True Worship

BY JOHN A. BROADUS, D. D.

"But the hour cometh, and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."—John 4: 23, 24.

Jesus was tired. His humanity is just as important to us as his divinity. He had been doing that which always fatigues. He had walked and worked to win man to God. That is hard work. The disciples had gone ahead to buy food. The Master rests by Jacob's well. He rouses up to do good. He sees an opportunity—a lone woman of no favorable surroundings. He brought her to God. This good deed affected all the town. It has gone on doing good through all the ages. This incident, so full of instruction gives an instance of the power of introducing religion into ordinary conversation; for Christian people this is a faculty to be desired—the tact to introduce religion into conversation. This woman came to draw water. Jesus tells of spiritual refreshment. She had no deep sense of personal sin. How delicately he managed to remind her of her own sinful life. Ah, the trouble of all troubles is, the world does not feel its sinfulness. Again there came to her the thought that he was a prophet then the idea of worship, as she looked back from Jacob's well at Mount Gerizim. She speaks of the fathers worshiping in that mountain, and the Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where man ought to worship. Jesus spoke to her the words of our text.

Let us think awhile on that important theme of Jesus. Why should we worship God? How should we worship God? Why? Many of you are convinced that you ought to worship. There are two comprehensive reasons for worshiping: It is due to God; it is good for us. The German philosopher says: "Two things awaken sublimity within me: The starry heavens and the man's moral nature." Why not worship him who made them both? High heaven is but a thin reflection of the power and glory of God, and the moral nature of man is but a broken image of the character of God. We should adore God for the glory of his works. We should adore him for his holiness. We admire holiness. The worst man in Louisville, God knows who he is, sometimes admires goodness. Oh! shall we not admire the goodness of God, the high, sinless and pure Intelligence around whom angels cry, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty? There is something in you and me that responds to the thought of God's goodness. There are strange longings in our natures. How low we can fall, how high aspire. I have had moments of sympathy with those in Asia who bow to the sun to be risen in splendor, and we may sympathize with those who indulge in hero worship. All these are trifling. None can meet the ideal of our nature but the Son of God. "Thou hast made us for thyself," says great Augustine.

Then worship expresses our dependence. How helpless we feel at times. The earth is rolling around with us and whirling along with us. We cannot help ourselves; we want to look higher, and again worship soothes our sorrows. I appeal to the experience of many here who have gone to places of worship troubled and came away soothed. And worship strengthens us to bear the burdens of life. Earth's burdens are sometimes terrible. What are we, flesh and blood, that we should slight God's help? Worship makes deeper the root of morality. There are surface roots, but the tape-root of morality is the fear of God. What would become of our happiness, our poverty, our lives, if everybody in Louisville ceased to worship God? My friends, you who do not worship regularly, consider, I pray you, how much you love your friends, your community, your age, your own soul, and worship regularly.

The other question: How shall we worship God? The text says in spirit and in truth. God is the Spirit; spiritual worship is essentially independent of any locality. Under the old dispensation, the childhood of our race, there was the picture-book system, symbolic places; now we are to worship anywhere, everywhere. We err when we apply the terms of the old temple worship to our modern places of worship. You can't have a holy house according to the New Testament idea. You can dedicate a house, you cannot consecrate. The only thing you can consecrate is a life. Why then do we have special places for worship? Principally for convenience. And there is a great power of association in the human mind.

Again, spiritual worship must subordinate to itself all the externals it may employ. Spiritual worship must have externals. I knew a man who said there was no use of spoken prayer, that a man might think his prayer.

But God has to express himself in spirit and in word; so much we express the inward by the outward. Externals must be subordinate. The beautiful features in architecture, in music, in style of speech, are natural expressions of spiritual worship; but the moment we appeal to them as merely gratifying taste, we do harm. It is difficult to prevent this. Think a moment; there are some men who, under the influence of drink or opium, feel religious and talk maudlin morality, yet so use these as religious influences would be outrageous. People say it would be well to use pictures and statuary as religious influences in church, and in spite of the ten commandments a large portion of Christianity do this. They say pictures of the life of Christ and the crucifixes, help to bring them to the Saviour. Ah, the soul is dragged down from Christ to the crucifix. The same is true in regard to architecture, flowers, in the pulpit, eloquence in the pulpit, charming music. So I expect all who preach in this pulpit to preach in the spirit and in the truth. I exhort all who sing in the choir, sing with the spirit and the understanding. Singing is a beautiful gift. It is a dangerous help to worship—danger that the singer may think of self, or that the audience may think of the performance. Singers, sing as in the sight of God, who searches hearts; worshipers, put your heart into all your worship. Then shall ye bring blessings to your souls and bless those about you. Have a tone of spiritual hospitality. Bring the glow of household hospitality to your church. Warm the stranger's heart who may enter. He may come again and become the pillar of the church. When the candidate is buried in the baptismal water, confessing Christ, be as solemn as at a real burial. When you gather at the table with the bread and wine, try to put your soul in solemn remembrance. When burial processions sweep down the aisles and you see happy faces, pray God's blessing upon them. And when the coffin comes with its sorrowing scene, pray to the Great Comforter to heal the aching hearts. Let all things in this house be worship in spirit and in truth to God, the Spirit and Truth.

