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EVANGELICAL WORSHIP

I

RECENT tendencies in England and Scotland to aesthetic and liturgical worship or what has been called "the movement towards Beauty and Order" have evoked adverse criticism from evangelical churchmen who feel that preoccupation with the material surroundings of worship and provision of and reliance on so many written forms of devotion will have a deleterious effect on the evangelical sincerity of the worshippers and on their witness to the truth of the historic Christian Faith. It is admitted by all that the formation of parties within the Churches affected by the movement would not conduce to their peace and progress and in turn would seriously hinder the cause of Union among the Reformed Churches. Further, the present time is peculiarly inopportune for raising doctrinal and ecclesiastical disputes in view of the rising tide of paganism both in faith and morals which unhappily is menacing this country. What is of prime importance is that all the Churches of the Protestant Reformation concentrate on the central and fundamental truths of the Gospel which they hold in common and not distract their attention with subsidiary matters however important in other respects. Much might be said and with real cogency concerning the urgent need at the present time for the various Churches to stand together and form a United Evangelical Front against the common enemy—"the world at enmity against God". Perhaps the Church will find that it will be a case of *per aspera ad unitatem*. However that may be, one thing is clear, namely, that the present is no time for arousing controversy and disturbing the internal peace of the Churches by attempts to return to discredited ritual and artistic formalism. Few things are more likely to have these results than unwarranted innovations in worship: few things are less likely to meet the clamant needs of the time as much talk about beauty and forms of devotion and the necessity of art. Much of the advocacy of the need for the Church to "attract" outsiders by external

means or by an *argumentum ad hominem* is not only ineffective but hurtful to the Church herself called upon as she is to pursue simply and faithfully the work which the Head has given her to do. "Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit," saith the Lord of hosts. The cure for the widespread and much deplored worldliness which prevails, accompanied by contemptuous neglect and indifference to the Gospel and the Church, and by the deliberate flouting of Christian morals, will not be found by the preaching or advocacy of smooth things or mere palliatives: it will rather be found in the Church's uncompromising attitude to the world at enmity against God and by such a "speaking of *the truth* in love" as does not involve the dilution of it to please men. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty *through God* to the pulling down of strongholds." So shall the Church progress *per aspera ad asra* but confident that ultimate defeat is impossible and final victory secure.

The conservation of the essential simplicity of evangelical worship within the Church is an important factor in the Church's witness for Christ to the world. In this article the protest is not against the liturgical movement insofar as it represents a sincere effort more fully to express the nature of evangelical worship but against the dangers resulting from the introduction of unscriptural ideas and innovations. Evangelical churchmen are fully as well informed as others on the philosophy of Beauty and the value of Art: they are aware that Calvinism, in particular, has made a rich contribution to Art. But the movement "towards Beauty and Order" is based largely on unwarranted assumptions as to what is compatible with evangelical worship and on a failure to appreciate the inherent dangers of certain allegedly expedient "aids to devotion" as used in public worship.

II

THE SIMPLICITY OF EVANGELICAL WORSHIP

The true nature of evangelical worship must obviously be sought in the New Testament: this appeal to Scripture is the first duty of every church claiming allegiance to the Reformed and Protestant Faith. Without digressing into the question as to the correct interpretation of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, it may be stated here that all the Churches of

the Reformation accept the Pauline vindication of the continuity and integrity of Divine Revelation as a progressive process culminating in Jesus Christ the final Revealer of God's nature, will and purpose for mankind: "After the manner which they call heresy so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets. . . ." The practical importance of this allegiance to Scriptural truth as against the insidious influence of the "traditions of men" cannot be over-estimated, for on its reality depends the Church's freedom from erroneous doctrine and worship. If the Church is to be able to say like her Founder, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up"; she must know what is the will of God in Christ. The only infallibility recognized by the Evangelical Church is the infallibility of the Word of God, and it is due to conscientiously held and differing views of the doctrine which is compatible therewith that there are so many denominations of the Churches of the Reformation, each one claiming the right in dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to state authoritatively what is the true doctrine. No Reformed Church, therefore, makes the pretentious Romish claim to Infallibility but only to Orthodoxy. But here we are concerned not with dogmatic truth but with worship, and it may be suggested that were the simplicity of evangelical worship more widely recognized both in theory and in practice, the Reformed Churches would be more conscious of their essential unity. In that worship there are no burdensome ceremonies; no deference paid to riches, superior education or prestige, no flattery of the "natural man"; no emphasis on those things which human predilection, prejudice or fancy would on "logical" or other grounds consider necessary or expedient. What has been called the "Simplicity of Christian Ritual" is one of the most challenging facts in the spiritual history of mankind. In this connexion, as in many other respects, we can see how "God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world."

In evangelical worship there is an entire absence of detailed instructions or prescribed forms such as are given in the Liturgies of later ages; the word "liturgy", as it occurs in various forms in the Greek New Testament, never denotes what it does in modern ecclesiastical usage. Compulsory liturgies imposed on Churches on specious aesthetic, intellectual or other grounds,

have served only to fortify doctrinal error and have resulted in regrettable spiritual coldness in the hearts of worshippers. They have thus led to results which follow a departure from "simplicity and fidelity to Christ."

The retention of simplicity in worship is, therefore, the constant and important duty of the evangelical Church because that simplicity is the hall-mark of its completeness and spiritual maturity as we shall see later. Meantime, it may be noted that the pre-requisite of evangelical worship is evangelical faith: there are other kinds of worship and faith. There is, for example, philosophic worship (*amor intellectualis Dei*) which is the attempt exclusively of the mind to contemplate one or more of the "ultimate values" in the Absolute regarded as their nexus. There is "superstitious worship" which is the outcome of irrational credulity, and emotional fear expressing itself in the practice of magic.

