characters were given by the Holy Spirit. We know without a doubt

what God did for them. Were their lives too dull, boring, or too far removed from this age to be relevant? What has happened to the truth of the Bible? Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). *Our* testimony is uninspired, Bible testimony is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

(4) In an effort to hold attention and get a few laughs, those who speak before young audiences make their stories, illustrations, and the *objects used* in object lessons *the lessons themselves*, while hardly setting forth any spiritual truths! And, each participant tries to make his story or demonstration more flamboyant than the preceding one. This turns the whole activity into a contest or a show for entertainment purposes. Then, when it is over, the group gives a rousing hand of applause for such wonderful entertainment! While we are not opposed to illustrations or object lessons, there must be a proper perspective or balance which is woefully lacking today. *God never designed worship to be entertainment!* To consider worship or any one act of worship a means of entertainment is to deviate from God’s plan for worship. When one arises to speak forth God’s word, he ought to do so with the motivation and purposes for which the Lord designed it. “And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul commanded, “Preach the word...” (2 Tim. 4:1-5). He wrote, “But speak thou the things which befit the sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). He further taught that young men are to be soberminded (Titus 2:6). Paul spoke of his work and the motivation for it when he wrote the church in Corinth and in his farewell message to the Ephesian elders (1 Cor. 2:1-5; Acts 20:26-27). Young men and those who train them would do well to read the actual sermons or discourses of Jesus, the apostles, and other inspired men of the New Testament. What many are hearing today is a far cry from the Bible.

The effort to have fun and entertainment seems to be the primary emphasis. Such shows a sinful dissatisfaction with God’s plan. After a foot-and-hand wiggling, semi-dancing, nonsensical song in such a service, the young man who led the activity stated, “I believe worship ought to be fun!” The Bible does not teach that *fun* is a Scriptural ingredient or goal of God-approved worship. Handclap-

ping and other such demonstrations are additions to God's plan. Every Christian ought to enjoy worshipping God. Indeed, joy is a part of our worship, but *fun* in the worldly manner is not the goal of worship!

We love our young people and should seek to impress upon their minds the need and desire to be pleasing unto the Lord in worship. They must come to understand that acts of reverence are paid to God, not man. Young people are in desperate need of training and good examples in this manner. Those adults and "Youth ministers" who are in charge of young people need to begin really caring about the souls of all who are involved in these activities. The stewardship of the young is a serious matter. "Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2).

All of the aforementioned matters abundantly point up the fact that there is a great need to train our children to worship God acceptably. As many are already aware from history, only one generation which is not firmly and deeply rooted and grounded in the truth will bring about the tragedy of apostasy in the Lord's church (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:11).

BIBLE EXAMPLES OF PROPER TRAINING

Jehovah expressed confidence in the ability of Abraham to train his children, "For I have known him, to the end he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19). This confidence on God's part toward Abraham extended to Abraham's ability to train his children properly in the matter of worship. The promise that God made to Abraham (Gen. 12) led him over most of the then populated world. As he travelled, he worshipped God, wherever he was! His route can be pretty well traced by the altars he constructed. Abraham showed a willingness to give unto God offerings and sacrifices (Gen. 14). No wonder God expressed confidence in Abraham! He was a good father. What Abraham's children did was very important for the promise. What our children do will be very important so far as the promise now applies to the gospel and the church (Eph. 6:4). Perhaps some of the most impressive training received by Isaac, the child of promise, was

the dramatic example of his father building the altar in Moriah at the instruction of Jehovah and binding him (Isaac) upon it in preparation to sacrifice his only son whom he loved as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:1-14). Isaac learned that strict adherence to God's word in worship is essential to pleasing him. One cannot deviate from what God has commanded and expect to be blessed.

As Isaac grew to adulthood we read of him meditating in a field at eventide (Gen. 24:63). Later, we read of him entreating Jehovah on behalf of Rebekah because she was barren, and God answered his prayer (Gen. 25:21). Still later, Isaac built an altar in Beersheeba and called upon the name of Jehovah (Gen. 26:25). Isaac is listed in Hebrews 11:20 as one of the heroes of faith. Indeed, there was proper training by Abraham toward his family in the matter of worship.

The proper training of the young was an essential part of the lives of the Israelites. When Israel was given the law of Moses, God commanded respect for and obedience to his will. He set forth a powerful command concerning how to go about making the law an integral part of each person:

And these words which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates (Deut. 6:6-9).

These strong, beautiful words from the mouth of Jehovah set forth the serious nature of all that was divinely commanded for Israel to obey. His law was so important that from the earliest time in the life of an Israelite child, God's law, including his commandments regarding worship were to be taught and obeyed. This training involved the following:

(1) The proper attitudes and priorities of parents—"Love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (vs. 5).

(2) God's word must first dwell in the parents—"These words which I command thee this day shall be upon thy heart" (vs. 6).

(3) Note the intensity and consistency with which it was be taught—"diligently" (vs. 7).

(4) Note both the literal and figurative terms used to indicate that this training was to be a daily way of life:

- (a) “Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house.”
- (b) “When thou walkest by the way.”
- (c) “When thou liest down.”
- (d) “When thou risest up.”
- (e) “Bind them for a sign upon thy hand.”
- (f) “Write them upon the door-posts of thy house and upon thy gates.”

God intended that this law be indelibly stamped upon the hearts of all!

Samuel was born to devout Hannah and was given to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:27-28) to minister unto him before Eli, the priest (1 Sam. 2:11,18). Samuel received a proper training in the worship of God from Eli as he learned how to be a servant in the temple (1 Sam. 2:11,18-19; 3:1). Samuel’s parents came up to offer the yearly sacrifice to God. They too, had a strong influence on his life. Samuel was set apart for lifelong service to the Lord. As he grew, he was in favor, both with the Lord and with men (1 Sam. 2:26; 3:19). Eli was successful in training Samuel in the way of the Lord. The example set by Joseph and Mary before their children is seen clearly in that they “...went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover” (Luke 2:41). Furthermore, Jesus “advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). The account of Jesus at the age of twelve indicates excellent training.

The training of Timothy is mentioned by Paul. Timothy’s mother and grandmother were the strong influences in his early life. His faith in Christ and his depth of knowledge and devotion were instilled in him from infancy by Lois and, Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15).

Both the Old and New Testaments reveal examples for us to follow in the training of children for acceptable worship unto God.

HOW MAY WE ACCOMPLISH SUCH TRAINING?

To accomplish the training of children for worship today one should look closely at the commands set forth for Israel to find some principles which apply in such situations. In all spiritual matters the church and the home must work together. Many believe it in the

responsibility of the church alone to teach and train their children the Bible, lead them to Christ, and prepare them for proper Christian service. Further, the view is held that if we are losing our children to the world, the fault lies with the church. This is not true, and such an erroneous belief has caused many parents to neglect their responsibility in the formation of some vital Christian attitudes and habits in the home. The Lord's plan has always been for the parents to teach their children to love the Lord and follow him (Deut. 6:6-7; Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:15).

In order to train our children in Christian worship acceptable to God or for any other work in the kingdom of the Lord, we must keep in mind the fact that we are striving to develop and guide young people so that their hearts and lives are in tune to God's word. Attitudes of the heart bring forth one's outward behavior. Jesus said, "...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). "For an he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7, KJV). Christian personality takes on the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). And, Christian personality is accomplished by re-creating people in the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18). To develop properly, one must be instructed intellectually in Christian truth. Jesus said "...they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (John 6:44-45). Such includes having the emotions fixed on God and things pertaining to him. "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above..." (Col. 3:1-3; 1 John 2:15).

If children know little of the Lord or his word, the fault lies primarily with the home, though the church cannot escape some responsibility for the failure. Since the church is comprised of people who represent homes, the personality of a congregation reflects the collective personalities of the individuals and homes of which it is comprised. If a church is practicing that which is unauthorized in worship, look to the influence of the individuals and homes which make up that congregation for the source of the sinful activity. If however, the young people in a congregation are worshipping God acceptably (i.e., according to the New Testament), look to the good leaven or influence which comes from the homes of which the congregation is comprised. Children become and behave, in most

cases, what we train them to be or do. “As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of youth” (Psa. 127:4). They will go the direction they are pointed. We must point them in the right direction.

The best time to begin training children is in infancy. In some ways children are trained the same way we teach or train adults. We must begin by setting the proper example. This example begins at home where love, reverence for God, and obedience to his word begins. A child who is disobedient at home will usually be disobedient at church, too. In the early years, and continuing throughout one’s life, parents must be sure that their own spiritual lives are right with God, and that the priorities in life are according to his will. It is still possible to blaspheme God by living a hypocritical life before our children (Rom. 2:21-24). Putting the Lord, his church, its work and righteous living first, based upon love is the way to avoid hypocrisy. “But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). Children often understand more than we think they understand. As they observe our lives and attitudes, they are being molded and shaped. We must be all that God expects us to be both at home and in our public worship services (Phil. 1:27; 2:14-15). We must walk worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1-3).

Working with small children in worship services to achieve quietness and sowing seeds of respect for the activities involved requires effective training methods. Parents are encouraged to discipline *wisely* and *consistently*. Furthermore, there must be consistent, faithful attendance at the worship services for any training at all to be achieved. Parents with a haphazard, lackadaisical attitude toward attending the appointed times of Bible study and worship can never fulfill adequate training in this area with their children. Parents must respect Hebrews 10:25 and assemble with the saints consistently. Children should often hear their parents speak in a positive, reverential manner about God and worship. Children need to be taught that worship is not entertainment or play time. When correction is needed, it should be given. “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov. 13:24). Chastening is to be done early, promptly, before it is too late

to be effective. “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Prov. 19:18, KJV). “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Prov. 22:15). Spanking a child at church will no more make him dislike church than spankings at home will make him dislike home. A child will often be guided by the feelings of like or dislike his parents have concerning the church more than whether or not he is punished at church. These early years are very formative.

As children grow a little older they will be challenged by their peers to misbehave in worship services. This may well be a forerunner of the challenges to ape someone who is doing something novel or sensational in worship. We must discourage the desire in youth to submit to peer pressure in worship. He must do what is right before God regardless of what others may strive to pressure him to do. He must be taught that courage to do what is right in worshipping God is a noble trait. Stories of Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will show that Christians must be courageous, and sometimes stand alone in our efforts to please God in worship (Dan. 1-2). God’s way is not always sensational, new, or novel. It takes an intelligent mind and a devout heart to put into our worship what God requires.

In addition to proper discipline, training, example-setting, and faithful attendance at worship services, family devotionals provide a means of training young people of all ages. Every family member should be expected at such gatherings. Each should be expected to participate in the singing of songs and participating in Bible discussions. Devotionals should be enjoyable, and they do not have to last long to be effective! Questions may be asked and Bible answers given. The meanings of songs can be discussed. Prayers may be offered on behalf of church members and others. Specific works of the church may be mentioned. Such activity should be a fond memory in one’s life. This will help young people to understand better what worship is all about.

Congregations can greatly assist the men and women the church to better know how to conduct the worship of God by means of training classes. Young men and young women can have a “Timothy Class” or a “Priscilla Class” taught by capable church members who

will lead them and give constructive criticism. The energy and enthusiasm of young people can be channelled into developing their talents in Scriptural worship and service. Incorrect attitudes and ideas may be weeded out early, and young minds may be prep for leadership as they continue to grow.

In her book, *Calm or Chaos, Children In Worship Service* sister Ruth Hale concludes with the following words:

Children should be the most prized possession of every family. Many people take better care of their material possessions than they do their children. They may spend hours polishing silver, grooming the lawn, or in enjoying a favorite hobby and give no time for teaching and training their children.

Our children are the fruit of our bodies. We brought them into this world and they are our responsibility. The kind of people that they turn out to be are the results of our labor*. May God help us as we put our hand in His to lead our children to a heavenly home.

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A HISTORY OF IDOLS AND IDOL WORSHIP THROUGH THE AGES

H. Daniel Denham



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An idol is “an image of god, used as an object of worship...” Often the word is extended in meaning in this classical sense to refer to any pagan deity. Idolatry, the worship of idols, is of great antiquity and has flourished in almost every era of history. Even today it remains a dominant force in the lives and cultures of many nations around the world. Many hold to traditionally established forms, especially where ancestor and demon worship is prominent. Others observe a syncretistic form that combine traditional idolatry with pantheism, which identifies god with the universe in a very close fashion. Hinduism is the most common syncretistic form today. Secular Humanism, being by definition a religion, can also be classified an idolatrous religion in that man as “the measure of all things” is conceptualized as his own deity! Worldliness and materialism form another kind of common idolatry, even as they did in Paul’s day, when he warned against the danger of “covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). So idolatry can take a variety of forms, and sometimes a combination of differing (and contradictory) forms. At the height of Baal worship in ancient Israel, the Jews, who were engaged in such worship, combined it with their regular devotions

to Jehovah God, and this despite his admonitions against the pagan religion! The combining of the sacred and holy with that which was profane and vile did not sanctify the idolatrous and immoral religion of Baal, but only served to corrupt and pollute the worship of God. Historically and biblically, idol worship has never exalted the concept of worship, nor has it succeeded in bringing men closer to the Creator, but has proven to be a bane to humanity! A working knowledge of its past will provide an excellent tool in helping to confront it in the present and future, regardless of the form in which it may be manifested. As with “every false way,” it must be opposed by God’s people (Psa. 119:104).

The purpose of this study is to set forth A HISTORY OF IDOLS AND IDOL WORSHIP THROUGH THE AGES, especially as it relates to the biblical record. The scope of the study will be confined to the periods covered by the historical, record of the Bible. We shall examine briefly: (1) the ORIGIN of Idol Worship, its place in the history of (2) the PATRIARCHAL AGE, (3) the MOSAICAL AGE, and (4) the CHRISTIAN AGE. We shall consider some of the evil perpetrated through idolatry against both God and man.

The ORIGIN of Idol Worship. Humanity possesses an innate impulse to worship, to bestow our adoration and devotion on something or someone. This religious inclination of the Race implies a higher Source that must be by nature spiritual. The concept or idea of God was not dreamed up, nor is it the result of a fanciful Freudian “wish” for dominant “father figure,” who exercises control over terrible powers of Nature. In every age, this impulse worship can be observed, and is not diminished from one, generation to another. It may be—and often is—misdirected away from the Creator toward some other object of devotion. Some may even seek to ignore it, as does Atheism, but it cannot be totally expunged from human consciousness. There still dwells a sense of oughtness in morality and religion ingrained within men. There exists that constant reminder that we “ought” to do what is right, whatever that, right may be! The pull of man’s intrinsic religious nature seen in that, even when men seek to renounce the very idea of Deity, they invariably declare Man as the apex of all things, “the measure of all things.” Hence the

doctrine of Humanism, which while opposing the idea of God makes Man (Humanity) its “god.”

The Scriptures presuppose that the worship of Jehovah God was universal in the beginning. Adam and Eve, and later Cain and Abel, knew God and communicated with him in a personal fashion. Ritual sacrifice was an early part of their religious observance (Gen. 4:3,4) and was instituted by God himself shortly after the Fall of Man (3:21). Secular history supports the biblical record by showing that at one time in every ancient civilization, of the which sufficient evidence exists, monotheism (the worship of one God) was the earliest religious form. Thus, William F. Petrie, noted archaeologist and Egyptologist, writes, “...monotheism is the first state in traceable theology...,” and adds, “Wherever we can trace back polytheism to its earliest stages we find it results from combinations of monotheism.” To this testimony can be added that of George Rawlinson, A. H. Sayce, J. R. Swanton, and E. A. Wallis Budge. Even in the most confused and syncretistic pantheons there persists belief in a Supreme Deity, who created initially all that existed in the primordial world. This is especially true of the ancient Egyptians, Sumerians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Chinese, and Indo-Europeans, who were direct heirs of the antediluvian world.

Of the godly line of Seth, the successor of the murdered Abel, the Bible says, “...then began men to call upon the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:26). A period of religious fervor and faithfulness, spurred on by the living reminder in the person of the marked murderer Cain of God’s righteous hatred of sin, seems to have typified this early period of relative innocence, but the descendants of Cain were already departing from the living God (vs. 16-24). The haughty and remorseless attitude of Lamech in Genesis 4:23,24 reflects the degeneracy of that lineage. In time, through intermarriage with that of Seth, it gained the ascendancy. With it came exceedingly great wickedness (Gen. 6:1-6). Violence and immorality abounded, and it repented God that he had made man. Therefore, the primeval world perished in the Flood. Only eight souls were spared by the grace of God and their faith in obeying his will (1 Pet. 3:19-21).

While no express point is given as to when the first idol was reared up and a new “god” proclaimed to be in com tion for man’s devotions, Paul provides a general description of the rise of idolatry in Romans 1. It came at a time when men refused to retain God in their knowledge. They knew that God existed, but they refused to further recognize him as God. They turned then to worshipping the corruptible—birds, beasts, and creeping things, even man himself! They refused to glorify God, and were unthankful to him for his goodness to them. So they turned to serve their own imaginations, to bow to the creature instead of the Creator! As a result, God “gave them up” to fulfill their unbridled passions indulge their evil imaginations. Immorality and every wicked thing the Human Race could devise followed (cf. vs. 18-32). Men desired a god that would not “talk back” to the one who would sanction their excesses and riotous life-styles. The new deity (or deities) was made after the image of and of his fellow creatures. The carnal superseded spiritual. Budge, anent the religion of the ancient Egyptians, notes that, “...the Egyptian made all” of his gods “in his own image, and he assumed that they ate and drank, and made love, and wore clothing, and that their feelin passions and emotions resembled his own. He thought they could be flattered, cajoled and wheedled into granting his requests....” Pride, lust, ambition, and unbounded sensuality went hand-in-hand with the origin and development of idolatry. If one wished to commit fornication and feel, “justified” in so doing, there was ample justification to be, found for it in an *anthropomorphic* god, who was subject to the same passions! Where moral and ethical decay abounded, there was always to be found religious and spiritual corruption. Where departure from God occurred, there followed own after idolatry and moral ruin! The period of the anti-diluvians shortly preceding the Flood furnished an atmosphere in which idolatry could—and without doubt did—flourish.