We send our children to school to train for college, and these train for the greater school of life. Oh, that our worship in the flesh would better enable us to enter the higher, sublimer, delightful worship of heaven.

"Oh, that with yonder sacred throng,
We at his feet may fall;
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown him Lord of all."

—*Pulpit Treasury.*

Cackling.

I saw some time ago a remark of Spurgeon's to this effect: "Brethren, do all the good you can, but don't cackle." I thought at first that that was good advice. I read it to one who is more familiar with feathered cackling and their habits than I am, and she said: "I don't agree with Spurgeon. I like to hear the hens cackle, especially when eggs are worth forty cents a dozen. Why, our barnyard, these pleasant mornings, is fuller of music than a hand-organ. By the cackles I can count up eggs enough to pay for the family groceries, and that's a great comfort these hard times. And it kind of seems to me as it when one hen cackles the other hens think: 'Well, she has laid an egg, and I ought to lay one too. Our mistress fed us both this morning, and why shouldn't I pay her as well as that cackling Shanghai?' So I reckon that we get more eggs than if each hen just laid her egg and didn't make any fuss over it. And as to people telling about what they do, or about what the Lord does for them, that is sometimes a means of grace to them and to others. He who made the hens to cackle made us to talk, and what better can we find to talk about than the good we are trying to do, and the blessing we receive in doing it? Don't you know what Malachi says: 'Then that feared the Lord spake often one to the other, and the Lord hearkened and heard it.' He didn't call it cackling. He loved to listen to Christian sociability; and for my part, I wish we had a great deal more of it. I have heard old Mother Brown tell the story of her conversion, and how she prayed and prayed for the conversion of her drunken husband, until the Lord converted him, too. Yes, I've heard that story over twenty times, and yet I like to hear it. Most Christians nowadays have such a 'sense of propriety' as they call, that they can't say a word about their own experience, and may be that is the reason they haven't much religious experience any way."

I think that the criticism of the London preacher was more than half right. No man of the present generation has done more cackling than Spurgeon himself. And we don't complain of him for it. We are always glad to hear what he and his church are doing. But we want him to let us cackle, too, when an egg has been laid, even if it is not as big at the Tabernacle eggs. We want to know that the toiling frontier missionary has reaped a few sheaves from the good seed which he sowed in the hard soil of the wilderness and watered with his tears. It does him good "Yes, a thousand times yes," says the heart supremely consecrated to Jesus Christ, cheered by the "hundred fold in this life, and in the life to come life everlasting" of the Master.

Our author spared himself the apprehended family and social ostracism, and while conceding that "immersion is valid baptism," whereupon let us all draw a long breath of relief, he declares "that for myself (himself) I (he) will have none of it."

Convinced, if at all, thus evidently against his will, he shores himself up by a show of reasons that have not even a "sprinkling" of strength; of which this is one:

"John the Baptist did not go down to the Jordan to immerse the people in the Jordan, but because the Jordan valley was a convenient place for the assembling of so many thousands." It is remarkable that the New Testament declarations on the subject, seem to have had so small an influence in determining the course of this Princeton student.

Whatever the multitudes did in "the Jordan Valley," it cannot be denied that there was a river there, and that Jesus was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him, who said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

The Lost Closet.

In the days gone by there was a place and a time very full of blessedness. You can remember the little room whose door you locked while you gathered its stillness and calm around you. You remember the chair before which you knelt. What scenes of glory and of blessedness in your soul's life were witnessed there!

