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Worship, Sacrifice and Mission: Themes Interlocked in John

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Four decades ago William Nicholls, in his *Jacob's Ladder*, published in the Ecumenical Studies in Worship Series, wrote "Worship is the supreme and only indispensable activity of the Christian Church. It alone will endure... when all other activities of the Church will have passed away."¹ However, worship does not seem to occupy the place which it deserves in the Church's life. In most of the churches the pews are found empty at the time of worship. Does it not indicate that the value of worship is forgotten by their members ? Several seminars and workshops on worship have been conducted in the past and almost all of them have stressed the need for a change in liturgy in order to make our worship meaningful and effective both to Christians and non-Christians. However, the root of the problem does not seem to be a lack of some external forms of worship, but rather a lack of understanding of what worship means. Is it merely a religious exercise performed every week ? What relevance does it have to our daily life ? Is it confined only to a church building and to a select group of people ? This is high time to make our congregations understand what worship is and thus to motivate them to worship the Lord in a new and acceptable way. This is what is aimed at in this paper. The best source to clarify the act of worship, I believe, is the New Testament, because it throws enough light on the early Church's worship. However, in an attempt to narrow down my study, I have selected the Gospel of John mainly because it is John, more than any other New Testament writer, who shows a real passion to give a picture of true worship.

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The Greek word *proskynêsis* for “worship” does not appear in John, nor in the whole of the New Testament, but its verbal form *proskynein* appears 11 times out of which in 4:20-24 alone 9 times, in 9:38 and 12:20 once in each. This means that worship for John is not an abstract entity, but an act just like the acts of believing and knowing. The noun *proskynêtês* (“worshipper”) occurs in the plural form in 4:23. The cognate word *latreia* (“service”) is used in 16:2, but we can exclude this verse from our study, for it is a prediction about the future fate of the disciples rather than a depiction of worship in the Johannine community.

1. WORSHIP CLARIFIED TO “THE SAMARITANS” (JOHN 4:20-26)

John 4:20-26 is a part of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman. During the dialogue the woman herself opens up the subject of worship by probing. “Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain; but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem” (Jn 4:20 NRSV). On seeing that Jesus is the eschatological prophet (i.e., “the *taheb*”), the woman opens up the age-long cultic debate between the Jews and Samaritans. Thus she represents the whole Samaritan community in raising the question on worship. S.S. Stuart rightly observes that John 4 contains a definition of worship that is reflected in other parts of the New Testament and in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers where *proskyneô* is used.² Worship is defined in John 4 not in terms of place of worship, but in terms of the object and the manner of worship.

1. The Object of Worship

Whereas the implied question of the woman in v. 20 does not show any interest in the object of worship, the Jesus of John’s Gospel points out the object of worship as God the Father and thus underlines the filial relationship of the worshipper with God. Although a reference to this filial relationship is not clear at first, Jesus’ use of the word “Father” in this context is sufficient to warrant this. It is true that Jesus always addressed God as Father. However, in view of

the four references to God as the Father in vv. 21-24 (once in v.21, twice in v.23, and the indirect reference "him" in v.24), that too before a Samaritan who probably knew God only as *Buthos* (i.e., the Non-Existent)³ but not as Father, the use of this pregnant term is not accidental. Besides this, John describes the object of worship once as God (v.24) and once as "what we know" (v.22). For John it is imperative for the worshipper to know whom one should worship and hence the constant emphasis on God. Genuine worship can take place only when the worshipper recognizes God as the Father and enters into a filial relationship with Him. How does this relationship become possible? To answer this question we should turn to v.22.

Jesus' first response to the woman's question as to why Jews treat Jerusalem as the only place of worship is:

"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."

(Jn 4:22)⁴

The neuter form "what we know" may refer to the person of God, as Schlatter commented.⁵ The Samaritans had known the Name of God to whom they had erected an altar on Mount Gerizim, but they did not know his character and purposes,⁶ whereas the Jews were worshipping a God whose character and purposes they had known. What does this knowing mean? As salvation is referred to in this verse, "knowing God" in this context could mean "seeing or experiencing" His salvation, for one of the meanings of the Johannine knowing is "seeing" in the sense of "experiencing" (cf. Jn 1:48; 14:7,9, 19-20; 17:3, 22-24). In John 17:1-5 knowing is described as eschatological salvation (i.e., eternal life) particularly in the context of glorification of Father and Son. Later in John 17:22,24 the same eschatological life is portrayed as an experience of beholding in Jesus the glory of God and of having a share in it. Thus "knowing" can mean "beholding" God's eternal glory as revealed in Jesus both in his earthly and heavenly life. The Johannine idea of worshipping "what we know" then implies, as Dodd concedes, the acknowledgment of the glory of God in the person of Christ.⁷

The God who is worshipped by Jews and Christians alike⁸ is the God who brings salvation to the world by means of His salvific act performed in Jewish history. The Jews viewed salvation in terms of the messianic deliverance which will come at the end-time (cf. Gen. 49:10; Isa. 59:20; Lk. 1:69, 71, 77; Acts 13:26, 47). For example, the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a second century BCE document, describes the then Jewish belief that the Lord's salvation or Saviour will arise from the tribe of Judah and Levi (T. Dan 5:10; T. Naph. 8:2; T. Gad 8:1).⁹ In John, salvation, which is substantially the same as eternal life, is possible in and through Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 17:3). True worship, according to John, is directed to God, the One who saves the world by electing the Jews and fulfilling his purpose in Christ, who, in flesh, sprang from the tribe of Judah. Unless one accepts this salvation, (s)he can hardly enter into filial relationship with God and thereby worship Him as the Father.¹⁰ The eschatological salvation can be received even now in the person, Jesus. Thus John links worship closely with God's act in the history of Israel and more particularly in the incarnation by using the phrase "what we know". In other words, one can know and worship God by experiencing His salvation which is in Jesus and which enables the worshipper to call God "*abba*, Father". In this way John presents Christian worship as the continuation and transformation of Jewish worship and this transformation takes place in Christ. The personal relationship involved in the Johannine understanding of worship is further confirmed in John's description of the manner in which one should worship.