Now it cannot be too clearly understood that only those who are already Christians by spiritual experience can worship evangelically and can recognise the supremacy of that worship over all other modes of worship. Consequently the opinions of aesthetes, intellectualists and others are utterly irrelevant: the question is not what men, on *a priori* grounds, think worship ought, in their opinion, to be, but what, in point of fact, it really is. The fact that men hold some general theistic belief or cherish some philosophic ideas or ideals for human life in no way gives them authority to dogmatise on the nature of evangelical worship. The Church is to be a witness for Christ to the world and although she includes in her membership artists, philosophers, scientists, &c., she cannot be expected to pay deference to their individual predilections. Her worship must be so simple that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah xxxv. 8). The Church, therefore, must sedulously guard against any unwarranted additions to, or detractions from, her worship, if the spiritual needs of the worshippers are to be met and if the truly "catholic", or "universal", appeal of the Gospel to mankind is to be kept evident.

One of the reasons why heathen worship was usually either very elaborate, imposing and impressive, or else crude and superstitious, was because it was the worship of the "unknown", worship which proceeded from a vague belief in "lords many and gods many", and lacked that inner and spiritual experience

of the individual devotees without which true worship is impossible. Undoubtedly among all ancient and heathen peoples the Greeks were pre-eminent in intellectual enlightenment and artistic skill, so, to appreciate *their* limitations as regards worship is to know that all other heathen peoples were further removed from the true worship of God as practised among God's "chosen people". Let us, therefore, briefly refer to Greek worship.

The example of Greek religious worship is the most conclusive testimony in ancient times to the peril of aestheticism as that of Romanism is later. The Greeks, surpassing all other ancient peoples in intellectual and artistic power, had evolved a type of worship which was the outcome of the simple idea that the obvious way to obtain the favour of any particular god or gods was to construct a temple sufficiently attractive and magnificent to persuade him or them to occupy it as a dwelling-place, and so yield protection and favour to those who had provided it. If such temples were everywhere to be found throughout the land then it would prosper. The difficulties confronting this "theory" were many, one of the most obvious, in the elaborate polytheism, being the necessity of not omitting to do honour to one of the gods. Some such omission was held to account for any national disaster, and this probably explains the altar with the inscription "To the Unknown God" (Acts xvii. 23). Evangelical worship was regarded by the pagan worshippers as a menace to religion and a danger to the State because it opposed the "orthodox" principle of pagan worship—localised deism—and so seemed subversive of the stability and prosperity of the State. Thus arose the strange paradox that the early Christians were accused of being "atheists" and "haters of the human race"! To the pagans the proof of such accusation lay in the Christian assertion that "the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts vii. 48; cf. xvii. 24) and in the Christian refusal to participate in heathen, polytheistic worship. *Religion and Art in Ancient Greece* (by Professor E. A. Gardner) is an interesting study of the subject the conclusion of which may be noted. "The result was a tendency towards symbolism in which the symbol itself was regarded as a mere convention, and the inspiration and actual communion with men, vouchsafed by the gods through their ideal images, was no longer sought after. When any means of communion between god and man, whether by means of a solemn service

or by means of an image which the god himself accepts as his earthly representative, ceases to be felt as anything more than a human device its religious power must fail. When, on the other hand, we find a union of religion and art to provide a means for this divine intercourse, we may recognise idolatry in its highest form, the use of images not merely as accessories of religious service, but as providing in themselves a channel of worship and inspiration."

As against any idolatry, evangelical worship was the worship of the known God as He had revealed Himself in Him who said, "Whoso hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Thus its rites or features were necessarily simple and few because they were commemorative of the Christ who *had been known* to His own people, and because evangelical worshippers had received the gift of the Holy Spirit taking of the things of Christ and showing these things unto them. The rites were means of grace but, of course, for those whose faith was immature their full effectiveness was not experienced. Thus the first question which Paul asked of "certain disciples," whom he found at Ephesus, was "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" "And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit" (Acts xix. 2).

The historical condition and spiritually experiential nature of evangelical worship, the fact that it was commemorative of a Person who had dwelt among men, and the fact that the working of the Holy Spirit was a living experience of the worshippers, explain its simplicity as compared with the elaborate legal or Jewish worship. Thus around the simple outward memorials, which were also means of grace, namely the evangelical sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper a host of thoughts, reflections, remembrances, are ready to gather : Deity Incarnate, Infinite Self-Sacrifice, Reconciliation with God, Pardon, Purity, Peace, Eternal Life through the Atonement of Christ, and so on.

Now this simplicity of evangelical worship is a fact of the history of the early Church and of the New Testament, but in the light of subsequent history we can discern the reasons for the fact. Without going into detail which would lead us beyond the limits of space possible in an article like this, it suffices to say that the reason, *par excellence*, is that simplicity is the essential and most effective safeguard of spiritual sincerity on the part

of the worshipper, is the *sine qua non* of true worship, and the necessary accompaniment of *evangelical* worship.

Numerous and varied are the things which threaten sincerity in worship, and it is clear that if Christians would insist on, and remain content with, the simplicities of the Faith and Worship of the Evangelical Church, the Church would be stronger and more influential to-day than she is. The temptation to accommodate the Faith and Worship to the world and to the weaknesses of human nature is one that ought to be sedulously guarded against. In Romanism we see not merely the sad result of this tendency but the exploitation of worldly prejudices and predilections to fortify doctrinal and other kinds of error.