You remember that day when a great joy came to you, and you knelt there and took the joy to God while you praised him for it. You remember that day when your first real grief swept over you and in your tears and through your sobs you said, "Thou knowest all, help me!" The great shadow was over you and the night and storm were around you, but there in that room you seemed to hear a voice which you recognized, saying, "It is I." It grew into a habit with you to go thither, and the hour that you had selected seemed to have a low call that you gladly answered, and you went in—it was to meet Some One there. If at any time you missed the visit to the place of prayer there was something wanting all day.

All this was long ago. Of late it has not been so with you. You do not much miss the closet now. You can go through all day and feel no special vacancy in your heart, except at times when there comes a sudden and sharp pang that makes you almost cry out for what is lost. But that is only for a moment, the rush and hurrying thoughts bear you on and away. You can go through the whole day and many days without any real prayer. You say your prayers night and morning, you say them hurriedly, but there is no hour and no place that now grows so sweet and solemn in its sweetness because you find it good to draw near to God. The closed door and the silence do not now bring hallowed thoughts. The closet has gone. Perhaps the room is there, but the prayers are away.

Perhaps you can remember—you can if you try—when the closet began to lose all that made it your meeting-place with God. You recall the growing reluctance to linger there in the effort which seemed necessary in making the moments go by, the more hurried praying. Perhaps were you willing to think of them you could recall the reasons for all this and the causes; the subtle influences which came in and made this pervading change in a place which once was so radiant and so dear.—*Rev. William Aikman, in N. Y. Observer.*

So Many Calls.

It was a brisk, clear evening, in the latter part of December, when Mr. Abeum returned from his counting-house to the comforts of a bright coal-fire and warm arm chair in his parlor at home. He changed his heavy boots for slippers, drew around him the folds of his evening gown, and then, lounging back in his chair, looked up to the ceiling, and about, with an air of satisfaction. Still there was a cloud on his brow. What could be the matter with Mr. Abeum? To tell the truth, he had that afternoon received in his counting-room the agent of one of the principal charities of the day, and had been warmly urged to double his last year's subscription and the urging had been pressed by statements and arguments to which he did not know well how to reply. "People think," soliloquized he to himself, "that I am made of money, I believe; this is the fourth object for which I have been requested to double my subscription and this year has been one of heavy family expenses—building and fitting up this house—carpets, curtains—no end of new things to be bought—I really do not see how I am to give a cent more in charity. Then there are the bills for the girls and boys; they all say they must have twice as much as before we came into this new house: wonder if I did right in building it?" —and Mr. Abeum glanced up and down the ceiling and around on the costly furniture, and looked into the fire in silence. He was tired, harrassed and drowsy; his head began to swim, and his eyes closed—he was asleep. In his sleep he thought he heard a tap at the door; he opened it; and there stood a plain, poor-looking man, who, in a voice singularly low and sweet, asked for a few moments conversation with him. Mr. Abeum asked him into the parlor, and drew him a chair near the fire. The stranger looked attentively around, and then, turning to Mr. Abeum, presented him with a paper.

"It is your last year's subscription to missions," said he; "you know all of the wants of that cause that can be told you. I called to see if you had anything more to add to it."

This was said in the same low and quiet voice as before; but, for some reason unaccountable to himself Mr. Abeum was more embarrassed by the plain, poor, unpretending man, than he had been in the presence of any one before. He was for some minutes silent before he could reply at all, and then, in a hurried and embarrassed manner, he began the excuses which had appeared so satisfactory to him the afternoon before—the hardness of the times, the difficulty of collecting money, family expenses, etc.

The stranger quietly surveyed the spacious apartment, with its many elegancies and luxuries, and without any comment took from the merchant the paper he had given, but immediately presented him with another.

This is your subscription to the "Tract Society." Have you anything to add to it? You know how much it has been doing, and how much more it now desires to do, if Christians would only furnish means. Do you not feel called upon to add to it? Something in the mild manner of the stranger restrained him, and he answered that although he regretted it exceedingly, his circumstances were such that he could not this year conveniently add to any of his charities.

The stranger received back the paper without any reply, but immediately presented in its place the subscription to the Bible Society, and in a few clear and forcible words reminded him of its well-known claims, and again reminded him to add something to his donation. Mr. Abeum became impatient.

"Have I not said," he replied, "that I can do nothing more for any charity than I did last year? There seems to be no end to the calls upon us in these days. At first there were only three or four objects presented, and the sums required were moderate. Now the objects increase every day; all call upon us for money; and all, after we have given once, want us to double and treble our subscriptions. There is no end to the thing; we may as well stop in one place as another."

