

The Temple of God and Its Worship

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In the two temples, that at Jerusalem in the old dispensation, and that of the Spirit in the new, we see a meaning in everything within them. Heb. 9: 8, 9 gives us notice of this touching the sanctuary, and shows the character of the service there; the veil being constantly down to forbid the access of the worshipper into the presence of God, or holy of holies, was the figure for the time then present. It exhibited the character of that dispensation which never, with the sacrifices it provided, gave the sinner confidence, or purged the conscience — never brought him near as a worshipper. We see the same significance in the New Testament temple; everything said of it has a voice which tells us of the time now present, and exhibits the character of the dispensation in which we are, as clearly as the other did. In proof of this, I would look at 1 Cor. 11, where from ver. 17 (and down to the close of 1 Cor. 14) the apostle is treating of the ordinances and worship of the house of God, or the New Testament temple. This chapter, in its latter half, assumes the saints to be in assembly or church order, and in looking at their order as detailed here, several objects strike our notice.

First, we see men and women seated together. This tells of their equal and common interest in Christ, where there is neither male nor female, as we read here, "For neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord"; for, personally considered, they have the same standing in the church of God.

Secondly, we see the man uncovered, and the woman covered. This tells us of their difference mystically considered, as we read here, "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man" (8th and 9th verses). And these two things are true, not only of Adam and Eve, but of Christ and the church, so that in the assembly — where she is not permitted "to speak" (1 Cor. 14: 34), or when prophesying, which she may do elsewhere (Acts 21: 9) — the woman is to carry the sign of subjection (i.e. the covered head) Gen. 24: 65, and the man to appear without it, thus mystically setting forth "Christ and the church."

Thirdly, in the next place we see the Supper spread. This tells why the saints have come together, and the character of the dispensation into which the church is now brought; for it shows us the veil is gone. The blood of Jesus has rent it, and been brought in its stead. The table tells us of the Paschal Lamb and of the feast of unleavened bread upon it, and thus of the full remission of sins, and also of the exercise of self-judgment; and these are just what the church enjoys and observes till the Lord comes.

Thus these features in the assembly have all their signification. And, in this manner, the assembly of saints formed the New Testament temple of living stones, and, thus raised, is a blessed testimony to the time now present. Every object tells us of its character; we look into the assembly of saints, and see the great truths of the present age reflected as in a glass, just as in the sanctuary under the law there was a figure of the things then present.

All this is clear and simple; but in further meditation on the subject, observe that there is still more meaning in the covering of the woman in the congregation than I noticed before (1 Cor. 11: 5, 6). This power of covering on the head is primarily to be regarded as signifying that subjection which the woman owes the man, who is her head, or the subjection which the church owes her Lord. Power, or covering on the head, was the sign of that, and therefore was suitable to the woman in the congregation,

because without it she thus dishonoured the man, who is her head (ver. 5).

But there is more than that, for the apostle adds, that if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn or shaven, which he then says would be a shame to her (ver. 6). What was the shame of which the shaven or shorn state of a woman's head was the confession? This must be determined by a reference to the Law, and under it we find two occasions on which the woman was shaven, or uncovered. First, when she was a suspected wife (Num. 5). Secondly, when she had lately been taken captive and was bewailing her father's house, not yet united to the Jew who had taken her in battle (Deut. 21). This shaven state of a woman thus expressed showed that she was not enjoying either the full confidence, or the full joy, of a husband.

Now the woman ought not to appear with such marks on her; for the church ought not to be seen as though she were suspected by Christ, or still felt herself a sorrowing captive. This would be her shame! But the covering on her head shows the church to be in neither of these states, but, on the contrary, happy in the affection and confidence of Christ; and this is as it should be — this is her glory.

Thus the woman covered in the assembly shows out the two things touching the church — the church's present happy honourable estate with Jesus, as well as her entire subjection to Him as her Lord — i.e. both owning Him as Lord, and enjoying the cherishing presence of Christ, which puts away the sense of captivity; while on the other hand the uncovered head would be a denial of both — a dishonour to the man, and a shame to the woman, and it would bear a false witness to angels, who are learning the deep mysteries of Christ from the church (Eph. 3; 1 Cor. 9). Christ was seen of them first (1 Tim. 3: 16). They marked and attended His whole progress from the manger to the resurrection; and now they are learning from the church and mark her ways, and if the woman in the assembly were to appear uncovered, the angels would be learning the lesson incorrectly. The shorn head of the woman would have done for the dispensation of the Law; for then the sense of captivity was not gone, the spirit of bondage was yet in the worshipper, kindredness in the flesh was not then fully forgotten; but now "we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit," as being joined to the Lord, and there is liberty and not bondage.

