

## WORSHIP IN THE REFORMED CHURCH

### THE PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

#### I. THE PLACE OF JESUS CHRIST IN WORSHIP

Jesus Christ is the One True Worshipper

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Jesus as Mediator in Worship

His Worship is our worship - by grace

His Worship is our worship - in the communion of the Spirit:

- (a) Participation
- (b) Memory
- (c) Communion

His Worship is our worship - through a Wonderful Exchange:  
Consecration and Communion

#### II. WHAT THEN IS CHRISTIAN WORSHIP?

- (1) In her worship, the Church recapitulates the History of Salvation
- (2) Worship is the Epiphany of the Church:  
Worship and Mission
- (3) The Church in her worship foreshadows the Judgment and the  
Renewal of the world in her joyful witness to the Risen Lord:  
Continuity and Discontinuity between Church and World  
Joy in worship

#### III. PUBLIC WORSHIP AND THE MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENTS

## WORSHIP IN THE REFORMED CHURCH

### THE PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

In worship we both adore God in His Majesty for His own sake and offer Him our thanksgivings and praise for all that He has done for the world in Creation and Redemption. Worship is our response to God for all that He is in His own glory and has done for us in Jesus Christ. Through the Spirit, we offer ourselves in body, mind and spirit to the Father through the One True Offering made for us by His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Among the Christian churches, there are many patterns of worship - presbyterian, anglican, methodist, pentecostalist, Roman Catholic and eastern orthodox. Within our own church and our sister presbyterian churches in Scotland there are wide varieties deriving from differing traditions, with different attitudes to preaching, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the place of music, etc. Again too many churches and groups are experimenting with new forms of worship, with an awareness of social change, the attitudes of the young, the stereotyped patterns of much public worship, and a concern to find relevant, intelligent ways of worshipping in relation to the mission of the Church in a secular world.

The question inevitably arises, with considerable urgency. How are we to evaluate these many forms of worship? Have we any criteria by which we can decide what is or what is not genuine Christian worship? What factors control or should control our thinking as we work for the renewal of the Church and seek to find meaningful forms of worship in our day?

Primarily anything we say about worship, be it public or private, corporate or individual, must be said in the light of the realities to which it is a response. Do our forms of worship convey the Gospel? Are they an appropriate response to the Gospel? Do they help people in our day to apprehend the meaning of the Gospel or do they hinder? How far in her worship as in her mission is our Church the servant of Jesus Christ? These were the questions asked by the Reformers and which are being asked by many churches today, both Roman and Reformed.

#### 1. THE PLACE OF JESUS CHRIST IN WORSHIP

In our Christian doctrine of creation, we believe that God has made all creatures for His glory. The lilies of the field, the sparrow on the housetop, the universe in its vastness and remoteness, all glorify God, but they do not know it. But God has made man to be the priest of creation, to express on behalf of all creatures the praises of God, so that through the lips of man the heavens might declare the glory of God, that in our worship we might gather up the worship of all creation. Man's chief end is to glorify God, through the lips of man. Man was made to be that creature among all creatures who might know the Creator and on behalf of all creatures worship God.

But nature fails of this purpose because of the failure of man. Instead of singing for joy, the whole creation groans in universal travail waiting for the fulfilment of God's purposes in the lives of men.

The good news of the Gospel is that God does not abandon His purposes for creation and for men. The witness of the New Testament to Jesus is that He came to be the Priest of creation, to do for men and for all creatures what man fails to do; to offer to God the praise man fails to offer; to glorify God in a life of perfect obedience. He who is the Son of God, by whom and for

whom all things were created, Himself becomes man that as man He might carry through His purposes for man, and in our name worship and glorify God the Father (Heb. 1:2, 3; 2:16ff.) The Gospel of grace is that He assumes our life, takes on our responsibilities, offers to the Father a life of unbroken communion and obedience, dies our death, rises in our humanity, returns to the Father as the One True Man before God, the One True Servant of the Lord, the One True Worshipper who now by His Holy Spirit leads us in our worship. As our One High Priest, He is the Head of all creation, the Head of the Church, the Leader of the worshipping community, who lives in communion with the Father to intercede for all His creatures. "Wherefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9-11)

### Jesus Christ is the One True Worshipper

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes our Lord as the Leitourgos (8:2), "the Minister of the sanctuary", the One True Worshipper, the Leader of our worship, who has gone ahead to lead us in our prayers and intercessions. As such the leitourgia (worship) of Jesus is contrasted with the leitourgia of men. This is the Worship and Offering which God has provided for men and which alone is acceptable to God.

Israel had been called to be a royal priesthood, a worshipping community, and the priest, the leaders of Israel's worship, sought to fulfil their God-given ordinances of worship (dikaionata latreias), but their worship only foreshadowed the True Worship and Self-offering of Christ on our behalf, which gathered it up, fulfilled it and replaced it. (Heb. 9:11-15; 10:1-25).