2. The Manner of Worship

The key factor in John 4 regarding worship is how to worship God. After pointing out to whom worship should be directed, Jesus unfolds the manner of worship in terms of worshipping the Father "in spirit and truth" (vv. 23, 24). H. Odeberg understands the word "spirit" in this pair as the human spirit which denotes a spiritual inward form of worship.¹¹ So also C.J. Collins argues that "spirit" in John 4:23 refers to the human spirit denoting inner self, mind, feelings, and will, whereas

“truth” means “reality, genuineness”; and that the conjunction “and” has an explicative or exegetical function implying “that is”. Thus the whole expression “in spirit and truth”, for Collins, means “in spirit, that is to say, in reality”.¹² However, such Greek-understanding of inward form of worship is not attested in John, particularly by using the word “truth”. Most of the scholars, I think rightly, understand “spirit” as God’s Spirit or the Holy Spirit, who, by transforming the life of the people, enables them to rise above the earthly level, the level of the flesh so that they can worship God properly.¹³ Worship, then, is essentially God-centered and is only possible by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is attested by John 4:24 where God is wholly described as Spirit. Like can be known only by like and so also the God, who being spiritual by nature, is invisible and life-giving, cannot be truly worshipped without the worshipper being inspired and transformed by the Spirit of God.

“Truth” in John denotes Jesus himself (1:14; 14:6) and also the Word of God (17:19). The Holy Spirit is presented as the Spirit of truth who will witness to Jesus and guide his followers into all the truth (14:17; 15:26; 16:23). One can probably find the revelation motif here, for “truth” in John is essentially the revelation brought by the Son who embodies in himself the divine truth.¹⁴ It is God’s reality, more particularly His will and power to save people, which is revealed in Jesus.¹⁵

Since the doublet “spirit and truth” together take one preposition *en* (‘in’), they cannot be treated separately. Stuart considers *en* as the key for understanding worship in John; according to him, *en* here indicates a close personal relationship, as it does in the Pauline “in Christ” formula, and thus worship happens when one participates in the life of the Spirit and accepts the truth found in Christ.¹⁶ We can easily argue now that the one who reveals God’s love and salvation becomes the place or spiritual space that constitutes the new sanctuary of worship.¹⁷ The preposition *en* could have not only locative sense here but also instrumental sense conveying the idea that it is by means of the Spirit’s revealing action that the new worship is rendered possible.¹⁸ Since God is revealed in Jesus Christ, one can really worship God only in Christ.

The eschatological worship which depends on the hour of Jesus' passion-death is possible here and now in Jesus.¹⁹ The one who enters into a personal relationship with Jesus by the Spirit of truth enters thereby into relationship with God the Father (cf. Jn 14:19-20). Worship finds its realization in Christ who replaces the traditional places of worship, Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim. The new temple is Christ in and through whom come the eschatological salvation and the real perception of God who alone is to be worshipped (cf. Jn 2:19-22). Thus we observe three important features intertwined in the Johannine portrayal of worship: the transforming power of the Holy Spirit who enables one to perceive God and to meaningfully worship Him; and eschatological worship which is already initiated but which still looks forward for its final realization.

3. The Place of Worship

We have already observed that for John a new and spiritual worship is possible in Jesus, the new Temple, in whom the Father is revealed. This is reiterated in Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman which culminates in John 4:26: "I who speak to you am he." Soon after Jesus divulged her personal life, the woman recognized his supernatural power by confessing him "a prophet" (Jn 4:16-19), for in Samaritan tradition prophecy and power to know what took place in the past and what was still to come cannot be separated.²⁰ Probably the woman perceived Jesus as the *taheb* whom the Samaritans identified as the 'coming one', the only prophet Moses (cf. Deut 18:18).²¹ That is why she posed the question about the place of worship (Jn 4:20), for the Samaritans believed that *taheb* will come and restore eschatological worship primarily by purifying Mt. Gerizim from the defilement caused by Israel's enemies.²² This prophet, according to the Samaritans, will reveal the truth and as the spokesman of God, he knows and declares the divine will.²³ This explains why in the course of her dialogue on worship she stated, "I know that Messiah is coming; when he comes, he will show us all things." (Jn 4:25).

Jesus, in response, did not deny the eschatological aspect of worship, but he turned her attention not only to the person *whom* one should worship but also to the person *in whom* true

worship could be offered. The real place of worship, for Jesus, is not any building either in Jerusalem or on Mt. Gerizim, but the person in whom God revealed Himself as Father and by whom the eschatological salvation became possible (Jn 4:21-22). This person is no other but the Messiah who is reinterpreted by Jesus as "I...am he" (Jn 4:26). The term "I am" in John echoes the divine Name used by Yahweh in the Old Testament to reveal Himself in His divine prerogative as well as to denote His relationship with His chosen ones (e.g. Gen. 28:13, 15; Exod. 3:14; Isa. 43:10-11; 45:5, 6, 18: etc.). Jesus, whom John portrays, is the revelation of God, who in the Old Testament revealed Himself by the Name "I am", and thus he is the place where one can worship God and relate to Him. This confirms that even though the term "temple" is not used in John 4:20-26, the idea that Christ is the new temple where one can render true worship to God is very much present. Thus the temple made with hands is replaced in John by the temple made without hands (cf. Jn 2:19-21; 14:2-3). Such worship is an important aspect of the "hour" (i.e., the new era inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus), and knows no geographical boundary; it is not simply an end-time event, but a present experience as well (Cf. above p. 4). As Schnackenburg puts it, "The 'hour is coming' when both places of worship will lose their significance... With the person of Jesus, this day is already dawning, and a new type of worship is signalled in which the place where it is offered is unimportant."²⁴

The notion that Jesus Christ is the presence and manifestation of God in whom true worship can be offered can be drawn from two more passages: John 2:19-22 and 12:20-26.