The PATRIAR CHAL AGE. Idol worship became heavily embedded in the cultures of the great civilizations that arose after the Deluge. In a relatively short span of time, the descendants of Noah fell almost universally into idolatry. The haste with which this was done suggests that the practice was one retained, at least, in

memory from the antediluvian period. The formulated pantheons of the Hamitic, Semitic, and Japhethic nations may have been drawn from those devised by those gone before in the old world, so recently destroyed. They also, and this seems very likely, may have arisen in part from the deification of “mighty men who were of old, men of renown” (Gen. 6:4). The practice of elevating mortals to “godhead” in ancient cultures is well-known and documentable. The Egyptians “deified” the wise man and architect Imhotep. He became the patron god of scribes and scholars in Egypt. The Pharaoh himself was worshipped as a living embodiment of the Egyptian sun-god Ra, and took the title “Son of Ra” (for Rameses). The Oriental powers frequently deified their kings, and the practice was adopted by Alexander the Great and the Roman emperors centuries later. The ancient Chinese elevated both emperors and philosophers to the status of “god” in their devotions, and instituted ancestor worship, a practice that continues today in Taoism. The mighty hunter Nimrod, so proud and so arrogant in his defiance against the God of Heaven, and the notable Asshur were preserved in memory not only in the Scriptures, but also in the Assyrian pantheon (cf. Gen. 10:8-11). Many other examples could be cited. One final evidence for this may lie in the LXX text, which employs the word *daimonion*, commonly transliterated “demons,” in Deuteronomy 32:17 interchangeable with the term “gods” (v. 16ff.). The word *daimoniac* denoted among the ancient Greeks and Jews “the disembodied spirits of wicked men,” as Alexander Campbell so compellingly demonstrates in his lecture on DEMONOLOGY. It is used in the LXX in other places for the Hebrew *elilim* “idols” (cf. Psa. 96:5). The Psalmist speaks of the abominable fire gods of the pagan neighbors of the Israelites as *daimonia* (Psa. 106:36,37, LXX). This would indicate that to some extent the idea of idols and the disembodied spirits of wicked men were inter-related and somewhat synonymous.

The region of Mesopotamia was a center of idolatry in the time of Abraham. In Sumeria, the southern portion of that region forming the Eastern half of the Fertile Crescent, idolatry became a tool of statecraft. The *lugal* (“war leader”) of the various city-states,

including Abraham's hometown "Ur of the Chaldees," utilized the state religion to legitimize his rule. He, as Arthur Cotterell states, "sought his authority more and more in divine choice rather than in choice by human assembly...." The doctrine of *divine-right* rule had its foundation on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The worship of Abram's kinsmen was sensual, superstitious, and bloody! Prostitution was utilized to fill the coffers of the temple treasuries. Sexual contact with male and female prostitutes, who served as priests and priestesses for the various cults, was thought to enhance one's contact and communion with the gods! It was a means by which one "became one with" the pagan deity. The place of worship was the ziggurat, which was an artificial high-place—a stop pyramid which was made to appear as a mountain or hillock and which had terraced slopes covered with soil and with trees and shrubbery to enhance the mountain-like appearance. The ziggurat was the center of Sumerian life and culture. The *lugal* officiated at its altars as a "priest" and used this exposure to further his ambitions. Astrology, divination, and necromancy were tools of the cultus and were used to add an ambiance of mystery rites. The blood of captured soldiers and sometimes of city maidens flowed from the altar. It was thought that human sacrifice was a means of expiating for any "sin" that might have angered some deity and brought about a natural calamity, such as a flood, drought, or pestilence. Every victory in battle was celebrated with the slaughter of enemy soldiers and kings, usually by disemboweling with a sword," crushing the skull with a club, or cutting out the heart with a sacrificial knife. Their blood was then offered amidst gleeful revelry. The fertility rites included a sexual joining of the *lugal* with a priestess of special rank representing the goddess of fertility to simulate the impregnation of the earth with the seed of life. Out of this kind of ungodly background, godly Abraham was called to preserve the Messianic line and be the progenitor of the nation through whom the Messiah would come! Thus, he is commanded of Jehovah God, "Got thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Gen. 12:1). In Genesis 31, the Bible refers to the "images" of Laban. These were stolen by Rachel on the

occasion of her departure with Jacob from Canaan from the region of Haran. These are called *teraphim* in the original. They were a kind of household idol, often in human or animal form, and were used for divination. They were used as deeds to property to which they were attached or dedicated, and were considered quite valuable. This occasioned Rachel's theft and Laban's subsequent pursuit of Jacob's caravan. The entire account shows that all of the vestiges of idol worship had not been removed from the family of Abraham even two generations later, and that idolatry was tightly bound up by tradition in the most mundane affairs including property rights and inheritance.

The Israelites, during their sojourn in Egypt, which began toward the close of Jacob's life, suffered some defilement from the idols of Egypt. Joshua reminded those of his day that their fathers had worshipped the gods "on the other side of the flood"—probably a reference to the land beyond the Euphrates—and "in Egypt" (Josh. 24:14). Years later, the Prophet Ezekiel would remind Israel in the midst of Babylonian Captivity of God's solemn charge in their early history to abstain from the idols of Egypt (Ezek. 20:7ff.). Their separation from the Egyptians, due to the Hebrews practice of shepherding, without doubt reduced the amount of the influence upon Israel of idolatry in Egypt (cf. Gen. 46:33,34), but it still posed a potent threat to God's people. Many succumbed to the sensuality of the Egyptian way of life and worship. The worship centered principally upon the veneration of the sun and the Nile River as the sources and sustainers in the "Black Land" (or *Keme*). The pantheon often reflects this regard for the power of the sun and the waters of the Nile. Numerous animals were sacred to the Egyptians, especially those animals closely associated with the Nile River such as: hippopotami, crocodiles, frogs, and certain fishes. Other animals were prominent. Among these were the bull, cat, baboon, and calf. Some of their gods were depicted as having human bodies with animal heads. The worship of trees was common in the earliest period of Egyptian idol worship. The tree-trunk later became connected with the worship of Osiris.

The rites of the Egyptians included the ritual immolation of enemy captives. Many were killed by a blow to the head with a club; a frequent portrayal of this appears in the hieroglyphs chronicling the conquests of the Pharaohs. Other prisoners were disemboweled. Some were burnt alive. The cult of Osiris frequently made use of red-headed men, a genetic rarity among the Egyptians, as sacrifices for celebration commemorating the god's triumph over his murderer Set, whose color was supposed to be red. Like the Sumerians, the Egyptians buried retainers alive in the tombs of nobles. Sometimes these servants would be executed first, when deemed most expedient! Prostitution and sexual immorality were commonly associated with the idolatry of Egypt as in Sumeria. Fertility cults flourished, and proved to be popular with both the people and the nobility. Dancing, revelry, drunkenness, and such like attended their festivals. Sexual copulation was engaged in freely by the worshippers, and homosexuality flourished with Oriental abandon! Bestiality was sacrosanct in some cults: for it brought one into communion with primal nature and with the deity represented by the sacred animal.

In the ten plagues of the Exodus, there was a demonstration of Jehovah's awesome power over the false gods and idols of the Egyptians. Pharaoh, the son of Ra, was himself shown to be merely human and unable to stand against the God of Heaven! Each plague in some fashion was a slap at the vanities of the major and minor sects comprising the pantheon of Egypt. The turning of water into blood demonstrated the impotence of the gods and goddesses associated with the Nile, such as: Taurit, the hippopotamus-goddess; Sebek, the crocodile-god; Merit, the goddess of the, annual Inundation; etc. In succession each plague emphasized the fallacy in bowing down to that which is no god! The smiting of the firstborn was the capstone of that demonstration, and shook the religion of Egypt to its very roots. It showed that the living God is He who alone possesses power over both life and death. The creator-god Khnemu was powerless to sustain his creatures; Ptah, who was derived by the deification of a man and who was the patron god of Memphis, could not protect his children; and Osiris, the dread god

of the dead and judge of humanity, could not bring back to life those smitten. Only Jehovah God had power over life, as shown in his protection of those Hebrews who placed the blood of the paschal lamb upon their door posts and lintels, and over death, as shown in the destruction of the flower of Egyptian pride. The force of the demonstration was so great that for centuries to come the nations round about Israel and throughout the Near East held remembrance of the triumph of the God of the Hebrews over the gods of Egypt! Thus, the Philistines in the days of Samuel—almost 500 years later—are affrighted at the sight of the ark of the Covenant being brought to the battlefield in 1 Samuel 4. They cry out, “Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness” (1 Sam. 4:8). Numbers 33:4 states, “For the Egyptians buried all their firstborn, which the Lord had smitten among them: upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments.” This is what God had promised to do (Ex. 12:12). Jethro, the priest of Midian, was impressed with the fact of God’s greatness and superiority, and proclaims, “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods...” (Ex. 18:11).

The MOSAICAL AGE. Idolatry played an important and often dreadful part in the fashioning of Hebrew history. When the nation received the law of Moses at Sinai, the Decalogue established in precise terms in the law’s preamble God’s hatred of idols and idol worship. The first and second commandments therein efficiently forbade the people from indulging in these things (Ex. 20:1-6). In Deuteronomy 5:8,9 Moses warns against the creation and adoration of graven “images”: stressing, as in the Decalogue, that Jehovah is “a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them who hate me.” This lesson would be one learned by the nation only in a bitter way! Acceptance and devotion to idols meant rejection and hatred toward the God of Heaven! There could be no middle ground. The law maintains, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Deut. 6:13; Matt. 4:10). Constant conflict with idolatry typified much of Hebrew history.

The pull of idolatry is observed at the very beginning of the period. The fashioning of the golden calf at Sinai by no less a personage as Aaron, the brother of Moses, underscores the appeal it had to the Hebrews (cf. Ex. 32). While Moses was out of sight of the people, so too was the God of Moses from their thoughts and concerns. With the cry, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (v. 4), the people received the calf, made from the gold taken by spoil in Egypt by the power of the living God! Revelry, including dancing, nakedness, and fornication, accompanied the festivities (vs. 19-25; 1 Cor. 10:7). About 40 years later at Beth-peor the people were enticed "to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab," who in turn "called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods...." The Hebrews were compliant, as "they did eat, and bowed down to their gods" (Num. 25:1,2). The religion of Moab centered upon the worship of Chemosh, the fire-god. Human sacrifices were crucial to his rituals. Young children were most, frequently the victims, being caused to "pass through the fire." Ammon also worshipped Chemosh (Judg. 11:24), but the central figure in that nation's pantheon was Moloch (or Molech, Milcom). He too was worshipped as a fire-god with the attendant human offerings. An example of human sacrifice to Chemosh is given in 2 Kings 3:26,27.

In the land of Canaan, Israel confronted the idolatry of the barbaric Canaanites, including the Phoenicians. They worshipped the Semitic deity or deities called Baal. Often in the plural form *Baalim* the word contemplated the presiding gods in various localities. Later it came to be used for one supreme god in the pantheon, El. His symbol was the rock. His female counterpart and consort was Ashtaroth, who was called Astarte by the Chaldeans. She was the goddess of fertility. Her emblem was the tree trunk. Associated with her worship was the *Asherah* (KJV "grove"), which were also paid homage. The Canaanites were animists who believed that the very presence of these pagan gods dwelt in the natural objects identified with them. Wooded areas with adjoining "high places" provided the common locations for their rites, except where a temple had been raised to this end. Houses of worship were quite

splendid in seafaring Phoenicia, and some were built by the royal family of Omri in Israel. Fertility rites, which included both male and female prostitution, dominated the form of worship. Infant sacrifice was practiced. This included the burying of infants alive in funerary jars under the cornerstones of houses to dedicate them, and the practice of cutting the throats of babies to drain the blood for the altars of Baal. Large vats that served this purpose have been uncovered: thus testifying to the brutality and inhumanity of Canaanite religion. Other abominations were observed, such as the boiling of lambs in the milk of their mother, etc. It is no wonder that God commanded Israel to drive the Canaanites out of the land, and forbid them from intermarriage with so brutal a race. Unfortunately, Israel failed to fulfill the commands, and Baalim plagued the nation almost throughout its history!

The period of the Judges, the Dark Ages of Israelitish history, was often marked by periods of rampant idolatry as Judges 2:11-13 shows. A low mark came when a grandson of Moses, named Jonathan, officiated at an altar dedicated to idols and *teraphim* on behalf of Micah the Ephraimite and later on behalf of the tribe of Dan, even at the time the Tabernacle of God stood at Shiloh! Samuel, near the close of the period, successfully convinced the people for a time to renounce the false gods of the heathen in 1 Samuel 7:3,4. Saul the son of Kish prosecuted a fervent repression of sorcery, witchcraft, and divination, which things God expressly admonished Israel to avoid (Deut. 17), but toward the end of his life Saul, forsaken by Him whom he had forsaken, turned to the witch at Endor for counsel and guidance (1 Sam. 28). Thus, the first king of the United Monarchy transgressed and died!

Solomon's once enlightened reign was marred near its close through foolish marriage policies. He married foreign wives, who brought their idol worshipping ways with them. Solomon pacified them by building temples and rearing altars to the pagan deities. He "went after Ashtaroth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites" (1 Kings 11:5). After the division of the kingdom, of which his policies were a catalyst, Solomon's successors struggled with idolatry. In the Northern

Kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam the son of Nebat reinstated calf worship with the same cry as before (1 Kings 12:28). He placed a calf each in Dan and Bethel, appointed the lowliest of the people to his new priesthood, established a special feast day for the 15th day of the 8th month, and built an house of “high places” at Bethel as the royal center of the religion. It became so entrenched in Israel that it remained active until the Assyrian Captivity in 722 B.C. and exercised dominance for the most part even over Baal worship. It became “the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin” (1 Kings 12:30; 16:26). Baal’s chief advocacy came from the house of Omri, whose son Ahab married the daughter of Ithbaal, the priest-king of Sidon. Ahab adopted the religion of Jezebel, who stirred him up to sell himself to do evil. He enfranchised Baalim and built a magnificent temple to the pagan god. Only the great contest on Carmel with the Prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18) and the brutal and devious work of Jehu (2 Kings 10) pruned back the vine of Baal worship. Jehu, however, persisted in Jeroboam’s calf religion. In the days of Jehoahaz, his son, *Asherah* worship is still observed alongside calf worship, but in a subservient form (2 Kings 13:6). At the same time, worship of Jehovah was continued by the Israelites, as well as that of the heavenly bodies and their host, the fire-gods, divination, etc. Often these were combined in a syncretistic form. 2 Kings 17 provides a catalogue of the various idolatries in both Israel and Judah.

The Southern Kingdom of Judah was subject to periods of rebellion against God and of reformation back to God. Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, sanctioned Baal worship. His wife Maacah, serving as queen mother till the time of Asa, was a devotee of *Asherah* worship (2 Chron. 15:16). Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was the very image of her heathen mother. The joining “in affinity” between the house of Omri and that of David under Jehoshaphat almost led to the destruction of the Messianic line (cf. 2 Chron. 23). The later reforms of Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah were offset by Amaziah, who brought in the idols of Edom to be adored in Jerusalem; Ahaz, who adopted Assyrian gods and brought an Aramaean altar to the Jerusalem Temple in usurpation of the place

of the brazen altar of Jehovah God; Manasseh, who was a worshipper of the fire-gods and filled Jerusalem with the blood of innocents; and Amon, who walked in the ways of his father Manasseh! The successors of Josiah all permitted idolatry to flourish without opposition. Jeremiah lamented to the people, "...upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot" (Jer. 2:20). All the prophets of God cried out against idol worship—Isaiah, Micah, Ezekiel, Amos, Hosea, et.al.—but the nation would not cleanse its ways. Babylonian Captivity thus ended their independence for centuries to come.

In Babylon, contact and conflict with the Chaldaean religion occurred. Nebuchadnezzar II set up an image on the plain of Dura in Babylonia. When the three Hebrew children of Daniel 3 refused to pay homage to it, they were cast into a fiery furnace. The story of their deliverance is well known. The Babylonians, being descended from the Old Chaldaeans and Sumerians, for the most part observed the same practices as their forebears. Marduk and Ishtar were especially revered in Babylon proper. The Medo-Persians, borrowing the virtues of the more moderate Persians, were far more principled and disciplined in life and religion. Under Cyrus the Great no state religion was pressed upon the conquered peoples, but certain dispensations and favors were granted to all, as evidenced by the famed Cyrus Cylinder. This attitude was especially manifest toward the Jews, to whom the famous Edict of Cyrus granted the right to return and rebuild the Temple of God in Jerusalem. For almost 400 years after, there was little conflict with the vanities of other nations. When such finally arose, it came from the land of Greece by way of the Seleucidae under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who sought to compel Jewry to accept the worship of Bacchus and renounce the worship of God. He desolated and desecrated the Temple. Judaism was brought into conflict with Hellenism. Many Jews compromised with the efforts of Antiochus and his successors and joined in with the riotous life-styles associated with the Hellenists. The Sadducee party was premised on the combining of Judaism with Hellenistic views. Others resisted, and were led in this resistance by the Maccabaeian family. The party of the Chasidim was

produced through, the effort. This party became known later as the Pharisees.

