

Divine Worship.

I.

On this most important subject the writer proposes writing several short papers, hoping they will be helpful to the readers of the K. D. M.:

First: Let us enquire "What is worship?" This question does not admit of as easy an answer as some may think. The answer of most persons would be: "Divine worship is the offering of prayers and praises to God." This answer is quite correct, but the questions at once arise "In what way shall we best offer up to God prayers and praises?" and "What are the prayers and praises that are acceptable to Him?"

These questions compel us to go to the root of the matter in order that we may be able to answer them clearly and fully. To the root of the matter, then, let us go, seeking for firm foundations on which to build; for if we build on sand our building must collapse.

It pleased God in course of time (to speak in our human way) to create for His own pleasure and glory angels and men, as well as the heavenly and earthly homes in which He has placed them to dwell. Now all these creatures of God—al. God's creation—in heaven and on earth, were, when fresh from the hands of God, good and beautiful and perfect. There were different degrees of excellency; different heights of being; God's creatures differed as the stars in glory, but each was perfectly adapted for the position given to each, all were capable of accomplishing what they were created to accomplish.

The worlds spun round the suns in unchanging courses; the trees budded, blossomed and brought forth fruit; the animals joyously pursued their various occupations and followed their guiding instincts; man when first created reflected the glory of God and gave God full obedience; and the angels, created long before man, reverently and joyfully encircled God's Throne, doing Him loving homage and cheerfully performing the tasks entrusted to them.

But in course of time, we know, some of the angels fell; we are told little about how it happened, but that it did happen is most clearly revealed in Scripture: and we also know that through the envy and deceit of these fallen angels the whole race of man has fallen, so that although some of the angels remained unfallen no one of our race has stood untarnished.

In considering Divine worship, therefore, it will be necessary to consider the worship of God's fallen creatures apart from the worship of His un-fallen creatures; for you can well understand there must be a great difference, yea, gulf, between the two; and it need not surprise you to learn, if you do not already know it, that the worship of the one must be offered up in quite a different way from the worship of the other. I shall show you what I mean by and bye.

But, moreover, in taking up the subject of Divine worship, we must not pass by the worship of God's material, irrational creation, the sun, the moon and the stars, the sea, the beasts, the birds, the insects and so on, an endless list. For these too worship

God. Let us close this first paper by considering in what way it can be said that God is worshipped by His irrational creation.

For that this is the case Scripture plainly asserts. "Praise Him sun and moon" (says the Psalmist in "the 48th Psalm); praise Him all ye stars and "light: Praise Him all ye Heavens; and ye waters "that are above the Heavens; * * * Praise "the Lord upon earth: ye dragons and all deeps; "Fire and hail, snow and vapours, wind and storm, "*fulfilling His word*; Mountains and all hills; "fruitful trees and all cedars; Beasts and all cattle; "worms and feathered fowls." The Psalmist here calls on all God's irrational creation to praise God. Is this merely a poetical way of speaking, signifying some spiritual truths only, and not that in any real way all these things can praise God? Doubtless there is some spiritual teaching intended, but at the same time the Psalmist's words have a literal meaning. "How can that be?" you may ask. "How can things which cannot think nor speak, praise God?" You would not ask this question if you realized fully what praising God meant; the key to the answer lies in the 8th verse of the Psalm from which I have been quoting, in the expression "*fulfilling His word*." These words are a terse definition of praise or worship. When God's creatures fulfil His word, they worship Him. When, for, example, the earth revolves around its axis day after day, and encircles the sun year after year, never erring, never loitering, never failing, with undiminished vigor of motion, with motion smooth and beautiful, it is fulfilling God's word. It is doing what it was made to do; it is following perfectly God's laws laid down for its governance (involuntarily of course but yet fully); and by so doing it is manifesting forth God's wisdom and goodness, and is saying as far as it is capable of saying, "O, how wonderful is He who has created me, and has launched me forth in space, making strict laws to govern me and enabling me to obey these laws and to move so regularly, accurately and beautifully." And God gazing on the earth and on all His irrational creations, performing in every detail what is His will (in how wonderful a way, all who study nature know), asserts, "Behold it is very good;" and at sight of it all God's creatures learn more and more about God's wisdom, so that it causes all the sons of God to shout for joy.

Thus does God's inanimate and irrational creation really praise Him; and these are no mere empty words that we sing when we say, "O all ye "works of the Lord: bless ye the Lord: praise Him "and magnify Him for ever." Of course, as I have said, this worship of God's irrational creatures is involuntary and unconscious and irrational. God has given them no wills, no spirits, no minds; but yet by fulfilling God's word they really (although unconsciously) do praise Him, and that perfectly, their praise being up to their ability. Yet we must remember this worship of God's irrational creation is not so high a worship or as pleasing to God as the worship of His rational creatures, for the higher the creature the more full, high and excellent a worship is it capable of offering to God.

In our following papers we shall go on to consider the worship of God's rational creatures.