II. WORSHIP CLARIFIED TO "THE JEWS" (JOHN 2:13-22)

Jesus' act of cleansing the Jerusalem temple appears in the early part of his ministry in John (2:13-22) unlike in the synoptics where it occurs in the period of His passion. It seems to be a symbolic and prophetic act of Jesus in defiance of the wrong use of the temple and the worship system prevalent

among the Jews at that time.²⁵ Carson recognizes the cleansing as an act of prophetic symbolism for the denunciation of worship that was not pure as well as a prophetic invitation to worship God from the heart.²⁶ Dodd sees in the purging of the temple the sign the Jews desired, but it was a sign which points to the destruction and replacement of the system of religious observance of which the temple was the centre: a new 'temple' for an old one. However, this deeper interpretation could be fully understood only in the light of the resurrection of Christ (Jn 2:21-22).²⁷

1. True Worship Centres on Sacrifice

While the replacement motif is definitely present in this bold act of Jesus inside the temple, other motifs related to worship cannot be ignored. The act of cleansing unveils how and where true worship can be offered. First of all we should note that it takes place during the passover, a festival which not only commemorated the exodus from Egypt and the start of the barley harvest, but also was meant for rest and worship on the first and last days of unleavened bread.²⁸ Since the time of Moses till Jesus' time, there have been variations in the observance of the Passover. At any rate, in all Jewish traditions the offering of sacrifice as a substitute played a central part in the Passover worship.²⁹ The Passover combined the notion of sin-offering, of burnt-offering, and of peace-offering both in their original form and in their post-exilic observance. In John 2:13-22 also worship and sacrifice emerge as notable features. Wohlgenut observes that the key terms such as "Passover", "Jerusalem", and "going up" in John 2:13 foreshadow the suffering and death of Jesus yet to come.³⁰ In similar vein, J. McCaffrey observes that the verb "to go up" has a double meaning to indicate the ascent of the pilgrimage to the temple (Jn 5:1; 7:8, 10, 14; 11:55; 12:20) and the ascent of Jesus to his Father through his passion and resurrection.³¹ So also the disciples' right perception of the temple-cleansing after Jesus' death and resurrection (Jn 2:22) links the scene closely to Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.

The quotation from Psalm 69:9 in John 2:17 ("Zeal for thy house will consume me") takes on a deeper meaning in the

light of the passion-resurrection of Jesus. The primary meaning here is not that Jesus' violent action was an expression of his consuming zeal, but that Jesus' zeal will soon lead him to his death, for the future "will consume" denotes a prophetic utterance about Jesus' death.³² The purging of the temple is thus an enactment of Jesus' impending death without which a true worship of God becomes impossible. Only by offering his life as a sacrifice will Jesus in some way build up the temple and bring a new order of worship.

This idea is reiterated in John 2:19: "Destroy (*lusate*) this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." McCaffrey remarks that this verse contains irony and double meaning.³³ For the Greek word *lusate* used for "destroy" is an ironical imperative such as we find in the Old Testament prophets (cf. Amos 4:4; Isa. 8:9), implying, "If you destroy this temple (as you most certainly will)...I will build."³⁴ The evangelist's comment in v. 21: "But Jesus spoke of the temple of his body" makes it clear that by the term "temple" Jesus meant his own body which would soon be destroyed by the Jews. His body is the same as the Word-become flesh which uniquely manifests the glory of the Father (Jn 1:14).³⁵ But why should it be destroyed? The Johannine Jesus affirms that the destroyed body is to be raised up. John uses *luô* in the place of the synoptic *kataluô* and *egeirô* in the place of the synoptic *oikodomeô* and by changing the verbs thus, he emphasizes the destruction and reconstruction not of a building but of a human body. The death of Jesus results in his resurrection and thus enables him to be the place of worship. The new temple is no doubt the glorified body of Jesus which replaces the Jerusalem temple that was being used as no more than a centre of traditional ceremonies, hindering the worshippers from having deeper communion with God. Therefore a new worship is possible now in Jesus who died and rose again to impart new life to the worshippers so that they might worship the Father in spirit and truth. God removes in Jesus the old form of worship and brings in a new and spiritual worship in which one can really commune with God (cf. Jn 4:23-24; Rom. 12:1; Mt. 12:6). This, however, does not mean that the ceremonial aspect of worship is wholly condemned. As McCaffrey puts it, "God abolishes only to

fulfil."³⁶ In the new order of worship, which has now become possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus, the only sign given to the Jews (Jn 2:18), the worship at Jerusalem has been fulfilled and superceded.³⁷ For his death has met once and for all the requirement of a sacrifice in worship to commune with God (cf. Heb. 9:24-26) and his resurrection has imparted new life to those who believe (cf. Jn 5:29; 8:12; 11:25-26; 20:22). The Johannine idea of Jesus as the paschal sacrifice is clear from the title "Lamb of God" (Jn 1:29, 36) and from John's dating of Jesus' crucifixion on Nisan 14 on which the paschal lamb was usually slaughtered in Jerusalem temple.