With this little view of the temples, let us consider the worship which might fill them. True worship, like true knowledge of God, flows from the revelation of Him, for man by wisdom knows not God. Worship, to be true, must be according to that revelation which God has made of Himself, and this I would trace a little through Scripture.

Abel was a true worshipper; his worship or offering was according to faith — i.e. according to revelation (Heb. 11). The firstlings of his flock which he offered were in view of the bruised Seed of the woman, and according to the coats of skins with which the Lord God had clothed his parents.

Noah followed Abel, and also worshipped in the faith of the woman's bruised Seed; he took his new inheritance only in virtue of blood (Gen. 8: 20); he was therefore a true worshipper — worshipping God as He had revealed Himself.

Gen. 12: 7; here we see Abraham following in their steps, a true worshipper. I might observe that there is strikingly an absence of self-will in Abraham; he believed God, and what was told him; he went out as he was commanded; he worshipped as then was revealed to him.

Isaac, precisely in the track of Abraham, worshipped the God who had appeared to him, not effecting to be wise and thus becoming a fool, but in simplicity of faith and worship, like Abraham, raising his altar to the revealed God (Gen. 26: 24, 25).

Jacob was a true worshipper. The Lord appears to him in his sorrow and degradation, in the

misery to which his own sin had reduced him, thus revealing Himself as the One in whom mercy rejoiceth against judgment; and he at once owns God as thus revealed to him, and this God of Bethel was his God to the end (Gen. 48: 15, 16). Here was enlarged revelation of God, and worship following such revelation, and that is true worship.

The nation of Israel was to be a worshipper. God had revealed Himself to Israel in a varied way — He had given them the law of righteousness, and also shadows of good things to come. By the one He had multiplied transgressions, and the other provided the remedy: and the worship of Israel was according to this. There was an extreme sensitiveness to sin, with burdens to allay it, which they were not able to bear, and thus the spirit of bondage and fear was gendered. Israel had thus become increasingly acquainted with the good and evil, and their worship was accordingly. The tabernacle or temple where all the worship went on as the established worship might still be set aside, because it was not the perfect thing, and God might show out the better if He pleased in spite of it; and so He did on various occasions. Witness Gideon, Manoah, and David.

Gideon worshipped according to a new revelation of God in spite of Shiloh and the tabernacle; his rock became the ordered place, or the anointed altar, just because of this revelation and command of God (Judges 6: 14-26). Manoah turns what he had supposed a repast into a sacrifice, because the Lord had revealed His wish that it should be so (Judges 13: 15, 19). David at the bidding of the Lord turns from the ordained or consecrated altar to another, which was in the unclean inheritance of a Gentile, where, however, as at Bethel of old, mercy had rejoiced against judgment, and where accordingly God had built Himself another house. "This is the house of the Lord God," says David (1 Chr. 22). Thus, then, these three instances were cases of true worship, though manifestly a departure from God's own established worship.

The healed leper was a true worshipper, though in like manner he departed from the established, the divinely established, order, just because without a command he apprehended God in a new revelation of Himself (Luke 17: 11-19). The healing had a voice to the ear of faith, for it was only the God of Israel who could heal a leper (2 Kings 5: 7). This was more excellent even than the same kind of faith in Gideon, Manoah, or David.

II.

The church of God is a true worshipper on exactly the same grounds, worshipping according to God's enlarged revelation of Himself. The true worshippers now are those whom the Father in His grace has sought and found, and their worship proceeds on this — that the Son has revealed the Father to them, and they have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This is still, like all the other cases of worship in truth, because of God's revelation of Himself.

