

## **Worship: Its Meaning, Significance, and Experience**

### ***1. Introduction: The Meaning of Worship***

Whilst there are generally accepted meanings for words, the true meaning of a word is discovered from its context. In order to understand the principle of worship we need to understand the actual sense of the word ‘worship’. The English word, of course means ‘worth–ship’ meaning we give worth to the one concerned. In the Hebrew the word ‘*abodah*’, with its cognate verb ‘*abod*’ means ‘the service (of God).’ The verb to worship is simply to serve. The LXX (the Greek Old Testament) uses the New Testament Greek equivalents of ‘*latria*’ (noun) and ‘*latreuo*’ (verb) which means to sonship or to serve thus repeating the exact meaning of the Hebrew. For a simple word study, together with the many contexts of the word, we can assume that to worship is to serve. That greatly simplifies our study. Of course the modes and elements of worship are many and we could examine them also, but we conclude that worshipping is serving, and serving is worshipping. Later we will examine places in which the word is used, but for the moment we will pursue the background and reason for man's worship of God.

### ***2. The Reason and Origin of Worship***

The Ten Commandments (cf. Exod. 20:1ff., Deut. 5:6 ff.) state ‘You shall have no other gods before (besides) me.’ They also say, of these gods, ‘You shall not bow down to them and serve them.’ Otherwise there will be dire consequences.

Whilst this command against idolatry is delivered to Israel, yet the principle of worshipping God, and Him only is innate in creation, as indeed are all the Ten Commandments. The reason why God must be worshiped is that He is Creator, King of all the earth. Because he created man, man must be thankful – which is part of true worship – and serve God. Two clear elements relate to this worship – (i) Man has been created and must relate to his Creator in service–worship. Gen. 1:26ff. shows that man has reason to be grateful that he, of all creatures made by God is in His image. He is thus intended, by having affinity to relate to God, usefully, in His universe. God has given him a command to serve him by being fruitful, multiplying, and filling the earth, as also, by being lord over it. (ii) Man should be grateful to God because of His benevolent and righteous control of the earth, in providence. This providence relates to the wise ordering of the universe, and providing for its needs on every level. See Acts 14:15ff, 17:24–28, and cf. Psalm 104, I Tim. 4:4, 6:17.

Worship then is a relationship, in which, and on the basis of which, man serves God. That God serves man is evident, but it is not that God worships him, although he makes him honourable by creating him in His own image.

### ***3. The Exercise of Worship***

Rightly understood, true worship is serving God in every part, moment, and faculty of one's being. This will mean that there never is a moment, when man will not be worshipping God in some way or another. This is seen clearly in Romans 12:1–2. Yet there is also embodied worship, those times when man either personally (singly) or corporately deliberately comes before God and worships in acts of adoration, submission, praise, and thanksgiving. In history he has set aside, from time to time, some place for such worship, or he has built a structure for worship.

What we are concerned with, at the outset, is the set of conditions which make for true worship.

- (i) The primary one must be a relationship between God and the one who worships him. Adam must have gladly 'tended the garden' and set about obeying God's commands, since, it seems, he worshiped Him by his obedience. He fellowshiped with God, even walking with Him in the 'cool of the day'. Service would be natural, simple, and, we suppose, profound. Innocence must have been a wonderful context for full worship.
- (ii) The second criteria for true worship must be love. This love of course flows firstly towards the worshipper, from God. Matthew 5:43–48 makes it clear that all humans are loved by God, quite apart from the question of their being good or evil. However the worshipper must experience this love, and respond to it. In Deut. 10:12–13, 11:1, and 11:13 the condition of loving God is laid down for true worship, e.g. 'What does the Lord require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul.' 'You shall therefor Love the Lord your God and keep His charge....' 'to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart'.
- (iii) We also doubt not but that intelligence relates to worship. By this we mean not only the knowledge of God, but also what He is about in His universe. Service is not given blindly, but intelligently. One knows one has to serve. One knows what one has to do, and one knows it is reasonable to do so. Hence in Romans. 12:1 we read 'logical (reasonable) worship (service)'. Such knowledge would be contained within a true relationship with God. There is a reciprocal action in worship. Man offers worship (service), and God receives it, as is seen in the case of Abel's worship, although of course, equally, Cain's so-called worship was rejected.

### ***4. Man and The Loss of True Worship***

#### **(i) Man and Worship**

We do not have to speculate that worship (service) is essential to true being. It is not merely a spin-off from his relationship with God,

but is totally essential to his true being as a man. He is created to serve (Gen. 1:28ff, 2:15, 9:1ff.) and finds his being in serving. From the total Biblical portrayal man is a creature, a servant, and a son, and so in this very full relationship serves God as Creator, as King, and as Father. We assume that Adam, unfallen, knew this. However it takes all history for fallen man, redeemed, to come to know it in truth. We mean that he grows in worship and is perfected for it – at the end.

The statement of John 17:3 that it is life eternal to know God and His Son, means that a man's service and worship is only full when in that relationship. At the same time, man is only congruent with the creation when he worships God. Psalm 150:6 says, 'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord'. Psalm 148 speaks of all the creation praising God. Psalm 145:10 says 'All thy works praise thee, Oh Lord'. These and other sayings show us that the whole universe, of its true self, worships and serves the Creator. We will see, in Revelation 7:4–11, that celestial creatures praise God because He is worthy of such, most especially because He has created all things. All things are glad to be created'

The whole harmony of the universe which was 'very good', must have been experienced by unfallen man in his unceasing worship, service, and praise. Another way of saying it is that the will of God was uncontested. God was about His business, and creation was happy.

