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THE PRINCIPLES OF COMMON WORSHIP.

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THE various forms which the demand for the revision of the Book of Common Prayer has taken and the variety of the attempts to produce a satisfactory revision seem to point to a certain haziness in the idea of what the word "worship" connotes. We need, then, to try and arrive at an exact definition of our terms, and it is extraordinarily difficult to express our ideas cogently. We have to guard against "too much stiffness in refusing and too much easiness in admitting" terms which our upbringing or our prejudices suggest. Any man can formulate his own definition of worship if he has regard only to his own approach to God: it is something quite different to compress into a few words the meaning of the term as it is variously applied by men of varied training and outlook. In one place the writer has seen worship defined as "a religious service," in another "adoration paid to God." In each case the suggestion was offered by a man of culture and experience, yet we should all feel that neither includes, at any rate with sufficient exactitude, all that we understand by the term in the particular connexion in which it is found at the head of this paper. Whatever the definition at which lexicographers may ultimately arrive, we can start from the point that worship is, originally, "worth-ship." Admittedly the meaning may easily have been modified by the passage of time, but the root idea of the word must always remain. As applied to God, then, worship involves a recognition of the "worth," the worthiness, of God. This seems to limit the area from which worshippers can be drawn. It appears that only the converted and the definite seekers after God can, strictly speaking, worship Him. Something of the kind was apparently in the mind of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews when he said (xi. 6): "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Many of those who join in the services of the Church are not, then, worshippers, for each congregation contains some who have not a

personal experience of God and, probably, some who come to Church rather because it is customary than because of any desire to render homage to their Creator. In considering the principles which should govern our common worship, it seems necessary to bear this in mind.

Worship may be said to include matter, form and act. For example, the "matter" might be praise or prayer, adoration or confession; the "form" would include the style in which the worshipper addressed himself to God, and may be illustrated by the difference between a collect from the Prayer Book and the *ex tempore* prayer with which, say, a Sunday-school teachers' meeting is opened. The term "act" would refer, among other things, to the posture of the worshipper: for example, standing or sitting while the choir renders an anthem. It is worth noting here that there is no justification for uniformity of practice during the singing of an anthem. Some anthems are acts of praise, and standing is the appropriate attitude, as it is with those which are prayers, since kneeling would be impossible; but some are meditations, principally on passages of Scripture, and for these sitting is more suitable, just as the congregation sits while the lessons are being read. In attempting to arrive at the principles of common worship, it will probably be best to keep these three points in the background, regarding them as giving tone to all else, rather than to use them as headings under which the subject should be considered. The writer proposes to take the two words "common" and "worship," and treat of them as representing the man-ward and the God-ward sides of the public approach to God, which for the time he takes as a working definition of worship.

I

First, then, we deal with the man-ward side of our worship, that is, we think of the worshippers. The word "common" implies a group. Our daily services cease to be Common Prayer when the priest recites the office alone. In any group there is diversity of temperament, and we have come to learn in recent years that the form, at least, of our worship is largely a matter of temperament. The writer knows of an Anglo-Catholic who refuses to have an ornament of any kind in his Church, and on the other hand he is personally acquainted with a convinced Evangelical whose conduct

of public worship has more than once led the brethren to question his soundness in the faith! The first desideratum on the part of the worshippers is that they should recognize the existence of this diversity. And it is not only a matter of temperament, but also of something more vital. There is diversity of religious experience. A congregation may, and probably will, include boys and girls in the year before their confirmation, young communicants (and no one can pretend that, however careful the instruction, all those who pass out of our Confirmation classes have reached even approximately the same spiritual height), communicants of many years' standing, who presumably have grown in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the casual visitor who has possibly not darkened a church door since the last Harvest Festival. Whatever may be the faults of our services or of those who conduct them, there is no doubt at all that the average church-goer makes little or no allowance for this diversity; indeed, it is more than likely that he has never thought of it. Before our worship can be truly common it will have to be generally recognized. Each member of the congregation must be brought to see that not all the others have his particular needs, nor have all precisely the same subjects for thanksgiving as move him on Sunday morning. We need to guard against the complete absorption of the individual in the congregation, which would tend to make worship a mechanical priestly rite, but on the other hand we need to develop a corporate consciousness.

