

WORSHIP IN RELATION TO THE ALIEN

The amount of uncertainty and hesitancy manifested by many brethren upon this subject is sufficient reason to justify an attempt to educe the teaching of scripture upon it. Were an alien to ask "Have I the right to worship God?" a considerable number of brethren would be in doubt as to how to answer. That such uncertainty should exist is a matter to be lamented, and the question arises, Are the scriptures to blame? The writer thinks not, and considers that the fault lies with the brethren themselves in allowing ideas inherited from orthodoxy or the sympathies of the natural mind to obscure the clear line drawn by God between those who are in His son and those who are not.

Worship, like every other Bible subject, must be studied in the light of what God has spoken, and in that light only. Worship concerns God, and can be offered solely by His permission and decree. The necessity for viewing the matter from a divine standpoint is made apparent by remembering that Deity's ways are not man's ways. Those who fail to recognise this, who only behold things naturally, are not in a position to understand the Spirit's teaching. The diversity between the thinking of man and the thinking of God has been made exceedingly plain in the record given as concerning God's dealings with the human race. To cite a few illustrations: Israel was chosen to the exclusion of all other nations, man thinks the choice should not have been so exclusive; God has called the "foolish" and "weak," man considers it should have been the "wise" and "mighty"; alienation from the world is enjoined, man disputes the wisdom of the command; God's children are prohibited from avenging themselves, man regards this as cowardly and wrong. These few examples, and they might easily be multiplied, shew the tendency of human nature, as powerful to-day as in the past, against the deceptiveness of which it is the duty of everyone to be on the alert. God's commands are imperative; His teaching unquestionable. They are not to be doubted or ignored because contrary to our cherished instincts. Man is weak, short-sighted, and erring; God is Almighty and infallible—"Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world."

In entering upon our enquiry, we must have clearly before us man's capability, character, and condition, for God's estimate of these furnishes the key to the whole matter. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Of this we have abundant bible proof. Adam discovered it at the expense of his life; and the law of sin and death instituted at the time of the transgression has brought the lesson down to us. Man, by nature, is out of the way of understanding. His inclinations and predelections are sinwards. Apart from divine guidance the mind of man inevitably works in a way baneful to himself and displeasing to God. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Man is a strange phenomenon. Though wonderful in his construction, and endowed with high moral faculties, he is the cause of all the evil that obtains. God made man upright, but he has "sought out many inventions." Through rebellion at the outset of his career he became mentally and physically deranged, and alienated from divine favour and intercourse. In his present condition the scriptures define him as unclean, unsanctified, unjustified, unholy, dead in sins, as without "hope, and without God in the world" (1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 2:5-12.) And in this condition he must remain unless he avail himself of God's loving and merciful means of reconciliation, viz., union with Christ, the appointed "fountain" for "sin and for uncleanness" (Acts 2:38, 39; Eph. 2:13; Gal. 3:26, 29). There is no middle ground, a man must either be in Christ or without Christ. If the latter, then his position is that described in the terms just quoted—a position to which the statement (uninspired, but true) applies, "God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth."

It may be objected that this hard and fast way of looking at the matter excludes any distinction being made between the grossly infamous and those who endeavour to walk uprightly according to the light they possess. Without proper reflection, there may appear to be force in this objection, but ponder! God's ways are unfathomable. We are safe only where we have a, "thus saith the Lord," to guide us in our conclusions.

Analyse the worship of the alien, of what is it composed? Forgiveness of sins is asked for whilst the divinely appointed means for forgiveness is ignored. Help is supplicated to carry on the bible-nullifying work in which they are engaged. Thanks are given to God for assistance He is supposed to have rendered in this direction in the past. Prayer is made to Him to thwart the work of the saints. God's blessing is besought in order that wordly places may be secured and maintained—places which God has forbidden His children to fill. The Holy Spirit is petitioned as a personal being. Eternal life is not sought, because it is thought to be possessed. The peace of Jerusalem is overlooked. Christ's coming ignored. In brief, the worship is altogether

contrary to the divine requirements, viz., that they who call upon God, must call upon Him in truth, and according to His will. "In vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