**Note:**– The origins of evil, and hence the disharmony of the universe, have puzzled many. In Job, it appears that when the angels (the 'sons of God') shouted for joy at the dawn of creation, then they applauded the action of God. Unless we subscribe to the 'gap theory' (which some interpose between verses one and two of Genesis Ch. one), then between creation, and the coming of the primal pair into the garden of Eden, the rebellion of Satan and his angelic followers must have taken place. (cf. Rev. 12:1ff.) It is difficult to say, of course, but we do know that the serpent was in the Garden, and that he sought to change the worship of man. Cf. Ezekiel 28:13 and context. In fact he succeeded in this aim to a great degree.

## **(ii) Man and the Loss of Worship**

Worship and service being identical, it is clear that man ceases to worship God in the moment he ceases to acknowledge God as Creator, King and Father in toto. The temptation was 'You shall be as God, knowing good and evil'. This meant man would not have to serve God, but, in fact, serve himself. Immediately man made this decision and acted upon it, then in that moment he lost his total rapport with God. He became afraid and began to hide himself. Hebrews 4:13 tells how naked man is before God, when he is in disobedience. He cannot bear exposure to the purity of God. Guilt enters and man loses worship in its full experience and operation.

Worship, whilst personal, is intended to be corporate. When guilt enters, the corporate relationship in worship is also affected. There was some break between man and his wife, and so between them and their children. That is why the loss of true worship is shown very clearly, in the case of Cain and Abel. Gen. 4:1–16 is the story of Cain 'whose deeds were evil' (cf. I John 3:10ff.) and Abel 'whose deeds were righteous'. Cain made an act of worship. It was a sacrifice, an offering to God. Such an offering could be an acknowledgement that God is Provider, or it could mean that the offerer was thankful to God, and wished to praise Him. However, Cain's attitude in worship was wrong - he did not really wish to serve God. This is not only

stated, but it is seen in his actions. He is angry with God and Abel – for the offering being rejected. He kills Abel as a consequence, and later builds a city, seeking to set up his own kingdom, and not to ‘fill up the earth’. That Abel was a prophet we later discover, and see, in fact, that Cain opposed the plan of God for His history. Hence the impossibility of his truly worshipping God – a principle which the prophets later make very clearly.

Romans 1:18–32 tells the story plainly. When men knew God, they did not wish to know Him as He was (is). They were not Thankful. As a result, they did not serve God, but came to serve idols. We saw that three criteria for worshipping God are those of relationship, love, and understanding. These man lost in his rebellion against God. It is not strange then, that Paul says they became ‘Haters of God’. True worship had been destroyed. Man did not wish to serve God, and, incidentally, anyone, for that matter. He served only himself. Once the vertical relationship with God is lost, so is the horizontal one with his fellow beings. As we shall see later, serving God and serving man are in the one bundle.

## *5. Satan And His Worship*

The orthodox understanding of Satan, is that he was created as a great creature of light, and given special authority, and (probably), as the equivalent of an archangel, had a large number of other angels under him, and that he drew a third of the total number of angels to follow and serve him. Passages such as Revelation 12, Job chs. 1 and 2, Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, either by inference or explicit statement, tell us that Satan fell into pride and self-worship. There can be no worship of self which is not service of self instead of God. Satan attempts to have the worship of heavenly and earthly creatures. He is jealous of God. He wishes to have creatures serve him. In Ephesians 2:1–3 he is depicted as one who demands service. What is incredible is his attempt to have Jesus worship him (Matt. 4:7–11). He lusts after the worship (note: service!) of the Son of God. Jesus answers him in the words of Deuteronomy 6:13, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’. Add to this II Thess. 2:3–4, and the height of his presumption is seen:

*‘...for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.*

We can see then, that Satan is the great impostor, seeking to dethrone God and exalt himself. We can also see the thrust of Jesus' words, ‘He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalts himself shall be made low’.

## *6. Idolatry and Worship*

I Cor. 8:1–6 shows us the true order of the universe. There is one God – the Father – and one Lord – Jesus Christ. All creation is contingent upon them. There are many (‘so-called’) gods, and lords. I Cor. chs. 10 and 11, and related scriptures, indicate that behind the silly idols, made to be dumb themselves, are demonic powers. Some see them as infesting and actually living within the idol of wood or stone. However that may be, a far more deadly thing exists, the actual operation of demonic powers upon

the worshipers of idols. Idolatry is a subject all of its own<sup>1</sup> but Romans 1:19ff. shows us that man's problem is that having rejected God 'he worshiped and served the creature (or, creation) rather than the Creator'. In the same breath we are told that he became a creature of idolatry, making gods of every aspect of the creation. His refusal to be in servitude to God brings him into servitude of the gods.

Paul has a fascinating passage (Acts 17:24–30) where he speaks of the nature of the true God, and really says He is Father, and finally calls on his audience, all of whom are idolaters, to repent, and turn to God. In I Thess. 1:9–10, he addresses former idolaters and says 'They turned from idols to God to serve a living and true God'.

We do not have time to develop this theme, but looking at the matter generally, we find that Satan seeks to delude mankind as to the true nature of God and the creation, and to bring man under his own subjection. Hence man, being deceived first, by his own fall, and then by the continuous conditioning which Satan effects, cannot really see God as he is. This is why Romans 1:19ff. says that his mind and heart were darkened and became vain. His true intelligence in understanding God is sadly perverted, and he cannot be caught up in that adoration which longs to obey God, and which sees service as a gift from God, a privilege for man, and the true mode of genuine human living.

Always, in the Bible, and in history, the gods dominate man. They are avaricious for man's worship, and his slavery. In the ultimate, the slavery of Satan, of the flesh (man's humanity as conditioned by sin), of the world, of sin, is one and the same thing. Hence we are told that 'the whole world is in the power of the Evil One' (Rom. 6:13, I John 5:19), and Paul can point back to when people were 'slaves to the elemental spirits in the universe', and even subjected to worshipping angels (Gal. 4:3, Col. 2:18).