This diversity of worshippers in any one service makes intelligibility a cardinal principle of public worship. Intelligibility governs the choice of language for our public prayers in two ways. In the first place it involves the use of the "vulgar tongue," and this was considered of sufficient importance at the time of the Reformation for it to find a place in our Articles of Religion. Obviously, if all are to join intelligently in the worship of the Church (and a service ceases to be worship if it is not intelligently rendered—1 Cor. xiv. 15), the act of worship in which they are participating must be in a language which all understand. The principle, however, goes farther. Not only must a known tongue be used, but a known form of that tongue. Shakespearean English may be more resonant and more dignified than that of the twentieth century, but that is no reason at all for employing it in twentieth-

century services unless the average worshipper can follow it without having to determine the meaning of a particular word from its context: this detracts his attention from the prayer itself to the form in which the prayer is offered. Intelligibility, then, necessitates simplicity, but simplicity does not involve looseness or anything approaching slang. The highest form of worship is worthy of the best language of which the worshipper is capable. It does mean that we shall cease to ask God to prevent us when we want Him to go before us: it will rule out for many congregations such descriptions of God as omniscient. In this connexion we see the value of alternative prayers for the same object: one should be suitable to an educated congregation, and the other to a typically working-class one, for it is almost as bad to pray in a form much below people's intelligence as in a form above it—it encourages the feeling that anything is good enough for God. Simplicity will also determine the form of our public prayers. The preambles to our collects are most valuable and, as Bishop Barry remarks, an almost complete statement of Christian doctrine might be drawn from them, but when we get away from the collects for Holy Days to prayers in some of the Occasional Offices, some of the opening addresses to God are too involved for ordinary use. In the first prayer in the Baptismal Office almost half is occupied with the address; similarly the preamble to the collect in the Burial Service is too long: at these and other occasional services there are people who may not be accustomed to liturgical services, and there are usually some who, while used to ordinary Church services, are not able to pray intelligently when there is such an interval between the opening of the prayer and the actual petition. It would be better in the address to direct attention to some one relevant incident or fact, as in the third collect at Morning Prayer, than to attempt to produce a cumulative effect and in the attempt allow the worshipper's mind to wander. Further, if our prayers are to be understood by those who use them, they must proceed from stage to stage by a natural transition. The prayers in our Book of Common Prayer are mostly admirable examples of this, although they were compiled before the scientific study of psychology, but the *ex tempore* prayers which one sometimes hears, obviously composed on the spur of the moment, frequently jump from subject to subject without any warning to the others present (who are

supposed to be joining silently in the petitions) so that the hearers have scarcely realized what they are supposed to be praying for when another subject is brought before them. If the "bull" may be forgiven, *ex tempore* prayers for use at a meeting or an informal service should be written out beforehand. Closely allied to this, and still under the heading of intelligibility, is definiteness, both in choice of phrases and in aim. One of the defects of much modern worship is that it leads nowhere: we are no nearer God at the end of the service than we were at the beginning of it, and this is not all due to the worshipper's being too subjective and having been put off by some, to others, trivial incident. We can apply a simple test to ourselves—what is the effect on us of a service when there is no sermon? The question is best asked of a service other than the Holy Communion, for custom has there inured us to the absence of the sermon. Apart from the question of answers to our prayers, are we more fully in harmony with God than we were when the service began? Now, if our worship is to be definite, if it is to draw us nearer to God, it must be according to the will of God. It is in this connexion that the reading of the Scriptures is of service, for no day need pass without our learning something more of God's will from the reading of His Word. We might almost count the "lessons" a necessity of public worship on these grounds, but the existence of the Litany as a separate service which, no one doubts, may be one of the most real of our acts of public worship, forbids us to insist on the reading of the Bible as a fundamental. The exact place of the lesson is, however, worth investigating. Though we may be used to hearing the Litany by itself, it was originally intended to be said only after Morning Prayer, and this seems to point to the fact that the compilers of our present Prayer Book considered the reading of some part of the Bible as a necessary part of all public worship. Whether or not this was for instructional purposes at a time when the average worshipper was extraordinarily ignorant of Holy Scripture is a debatable point.