The CHRISTIAN AGE. It is in the midst of this conflict between Judaism and Hellenism that the Christian system finds its birth. The Son of God sent the early disciples “into all the world” to preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15,16). Beginning at Pentecost in Acts 2 they commenced this great task. The truth of the Gospel would come face to face in conflict with the religious ideas of the day, and indeed did so! To the Jew, who wished to hold to the vestiges of Judaism despite its fulfillment and end in Christ, the Gospel was a stumbling block. To the Greek it was foolishness, because it did not accord with his materialistic philosophies. The worship of Zeus, Artemis, Apollos, Bacchus, Poseidon, and Aphrodite made more sense. Engaging in the revelries and excesses of the Mystery Cults were deemed more practical. To a world in cynicism carnality is the only virtue, pleasure the ultimate end! Only the pseudo-noble Stoics offered an alternate view in the Hellenic world, but they seem to find perverse pleasure in physical sufferings—the kind which would give rise to monasteries and nunneries long after the pagan religions of Rome and Greece had collapsed. But by and large the, dominant view of things within the pagan world of the New Testament era was a concern for pleasure, for the here and now! The religious rites of the sundry cults reflected that concern.

Fertility cults flourished in the major centers. The temple of Aphrodite at Corinth employed over 1000 prostitutes who plied their trade for the coffers of the temple. Homosexuality abounded in many of the cults. Rome itself became a center for every foul and evil practice. The Romans brought the Oriental religions and popular Egyptian cults, like that of Isis, to Rome, where they found willing acceptance. The great Cicero bemoaned the pollution of Roman minds and mores with these “new” religions. The words of the Apostle John in Revelation 18:2,3 would well suit the moral and spiritual condition of Rome in the days of the Apostles and the generations following them.

The great centers of learning in the Hellenic world were not untouched by the carnal religions. Alexandria had its share of

heathen temples, as also did Damascus and Antioch of Syria. Perhaps, the most notable in the Scriptures is the condition of Athens, which “was wholly given unto idols” (Acts 17:16). An altar was even set up to the “Unknown God” lest the Athenians fail to reverence one and move him to anger. An altar of this nature has also been uncovered in Asia Minor: thus showing that it was a common practice among the Greeks. The region of Galatia bears evidence of widespread idolatry at that time. The incident at Lystra in Acts 14, where the people mistook Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus for incarnations of Zeus and Hermes, evidences the superstitious inclinations of the populace of the region. But eventually, Christianity triumphed over the ancient religions of Rome and Greece. Pliny the Younger in a letter to Trajan in the early Second Century A.D. bemoaned the fact that Christians were everywhere to be found, while the temples of his ancestors were forsaken by the people!

The major threat to the church respecting idolatry came from the imperial cultus, which arose out of the policy of Orientalism followed by Vespasian and his successors. Twelve major persecutions instituted by imperial decree confronted the church; at least ten of these were specifically designed to enforce the worship of the Genius of the emperor and destroy Christianity, which was deemed to be a *religio illicita* “an illegal religion.” By the power of the Gospel and the providence of God, the Church and Christ triumphed over Rome and Caesar! Constantine the Great ended the persecutions with the famed Edict of Milan in 312.

CONCLUSION. Idolatry has had a long and varied history through the ages, but in every period has always been a curse to humanity. Barbarity, murder, immorality, and impiety have always attended its observance in whatever forms it was manifested. This was true from its earliest beginnings and throughout the succeeding ages, as we have seen

THE HISTORY AND GROWTH OF SATAN WORSHIP

Garry K. Brantley



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Since the 1960s, American fascination in the occult has grown considerably. The term “occult” is derived from to Latin “occultus” and denotes that which is hidden, secret and mysterious, and should not be misunderstood with the term “cult.”¹ Witchcraft, spiritualism, demon possession with its companion exorcism, and Satanism belong to the general category entitled, “The Occult.”

Surely, such a “highly intellectual” and “technologically advanced” nation as America, would leave the mysterious practices of witchcraft, crystal balls, and “hexes” buried in the dark ages! However, the brutal and ritualistic murder of actress Sharon Tate in 1969 by Charles Manson and his gruesome gang, rudely awakened America to something thought impossible—Satan worship.² Subsequently, it has been reported that “the United States probably harbors the fastest growing and most highly organized body of Satanists in the world.”³ Even more alarming is the evidence suggesting that, though the number of practicing Satanists is relatively few, these people are probably in every community in the United States.⁴ Organized Satanism, publicly avowing allegiance to Lucifer is a force with which the people of God must reckon.

The Bible repeatedly warns Christians against the devil's schemes in his efforts to turn souls from God and embrace his unholy cause. Peter, who was quite familiar with the devil's subversive ambitions (Luke 22:31-32), described Satan as the archenemy of God's people stalking them as a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8). The apostle Paul described the armour of God which we must don if we are successfully to stand against the evil one (Eph. 6:11-13). Though there are those who acquiesce to Satan (1 Tim. 5:15), we are assured that a constant resistance of the devil will result in his defeat and flight from us (Jas. 4:7). These passages are most pertinent in light of our struggle against an organized movement devoted to evil which is currently sweeping our nation. Satanism is a real threat to our family, nation, and souls, therefore, we must be aware of its presence and be armed to combat it. In this lecture we will give a brief history of modern Satan Worship, its basic tenets, its recruiting methods, and a Christian's response to it.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The worship of Satan and dabbling in the demonic are not Twentieth Century phenomena. In fact, from the dawn of time, Satan has enjoyed a following.

Ancient History

The so-called gods to whom the Canaanites paid tribute were equated with devils (Deut. 32:17). Israel's flirtations with pagan deities led them down a darkened path tainted with the blood of their own children whom they sacrificed to Canaanitish idols (Psa. 106:37-38). It should be noted that the Psalmist, in typical Hebrew poetry, by means of synonymous parallelism, equated those idols with demons. Jehovah also prohibited his people from occult practices including witchcraft, augury, and necromancy (Deut. 18:9-14). Many of the practices and morbid rituals of some modern Satanists are familiar to the abominations of the Canaanites for which they were destroyed.

The development of Zoroastrianism (ca. 538 B.C.), with its dualistic philosophy, ultimately contributed to the worship of Satan. Zarathustra, which the Greeks changed to Zoroaster, averred that the whole universe with its innumerable aspects is divided between two

cosmic forces or deities: (1) the supremely good deity known as Ahura Mazda; and, (2) the supremely evil deity known as Angra Mainyav.⁵ Practitioners of this religion were devoted to the worship of Ahura Mazda but they acknowledged the presence and power of Angra Mainyav. This dualistic belief gradually invaded Christian lands to Western Europe in which it became the basis for belief in demon possession and worship.⁶

Christian Era

Much of the thrust of Zoroastrianism was incorporated into Gnosticism which boasted of several sects some of which paid homage to the devil. One such Gnostic sect was the Ophites (Gr. ophis meaning serpent), the Naaseenes (Heb. Naas meaning serpent) being one of its sub-sects. The Ophites shared with the Gnostics the general belief in dualism, the Demiurgus (i.e. Jehovah), conflict of spirit and matter, and other concepts common to this esoteric school. The Ophites abhorred the Demiurgus or Jehovah of the Old Testament, but considered the serpent which introduced “knowledge” to humanity and thereby freedom from Jehovah’s control, the great benefactor of the human race and, therefore, worshipped him.⁷ Like modern Satan those who entered the Ophite sect, were obligated to utter curses against Jesus.⁸ It is easy to see why the Gnostics were so vehemently denounced by early Christian writers (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Pet. 2; Jude) as they stood opposed to everything sacred to Christianity.

Middle Ages

The teaching of Gnostic sects which pledged allegiance to the devil, continued to plague the Christian community and was fully developed as an anarchist organization by the Middle Ages.⁹ By this time, the papacy had approved the use of inquisitors in their search for such heretics. The inquisition was actually nothing more than a forced confession by means of unimaginable torture which often resulted in the execution of the innocent. Such atrocities committed in the name of “righteousness,” provided impetus to wide-spread rebellion against religious authorities, resulting in the growth of Satan worship.¹⁰ Many of the rituals practiced by modern Satanists (i.e. the Black Mass, sexual perversion, animal and human sacri-

fices, drinking of blood, and consumption of human flesh), grew out of this era.

Modern Satanism

Beginning with the 1960s, interest in and practices of the occult have enjoyed an unprecedented revival in America rivaling the Middle Ages.¹¹ In 1966, a number of destructive events occurred in America. In this year, Thomas J. J. Altizer, professor at Emory University, promulgated his “God is dead” doctrine; the Sexual Freedom League was established; the hippie element developed their “free love” culture; and Anton Szandor LaVey founded the Church of Satan in San Francisco, California.¹² The cultural upheaval of the 60s in which traditional values were questioned, provided fertile soil for the roots of Satanism. Though Satanism was present in America prior to the debut of LaVey’s organization, he is one with whom Satanism is usually associated.

Since 1966, which LaVey proclaimed; “I Anno Satanas” (i.e. the first year of Satan), organized Satan worship has enjoyed an alarming growth. In fact, it has been reported that Satanism may be the fastest growing anti-religion in America, boasting of approximately fifteen thousand members of known Satanic cults, but, due to their secretive nature, it is impossible to estimate the exact number.¹³ LaVey discontinued releasing figures of those associated with the First Church of Satan in 1970, but estimated that there were approximately 2 million practitioners in 1975.¹⁴ That did not include the individual Satanists disassociated from his organization! No one knows the present figure of practicing Satanists, but, we are confident, the number is overwhelming!

BASIC TENETS

There are varying degrees of Satanists; from the adolescent dabblers as a means of rebellion, progressing to the organized Satan worshippers as headed by LaVey culminating with the truly sinister and deadly cults which engage in animal and human mutilation.¹⁵ However, “The Satanic Bible” written by Anton LaVey and published by Avon Books in 1969, is a literary ground of communality upon which Satanic cults stand. This virulent volume coupled with

its corrupt companion, “The Satanic Rituals,” sets forth the basic tenets and practices of the Church of Satan.

Basic Philosophy

According to LaVey, Satanism is a “blatantly selfish brutal religion. It is based on the belief that man is inherently a selfish, violent creature, that life is a Darwinian Struggle for survival of the fittest, that the earth will be ruled by those who fight to win.”¹⁶ His sinister “Satanic Bible” sets forth the particulars of that philosophy. The Church of Satan requires each member to endorse nine Satanic statements in which indulgence and revenge are applauded but kindness and humility are decried.¹⁷

One section of the Satanic Bible entitled “The Book of Satan,” is actually an inversion and mockery of the beloved sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), beginning with blasphemous statements regarding God and Jesus Christ.¹⁸ One example will suffice to demonstrate the total disregard LaVey and followers have for God’s holy precepts. Jesus taught; “...whoso ever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also,” and to “...love your enemies, bless them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” in Matthew 5:39,44 respectively. However, the Satanic Bible asserts; “Hate your enemies with a wholeheart, and if a man smite you on one cheek, SMASH him on the other!; smite him hip and thigh, for self-preservation is, the highest law!”¹⁹

Satanism, according to LaVey, advocates sexual activity: in which individual desires are satisfied.²⁰ In fact, the Satanic Church is a haven for transvestites, homosexuals, sexual abusers and every other sexual pervert.²¹ Sociologist Marcello Truzzi observed that one variety of Satanism consists primarily of sex clubs that embellish their orgies with Satanist rituals²² though LaVey claims his group no longer sponsors sexual activities.²³ Obviously, LaVey does not consider employing a nude woman as an altar during his weekly ceremonies a sexual activity!

Most modern Satanists are avowed atheists, believing in neither God nor the devil, LaVey assures.²⁴ LaVey contends that God is nothing more than an impersonal force that balances the universe, demonstrating no concern for the creatures inhabiting this ball of

dirt on which we live²⁵ and Satan is merely a symbol of man's controlling his own destiny rather than acceding to the pressures of society.²⁶ As a corollary to these concepts of God and Satan, eschatology plays an allegorical role in modern Satanism. According to LaVey, hell is not an actual place of eternal torment nor is heaven a veritable habitation of bliss. Rather, hell and heaven are earthly experiences of misery and pleasure respectively.²⁷

Satanic Rituals

The ceremonies associated with modern Satanism did not originate with LaVey, but date back to the Fourteenth Century. During this time Satanic cults were composed primarily of peasants who strongly reacted against the oppressive teachings of the Catholic Church. A veritable explosion of witchcraft and Satan worship occurred during this darkened era complete with the witches' "sabbat" and the "Black Mass."²⁸ These rituals, all with sexual overtones, symbolized complete opposition to the Catholic Church.

The "Black Mass," which LaVey is reluctant to perform,²⁹ was a ritual parody and mockery of the Catholic Mass. In this ritual, an inverted cross was displayed; a nude woman was used as an altar, the host, or wafer, symbolizing the body of Christ was subjected to indescribable desecration; a cup containing urine and other bodily discharges was used for a chalice; and, the Latin mass was recited backwards, invoking Satan rather than Christ.³⁰ The modern "Black Mass," does not approach the vulgarities of its ancient predecessor, though its continued purpose is to ridicule Christ and the church.

A typical Satanist meeting is held on Friday night—the day on which Jesus was crucified. Members donned in black robes, gather in the "ritual chamber" adorned with Satanic symbols as the inverted cross and pentagram, which represent the demise of Christianity and the goat's head respectively. The ritual centers around a couch on which a nude woman is reclined, symbolizing fleshly fulfillment. One popular ritual of LaVey's cult is the "Invocation of Lust," in which "Black Magic charms" are employed to assist members with sexual conquests over people they desire. Members who use such charms are encouraged to relate their success at the next meeting.³¹

Though LaVey does not condone Satanic cults which engage in animal and human sacrifice, many such atrocities are justified by LaVey's "Satanic Bible."³² It has been estimated that between the years 1965 and 1975, there was over one hundred murders thought to have been associated with some occult organization or practice.³³ Tales of ritualistic murder, suicide, child abuse, rape, and torture are attributed to Satanic activity.³⁴ Indeed, the morbid fruits of Satan worship!

RECRUITING METHODS

Having seen the depths of degradation to which those associated with Satanism will go, surely only the weird and wacky element of our society is involved! Not so! In fact, many practitioners of Satanism are highly educated and considered "respectable" citizens. To illustrate, Michael Aquino, holder of the Ph.D. in political science, a college professor, and a career military reservist whose assignments frequently involve psychological operations is an avowed Satanist.³⁵ He has recently established the "Temple of Set"—a rival organization of LaVey's.

Dr. Ronald Enroth, specialist in occultic groups, portrays the average member as follows: (1) from the middle to upper middle class economic bracket; (2) has lived in the average American home; (3) has a structured religious background; (4) has a history of emotional problems; and, (5) considers religious institutions to be lacking in spiritual depth meaning.³⁶ Perhaps in light of the reasons for Satanic association, some of our brethren will scrutinize their social-gospel and athletic oriented programs. People long for SPIRITUAL depth and meaning! The point to be underscored is that Satanism has a cross-cultural appeal and is not limited to a particular socio-economic group. It offers power, pleasure, wealth, and other gratifications of the flesh, which appeal to all (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 5:16-26). Notice some of the avenues through which Satanic cults operate to spread their diabolical philosophies:

Music

God recognizes the effect of music, thus, he commanded his children to "teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"

(Col. 3:16). Songs such as “Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All” and “Mansion Over The Hilltop” have motivated numerous Christians to better service to God. Surely we see the effectiveness of music. We might also add; so does the devil! There is no need to categorically condemn all popular “Rock and Roll” songs but some modern “Rock” bands are devoted to Satan as the lyrics of their songs indicate.

Many “heavy metal” bands sing of illicit sex, drugs, and anarchy. It was reported that in a 1983 concert by KISS, the group screamed to the audience, “Do you care what your parents think of us?” The audience responded loudly and in unison; “NO!” The group then asked, “Do you care what your preacher thinks of us?” Again, the audience answered; “NO!”³⁷ They should have inquired into Jesus’ estimation of them! One such group entitled “Slayer” have encouraged rape and murder in one of their songs.³⁸ Parents must not allow themselves to fall into the “Well, that’s just music” syndrome because the message of the music has proved effective!

Movies/TV

The average teenager will watch 22,000 hours of television before high school graduation and the average fifteen-year-old has witnessed 13,000 deaths and hundreds of violent crimes via television.³⁹ To this can be added the hours of movies such as “Friday the 13th,” “Halloween,” (et al.) in which gruesome murders are vividly portrayed on the screen. This serves to desensitize our society to the sanctity of life. If the devil is successful in deceiving a people into lowering their moral standards, he has gained a monumental victory. This, to a large degree, he has accomplished.

Movies replete with Satanic overtones, such as “Rosemary’s Baby,” “The Exorcist,” “The Omen,” and others, appealed to our nation’s macabre fascination in the occult. “Rosemary’s Baby” in which Anton LaVey appeared as the devil, was considered the “best paid commercial for Satanism since the Inquisition.”⁴⁰ By such productions, people’s fascination in the occults is fed, leading many to dabble in the demonic.

Fantasy Games

“Dungeons and Dragons” is a popular fantasy game in which the participants create powers and strategies to assist their victory. In this game, unlike most others, the villain is more likely to win. Characters with evil, violent powers have a much better chance of survival and gain more points. It is analogous to watching an old “Western” and hoping that the “villain in black” will kill the “hero in white” and wreak havoc upon the innocent. Should we not question games which promote wickedness and belittle righteousness?

To many, such games seem innocent, however, they have proven to be deadly. Sean Simmons, presently the youngest inmate on death row, began his decline into the depths of Satanism when he began playing “Dungeons and Dragon.” He became so obsessed with his evil character that he was no longer able to distinguish between fantasy and reality, becoming isolated from his family until the fateful night he murdered his own parents.⁴¹ The basic philosophy of Satanism is emboldened by such fantasy games.

Printed Matter

The printed page is a most effective tool in promoting one’s philosophy and Satanism is taking full advantage of America’s “freedom of speech.” By 1975, a monthly journal consisting of intellectual discourses developing Satanism entitled “The Cloven Hoof,” was received by over 20,000 subscribers.⁴² By 1977, the “Satanic Bible” had circulated over 300,000 copies in America alone.⁴³ Other titles authored by the prolific writer Anton LaVey include: “Satanic Rituals,” “The Complete Witch,” and “The Devil’s Avenger” all of which promulgate Satanism. There are also numerous bookstores filled with volumes dealing with the occult, dispersed across our nation. Obviously, in light of the enormous circulation of Satanic materials, someone is reading (and believing) it!