It is imperative that we have before our minds the office Christ now holds as Mediator and Priest. Failing to grasp the nature and importance of the work he now performs, doubt must inevitably exist concerning the relation between man and his creator. Christ is the Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). Does he mediate for the whole world, or are there limitations? Paul answers. In writing to the Ephesians he shows that there was a time when they as Gentiles had no approach to Deity, when they were "without Christ" and "without God in the world," and that not until they had been made "nigh" in Christ, had they through him "access by one spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:12–18). This passage, brief though it is, sets forth the main features of this important subject. It teaches that the Father is inaccessible apart from Christ; that Christ, as the way, is open only to those who are no longer "strangers and foreigners," but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God (5:19). Christ is the "High Priest of our profession," and of that profession only (Heb. 3:1–6; 4:14; 9:24; 10:19–22; 1 Tim., 3:15). If thanks or praise be given, they are to be presented in Christ's name (Col. 3:17; Heb. 13:15). All wants are to be made known through Christ (Jno. 16:24). And it is through him also that remission of sins is to be sought (1 Jno. 2:1). This being so the thought suggests itself, if the saints require a mediator, how much more must the unimmersed! If sinful man can have direct intercourse with Deity, Christ's mediatorial work is superfluous. But unsanctified man cannot have this intercourse with God. The testimony upon the point is sure. Man can only reach Deity through his son. In Christ man is accounted perfect (Col. 1:22; 2:10; 1 Cor. 1:30; Hebrew 10:14; Eph. 1:6,) and this qualification is essential to give him a standing before God. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14.) Those in Christ have recognised the holiness of God and their own sinfulness, and have availed themselves of the only provision he has made for justification. Thus fulfilling the necessary principle set forth in the words "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh unto me."

The principles upon which God now acts in relation to worship are the basis of all the declarations contained in the law. With God there is no "variableness, neither shadow of turning." The recognition of God's inherent and incomparable holiness and man's uncleanness was enforced in the law repeatedly and emphatically. God's majesty and sanctity were kept continually in sight by an elaborate, involved, and peculiar system of ritual, in the observance of which he would alone be served and worshipped. Wilful disobedience or infringement of his appointments entailed death. Israel were given to understand unmistakably that their position as a favored people resulted from God calling them and not from them calling Him. Without circumcision and sacrifice, none could have any portion in Israel's commonwealth, nor be accounted holy or able to approach Deity. Peter draws an analogy between the Israelitish nation and the saints in this dispensation, and shows that the privilege of offering worship pertains only to a certain class—"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by (or through) Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5–9.) This last expression "acceptable to God by (or through) Jesus Christ" is deserving of special notice. Spiritual sacrifices (which include prayer and praise) are well-pleasing or acceptable when offered by those who are connected with Christ. The alien are not connected with Christ, and therefore, their sacrifices are not acceptable.

Christ, chosen by God, as was Aaron (Heb. 5:4), is the antitypical High Priest, purified and made meet for Deity's presence (Heb. 7:26–28), on the principles shadowed forth in Lev. 21:17–23, 16: 8:1–12. It was one of the high-priestly functions to carry into the presence of God the names of those for whom he appeared, viz., the children of Israel (Exod. 28:29.) This confirms the point already established that Christ appears for his people only.

The typical significance of the Golden Altar and incense likewise indicate the exclusiveness of worship. A perusal of Exod. 30. will show that concerning both the altar and the incense the most arbitrary instructions were given. Three points are conspicuous: the altar was the only appointed place upon which incense could be burnt or offered; the priests alone had the right to officiate; and no strange incense was to be used. The latter was to be of the kind prescribed—"salted, pure, holy." Passing to the antitypes: the altar prefigured Christ; the priests, the saints; and the incense, prayer. Association with Christ alone provides the altar; "the washing of water by the Word" alone qualifies the priests; the mind intellectually and morally in harmony with Deity, alone provides the incense—"they that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Communion with God is far more sacred than many are wont to think. The definite, stringent, and awe-inspiring instructions as to the way in which Israel's priests were to draw nigh to Him (see Lev. 16:1, 2, 3, 13)—should cause man to reflect—to carefully, and solemnly submit his reasoning in regard to worship to the test of the Sacred Word. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." This applies to the "great things" of Israel's law as much as to any other item of Bible revelation.