We can pass now to the second principle of common worship which arises out of the word "common," and that is comprehensiveness. The service in which so many are to join must meet the needs of all types, though it cannot meet those of all individuals, and of all occasions. It is scarcely necessary to deal with this part of our subject, for the principle is generally recognized, and this

recognition is largely responsible for whatever demand there is from the ordinary worshipper for the revision of the Prayer Book. It has been urged, earlier in this paper, that alternative prayers for the same object suitable to the different types of congregation with which we are all familiar, should be provided within the one Prayer Book. They should be printed together, with the usual "Or This" before the second of them, or the Church will lay itself open to the charge of condescension: nothing would be more likely to estrange the working-classes than to have a special Prayer Book or a special appendix to the Prayer Book for them, and their resentment would be justified. On the other hand, it would probably be best to print all the prayers for use on special occasions together, preferably at the end of the book, where they may most easily be found by the average man or woman who wants to follow what the minister is saying, and to find it before he has finished the prayer. Within each type there are individuals with needs or desires which they want to lay before God, and it is worth making some sacrifice to enable them to do this. The method is simple, though it needs care in its application. Periods of silence should be observed. We approach towards these in the biddings which have become common before the Prayer for the Church Militant, but there is no reason why the custom should be limited to that occasion, and a too common fault is that while subjects for intercession are suggested, very little, if any, time is given the individual to bring them before God. If the bidding is to be followed by audible prayer, a short space of time should intervene in which the members of the congregation may concentrate their thoughts. But there is real opportunity for the use of a bidding without audible prayer. If it is asked: Why have a bidding at all in this case? the answer is that we are considering common worship, and that presupposes a concentration of thought on the part of the whole congregation on one object at one time. "Let us pray for those who have burdens to carry," or some such call to concentration, gives each individual an opportunity to lay his own needs, or those of others for whom he specially wants to pray, before God; while it does not destroy the "common" element in worship, for all are concerned with the same general subject. So we might pray for "those who are sick and those who mourn," and each person present could bring the whole of his intercessory power to bear for those for whom he wanted

to pray when he entered church, or, if there were no such, he would link himself with his fellow-intercessors in their petitions. Those who have tried this method speak highly of its value to themselves, and have received the thanks of members of their congregations for their departure from more traditional ways. It appears to the writer that only by a recognition of this principle of comprehensiveness can we secure the outpouring and the opening of the individual heart which is essential to true worship. There must be responsiveness, or the service becomes the mere repetition of an office, whether a congregation is present or not, and to repeat an office is not, in itself, an act of worship any more than the reception of the Bread and Wine at the Holy Communion is in itself to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ.

II

We pass now to the consideration of our principles under the head of the word "worship," and we treat this as indicating the God-ward side of our approach to Him. If we demand intelligibility and comprehensiveness in our worship, what does God expect in order that we may worship Him in spirit and in truth? Worship is a recognition of worth-ship, so we arrive at once at the principle that our worship must be Scriptural. As has been already remarked, our worship, if it is to be acceptable, must be according to the will of God, and this is revealed in the Bible. The principle enunciated in our Article (VI) about things necessary to salvation applies with equal force to worship. But the term scriptural, as any period of Church history abundantly shows, is liable both to misunderstanding and abuse. In the particular connexion before us now, it must not be interpreted in such a sense as to demand textual proof for every phrase or action, nor on the other hand is the existence of some form of worship in the Bible an argument for our still worshipping in precisely the same manner in the twentieth century. The Bible is undoubtedly a manual of faith, but it is certainly not a manual of worship. The faith is one for all time: it is the faith once for all delivered to the saints; but modes of worship will differ from age to age as man's æsthetic sense changes and as the interpretation of the once-given faith develops. Further, modes of worship will vary according to nationality, because national temperament is distinctive, and the form of our worship is largely a question of