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

After perusing the evidence of organized Satanic activity in our country, there is no place for complacency regarding this matter. Our children, nation and eternal salvation are at stake. We are in a

constant battle with darkness and must not allow our shields of faith to slip (Eph. 6:11-16). Notice some facts of which we need to be aware in combating Satan and his followers:

1. Satan is real and always appears as man's adversary, not his benefactor. Unlike LaVey's allegorical devil, Satan is a real being and the perennial enemy of truth and right. "Satan" in both Hebrew (*satan*) and Greek (**satanas**), means adversary and "devil" (Gr. *diabolos*) denotes "accuser" and adversary. He is also called the Enemy (Matt. 13:39); Evil One (Matt. 13:19,38); Tempter (Matt. 4:1-3); Adversary (1 Pet. 5:8), and other designations implying his destructive nature. His desire is to keep everyone from the joys of salvation (Luke 8:12).

2. God is not a mere impersonal force of nature, having no concern for humanity. Rather, God is the supreme ruler of the universe. The power of Satan is vastly inferior to Jehovah who shall "reign forever and ever" (Ex. 15:18). Since the creation, the "eternal power and divinity" of Jehovah have been perceived (Rom. 1:20). The Bible suggests that Satan sought to overthrow God but was unsuccessful and was cast out of the heavenly realm (cf. Ezek. 28:11-19). In light of Calvary, who would dare assert that God "has no concern for the little creatures inhabiting this ball of dirt" (John 3:16; 19:16-30)?! Contrarily, the longsuffering and mercy of God have been fully demonstrated in his dealings with rebellious mankind (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9).

3. Parents should appreciate the full weight of their God-given responsibility in rearing their children. According to Dr. Ronald Enroth's profile of cult devotees, the average Satanist comes from a broken home, underscoring once again the desperate need for strong Christian homes in combating this deadly force. Fathers are charged to "provoke not their children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Mothers are instructed to fulfill their domestic role which, sadly, many today are neglecting (1 Tim. 2:9-15; Titus 2:4-5). Women certainly have the prerogative to pursue careers outside the home (cf. Acts 16:14), but not to the neglect of their heavenly responsibility to the family. We are rearing a generation of "day care orphans" to whom Satanism

will appeal as it offers a family atmosphere which children so desperately need!

4. We have been assured that righteousness will ultimately prevail over wickedness. The entire theme of the book of Revelation is to demonstrate that the righteous, though often persecuted, will enjoy an eternity of bliss but that the old serpent and his disciples will meet their eternal demise (cf. Rev. 6: 10; 21:7,27). It was said of Moses that he chose a life of difficulties with God, rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25). Moses chose such a difficult path because he “had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb. 11:26). In short, Moses understood that the things of this world are temporal and subject to destruction, but the things of above are eternal (cf. 1 John 2:15-17). We should choose our master in light of eternity!

5. A life lived for the flesh is not as wonderful as the devil would have us believe. Solomon concluded that a life apart from God, even with all the luxuries of this world, is deficient (Eccl. 1:2). However, by fearing God and keeping his commandments, one may experience a full and happy life (Eccl. 12:13-14). Sin is a ruthless master paying wages of death (Rom. 6:23). We must not allow ourselves to be deceived, sowing to the flesh is destructive—in this life and the one to come (Gal. 6:8-18)!

CONCLUSION

Christians should be alarmed at the growth of this insidious movement. However, we must always remember that, because of the work of Jesus Christ, Satan has no more power over death (Heb. 2:14-15), rather, the child of God is assured a victory over sin and the grave (1 Cor. 15:55-57). Satan and his demonic hosts no longer have the ability to possess individuals as in the First Century, therefore, they cannot be exploited through Satanic ceremonies or rituals. Jesus Christ and his apostles forcibly exhibited heaven’s power over the demonic world (cf Luke 10:17-20). The devil may control an individual only to the extent and degree that he is allowed. Furthermore, God restricts Satan from tempting man beyond his ability to withstand (1 Cor. 10: 13). We are assured that if we “resist the devil, he will flee from us” (Jas. 4:7). A quotation

from the beloved Paul will serve as a splendid conclusion: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:13)!

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SHOULD OUR DESIRE BE TO WORSHIP GOD OR TO ENTERTAIN MEN?

Ira Y. Rice, Jr.



Born August 3, 1917, at Franklin, Texas, Ira Y. Rice, Jr., is the son of Ira Y. Rice, Sr., and the former Eula Edna Davis. Baptized at the age of 12 by A. R. Holton, at Norman, Oklahoma, Rice began preaching while yet a boy, in 1932. After ministries at Noble and Paul's Valley, Oklahoma; Edcouch and Mercedes, Texas; Paso Robles, San Rafael, Richmond and San Francisco, California; and Seattle, Washington, he went, in 1955, to plant the churches of Christ in Singapore, Malaysia, and Southeast Asia.

Having now been preaching for some 58 years, Rice is the editor of two monthly periodicals—**Contending for the Faith** and the **Far East/World Evangelism Newsletter**—and also the author of several books, including **God's Truth on Elders. We CAN Evangelize the World**, and **Axe on the Root—Volumes I, II and III**. Co-founder and second President of Four Seas College of Bible and Missions, In Singapore, he has served as Chairman of its Board of Directors since 1968, and as missionary to the Far East under oversight of the Elders of the Bellview church of Christ, of Pensacola, Florida.

When we get right down to it, for man to be acceptable unto God, not just one consideration, but two, are necessary (1) whether what we *want* to do is *according to God's will* and (2) whether our *motivation* for doing what we do is to, *please God or ourselves*.

In a former day, when it seems to me that most of our brethren were more concerned with pleasing God than we are now, we used to sing a song written by brother August Taylor, seldom heard any more, which helped to keep such thoughts in mind. Evidently based on what Paul wrote in Colossians 3:17, and entitled “Do All in the Name of the, Lord,” it went like this:

Whate'er you do in word or deed,
Do all in the name of the Lord;
Do naught in name of man or creed,
Do all in the name of the Lord.
Be not deceived by worldly greed,

Do all in the name of the Lord;
The Spirit says "in word or deed,"
Do all in the name of the Lord.

If you are toiling for a crown,
Do all in the name of the Lord;
O do not trust in world-renown,
Do all in the name of the Lord.

Till toil and labors here are done,
Do all in the name of the Lord;
Dear Christian friends, if you'd be one,
Do all in the name of the Lord.

CHORUS: Do all in His name, the name of the Lord,
Do all in the name of the Lord;
In word or deed, as God decreed,
Do all in the name of the Lord.

The same principle should apply in worship as applies in everything else that we do. The only way we have of knowing what pleases God is to go to his word, and what we find authorized thereby, do it! A similar thought is found in James 4:13-15, wherein we are instructed,

Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

I. BY PLEASING SELF RATHER THAN GOD, SIN CAME INTO THE WORLD.

Going all the way back to the garden of Eden, although God allowed men to please himself in everything else in the garden, yet he restricted him in just one thing, saying,

...Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it. for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:16-17).

Was not God being gracious to man to permit him to eat of every fruit but the one that would kill him? It would seem so. Yet, it did not take man long to forget (or ignore) what God had said, and start pleasing himself by "doing his own thing." In Genesis 3:1-6 we read the account:

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her. and he did eat.

All of us know the rest of the story. No sooner had the eyes of them both been opened, and they knew that they were naked, and sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons than they “heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.” When God called for Adam, we know the conversation that ensued.

When Adam explained hiding himself “because I was naked,” the Lord God said, “Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” Adam said, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” Whereupon the Lord God asked Eve, “What is this that thou hast done?” And Eve said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”

Adam blamed the woman, and the woman blamed the serpent; however, it should be evident that neither had anyone to blame but himself. It was through pleasing (entertaining) self rather than God that “sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men...” (Rom. 5:12). The Lord not only pronounced a curse upon the serpent for tempting Eve, but upon Eve for listening to the serpent, and upon Adam for hearkening unto his wife. Not only did God condemn the serpent, saying, “...upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life,” but, lest he put forth his hand, and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever,

the Lord God drove out the man from the garden of Eden placing cherubim and a flaming sword, “to keep the way of the tree of life.”

II. SECOND RECORDED SIN HAD TO DO WITH WORSHIP

As inconsequential as what we do or do not in worship appears to some, the fact that God singled worship out relative to man’s second recorded sin would appear to be of some significance. Let us study the story of Cain and Abel.

Genesis 4:1-7 tells us of the birth of these first sons of Adam and Eve. Abel was a “keeper of sheep,” but Cain was a “tiller of the ground.”

...And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door...

Just why God wanted animal sacrifice rather than an offering of the fruit of the ground we are not told. From the context, however, it is clear that Cain should have known this. Cain, like so many today, seemed to have the idea that worship is worship; and God should be pleased with whatever I offer him, just so it pleases me. But God presented the matter as something differing between “doing well” and “doing not well.” Abel and Cain both made “an offering unto the Lord.” In Abel’s case, he offered what pleased the Lord; so the Lord had respect both to him and his offering. In the case of Cain, he offered what pleased himself, so the Lord refused to accept him. In fact, the Lord viewed such an offering as “sin [lying] at the door.”

III. NADAB AND ABIHU OFFERED “STRANGE FIRE”

From Leviticus, we learn a lesson similar to the one from Cain and Abel. Aaron had two sons—Nadab and Abihu. Being sons of Aaron, surely they must have known the instructions that God had given him regarding the altar of incense. In Exodus 30:7-9, we read,

...And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations. Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon...

As clear as these instructions are, whatever possessed Nadab and Abihu to try to worship God in a manner contrary to what he had said! Yet, from Leviticus 10:1-2, we read,

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

This may seem like a lesson learned the hard way; however, from the next few verses, we see that God was never more serious, relative to worship, than that he should be obeyed. Hence, Moses said unto Aaron,

...This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp. So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said.

And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled. And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.

IV. JOSHUA IMPRESSES ISRAEL AGAINST SERVING FALSE GODS

Following the death of Moses, the great leader of Israel became Joshua. When Joshua, in turn, grew old and stricken in years, he reminded Israel of how “the Lord your God hath fought for you,” exhorting them, “Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left...” (Joshua 23:6). Although

he spoke of all the good things that the Lord had done for them, yet, if they forsook the Lord and started worshipping false gods again, he warned Israel that

...so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you (Verses 15-16).

In chapter 24, we see Joshua as he gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, calling for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before the Lord. Saying, “thus saith the Lord,” Joshua rehearsed God’s centuries-long dealings with Israel from the time of Terah, the father of Abraham, down to the then-present time, concluding,

... Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods...we also [will] serve the Lord; for he is our God... (Verses 14-18).

Having thus emphasized and re-emphasized the absolute necessity of giving up strange gods to serve the Lord, it came to pass that Joshua died, being 110 years old. He must have made his point with all who heard him upon that solemn occasion, for verse 31 declares that “Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel.”

V. A LATER GENERATION FORSOOK THE LORD AND SERVED FALSE GODS

As long as that generation lived, the people of Israel put away their “strange gods” and “inclined their heart unto the Lord.” However, once that generation died, “there arose another generation after

them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel,” which led them into apostasy.

In Judges 2:11-15, we read what happened, as follows:

...And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

In order to bring them back from their apostasy, the Lord raised up judges. As long as they would hearken unto the judge, the Lord would deliver them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. However, when they would not hearken unto the judge, but went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them, turning quickly out of the way in which their fathers walked in obeying the commandments of the Lord, God would let their enemies overcome and enslave them until they were ready to repent once again.

Over and over and over again these later generations of Israel went through this same, sad cycle. As long as their desire was to worship God, seeking not their own pleasure, the Lord blessed them; but when their desire was to worship strange gods and to please (entertain) themselves, the Lord put them down.

We all know the story of Ahab and Jezebel. 1 Kings 16:30-33 uses their false worship to illustrate their evil, saying,

...And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that went before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sime of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove, and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

It was specifically over this false worship that the prophet Elijah reproved Ahab. It came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” Elijah answered, “I have not troubled Israel: but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.”

Elijah commanded Ahab to gather all Israel together unto mount Carmel as well as the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the groves who ate at Jezebel’s table. What transpired there is one of the most remarkable and astonishing events in all history. Time does not permit going into detail; however, when the people came together, Elijah demanded, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”

He then challenged the 450 prophets of Baal to a contest that they should call upon the name of their gods, and he should call upon the name of the Lord: and the God that answered by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, “It is well spoken.”

Although the prophets of Baal called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, and from noon until evening, “there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.”

Then Elijah called upon all the people to come near him, which they did. Not only did he repair the altar that had been broken down, but he prepared the sacrifice, had it drenched with four barrels of water once, twice, and even the third time until it soaked the sacrifice, ran down around the altar, and even filled the deep trench that he had dug.

It was not until all this was accomplished that Elijah called upon the Lord to send down the fire. By then it was time for the offering of the evening sacrifice. Coming near to the altar, Elijah said,

...Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

In that instant “the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench.” With what effect? When the people saw it, as 1 Kings 18:39 records, “they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.’” Rather than compromising with those who had led the people astray after their own pleasure, the very next verse tells us that Elijah commanded, “Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.”

VI. MANY OTHER EXAMPLES COULD BE CITED

Other examples of men worshipping according to their own pleasure rather than according to God’s word might include the priests of Malachi 1, who offered “polluted bread.” Verse 6 and following records the Lord’s rebuke:

...A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if I then be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, “Wherein have we despised thy name?” Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar, and ye say, “Wherein have we polluted thee?” In that ye say, “The table of the Lord is contemptible.” And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, in it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.

Rather than desiring to worship God from their hearts, the Lord charged those priests with being motivated by greed, saying,

...Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand (Verse 10).

The Lord was determined to be exalted with a pure offering that his name should be great.

...For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts (Verse 11).

By having the wrong attitude toward worship, those accursed priests had made themselves unacceptable unto the Lord. As Malachi went on to describe what they were doing, he said,

...But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, "The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat in contemptible." Ye said also, "Behold, what a weariness is it!" and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: "Should I accept this of your hand?" saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen (Verses 12-14).

VII. IF WE SEEK TO ENTERTAIN MEN, WE CANNOT WORSHIP ACCEPTABLY

All through the New Testament, we find admonition after admonition in harmony with these Old Testament examples. We have to decide whom we are to please, men or God? In Galatians 1:10, Paul asked, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men?," concluding, "for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Those determined to turn worship into self-entertainment are, at best, carnally minded, walking after the things of the flesh. Of such, Romans 8:5-8 tells us,

...For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

They that please God, Hebrews 11:6 tells us, must do so "by faith." And faith, as we learn from Romans 10:17, still comes "by hearing the word of God."

Those who would exchange the word of God for the doctrines and commandments of men make even their worship vain. Jesus said that such are those prophesied by Isaiah, saying,

...This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:8-9).

Therefore, as 1 Peter 3:15 instructs, let us “sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [us] a reason of the hope that is in [us] with meekness and fear.” If any want to ridicule us for thus contending earnestly for the faith “as it was once delivered unto the saints,” let us remember that “it is better, if the will of God be so, that [we] suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.” We all know that genuine worship according to his word always has been acceptable unto God, whereas worship according to what pleases men never has been. Choose ye this day!

DOES MAN WORSHIP BY INSTINCT AND/OR BY REVELATION?

Stanley Ryan



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I appreciate the invitation extended by the BELLVIEW elders and brother Bobby Liddell to speak on the lectureship again this year. I believe this marvelous theme which has been chosen will strengthen individuals and congregations as they worship. I believe this lectureship will immediately have an impact and that the tapes, book, etc., will continue as powerful tools to prevent further corruptions in worship and will help stem the tide of apostasy which involves worship.

MAN IS A WORSHIPPING BEING

In studying the history of man it becomes clear that man has been in all ages and continues to be a worshipping being. Archeologists have found that regardless of man's location upon the earth and from the earliest remains (clay, tablets, objects, symbols), that religion has been a central fact of human society (For a detailed discussion of Archeology and the origin of religion see *Why We Believe The Bible* by George W. DeHoff, pp. 35-63).

Even without the Bible in hand man has shown a unique ability to deduce by perception a power or being, greater than himself. No

human society has ever been found which had no concept of a superior being. Atheism is the result of man a departure from and denial of his religious nature and his religious history.

The concept of a Supreme Being, God, so universally recognized and worshipped, can only be accounted for upon the premise that, "God, revealed His will to man when man was first created and the religions of the earth are but corruptions of this original revelation" (*Why We Believe The Bible*, p. 46). Man's continued perception of God even without the Bible can be understood in that nature's testimony of God is so strong rational man cannot deny it (Psa. 14:1; Acts 17:16-28; Rom. 1:18-21; Heb. 3:4; Acts 14:17). The Athenians perceived the existence of one superior (Acts 17) but ignorantly worshipped him. Their dim view of God was limited in that they did not know his name, nature, actions in history nor his will for man. Paul declared the true God could be known not only through nature but by revelation and thus taught them that instinct without revelation was insufficient (Acts 17:31).

MAN UNIQUELY FITTED FOR REVELATION

God created man superior to all animals and gave him dominion over them (Gen. 1:26; Psa. 8). Man was made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27). This sets man apart from and distinguishes him from the animals. Man is akin to God, to Deity (Heb. 12:9; Zech. 12:1). Man is a two-fold being, body and soul, flesh and spirit, he is composed of an outer man and an inner man (2 Cor. 4:16; Zech. 12:1; James 2:26; Gen. 35:18; Acts 9:37-39; 17:28). In God's plan, he has placed man in a position superior to any other creature that he made, "endowing him with intelligence, skill, reason and ability far above any and all other creatures of the earth; he was made different; he is different" (Ector R. Watson, *Genesis or Evolution—God's Crowning Act in Creation*, p. 21). Watson states that "man is different from the animal kingdom in at least five major points. 1. Man is made in the image and likeness of God. 2. Man's flesh is not the same as animals (1 Cor. 15:39). 3. Man's blood is different from that of animals, even that of monkeys (Acts 17:26). 4. Man is to have dominion over all other creatures that God made (Gen. 1:26; Psa. 8). 5. God addresses himself to man (Gen. 1:28;

Ibid., pp. 21-22). Man must know God to be saved from sin (John 17:3; 2 Thess. 1:8). God has revealed himself to man in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17)!