What is horrendous in the history of man is the arrogant, cruel insistence by the beast, the second beast, and the image of the beast, which men must worship. All mankind must have its mark on their foreheads, and render worship. Men worship the dragon and say, 'Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?' This is the terrible union of Satan–worship with idolatry. True, they are of the one piece, but the deception of Satan confuses men, so that they do not understand they are worshipping Satan himself, nor do they see the beast, as such, in all its horrible nature. (See Rev. chs. 12 and 13).

We may conclude this section, by observing that true worship is dreadfully perverted by evil powers. Nevertheless, we can see the principle of true worship, even if only by–contrast! That is worshiped which has authority and power, which is greater than man, and which can dominate him. Nevertheless, the true joy of genuine worship is replaced by illicit excitement, dreadful fear, cruel domination. To think of this in terms only of individual persons is to miss the full operation of evil. The whole world lies under this dread occupation by evil. Nation after nation is gripped, today, in the talons of the beast, and under the domination of the dragon. In his cunning, he has disguised the modes of domination, and even persuaded human minds that they are acceptable. In fact they are the norm'

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cassette Nos. NS.25 'The Deadliness of Idolatry', and NS.22 'The Dominion of Darkness and the Victory of God' (New Creation Publications Inc.)

## ***7. The History of Worship***

By history, we simply mean the facts of worship as they appear, from time to time, in the Scriptures, amongst God's people. It is also apparent that merely noting the occasions and manner of worship of persons and groups is not the final word in a history of worship. True worship, as we have seen, is an event (or, events), each springing from relationship with God, love from and to Him, and understanding of the mind, with, also, obedience of the will. For example, the Song of Moses, the song of Hannah, and many of the Psalms are worship on a very high level. We assume then, that the nature of the worship of early mankind was at a high level, where the criteria for true worship were present. It is clear from Hebrews 11 that faith is the necessary pre-requisite for truly relating to God.

### **(i) The Pre-Flood Worship**

Whilst Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden, this fellowship, at least at that level was unbroken, until of course the happening of the Fall. Later Cain and Abel, their children, both offer worship to God, in the produce of their vocation. Cain's offering is not accepted by God. Obviously he does not evidence true service, but Abel does. Elsewhere we are shown that Abel was a prophet, and Cain must have opposed what he was about, in fact was not truly serving God. Hence, worship indicates true relationship with God, and so, with man. This account of their offerings is significant for an understanding of worship itself. Apart from it, little else is said, regarding worship. In Gen. 4:26, when Abel's substitute, Seth, is born, then men begin to 'call on the name of the Lord', that is, 'to use the name of Yahweh (the LORD) in worship'. This appears to be public (corporate) worship, as against the non-worship of the Lord, by others. It is obviously put in opposition, over against what Cain has done, and so would repay deeper study. The relationship of Enoch with God, seems one of true worship. Enoch, like Abel, was a prophet (Gen. 5:21 f., cf. Jude 14–15).

### **(ii) Post Flood Worship: The Patriarchs**

By this we mean worship between Noah and Abraham, and then worship from Abraham to Israel in Egypt. Noah's offering was out of gratitude, as also acknowledgement of the rightness of God's judgement. The sacrifice of animals must have been enormous, although it was limited to the 'clean' birds and animals. The odour of the sacrifice was said to be 'tranquillising' (pleasing). Out of this worship, God was moved to promise there would be no such deluge in judgement, ever. In the context of worship, God restates His commands to man, to be fruitful, and to have control of the earth.

Idolatry is not, as such, mentioned in previous chapters. In fact, even at the building of the tower of Babel it is not mentioned. Those building the tower were defying God's edict for man to spread across the face of the earth (cf. Gen. 11:4). Obviously they did not worship God. Even when we meet Abraham we are not told that he was a worshipper of God, but simply that God appeared to him. Abraham certainly worships (cf. Gen. 15:7ff. 18:1f., 21:33, 22:1ff.). However, it is not always easy for us to understand what is behind the mode of worship.

Isaac is involved in the act of worship on Mt. Mariah, and must have been profoundly affected. Like his father Abraham, he is a man of faith

(cf. Gal. 4:28f.) and worships God, but again little is recorded on that score. Jacob has certain experiences of worship with God which are significant for him (e.g. Gen.28:10–22, 31:51–54, 35:1–7). The place Bethel, became for him ‘the house of God’, and he established an altar there. It is clear that these three patriarchs see their vocation as obedience to God's call to them.

### **(iii) Israel, Egypt, the Exodus, and Canaan**

The material on worship becomes profuse at this point. It is clear that Israel in Egypt had been affected by Egyptian idolatry (Joshua 24:14–15). It is therefore particularly interesting and significant that God wishes to have His people serve (worship) Him. He tells Moses that the proof of His being with Moses (and Israel) is that Moses would again come to Horeb, and there ‘serve God upon this mountain’. The message to Pharaoh is, ‘Let my son go that he may serve Me’. (See Exodus 3:12, 4:23, 7:16, 8:1, 20, 9:13 etc.). Pharaoh calls this service ‘sacrifice’, thus recognising that the people wish to relate to the LORD, whilst at the same time serving Him. However, even if he would, on an occasion let them go, he would retain their flocks and possessions, meaning that he would not really let them serve God. Cf. Exod. 10:24–6. Finally, Pharaoh is forced to let them go to worship God. It is true to say that immediately, commencing with the Passover, the Israelites have ‘the worship’ which Paul speaks of in Romans 9:4 as though it were unique to Israel amongst all the nations.

It is also interesting to see that in the wilderness, the faint-hearted ones would rather turn back to Egypt. They see their choice is between serving the Egyptians, or serving God. It is this comparison which presses the truth upon us that service and worship are the one.