temperament. It is the inalienable right of a national Church to prescribe its own ceremonial, and so to introduce a distinctively national order into its services. We are told, with a certain amount of justification, that the order of our prayers, or, rather, the particular place which a prayer occupies in relation to other prayers (e.g. the Prayer of Humble Access and the Prayer of Oblation in the Communion Office) may have a doctrinal significance, but the principle of Scripturalness will cover this. It demands that there shall be no part of our worship, whether word or deed, which is contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture interpreted in the light of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. To define it thus negatively leaves considerable room for variation, but at the same time guards against excess: the last phrase of the definition, for example, denies the right to import the Jewish ritual into our Christian worship. The conformity of our worship to Scripture will rule out all that is meaningless or unworthy, for the Scriptural ideal is " in spirit and in truth," and while " in spirit " is our Lord's protest against the limitation of worship to any particular place, be it Temple or Church, " in truth " is similarly His protest against ignorant forms of worship in so far as they are due to wilful blindness, or the refusal to use the light already received in one's approach to God, or the unwillingness to seek further light and incorporate freshly assimilated truth into prayer and praise.

If we are to worship God acceptably, it is clear that we must bear in mind what we know of His Nature: it is doubtful whether in these days we take sufficient account of God's majesty and holiness. It is altogether right that, as Christians, we should lay chief stress on the Fatherhood of God, but this carries no obligation to exclude the thought of His Kingship, and there is real danger to-day of our losing sight of the awe-inspiring Nature of God. This is shown by the absence of any sense of sin among those outside the churches, and of its seriousness by many of those within. The prevalent idea is that God is very kind; in fact, too kind to expect people in the modern world to live truly Christian lives if they find it hard to overcome temptation. No one thinking along these lines is in the right attitude for worship, and this conception of God is a travesty. This being so, we need to insist more forcibly than we have done on the recognition of God's holiness in our public worship. The experience of Isaiah, of the publican in the

parable, and of many other Biblical characters, besides that of men and women of later date, goes to prove that a realization of our own unworthiness and sinfulness is intimately connected (either as cause or effect) with a realization of the holiness of God. Hence arises the fundamental importance of the penitential parts of common worship, and anything which tends to weaken them should be strenuously resisted. Apart from other considerations, the proposals to shorten the Ten Commandments at Celebrations of the Holy Communion should be carefully examined on these grounds. There cannot be any vital objection to omitting parts of a few verses in Exodus for public reading on specific occasions, merely on the ground of the omission, so long as we divide up paragraphs in the Gospel story and omit part from the lesson. But if the shortening of the Commandments is going to produce the impression that the Church is adopting the average view of God, then it is a bad thing, and whether it is legalized or not (as an alternative) we ought not, for the present, to adopt it. The vital importance of the penitential parts of our services will determine their place in the service in relation to petition and praise. There is a great deal to be said for keeping the confession of sin and the absolution in their present place as an introduction to the rest of the service both at Morning and Evening Prayer and at the Holy Communion, and if penitence is necessary as a preliminary to the reception of the Bread and Wine, it is equally necessary as a preliminary to the daily services, though the point seems to have been overlooked in the discussion of the subject provoked by the various proposals for the revision of the Prayer Book. To insist on penitence in the one case while regarding it as optional in the other, or to insist that the penitence must be deeper in one case than in the other, is to relegate one service to a position of real inferiority. If sin is a turning of the back on the love of God, then confession of sin must come before petition or praise, for it is the act of turning round to the Father again, and, to continue the metaphor, we must face Him before we speak to Him. And if it be urged that many worshippers do not feel in the mood to confess their sins at the opening of the service, it is an argument for strengthening the Exhortation, not for removing the penitential introduction. It seems necessary to say this because there is a more or less widespread feeling that Morning Prayer should begin at " O Lord, open

Thou our lips," whether or not it is to be immediately followed by Holy Communion.