In evangelical worship the appeal is to the hidden man of the heart, allowing him no subterfuge to escape facing the uncompromising moral and spiritual demands of the Lord upon him. He is not given the chance to dope his soul with aesthetic emotion aroused by an abstrusive materialism or a histrionic ritual which are so "busied and troubled about many things" (perhaps good enough in themselves and in their place but out of place a snare to sincerity—such as "moving music" and other empirical promoters of emotion) that they veil "the one thing needful", namely, the necessity for abiding in Christ and waiting upon God in spirit and in truth. Where "the form of godliness" in worship alone exists then, however "beautiful" and orderly and pleasing it may be to the worshippers, it is not only futile but displeasing to God (Isa. i. 11-18). Mere aesthetic appreciation of the religious service is vain (Ezek. xxxiii. 32). Where worship is reduced to an entertaining performance and becomes the cultivated reverie of a group of either genuine or dilettantish aestheticists then the strength and power of evangelical worship is not only unrecognised but despised. A clear recognition of the dangers which threaten evangelical worship is the primary requirement in avoiding them in the effort to attain in the modern Church harmonious conditions of worship.

III

SYMBOLISM IN WORSHIP

Liturgists and generally all promoters of "the movement toward Beauty and Order" in the worship in the Reformed

Churches seem to be more concerned with what on their own theory, worship ought to be, than with what in point of fact evangelical worship is. But the duty of evangelical Churches is not to make worship conform to theoretical pre-suppositions but to maintain the spirit of evangelical worship and to avoid being "wise above what is written" thereanent in the New Testament. Unfortunately, however, the average churchgoer is unaccustomed seriously or deeply to study the matter and this facilitates the progress of "Ritualism": it is enough for him that he feels by some vague emotional or sentimental intuition that such and such a practice or object in worship promotes "seemliness," "order" or "dignity"—and *cadit questio!* Anyone who ventures to question the expediency of such innovations is regarded as narrow-minded, peculiar and somewhat eccentric.

But Jesus said "He that is a friend of the truth listens to my voice" and the truth here is that the glory of evangelical worship lies in its complete rejection of human pride and predilection. The startling fact about evangelical worship is that it differs fundamentally from all other modes of worship and dispenses with what on *a priori* grounds we might have expected it to include. For example, it is well known that the basic arguments of liturgists are not based on Revelation but on the facts of everyday experience and human psychology. They confidently (and correctly) indicate how largely sign and symbol (gesture, etc.) enter into human life; that thoughts and emotions are expressed, not exclusively, by articulate speech: that words are themselves largely "symbols" whose exchange value is simply determined by conventional and educational usage; that human nature craves after the outward expression or material embodiment of its emotions of joy or sorrow; that the divinely created world is replete with "beauty and order," silent testimonies to God's power and nature; that

"In this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stone and good in everything."

(SHAKESPEARE)

"What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice nor sound
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?"

In reason's ear they all rejoice,
 And utter forth a glorious voice,
 For ever singing, as they shine,
 'The hand that made us is divine'."

(ADDISON)

Now as we have seen, all that is not denied and no other book in the world so well bears witness to the Natural Revelation as does the Bible. But in evangelical worship we find surprisingly small dependence on symbolism and never on it *per se*. Its scantiness of ritual observance, its utter avoidance of sensuous ceremonies is in conspicuous contrast to heathen worship, and renders it distinctive and unique. As Dr. W. R. Inge points out "The early church was not much impressed by the beauty of nature; and in its attitude towards art, it maintained, on the whole, the distrust which is found in Plato" (*Faith and its Psychology*).

It is easy to show that this distrust of symbolism in worship, far from being a weakness or defect, is, on the contrary, the hall-mark of its supreme strength and complete spiritual maturity: accordingly all that would menace or detract from its intrinsic simplicity should be resolutely avoided by all who desire to worship after the manner of the first Christians and the early Church.

The plea of symbolists is usually made on sacramental grounds. It is needful, however, to be particularly careful as to the use of the term "sacrament"—which is not found in the Bible and which originally had a wider than spiritual significance. Undoubtedly for an already spiritually-minded person it will be easy to recognise the fact that fundamentally evangelical worship is "sacramental" but what of "those who are without"? The asking and answer to this question at once make it clear that the over-stressing of symbolism is fraught with dangers which far outweigh those which result from its utter rejection. All serious students of the nature, history and doctrine of Sacraments clearly realise *why* there has been so much controversy in Christendom about Sacrament; there has always been the tendency to revert to ideas, doctrines and practices thereanent which are without evangelical warrant.

It is certainly not suggested here that the use of material symbols is defensible only as "milk for babes", and it is admitted that non-sacramental and non-symbolic "Christianity" has

received a very limited welcome throughout Christendom as Quakerism and Quietism and other non-symbolic faiths indicate. But what is stressed here is that spectacular display is liable to accompany a period of spiritual decline but is impotent to arrest it. The preventive to that is to enter fully into the simplicities of the evangelical heritage, to grasp afresh their depth of meaning and the efficacy of Christ's institutions faithfully observed, because, while these institutions are necessarily adequate and perfectly adapted for their purpose, our use of them may require to be improved. The subjective aim is the deepening of spiritual life and this must not be forgotten. All movements towards "beauty and order" are apt to err by failing to stress this underlying "motif" of evangelical worship.

I submit that evangelical worship adequately utilises the value of symbolism in the sacraments, and that the Church cannot be too careful in guarding against both the misinterpretation of her sacramental worship and the desire to add to that symbolism by borrowing from the resources of the material arts. It would be a caricature of fact to stigmatise all "inartistic" worship as a "bare intellectualism" or to assume that highly "artistic" worship does not lay itself open to the danger of an unevangelical emotionalism.