There are many other details regarding Israel and ‘the worship’, and they form the basis for understanding all worship, and without doubt give us the key to Christian worship. However, what we have to understand most of all, is that all their worship is within the context of, and relates to, covenant. The whole sacrificial cultus and moral law must be seen within covenant. Sacrifice is very important, and the significance of the sacrifices is outlined. In addition, the festivals relate to the rhythm of the seasons, especially to harvesting. Some festivals and worship relate to the saving acts of God, especially those of the Exodus. (cf. Exod. 12–13, Deut. 26:5–9, Joshua 24). The epistle to the Hebrews gives much of the rationale of the sacrificial cultus and the covenant, but points out that the law (worship) as such was only a shadow of ‘things to come’. It foreshadowed the greater reality which would emerge in time. Even so, all the worship was rooted in the life of the people, and they were the people of the earth, amongst and above all others, who were serving the Lord. Their whole reason for being – for having the sonship, the covenants, the glory, the law and the worship was because they were the people of God. Their sacrifices were designed to express various elements, such as thanksgiving, praise, fellowship with God, forgiveness, grace, and so on, whilst other offerings related to the whole manner of life in agriculture and the like. Hence the difficulty in defining the whole gamut of their worship.

**Note:**– At this point, we have to interpose a note regarding the Old and new Covenants. Hebrews makes the point that everything in the New Covenant, including the Mediator, Christ, outmodes as well as surpasses the Old Covenant. This point comes through clearly from the O.T., not only in the fact that Israel, as a nation did not truly serve (worship) God, but that the Mosaic Covenant itself was not final. Jer. 31:31-34, and associated passages points to a new

covenant. This must presuppose new worshipers, new service, new patterns. II Cor. ch. 3 bears this out clearly. One is –the epoch of law and the other is the epoch of grace. Hebrews 9 and 10 demand that true sonship can only be given where there is a purified conscience. This the Old Covenant could not give – as such. We will, then, expect to see worship from a new vantage point with the New Covenant.

The second note we have to make is on true worship and idolatry in Israel. Israel was surrounded by idolatrous nations, and the pressures of idolatry were immense. Yet to Israel had been ‘the worship’. We saw, above, that to research the whole structure of Israel's worship would be a large task. Again, we have in the Scriptures, a whole wealth of worship in praise, adoration, intercession, thanksgiving, offerings and sacrifices, and the hortatory teaching of the prophets, concerning the same. We have directions regarding music, various liturgies, and the like. In fact, the structured side of worship is most valuable. Yet, again, the test in regard to worship is always a simple one – obedience to God, service in His plan, work according to His commands, behaviour in conformity with His will, with the accompanying repentance and faith, where one has departed from these no rns. The conflict with idolatry would be centred around these points. Also God never abandoned Israel. He would chastise, punish, exile and judge, but the Covenant provided for repentance, faith, and renewal. This was the way out of idolatry, back into true worship. Apparently this was where Israel was at the Coming of Christ.

#### **(iv) Worship in the New Testament**

##### **(a) The Temple**

Tracing worship events in order of sequence, we find in the first two chapters of Luke, that the priest Zechariah is visited by an angel, who makes a prophecy concerning John the Baptist, the son who will be born to Zechariah. Zechariah himself makes an inspired prophecy following the birth. It is in this Temple that both Anna and Simeon speak of Messiah in the presence of the babe Jesus. Jesus, at the age of 12, is found in the temple, and calls it ‘my Father's house’ (Luke 2:49, cf. John 2:16). In fact Jesus, on the basis that it is His Father's house, twice cleanses it from the commercial interests which have defiled it. (See John 2:13–17, Mal. 3:1–3, Zech. 14:21, Matt. 21:12–13). Jesus, with his family, observed the Temple rituals, and in his ministry visited the temple at the appropriate feasts and taught within the precincts of the temple. In fact he was as an orthodox Jew in regard to these things. Yet one of the great objections to him was that he had said, ‘Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again’. Whilst he meant the temple of his body, they took it to mean the very temple, and in truth, in another sense, his own body (the Church) was to be the new temple. Cf. John 2:17–22, Matt. 26:61, 24:1–2, 27–40, Ephes. 2:21–22. Without doubt, Jesus had in mind what they feared – the ending of the Mosaic epoch, and the bringing in of the new epoch, concerning which the writer of Hebrews argues so brilliantly. See Hebrews chs. 6–10. Nevertheless, Jesus never advocated terminating the old rituals, as such, and honoured them up to his death.

##### **(b) Christian Worship**

A study of Matt. 27:51–53 and Hebrews 10:19–22 shows that in fact the crucifixion terminated the Temple worship as such. The New Covenant had

come. In practice this worship, in the Temple, continued for some forty more years, until the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 by Titus. Nevertheless, the Greater Covenant, and the Greater Priest had come and the Greater Sacrifice – ‘once for all’ – had been made.

The outworking of this is described very well in Acts. The new Christians gathered about the precincts of the Temple, especially for the hours of prayer. They also witnessed there. Around Palestine were many synagogues, for apart from the Temple sacrifices and worship, worship was now conducted in local situations, though not of course with sacrifices, since Israel could have only one altar. Christian worship in the first century seems to have taken on much of the synagogue approach. The synagogue had a worship composed of prayers, of the reciting of the Shema (Deut. 6:4–5) and of the reading of the lections – portions from the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus participated in such worship, as for example, the account of it in Luke 4:17ff.