The recognition of the holiness and majesty of God calls forth not only penitence but also praise and adoration, and no act of worship can be regarded as complete which omits these. It is interesting to note that in the Litany, which is pre-eminently the penitential service, the *Gloria* is introduced, and while we may be able to account for its presence in the particular place where it occurs, it is a moot point how many modern liturgists would have put it there—perhaps its place may be due after all to nothing more than the recognition of praise and adoration as an integral part of all worship. This part of common worship may be expressed in two ways, in the "matter" or in the "form" of the service. The *Gloria Patri* and the *Gloria in Excelsis* are two obvious examples of this acknowledgment of God for what He is in Himself rather than for what He is in relation to His creatures. There is a wonderful instance of it in David's parting message (1 Chron. xxix. 10–16), and again in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kings viii. 23 ff.), while it was the same spirit which prompted him to such liberal offerings as are recorded in 1 Kings viii. 62 ff. The same spirit may be expressed in the manner in which the service is rendered: a dignified service is in itself an act of praise, and conversely a slipshod service is an act of dishonour to God. We may be sure that anything which adds reverence to our worship is acceptable to God as an expression of our recognition of His holiness and majesty.

There remains one other principle of our common worship, considered in its God-ward aspect, and that is the recognition of the Fatherhood of God. This is the distinctively Christian part of our worship, because God's Fatherhood is the distinctive point of our Lord's revelation of Him. It will permeate all the rest of our worship, so that there will be no confession of sin which does not base itself on the love of the Father, no petition which fails to take account of the fact that the Father is always more ready to hear than we to pray and is wont to give far more than we desire or deserve, no praise that thinks of God as a far-off monarch and does not remember that He is the Father of those who would offer Him the best sacrifice of which they are capable, unworthy though they know it to be. Because God is Father no act of worship is

complete which does not include petition. He delights to hear the requests of His children; it is His joy that they should bring all their needs to Him. Because God is Father we have boldness, freedom of speech, as we draw near to the throne of grace, and it matters not with what burden or what overflowing joy we come to public worship, the remembrance of God's Fatherhood will determine its spirit. But it will also include a thankful recognition of the redemptive work of Christ through whom alone we have access and to whom we would unite ourselves as we approach the God and Father of us all. It is on the foundation which He has laid by His atoning life and death that we stand: it is because He has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers that we draw near, and we shall remember this with thanksgiving, for thanksgiving is the other side of petition, and our sense of dependence on the Father will prompt us continually to thank Him for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for His inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.

In *Put Forth by the Moon*, by Hubert L. Simpson (Hodder & Stoughton, 7*s.* 6*d.*), the writer preaches to the untheologically minded, but he deals with problems that interest theologians and presents them with a rare felicity of exposition and a burning earnestness that recall the Robertson addresses, which are as fresh to-day as when they were preached. He takes an out-of-the-way text and without straining its meaning proves its applicability to contemporary life. He makes his reader sit up and think, and if his pulpit manner be at all equal to his literary skill he cannot fail to make a deep impression. The twenty sermons, dealing with such questions as Michal putting the image to bed, Samson and the Gaza temple, and "Another Name," all have their message, and we confess that when we began to read the book we had no idea that we should spend so many hours consecutively with its discourses. The truth is old truth—the manner of exposition is new. The illustrations are unhackneyed and suggestive; the underlying note is evangelical, and if at times we disagree with the line taken—why, this only proves the preacher thinks for himself and is not the slave of any school of exposition.