

## ADVENT LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT.

## WORSHIP.

"The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thine heart and with all thy might."—DEUT. VI. 4, 5.

THE Old Testament was designed as a preparation for the New. This it could do only by establishing firmly the same principles of morality and religion which were to find their full development in the system for which it was a preparation. To train men in different principles would have been not to prepare but to unfit them for what was to succeed.

It is my desire at this season to draw your thoughts towards some of those features of the Hebrew religion in which it was preparatory to the Christian. We may thus see how from of old our Lord's way was made ready, and by His grace be ourselves the more ready now to walk in the same way. To-day let us inquire what the Old Testament teaches as to the principles of Divine worship. The worship of God is the highest employment of every rational being, and his first duty, and inasmuch as the object of worship is One and Unchangeable, the nature of the worship which is acceptable to Him must be always the same.

Two questions present themselves, to both of which the text supplies satisfactory answers.

1. What is the inward spirit of worship?
2. What in general outlines should be its outward form?

I.—The text lays down as a principle the unity of God, and from that, together with the truth of His spirituality which is ever joined to it, we are taught that our worship must be *spiritual* and must consist of the complete devotion of *all* our powers to the service of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might." The pervading principle of worship therefore is love, which is essentially inward and spiritual. It is the homage of the heart to God. And in it are offered to God all the powers, both moral and intellectual, to find in Him in whom they originated, their highest object, their only full satisfaction. When, therefore, our Lord taught that the true worshipper should worship in spirit and in truth, He was enforcing a principle which was not new, but which He Himself, the Eternal Word, had taught long before in that older revelation which came from Him as truly as did the later. And we must remember that however elaborate was the ritual of the Hebrews, their worship was not unspiritual, but deeply and truly spiritual; and this spirituality showed itself in the deep reverence which breathed through every ceremony and every act of that ancient worship.

II.—We come now to consider the outward form of worship, and what has just been said suggests the first and most essential requisite of all legitimate ritual, viz., *Reverence*. Every act, posture, word, and look of the worshipper should express the reverence of his whole being for the Creator of all things, the God of the spirits of all flesh, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Add to this the consideration that the "thou" of the text does not address the individual Hebrew merely, but rather the covenant people idealized and personified, and you have the idea of united or common worship—the whole redeemed people

with one heart and one mind worshipping the one God. If we are to follow the lead of the Hebrew Church, Christian worship ought to be offered by Christian men united in brotherly sympathy with each other by their filial love and reverence towards God. As individuals and as families we are bound to worship God; and I may observe in passing that I can see no reason why private or family prayer should be less reverential than public. It is the same God that we worship everywhere, and the duty of reverence does not arise from the place where we worship but from the relation in which we stand to the Being whom we worship. In like manner it seems to me that if we are to speak at all of degrees of sacredness in different acts of worship we should do so with great caution. If we speak for instance of the Holy Communion as the highest act of the Church's worship we must be careful to remember that there is no part of the Church's worship that is not offered to God, and that we have no right to offer Him less than our best; and, therefore, have no excuse for being less thoughtful, collected, and reverent at other services than we try to be at Holy Communion.

To return, however; we find the largest recognition of the principle of *common worship* among the Hebrews—in the Temple services, in the feasts, and, in later times, in the worship of the Synagogues. For this common worship the Hebrews had an elaborate system of ritual. This was partly enjoined in the law of Moses, as, for example, the ritual relating to the services and the great feasts. It was in part also of later growth. The service of praise was organized in the time of David, and developed in still later times; and the Synagogues, with their liturgical worship, are also of later growth. But all these, whether earlier or later, were divinely authorized, and all are in harmony with the fundamental principle of the spirituality of worship. The system, as such, is not binding now; and the sacrifices, and many rites which were local or temporary in their reference, are distinctly abrogated or rather superseded. But certain principles underlying the system cannot be superseded because they have their roots in human nature as God made it.

