

# Worship and Service

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Christianity in its practical outworkings is a well-balanced combination of the passive and active sides of divine life in the soul. Every Christian is of necessity a receiver, not only at conversion, but all through his career. He must daily sit at Jesus' feet and hear His Word (Luke 10: 39), cultivating that quiet passivity of soul which ensures a receptive state. Otherwise he has nothing to impart.

On the other hand, having received, he finds himself constrained to give. Is he rejoicing in the knowledge of sins forgiven? His joy will not be complete until he has told the news to some one else. Has some fresh truth of Scripture burst upon his view? It will not be fully his until he has acted upon it. To practise any truth is to possess that truth indeed.

So the two things go hand in hand. A Christian resembles a reservoir, inasmuch as he must have an inlet and an outflow. If he becomes so enamored of the activities of Christianity that he is always attempting to give out without stopping to take in, spiritual emptiness and bankruptcy are the result. If he degenerates into a dreamy mystic, decrying all forms of Christian activity under cover of zeal for larger reception of divine truth, spiritual surfeit will supervene, and his ultimate loss will be great.

"From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matt. 25: 29). This was said of the servant who *received* a talent, but did not *give it out* to usury.

"For we must share if we would keep  
That good thing from above;  
Ceasing to give we cease to have,  
Such is the law of love."

All activities of a distinctly Christian character flow from one source: LOVE, the love of God known and produced in the soul. They range themselves under two heads. First, there are those activities which have God alone for their object and end. Second, those which, though God's glory is their end, have man in some way as their immediate object.

Let us briefly consider these two things.

WORSHIP must stand first. It is a spiritual activity which, having God alone as its object, confers no tangible benefit upon any one in the world. Therefore, in this utilitarian age it is greatly neglected, and its true character little understood. Let Christians, be they few or many, assemble together, drawing consciously into the presence of God and pouring out their hearts in thanksgiving and worship, and there will be not a few ready to rebuke them and say) "Why was this waste of the ointment made?" They will be told to go out and do something that will confer a practical benefit upon somebody, and abandon that which does nobody good.

But things have gone even further than this. There are many professed ministers of Christ who so fully "mind earthly things" (Phil. 3: 19) that they have no thought for "the things which are above" (Col. 3: 1), which the believer is bidden to seek. Their aim is limited to the benefit of men, and that in the most material way. Mark the pitiful spiritual degradation to which they have sunk as witnessed by their activities. Here is a flagrant example.

"By training people in music, developing orators and athletes, starting 'Bible classes - with heaps of fun,' and making the church a social centre, the writer has created a new community spirit, and as a result land-values are going up."

Thus an article in an American magazine describes how a church may be "run" so as to benefit the whole community.

Such activities are neither worship nor service. There is nothing in them for God, and nothing for the spiritual benefit of man. Such "ministers" and "churches" must have long ago practically banished the word *worship* from their vocabularies; the idea which the word properly conveys they probably never had.

What, then, is worship? In the Old Testament the term frequently occurs and is often used in a purely ceremonial sense. The Hebrew word most frequently used means literally "to bow oneself down." In the New Testament the word gets the inward and spiritual meaning with which we are concerned, and signifies the up-flow of responsive love, in adoration, from the believer to God, now known as Father.

In John 4 the Lord Jesus, speaking to the woman of Samaria, carefully distinguishes between the "true worshippers" and the worshippers according to the ancient rites, whether at Jerusalem or Samaria, and instructs us as to the essentials for true worship. After speaking of *the Father* as the object of worship, He adds: "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Do not these words plainly show that it is God *as Father* that we are to worship? and, further, that He is only to be worshipped according to what He has revealed Himself to be?

"*In spirit*," for "Spirit" is what God Himself is. True worship, then, is not a matter of religious emotions roused by impressive ritual or sensuous music. "Spirit" is the highest part of man, and unless we worship in spirit we do not worship at all.