A necessary condition to acceptable worship is fellowship with God. Fellowship involves right doctrine and right practice. When united, these compose the "light" of 1 Jno. 1:7, in which, if we walk, "we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His son, cleanseth us from all sins." The unenlightened and

disobedient walk not in this light, and as a result, lack a scriptural basis on which to offer acceptable prayer and praise. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in *truth*" (Psalm 145:18). "The prayer of the *upright* is his delight" (Prov. 15:8). Whom God invites to approach Him are those who hear and heed the gospel and its claims (Acts 17:30; 1 Tim. 2:4).

There are scattered throughout the Word incidental statements which corroborate the view set forth in this article. Paul, in writing Timothy (1 Epis. 4:3), restricts the offering of thanks to believers: "Meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of *them which believe and know the truth*." In Rom. 8:27 and Rev. 8:3 Christ is represented as making "intercession *for the saints*," and as offering the "prayers of *all saints*." If Christ presented the prayers of those not in union with himself, might we not reasonably expect to find some broader term than "saints" employed?

If an alien desires to entreat Deity, the right course would be to do so through one whom God will hear. This is indicated in the instance of Abimelech, who was divinely instructed to ask Abraham to pray for him (Gen. 20:7–17). God has declared that He will hear the saints, but He has not said that He will hear those who are yet in their sins. Even the saints, God will not always directly hear. Job's friends are a case in point. The patriarch was commanded to pray for them (chap. 42:7–10). If the Deity esteemed the well-meaning comforters of Job, whose offence was committed in ignorance, as unfit to approach heaven directly, how can the spiritually-naked alien expect that without a mediator, God will hear? That the saints may assume the position of mediators, for the alien is in harmony with Paul's admonition "I exhort therefore, that, first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made *for all men* (1 Tim. 2:1).

God's character as expressed in such statements as "His tender mercies are over all His works" is supposed by some to necessitate the idea that all His creatures have the right to approach Him. Unless the whole of the facts concerning God are considered, undoubtedly there is apparent ground for this conclusion. But a passage such as this must be viewed comprehensively. The condition of the Gentile nations at the time the utterance was given must first be taken into account. These were walking in their own ways, without hope, and destitute of the knowledge which makes life worth living, and this through no fault of their own. Can we say in the strictest sense of the words, that these nations were the recipients of God's tender mercies? God's goodness must be viewed from God's standpoint. His goodness permits the bulk of mankind to pass into eternal oblivion; it permits the good to be cruelly oppressed for centuries; and many other (from a human point of view) anomalous things. The deduction from all this is that God's goodness and mercy must be interpreted in the light of facts, and not away from them. His goodness may or may not allow the alien to commune with Him, and the enquiry now is, What saith the Word?

There are some brethren who are inclined to think that the alien have the privilege of approaching Deity as creatures to a Creator, though not as children to a father. But such a thought is neither in accord with the spirit nor letter of scripture. We have seen that man by nature is the creature of wrath; that to attain to a position of favor, he must know and obey God. In other words, he must intelligently apprehend the things concerning the kingdom and name, and humbly fall in with the conditions appointed for the forgiveness of sins. God in His word (and we hear His voice nowhere else) speaks to man. His command is "Hear ye him (Christ.)" And Christ exclaims, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—"I am the way the truth, and the life." "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Is it not bordering upon presumption to ignore these directions, and affirm that men can draw near to Deity upon their own basis? We ought rather to adopt Paul's reasoning "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" In Christ we have confidence; out of him there can be none. In him, there is grace and peace; out of him, there is nought but uncertainty and danger. "Free thither" is the exhortation of the Spirit to the alien. The scripture data upon which we can alone rightly reason necessitates the view that the alien must first give themselves to the Lord before they can possess the right to worship. That those outside Christ are recipients of the Creator's temporal mercies, is another matter. Like the birds of the air, not one is overlooked. God's mercy, however, is subject to many qualifications. This has already been noticed, and does not require to be enlarged. God's dealings in the past show that at times He has regard for the alien (individually and nationally) who manifest a certain character, but the point is, does it involve communion? Concerning communion, plain revelation is given which shows it to pertain only to the saints. Jehovah, however, has the right to do what He wills. His enactments have been given to guide us, not Himself. If he chooses to act apart from them, it is His prerogative so to do; but we have no right to set them aside, nor to presume upon what He might do. During the Mosaic dispensation, worship was confined to those in covenant relationship with God, and it is the same under the present dispensation.