The celebration of the Passover includes the sacrifice of an unblemished animal. It is noteworthy that it is only John, among the four evangelists, who mentions the sheep and oxen which were sold in the temple and which were driven out by Jesus. These animals were being sold, because they were required for holocausts and peace-offerings (Lev. 1 and 3). This probably implies that Jesus takes away the Jewish sacrificial system comprising the offerers of sacrifice and the animals which are to be sacrificed, because he himself becomes both the offerer and the sacrifice. That is, in the temple of the eschatological order sacrificial worship in terms of offering of animals has no place. The whole act of Jesus in the temple, including his use of "a whip of cords", which John alone mentions, indicates that the idea of condemnation is not missing. However, the question is: what did Jesus condemn? Did he condemn Jewish worship itself? A closer reading of the passage suggests that Jesus condemned only the manner in which the temple worship was made a means of material gain. The temple, which is the meeting place between God and the worshippers, was being used as a "house of trade" (v.16). Trading deprived the temple of its very identity as a house of prayer. The Father's house belongs to Jesus and he will make his own to dwell there (Jn 14:2); it is also the place where eschatological worship in terms of beholding the glory of Jesus will take place (Jn 17:24). Thus Jesus becomes the end of the temple worship as well as the beginning of a new and life-giving worship. Hoskyns aptly comments, "The action (of Jesus) is not merely that of a Jewish reformer: It is a sign of the

advent of the Messiah; it is not merely a protest against the irreverence and corruption of Jewish worship: it is a sign that the end of animal sacrifice is at hand (see v.21).³⁸ He further observes that an allusion to Jeremiah 7:11 suggests that all profit, not only dishonest profit, made out of the temple of God is irreconcilable with true worship.³⁹ This argues against today's tendency, if any, to exploit the revenue of the churches for one's own benefit or for wrong ends. Wherever such a tendency prevails, there can one hardly see the marks of true worship.

2. True Worship is thoroughly Scriptural

We have seen that Jesus' act of cleansing the temple symbolizes that the animal sacrifice becomes obsolete and vanishes in lieu of Jesus sacrificing himself. There are two important scriptural passages which John 2:13-22 alludes to. First, in this passage there is an allusion to Malachi 3:1,3 which contains the prophecy about the coming of the Lord into His temple in order to purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. This prophecy seems to be fulfilled in the coming of Jesus in the temple with the purpose of purifying not only the temple system but also the people, both the worshippers and the religious leaders. Jesus' violent action seems to be an enacted call for pure and spiritual worship. As Carson points out, it is "a prophetic invitation to worship God from the heart, without clamour or distracting influences".⁴⁰ In worship, as John views it, the Lord would cleanse the hearts of those who adore Him in His presence. He cleanses them from their wrong attitude in seeking God, from the corruption of their hearts and from all forms of selfish gain. That is, in Jesus our hearts are set right with God so that we might offer spiritual worship that is acceptable to God. This is the inward experience which should take place in worship. There is an outward dimension also in the Johannine picture of worship, as our study shows.

An allusion to Zechariah 14:21 ("And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day") shows that eschatological worship, as a section of the Jews envisaged, includes all nations, for there is a play on the word

“trader”. The word used in both the MT and the LXX of Zech. 14:21 for “trader” is “Canaanite”. This word cannot be understood geographically, but rather metaphorically to denote “trader” lest it contradicts Zech. 14:16-17 which indicates that all the nations (i.e., Gentiles) that came against Jerusalem will go up to worship the King. It seems that originally the Phoenicians called their land “Canaan” and later the word “Canaanite” became equivalent to “trader”, because the leading Phoenician cities were big commercial centres (cf. Job 41:6; Prov. 31:24; Isa. 23:8; Ezek. 17:4; Hos. 12:7; Zeph. 1:11).⁴¹ Thus the worship prophesied in Zechariah is extrovert, embracing the Gentiles, and hence universal by nature. Does the Johannine account of the cleansing of the temple, which echoes Zech. 14, also reflect the out-flowing characteristic of worship? The location in which trade was going on seems to point to this direction. Most probably the business was going on in the outer court which was also called “the court of the Gentiles” making it impossible for Gentiles to go and worship Yahweh. If so, John, like the synoptists, denounces not only the misuse of the temple precincts, but particularly the act of hindering the incoming of non-Jews for worship. Jesus removes precisely this barrier and makes worship an universal act. This means that Jesus becomes the meeting-point for both Jews and non-Jews to worship and commune with God together.

J.A.T. Robinson denies that there is a reference to the Gentiles in the cleansing of the temple, although he admits that the Fourth Gospel contains more universalistic sayings than any other books of the New Testament.⁴² However, he does not show any awareness of an allusion to Zech. 14:21. Wohlgemut, on the other hand, accepts that trade did take place in the Gentile court, but does not think that Jewish temple worship was thereby distorted, for according to him, such an interpretation relies heavily on the phrase “house of prayer” used in the synoptic accounts.⁴³ However, in spite of his awareness of an allusion to Zech. 14:21 in John 2:13-22 he gives no attention to the possibility of applying the context in which Zech. 14:21 occurs to the cleansing narrative. The new worship, which John envisages in chapter 2, is by nature universal and all-inclusive. The universal perspective of

Johannine worship with its claim that Jesus himself replaced temple worship can also be seen in the coming of the Greeks to see Jesus as recorded in John 12:20-26, the next passage of our study.

III. WORSHIP CLARIFIED TO "THE GREEKS" (JOHN 12:20-26)

There were some Greeks (*hellènes*) in Jerusalem who expressed to Philip their desire to see Jesus and these Greeks were those who had gone up to Jerusalem to worship (*proskynein*) at the Passover feast. Beasley-Murray views the turning of the Greeks to Jesus against the background of the purging of the temple in the sense that the cleansing that took place in the court of the Gentiles would have stimulated an interest in the minds of these Greeks.⁴⁴ If this is true, then it is obvious that the cleansing has opened the way practically for the Gentiles to come to Jesus, the real 'place' of worship. John alone, among the four evangelists, records this incident and that too with a two-fold irony:

(i) Those who had gone up to Jerusalem to worship were "Greeks", a term which represents Gentiles as a whole. Robinson argues that these Greeks are not Gentiles, but that they are Greek-speaking Jews.⁴⁵ He puts forth this observation in his over-all thesis that John is a Jewish book written exclusively for the Jews including the Jews in Diaspora. However, his argument has not got wide support, because it begs the question: why in that case should John use the word *hellènes*, a term that is applicable to the born Greeks (cf. Jn 7:35), rather than the term *hellênistai*, which alone refers to the Greek-speaking Jews (cf. Acts 6:1)?⁴⁶ It is also not clear why the Greeks should approach Jesus through Philip, while in other places the Jews seem to have direct access to him. Therefore it is more probable that the Greeks represents the non-Jews who were probably proselytes or God-fearers. H.B. Kossen argues that the glorification of the Son of Man in the arrival of the Greeks echoes Isa. 49:3,5-6 with the implication that the Greeks appear here as representatives of the Gentiles.⁴⁷ It is fairly clear, then, that John 12:20ff. illustrates the point that true worship includes both Jews and Gentiles

alike. That is probably why the evangelist has placed vv.20-26 immediately after v.19: "Look, the world has gone after him." The coming of the Greeks to Jesus affirms the fact that for John the possibility of taking part in the eschatological worship is extended even now to the Gentile race also, for in Jesus they too receive the privilege of being recognized as the people of God, as Israel (cf. Eph. 2:11-22).

(ii). It is ironical that the Greeks who came to Jerusalem to worship (*proskynein*) YHWH, the God of Israel, should wish to see Jesus (Jn 12:20-21). At this point Jesus responds first of all in terms of the Son of Man being glorified (12:23). This is deliberate, for by so responding, the Johannine Jesus conveys the message that real worship lies in *seeing* the glorified Jesus, who, for John, is the revelation of the glory of the Father (Jn 1:14; 13:31-32; 17:4, 24). That is, one can worship YHWH by perceiving the glory of Jesus as revealed in his death.⁴⁸ The celebration of the Passover festival can be fulfilled in seeing Jesus who sacrificed himself on the Cross as the paschal lamb — an event which was treated as a folly by the Greeks (cf. 1 Cor. 1:21-24). The coming of the Greeks to Jesus and the latter's response indicate that the longing which prompts one to seek God and worship Him can really be satisfied in Jesus, for he is the revelation of God and his glory is nothing but the glory of God. This explains why the worshippers should desire to see Jesus at this point. Schnackenburg concedes this when he comments, "In the evangelist's view the Greeks' request is evidence of true religious searching, similar to the Samaritan woman's question, though in her case Jesus gave instructions about true worship of God (4:20-24)."⁴⁹ Whereas the concept of worship in chapter 4 is explicit, it is hidden, but ironically revealed, in chapter 12. It is true that the Greeks disappear in this passage as does Nicodemus in chapter 3, but this does not weaken the connection between vv. 20-21 and vv. 23-26. Even Bultmann who first observes that what Jesus says in vv. 23ff. cannot be treated as a direct answer to the request of the Greeks,⁵⁰ later comments that v.24 could be an indirect answer in the sense that Jesus' glorification, as an event of salvation history, makes Jesus accessible for the Gentiles as the exalted Lord and thus gathers his community.⁵¹ Thus he

confirms the link between the Greeks' request and Jesus' response. Jesus' glorification which unites his death, resurrection and exaltation into one single event (Jn 12:28, 32f.; 13:31f.; 17:15), is seen here as bearing universal fruitfulness and as the drawing to himself all those who believe in him (cf. Jn 12:32).

Worship involves allegiance to and participation in Jesus' death. The indirect reference to Jesus' death in terms of a grain that falls into the earth to die and then to bear fruit (v.24) is immediately followed by an injunction to the seekers of Jesus that they should hate their life in order to attain eternal life (v. 25). This "Johannine parable", which reflects the synoptic tradition (cf. Mk. 8:31,35; Mt. 10:39; Lk. 10:26),⁵² implies that Jesus' death is necessary to bring rich missionary fruit.⁵³ That is, Jesus' death will produce many more followers who will be drawn to Him (Jn 12:32) and who will render true worship to the Lord by undergoing a sacrificial death like his in order to live eternally. Moreover, just as dying and fruit-bearing appear together in the mission of the Son of Man, so too in the life of the true worshippers. By hating their life every day, they will attain eternal life, which, for John, is already a present reality (cf. Jn 5:24; 11:25; 17:3). In John 15:1-11 fruit-bearing, which is conditioned by abiding in Christ, denotes all forms of Christian life lived in close communion with Christ⁵⁴ In other words, in fruit-bearing, which is the result of hating one's life and thus participating in the death of Jesus, the very character of Jesus Christ is revealed and experienced by humankind. If worship involves a sharing in Christ's death that results in exhibiting the life of Christ to the world, then it implies that the whole act of Christian life becomes a form of worship offered to God through Christ. Worship is neither time-bound nor space-bound, but is action-oriented ranging from the liturgical worship in a building to the worshipper's involvement in the society for the welfare of the people. J. Samuel touches this point when he observes that true worship enables the community of believers to serve one another in love and unity (cf. Jn 15:12-13; 17:22-23) and that true worshippers worship God through Jesus Christ at all times and in all places with genuine love and unity for the whole of humanity.⁵⁵

The connection between service and self-denial is reiterated in John 12:26: "If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honour him." True service is possible only be, following Jesus in as much as hating one's life involves renouncing one's own interests and following Jesus in his suffering and death. By mentioning the cost of discipleship, Jesus probably means that it is impossible to offer true worship to God without prior commitment to follow Jesus and serve him. It looks as though Jesus is sending the message to the longing Greeks that 'seeing Jesus' involves a cost, the cost of their own lives, because true worship lies in one's commitment to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and to serve him for the welfare of suffering humanity. This means that for John worship is not simply an one-time act, but it is life-time commitment to Jesus and hence is something which fills the whole of our life. In brief, our whole life, if we are committed to follow Jesus and serve him, is an act of worship.