The Christians assembled in homes, and worshiped in the love-feast, in the Lord's Supper, listened to the exposition of the Word of God, shared in prayers, and in all of this exercised the gifts of worship, of which we will speak later. Following the apostolic era, worship gradually formalised, although down through two millenniums of Christian history there have been great waves of spiritual life and ferment which have from time to time rejected more formal rituals, and have evidenced similar worship to that described in the New Testament. This is not to say that liturgies are signs of decline in worship, for many of them have come out of high levels of worship. It is that the church knows decline in living worship, when the impetus of the New Covenant is not experienced, or is minimised. Because of this judgement, we must seek to understand the true power and motivation of the worship of God in the New Covenant.

## ***8. The New Covenant and The New Worship***

The subject of worship is vast. In fact, rightly understood, the actions of history are really the struggle between God and Satan for worship. Satan seeks to wean man, angels, and creation away from the worship (or, service) of God. God, for His part, demands the worship of His entire creation, and He does this on the basis of His creator-hood, His Fatherhood, and His Redeemerhood. Satan seeks to obscure these facts of God's Being, and to lure man to worship of ‘the creature rather than the Creator’, and thus to deceive men into serving (or worshipping) him.

### **(i) Transition from Old to New Covenant**

Israel was called to serve God, and its worship was really related to every detail of its corporate life, as also to the personal lives of the members of Israel. Hence the whole cultus of sacrifice and worship was the service of God. Yet, as we saw in the case of Cain and Abel, it is the disposition of the heart which made such worship either acceptable or unacceptable. Israel was open to two temptations:–

- (a) To formalise the worship of God, and
- (b) to rest upon its form, rather than to be in it with the heart.

Thus it seems, often, that the prophets reject the very sacrifices themselves, but what they are rejecting is a wrong and hypocritical use of those sacrifices. Sometimes Israel seems so far gone that even the prophets forecast the doom of the Temple, its sacrifices and its rituals. Nevertheless, the Law and its worship are prophetic. They are a shadow of the things to come, and when the reality comes, the shadows will not be significant.

They teach of a new and better way of sacrifice and forgiveness. Hence the rituals of the Mosaic Covenant, in their time, are to be fully observed, and never despised. However, as we have seen, the new age, or the new covenant is prophesied, so that when it comes it will bring cleansing (Ezek. 36:24–28) and forgiveness (Jer. 31: 31–34). It will be a time of the coming of the Spirit, universally (Joel 2:28ff.) and will lead to the day of the Lord. In other words, worship within the New Covenant will be in the last days, and will lead to the Last Day'

### **(ii) Jesus and Worship**

Jesus' statement of John 4:21–24 is monumental. In it he teaches

(a) The Samaritans do not know what (Him Whom) they worship. (b) True worship is not merely a matter of locality. (c) True worship is worship of the Father. (d) This worship demands affinity of being (Spirit and truth). (e) The Father seeks such worship, i.e. is the Initiator.

This whole statement is based on the principles of the New Covenant, and the coming of the Spirit. Elsewhere, Jesus shows that the basis of worship and service, including prayer, is rooted in the fact that God is Father. (See sermon on the Mount, Matt. chs. 5–7, cf. Luke 11:1f.).

### **(iii) The New Covenant and Worship**

#### **(a) The Israel of God**

In Gal. 6:16 Paul speaks of 'the Israel of God'. He loves 'Israel after the flesh' as is seen from Romans 9–11 (cf. especially 9:1–4, 10:1–3). In Phil. 3:1–3 he is differentiating between the false and true circumcision (cf. Romans 2:27 3:3). He may be referring to Jews as such, or to Jewish Christians who are Judaisers. However, he makes the powerful point that the true worship which is made is made by the Spirit. This Spirit he elsewhere calls 'the Spirit of promise' or, 'the promised Spirit' (See Gal. 3:14, Ephes. 1:13, cf. Luke 24:49, Acts 1–4, John chs. 14–16). As we will see later from Ephes. 5:18f. it is when the Spirit comes fully that worship flows freely.

However, our point is that the whole of the New Covenant changes worship. Not only does it outmode the worship of 'old Israel', as is so ably shown in Hebrews chs. 6–9, but in fact sets up the new conditions for worship, both in the persons of the new believers, and in their corporate being as the Body of Christ, and the Temple of God. We will look first at these points, and then at the argument of the writer of Hebrews.

#### **(b) True Conditions for Worship<sup>2</sup>**

1. **The promise of Jer. 31:31–34** was that when the **covenant of forgiveness** came into operation, two results would follow:

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<sup>2</sup> We mean that man is in the image of God. He has likeness to God, even more so than angels. Hence as 'deep calls unto deep' so does man to God in true worship.

- (i) The law of obedience would be written in the heart – spontaneous obedience, and
- (ii) The knowledge of God would be powerfully present in all God's people.

In effect, this means that true service would follow forgiveness. This accords with the principle of Exodus 4:23 'let my people go that they may serve Me'. First deliverance, then service. This is the same point made in Exodus 20:1ff. 'Because I have delivered you from Egypt, worship only Me, and serve only Me.' The thought is repeated in the Benedictus in Luke 1:68ff. The promise of the Abrahamic Covenant, which is ultimately the New Covenant, is that 'we being delivered from the hands of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life'. Hence, true worship (for fallen man) is rooted in redemption, and in particular in the forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:34).

This principle is powerfully set forth in Hebrews 9:14 '..the blood of Christ.... purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God'. In Rev. 7:9–14 the redeemed have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, and so they serve Him day and night.. In II Timothy 1:3 Paul says 'I thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience...' This is the old principle set forth in the story of the worship of Cain and Abel. It accords with Paul's claim of Acts 24:14 '...I worship the God of our fathers, according to the Way', meaning 'the way of the Gospel'. This relates to his statement in Romans 1:9 'God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son'.

In practice, all this means that man who was estranged from God is reconciled by the work of the Cross, the forgiveness imparted by the Holy Spirit, so that man, now reconciled to God, is free, and glad, to worship Him, and serve Him all the days of his life.