To those who know and obey the truth, the words of the Psalmist are applicable: "Blessed is the man whom thou *choosest* and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts" (45:4). God has not chosen the ignorant and disobedient—such are "without the city," and belong to the company that "loveth and maketh a lie" (Rev. 22:15). They, and they alone, have boldness to draw nigh the throne of grace, who have cleansed themselves with the blood of Jesus, having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water (Heb. 4:16; 10:19, 22).

The natural mind is disposed to think that worship, if it is only offered sincerely, must at all times be acceptable, whether the worshipper be enlightened or unenlightened. This is not the case, as has been proved. Devotion and sincerity, like earnestness and zeal, are right in their places, but they must be governed by knowledge. It is man's nature to worship; he cannot refrain from it; but to worship acceptably, he must have received a divine education.

It is a rule laid down in the Scriptures that prayer to be efficacious must be made nothing doubting (Heb. 11:6; Jas. 1:6; 1 Tim. 2:8). Now is it possible for the alien to approach God with intelligent unwavering confidence, with a "full assurance of faith," when they have received no invitation? The utter absence of direction is in itself sufficient to create doubt, especially when taken in connection with the specific and assuring commands that pertain to the saints; as for example, "He heareth the prayer of the righteous;" "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers."

Among the alien, none would be so likely to be heard as those who are earnestly in quest of the truth. Admitting this, are earnest seekers exhorted to obtain help in their search by prayer to God? No, neither by command nor by apostolic example. And is it not correct to say that God requires only what He has commanded? If the same benefits that accrue to brethren through prayer are derivable by the alien, then why the absence of instruction to this effect? The only explanation is that God requires not prayer from them. God has reserved to himself the right of instituting His own appointments in regard to service rendered to Himself, and His appointments preclude the unreconciled from holding communion with Him. The Father of mercies dispenses His blessings to the saints and the alien upon different rules. Continual prayer on the part of the saints is a necessary condition of divine favour. So far as saints are concerned, God will be enquired of. Let them forsake prayer, and they will soon be forsaken by God. If in this life, and in the life to come, they would receive good from above, they must "in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let their requests be made known unto God." The standing of the unsanctified is otherwise.

The argument of some would seem to imply that God requires the alien to seek Him before He seeks them; that it is necessary to attract God's notice by crying unto Him before He will regard. This is a great error, and tends to becloud the truth. Where God wills His word to go, it goes, and He does not wait to be entreated for it. He knows what His children want before they ask Him, and He knows what His to-be children need before they are in a position to ask Him. In regard to the latter class, the evidence is that He will bestow good upon them unasked. In return for which He demands their obedience. His requirements run: "Hear," "Believe," "Repent," "Be baptised," "Continue in well-doing." When these commands have been observed (and not until) a well-grounded Scriptural confidence may be entertained that God, who is of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity," will take pleasure in prayer and praise.

Christ's regard for the Syro-Phœnician woman's request is adduced as inferential evidence that the prayer of those out of covenant-relationship is heeded. But it must be remembered that Christ was not in the position of God. Christ conversed with good and evil; God will not. Christ healed all that came to him, including those with whose conduct he was not pleased (see Luke 17:17, 18). Christ's attitude, therefore, in relation to healing and God's attitude in relation to prayer are not on a parallel.

It is not unfrequent to hear brethren, especially those who are young in the truth, urge their former Gentile experience as certain evidence that the prayer of the alien is answered. They cite circumstances in their lives and confidently affirm that such were the outcome of prayer. But were there no scripture principles pointing in an opposite direction, there would still be many questions to settle before their claim could be established. Is it possible for them to show that their experience would have been different had they refrained from prayer? It is not possible. Hence their experience proves nothing. Among the religious alien, how often is positive evil attributed to prayer? What popular truth-denying preacher does not ascribe his popularity to prayer?

Solomon's allusion to the prayer of the stranger (II. Chron. 6:32-33) may, however, be a difficulty with some. But Solomon, there is little doubt, had in view strangers who had "joined themselves to the Lord," who had "taken hold of his covenant," and of whom God had said "their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar" (See Isaiah 56:3-7). The law took cognisance of strangers. (Num. 15:16; Exodus 12:48.) The Ethiopian eunuch, mentioned in Acts 8:27, was a stranger, and one who could worship acceptably. Belonging to this class were likewise Lydia (Acts 16:14); Nicolas (6:5); Justus (18:7), and probably Cornelius (10). Such strangers became entitled to all the rights and privileges of God's chosen people, and were amongst those upon whom His name was called—"If my people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray . . . then will I hear." (2. Chron. 7:14). Deity speaks not thus of the uncircumcised alien. Strangers, or proselytes, in apostolic days dwelt in all parts; this is evident from the general gathering on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10; see also 13:43). To make one proselyte the Jews would compass sea and land (Matthew 23:15).