INSTINCT, A UNIQUE ANIMAL TRAIT

Instinct means “a natural aptitude or knack; as an instinct for order. 2. A natural prompting to perform any of the actions characteristic of a species or necessary to its existence; an innate rather than an acquired tendency to do something; as the web-building instinct of spiders” (*Webster’s Student Dictionary*, p. 427). The fact that instinct deals with “an innate (meaning inborn, belonging to nature: esp., not acquired from experience or instruction) rather than an acquired tendency” (*Webster’s Student Dictionary*, p. 424) shows that instinct is a basic mechanism to brute animals. However, man has intelligence to reason, think, comprehend, learn, be instructed and develop responses by experiences. Therefore, instinct is a unique animal trait which excludes reason as defined by McClintock and Strong. “Instinct, that power which acts on and impels any creature to a particular manner of conduct, not by a view of the beneficial consequences, but merely from a strong impulse, supposed to be necessary in its effects, and to be given in order to supply the place of reason” (Vol. IV, p. 617).

The evolutionist who looks at man as just another animal says “that the soul of man, like his body, is the product of purely natural operations of the laws of nature” (Byron Nelson, *After Its Kind*, p. 144). Thus, they refuse to acknowledge that man has a spiritual nature that distinguishes him widely from the dumb brute. To them any interference in the evolutionary process from a supernatural Divine source is excluded by a “logical necessity.”

Nelson says concerning instinct, “It is the instinct of every newly born offspring of mammalian parents to suck as soon as it is born. In no mammalian species is that instinct lacking. It need not, nor can it, be taught” (p. 98). Instinct in animals cannot be denied as we observe the salmon return from the ocean to their native streams or the geese migrating south for the winter. We observe the martins early in the spring and miss them so suddenly in the fall. Animals uni-

quely operate by instinct; however, man serves God by reason and revelation.

Milligan says that “Instinct in animals is a fact generally conceded by students of nature, that God has given to all animals inferior to man, a perfect guide. They have all in the gift of instinct a perfect rule of action. Under the influence of this mysterious principle every species perfectly fulfills the object of its existence. Thus, for example the bee constructs its comb and distills its honey with a degree of accuracy that baffles the skill of the most profound mathematician and the most skilled chemist” (Robert Milligan, *Reason and Revelation*, pp. 414, 415). Milligan says of man, “but to man God has given no such natural power of facilities. The infant is the most helpless and dependent creature on Earth. It learns everything by the slow process of experience and even as it grows up it commits the most serious blunders and mistakes in many areas of life. While the bees are laboring toward one and the same end, one man is pursuing wealth as their chief good and other power...and a few only are earnestly striving to attain to celestial honor and glory and immortality” (*Ibid.*, p. 415). Milligan quotes Pliny as saying, “The animals seem content to remain within the bounds of their nature yet man is full of desires and wants that extend as far as his imagination can carry him” (*Ibid.*, p. 415.).

Man does not operate by native instinct but has the intellectual ability to reason. Milligan says, “The light of Divine Revelation is therefore necessary to the solution of the problem. With its aid all is plain, clear, and satisfactory. In it we are taught that God designed himself as man’s guide, and that for this purpose and with this in view, he formed him after his own image and after his own likeness” (*Ibid.*, p. 416). Revelation therefore fits and fulfills man’s intellectual ability as it guides man in his relationship with God.

MAN HAS MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS

God made man “in his own image” (Gen. 1:27). Being in the image of God man has a moral consciousness. This consciousness is inherent (“firmly established in or as an essential part of anything; belonging by nature or settled habit; as the inherent rights of man”—*Webster’s Student Dictionary*, p. 422) within man. Animals

do not have it. A dog possesses no remorse after stealing a bone from one of his peers. Our moral consciousness may be dulled by constant abuse resulting in a hardened heart (Heb. 3:8,12). "From the smuggest atheist to the most illiterate savage, moral consciousness can be observed in that man defends some standard of right and wrong" (Wayne Jackson, *Fortify Your Faith*, p. 20). Some may object to the idea of a "law of nature or decent behavior" realizing that in recognizing such one grants the possibility of a universal moral law giver who has implanted moral sensitivity within the human heart, which depending upon how it is educated, will either accuse or excuse man (Rom. 2:14,15). The variations in moral conduct point to the fact that moral consciousness is not by instinct (which would require the same behavior of all or at least the majority). For example if one steals by instinct why do some men refuse to steal under conditions when it is almost certain they would be caught? Moral consciousness is far more powerful in controlling behavior than the abstract fear of the policeman.

MAN HAS A RELIGIOUS INCLINATION

There is a universally recognized religious inclination in man. "The religious faculty is universally (and peculiarly) a human trait" (Wayne Jackson, *Fortify Your Faith*, p. 14). Drummelo says concerning man's religious inclination: "As far back as Cicero in the first century B.C., or even earlier, pagan thinkers had observed that religion in some form or other is a universal trait in human nature...no race or tribe of man, however degraded and apparently atheistic, lacks that spark of religious capacity which may be fanned and fed into a mighty flame" (J. R. Drummelow, *The One Volume Bible Commentary*, p. ci).

But what is the origin of this religious tendency in man? George DeHoff says concerning the origin of religion that, "God gave moral laws to govern man's actions toward his fellows and positive laws to cause him to retain faith in God. These laws were so universally planted in the hearts of all people that it has been impossible for the ravages of time and sin to obliterate them. Revealed to the first people who ever lived on earth, they yet live in the heart of man" (*Why We Believe The Bible*, p. 35). The atheist believes that, "the

first gods rose through the personification of natural forces...out of the many more or less limited and mutually limiting gods there arose in the minds of men the idea of the one exclusive god of the monotheistic religions” (James Bales, *Communism: Its Faith and Fallacies*, p. 45). However, archaeologists have found that in all traceable cultures, monotheism always predates polytheism.

The atheist Robert Owens declared in his debate with Alexander Campbell that the idea of God came into the world by man’s “imagination.” However, Campbell rebutted Owens by stating “Imagination, all writers agree, has the power of analyzing, combining, compounding and newmodifying all the different ideas presented to it, but imagination has no creative power.” Campbell also quotes Hume, an unbeliever who states concerning man’s imagination, “All this creative power of the mind amounts to nothing more than the faculty of combining, transposing, augmenting, and demising the material afforded us by sense and experience” (*Campbell-Owens Debate*, pp. 123,124). Therefore, religion (the service and adoration of God or a god as expressed in forms of worship and a way of life—*Webster*, p. 691) which rests upon faith in God cannot be the result of man’s imagination. Neither is it the result of instinct but is the result of God revealing himself in nature and Revelation.

A comparison between mankind and animals in the scriptures shows that animals long for the physical whereas man longs for the spiritual. The psalmist declares, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psa. 42:1,2). The deer’s physical thirst makes him seek water, and a man’s spiritual thirst leads him with joy to “draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isa. 12:3). In another scripture the psalmist records, “Yea the sparrow hath found her house and the swallow a nest for herself...even thine altars, O Jehovah of host, my king and my God” (Psa. 84:3), indicating that the worshipper, away from the temple, was jealous of the birds who lived at the temple. Man would like to live there too: “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah: my heart and my flesh cry out unto the living

God” (Psa. 84:2) and “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house” (Psa. 84:4). Righteous men crave the presence of God.

IF MAN WORSHIPS BY INSTINCT AND WITHOUT REVELATION IS THAT WORSHIP ACCEPTABLE?

Some assume that instinct is compatible with revelation thus they follow false standards of authority. Instinct results in rebellion against God’s authority and is the sin of “will worship” (Col. 2:23). Man has a tendency to minimize the word of God (2 Kings 5:1-14; Luke 16:19-31). To some, God’s revelation is not enough (Matt. 15:9). Others want an experience beyond and apart from the word, they want leadership and guidance from some other source. They erect false standards: (1) Feelings (Prov. 14:12; 16:25; Matt. 7:21-23); (2) Consciences (Rom. 14:23; Acts 23:1); (3) Dreams and visions (Gal. 1:6-9; Jer. 23:16,31); (4) Common sense (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 3:5,6; Isa. 55:8,9); and, (5) Creeds (Gal. 1:6-9). All who practice what is not authorized by the Bible, sin in so doing (Lev. 10:1,2; 1 Chron. 15:1-5; 2 John 1:9-11) and their worship is “vain” (Matt. 15:9).

THE RESULTS OF INSTINCT VS. REVELATION

Those who follow instinct and reject the Bible are vulnerable to every kind of superstition and pseudo-prophet. Today the results can be seen in the growth of cults, oriental religions, atheism, and in the continued development of denominationalism. Ignorance of the Bible is seen in the conflicting doctrines propagated in the name of the Lord and believed by gullible people. Think of some modern statements: “The church of your choice,” “What is your faith?,” “My church,” “Our church.”

The prevalence of sin, the disgrace of adultery, the shame of homosexuality, the tragedy of drunkenness, the degrading effect of drug abuse, and the lack of respect for human life all reflect ignorance and disobedience of God’s word, the Bible.

Instinct as a standard of authority in worship will corrupt the Lord’s supper in favor of a common meal (1 Cor. 11); will make prayers vain (Luke 18:11); will reject singing (Eph. 5:19) in favor of the instrument, the chorus, the quartets; will corrupt the free will offering (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7) by “tithing,” bake sales, etc.; and,

preaching would be turned from a “thus saith the Lord” to the doctrines of men (2 Tim. 4:2-4; Matt. 15:9).

WHAT PART DOES REVELATION PLAY?

The Bible is God’s revelation to man (2 Tim. 3:16,17). It reveals God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and God’s plan to redeem man from sin (John 3:16). It reveals the origin of man (Gen. 1,2), the fall of man (Gen. 3,4), and the duty of man (Eccl. 12:13). It also reveals the worship that God desires (John 4:24,25) and what man must offer to be pleasing to God. It reveals the hope of eternal life and the damnation of hell (Matt. 25).

The Bible is God’s standard of authority. Authority is “the right to command to enforce obedience,” “that which may be appealed to for the, right to believe or act in a particular way,” “power or right to command or act: dominion; control,” the right to exercise power, “or the power of one whose will and commands must be obeyed by others” (Matt. 28:18; John 17:2; Jude 1:25; Rev. 12:10; 17:13 [Greek “exousia”]).

Man needs a standard of authority to regulate his life that he might co-exist in peace and harmony with God and man. Imagine the chaotic condition of a nation without authority. No home could survive, no business prosper, no society exist without law and order. Even in football and baseball there is the absolute necessity of a recognized standard of rules. This principal is emphatically true also in the realm of religion. The world needs a moral code of right and wrong to direct the lives of people or people become a selfish standard doing as they please at the expense of others. Remember the “golden rule” (Matt. 7:12) as it regulates the standard of personal conduct? If there is no standard of authority why shouldn’t it be “dog eat dog,” “survival of the fittest”? The moral chaos of our world today is the result of the loss of respect for authority. The greatest need in government, business, the home and the church is respect for God and his authority as our creator and lawgiver as revealed in the Bible.

Religious people are confronted with at least three seats of authority: (1) One asserts that the church is the authority. These people claim that what the church says, God says. They claim, “By

God's donation, exclusive ownership and trustee of the scriptures," and "Men must follow the church as their guide and their teacher." However, we must refute this in that God's word brought the church into existence, the church did not bring God's word into existence. The church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). (2) The subjectivist maintains that what human reason and conscience says, that is what God says. Men have often tried to "reason without God" (2 Kings 5:1-14; 1 Sam. 15:1-31). Reason and conscience both operate from information received. Either can be properly informed or uninformed. Reason and conscience are only safe guides when properly informed with Bible knowledge (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:12-16; Acts 26:9). The Bible, not the conscience, is the guide and standard of judgment (John 12:48; 2 Tim. 3:16,17). A conscience directed by truth is valuable and is not to be violated as a witness (Rom. 2:13-15; 9:1); as it decides between good and evil (Isa. 5:20; Heb. 5:12-14). One must be taught and hear and obey the truth for one's conscience to answer properly before God (Rom. 10:13-17; 1:16,17; 1 Pet. 3:20,21). (3) The Bible is the only fully complete and final authority in religion. The Bible is the word of God. The Bible claims exclusive authority and denounces anything contrary to its teachings. Paul: (1) repudiates visionary states of the fleshly mind (Col. 2:18); (2) rejects religious philosophy based on human tradition (Col. 2:8); (3) renounces false knowledge of Gnostics (1 Tim. 6:20); and (4) he reminds the Galatians that a perverted gospel is no gospel at all (Gal. 1:6-9). John warns us "not to believe every spirit, but try the spirits" (1 John 4:1). We are not to "follow a multitude to do evil" (Ex. 23:2). Bible authority is not established by an individual's honesty, sincerity, good conscience, feelings, likes or dislikes, or whether it is popular, understood, known, or done by others. In religion we do "all" in the name of the Lord (Col. 3:17) and this means "by the authority of the Lord," as the Lord has authorized in the written word, the Bible. It means we do not go beyond, fall short, seek to change or make substitutions in regard to God's revelation (2 John 1:9-11; Rev. 22:18,19; 1 Cor. 4:6). The authority of the scriptures is objective and absolute.

HOW DOES MAN RECEIVE THAT REVELATION?

God has spoken to man (Heb. 1:1,2). God has revealed himself to man. He spoke directly to Adam (Gen. 2:16) and under the Patriarchal system God worked through the fathers, the heads of the families. Under the Mosaical system, God's word was revealed to the prophets who recorded in written form God's word (2 Pet. 1:20). In the Christian age, God has spoken to us by his Son, Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18; John 14:24-26), who through the Holy Spirit gave delegated authority to the apostles (John 14:23; 16:12,13; 15:15ff; 20:21; Matt. 18:18; Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-4; Heb. 2:1-3). The apostles along with the New Testament prophets (men endowed with miraculous gifts through laying on of the apostles' hands [Acts 6:6,7; 8:17; 19:6; Rom. 1:11; 1 Tim. 1:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 1 Cor. 12,13,14]) preached God's word.

God's word was orally preached and was written with equal authority (2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Cor. 14:37; John 20:30,31). The written word of God, the Bible is: (1) God's revelation (Eph. 3:1-9); (2) God's full revelation (John 16:13); (3) God's final revelation (2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17); (5) God's all-sufficient revelation (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17); and, (6) God's judgmental revelation (John 12:48).

Man receives the revelation by accepting the Bible as the truth (John 17:17), learning truth (John 8:32), desiring to obey truth (John 7:17), receiving the word into his heart (Luke 8:11; Rom. 10:9,10), believing truth (John 8:24), repenting of sin (Luke 13:3), obeying truth (Rom. 6:16; 2 Pet. 1:22), standing upon truth (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Jude 1:3), continuing steadfastly (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 15:58), growing in grace and knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), adding the Christian graces (2 Pet. 1:5-8), bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and remaining faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10).

Without the Bible and our obedience to God's word man is: (1) In darkness and without understanding (Psa. 119:129; 1 Thess. 5:5; Eph. 5:8; John 3:19); (2) Unclean and impure (John 15:3); (3) Dead in trespasses and sin (Eph. 2:1); (4) Worldly and disobedient (Eph. 2:2); (5) Hardhearted (Heb. 3:13); (6) Lukewarm (Rev. 3:16); (7) Aliens, strangers without hope (Eph. 2:12); (8) Workers of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21); (9) Without affections (Rom. 1:31); (10) Without

spiritual food (1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12); and, (11) Lost in sin, perishing (Luke 13:3).

WHY DOES MAN WORSHIP GOD?

This may be the most challenging part of the lecture—simply to give the reason or reasons for the intent and purpose of why man worships. What reason would you give? Many people would have great difficulty in scripturally answering this question, how about you?

Man, without the Bible, worships (though vainly) to fulfill his religious inclinations and to satisfy the requirements of moral consciousness. All men perceive the existence and recognize the need for a superior Being and are inclined to offer praise. The American Indian recognized “the great spirit” and perceived of a future state “the happy hunting grounds.” Through chants and dances, they sought approval, continued protection and prosperity from the great spirit. Other societies created physical idols (wood, stone), some addressed praise to celestial objects (sun, moon, stars). The Romans deified the emperor and praised him. Only those who have been educated above their intelligence deny the existence of God and refuse to worship (Psa. 14:1).

Men who believe the Bible worship to fulfill their religious inclination and to satisfy the requirements of moral consciousness as instructed by the word of God (John 4:23,24). If we hunger and thirst for righteousness we shall be filled (Matt. 5:6).

Man worships because God commands it (Ex. 20:2-11; Deut. 6:13; Matt. 4:10).

Man worships God recognizing and acknowledging his superiority as creator and sustainer (Gen. 1:27; Acts 17:24; John 1:1-4; Acts 14:17; Matt. 5:45; Heb. 1:3).

Man worships God expressing dependence as a limited and inferior being unable to control nature, disease or death. Man seeks comfort, courage and strength to endure hardships (1 Pet. 5:7; 1 Thess. 4:18; 2 Cor. 1:3; Psa. 23:4; Heb. 4:16).

Man worships God offering praise and thanksgiving for the obvious blessings available from a supernatural being—such as life, breath, all spiritual blessings (Acts 17:25; James 1:17; Eph. 1:3).