The difference between the symbolism of the evangelical sacraments and all merely human uses of symbolism must be recognised and emphasised. It is perhaps regrettable that the word "sacrament" was ever used by the Church—Hooker and Lightfoot have made the same suggestion in regard to ecclesiastical uses of the terms "Priest" and "Sacrifice"—because some of the ideas which have gathered round the word have proved incompatible with evangelical truth. As Dr. W. R. Inge points out "There is always a residue of barbarism in the minds even of the most civilised peoples, which tends to drag back their religion to forms which are not only pre-Christian, but which belong to those conceptions of the relation between God and man which Christ intended to abolish for ever." At all events the sacraments must not be looked upon *merely* as "symbols" in the Zwinglian sense. Knox's words in the Scots Confession of Faith (1560) "we utterly condemn the vanity of those that affirm Sacraments to be nothing else than bare and naked signs" are a decisive reply to Zwingli's definition of a sacrament as "an external symbol by which we testify for what

are and what is our duty, just as one who bears a national costume or badge testifies that he belongs to a particular nation or society." The economy of symbolism in evangelical worship is very significant and will be referred to later. Meantime the question is *not* whether we shall dispense with the sensuous and mechanical element in worship—for no "Church" has ever done that—but the question is this "Is this or that proposed piece of *additional* symbolism expedient to deepen evangelical devotion in worship?" In answering this question in any particular instance regard must be directed not exclusively to highly artistic persons and temperaments and the "wise and prudent," but to simple-minded folk. The evangelical sacraments are the two simplest and most universal acts of religious worship because of the necessity of giving spiritual comfort and assurance to "unlettered and ignorant men" as well as to the refined and learned Greek or Jew or Gentile. There can be little doubt that the Lord's disciples were they to reappear on the earth would not feel spiritually "at home" in some of our modern church services and buildings: the excessive sophistication and aesthetic refinement would jar on their spiritual-mindedness, and they would say "Not so did *we* worship God in the days of our flesh."

Non-liturgical and "inartistic" worship has frequently been criticised as being excessively subjective and intolerant of any permanent objective element but, except in regard to "extreme" Puritans and Quakers, the charge is quite unfounded so far as the Protestant Church is concerned. On the contrary the Reformed Churches have had much reason to beware of "excessive objectivism" as the history of Romanism and subversive movements like Anglo-Catholicism indicates.

It does not follow that, because, for Christians all life should be felt to be sacramental, it is permissible to introduce *into worship* an imposing display of symbolism. The true Christian's worship is *not* confined to the interior of a church building: "Thus saith the Lord 'The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?'" (Isa. lxvi. 1 and Acts vii. 49). The symbolism of the Lord's Supper is sufficient for the Evangelical Church. "It is Christ's will that we should realise His presence most vividly by means of those symbols which He has appointed for us and ordered us to use. Like all symbols they

are attached on the one side to the real and eternal verities, and on the other to the perishing world of appearance. It is nonsense to ask whether the elements in and by themselves are the Body and Blood of Christ, because in and by themselves they are nothing at all. They are *efficacia signa*, and their efficaciousness is a matter of experience. We do, as a matter of fact, attain by them to a deeper consciousness of our union with Christ than by any other means. And they have this effect upon us, I think, in proportion as we treat them as symbols of a spiritual reality, neither rationalising the Sacrament into a mere commemorative meal, nor materialising its symbolic value into the 'substance' of Christ's body. Both these opposite errors destroy the nature of a sacrament by ignoring its symbolic character. The value of sacramental symbolism is that it provides us with a *language* less inadequate than any other mode of interpretation, by which heaven and earth are brought together and made to interpret each other. In the Holy Communion we are led as near to the solution of the great mystery of life as we can go without passing beyond the veil. . . . When we see God face to face we shall no longer need even the highest symbols. But here on earth we do need them." (Dr. W. R. Inge in *Contentio Veritatis*.)

IV

THE PERIL OF AESTHETICISM AND RITUALISM

For Evangelical Churches the New Testament alone must determine the nature and practice of worship, and where this guiding principle is faithfully applied it is a powerful factor in conserving what the Apostle Paul calls "simplicity and fidelity to Christ". But where it is not applied there may be worship of a kind but it will not be evangelical worship: it may be aesthetically attractive, stimulating to the emotions of the devotees but its religious value may be almost nil or, worse still, it may be so immersed in superstition as to be a serious hindrance to true faith. Philosophic worship (*amor intellectualis Dei*) is the recognition of the absolute values—the contemplation of the values which are regarded as ultimates such as truth, goodness, justice and so on: this type of worship has comparatively few devotees. But *dramatic* worship has many devotees because it is exceedingly pleasing to the natural man to take his religion at second-hand and on the easiest terms possible. Highly artistic and ceremonial

worship so influences the emotions that it provides a passing substitute for evangelical experience and gives added enjoyment to secular and worldly interests by way of contrast. It appeals strongly to those who want to "go about to establish their own righteousness" since it arouses in them emotions which are easily confused with the spiritual effects of evangelical conversion. The Adversary of souls is never so dangerous as when he "veils himself as an angel of light", and leads men captive to a travesty of the spiritual characteristics of the true Christian. The simulation of religion is the worst enemy because it is so difficult to counteract. Those who have really come to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ will escape the menace of self-deception, but for others there are abundant means to promote religious hypocrisy until, if persisted in, it becomes almost unconscious. The characteristics of false worship are well known and they serve so to stimulate the emotions of the devotees as to produce in them for longer or shorter periods a sense of conscious holiness and self-confidence. Conscious hypocrisy (literally dramatic acting) in religion is bad but unconscious hypocrisy is much worse. Thus Jesus said concerning the Pharisees, that they shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men and neither would enter themselves nor allow others to do so. The talented actor on the stage may become so absorbed in his part as almost to forget his own identity, and it is obvious that the more impressive and attractive the stage-scenery the easier it is for the beholders to feel the reality of the play. So in churches where religious worship has degenerated to the level of a performance with the pleasing of the worshippers as the dominating motive there is a sad travesty of devotion: those who are abiding in moral and spiritual darkness are confirmed in their condition by participating in what is no better than an insidious substitute for really evangelical worship. This is precisely what may be found in all highly ritualistic and ornate religious performances: the very things which are acclaimed as aids to devotion are the means of illusion and very effectively keep the participants in bondage to superstition and error. "Romanism exercises the most weird delusion and profound fascination over the minds and imaginations of its followers. The mighty temples of Paganism and Romanism, with their massive pillars and lofty domes, and long aisles stretching away into the gloom, enriched with costly carvings, statues,

and precious stones, the subdued light, the imposing ritual, with its air of mystery and awe and sweet, solemn music, the mysterious signs and actions of the priesthood in their rich and magnificent robes—these all powerfully appeal to the senses and imagination and call forth the psychic emotions of their devotees, suggesting the idea of some mighty, mysterious and occult virtue and effect.” (Garnier, in “*The True Christ and the False Christ.*”)