The stranger took back the paper, rose, and fixing his eye upon his companion, said, in a voice that thrilled to his soul:

"One year ago to-night you thought your daughter lay dying; you could not sleep for agony. Upon whom did you call all that night?"

The merchant started and looked up. There seemed a change to have passed over the whole form of his visitor, whose eyes were fixed upon him with a calm, intense, penetrating expression, that awed and subdued him. He drew back, covered his face, and made no reply.

"Five years ago," said the stranger, "when you lay at the brink of the grave, and thought that if you died then you would leave a family of helpless children entirely unprovided for, do you remember how you prayed? Who saved you then?"

The stranger paused for an answer; but there was a dead silence. The merchant only bent forward as one entirely overcome, and rested his head on the seat before him.

The stranger drew yet nearer, and said, in a still lower and more impressive tone, "Do you remember, fifteen years since—that time when you felt yourself so lost, so helpless, so hopeless; when you spent days and nights in prayer, when you thought you would give the world for one hour's assurance that your sins were forgiven you? Who listened to you then?"

"It was my God and Saviour!" said the merchant, with a sudden burst of remorseful feeling. "O, yes, it was He!"

"And has He ever complained of being called upon too often?" inquired the stranger, in a tone of reproachful sweetness. "Say," he added, "are you willing to begin this night, and ask no more of Him, if He from this night will ask no more of you?"

"O, never, never!" said the merchant, throwing himself at the stranger's feet; but, as he spoke these words, the figure of his visitor seemed to vanish, and he awoke with his whole soul stirred within him.

"O, my Saviour! what have I been saying?" he exclaimed. "Take all—take everything! What is all that I have to what thou hast done for me."—*Nashville Advocate.*

Praising God.

If I were to put to you the question, "Do you pray?" the answer would be very quickly given by every Christian person, "Of course I do." Suppose I then added, "And do you pray every day?" the prompt reply would be, "Yes; many times in the day. I could not live without prayer." This is no more than I expect, and I will not put the question. But let me change the inquiry and say, "Do you bless God every day. Is praise as certain and constant a practice with you as prayer?" I am not sure that the answer would be quite so certain, so general, or so prompt. You would have to stop a little while before you gave the reply; and I fear, in some cases, when the answer did come, it would be, "I am afraid I have been negligent in praise." Well, then, dear friend, have you not been wrong? Should we omit praise any more than we omit prayer? And should not praise come daily and as many times in the day as prayer does? It strikes me that to fail in praise is as unjustifiable as to fail in prayer. I shall leave it with your own heart and conscience, when you have asked and answered the question, to see to it in the future that far more of the sweet frankincense of praise is mingled with your daily oblation of devotion.

Praise is certainly not at all so common in family prayer as other forms of worship. We cannot all of us praise God in the family by joining in song, because we are not all able to raise a tune; but it would be well if we could. I agree with Matthew Henry when he says, "They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; but they that pray and read and sing do best of all." There is a completeness in that kind of family worship which is much to be desired.

Whether in the family or not, yet personally and privately, let us endeavor to be filled with God's praise and with his honor all the day. Be this our resolve,—"I will extol thee, my God, O King; and I will bless thy name forever and ever. Every day I will bless thee; and I will praise thy name forever and ever."

Praise cannot be a second-class business; for it is due to God, and that in a very high degree. A sense of justice ought to make us praise the Lord; it is the least we can do, in return for the multiplied benefits which he bestows upon us. What, no harvest of praise for him who has sent the sunshine of his love and the rain of his grace upon us! What, no revenue of praise for him who is our gracious Lord and King! He doth not exact from us any servile labor, but simply saith, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." Praise is good and pleasant and delightful. Let us rank it among those debts which we would not wish to forget, but are eager to pay at once.

Praise is an act which is pre-eminently characteristic of the true child of God. The man who doth but pretend to piety will fast twice in the week, and stand in the temple and offer something like prayer; but to praise God with all the heart, this is the mark of true adoption, this is a sign and token of a heart renewed by divine grace. We lack one of the surest evidences of pure love to God if we live without presenting praise to his ever blessed name.