But there is something beyond this in the present worship of the church; it is "in spirit and truth" (John 4: 21-24), as well as "by the Spirit of God" (Phil. 3: 7), because the Holy Ghost has been given us that we may so worship, enabling the saints to call God "Father" and Jesus Christ "Lord." There is now communicated power, as well as revelation for the ends of worship. The worshippers are sons, and also priests (Gal. 4: 6; Rev. 1: 6); having access with filial confidence they are in the holy place — the brazen altar (the remembrance of sin) behind them, and the fulness of God disclosed, and all that must be for blessing. Everything is told to the worshippers now, for the second veil is rent before them, and they see their Father on the mercy-seat, on the throne of the sanctuary; the blood of the Son has introduced them there, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost makes them to worship in a way worthy of such a sanctuary; and the Father seeking such to worship Him does not rest on anything short of this, which thus the confidence and love and honour of children give Him. Such is worship, I judge, "in

spirit and truth," for thus it is where it is according to revelation, and in the grace of the Holy Spirit.

But its materials or its form may be very different, as we may further notice; for, properly and simply understood, it is rendering glory to God in the sanctuary, according to His own revelation of Himself. Many things may gather around it or accompany it, but which are not so properly and simply worship. Abel worshipped when he laid his lamb on the altar, though that was very simple; but it was enough, for it was meeting God in the appointed way, and owning His glory.

So did Abraham worship when he raised an altar to God, who appeared to him (Gen. 12: 8). Israel worshipped when they bowed the head at God's revelation by Moses (Ex. 4: 30, 31; 12: 27); as Moses did at another revelation (Ex. 34: 8). So David worshipped (2 Sam. 12: 20). And so Solomon's congregation (2 Chr. 7: 3) and Jehoshaphat's (2 Chr. 20: 18) worshipped; and though it be not so called, yet Jacob's anointing the pillar at Bethel was worship, because it was owning God according to His revelation; and so David's "sitting before the Lord" was worship, I judge, on the same principle (2 Sam. 7). Job worshipped when he fell down in subjection to God's dealings with him. Eliezer worshipped when he bowed his head, for in that act he owned the divine goodness to him (Gen. 24: 26, 52). The nation of Israel worshipped when they presented their basket of first-fruits, for their basket told God of His own gracious ways — set forth His praises in the sanctuary (Deut. 26). The appearing of the males at the three annual feasts in "the city of the great King" was worship, for such feasts set forth God's own gracious acts and ways, and that is worship. What were all these acts but the thankful acknowledgment of God, according to what He had either done or spoken, and the acceptance of His mercy accordingly?

It appears to me that the congregation of the Lord should enter the sanctuary of the Lord now with like worship — with the purpose of showing forth God's praise — the virtues or praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light — the praises which He has earned for Himself by His own blessed acts and revelations — and this is done in breaking of bread with thanksgiving, according to His ordinance. That is the service which sets forth what God has done, declaring that He has provided a remedy for sin. It is a remembrance, not of sins, like the legal sacrifices (Heb. 10: 3), but a remembrance of "Me," says Jesus, and consequently of sins put away. Thus it is, an act of worship, or a giving to God His own proper glory — the glory of His acts and revelations. To pray about the forgiveness of sins would be discord with the table; it would be (quite unintentionally, it might be) a reproach upon the Sacrifice of the Son of God; it would be building again the things that Christ had destroyed; and, in the language and sense of Gal. 2, making Him the minister of sin — making His blood, like the blood of bulls and goats, only the remembrance of sins, and not the remitter of sins.

But to surround the table with thanksgiving, and wait on the feast with praise for redemption, this would be honouring the work of the Lamb of God which the feast sets forth, and, accordingly, it is always as thus accompanied that Scripture presents it to us. Jesus, in taking the bread and the cup, "gave thanks" (Matt. 26, Mark 14, Luke 22). He did nothing else. The words blessing and giving thanks are, to all moral intent, used in the same sense; and, in the like mind, the apostle calls it "the cup of blessing which we bless," because by that cup, or by that death and blood-shedding of Jesus which it sets forth, He has richly entitled Himself to praise. It may be accompanied with confession of sin, for such confession would not be in discordance with this supper. But still we do not find that alluded to in any passages which refer to the Supper; by them it takes the simple form of being a Eucharistic feast, or a season of thanksgiving for the remission of sins. It says (at least the table has this voice in it) — "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts: let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." Yet, surely, the service of self-

judging and self-examination may well precede this feast.

In due order the covered women and the uncovered men appear before the Lord, and they break bread (1 Cor. 11). This is taking the place the Lord has called them to, and this, therefore, publishes His name and praise, and that is giving Him the glory He has so blessedly earned; so to speak, it is like Israel presenting their basket. It is like bowing the head at the revelation of His mercy.