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(To be continued.)

WORSHIP IN RELATION TO THE ALIEN

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As the case of Cornelius is cited in opposition to the principles enunciated in the foregoing, a review of it will not be out of place. It is assumed that that God-fearing man occupied a position parallel to that of the religious alien of to-day. And that as the prayers of the one were heard, so those of the other will be. But are these assumptions justifiable? Let us see. Cornelius is described as a "just" and "devout" man, "one that feared God with all his house, and prayed to God always;" as being "of good report among all the nation of the Jews," and, as having known the "Word," which God sent unto the children of Israel (Acts 10:36, 37). The narrative further implies that he was not only a man of prayer but of fasting (30 v.) These particulars at once suggest the thought that Cornelius may have been a proselyte. Surely a God-fearing man, and one acquainted with Christ's teaching, would have complied with the requirements of the law, which included circumcision. Especially in view of the fact that until this latter enactment had been observed, no part nor lot could be attained in Israel's common wealth. If Cornelius was a proselyte, it may be said, why was it necessary for Peter to go and instruct him in the way whereby he and his house could be saved? (11:14). The circumstances of the time supply the reason—it was a time of transition. Immersion into the e resurrected and glorified Christ was now the appointed way for remission of sins and eternal life. The recognition of this was required from both Jews and proselytes. This is clear from the cases of the Eunuch (8:1–5). The reference to "uncircumcised" may apply to the "many"—"the kinsmen and near friends"—who had assembled to meet the Apostle. Although Peter's vision of clean and unclean may present a difficulty at the first glance, it may mean the following, and nothing more, viz.:—That Peter was to understand that the time had arrived when Jew and Gentile were upon a level in regard to the way of salvation; that the distinction that had existed hitherto was now no more; that the Gentiles were no longer to be esteemed unclean in the sense of the provisional difference that God had previously made between Israel and the other nations—"In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." Peter's hesitancy in visiting Cornelius may be accounted for by remembering that Christ had said "Go not into the way of the Gentiles" (Matt. 10:5), coupled with the great repugnance that existed in associating with Gentiles. And Cornelius, it must be noted, was a commander of a cohort of Roman soldiers.

It is thought by some that we should take neutral ground upon this subject—that whilst we should not encourage worship upon the part of the alien, we should not discourage it. This, however, is hardly a satisfactory position. If there existed an absence of direct testimony upon the subject, then silence perhaps would be commendable. But positive commands have been given as to the way in which God is to be approached. Let divine revelation concerning Christ as the medium of approach be clearly apprehended, and neutrality will be out of the question. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully" (Jer. 23:28; 2. Tim. 2:2; 2. Thes. 2:15; Tit. 1:9). One of the many charges Deity brought against Israel's religious instructors was that they "put no difference between the holy and the profane" nor "shewed difference between the clean and unclean" (Ezek, 22:26 and Lev. 10:10). Here is a lesson for Christ's servants of this dispensation. They occupy a position somewhat a nalogous to Israel's priests, and it rests with them to point out faithfully and fearlessly the distinction God has made among the sons of men (1. Cor. 1:30; 6:11; Jno. 15:3). As God is particular, so let us be particular. The jealous watchfulness of God over His appointments is forcibly illustrated in the punishment of Nadab (Num. 3.), of Korah (Num. 16.), of Uzzah (2. Sam. 6.), and of Uzziah (2. Chron. 26.) Laxity or disregard of the divine word also brought condemnation on Israel (Hos. 8:12, 13; 9:3). Let us take heed! "These things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come."