It is obvious that such worship is remote from that of the first Christians and may be perpetuated when few vestiges of evangelical faith and life remain. The aphorism *corruptio optimi pessima* is peculiarly appropriate to describe the despiritualising effects of elaborate ritual with all its outward grandeur and emotionalising results. It has been said that “it is a favourite trick of the devil to capture the organisations which were meant to defeat him, and to turn them against the cause of moral and religious reform”. (Inge, op. cit.)

As we might expect, the Bible itself provides us with all due and sufficient warning as to this tendency of Satan to “veil himself as an angel of light.” This does not mean, of course, that every “angel of light” is to be avoided, but it does mean that we have to comply with the advice about giving heed to seducing spirits (1 Tim. iv. 1). In regard to worship it is obvious that despite elaborate ritual and aesthetic magnificence it can err by defect. It is no mere accident in history that there have been times when a very high degree of aesthetic and intellectual culture has prevailed and yet was accompanied by a serious decay of morality and religion. The Bible itself illustrates this in Old Testament times: hence the prophet denounced a mere form of godliness in outward worship—“bring no more vain oblations”—which “neglected the weightier matters of the Law”. Abundant examples are to be found throughout the history of Christendom, but it will suffice to notice the Puritan reaction to a histrionic religiosity which neglected moral and spiritual conformity to the teaching of Christ and which impeded social and political reform. At the present time no amount of “reverent Ritualism” or priestly pretentiousness will avail to silence the loud and uncompromising demand for complete economic and social justice which rings throughout the world. “Let justice roll down like water and righteousness like a perennial stream” (Amos v. 24). Faith without works is

dead be it ever so solemn, refined and immersed in artistic embellishment and feeling.

The Puritan reaction to Ritualism may have been extreme, but it was uncompromising refusal to admit anything into worship which might serve to side-track spiritual sincerity: it was an effective blow struck at formalism. It maintained that Romanism had not only gone too far in accommodating the claims of evangelical morality and worship to the limitations and weaknesses of human nature but had exploited these infirmities in the interests (material and authoritative) of the Romish priesthood by establishing a great variety of ceremonies to fortify doctrinal errors and to promote fear and superstition. Thus the great merit of the Puritans was their demand for simplicity and sincerity in worship: they maintained that man must not be confronted in worship with anything which might deflect him from "growth in grace". It is easy to ridicule Puritanical extremes if one pays no attention to the conditions which prevailed in their time but it is needful to remember the salutary influence of Puritanism. "Admit that Puritanism wore needless blinders—it went straight on and carried man's burden; it lifted by main strength the whole world to a higher order, and opened a purer and grander prospect for humanity. Grant that the true ideal should include the aesthetic, extend to the least flower and own the simplest joy of nature, it should not, therefore, exclude the awe of the Calvinistic conception of divine sovereignty and the power of that tremendous sense of responsibility which Puritanism succeeded in maintaining. The iron need not be taken from the blood, nor the commanding vision of righteousness from the soul, when the touch becomes fine, the heart tender, and the eye sunny, in the world of beauty, light and love." (Newman Smyth in *Christian Ethics*.)

In a particularly acute and profound sermon on the essential simplicity of evangelical worship, the Rev. Principal John Caird wrote that the chief danger incidental to all ritual worship is "the tendency of the unspiritual mind to stop short at the symbol . . . to rest content with the performance of outward ceremonial acts apart from the exercise of those devout feelings which lend to such acts any real value. . . . A religion in which ritual holds a prominent place is notoriously liable to degenerate into formalism. The feelings of awe and reverence for unseen and spiritual objects coming often at the suggestive call of the

sacred symbol, gradually transfer themselves to that with which they have been associated. The invisible good is less and less remembered. . . . It is easy to employ the sacramental sign of purity; it is far from easy to bring the mind and heart into contact with the hallowing influences which it represents. It costs no effort to receive the emblems of a dying Saviour; to multitudes it is an irksome task to raise the thoughts and affections into communion with an unseen Lord. To bend the knee with external decorum, or to send forth from the lip the mechanical sounds and intonations, is an act which calls for scarcely any mental exertion; but it demands the strenuous up-gathering of all our inward energies in order to pray with the spirit, or to offer up the true inner melody of adoring gratitude and love to God. The worldly and unspiritual mind is ready to avail itself of any excuse for evading the task of spiritual worship, and an excuse is too readily available in the decorous observance of its external forms." Speaking of the common mistaking of aesthetic emotion for religious feeling Caird concludes his penetrating criticism of falsity in worship by saying "It is quite possible, apart from a religion of conscience and spiritual conviction, to get up a sensuous mimicry of pious emotion. . . . Beauty, it is true, is not hostile to goodness . . . yet there is a lower sensibility to Beauty which is attainable apart from the moral condition of the heart, and which is often felt most keenly by the most unspiritual and irreligious of men. . . . If largely introduced into the act of religious worship, the refinements of art may become to multitudes not the means but the end. Instead of walking by the light you kindle many, gazing on the beauty of the lamp, will stumble in the Christian path. For one that can take hold of an angel's hand, there are multitudes who will content themselves with gazing artistically on the splendour of his vesture. It is easy to admire the sheen of the sapphire throne, while we leave its glorious Occupant un-reverenced and unrecognized. Banish from the service of God all coarseness and rudeness—all that would distract by offending the taste of the worshipper, just as much as all that would disturb by subjecting him to bodily discomfort, and you leave the spirit free for its own pure and glorious exercise. But too studiously adorn the sanctuary and the services; obtrude an artificial beauty on the eye and sense of the worshipper, and you will surely lead to formalism and self-deception. The meretricious

attractions of form may bring numbers but it will not add true strength to the Church. The artistic splendour of ritual may kindle many hearts with emotion but it will be with unhallowed fire. Better that the world should stay away than join Christ's ranks on false pretences; better that the hearts of men should remain utterly cold, than that, warmed by spurious feeling, they should deem themselves inspired by a pure and holy flame."