"*In truth*." What is truth? We may answer Pilate's famous question thus: The realities of God Himself, that which God has revealed Himself to be: this is truth. The One who stood, crowned with thorns that day, in the judgment hall was Himself the truth, though Pilate knew it not, nor cared to know. He, and He alone, could say: "I am . . . the Truth" (John 14: 6), for He alone is the perfect revelation of God, and it is as Father that He has revealed Him. Therefore He said: "He that hath seen Me hath seen *the Father*" (John 14: 9).

The Father, then, is to be worshipped "in truth," in the light of that revelation which has come to us in Christ. That which does not give Christ His right place is no true worship. Worshipping God and rejoicing in Christ Jesus go hand in hand (Phil. 3: 3).

All this is of great importance. Let the soul firmly grasp the fact that true worship is "in spirit" and it will be delivered from the ritualistic idea which supposes that God can be worshipped by men's hands, that the more imposing the ceremony, the more gorgeous the surroundings, the more acceptable the "worship" is.

On the other hand, to know that only worship "in truth" is acceptable to God is to have the rationalistic idea dispelled. Neither the torchlight of science nor the study of God's handiwork in nature gives rise to worship. The knowledge of God Himself, revealed in Christ, is essential.

After worship comes SERVICE, the outcome of the gracious activity of divine love in the hearts of believers, leading them to an endless variety of labour for the glory of God and the good of souls.

Let us make no mistake here. The very essence of true service is that, while undertaken that others may be benefited, it is done *for the pleasure and under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

In service our one motive should be to please the Lord, who has in this Himself become our great Example. Speaking of the Father, He said: "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8: 29). To do right things is not enough. Right things done with a wrong motive are wrong in the sight of heaven.

Neither is it enough to act even with a right motive, if we are acting simply on our own initiative and doing what seems right in our own eyes. A man employed in a workshop may be a good workman, but a poor servant. If he is opinionated and independent, he will be continually running counter to his master's wishes and will give no end of trouble. Again, the Lord Jesus comes before us as our Example, saying: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4: 34). Service, then, is not merely work, not even good work, Christian activity of the most scriptural sort, but rather such activity under the direction of the Lord.

If an illustration of our theme be wanted, John 12: 1-9 presents us with an excellent one. "Martha served." There was hard work connected with that supper, and many benefited by it, but she performed it *for* Him. "They made *Him* a supper." That was true service done out of a full heart of gratitude to the One who had brought her brother from the tomb.

Lazarus "sat at the table with *Him*," a type of that communion with the Master which alone gives point and character to either service or worship.

Mary took the costly ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus. Upon Him she lavished it all. It was the outflow of a heart concentrated upon Christ, though the odour of the ointment filled the house. The worship of the heart is fragrant everywhere.

The Father is seeking worshippers (John 4: 23). The Lord has need of servants (2 Tim. 2: 1-7). May we respond to both desires!

**In speaking of worship, do you intend to refer to your form of worship as compared with that of other people?**

Not at all. I have no form of worship, whatever other people may have. To the Jews of old God gave what might be termed a "form of worship." But it was of a national, outward, ceremonial sort, though acceptable to God, if carried out with all the heart. Alas! it was not so, and soon Jehovah had to say: "In vain do they worship Me."

But the shadow dispensation has passed away and the substance has come. Christian worship is not national, not a mere matter of the lips, not a thing made up of certain ceremonies and observances. You can no more confine worship in forms than you can keep new wine in old bottles. The thing has been attempted times without number, for again and again have even true believers drifted back in mind and understanding to pre-Christian days. The result, however, must either be that if true worship be retained the forms are burst and discarded, or that if the forms be rigidly adhered to the new wine of true worship is spilled and quickly disappears.

**You speak of worship and service Is there such a very great difference between them? Ought we not to worship God whenever we go to a service?**

There is a very distinct difference. But just as we are speaking of worship and not "a form of worship," so we are speaking of service, and not "a service." The fact is, in the minds of many the whole subject is obscured and confused to a surprising degree, until no clear scriptural idea is left.