IV. WORSHIP EXPRESSED IN MISSION

In John worship and Christian mission are linked together. The narrative of Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:20ff.) which, as we have seen above, defines what true worship, eventually leads to the idea of witnessing (to Christ), the primary element in Jesus' mission (Jn 3:11; 18:37). The revelation of Jesus in whom true worship is possible led the woman to testify to her people about Christ and to lead them to Him (4:28-30). Her act of leaving the old water jar symbolizes her renunciation of the old ceremonial forms of religion in favour of worship in spirit and truth⁵⁶ and this worship, in her case, is expressed in the form of witnessing and bringing people to Jesus. The coming of the Samaritans is described as the "harvest" (Jn 4:35) which, according to Matthean tradition, is the image of mission (cf. Mt. 9:37f.).⁵⁷ Bultmann argues that this harvest, as John 4:36 further clarifies, is an eschatological event which is to be seen in the coming of the Samaritans to Jesus.⁵⁸

Besides the word "harvest", the terms, "sower", "reaper" and "labour" and the verbs "to reap" and "to labour" (Jn 4:36-38)

seem to have been used here in a technical missionary sense. As E.S. Fiorenza puts it, "The dramatic dialogue is probably based on a missionary tradition that ascribed a primary role to a woman missionary in the conversion of the Samaritans... The present Johannine community reaps the harvest made possible by the missionary endeavors of a woman who initiated the conversion of the Samaritan segment of the community."⁵⁹ The mission of the Samaritan woman is connected not only with the mission of the disciples who are sent by Jesus as the reapers of the harvest, but also with the mission of the Son (Jn 5:19-47) to which John 4:27-38 is "an anticipatory link".⁶⁰ If John 4:27-42 thus has a strong missionary thrust, then the question arises: why should the evangelist place 4:20-26, a passage whose major emphasis is worship, and 4:27-42, a passage whose primary concern is mission, in juxtaposition? Certainly such a literary structure cannot be accidental. By this he shows that worship in spirit and truth naturally goes beyond one's horizon by carrying the words of witness to embrace all humanity in its need of salvation and human dignity. Mission itself, for John, is the expression of true worship.

That real worship involves the fulfilment of God's mission is hinted at in the event of the coming of the Greeks to Jesus (Jn 12:20-26). The eschatological worship includes Gentiles and it is fulfilled in the turning of the Greeks, who had come to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh, to Jesus (cf. Jn 10:16), as we have seen above. Kossen rightly perceives a double reference to mission. First, Jesus, as Israel personified, fulfills Israel's mission to be a light to the Gentiles (cf. Isa. 49:6b) by giving himself to be lifted up in order to draw all people to himself (Jn 12:32); just as God will be glorified in Israel (Isa. 49:3) in the death of the Son of Man God is glorified (Jn 12:24; 13:31-32). Secondly, Jesus' death bears fruit (Jn 12:24) mainly in the missionary work of his disciples who would abide in him (cf. Jn 15:5). In the fruit-bearing of the disciples the Father is glorified (Jn 15:8) in the same way as he is glorified in the Jesus' death.⁶¹ The appearance of the Greek worshippers is "one of the signs of the coming conversion of the Gentiles",⁶² and recalls the coming of the Samaritans to

Jesus (Jn 4:42). Both the passages share the idea that worship can be expressed in witnessing for Christ and thereby bringing the underprivileged and outcasts into the fold of Jesus Christ.

There is one more piece of evidence in John's Gospel which underlines the fact that mission and worship are interlocked. That is the appearance of the risen Jesus to his disciples (Jn 20:19-31). Barrett draws our attention to John's description of this christophany with liturgical colour by commenting that the whole passage, John 20:19-29, particularly Thomas' pronouncement, "My Lord and my God!", may be liturgical in origin.⁶³ He supports this observation by stating:

The disciples assemble on the Lord's Day. The blessing is given: "Peace be with you". The Holy Spirit descends upon the worshippers and the word of absolution (cf. v. 23) is pronounced. Christ himself is present (this may suggest the eucharist and the spoken word of God) bearing the marks of his passion; he is confessed as Lord and God... That such a setting as this was in John's mind is supported by the fact that in the next verse the horizon of thought is explicitly extended to include all Christians as they meet under the authority of the word of God.⁶⁴

Although there is nothing to suggest in the passage a eucharistic reference, Barrett's argument for the liturgical context of the resurrection appearance is well made. This raises the question: why should this passage that forms the climax of the Gospel be put in a worship context? In other words, why does John use the liturgical language giving a worship colour to the appearance narrative? It is most probable that John envisaged the mission of Jesus, which will be carried out by his followers, as an act of worship, for it is the worshippers who are sent into the world as Jesus was sent by the Father (20:21). It is they who became the Spirit-bearing community. In John the idea of sending appears as an important motif which unveils the missionary heart of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ. The purpose of God's mission is to save the world from its lost condition so that it might have eternal life (Jn 3:16-17). The call to fulfil this purpose, as John portrays, comes to the church in a worship situation. The same worship

context becomes an occasion to equip the worshippers by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The commissioning of the worshippers for God's mission is not foreign to the New Testament. Paul and Barnabas, for example, were set apart for Christian mission in a worship context (Acts 13:1-4). Similarly, the disciples, as the body of Christ, moved into the world after being empowered by the Holy Spirit when they had come together in one place, most probably for prayer and worship (Acts 2:1-4; cf. Acts 1:12-14). John the visionary was commissioned to send messages to the seven Churches in Asia possibly in a worship context (cf. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" — Rev. 1:10). It seems then that worship is not a static act which can be confined to a particular place or time, but that it extends itself in the act of taking Christ to a world in need. The connection between worship and mission, which can be seen both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, seems to attain clarity in the Fourth Gospel. Worship is the sphere in which the true worshippers are sent into the world with an authority to forgive or retain sins and to render service to the suffering humanity. Mission is an aspect of worship in as much as prayer, praise, thanksgiving, intercession, confession of faith, confession of sin, preaching, the collection, etc. are the elements of worship.