Man worships God expressing reverence and cultivating fellowship with God and those of like precious faith (Matt. 18:20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:3). Rex Turner, Sr. said, “The obligation of Christians to assemble provides a coming together that serves to cultivate their fellowship with each other and their reverence and dedication to their God” (*The Bible None Like It—In Christian Worship*, p. 4).

Man worships God to grow in the divine nature (Psa. 135:15-18; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 1:3-11). Harvey W. Everest said, “Man always assimilates to the character of the god whom they worship” (*The Divine Demonstration*, p. 179). Rex Turner, Sr. said, “The scheme of the New Testament worship includes therefore, those items or acts or avenues of worship that not only is due a sovereign God but also are calculated to edify and encourage man in his efforts to be more like God” (*The Bible None Like It*, p. 4).

Man worships God to satisfy his spiritual appetite (Matt. 5:6; 1 Pet. 2:1,2; Psa. 42:1,2; John 7:37; Rev. 22:17) and to exercise our senses (Heb. 5:14).

Man worships God as a demonstration of submission, humility and love for God (John 14:15; Matt. 22:37; Heb. 12:28; James 4:7,10; 1 John 5:2,3). “Man worships because of his belief in a personal Deity who is the source of all goodness, who loves mankind and who rejoices in the love of his people” (G. C. Brewer, *Contending For The Faith*, p. 337).

Man worships God recognizing the avenue provided by Christ our Saviour, King, High Priest, Mediator, and Advocate (John 14:6; Heb. 10;21-23; Heb. 3:1; 2:17; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Col. 3:17).

Man worships God to get a foretaste of heaven (Rev. 4:8-11; 5:11-14; 7:9-12; Eph. 1:3; Heb. 12:22,23).

Man worships God in response to God’s desire to be worshipped (John 4:23; Matt. 4:10; Ex. 20:1-4; Deut. 6:13; Heb. 11:6).

Man worships God to give praise rather than to receive (Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5). G. C. Brewer says, “Scriptural worship’s primary purpose is not how it makes one feel but for us to give of ourselves in praise to God. It is true that we receive grace from God in true

worship. This is one of those strange paradoxes where we get by giving” (*Contending For The Faith*, p. 341).

Man worships God to avoid eternal punishment (Matt. 6:24; 7:13,21-23; John 3:3-5; Matt. 25-46; Acts 17:31).

God rejects vain worship (Matt. 15:9), ignorant worship (John 4:22; Acts 17:23), and will worship (Col. 2:23), but when man worships in “spirit and in truth” (John 4:24) he is blessed of God who “seeks such to worship him” (John 4:23).

MODERN ERRORS IN WORSHIP

It is a presumptuous sin to do things God has not authorized in worship (Psa. 19:13; Lev. 10:1-2; 2 Sam. 6). Everything we do in worship must be by the authority of God’s word (Col. 3:16-17). Our worship is to be “decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). We are not to add to nor to take from that which is written. If we refuse to abide in the doctrine of Christ we sin and are thus separated from God (2 John 1:9).

First, there are those who abuse the Lord’s Supper by: (1) Failing to observe it on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7); (2) Changing the frequency and day (once a quarter, once a year, Thursday night service); (3) Changing the emblems (water, hot dog buns, Ritz crackers); (4) Not examining one’s self, and not discerning the Lord’s body (playing, thinking of other things, seeing it as a common meal).

Second, there are those abusing singing by: (1) Adding the mechanical instruments; (2) Singing unscriptural songs; (3) Making instrumental sounds with the mouth (The vocal band); (4) Humming; (5) Special singers, solos, choruses; and, (6) Listening rather than singing.

Third, there are those abusing preaching by: (1) Not preaching God’s word; (2) Not calling men to repentance (refusing to preach on issues, marriage, divorce and remarriage); (3) Not preaching the plan of salvation; (4) Not reproving denominationalism; and, (5) Not exhorting the brethren to fulfill the mission of the church.

Fourth, there are those who abuse prayer by: (1) Vain repetition; (2) Unscriptural prayers (irreverent address “big daddy,” “bless the

denominations”); (3) Seeking to be seen of men; and, (6) Praying without faith.

Fifth, there are those who abuse giving by: (1) “Tithing”; (2) Not giving as one has been prospered; (3) Giving by constraint; (4) Giving without joy or thanksgiving; (5) Giving to pay the light bill rather than to support the cause of Christ; and, (6) Raising money by yard sales, auctions, etc., as or by the church.

Sixth, there are those who abuse worship by: (1) Being irreverent; (2) Disrupting by disorderly conduct; (3) Coming for part of the service then leaving; (4) Not attending or by not joining in when present; (5) Expecting to be entertained; and, (6) Being unprepared in body or spirit.

CONCLUSION

Scriptural worship is the most fulfilling, God glorifying, self-satisfying and edifying practice in which man may engage. It calls for a complete focus and expression of intellect and the spirit of man as he addresses God. G. C. Brewer said, “Worship is the calm, serene, purposeful, meditative emotions of the soul joyfully expressed in song, in prayer and other scriptural acts” (*Contending For The Faith*, p. 340).

May God richly bless you as you worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24).

WORSHIP WITH GLADNESS

Ronnie Hayes



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In John 4:24 we read, “God [is] a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth.” Certainly it is imperative for us to worship God in truth, but I am afraid that many have forgotten what it means to worship in spirit. In “spirit” refers to the correct attitude and emotion. Many worship out of a sense of “have to” rather than “with gladness.” David said, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord” (Psalm 122:1). Do you know why David was glad? It just was not another time of worship with him. To understand Psalm 122:1, we need to go back to Genesis 38:1-30. In Genesis 38, is the record of Judah committing the sin of adultery with Tamar. From this sin comes the birth of two sons; Pharez and Zarah. Deuteronomy 23:2 says, “A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.” Now, look at one other passage before we draw some conclusions.

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of

Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her [that had been the wife] of Urias (Matt. 1:1-6).

David was the *tenth* generation removed from the sin of adultery and the birth of the illegitimate children. Therefore David was the first generation that was allowed to go back to the congregation to worship. Then when you hear him say, "I was glad," it really shows you to what extent David truly meant that he was glad!

After recognizing this about David it embarrasses me to hear some speak of worship, as if it were some type of torture. You can usually tell how much individuals enjoy worship by watching them when the service is over. Do they stay around to talk with other Christians or do they fly off like a flushed covey of quail? It is almost dangerous for the preacher to stand at the door to shake hands, you could get stampeded by some running for the door. To many the closing remarks, song and prayer are like a starter's gun in the hundred yard dash and you better not stand in their way. Many who sit at the front never know who sat at the back, because they are gone before anyone can speak to them.

Well, I do not want to be one of those that worships just because I have to. I want to be like David. I want truly to enjoy worship and be glad when it is time to worship God, but HOW? We will look at these five suggestions: (1) Preparation before worship; (2) Presence during worship; (3) Praise of worshipers; (4) Participation in worship; and (5) Promises to worshipers.

PREPARATION BEFORE WORSHIP

If we go on a camping trip, we know what it takes to prepare. If we are going to have a test at school, we know what it takes to prepare. If we are going to get married, we know what it takes to prepare. But when it comes to worship, we act as if there is nothing to do to get ready to worship God. It takes preparation to worship God with gladness. We must be ready in heart, soul, body and mind or our worship will not be acceptable in the sight of God. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with [them] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not

hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7). Notice in 1 Peter 3 the possibility of our prayers being hindered *before* we get to worship. We cannot fight like cats and dogs at home and then come to worship and every thing be fine. We can see this principle in Matthew 5:23,24: “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Many things have to be worked out before we come to worship, if our worship is to be acceptable.

Samuel said to the house of Israel, “If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, [then] put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 7:3). Samuel told Israel that it was necessary for them to put away strange gods in preparing to serve God. For our worship to be acceptable, we will have to put away some things in preparing to worship God. “Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: [and] because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel” (Amos 4:12). I realize that Amos its speaking of impending doom when he said, “prepare to meet thy God.” But isn’t that good advice for us? It is a must for us to prepare before the time of worship. It would do us no good to worship if our life is a life of hypocrisy. “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with [their] lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matt. 15:8). Some will spend Saturday on Satan and then come to worship on Sunday and sing, “Oh, How I love Jesus.” When this happens, our worship is not acceptable.

From these passages, I believe you can see that our worship is affected by our life. There is no way to enjoy worship and not be prepared for it. This will involve all our life and not just Sunday and Wednesday. Do you prepare to worship with gladness?

PRESENCE DURING WORSHIP

How does presence during worship help me to worship with gladness? I think it is quite obvious that if one is not there they have no opportunity to worship with or without gladness. It is

therefore necessary for one to be there to enjoy the worship service. If we have prepared ourselves for worship and are now present, we should obtain something from the worship that will make us glad.

Let us hold fast the profession of [our] faith without wavering; (for he [is] faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance [belongeth] unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. [It is] a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if [any man] draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10:23-39).

From the above reading let me make three points which should show how gladness comes from presence.

First, when we are present we *encourage* one another. From verses 23-25, we see how we should consider one another. One of the greatest blessings of attendance is the fellowship that is shared and you cannot get that anywhere but at worship. This fellowship cannot be bought, borrowed or stolen but it can be enjoyed by the faithful who are there!

Secondly, from verses 26-29 we receive an *exhortation*. This warning should serve as a source of gladness. Aren't you happy if someone warns you of impending danger? We should be happy in the fact that God loves us enough to warn us. He warns us of sinning wilfully, and of judgment and punishment to those that have done despite unto the Spirit of grace. Why would anyone want to disregard the warnings of God? Instead we should be thankful for the warnings and do our very best to escape the danger.

Thirdly, from verses 30-39 we should gain strength to *endure*. In receiving strength to endure, this should make us happy! When I see others doing the will of God this should strengthen me and help me. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). I should not have the attitude that God's will cannot be done. Even if I had this attitude, when I look at the lives of others I would be able to tell differently. When I see the encouragement and exhortation I receive and I am strengthened to endure, how could I help but be glad about being at worship?

PRAISE FROM THE WORSHIPER

If I am going to be able to worship with gladness, then I must worship God with the correct attitude! "God [is] a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). I am afraid that many instead of praising God endure the worship service. Our attitude and emotions should be one of enjoyment rather than sleeping through the worship service. How many of us are excited about the fact of going to worship? How many of us love to praise God? I heard of a man that was a visitor at a congregation and while the preacher was preaching he agreed with a point and said, "Amen." This happened a couple more times and then he said, "Praise the Lord." At this point an usher came down the aisle and said, "Mister, we don't praise the Lord around here." Is this where we are headed? Don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to push for some charismatic, bench jumping service but on the other hand there should be praise in our worship. "Sing praises to

the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings” (Psalm 9:11). “Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee” (Psalm 67:3). “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [our] lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15). “But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). Let it be known, that it is easier to calm one down, than to raise the dead and if we are going to worship with gladness then we will be those that praise God!

PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP

Have you ever been leading singing and noticed that many in the audience are not singing.? But, if you ask them if they worshipped, their answer would be yes! Worship is reverence offered a divine being or supernatural person; *an act* of expressing such reverence. Worship is not a spectator sport! It demands participation. Look at Nehemiah chapter eight and see what the reaction of the people was when Ezra came and read from the book.

And Ezra opened the book in the eight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with [their] faces to the ground (Neh. 8:5-6).

I think it is interesting to notice what *all the people* did. They all *stood up, answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands, bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord*. Now when we come to our worship today, which part of worship can we choose to leave off and be acceptable to God? Who could sing for us? “*Speaking to yourselves* in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). This shows that each should sing. Who could give for us? “Upon the first [day] of the week let *every one of you* lay by him in store, as [God] hath

prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16:2). Every one of you, to whom does that not apply? Yet, there are those that will not give, sing, pray, partake of the Lord’s Supper or be a part of studying the word of God on the first day of the week. No wonder there are so many who are unhappy about worship—because they will not participate. To feel useful, to feel good about yourself and to feel like you are valuable in the kingdom, you need to participate. If you get involved, the gladness will come.

PROMISES TO WORSHIPERS

We have been trying to figure out a way that we can worship with gladness. If you have reached this point as one that prepares before worship, one that is present during worship, a worshiper that has the correct praise, and one that participates in worship, then the promises that are made to worshipers should make you one who will worship with gladness.

We can see from God’s inspired word that vain worship has no value. “[Ye] hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with [their] lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:7-9). Our worship could be vain for one of two reasons, either it is not in spirit or in truth. We can look at the scriptures and see if we have the truth, but the attitude of worshipping with gladness is something for which we must examine our hearts.

We can also see from the scriptures that true worship has great values and carries with it some great promises.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in [them]; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean [thing]; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved,

let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

In chapter 7:1, we see the promises that point back to chapter 6:16, where God says, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” These promises are not made to everyone but to those that are worshipers of God.

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But 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. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ. when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am [he] (John 4:20-26).

In this passage we see that the true worshiper will worship in spirit and truth and most importantly have access to Christ. “Now the just shall live by faith: but if [any man] draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb. 10:38). The just in Hebrews 10:38 is the “us” of verses 22-24 and is in contrast to those of verse 25 who forsake the assembling. I realize that attendance alone does not make faithfulness, but in verse 38, we are told the “just shall live by faith!” We also see, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall, live by faith” (Rom. 1:17). If we are to be a true worshiper of God then we will walk by faith and this does not refer to a mere acclamation of God but obedience to his will.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female- for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye [be] Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-29).

We are children of God by faith and the just shall live by faith, therefore the children of God and the just are one and the same and

are “heirs according to the promise.” Now if that does not make you worship with gladness, I don’t know what it would take!

OUR FATHERS WORSHIPPED IN THIS MOUNTAIN

Bobby Liddell



Bobby Liddell was born in Birmingham, Alabama. He left Methodism in obedience to the Gospel in 1972. He has attended Walker College, University of Alabama In Birmingham, Memphis School of Preaching and Alabama Christian School of Religion. He has done local evangelistic work at Central and Parrish, Alabama, and now serves the Bellview congregation, Pensacola Florida Bobby has served as Assistant Editor of **The Christian Sentinel**, and is now Editor of **Defender** and **Beacon**, Director of the Bellview Lectures, Editor of the Bellview Lectures Book and staff writer for **Firm Foundation**. He has done radio and television work in several states and has spoken in lectures and meetings at home and in Southeast Asia. Bobby is married to the former Joan Los and they have three children, Anthony Allen, Nathan Gant and Karl Jayne.

Jesus, enroute to Galilee from Judaea, passing through Samaria came to Sychar and to the place of Jacob's well. It was about the sixth hour; his disciples had gone into the city to buy food; and he, tired from his journey, sat by the well. A Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus asked her for a drink. The woman, thinking it strange for one of the Jews (who would have no dealings with the Samaritans) to make such a request said, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans?" Such a request did indeed seem strange (for example, when the disciples returned they, " marvelled that he talked with the woman..." [John 4:271]). The hatred between the Jewish and Samaritan races was so great that Jews would often cross the Jordan and circumvent the cities of the Samaritans when traveling north and south rather than pass through their land.

Jesus told her of water far better than that from Jacob's well-living water which he could give: "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The woman said, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." Jesus replied, "Go, call thy

husband, and come hither.” When she replied she had no husband, Jesus revealed his knowledge of her five husbands and of her presently living with one who was not her husband. “The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.” Then, from whatever motive (which motive men dispute), she said, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship” (John 4:1-20).

THE TEMPLE ON MOUNT GERIZIM

The Samaritan woman, well aware of the difference in the designated places of worship for Jew and Samaritan, knew also the reason for the enmity between the two races. The ancestors of the Samaritans came into the land, brought there by King Esarhaddon (Asnappar of Ezra 4:10) of Assyria following the captivity of the ten tribes (c. 721 B.C.), and intermarried with the Israelites left in the land. 2 Kings 17:20-41 gives the history of this transmigration and the problems which ensued.

And the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king; and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sine of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; Until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day. And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the Lord:...Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt (2 Kings 17:20-29).

The Samaritans claimed to serve the Lord, but their worship was a hodgepodge gleaned from the idol worship of various factions and nationalities mixed with the worship of the God of the Israelites and not from God.

So they feared the Lord, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods,

after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence. Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel (2 Kings 17:32-34).

In ensuing years, the Babylonian kingdom supplanted the Assyrian and in time, the Medo-Persian replaced the Babylonian. In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, according to the prophecy given by the Lord through Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10), and that the prophecy might be fulfilled:

...the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4).

Isaiah prophesied of the role of Cyrus, calling him by name, some one hundred fifty years before the birth of the Persian king (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). “That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid” (Isa. 44:28). In fulfillment of the prophecy, under Cyrus’ decree, Zerubbabel returned with 49,987 former captives; set up the altar, renewed the offerings and laid the foundation of the temple (Ezra 1-3). The Samaritans sought to be a part of the work of building the temple and appealed to their “sacrifice” to the Lord on equality with that of the Jews as reason for their inclusion.

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we

ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia (Ezra 4:1-5).

The Samaritans, outraged at being rejected as co-workers in the temple reconstruction, succeeded temporarily in halting the building of the temple. Some years passed until the Jews appealed to Darius the king, whose search found the original decree of Cyrus, and whose new decree enabled the finishing of the temple by the Jews. “And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king” (Ezra 6:15). The children of Israel kept the dedication of the temple with great joy, set the priesthood in order and renewed the offerings and feasts.

Subsequently, Artaxerxes, king of Persia, issued a decree that empowered Ezra to, among other things, “set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not,” and “beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 7:25-28). With Ezra returned more former captives who offered burnt offerings upon their return to Jerusalem. Soon, Ezra learned:

The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands...they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass (Ezra 9:1-2).

In response to the ungodly intermarriages of the people, Ezra said: “I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished” (Ezra 9:3). At the evening sacrifice (also a time of prayer), Ezra fell on his knee’s and prayed to God saying:

...O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the

lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this (Ezra 9:6-15).