We have heard of a preacher who rose from his seat one Sunday morning and said: "Let us commence the *worship* of Almighty God by singing the hymn -

"Come ye sinners poor and needy,  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore."

To him "worship" evidently meant any kind of religious meeting. But it does not! It may be a true service to the Lord on the part of the preacher to conduct a meeting for the edification of believers or the conversion of sinners. It is no service (in the proper sense of the word) for the listeners. And for neither preacher nor hearers is it worship. Worship is not hearing sermons nor preaching them. Nor is it praying, or singing Gospel hymns. It is that up-flow of adoration which rises from a redeemed soul to God.

**Are worship and service confined to any particular class, or may all Christians have part in them?**

All Christians are both priests and servants. We read, for instance:

"Ye also . . . are built up . . . an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 5).

And again:

"Ye are . . . a royal priesthood . . . that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2: 9).

These words were written not to clergy, but to Christians. All such are a holy and a royal priesthood. Mark their activities! In the one character they OFFER UP spiritual sacrifices to God, i.e., worship. In the other they SHOW FORTH the praises of God, i.e., service.

In connection with service it is, of course, true that not every Christian has a gift according to 1 Corinthians 12, or is an evangelist, pastor, or teacher according to Ephesians 4. Yet every Christian can serve according to Romans 12. If he cannot prophesy or teach, he can show hospitality, or mercy; he can bless his persecutors, or weep in sympathy with a weeping saint, and thus be "serving the Lord."

### **Are there any special qualifications needed for us to rightly worship or serve God?**

As to worship, Hebrews 10: 19-22 speaks of "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," and we are exhorted to draw near with "a true heart in full assurance of faith." These are two important qualifications. Faith must be in active exercise, so that there is full assurance based upon the work of Christ, not a doubt or fear left. Then a true heart would indicate that sincerity and transparency of soul which is the result of a tender conscience and self-judgment.

As to service, read Acts 20: 17-35. Here is one of the most eminent of Christ's servants reviewing his career. Our service may be of the most insignificant description, yet the things that marked him should characterize us. Here are some of them: "humility of mind"; "many tears" - expressive of much exercise; "none of these things move me" - stability of soul; "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel" - the strictest possible righteousness before the world; "I have shewed you all things" - the practice of what is preached. These are important qualifications indeed.

### **If a person recently converted desires to serve the Lord, how would you advise them to start?**

I would encourage all young believers to serve the Lord by just doing that thing which, in His ordering of their lives, is next to hand. "Do the next thing," is a very sound motto, albeit that, as a rule, it is the very thing we do *not* wish to do.

Years ago there was living in a mountainous district of Virginia a humble servant-girl who had never had more than three months' schooling in her life. She earned four dollars a month. Out of this, one dollar went to her chapel, and one dollar to foreign missions. She was the largest local contributor in both these directions. The other two dollars went to her father, who was very poor and had a large family. She clothed herself by taking in sewing and sitting up late to do it.

An earnest minister visited the place. Accommodation was scarce, so her room was handed over to him. On the table lay her Bible. He opened it and found it marked on nearly every page. But what struck him most of all was her note against "Go ye into all the world" (Mark 16: 15). In firm, clear letters it stood, "Oh, if I could!"

Next day he spoke to her about it, whereupon she broke into crying, and for the moment he could get nothing out of her. Later on he heard this story.

She was converted at the age of fourteen, and on reaching home found a paper, "China's Call for the Gospel," lying about. Where it came from nobody knew. That had coloured all her thoughts. For ten years she had prayed the Lord to send her to China.

But lately a change had come over her. Just two weeks before, she had come to the conclusion that she had made a mistake, and that, after all, the Lord's plan for her was that she should be a missionary in the kitchen. At once her prayer became, "Make me willing to be a missionary for Thee in the kitchen," and the Lord had answered that prayer.