2. **Man is given sonship with the Father by the Cross, and through the Spirit.** Jesus said we would come to the Father by him (John 14:6), and that our worship must be of the Father (John 4:24) and this through the Spirit. Gal. 4:4–6 shows that through the Spirit we cry 'Father' Romans 8:14 says this issues in obedience, i.e. service. Worship of the Father is then, through the Spirit. This is precisely the worship Jesus offered to God as His Father. (Cf. Luke 10:21–22). A curious opposite thinking from this, is indicated in John 16:1–3, where Jesus says, 'They will put you out from the synagogues: indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father nor me'. We conclude that as the Son honours the Father and serves Him, so sonship through Christ and the Spirit motivates man, in this relationship to sonship and serve his Father, God.
3. **The three criteria for worship were relationship, love and understanding** (intelligence), these presupposing true service/worship. The clear conscience is what brings love flowing (I Tim. 1:5, cf. II Tim. 1:3, I Peter 1:22, etc.) In II Cor. 5:14–15, Paul makes it clear that true service of God comes from the love of Christ (John 14:15–23). John 17:3 (cf. I John 5:20) makes it clear that to know God is to have life, and so, we assume, worship service. In fact, in Romans 12:1–2 that Paul bases true worship upon the love and gratitude of man for 'the mercies of God'. This would also be the case in Rev. 7:14, and indeed again in Hebrews 9:14. Hence Jer. 31:31–34 shows that forgiveness brings the knowledge of God, and with it consequent obedience

and service. This is also powerfully illustrated in Isaiah ch. 6 where the prophet longs to do God's service when his conscience is cleansed from its pollution.

We are really saying that man estranged does not wish to worship and serve God. Hence, God's people Israel, when in their idolatry, had no taste for serving God. However, when man is liberated from sin, and from idolatry, he then longs to serve God (Ezek. 36:25–26).

4. **Worship is by the People of God.** Whilst worship is always personal, whether by one alone, or the body of persons together, yet true service is never done merely singly, by separate persons. Exodus 19:5–6 (cf. I Peter 2:9–10) shows that the nation or people was to serve and worship God. At Pentecost the initiative of worship passed from Israel–after–the–flesh to Israel–after–the–Spirit. Hence, the old Jewish congregation becomes the new church of Christ. Passages such as Acts 4:23ff. and Acts 13:1f. (amongst others) show us the church at worship, yet it was the church who served in proclaiming the Word of God. The whole discussion of the life of the Church, the gifts within the Body and the exercise of those gifts is pursued in I Cor. chs. 12–14, and discussed in Romans 12. From these passages, it is evident that the (new) people of God are now the true worshipping community. I Peter 2:9–10 shows that they are of the true Israel, as this parallels Exodus 19:5–6 for the children of Israel.

#### **(iv) The Worship of the Church**

##### **(a) Reasonable Worship**

In I Cor. 10:31 Paul says, 'Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.' He means that wherever man is related to God, through love, that all of his life – perhaps more unconsciously than consciously – is worship, that is service. Romans 12:1–2 is the highest point at which worship is discussed. In the O.T. worship, one offered, as a substitute for oneself, an animal. Very soon it was dead. The body lay on the altar, and was immolated. Paul says that the offering of one's physical body is a rational (Gk. 'logiken' i.e. 'logical') service. This can be translated 'spiritual worship'. He surely means that as the body lives, functions, operates, visibly in this world, it will indicate, and, indeed, actuate the true worship of God. Others, seeing it in action, will see it is serving God, i.e. worshipping Him. How much better is this than a dead victim on an altar! It brings us back to our opening observations on worship. i.e. That service and worship are the one. Notice too, the motivation for this worship – 'the mercies of God'. See also that one's mind (or, inner man) has to be renewed so that transformation proceeds, rather than allow the world to conform the mind to its standards i.e. non-worship of God, and 'worship of the creature rather than worship of the Creator'. We can see, then, that within the church, through redemption, the regenerated human being is now able to truly worship God. His very life is constant worship. Romans 12:3ff. indicates how that worship works out, and the description is so remarkable that we should read it and know what is the essence of true worship/service.

##### **(b) Modes of Worship**

The true mode of living, is the true mode of worship – we have seen that. However, corporate worship is also portrayed. In Acts 2, the 120 were gathered together for prayer and worship – cf. Luke 24:33, Acts 1:14,

2:1. At Pentecost they were filled with the Spirit and prophesied, and proclaimed the Gospel. They then shared in four elements – the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and the prayers – with those who were baptised. In their homes they had times of worship and prayer (Acts 2: 46f., 12:12, etc.). Churches met in homes – cf. Acts 16:15, 20:8 (house?) Romans 16:5, 23. Probably the church proper met in homes, whilst proclamation was made in more public situations. cf. Acts 19: 8–10.

We can now look at passages which describe worship in the N.T. One of the simplest appears to be I Thess. 5:16–22. 'Rejoice always. Pray constantly. Give thanks in all circumstances: for this is the will of God for you, in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything: hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil'. The thrust of this should be examined. Again in Col. 3:12–17, a passage, which whilst it may be for all Christian living, is also the action of worship, says 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.' Notice here that psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are not addressed so much to the Lord as they are to one another – in order to teach, mutually the things which are related to the congregation's needs.

In Ephesians 5:18–21, the picture of worship is very clear. As in the Colossian passage the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are forms of 'addressing one another' obviously for the purposes of exhortation, encouragement and even admonishing. 'Making melody in the heart' is 'to the Lord'. Thanksgiving is also a part of worship. All of this is in the context of 'being subject to one another', meaning the entire body of believers, hence what follows in family life with husbands and wives, parents and children, servants and masters is all part of the *latreia*, i.e. the worship/ service which Paul speaks of in Romans 12:1–2.