The people wept very sore and determined their course to follow God and to: “make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the, commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law” (Ezra 10:3). A method by which this determination would be accomplished was proclaimed and the process began. Ezra lists over one hundred of the sons of: the priests, the Levites, the singers, the porters, and Israel who had taken strange (foreign) wives and some of whom had children by them.

One of the Israelites who married a foreign wife, according to Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XI, Chapter vii, 2) was Manasseh, brother of the high priest, who married Ricaso, the daughter of Sanballat. (The time frame [during the reign of Alexander the Great] presented by Josephus is in disagreement with that of

Nehemiah 13:28 which shows Manasseh as a contemporary of Nehemiah: “And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.”) Sanballat, “a Cuthean by birth; of which stock were the Samaritans also,” sent by Darius, king of Persia, thought this marriage would safeguard his continued security with the Jews.

The elders of Jerusalem gave Manasseh the choice of divorcing his wife or forfeiting the priesthood. When Manasseh approached his father-in-law, Sanballat promised he would preserve Manasseh’s priesthood and make him highpriest and governor if he would remain married to Nicaso. Josephus continues: “He also told him further, that he would build him a temple like that at Jerusalem upon Mount Gerizim, which is the highest of all the mountains that are in Samaria...” Knowledge that many of the priests and Levites were involved in intermarriage with foreigners greatly disturbed the people of Jerusalem. The guilty priests and Levites rather than renounce their evil, “all revolted to Manasseh, and Sanballat afforded them money, and divided among them land for tillage, and habitations also; and all this in order every way to gratify his son-in-law” (Antiquities, XI, viii, 2).

Sanballat built the temple on Mount Gerizim and made Manasseh priest. Shechem, “a city situate at Mount Gerizim and inhabited by apostates of the Jewish nation,” became the chief city of the Samaritans. To it, those Jews who regarded the administration of the Law in Jerusalem as too strict fled for safe haven with the more liberal Samaritans and found reception with open arms.

...if any one were accused by those of Jerusalem of having eaten things common, or of having broken the Sabbath, or of any other crime of like nature, he fled away to the Shechemites, and said that he was accused unjustly (Antiquities, XI, viii, 7).

The connection of the Samaritans with the Jews was one of convenience. In times of trouble, they quickly denied any association, but when “brotherhood” served their purpose, they as quickly claimed kinship. When they perceived the Jews under accusation by King Antiochus, they sent him the following epistle.

To king Antiochus the god, Ephiaphanes, a memorial from the Sidonians, who live at Shechem. Our forefathers, upon certain frequent plagues, and as following a certain ancient superstition, had a custom of observing that day which by the Jews is called the Sabbath. And when they had erected a temple at the mountain called Gerizzim, though without a name, they offered upon it' the proper sacrifices. Now, upon the just treatment of these wicked Jews those that manage their affairs, supposing that we were of kin to them, and practised as they do, make us liable to the same accusations, although we are originally Sidonians, as is evident from the public records. We therefore beseech thee, our benefactor and saviour, to give order to Apollonius, the governor of this part of the country, and to Nicanor, the procurator of thy affairs, to give us no disturbance, nor to lay to our charge what the Jews are accused for, since we are aliens from their nation and from their customs; but let our temple, which at present hath no name at all, be named the Temple of Jupiter Hellenius... (Antiquities, XII, v, 5).

King Antiochus agreed and the temple of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim became the Temple of Jupiter Hellenius. There it stood until destroyed by John Hyrcanus (c. 128 B.C.) in his expedition against Syria (Antiquities, XIII, ix, 1).

Mount Gerizim continued to be the sight which the Samaritans held as consecrated; thus, the Samaritan woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain" (John 4:20). The Samaritans created many legends and traditions about Gerizim. They contended that from its dust God formed Adam, that the flood did not cover it, that in fact it was the mount named Ararat upon which the ark came to rest, and that it was the sight of Jacob's wrestling the angel (Guy N. Woods, Commentary on John, p. 81). As "proof" of the authenticity and correctness of worship on Gerizim, the Samaritans claimed to have the only legitimate copy of the Pentateuch (known today as the Samaritan Pentateuch). In it, certain textual changes give Mount Gerizim, the site of their spiritual center, a significance supposedly attributed by God not found in the Massoretic Text. In rejecting the other books of the Old Testament they limited their knowledge of God to that found in the first five books; thus, they erred in the place and practice of worship.

Through the centuries, conquerors systematically annihilated the race until the Samaritans "now form a small community in Nablus of not more than 200 souls. Their great treasure is their ancient copy

of the law.” (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, Pentateuch, The Samaritan, pp. 2312D-2318).

THE WICKEDNESS OF UNAUTHORIZED WORSHIP ON MOUNT GERIZIM

Worship on Mount Gerizim was perverted and wicked. That the Samaritans’ “fathers worshipped” there did not make it accepted of God. It sprang forth from a bed of unbridled idolatry and disobedient disregard for the authority and Law of God. Its priesthood began with reprobate malcontents who refused to repent of the evil of disobedience to God’s law about marriage and who chose to allow their emotional ties to overrule their submission to the will of their Creator. Its high priest, Manasseh, preferred preservation of his “priesthood” to preservation of his soul. Worship “on this mountain” continued through the upholding of a perverted “Bible” which bolstered their contentions for a consecrated site and worship on Gerizim.

Men built the temple of Gerizim, according to the will of man and had neither God’s direction or approval in so doing. The temple resembled the temple in Jerusalem that it might be accepted by those who wanted something “close” to the worship of the Jews. Although claiming to worship God when such a facade was convenient to them, the Samaritans later sought and gained approval from King Antiochus to dedicate their temple to Jupiter Hellenius. The Samaritan worship became the sanctuary of those Jews who thought God’s law was too strict and its upholders too narrow-minded and dogmatic, and who, no doubt, appreciated the “open-mindedness” and “loving acceptance” of the Mount Gerizim worshippers. Interestingly, the Samaritans were “brothers” of the Jews when it served them to be so and made claims for an equal inheritance among those who served the Lord. “...for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither” (Ezra 4:2). Zerubbabel and Jeshua said it well: “Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel” (Ezra 4:3).

God did not authorize worship on Gerizim. Such worship came from the wrong source; manifested the wrong spirit; and, centered at the wrong side. The Samaritans based its continuance on legend and tradition of men; to which the woman now appealed. About such worship, Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). Thus, he shows that not all that men call “worship” is authorized or accepted by God.

THE WICKEDNESS OF UNAUTHORIZED WORSHIP TODAY

“But 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). This passage plainly illustrates the simplicity and clarity of God’s message to man. Those who are true worshippers: (1) Worship God; (2) Worship God in spirit (from the heart with sincerity); and, (3) Worship God in truth (according to the word of God). Others may worship, may worship God, but will worship “in vain” (Matt. 15:9) if not “in spirit and in truth.” Sadly, today, too many men commit the same sin as the Samaritans all the while claiming to “worship God.” Like the Samaritans of old they: (1) Hold as authority the unscriptural traditions of men; (2) Follow their will instead of the will of God; (3) Run to perverted “Bibles” (ill-translated and denominationally slanted versions) for “Proof” for their unauthorized worship and reject parts of the word of God which are contrary to their teaching and practice; (4) Place emotional ties over obedience to God (especially as it applies to God’s law on marriage); (5) Have a corrupt “Priesthood”; (6) Want to be “brothers” with God’s true children and claim a common spiritual heritage-when it serves their purpose; (7) Deny “kinship” with God’s people when that serves their purpose; (8) Seek to maintain some semblance of “closeness” to true worship that they might fool the gullible and ignorant; and, (9) Loose where God has not loosed continually tending more and more to liberalism.

To such men, God's children must say, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship," and, "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house (the Lord's church [1 Tim. 3:15]) unto our God." To all such men, the invitation is given to leave the creeds, traditions and doctrines of men and come to Jesus (Matt. 11:28-30). Obey the truth (1 Peter 1:22-23), live by faith and worship God "in spirit and' in truth."

Men lost in sin and worshipping in vain can receive forgiveness and begin to worship acceptably. Notice the influence of the woman in bringing many of the Samaritans to Christ.

Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: Or we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world (John 4:29-42).

You, too, can come to Christ in obedience to his will and be pleasing to God that you might be saved now and eternally.

IS EVERYTHING THE CHRISTIAN DOES WORSHIP?

Eddie Whitten



Eddie Whitten worked in industry for thirty years before into full-time preaching. He has served churches in Cook and Son Antonio, Texas. A 1969 graduate of Brown Trail School of Preaching, he returned as Administrator in 1971. From 1982 until December, 1987, he served Director. From 1975 until 1989, he served as one of the elders at Brown Trail. He has preached in meetings in several states and abroad. He is the author of a book on the Minor Prophets. From 1983-1990, he directed the Fort Worth Lectures. Now working with the Bedford church in Bedford, Texas, he is a staff writer for Firm Foundation and writes articles for several publications. He and his wife have three daughters, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

INTRODUCTION

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh (Matt. 2:11).

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Matt. 4:8,9).

While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live (Matt. 9:18).

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship (John 4:20).

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:9).

These are only five of the eighty references in the New Testament to the term “worship,” or some form of the word. In each reference there is the allusion to an act that is performed, or to be performed, by someone toward another. Not always is the reference directed toward the Lord, such as in the case of the Ephesians

bowing before the goddess, Diana. Therefore, the use of the word involves (1) one to be worshipped, (2) one to perform the worship, (3) an act of worship, and (4) a special attitude, or spirit, involved in the worship, as in John 4:23,24:

But 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.

A sharp distinction is noticed between the normal, mundane course of life and in the events of worship in the Old Testament. In 1 Samuel 1, the account is given of the circumstances surrounding the birth of Samuel. It is said of Elkanah, soon to be Samuel's father, that he "went up out of his city yearly to worship and sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts of Shiloh." The point here is that the purpose of his going to Shiloh was to *worship*. Also, that he had to make a trip to accomplish that worship. He was not worshipping in everything that he did in his everyday life. For him to worship, he had to do something special: he had to make a trip; he had to plan for this trip each year, and when he arrived in Shiloh he had to perform a sacrifice.

When the reign of Solomon came to an end, the kingdom of Israel divided. Rehoboam became the king of the southern kingdom of Judah, and Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, the king of the northern kingdom, Israel. Jeroboam was a renegade, and reasoned:

If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah (1 Kings 12:27).

Jeroboam built two altars, one in Dan, in the north, and at Bethel, in the south, and placed golden calves there for the people to *worship* so they would not go back to Jerusalem as they should. He stated, "It is too much for you to go to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (v. 28). Verse 30 says, "And this thing became a sin: for the people went to *worship* before the one, even unto Dan."

Thus, we see that in both the New Testament and the Old Testament, the use of the term "worship" is applied to a specific,

predetermined act of homage or sacrifice on the part of one to another. The object of worship to the Christian is Jehovah God, the creator of the universe and the Father of all mankind.

THE SOURCE OF CONFUSION REGARDING WORSHIP

The apostle Paul, writing to the church in Rome, stated,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

The Greek word which is translated by the English “service” in this passage is “latreia” which means either to perform an act of worship or to render a service.¹ The mistake is being made which limits the meaning to only that of “worship” rather than the broader meaning of the word. With this limited view, the passage would read, in essence, “I beg you therefore, brethren (on the premise that God has made it possible for both Jew and Gentile to be saved because of man’s obedience and God’s mercy, ch. 11), to lay your bodies upon the altar of constant and continual sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual worship” (NIV). This rendering, of course, would indicate that everything one does becomes a spiritual sacrifice which is worship. However, there are many scriptures which use both words in the same context, such as:

- Deuteronomy 4:19 — worship them, and serve them
- 8:19 — serve them, and worship them
- 11:16 — serve other gods, and worship them
- 17:3 — served other gods, and worshipped them
- 29:26 — served other gods, and worshipped them
- 30:17 — worship other gods, and serve them
- 1 Kings 9:6 — serve other gods, and worship them
- 9:9 — laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them
- 16:31 — served Baal, and worshipped him
- 22:53 — served Baal, and worshipped him
- 2 Kings 21:3 — worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them
- 21:21 — served the idols that his father served and worshipped them
- 2 Chronicles 7:19 — serve other gods, and worship them
- 7:22 — laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them

- 33:3 — worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them
- Jeremiah 8:2 — All the host of heaven which they have loved, and which they have served, and after which they have walked, and which they have sought, and which they have worshipped
- 13:10 — to serve them, and to worship them
- 16:11 — walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them
- 22:9 — worshipped other gods and served them
- 25:6 — go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them

Jesus' answer to Satan's temptation in the wilderness also expressed the same distinction: He said, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4:8; cf. Matt. 4:10).

These are sufficient to illustrate the distinctiveness of the terms "worship" and "service" as they are used by inspiration.

There are also several different Hebrew words used in the Old Testament which are translated exclusively "worship." These indicate actions or attitudes such as "to bow down," or "prostrate oneself," or "worship"; to "prostrate oneself in worship"; "to kiss toward"; "fearing God," but in the course of worshipping in specific acts; "an act of reverence." There are also several words, both Hebrew and Greek, which are rendered "service." Among those words are the Hebrew, "Sharat," and the Greek word, "Leitourgeo." "*Sharat*" means "to minister," or "to serve." It occurs nearly 100 times in the Old Testament. It refers to personal service to someone of high rank such as Joseph to Potiphar (Gen. 39:4). It most often refers to religious service such as the ritualistic duties of the priests and Levites in the tabernacle or temple. Moses told the Levites that they were to "stand before the congregation to minister unto them" (Num. 16:9).

"*Leitourgeo*" is a compound Greek word of "*laos*" (people) and "*ergon*" (work) meaning "work for the people" or "public service." This is the word by which the duties of the priests at the altar were described. This was not an expression of worship, but the perform-

ing of priestly duties related to the worship of the people toward God. In the New Testament, it is never rendered as “worship.” Paul wrote in Romans 16:16 that he had become a “ministering servant” for Christ in preaching to the Gentiles, in which his converts were a sacrifice offered up to God. This is the “*leitourgia*”—the public religious service that every Christian (who is also a priest) can offer today. This is service, not worship!

“*Latreuo*.” This is the word which is being misunderstood in connection with Romans 12:1. It is derived from the word “*latron*,” meaning reward or wages. Its original meaning was to serve for wages, but in time it came to simply mean “to work” or “serve,” in general. It is found 90 times in the Septuagint, and the noun nine times, always in the sense of religious service. Whereas “*leitourgeo*” is used only of priestly functions, “*latreuo*” refers to the people generally.

In the New Testament, “*latreuo*” appears 21 times and “*latreid*” (noun form) five times, always in the religious sense. There are differences in Greek lexicons as to the exclusive application of “service” to “*latreuo*,” but the conclusion follows: “The fact remains that ‘*latreuo*’ and ‘*latreid*’ refer to service in general, and not to worship in particular.” Paul tells his readers to “present your bodies a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1). This does not speak of a life of constant, continual worship, an some are inclined to believe. Paul is urging sanctification upon his hearers. Just as Old Testament sacrificial offerings are always called *service* rather than *worship*, so Paul uses the same term in Romans 12:1—a service that is “reasonable” or pertaining to the. Having once been truly converted, we can continue to “offer service (*latreid*) well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:28).²

THE TREND TOWARD SUBJECTIVISM

Modern trends in worship are toward the subjective. The decade of the 80s produced many departures from the objective view toward the Bible and refined some of the departures from previous years. The Bible is progressively being ignored as the criteria for decisions regarding worship and daily conduct. A Pentecostal aura

hangs over the thought process; i.e., an emotional barometer determines whether a program, or action, is approved. The higher the emotional appeal, the more excitement is generated in implementing the practice. Emotionalism then becomes the motivation for religious activity. This basis for belief produced the “feel good about yourself” emphasis which still prevails. The believer now attends “worship” to be made to “feel good about himself” regardless of what his situation may be spiritually. The natural result of such a priority is that the believer is led to attend worship to “get something out of the service” rather than giving his worship unto God. A great hue and cry issued forth from this subjective approach to worship. Church leaders began to listen to the pleas of the people to provide for them their “felt needs.” “Things” took the place of teaching. The Bible soon became secondary in importance in matters of faithfulness and devotion. The important aspect of the operation of the church was “church growth.” Church growth was numerical in nature under this emphasis. How many people could be “won to the Lord” was the goal. Numbers took top priority rather than spiritual growth or faith. Whatever it took to attract numbers to the church became the approved method of evangelism. The “traditional,” “old wine skin,” “legalistic,” church method of “preaching the word” became too austere and restrictive. There was no “charisma” to appeal to the senses, therefore little or no church growth was being noticed.

The old story of the frog being placed in a pot of cold water and the water being heated slowly until the frog boiled to death tragically applies in many, many cases. Good, faithful brethren have been lured into a slow, deliberate process of departure from the truth so subtly that they scarcely recognize it. Basic principles of God’s righteousness have been removed from their thinking. As Paul stated it in Romans 10:1-3,

Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

One of the most subtle attacks being leveled at the church today is the precept of subjective theology. The basis of this philosophy is that there is no standard of authority to which man can go to determine what is right or wrong religiously. *Anything that seems right in the thinking of each individual becomes right for that individual!* Secular humanism is characterized in exactly the same language. Every man becomes his own authority thereby eliminating the authority of God, the Bible, as one's guide. This philosophy is embraced in what is called "The New Hermeneutic," an effort among us today to become more sophisticated and acceptable in the eyes of the denominational world. To compete with denominationalism in church growth, it is necessary to abandon the "old paths" and cater to the whims and fancies of people. In this effort the Bible is being relegated to a lower level of importance with regard to worship and conduct in the church. Many authors are now referring to the church of our Lord as another denomination; the Bible is no longer a rule book, or a pattern of salvation, it is a group of love letters designed to encourage us to be more like Jesus who is depicted as a "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" type of individual. They conveniently and eagerly overlook the warnings against sin and the horrible consequences of sin. Those who espouse this insidious philosophy are playing right into the hands of those who embrace secular humanism. God no longer reigns supreme in their lives, but what is socially popular and acceptable becomes their "little 'g'" gods.