For ten years she had longed for the big thing, while not neglecting smaller things, as her contributions showed. At last she became willing to accept the *very little* thing, to shine for the Lord in that narrow circle as kitchen-maid, *and then the Lord despatched her to some very blessed service in China!* For the minister became convinced that he was specially sent there of God to help her, and to China she ultimately went.

May service of that kind be greatly multiplied on every hand!

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16: 10).

## The Rapture and the Appearing.

F. B. Hole.

It is an actual fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again! Yet many people, even true believers, seem hardly to believe it. It seems to them a dreamy, visionary, mystical idea, and they cannot help thinking that the enthusiasts who announce it must be mistaking figures of speech for sober facts.

But, after all, why should you be surprised? You believe that He has been here once. Then why not twice?

Consider for a moment what happened when He first came. He was rejected, and His life was cut short. His public mission of three and a half years closed in His sudden death. But being God manifest in flesh, in dying He wrought redemption for His people; He rose again. Is it likely that the story ends there as far as this earth is concerned? Shall the ejection of the Creator from the world by the creature be the last word? By no means. Men despised Him in His humiliation. He will surely return in His glory.

We are not left, however, to consider what seems likely or reasonable. The doctrine of the Second Advent is one of the commonest themes of Scripture. The Old Testament frequently refers to it. In the New Testament the full truth of it is plainly revealed. From the great mass of texts that might be quoted, let us select one which is singularly explicit.

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1: 11).

This message has about it almost the sound of a legal document. Lawyers write a very simple statement in a rather lengthy way because they find it needful to hedge about their words from possible misinterpretations. So here there is a fulness and almost a redundancy of expression, especially designed to foil any attempt to evade or mystify this great fact.

It is evident from this verse that the Lord Jesus is Himself coming just as He went. How did He go? Personally; then personally He will come. He went actually as a living Man - it was no spirit manifestation. Then actually as a living Man He will come. He went visibly; visibly He will come. He went from the earth. Then to the earth He will return.

The attentive Christian reader, however, is often puzzled as he pursues his studies into this great truth, by seeming discrepancies between different passages, and he needs to have placed in his hands the key that unlocks the door of difficulty.

That key is an understanding of the difference between the two stages of the Second Advent, which for the sake of brevity we term "The Rapture" (*i.e.*, "the catching-up") and "The Appearing."

Take the trouble at this point to thoughtfully read 1 Thessalonians 4: 13 to 1 Thess. 5: 3. Notice that the Thessalonian believers were troubled because some of their number had died, and they thought that they would therefore miss the glory of the appearing and reign of Christ. Paul tells them not to sorrow, because as certainly as Jesus died and rose again, God will bring WITH Jesus all such when He comes (v. 9). Then the Apostle explains how this is to be brought about, by what means the formerly dead in Christ are found with Him in bodies of glory so as to be able to share in His glorious appearing.

This explanation is prefaced by "this we say unto you by the word of the Lord," indicating that what follows is not something which had been previously made known, but something newly revealed: his authority for stating it being not Old Testament scripture, nor any previous utterance, but the direct revelation of the Lord.

And this is the explanation: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Now compare these words with what is written in 1 Corinthians 15: 51-54, and you will find an additional fact stated. "The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

In the light of these two scriptures we gather that:

- (1) The Lord Himself shall descend into the air with an assembling shout.
- (2) His shout will awaken the sleeping saints and raise them in bodies of glory.
- (3) We, the living, will then undergo a corresponding change into a glorified condition.
- (4) All believers, whether previously dead or living, will be caught up together, to be for ever with the Lord.

Oh, most blessed hour, the fruition of our long-cherished hope!

All this, however, leaves the great world untouched, save as the sudden disappearance of multitudes of saints may affect it. But the hour of retribution follows on. Hence 1 Thessalonians 5 opens by drawing a distinction between the coming of the Lord for His saints with which chapter 4 has dealt, and "the day of the Lord." That comes, not as a bridegroom for his bride, but "as a thief in the night."