How brethren should act at public meetings, at meal times when aliens are present, and with their children, are matters which call for a remark or two before concluding. With regard to children, the task will be comparatively simple. Their chief source of knowledge upon such subjects being their parents, it will be but necessary to teach them that they are not in a position to approach God, and that His first requirements are: a knowledge of His will and obedience to His commands. At the same time informing them that God's blessing and guidance are sought by their parents on their behalf. The case of the adult stranger is, however, different. He is invariably under the impression that it is both his privilege and duty to worship God. Now as there is no common ground upon which to offer prayer, supplication, or thanks, the saints dare not unite with the alien in

either. It is incumbent upon the former that they studiously avoid compromising the truth, either by word or action. At meal times, it would be inconsistent to give thanks in a collective form when the alien are present, unless the relative positions have been explained to them. The exigencies of such a situation may be met by those in the truth returning thanks silently. Respecting meetings for the proclamation of the truth, worship should form no part of them, or if it did, the president should announce that the *brethren and sisters* would engage in singing or prayer. This may by some be deemed over-scrupulous, but is it? Let us be consistent and scriptural. It is right to supplicate God's blessing on our work in the truth, but there is a time and a place for everything. It is extremely questionable if a meeting convened for the purpose of reforming and enlightening sinners, is the time and place for singing and praise. Is it not distressing to witness young brethren and sisters, through lack of moral courage, or non-realisation of their separate condition, handing books to strangers, thus tacitly inviting their co-operation in the praises? Is it in the fitness of things to institute a service wherein (frequently) the major portion of those who are lustily singing and affirming "Amen" is not in a position to render acceptable worship? A public lecture is a time for the Word to work—for the Word to influence and convince, and if worship is introduced it should be done with the greatest care and discrimination. It is an unworthy and unwarrantable argument which says that worship should be resorted to as a means of giving tone and interest to a meeting.

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." (Ecc. 5:1, 2).

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Dr. Thomas's Mind on the Subject

Bro. Forbes copies remarks on the subject from the *Herald* of 1859, from which we make the following extracts:—"Praise, thanksgiving, and prayer are spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, which can only be offered acceptably by God's own priests. These are not 'miserable sinners,' or worldlings; but people whom Jesus has purchased for God by his own blood, and made kings and priests (Rev. 5:9-10; 1 Pet. 2:2, 5, 9) those who have believed and obeyed the Gospel of the kingdom; a family after the numeral type of Noah's. These sacrifices belong to the Altar and Holy Place, where no sinners can be found, except on pain of death; that is, of the second.

God hates the praises of those who do not perform his will. What greater insult can be offered to God than praise out of the throats of blasphemers, drunkards, sensualists, and liars? Even a good man would feel disgraced by the commendation of such; how much more God? And where are to be found greater blasphemers, lovers and inventors of lies than the clergy? And "like priest like people;" "there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all," as Paul saith of Jew and Gentile, "gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable;" in a scriptural sense, this is literally true of the clergy, and those who follow in their ways. If the Scriptures are to be accepted as the standard by which "the righteousness of God, witnessed by the law and the prophets. . . . is to be defined," "there is none that understand," among them; and consequently, "there is none righteous, no, not one" among them; and "the fear of God," which is his way and precepts, "is not before their eyes." Now, "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and *his ears are open to their prayers*; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12). Is it not, then, preposterous to invite the clergy and their followers, or the sinners of the world to sing songs of praise, and to pray—to offer up personally, or by proxy, their "abominations?" We do not deny their piety and sincerity; they are, doubtless, very pious and sincere in the ignorance of their ways, which are so specious, apart from the word, as easily to mislead "the man of the earth," who judges only by his blind feelings and sentiments, and the exterior of things, having no spiritual discernment. Prayer and praise, and thanksgiving are spiritual worship, when offered "in spirit and in truth;" and can only be so offered by those who are intelligent in the truth. Under any other circumstances, they are the mere mutterings of unreasoning animals, which none of the saints, who are saints indeed, do anything to develop.

The presence, however, of pious, "miserable sinners," or of those they regard as "impious," but who are oftentimes more worthy than themselves, need not prevent the saints, if they so judge, singing songs of praise, and praying and giving thanks. The assembly is indeed "a mixed multitude," but if the saints in that multitude are the directors of the proceedings, and scripturally define their position, they can do as they please. This is authorized by the case of Paul just preceding his shipwreck. He advised all his fellow-voyagers, who were a "mixed multitude" of Pagan soldiers and sailors, malefactors and Christians—Paul and his brethren—to refresh themselves with the comforting assurance that they should all get safely to shore: "and when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all" (Acts 27:35).

This was a very different affair to inviting the miserable sinners to join him in thanksgiving; or saying to them in clerical phrase, "Let us all pray!"

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