Praising God is singularly beneficial to ourselves. If we had more of it we should be greatly blessed. What would lift us so much above the trials of life, what would help us to bear the burden and heat of the day, so well as songs of praise unto the Most High? The soldier marches without weariness when the band is playing inspiriting strains; the sailor, as he pulls the rope or lifts the anchor, utters a cheery cry to aid his toil; let us try the animating power of hymns of praise. Nothing would oil the wheels of the chariot so well as more of the praising of God. Praise would end murmuring and nurse contentment. If our mouths were filled with the praises of God, there would be no room for grumbling. Praise would throw a halo of glory around the head of toil and thought. In its sunlight the commonest duties of life would be transfigured. Sanctified by prayer and praise, each duty would be raised into a hallowed worship akin to that of heaven. It would make us more happy, more holy, and more heavenly, if we would say, "I will extol thee, my God, O King."

Besides, unless we praise God here, are we preparing for our eternal home? There all is praise; how can we hope to enter there if we are strangers to that exercise? This life is a preparatory school, and in it we are preparing for the high engagements of the perfected. Are you not eager to rehearse the everlasting hallelujahs?—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

The Unseen Hand.

"Thank you very much, that was such a help to me," said a sick woman as she dropped exhausted on her pillow, after her bed had been made for her.

The friend to whom she spoke looked up in surprise. She had not touched the invalid, for she had feared to give pain, even by laying a hand upon her. She knew that the worn body was so racked with many pains, and had become so tender and sensitive, that the sick woman could not bear to be lifted or supported in any way. All that her friends could do was to stand quietly by.

"I did nothing to help you, dear. I wished to be of use, but I only stood behind, without touching you at all; I was afraid of hurting you."

"That was just it," said the invalid with a bright smile; "I knew you were there, and that if I slipped I could not fall, and the thought gave me confidence. It was of no consequence that I could neither see, hear nor feel you. I knew I was safe all the time, because you were ready to receive me into your arms if needful."

The sufferer paused a moment, and then, with a still brighter smile on her face she added:

"What a sweet thought this has brought to my mind! It is just the same with my heavenly Friend. 'Fear not, for I will be with thee,' is the promise, and thanks be to God, I know he is faithful that promised. I can neither see, hear, nor touch him with the mortal senses, but just as I knew you were behind, with loving arms extended, so I know that beneath me are the everlasting arms."

A PRAYER-BOOK.—The *Intelligencer* says: Great is the prayer-book. That it contains beautiful things everybody knows who is acquainted with it. But that it does not teach all those who are most familiar with it, even the ministers of the Episcopal Church, to really pray is quite apparent. The "Confessions of an Episcopalian," recently published in one of the monthly periodicals, gives the following instance: At the time of the Chicago fire our General Convention was in session in Baltimore. In the midst of the session one day, a delegate from Illinois rose to read the telegram which he had just received announcing that the city was in danger of utter destruction from the flames. Naturally, he moved that the convention interrupt its business and proceed to prayer. Unfortunately, however, there chanced to be no collect in the prayer-book for a burning city. What then could be done. Extemporize a prayer? Perish the thought that, in order to bring down help for a city wrapped in flames, the sacred order of the prayer-book should be disregarded! Still some prayer must be offered. So these assembled dignitaries, representing the combined wisdom of the church, went solemnly through the litany, which prays for well-nigh everything except a burning city; and then rose from their knees, feeling that, though Chicago might be burned to the ground, the majesty of the prayer-book had been duly honored.

"COME UNTO ME!"—No sweeter, richer, weightier words ever fell upon human ears or human hearts, than this short simple line—"Come unto Me." These words have pulsated on the atmosphere of this sin-cursed earth for more than eighteen centuries. He who uttered them was the Son of God and the Son of man. As God manifest in the flesh and yet as our elder brother, our burden-bearer, our Redeemer, he gives the broad invitation. It is addressed to everybody who is burdened with the intolerable load of sin. The law drives; Jesus draws. *All* who are heavy laden are called by this call of love.

Mr. Spurgeon says that he was once in a crowded court-room, when the Judge directed that a Mr. Brown should be called as a witness. The crier shouted out "Mr. Brown!" The name was passed out into the crowded lobby and to the street, "Brown—Brown." Presently a little insignificant man came pushing through the throng, and some one said, "Who are you?" He replied, "I am Brown." "Who is that?" "Nobody," replied the little man, "only that *I was told to come.*" So every human being that carries an immortal soul in his breast—be he a coal-heaver or a scullion—has a right to say, "I was told to." Jesus died on Calvary for this very purpose. The meaning of his last pathetic cry on the cross was—red emption is *finished*, and every sinner may come to be saved. Old School and New School, Calvinist and Wesleyan agree in this, that no man need perish for want of an atonement.—*Rev. T. L. Cuyler in Evangelist.*

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