When the Lord Jesus in humiliation was led as a lamb to the slaughter, He said to His enemies, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22: 53). But the tables are to be completely turned. He comes not in humiliation, but in glory; not as a lamb to the slaughter, but as the Lion of the tribe of Judah; not solitary and alone, but "with ten thousands of His saints"; not submitting to the will of His enemies, but that His enemies may be made His footstool. It is not man's little hour, and the short-lived triumph of evil; it is the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

"The day of the Lord" is not a day of twenty-four hours, but an interval of time like "the day of salvation." It is a period in the cycle of "times and seasons" marked by the absolute supremacy and authority of the Lord. It starts with His public manifestation in the clouds of heaven - His appearing with His saints.

It is to this public appearing that Old Testament prophets so frequently refer, being the consummation of God's ways with Israel and the earth. It ushers in a short, sharp work of judgment whereby the earth is purged of its dross before the shining forth of glory in the millennial reign of Christ.

Before this public appearing certain things must take place as foretold in Scripture. The Lord Jesus Himself, plainly predicted certain things (Matt. 24.; Mark 13; Luke 21). Again 2 Thessalonians 2 shows us that before the day of Christ comes there must first be "a falling away," an apostasy, and connected with that, the revelation of *the man of sin*, commonly called "antichrist." In him sin will find its culminating expression. He will be its very embodiment.

When the iniquity of man rises then to its full height God will smite in judgment. The Lord Jesus, who once bore judgment for our sakes, is then to be its Executor, and that oldest of all prophecies given through the lips of a man will be fulfilled: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14, 15). Previously the saints will have been "changed" according to 1 Corinthians 15, and "caught up" according to 1 Thessalonians 4, hence they are with Him in a glorified condition, and when the heavens open and reveal Him in the "flaming fire" of judgment, they are with Him, and He will be "glorified in His saints" and "admired in all them that believe . . . in that day" (2 Thess. 1: 7-10).

Meanwhile our business is "to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Theses. 1: 9, 10).

**May not what you call *the Rapture* be just a beautiful and poetic way of speaking of the death of a saint, and *the Appearing* be what is commonly called "the end of the world"?**

The death of a saint is thus described in Scripture: "To depart and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1: 23).

Is there no difference between our going to be with Christ and *His coming* for us? Further, when the saint dies and goes to be with Christ, his body is laid IN the grave. When Christ comes for His saints according to 1 Thessalonians 4, He takes all their bodies OUT of the graves. Are these one and the same thing?

No. The coming of the Lord *for* His saints is not death, but the deliverance of His people from the last vestige of death. The appearing of Christ with His saints is not "the end of the world," by which people generally mean the winding up of the heavens and the earth in their present condition. Revelation 19, speaks of the Lord's appearing in glory. Revelation 20 shows the result, Satan restrained and a thousand years of blessing for this weary old earth. After that - the end.

### **In this case would there not be two comings, a third Advent after the second?**

No. Frequently in Scripture the coming of the Lord is spoken of in a general way without referring definitely to either of its two stages. The Rapture and the Appearing are only two parts or stages of the one coming. When the King visits the City of London in state, the Lord Mayor and sheriffs meet him at Temple Bar, and after certain ceremonies they take their place in the procession behind him and re-enter the City, accompanying him to the Guildhall or wherever he is going.

Even so will it be at the coming of Christ. Caught up into the air to meet Him, we shall shortly after return with Him to share in His glorious kingdom.

### **What signs should we look for as indicating that the Lord's coming is near?**

If the appearing be in question, then such scriptures as 2 Thessalonians 2, 2 Timothy 3, and Matthew 24 supply the answer. The rising tide of apostasy in Christendom; the prevalence of false prophets deceiving many; the extraordinary awakening of the Jewish race, *i.e.*, the fig tree putting forth leaves according to Matthew 24: 32; the increasing carelessness of the world deceived into false security by its own achievements and saying "Peace and safety"; all these things and others of which we are witnesses indicate that we draw nigh to the end of this age.