Among these, after the general principles of reverence toward God and brotherly sympathy among ourselves, I give the first place to the use of *symbolism* in worship. While the animal sacrifices were of course symbolic, symbolism was by no means dependent on them for its existence nor could it in the nature of things be abolished with them. If there is to be an *outward* worship it must be *symbolic of the inward*; and our Lord Himself has expressly sanctioned the principle by His institution of the two Sacraments. Herein the Church has followed His example. The use of the sign of the cross in Baptism and the custom of kneeling for the reception of the Holy Communion are symbolical acts which the Church has enjoined and which carry their own explanation with them. The like may be said of the custom of bowing at the name of our Lord in the Creed—an acknowledgment of His Godhead which we cannot afford to omit in days when there are so many who openly deny the Lord who bought them.

(2) Another point of great moment is that the worship of the Jews was throughout *liturgical* both in the Temple and in the Synagogue. There were set forms of prayer and praise appointed for set times, and in a definite order. This method was apparently adopted as the most direct and effective means of securing the two essentials, reverence and union, both of which are certainly easier attained when all is arranged before hand than when all is left to the exigencies of the moment. However originated, the system had the sanction of our Lord's conforming to it, for it is evident that He joined in the worship of the Synagogue as well as in the great national rites which were celebrated in the Temple; and it was from the Synagogue that the germs at least of liturgical worship were introduced into the Church, so that as a

matter of fact the Christian Church has in this learned from the Jewish.

(3) All the *science and art* of the times were moreover made *subsidiary* to worship. The highest efforts of the architect, of the wood carver, of the embroiderer, of workers in all kinds of metals, were put forth to make the House of God beautiful. Music, vocal and instrumental, was the hand-maid of praise. The poetry of the Hebrews was all sacred, and was brought to a degree of perfection which has since been rarely equalled, and never surpassed. So still in our own days, skill and genius, wealth and culture, if they be godly, must present their costliest offerings to God.

(4) All external worship among the Hebrews, whether enjoined by special Divine command, or the spontaneous growth of the religious spirit, were in harmony with the whole life of the people, with all their customs and modes of thought; and worship was, therefore, among them the consecration of common life, individual and national. It was as natural to the religious Hebrew to express his devotion in the ritual of his faith as it was to speak in the Hebrew tongue. Here is another lesson for us, the full comfort of which, perhaps, none of us have yet practically appreciated. Our ritual should be to our religious life, and to the sum total of our life what the Hebrew ritual was to Hebrew life. That it may be so we must not strive to revive the details of Hebrew worship, but in the spirit of the Hebrews to worship the Lord with holy worship suited to our own times and surroundings; neither is it our business to imitate mediæval or even primitive forms, save in so far as these are suited to be to us what they were to those who used them. To retain ancient customs that are understood, makes worship solemn; to revive them when they have been forgotten, will often serve only to make it seem to be something quite apart from daily life instead of being the consecration of daily life. As our predecessors gave all their best, so we must give all our best. When we have given wealth and skill, and culture and thought, and feeling—have made art and science the hand-maids of religion, we can only say, 'Of Thine own have we given Thee.'—*Selected.*

## News from the Home-Field.

### Diocese of Nova Scotia.

#### Yarmouth.

The induction of Rev. T. S. Cartwright into the rectorship of Holy Trinity Church took place on Wednesday when interesting services were held. After the induction a reception was held in the School Room, which was largely attended. Appropriate addresses were made by Mr. E. M. Viets, Warden; Hon. J. E. Baker, Mr. T. B. Flint, M. P., the Rector, and Rev. Messrs. Filleul, How and Ambrose.

#### Lockeport.

It is with the most sincere regret that we have to record the departure of I. E. Richardson, Esq., and family from this parish; they having been intimately associated with all branches of Church work for many years. As church warden and Sunday School Superintendant, Mr. Richardson evinced the deepest interest in the prosperity of the Church. Being liberal and generous to a fault, his removal is a misfortune which we deplore. As President of the Ladies Sewing Society, Mrs. Richardson was ever to the front in every department of Church work, her cheerful and bright example doing much to cheer and encourage when affairs seemed dark and gloomy. As a teacher in the Sunday School, and occupy-