That is well said and is amply substantiated by what Caird says in the previous part of his discourse. Clearly then it is a facile but fallacious assumption that "beauty" (that is artistic embellishment) and order (that is liturgical forms) are necessarily helpful to worship. Historically they have lulled mind and conscience to sleep, and it is not merely accidental that the quality of religion in highly ritualistic churches is often very far from evangelical, and the worshippers far from enthusiastic in spiritual things. Ritual results in an other-worldly pietism which neglects the weightier matters of the law and frowns on any criticism of the existing social and economic order of society. Worship is largely separated from human life, the cloak of sanctimonious piety is thrown over moral and social wrongs which demand redress, and the devotee becomes a thorough-going individualist whose chief concern is with his own emotions and with the salvation of his own little soul. Wealthy but dilettante people find this type of worship most congenial, and so do the ignorant and incorrigibly unthinking class to whom the moral and spiritual demands of the Gospel are unwelcome and inconvenient. Dr. Emil Brunner, in his brilliant work, *The Divine Imperative*, notes that "Aestheticism makes a man a creature who enjoys everything and seeks nothing but enjoyment. The man who is entangled in the net of aestheticism feels no responsibility for his fellowmen and *odi profanum vulgus et arceo*. He is an aristocrat, he is self-sufficient; he flees from the world of practical action where there is so much to disturb his inner repose and upset his balance. True he desires to have a group of people round him, but he does not wish to serve them, but through their enjoyment he desires to intensify his own: indeed if they are beautiful and interesting he wants to enjoy *them*." . . . "The danger in art is to take the reflection for the reality or to rest content with it. Thus art becomes a substitute for faith, which is sought because it does not demand decision as faith

does, but merely the attitude of a spectator; or of one who is swayed hither and thither by the artistic influences around him; that is, it is not real devotion, it is merely aesthetic." Alongside of this let us notice this cogent observation by Dr. W. R. Inge: "Faith has always looked upon the aesthetic sense as a somewhat dangerous ally. . . . Just as morality for morality's sake is (in spite of Kant) impossible and self-contradictory; just as truth for truth's sake takes us no further than pure mathematics, in which all values are hypothetical and the connection with the actual world is broken off, so beauty for beauty's sake stultifies itself and ceases even to be beautiful. Our three strands of revelation are intertwined; we cannot unravel them. And there seems to be a mysterious law in the spiritual world that to aim directly at a thing is not the best way to hit it." (*Faith and its Psychology.*)

V

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LITURGICAL WORSHIP

Evangelical worship has been seen to be conditioned by Christ's teaching, person, example, death and resurrection: it demands a personal belief in and surrender to a personal God in whom alone the ultimate values have meaning for human life. Faith, is therefore, the pre-requisite of worship because "he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Now faith as it expresses itself in human life is real and ever maturing: it is a synthetic experience which evidences itself in the inner and outer life of the faithful one; it is not exclusively the directing of the will, nor the quality of the intellect or belief, nor an emotional sense but it is a comprehensive experience of the sufficiency of the grace of God for the heart, mind and conscience—for the soul. Externally its reality is proved by its fruits in the personal conduct but internally only its possessor is sure of his "election and calling", or, as Tolstoy has said, "in what state his own soul is each one knows for himself."

Now there has been throughout history—and most patently and seriously in Romanism—a grave tendency to make the Faith accommodate itself to the limits of human nature in all its diversity. Hence the word "catholic" has come to denote something quite different from the religion of the New Testament—it has come to signify a system which pays deference to

the diversities of human nature and which at the expense of truth builds up an all-embracing religiosity wherein "all sorts and conditions of men" are welcomed largely on their own terms so that whether a man be worldly or other-worldly, cheerful or melancholic, ascetic, or self-indulgent he is easily fitted into this "catholic" system. It is true that he must be prepared mentally to swallow no small amount of intellectual absurdity, superstition and even magic at the behest of an "infallible" Papacy and authoritarian Church, but as submission "earns" salvation which is guaranteed by the Romish Church it seems to him well worthwhile. The Reformation was a serious blow at this elaborate system of organised religiosity, and was a breaking through to the realities of the Faith which had been obscured by it: it was in fact the Recovery of Faith which had for so long languished in the chains of superstition and corruption under the Romish tyranny. But it is obvious that people tend to dislike a very rapid, radical and sudden change from customary ways and the Romish Church could rely on this natural conservatism of human nature in some measure to mitigate the Reformation movement. So in worship some of the Reformed Churches retained features of the old Romish worship which ought to have been departed from altogether. On the contrary the strength of Calvinism undoubtedly was its thoroughness and its uncompromising attitude.

With regard to worship, and making all due allowance for temporary expedients, the aim of Calvin was to reduce worship to the greatest possible simplicity conformed to its evangelical quality. His "Form of Prayers and Ministrations of the Sacraments, &c.," 1565, was according to Knox well received. "Herewith all men seemed to be pleased; no man did speak against it . . . till some of those who after came among us, before they desired to be admitted to the Church, did begin to break the Order, whereof they were by their seniors and others admonished but no amendment appeared. For they were admonished not to murmur aloud when the minister prayed; but they would not give place but quarrelled and said 'They would do as they had done in England, and their Church should have an English face.' The Lord grant it to have the face of Christ's Church, which is the only matter that I sought, God is my record; and, therefore, I would have had it agreeable in outward rites and ceremonies with Christian Churches reformed."