In I Corinthians chs. 12–14, the following things emerge.

- (i) The church is under the Lordship of Christ. It cries 'Jesus is Lord' This accords with the fact that Christ is the organic head of the church (cf. Ephes. 1:20–22), and all are members one of another (Rom. 12:5, I Cor. 12:25–27).
- (ii) The Holy Spirit distributes gifts to the members for the complete operation of the Body. Hence the Body as a whole exercises the gifts for its ministry and service. All of this must be done in love (Ch. 13).
- (iii) Ch. 14:26–33 gives us a picture of worship which is typical in the church – 'When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation'. The uses of these gifts are regulated. The criterion of true worship is 'order, not confusion'. However, it can be seen that the use of various gifts is contributory to the whole order of worship. Many participate. It is suggested that if the whole church were to use the gift of prophecy, then an unbeliever coming in would experience the impact of this ministry, as his secret thoughts would be disclosed, and he would declare, falling down, 'God is really among you' The point of this is that such worship is not passive but dynamic, God being known to be present.

In addition, other elements are described. Women, presumably married, are to keep silence in the churches, at least so far as questions are concerned, and to ask their husbands when they return home. Women of course,

may prophesy (cf. Acts 2:17–18) but with head veiled (I Cor. 11:5–6). In I Tim. 2:11–13, Paul enjoins women to learn, but not to take the authority of a man in teaching. The pastoral epistles show that elders lead the church community, and it is assumed they regulate the worship to some degree. In I Peter 4:10–11, the gifts mentioned may not all be used specifically in embodied worship, but they relate to the whole service of the church. ‘As each one has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: Whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God, whoever renders service (*diakonei*), as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ’.

In James, there are certain instructions for public worship. In ch. 2: 1–17, the treatment of the poor in the assembly is discussed. The poor must be honoured equally with the rich, and beyond that, those who can, should show their practical love by helping the brother who has need. This must be part of service, surely – the actions of the body of which Paul speaks in Romans 12:1–2, and expands in the following verses.

We conclude then that the modes of worship are not fixed rigidly. Because they ‘worship by the Spirit’ they are led into love (Rom. 5:5. I John 4:12f.), they are aided in the use of the gifts (for love), and the church worships in this living way, more especially because the living God is present. Hence, the worship contributes to the life and strength of the church, which is also equipped for service beyond even its corporate acts of worship. We must think then of the Father and His family, Christ as Lord of his people, and the Holy Spirit as guide, comforter, and empowerer. In this situation, worship flourishes.

### **(v) Conclusion in Regard to New–Covenant Worship**

We are now in a position to summarise the kind of worship which accompanies the new era brought in by the new covenant. The following elements obtain:

- (i) Man now knows God in freedom from bondage to sin, the fear of death, the powers of evil and its world system, as also the principle of the flesh which, like these other powers, still endeavours to work within it. Thus ‘we being delivered from our enemies may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness...all the days of our life’.
- (ii) Man, being reconciled to God, worships Him, not only as Creator and Provider, but as Father. This is the new worship, by the Spirit.
- (iii) Forgiveness is a gift to all men, and on repentance and faith, they continue to live in this state of freedom from guilt, and in love serve the God who emancipated them.
- (iv) Worship, both personal and corporate, is not formalised, as such, and is carried on in the context of the whole people of God, to whom have been given gifts, a divine order of authorities, and who share by means of the gifts and graces, the embodied worship after a pattern or order, and not of confusion.
- (v) This worship is epitomised, and demonstrated by the use of the bodies of the worshipers, as they live in the community of the church and the world.

(vi) The church, the worshipping serving community, is also part of the action of Messiah as He works out the plan of God to the end of time. Hence, spiritual warfare is part of that service, and martyrdom as well. It is such practical devotion which demands complete participation with Christ, in His fulfilment of the plan of the Father. Hence, we can envisage the battle of Christ's people, and their 'emergency' prayer and worship, as for example in Acts 4:24–30. As we have observed, such service comes out of the devotion and motivation of love. If we observe that all worship and service springs out of the true knowledge of God, then we can see that no matter what era man lives in, God does not change. It is as he sees God and responds, that he truly worships. Old and New covenants simply help to reveal to him that true nature of God.

## *9. Ultimate Worship*

We recognise that the creational worship of Adam, before the fall, although that of an untested devotion and loyalty, must have been of a high level. Nevertheless, when tested, it was tragically altered. It may well have been that Adam and Eve, or Abel in particular, and, later, Seth, truly worshiped God, since it is associated with Seth that man 'began to call upon the name of the Lord'. (See Gen. 4:26). When it is recognised that God's plan for man was to ultimately glorify Him (cf. I Cor. 2:6–10, Ephes. 1:4–12), then it is to that state of renewal of the heavens and the earth that we look to see the ultimate in worship–service.

In the Book of the Revelation, we have visions of heaven, and the worship found there. All worship is on the basis of the nature and being of God, as we gather from what we read. Such is as follows:

- (i) Revelation chapter 4. Here, there are four heavenly (living) creatures. They praise God for what He is (v.8), and this praise is unceasing. In v.11 they worship God, saying that He is worthy to receive all glory and honour and power because He has created all things. In this case, creation is the reason for worship.
- (ii) In chapter 5, it is the Lamb (Messiah, Lion of Judah) who is worshiped by the same creatures, and by the 24 elders. He is worthy to open the seals of the scroll, because he was slain and did ransom men out of every nation and tribe and tongue and people, transforming such into a kingdom of priests. He is worshiped in the basis of his redemptive work.
- (iii) In chapter eleven, the twenty four elders worship God because of His justice. (vs. 17–18).
- (iv) In chapter fifteen, the Song of Moses and the Lamb is sung, and God is worshiped because of His deeds and His judgements.
- (v) In chapter nineteen, (vs. 1–2), God is worshiped because of His judgements) and because He has avenged those destroyed by Babylon. Secondly, (vs. 6–8) praise is given because God reigns, and because He has caused the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb.