John's interest in setting God's mission in a worship context is also known from John 6:51 in which, as J.G. Davies observes, Jesus' act of coming down from heaven is described in cultic language: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."⁶⁵ Both mission and cult appear together in John 6:57 as well. By citing more NT passages, Davies rightly argues that worship and daily life, in which mission is carried out, cannot be separated.⁶⁶ Our earlier observation that worship is both introvert and extrovert is further confirmed here. Worship is inward, because it enables the worshipper to have communion with God through Christ; it is outward at the same time, because worship expresses itself in the act of mission. The former is theocentric, whereas the latter is anthropocentric. One should not treat worship purely as sacred and mission as

secular. They are the two sides of a single divine activity in which through Christ we are included.⁶⁷

Conclusion

Our study on John's portrayal of worship is not exhaustive. However, it is sufficient to show that the Fourth Evangelist was careful to incorporate various elements of Christian worship in his Gospel narrative. This is natural to any NT writer who wrote the Gospel of Jesus Christ particularly after 70 CE when there was a great concern for the place and manner of worshipping Yahweh. We have also observed that John clarifies with great care the nature and significance of worship to the Jews, Greeks, and Samaritans (represented by the woman at the well in Samaria).

John shifts the traditional focus on the place of worship to the object and the true manner of worship. The object of worship for him is God and those who worship Him should recognize and experience Him as their Father. He is God who brings salvation to the world by His salvific act in Jewish history and more particularly in Jesus Christ. One cannot really worship God, then, unless the worshipper experiences the salvation that is available in Jesus and thus enters into a filial relationship with Him. It is basically this relationship which is played out in the life of the Church today and hence worship seems monotonous for many.

John is convinced that worship entails a deep communion with God that is possible by entering into a communion with Christ who alone reveals to human beings the character of God. His love and salvation. In Jesus Christ eschatological worship is already initiated even while it looks forward to final realization. Nevertheless, for John without the transforming power of the Holy Spirit one can neither perceive God nor worship Him truly. He reiterates that the place of worship is not mainly a building but the person, Jesus Christ, and is not to be confined to a particular geographical location such as Gerizim or Jerusalem. In other words, the question is not where one should worship but whom and how one should worship.

The possibility of approaching God and worshipping Him is in fact generated by Christ's death on the Cross. Only by offering his life as a sacrifice will Jesus build up the temple and bring a new pattern of worship. His death (i.e., the destruction of the temple) and resurrection (i.e., the building up of the temple) have made him not only the place of worship, the new temple, but also the one who can impart life to the worshippers so that they may worship the Father in spirit and truth. Jesus whom John pictures is both the temple sacrifice and the offerer of that sacrifice.

The symbolic action of Jesus in the Jerusalem temple sends the warning note that worship should not be regarded as a means of material gain. This argues against the tendency found in many quarters today to exploit the church's income for one's own benefit or to spend it for wrong ends. Such a commercial attitude, if any, should be cleansed as Jesus cleansed the temple by fulfilling the prophecies recorded in Zechariah 14:21 and Malachi 3:1,3. The purging of the Jerusalem temple shows not only that Jesus is the new temple in whom true worship is possible, but also that worship is both introvert and extrovert: introvert, because in worship the Lord cleanses the hearts of the adorers from all corrupt practices and selfish gain so that they might be able to offer a spiritual worship that is acceptable to God (cf. Rom 12:1); it is extrovert, because worship, centered on Christ, is not confined to a particular group of people or nation, but rather it crosses the boundary to include all nations. The universal perspective of Johannine worship is further seen in the turning of Gentile worshippers (Greeks) to see Jesus. There is little wonder, then, that John portrays worship as an act of mission which seeks out those who are in need of forgiveness and salvation to bring them to faith in Christ.

Worship, for John, is not simply a weekly exercise, but it is a life-time commitment to share in the sufferings and death of Jesus and consequently in the new life he gives. This life is reflected in loving and serving one another and more particularly in seeking the welfare of suffering humanity. In this sense worship, sacrifice (of Jesus and of his followers) and mission are presented by John as allies which cannot

be understood one without the other. John thus conveys to his readers that our whole life, if committed to follow Jesus and serve him by serving humanity, becomes an act of worship.

Reference

1. W. Nicholls, *Jacob's Ladder: The Meaning of Worship* (Ecumenical Studies in Worship No.4; Richmond, Virginia; John Knox Press, 1958), p.9
2. S.S. Stuart, "A New Testament Perspective on Worship", *Evangelical Quarterly* 68 (1996), p. 215. M.P. Hogen, "The Woman at the Well (John 4:1-42)", *Bible Today* 82 (1976), pp. 663-69, indicates that true worship is one of the major themes in John 4:1-42.
3. See C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: The University Press, reprint, 1958), p.314 n.1.
4. In view of the anti-semitic nature of the Fourth Gospel, Bultmann supposes that v. 22 is completely or partially an editorial gloss — R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, ET 1971), p.189 n. 6. However, most scholars now agree that v. 22 is not a gloss mainly because of the conjunction "but" (*alla*) with which v. 23 begins and because of the use of the term "the Jews" positively in several places of John (e.g. 2:6,13; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2,11; 11:31,36f.,45,55f.; 12:9,11; 18:20).
5. See G.R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Word [UK] edition, 1991), p.62.
6. See J.H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, Vol.1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, reprint, 1948), p.147
7. C.H. Dodd, "The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel and Christian Worship", in F.L. Cross (ed.), *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1957), p.9 Dodd has attempted to trace the idea of Worship in John's Gospel by means of the glory-motif in the Gospel. Even after four decades of Dodd's study, few scholars have pursued it further. Most of the recent works on Johannine worship have completely ignored a pioneer study such as this.
8. Most commentators take the "we" of John 4:22 as referring to the Jews. However, A.T. Hanson agrees with H. Odeberg in understanding "we" as referring to Christians — see A.T. Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel: A Study of John and the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), pp.256-257. Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt that "we", in this context, can refer both to the Jews and Christians at least from the evangelist's point of view.
9. It should be noted that in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* both the tribes of Judah and Levi are treated in unity.
10. Stuart, "New Testament Perspective", p.221, shows that worship, defined in John 4, is a matter of relationship to God and His Son rather than a matter of acts or places.
11. H. Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel* (Chicago: Argonaut Inc. Publishers, 1968; reprint of original Uppsala 1929), p.170.