Apparently there are numbers of Presbyterians and people in other denominations who seem to be anxious that their Churches "should have an English face." The widespread discussion which has appeared in the Press recently is, however, an indication that considerable annoyance and resentment is felt at the unduly aesthetic and ritualistic tendencies which have expressed themselves. Without going into controversial matters, it may be pointed out that Liturgies were unknown in the Christian Church for nearly 300 years, and that the need for "Beauty and Order" in no way implies the necessity for Liturgical worship and reversion to Mediaeval conceptions of architectural beauty. Moreover, it may be questioned whether it is expedient that such diverse types of religious service should exist or be permitted within any one denomination. The Anglo-Catholic Movement is certainly not conducive to the internal peace and unity of the Church of England and has called forth the protest of the Protestant Truth Society and all who cherish the truth of the Reformed Protestant Faith. On the question of Liturgies the following statement of the two different attitudes to public worship is interesting as lifting the question, above the usual pros and cons mentioned in regard to read and extemporary prayers, to a fundamental difference of viewpoint as to what public prayer really is.

In the Reformed Churches the most typical mental difference as regards the mode of worship is that of preferring a liturgy or else an extemporary form of worship. Professor W. M. Flinders Petrie has described this difference as follows: "Each type appeals to its own form of religious feeling. The seat of inherited religious sense is specially the unconscious mind, with its intuitions, deeper even than personal experience. This is perhaps the essential seat of all religion, the nearest contact with the Father of spirits. It is to this that a liturgy appeals; no physical strain of attention is needed; a word or two is enough to start the devotional thought of each passage, so that the material makes the least inroad on the spiritual. It is parallel to the highest forms of literature or conversation, where allusions indirectly expand the train of thought far beyond the words. But the higher a process the more terrible may be its failures, and the deadly peril of a liturgy is formality. As most people will not think if they need not do so, any form tends to mechanical repetition, which is carried to its logical extreme

by the Buddhist prayer-wheel. Judging by the test of audibility, many rapid reciters of liturgy now might well give place to a dignified gramophone. It is against this failure that the extemporary system protests, while retaining the value of associations in the Bible and modern hymns. It appeals directly to the conscious intellect and emotions; it is obviously in the field of action. However the quality may vary, the product claims to be really alive and genuine in its expression. It prefers new corduroy to rotten velvet. It treats the great intuitional religious existence with fresh douches of conscious expression which may either invigorate or chill. Here are two entirely opposite avenues to the unseen, the intuitional and the intellectual, thoroughly typical of the natures of two different classes of mind. Neither can claim to be intrinsically better than the other, for they belong to different ancestries, different outlooks, different perceptions, different values in life." (*Hibbert Journal*, April, 1919.)

If the movement towards beauty and order is to do good and not evil to evangelical worship it must take due account of these differences, and in the effort to attain harmonious conditions of worship it must exercise a wise restraint in regard to the appeal to the aesthetic sense, and in particular avoid a preference for Mediaeval conceptions as to what are "beautiful" conditions of worship, conditions which are almost inalienably identified with Romish superstitions. A good test to apply to any proposed conditions of worship is the old one: "By their fruits shall you know them." It needs no great amount of historical acumen to discern the disastrous effects on the spirituality of worshippers which have followed the almost exclusive pursuit of the "aesthetic ideal" *per se.*

VI

FAITH AND BEAUTY

It has become clear that the threefold spiritual endowment of human personality must be cultivated harmoniously if faith is not to be distorted and become one-sided. Spiritual love, that is love toward God, unifies man's higher faculties and consecrates them to His service. Faith is in danger of becoming a barren intellectualism, or a presumptuous moralism (salvation by works) or a selfish aestheticism where Love is forgotten or not given its place as the greatest of the Christian's graces. Nor must this spiritual love be isolated from "love toward

the brethren": both are inseparable and we cannot obey the first great commandment of the law without obeying the second and vice versa. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" (1 John iii. 14).

The true reception of the Gospel is evidenced in faith and faith in turn is evidenced in true worship of God and conformity to His will throughout our life. The man in Christ acknowledges that all, save the clouds of sin, are His. Henceforth the Christian will recognise that every good gift is from above, from the unchanging God the Father.

Beauty which man perceives in God's handiwork far excels any work of art of which man is capable. Jesus said, "Consider how the flowers of the field grow. . . . Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these".

It is indisputable that the man of faith who considers the Beauty of God's works in the Natural Order will find that it has a purifying effect upon him and heightens his spiritual perceptions. Wordsworth is only one of many poets who have given eloquent testimony to this. The artist G. F. Watts once talked about the stars to a man whose dissipations were causing anxiety to his friends, and the outcome was that the man was morally reformed.

It is, however, very important to recognise that Art is not to be identified with Beauty; it is rather the response to Beauty, the measure of the artist's appreciation and perception of Beauty. "All art is affected with the limitation that the beautiful ideal world which it represents is but phenomenal, has existence only for the imagination. But not the less does this imaginary world contain the 'essence', so to speak, of the actual world and the anticipation of the world to come." (Martensen—*Christian Ethics*.) The term "art" must not, however, be restricted in meaning to pictorial and architectural art: it applies to music and poetry also. But it is obviously necessary to recognise the distinction, not only in their nature but in their effects, between the art which appeals to the eye and the art which appeals to the ear. Throughout the Reformed Churches superior importance has always and rightly been assigned to the latter in relation to the moral life not only in theory but in practice, and it has always been admitted generally that the former can only contribute to faith and worship so long as wise and necessary restrictions are observed. It is because Calvinism has so clearly recognized the dangers inherent in exclusively aesthetic worship