Attitudes toward worship. The natural effect of the thinking expressed above, *and which is rapidly spreading within the brotherhood*, is that the worship of God is vastly altered. The significance of the worship assembly is greatly reduced. The idea toward worship is that it is a time *and a place* where members of the church can go to hear peaceful platitudes that warm the cockles of one's heart, and thrill to the oratory or pulpit manner of an accomplished speaker, but fail to see the picture of a crucified Christ dying for sinful mankind. They hear no description of the ugliness of sin and worldliness; no admonition to avoid the temptations of worldly conduct, or the pain of punishment for wrong-doing. The

prospect of the horrors of hell for those who refuse to obey the gospel is carefully avoided—it might drive someone away and that would affect “church growth.” To mention some practice among our brethren that does not conform to the authority of the Bible is strictly prohibited! Therefore, the attitude toward preaching is grossly altered and compromised.

The Lord’s Supper, one of the most solemn and precious of the “acts of worship,” is also diminished in importance. It is now being teased and toyed with as if it were some sort of item for our convenience. Being offered on days (or nights) other than on the Lord’s day and for whatever occasion is deemed appropriate. For instance, the Lord’s Supper has been offered at a wedding on Friday night, on Saturday morning at a conference where the participants passed by the elements to partake rather than having the elements passed among the assembly so those of a “weaker faith” would not be offended, and was suggested even on the occasion of a PICNIC! If this high-minded, arrogant disregard for the death of our Lord Jesus does not illustrate the degree to which the worship of God has been denigrated by these lax and liberal attitudes toward worship IN THE CHURCH, then nothing does. When the sanctity of the word of God, and the purity of our worship of God is discounted to be nothing more than a part of one’s everyday life, such attitudes multiply.

Attendance. Part of the results of the “everything we do in life is worship” belief is the effect it has on our attendance. The “worship on the creek bank” idea fits in very well with this attitude. The assembly of the saints (Heb. 10:25), does not have the significance that it has otherwise. Therefore, the importance of one attending every worship period of the local church is reduced to a matter of convenience. Long time excuses for missing the worship, such as “company is coming,” or “we are going to Aunt Martha’s house and Sunday morning is the only time we can travel,” or “it’s the only day we have to do what we need to do,” etc., becomes justification for the summation that “all we do in life is worship, anyway.”

When a holy obligation is compared with secular desire, the indication is present that the importance of the worship of God is already suffering. Man can rationalize just about anything he wants to if he works at it hard enough and long enough. If we can only justify the thought of everything we do in life is worship, then we will not be obligated by holy principles to give much significance to the public worship.

DOES IT MATTER WHAT WE BELIEVE?

It destroys the purpose of worship. The question is often asked, “What does it matter if I believe that all we do in life is worship?” There are two basic problems with the attitude thus expressed: (1) It displays a lack of understanding of what is entailed in true worship, and (2) it destroys the very purpose of worship. True worship of God involves the recognition of the worshipper that he is in the presence of the Divine. Even though the ignorant pagans of years past in the far reaches of the south Pacific islands, or in darkest Africa, feared the unknown to the extent that they erected idol gods to whom they bowed down in abject superstition, they still expressed the attitude of complete subjection and loyalty to their god(s). In the religious world, this is still the circumstance with the vast majority of the people. They worship idols out of fear or ignorance. Such was the case with the Athenians who were charged by Paul in Acts 17 of worshipping an “unknown god.” Today’s attitude challenges the necessity of worship at all in an “organized, constructive, regimented” manner. Unless worship is done according to the manner which men want to worship, the insistence of those who want to worship God’s way is rejected. This only proves that there is great misunderstanding in the minds of many regarding the subservient relationship man should have toward God. Listen to the words of Jesus as he engaged in conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well in Sychar:

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But 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 4:19-24).

The purpose of worship is to express unto God our adoration, loyalty and devotion for providing man with an escape from the power of Satan, and to acknowledge his majestic, unspeakable power in regard to our destiny. We are both to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30), and fear him as the one who will effect our eternal reward (2 Thess. 1:7-9; Heb. 10:31). In order for these matters to be present in mind, we must worship in spirit and truth. This cannot be done in the midst of secular activities and pursuits.

It reduces the impact of true worship. One of the saddest tragedies of man is the lose of the true meaning and benefit of Biblical worship. The “me” generation has spawned the attitude of “getting” the things that will please the individual more than the Biblical principle of “giving.” *It is difficult for those who are interested in receiving to grasp the joy that can be realized through giving.* The nature of worship demands the prostration of one’s soul before God in humble, contrite submission. In this submission there is fulfilled the yearning of the soul to be fed by the deep, spiritual well-spring of God’s grace. There is the sublime sensation of *receiving* that which builds us up spiritually, realized through the unreserved *giving* of ourselves in worship. The receiving of God’s grace derived from true worship is not realized from the selfish motive of “going to church to get something out of the service” as the manner of many is today.

It is not surprising to hear so much dissatisfaction with the procedures taking place in so many congregations of the Lord’s church. Even in the stronger, sound churches who are vitally interested in maintaining the purity of God’s order of worship and service, there are heard dissenting comments of the quality of the worship services: “the singing is terrible,” “the preaching was not uplifting,” “the Lord’s Supper took too much time,” “all he preaches on is giving,” “he preaches too hard,” “he uses too much scripture,” “he doesn’t use enough scripture,” and on and on. If the

preacher or the elders demand too much from the congregation they are castigated. If they don't provide enough activities to please the social mores of the people they are criticized. It is no wonder that people cannot be satisfied: the emphasis is not on the proper object of worship, God! If we are trying to please God instead of the people, our worship would be more meaningful to us and spiritually edifying. At the same time, we would be gaining strength by the exercising of our minds unto spiritual matters that pertain to the salvation of our soul rather than on the color of another lady's dress, or the number of people who are away on a camping trip, etc.

It places unwarranted significance upon secular matters. In many denominations, there is great participation in affairs of the community, state and nation. Many secular, political issues have become the focal point of their annual conventions, councils, conclaves, etc. Political positions, candidates and campaigns have become a large part of the activities of many denominational bodies. Moral issues are discussed and voted upon as to what this, or that, denomination is going to believe in that regard. Usually, the issue is determined by majority vote of the group present which is supposedly representative of the people from whence they come. What the Bible has to say about the matter is of little consequence just so long as the majority is satisfied. The result has been, and will continue to be, organizations that are governed by the will of the people rather than by the will of God. Because of different views on many items, both religious and secular, different religious bodies have been established. Denominationalism is the ultimate result.

What caused the drift from Bible authority as the standard of worship and conduct to the majority will of the people? It is this writer's conviction that the very same desire for social and political involvement and influence that we find in the church of the Lord today had a very great contribution toward that end.

But, how does this situation equate with the question of this moment? The answer is rather elemental: When the emphasis of our spiritual life (our worship) is diluted by the influx of secular

interests and influence, the beauty and holiness of our worship is severely weakened. Secular matters become more significant in religious considerations, and the vicious circle begins. The idea of “all that the Christian does is worship” emanated through religious bodies which are highly guided and governed by secular influences, such as Pentecostal and Calvinistic bodies. In our quest to be more acceptable in social and religious circles, we are incorporating into our thinking this very same denominational idea.

It dishonors God. We appeal again to John 4:23,24, noted above. This is a great passage that reflects the attitude the worshipper must have toward God, the one to be worshipped. The very context of the passage indicates that worship is a very holy and reverent action. It is a time to pay deep, sincere, awesome respect, love and fear to the creator of the world and all that therein is (2 Pet. 3:10). It is a time when man can prostrate himself before God, who holds the destiny of every individual in his hand, and give thanks for his unbounded mercy; his unlimited power; his undying love; his inestimable grace. It is a time when those who realize the significance of God’s relationship with man can express the thoughts of their hearts through prayer; who can petition God for his Divine providence in each life, and who can receive the spiritual edification that belongs to the obedient servant. It is a time when the fellowship of kindred minds can be renewed and strengthened through the common bond of the blood of the Son of God. It is a time when the secular cares and frustrations can be properly evaluated and relegated to their proper secondary priority. It is a time when the spiritual quality of life can be enhanced to the extent that the temptations and heartaches of secular existence can be overcome through the assurance of eternal life.

Worship is so holy and sacred that to prostitute it with such things as entertainment, personal and sensual family practices, secular employment, and all the other non-religious activities in which man can rightfully involve himself, is nothing short of *blasphemy!*

Unless and until we, as God’s people, can come to the understanding of the purpose and holiness of worship, and claim it as a

precious privilege available only to the obedient servant of God, it is unlikely that we will be totally convinced that worship is a special activity to be enjoyed on special occasions, not as a minor part of everyday life!

CONCLUSION

An we live our lives here below, we need only to listen to the word of God, the Bible, for our standard both in the secular world, how we live before men, and in the spiritual world, how we live before God. The matter of “Is everything a Christian does worship?” should not be a problem for the devout Christian. How we live before men should be governed by the principles relating to our spiritual service. Jesus stated in Matthew 5:14-16:

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Jesus also said, in John 15:19,

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

The way a Christian lives before men, if it is in harmony with the word of God, serves as a living sacrifice. He may suffer persecution because of his service. 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” He may be tempted above what he may think he can bear, but Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:13,

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

The end of the matter is this: Serving God in our everyday life; worshipping him on the occasions when worship is to be offered, and being the kind of spiritual influence upon our fellow man to lead him to salvation is our reasonable service! May God help us to that end.

ENDNOTES

¹Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament*, Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc. (Grand Rapids, MI: 1885), p. 372.

²Credit is given to Gary Workman for much of this material and research in his excellent article, "Thou Shalt Worship The Lord Thy God," in the 1986 Ft. Worth Lecture book, pp. 278-284.

THOU SHALT WORSHIP THE LORD THY GOD

Guss Eoff Jr.



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My subject does not deal with the temptations of our Lord Jesus Christ, but rather with the worship of God. After forty days and nights of fasting, during which our Saviour was tempted, we have an account of three recorded temptations. It is quite evident that these three temptations are not the only ones. Too, it seems clear that these temptations did not come only at the end of the forty days of fasting. Mark's account says, "And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan" (Mark 1:13a). We also notice Luke's account, "and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil" (Luke 4:1b-2a). It is probable that the three temptations mentioned by Matthew and Luke came as a climax to the whole period of temptation.

The last temptation mentioned is very clever of Satan. In the first two tests Jesus' Sonship is questioned. The old devil says, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matt. 4:3b). Again Satan says, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down" (Matt. 4:6b). Jesus answered these enticements with quotations from the book of Deuteronomy. The first temptation was answered with Deuteronomy 8:3. The second enticement was also responded to by a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:16. It must be no-

ticed that Satan says, "If thou art the Son of God." The "if" implies doubt, which of course questions our Lord's divinity. What a temptation! The archenemy of mankind challenges the Divine Sonship of Jesus. Satan demands a miracle to demonstrate or prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If Jesus had responded to these two temptations, it would not have changed the devil's mind or proven to him anything that he did not know. It was the temptations that Jesus had to meet and overcome. This proves that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, and yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). Jesus had to be tried as a man, and not as God.

The third temptation of Satan would demand that Jesus do exactly opposite from which he came into the world to do. He came to turn men back to worship and serve God, not to do homage to the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). When Satan told Jesus that he would give him all the kingdoms of the world if he would bow down and worship him, he thus tempted Christ with the "lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16b). But the Son of God gave answer from the Bible of his day. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:13, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." With this third test, Jesus commands the "prince of this world" (John 12:31), to "get thee hence, Satan" (Matt. 4:10). This reminds us of the statement Jesus made to Peter. When our Lord rebuked Peter, he said, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matt. 16:23). Here Jesus says, "Get thee hence, Satan" (Matt. 4:10). In other words, "begone" Satan. James tells us, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). We cannot give Satan any place in our lives. Paul told the Ephesians, "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). Instead of worshipping Satan, we must do as Jesus quotes, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him" (Deut. 6:13; Matt. 4:10).

THOU SHALT WORSHIP

Our Saviour quotes from Deuteronomy 6:13 to give answer to Satan. We must remember that Moses in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy is warning the children of Israel. When they were to enter the land of Canaan, they were going to take cities that they had not built. They would take vineyards they had not planted. They would have houses they did not build and cisterns which they had

not hewn out. They are warned not to forget Jehovah that freed them from Egypt and gave them Canaan. They must fear Jehovah, serve him and not swear by any other name. They were not to go after the gods of the people among whom they lived. When they became wealthy in this new land, they may have a tendency to think they had done all these things by their own power and thus not to depend on God. Moses warns of the danger of apostasy. Notice what Moses says **MUST** be done.

1. Fear only the Lord. Deut. 6:13.
2. Swear to God only, Honor his name. Deut. 6:13.
3. They *must* not serve other gods. Deut. 6:14.
4. They *must* give God supreme affection. Deut. 6:15.
5. They *must* not tempt God. Deut. 6:16.
6. They *must* keep God's commandments. Deut. 6:17.
7. They *must* serve God by constant obedience. Deut. 6:18.

“THOU”

God directs Moses to instruct Israel, and says “Thou!”. Jehovah then tells his people what to do. He is not telling heathens here to worship a god or gods. God is telling his people who they are to worship.

“SHALT”

Israel thou “shalt,” you **MUST!** It is not an option! Israel had no choice! If she was to please God, she must do as he commands.

“FEAR”

The Hebrew word translated “fear” in Deuteronomy 6:13, has the meaning of reverence as well as being fearful or afraid. This is a reverent awe which is moved by love. Where this fear is found in the heart, it will lead to serving the Lord in holy obedience. “Thus, really believing in God and reverently worshipping him, the Israelites would be careful not to go after other gods, or to give to any object that homage which is due unto Jehovah alone. (*The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 111, p. 120.)

This passage in Deuteronomy 6:13 is the passage quoted by Jesus in Matthew 4:10. But the word “fear” is replaced by the word “worship” in Matthew’s account.

“WORSHIP”

Jesus told Satan, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10b). The Greek word translated worship means “to make obeisance, do reverence to (from pros, towards, and kuneo, to kiss), and is the most frequent word rendered “to worship.” It is used of an act of homage or reverence to God, e.g., Matt. 4:10; John 4:21-24 (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W. E. Vine, Vol. IV, p. 235).

God’s people are to worship! They are to reverence, to make obeisance. The Psalmist said,

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he [is] our God; and we [are] the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice (Psa. 95:6-7).

People all over the world worship. Some worship idols, some worship animals, others worship people and some worship things. What is most important to some become objects of worship. It may be wealth, popularity, education, prestige, or any one of a million things.

Paul found the people of Athens worshipping idols (Acts 17:22-23). Heathens may be expected to worship false gods. Paul describes such people in the Roman letter.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified [him] not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. 1:21-25).

The Apostle Paul further explains how the Gentiles gave themselves to vile passions and refused to have God in their knowledge. They practiced unrighteousness knowing that they would be eternally separated from God (Rom. 1:26-32).

God’s people are not to worship false gods.

And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt (Jer. 25:6).

Again Moses said:

If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant, And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; (Deut. 17:2-3).

God informed Solomon that if he and the children of Israel would keep his commandments, he would bless the temple and the people. But, if they laid hold on other gods, he would cause the temple and Israel to be destroyed. Note Jehovah's statement,

And at this house, [which] is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and to this house? And they shall answer, Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the Lord brought upon them all this evil (1 Kings 9:8-9).

Amon was a wicked king in Judah. He worshipped false gods.

And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did. And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them: And he forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the Lord (2 Kings 21:20-22).

It is interesting to see how God used Jeremiah to forewarn of the grievous distresses about to come upon Judah because of sin.

And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? or what [is] our iniquity? or what [is] our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God? Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; And ye have done worse than our fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me: Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, [neither] ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour (Jer. 16:10-13).

Man is going to worship! But, God demands that man worship Jehovah, and worship as he directs.

“THE LORD”

God is a jealous God! He is our King! An of our allegiance belongs to him. God is our Lord, our Master! In Deuteronomy 6:13, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.” The passage that Jesus quotes to Satan, the scripture says, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10).

The word “Lord” is used in the New Testament as an adjective and as a noun. The context of the sentence most always shows how the word “Lord” is used. Jesus says we are to worship “the Lord thy God.”

“THE LORD THY GOD”

God’s people are to worship God, Jehovah! We are not to worship anyone or anything else! As Jesus told the young lawyer the greatest commandment was, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37). Here Jesus refers to Deuteronomy 6:5: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” It is God the Father that we are to worship.

Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the time would come when true worshippers would worship the Father in spirit and truth. He said, in John 4:24 “God [is] a Spirit and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth.”

When Peter came to Cornelius, the centurion fell down and worshipped him. But Peter would not allow such worship.

And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped [him]. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man (Acts 10:25-26).

What a difference in Peter and mere men such as the Pope of Rome. Pope John Paul allows people to bow down and make obeisance to him. God’s people do not worship anything or anyone except God.

“AND HIM ONLY SHALT THOU SERVE”

Jesus would not worship Satan! And he tells us that no man can serve two masters. Matthew 6:24: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

We must not worship men, angels, or the devil. Note:

And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See [thou do it] not. I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10).

And I John saw these things, and heard [them]. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed we these things. Then saith he unto me, See [thou do it] not. for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God (Rev. 22:8-9).

WE MUST NOT WORSHIP OR SERVE SATAN

Our Lord Jesus was victorious over Satan. He is a perfect example for us. Thank God! Jesus defeated our great enemy. Instead of falling for Satan’s temptation, Jesus overcame by quoting God’s Word. It behooves us to follow Jesus! We must learn God’s Word so that we can answer each temptation with the proper passage. May we say, “get thee hence, Satan” (Matt. 4:10). May we be comforted by victory over our dreaded enemy.