12. C.J. Collins, "John 4:23-24, 'In Spirit and Truth': An Idiomatic Proposal", *Presbyterion* 21 (1995), pp. 118-21.
13. See, for example, R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p.180; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Vol. 1 (3 vols.; New York: Crossroad, ET 1990), p.437; D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp.225-26; Bultmann, *John*, pp. 189-92.
14. See Schnackenburg, *St. John* 2, p.228; C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2 edn., 1978), p. 167; J. McCaffrey, *The House With Many Rooms: The Temple Theme of Jn. 14:2-3* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988), p.229.
15. Schnackenburg, *St. John* 1, p.437; cf. Barrett, *St. John*, p.527.
16. Stuart, "New Testament Perspective", p.217.
17. McCaffrey, *House With Many Rooms*, p.229 n.33.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Note the eschatological word "hour", which anticipates the divine appointed time of Jesus' death and resurrection, is used in John 4:23a, both as future and present reality, in connection with worship.
20. See J. Macdonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1964), pp.206-207.
21. *ibid.*, pp. 360-361; cf. pp. 147-48.
22. *ibid.*, pp. 364-365
23. *ibid.*, pp. 204-205, 364-65.
24. Schnackenburg, *St. John* 1, p. 435.
25. See particularly L. Nereparampil, "New Worship and New Temple", *Bible Bhashyam* 16 (1990), pp. 225-27.
26. Carson, *John*, p.179.
27. Dodd, *Interpretation*, p.301; cf. also G.R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, p.42; R.H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel: A Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, reprint, 1960), p.114.
28. See M.O. Wise, "Feasts", in J.B. Green, S. McKnight and I.H. Marshall (eds.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1992), p.237.
29. See A.W.F. Blunt, "Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread", in J. Hastings (ed.), *Dictionary of the Bible*, One volume (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), pp. 683-84.
30. J.R. Wohlgenut, "Where Does God Dwell? A Commentary on John 2:13-22", *Direction* 22 (2, 1993), pp. 87-88.
31. McCaffrey, *House with Many Rooms*, pp. 187-88.
32. Bultmann, *John*, p.124; cf. also McCaffrey, *House With Many Rooms*, p.188.
33. McCaffrey, *House With Many Rooms*, p.189.
34. *ibid.*; cf. Barrett, *St. John*, p.199.
35. See Carson, *John*, p.182.
36. McCaffrey, *House With Many Rooms*, p.189.
37. See E.C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2 rev. edn, 1961), p.197.
38. *ibid.*, p.194.

39. *ibid.*
40. Carson, *John*, p.179. It is noteworthy that at a time when "the Jews" were less concerned with pure worship and a right approach to God, Jesus showed much concern for pure worship (pp. 180-181).
41. See G.A. Barton, "Canaanites", in J. Hastings (ed.), *Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 110-11. F.F. Bruce, "Canaan, Canaanites", in J.D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, reprint, 1978), p.184.
42. J.A.T. Robinson, "The Destination and Purpose of St. John's Gospel", *NTS* 6 (1959-60), pp. 120-21.
43. Wohlgemut, "Where Does God Dwell?", p.88.
44. Beasley-Murray, *John*, p.211.
45. Robinson, "Destination and Purpose", p.120.a
46. See Brown, *John I-XII*, p.466; Barrett, *St. John*, p.421; Carson, *John*, pp. 435-36. Schnackenburg, *St. John* 2, p.381, argues that these Greeks were God-fearers; so also Bultmann, *John*, p.423, especially n.2
47. H.B. Kossen, "Who Were the Greeks of John XII.20?" in *Studies in John: Essays Presented to J.N. Sevenster on the occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), pp. 103-104, 108.
48. Cf. above p.2 for a similar understanding of Dodd of Johannine worship.
49. Schnackenburg, *St. John* 2, p.382.
50. Bultmann, *John*, p.423.
51. *Ibid.*, p.424.
52. See C.H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, reprint, 1965), pp.366-69; Schnackenburg, *St. John* 2, pp. 383-84.
53. Schnackenburg, *St. John* 2, p.383; cf. also Kossen, "Who Were the Greeks of John XII.20?", p.109.
54. See Schnackenburg, *St. John* 3, p.100; Brown, *John XII-XXI*, pp. 662-63; Beasley-Murray, *John*, p.273.
55. J. Samuel, "Neither on this Mountain nor in Jerusalem: The Johannine Understanding of Worship", *Bangalore Theological Forum* 19 (2, 1987), pp.128-29.
56. See Carson, *John*, p.227.
57. See Bultmann, *John*, p.196 n.1.
58. *ibid.*, pp. 196-200.
59. E.S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), p.327.
60. See Carson, *John*, p.229.
61. Kossen, "Who Were the Greeks of John XII.20?", pp.97-110, esp. pp. 103-105, 108-109. I am not comfortable with the idea that Jesus is "Israel personified", for it presents the people of Israel as impersonal beings. Suffice is to say that Jesus is the fulfiller of Israel's mission.
62. Schnackenburg, *St. John* 2, p.382.
63. Barrett, *St. John*, p.573.
64. *ibid.*
65. J.G. Davies, *Worship and Mission* (London: SCM Press, 1966), p.10.
66. *ibid.*, p.12.
67. *ibid.*, p.71.