that it has often been *mistakenly* accused of being inimical to visible Art. e.g. "Calvinism has much to answer for on the aesthetic score." (Newman Smyth.) As we shall see presently Calvinism has on the contrary made a rich contribution to Art. But it has always recognised how inadequate is the "aesthetic ideal" (*per se*) to the moral and spiritual life of the Christian: it has maintained that the absence of the good is a much more serious defect in man than the absence of the sense of beauty; ~~that the Gospel alone is not only the moral ideal but also the real remedy adequate to meet and overcome the "ugly" facts of human sin and avoidable suffering.~~ Some highly ethereal and vague ideal of angelic beauty does not constitute a sufficiently redemptive dynamic for human beings surrounded and oppressed by so many temptations physical and mental. The "raison d'être" of the Incarnation of the Christ most certainly includes this necessity for One "full of grace and truth" coming "in the form of a Servant and in *the likeness of sinful flesh*" in order to save men from their sins. Thus the Gospel centres in "Jesus who was made a *little lower* than the angels", in One whom the blind eyes of the world seeing yet saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. But His moral and spiritual beauty is without parallel throughout the history of mankind.

It is precisely the failure of the aesthetic ideal to extend to the dark and unaesthetic aspects of human life which is the measure of its inadequacy. Souls are not saved by ideas or ideals, but by the grace of God in Christ, and that grace has a sanctifying influence on the whole man—on his body, mind, heart, and spirit. The chief means of grace must, therefore, be given the chief place in evangelical worship, and though many may be disposed to dispute the fact even in face of the overwhelming evidence of the history of the Church, the principal means of grace is certainly the Preaching of the Word. It is only a mistaken "anti-intellectualism" which can gainsay the fact that the preaching of the Gospel by those who themselves have experienced its power, is, *par excellence*, the means of grace to human souls. "The word of the Gospel faithfully preached and brought home to the souls of men by the Holy Spirit is the principal means of grace to the souls of men. . . . The Sacraments themselves depend for their significance on the preaching of the Word. That is essential in order to make them more than a mere ceremony." (Rev. Dr. R. J. Drummond.)

The plea for "more Art" and "beautiful worship" is usually advanced on sacramentarian grounds but, as we have seen, the term sacrament should not be applied to anything outside those rites which the Founder of the Church instituted. Space precludes an examination of the views on Sacramentalism as expounded by Gore (*Reconstruction of Belief*, page 766) so we may turn now to glance at the place which may be accorded to visible Art in evangelical worship.

Those who desire to promote visible Art in worship do not derive much support for their aim either from Scripture or from the history of the early Church. The little support that does exist is apparent rather than real, and more meaning must not be put into particular texts than actually exists. For example the simplicity of early evangelical worship is indisputable, but the Apostle Paul found it necessary in view of what had happened among the Corinthians to remind them that simplicity must not be confused with disorderliness, that is crudeness and coarseness of behaviour. "Let all things be done decently and in order." This plea refers to behaviour compatible with worship—as specified in detail in the Directory for Public Worship. The naive suggestion that the text has anything at all to do with Artistic Appeal in Church buildings or the necessity or expediency of a written Liturgy is absurd.

Again, it was recently stated that in Titus iii. 8 *καλά ἔργα* is not the same as *ἀγαθὰ ἔργα*, but "while the first intention is moral and spiritual it is legitimate to claim for it a wider meaning—that the spirit of the Christian Faith in God should, by its very nature, require beauty as one of its characteristic methods and forms of expression". Now such an extension of the word *καλόν* is *not* justifiable. I may refer to the cogent statement of the late Dr. B. H. Streeter (in *Moral Adventure*, page 34) "The traditional subdivision of human idealisms into the pursuit of the Good, the Beautiful and the True, is a more penetrating analysis of human mentality than one which would identify the beautiful and the good; and—since this tripartite analysis is implied in Plato—the Greeks cannot be quoted in the contrary sense merely because the word *καλόν* means ambiguously either beautiful or good. We, too, can use words like 'fine' or 'fair' of actions as well as looks."

Evangelical churchmen protest not against visible art but against both the misuse of it and the over-use of it in places of

worship. Where undue use is made of art, the danger of taking the reflection for the reality or at least resting content with it, appears. Thus art may become a subtle substitute for faith instead of being an "aid to devotion" as it was intended to be: art, unlike the demand (for faith and love toward God) which preaching always makes, does not require moral or mental decision from its beholders but only the aesthetic attitude of a spectator. This explains why in the past there has been so much distrust of visible art leading at times to an extreme hostility to it. But it is not accurate to say that Protestantism even in its Calvinistic form has been unfruitful in the realm of Art. Dr. Emil Brunner, in his profound book *The Divine Imperative*, has finally disposed of that charge against Protestantism: "The realism of Rembrandt, in particular, is most closely connected with his Calvinism: he is opposed to all deification of the creature, and thus provides one of the most convincing proofs that art can achieve great things even without those ingredients, which, according to Elert, are the presuppositions of Lutheran Art." Neumann is quoted to the effect that "in spite of the fact that from a thousand sources the influences of the art of the Renaissance flowed towards Rembrandt he remained aloof to an heroic degree from its pagan way of intensifying the (human) figure; he kept to the Biblical tradition of the 'form of a Servant' and the preference for the weary and heavy laden. . . . Beauty and its love of admiration is scarcely expressed in his art. . . . He grew up in the atmosphere of the earnest study of the Bible, and he lived in this atmosphere. He did not choose his subjects according to a theological plan; he is not determined in his choice of scenes by the Church Calendar of Festivals, but he has himself lived in the fundamental book, the Bible".

As ampler discussion of the various points considered in this article is precluded by the limits of space available here, I may fittingly conclude with these lines of Robert Bridges:

"Thy work with beauty crown, thy life with love;
 Thy mind with truth uplift to God above:
 For whom all is, from whom was all begun,
 In whom all Beauty, Truth and Love are one."

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