The service is Eucharistic. It is a feast upon a sacrifice. It is the Father's house opened upon the prodigal's return. And this is our proper worship, for it is "in truth," according to the revelation, according to that perfect provision which our God has made for our sins in the gift and sufferings of Jesus.

Accordingly, when the first disciples came together, it was to this act of worship or service (Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 10, 11). Other things may gather round it or accompany it, but this was their worship; this brought them to the sanctuary — this was their business there. I find in Deut. 26 that other things might accompany the worship, for after Moses directs them as to their basket, he tells them about confession and prayer. So Moses prayed after his worship in Ex. 34: So the elders ate and drank in God's presence, which was properly their communion or worship. But Moses had previously spoken to them about the covenant (Ex. 24), as in Acts 20 the disciples came together to "break bread," but Paul addressed a long discourse to them; as also, at the first institution of the supper, the Lord gathered His disciples purposely for the supper, but He teaches them about other things also, and ere they separate they sing a hymn; and most significantly is the same thing conveyed to us in 1 Cor. 11 and 14, where the house of God, or place of present worship, is widely opened to us.

For there the apostle shows the disciples mystically, and duly covered and uncovered, in the worship, a service of breaking of bread. He clearly tells us it was for that end they had met together. But then he considers "spirituals" (1 Cor. 12: 1). He considers what may accompany worship — the calling upon Jesus, or the ministry of the word in the life and power of the Holy Ghost given to the saints — and thus he unfolds the sanctuary and its actions and furniture, showing what the worship itself was, and then what might duly attend upon it. In 1 Tim. 2 we get directions as to the further service of the saints in the assembly — that prayer and intercession, as wide and free as the grace that had rescued themselves, should mark their union and fill God's living temple. But still this intercession is not simply and properly worship. Their worship was still the breaking of bread, because that was the act which set forth God's praise, or gave Him the glory of His present acts and dealings with them and for them, and that was what brought them together. The giving of alms also duly accompanied the worship, as prayer and ministry of the word may; but, in like manner, it is simply an accompaniment, like the releasing of the prisoner at the feast.

The two things are presented distinctly in Abraham's history. He is a worshipper at his altar. But then we hear no supplication addressed to God by him. He is a suppliant about Sodom, and there we see no altar (Gen. 18: 23). This is very plain, clearly defining the character of worship, and showing that the breaking of bread is clearly the service of the sanctuary now, whatever else may enter with it. For God is to be worshipped according to Himself (John 4), and the taking of anything as authority in religion but what is from Him mutilated worship, as the Lord told the Jews in Matt. 15 (of which principle Deut. 12 is a further witness)* Clearly man is not to determine his own ways as a worshipper. Willingness in worship is right; wilfulness destroys it all. Of their own voluntary will they brought their offerings (Lev. 1: 3; 7: 16); but this was to be done as and where the lord willed. So with us; we are to worship "in spirit," that is most true — and in the grace and liberty of the Holy Spirit which is given to us; but we are to worship "in truth" also, according to God's revelation of Himself and of His worship.

This I have already spoken of. The maintenance of groves and high places in Israel was always the witness that the people had not duly prepared their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, the only true God, who had set His name at Jerusalem (2 Chr. 14: 3; 2 Chr. 15: 17; 2 Chr. 17: 6; 2 Chr. 19: 3; 2 Chr. 20: 33).

*And a striking Scripture it is. Here the Lord of Israel tells Moses that He would Himself choose a place to record His name, and to that place alone the people were to bring their offerings, and not only to the place chosen by the Lord, but according to the manner *prescribed* by Him, they were to worship. They were not to imitate the worship of the nations, but to render their worship according to God's own word, or "in truth" (ver. 29-32).

On the subject of worship, I would still add that joy and a spirit of thankfulness and liberty have characterised it at all times. Adam's enjoyment of the garden and its fruits was worship. Israel's presentation of the basket and their keeping of the feasts was worship, and what gladness and thanksgiving suited such occasions! The saints surrounding the table of the Lord is worship now; and the spirit of filial confidence, of thanksgiving and of liberty, should fill them. All these acts of worship at different times were marked by joy in different orders, for surely a God of love is a God of joy. J. G. B.