Summed up, this means that creation, redemption, the judgements of God, and the climax of Christ and His people are the basis of heavenly adoration and service. We have already seen (Rev. 7:9–14) that the redeemed worship

God, serving Him day and night in the temple, because He has redeemed them. We conclude then that this worship is pure and based upon the revealed nature of God. That is true, simple, and yet profound worship.

From this we can see that man will only worship God truly, when he has the final revelation of Him, and when he sees Him 'face to face' (Rev. 22: 3f). To be in this state, he must receive the 'sonship, that is the redemption of the body', which is in the glorification of his entire person. Passages such as I Cor. 15:51ff., Phil. 3:21, I John 3:3, Romans 8:30, and others show that man will ultimately be like the Son, and as such will have no impediment in worship and service.

Romans 8:18–30 also shows that at the moment when man is glorified, there will be a regeneration or re-constitution of the entire creation. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, a creation wherein dwells only righteousness, and that nothing unclean will be allowed into it. Simultaneously, the whole moral struggle will have been completed, evil judged and executed, and justice and love will triumph. It will be the sight of this full accomplishment of God, in His creation, that will assist man to understand fully the triumph of God, and His glorious nature. He will understand what the four living creatures, the celestial hosts, and the redeemed will all know. Hence, Worship will be Inspired, motivated, spontaneous and full. The body of glory will no longer be insufficient, but sufficient. It will be the perfect vehicle for total praise and utter worship.

Doubtless the entire Family, before the 'Father of glory', will constitute richer personal worship because of their corporate entity as the people of God, and the triumph of His love. So much we can safely speculate. Beyond what we can grasp fully at the present, is the entire nature of God. It ought to be enough to make us fall down and worship, utterly, now. This we are generally far from doing. Then we will be able to do no other.

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## ***APPENDIX ONE***

### **THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP**

The constituent elements of worship such as praise, adoration submission, supplication, petition, intercession, as also the actions of readings, manual acts of bowing, kneeling, raising up of hands, and the singing of hymns and psalms and spiritual songs, have not been dealt with in this study. The reason is that such are the outward manifestations and expressions of the worship/service of which we have spoken. We intend then, to deal with these in a special paper, 'The Praise of God in Acts of Adoration'. This will include the place of music and singing, as also the exercise of the gifts of worship.

## ***APPENDIX TWO***

### **THE SACRAMENTS AND WORSHIP**

To nominate these two sacraments as worship is by no means incorrect. However, the theology of the sacraments is integral to understanding their place in worship. As we have indicated, sinful fallen man may only worship truly in covenant relationship with God. Hence an understanding of the sacrament of sacrifice is essential before we can understand even the Mosaic Covenant, let alone the New, of which these two sacraments (or, ordinances) of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are truly part. For this reason, these sacraments demand wider treatment. For the moment, we say that Baptism initiates into the covenant-relationship with God, as also into being part of the people of God. The Lord's Supper relates to the same forgiveness and cleansing which comes to man in Baptism, but is worship which looks back to the Cross and its deliverance, which shares in a present 'showing forth of Christ's death', and which looks forward to the triumphant Messianic banquet, the fuller manifestation of the Kingdom, when He comes. It is clear, then, why these two Sacraments have been primary in the worship of the Christian church, as also why the effectual working of them enables the true believers to serve God in the broadest spectrum of daily living.

## ***APPENDIX THREE***

### **WORSHIP AND THE TRINITY**

The relationship of the Persons of the Trinity in regard to worship, is another significant matter not covered by our paper. Within the triune Godhead, the Father is primary, the Son being subject to Him, and the Spirit always being related to both. Although the Spirit has discrete being, yet he is ever 'the Spirit of the Father', or, 'the Spirit of the Son', or 'the Spirit of the Lord', 'the Spirit of Jesus' and so on. In their relationships with man, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all communicate directly where it is needed. In prayer, especially petitionary prayer, Jesus directs his disciples to pray to the Father 'in my name' (cf. John 16:23–24, 14:14, 15:16). In relationship with the Godhead we are led by the Son, by the Father (John 6:45 cf. Matt. 11:27), yet the Father leads by the Holy Spirit (John 16:12–15). It is the Son who leads to the Father (John 14:6), yet it is also the Holy Spirit. The affinity essential for true worship, is effected in man by the Holy Spirit (John 4:22–24), so that man in his spirit, worships by the Spirit, (John 4:22–24, Phil. 3:3. cf. Ephes. 5:18–20) but his worship is to God as Father, man being his son. Our conclusion is that all three Persons of the Godhead are involved in our worship. Nevertheless, it is difficult for us to articulate the mode of worship when we approach the Godhead. We can say that by the Spirit, through the Son (we have access by these Two: Ephesians 2:18, 3:12) we worship God in His Fatherhood, and make our petitions accordingly. It is true that we stand in relation to the Father, as children of God. We stand in relation to the Son as our Lord (cf. I Cor. 8:6), and we stand in relation to the Spirit, as our Guide and Mentor (Rom. 8:14, I Cor. 2:12–13). In Revelation 4, God is worshiped as Creator, and in Revelation 5, Messiah is worshiped because of what he has done. It is best, then, not to create a methodology of worship, but worship as our momentary relationship dictates, i.e., to the Father as sons; to the Creator as creatures; to the Holy Spirit as Leader; to Christ the Son as our Lord. Christian history shows the people of God in their ascription's to any and all of the three Persons, yet in practice we pray to the triune God as 'God', reserving personal elements, as we have said, to the emphases of our momentary (and, changing) relationships.

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