But all these things are portents of the Appearing. As to the Rapture which precedes it, no signs are to be looked for. It is an event outside the calculation of times and seasons. These belong to the earth, as the opening verse of 1 Thessalonians 5 shows, and there was no need for the apostle to write to the Thessalonians on the subject. But as to the Rapture, which is not connected with times and seasons, there was a very distinct need that he should write to them.

There is nothing awaiting fulfillment before Christ comes *for* His saints. He may come at any moment.

### **Must not the world be converted first?**

That question would not be asked were it not that an unscriptural idea exists on the subject. Nowhere in the Bible is the conversion of the whole world by preaching of the Gospel either stated or implied. The Gospel is preached by command of God for the gathering out of the nations a people for His Name (Acts 15: 14). The world will not be converted, but rather purified by judgment which will remove the workers of evil and subjugate the earth to God. "When *Thy judgments* [not *Thy Gospel*] are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26: 9).

### **Will all Christians be caught up at the Rapture?**

Undoubtedly. To illustrate the truth of the Rapture, the effect of a strong magnet held over steel filings when mixed with sand has been used. It is a good illustration, only this must be remembered: Christians are not only like so many individual steel filings, they are by the Holy Ghost livingly connected together. They are "one flock," one family, "one body." When the Lord Jesus comes He will take His Church as one living entity, His body and His bride. Mutilated fragments will not be left behind.

The idea that some Christians will be left behind seems to crop up in two directions.

First, we have the prophets of various latter day apostasies from the truth. Some of them teach that only "living," "faithful," "watching" Christians will be taken. Their "faithfulness" is manifested by their reception of the teachings of the false prophet in question! Comment on this is needless.

Secondly, true Christians have run away with the idea that only "watching" believers are caught up, from such a Scripture as the following: "Unto *them that look for Him* shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9: 28).

After all, however, where can you find a true Christian who is not looking for Him? You can find many who are very unintelligent, who do not understand the truth of His coming, who have never heard of "the Rapture." Yet they look for Christ. *He* is the hope of their hearts, though they know not how that hope shall be fulfilled.

The fact is, the expression "them that look for Him," like "them that love God," (Rom. 8: 28) is just a Bible way of describing *believers*. If a man does not love God, nor look for Christ, he cannot be called a Christian.

**After all, is not this teaching concerning the Second Advent rather speculative? Is there any real use in it?**

It is no more speculative than the teaching divinely given to Noah concerning the approaching flood, or the prophecies given to Israel during centuries concerning the first coming of the Saviour. Difficulties may be raised as to details where Scripture is silent, and men may disagree and mystify matters as to the second coming just as the scribes succeeded in mystifying their generation as to the first coming. But the broad outlines of the truth as to it stand clear and plain in Scripture, and the event is sure.

As to the use of this truth, it will be found in practice that no fact exercises a more solemnizing effect on the consciences of sinners. No truth has a more separating effect upon believers. Shall we join hand in hand with the world which is shortly to come under judgment? No. "Every man that hath this hope in Him [Christ] purifieth himself even as He is pure" ( 1 John 3: 3). He whose hope is in Christ and His speedy return puts far from him every defiling thing.

**Do you believe that the "Rapture of the saints" is now very near?**

Yes. Foolish attempts have been made to fix dates for the Lord's return, thus contravening His own words. Earnest believers, too, have allowed themselves to use extravagant language, giving the impression that they were certain it could not be distant more than a year or two. Years have passed, and those who listened to these expressions have become sceptical as to the whole thing.

The truth remains, however: He is coming, and that *quickly*. Everything, both in the church and in the world, points to the closing up of this age. Therefore we lift up our heads and expect Him.

Entering a Christian's room the other day my eye fell on these words framed like a text and hung on the wall,

"PERHAPS TODAY."

I knew what it meant. That is the right attitude. His coming is certainly near. May we rise each

morning with this thought: *perhaps He may come to-day*; and may we so purify ourselves in holiness before Him that our unchecked response may gladly be: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."