Jesus' whole life in the Gospel story was a life of worship; as a boy He is found in the temple in His "Father's House"; He daily offers Himself in prayer and communion in the service of God and of man, praying on the mountainside and at the great crises of His life, at His baptism, when He chose the twelve, at the Last Supper in His "High Priestly prayer", in the garden of Gethsemane, on the Cross, offering as man to God a life of unbroken obedience; in His interpretation of His own passion in the light of Psalm 110 and the servant songs of Isaiah; in the cleansing of the temple and His willing acceptance of death. The whole life of Jesus is a life of self-offering to the Father on behalf of the world, culminating in the One True Sacrifice of love and obedience on the Cross, which alone is acceptable to God, for all men, for all nations, for all times, "the offering by which He has perfected for all times those who are sanctified" (Heb. 10:4).

### Father, Son and Holy Spirit

(a) In the witness of the New Testament, that life of worship and communion with the Father did not begin at Bethlehem. He who was the Eternal Son of God by nature, enjoying eternal communion with the Father, became the Son of Man, that we sons of men might become sons of God by grace and be drawn into the Son's communion with the Father, that through the Spirit we too might call God "Father". The Eternal Word who was with God and who was God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, who created all things, became man, and "tabernacled" among us, that we might see the glory of the Father, and ourselves become sons of God. (John 1:1-14).

(b) That life of worship and communion with the Father, which Jesus fulfilled as man, did not end in death. Having offered for men a life of perfect obedience to the Father, culminating in the One perfect Self-offering for all men and all nations, Jesus rises from the dead, returns to the Father to intercede for us (Rom. 8:34) as our great High Priest (Heb. 4:14), as the eternal Mediator of an eternal Covenant, who now appears on our behalf in the presence of God that we might be accepted as sons. (Eph. 2:13ff; 1 Tim. 2:1-6; Heb. 4:14; 9:24; 7:25).

So we distinguish a two-fold ministry of Christ, the once and for all earthly worship and self-offering of Christ, extending from His birth to His death, and His continuing heavenly ministry of worship and intercession inaugurated by His resurrection and ascension. "Inasmuch as He is the great High Priest, Jesus fulfils then a double ministry: on the one hand that of the expiatory act accomplished once and for all; on the other hand, the ministry of extending and exploiting the full benefits of His saving work which lasts into eternity." (Cullmann)

(c) Jesus draws men into His life of communion with the Father by the Spirit, putting His prayer "Father" into our lips, sharing His sonship with us. In both His earthly and continuing heavenly ministry, through His Spirit, He makes the Father known to men by sharing His unique knowledge of the Father, teaching us to pray, drawing us into eternal communion with the Father by uniting us in communion with Himself, and creating a reconciled community among men. So we are graciously given the gift of worshipping the Father, in and through the Son in the communion of the Holy Spirit in the communion of saints, praying "in the name of Jesus", "through Jesus Christ our Lord". So we are baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit into the community which worships the Father in and through the Son in the communion of the Spirit, confessing faith in the Trinity (as in the Apostles Creed) and receiving the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

#### Jesus as Mediator in Worship

The mystery, the wonder, the glory of the Gospel is that He who is God the Creator of all things, and worthy of the worship and praises of all creation, should become man and as a man worship God, and as a man lead us in our worship of God, that we might become the sons of God we were meant to be. (Heb. 2:10). On the other hand, Jesus Christ is the One by whom and for whom all things were created, the One in whom God draws near to men. So with the Father and the Spirit he is worshipped and glorified. On the other hand as the Incarnate Son, our Brother Man, He is the One who prays for us and with us. So we pray to Christ, and in Him and through Him to the Father, and at the same time, in our prayers He prays for us and with us to the Father. There is a duality-in-unity in the confession that "Jesus is Lord". As Calvin argued at the time of the Reformation, He is Lord and Head as our Creator, and He is Lord and Head as the Leader of our humanity. He is Lord as the One whom we worship and He is Lord as the Leader of our worship.

This finds explicit formulation in the doctrine of the Mediator. So the Apostle in 1 Timothy 2:1-6 in exhorting that "petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgivings be offered for all men" goes on to add at once, "For there is one God, and also one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, Himself ~~na~~ who sacrificed Himself to win freedom for all mankind." We intercede in the name and through the ministry of the Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6; 12:14).

The same duality in the roll of Jesus as the Leader of our worship is expressed in the language of priesthood. As High Priest, Jesus Christ represents God to men and represents men to God in His own Person. The Epistle to the Hebrews which says so much about worship, is significant in that it lays such stress on the vicarious role of the humanity of Jesus in worship, ministry, sacrifice and prayer, while seeing this as the gift of God to us - the ministry of the Incarnate son of God. Jesus Christ is both the Apostle of God and the High Priest in our confession of faith. God in Christ fulfils for us His own holy ordinances of worship in providing One in whom and through whom we can draw near to God.

#### His Worship is our worship - by grace

At the very heart of the doctrine and practice of public worship in the Reformed Church there is the recognition that by grace God gives what He demands. He draws near to us to give Himself freely to us in wonderful love and communion, in an act where He draws us near to Himself in Christ. We are accepted by God, not because we have offered worthy worship, but in spite of our unworthiness, because He has provided for us a Worship, a Way, a Sacrifice, a Forerunner in Christ our Leader and Representative, and our worship is our joyful Amen to that Worship. Such is the wonderful love of God, that He has come to us in Jesus Christ and assumed our life (the life of all men), underwritten our responsibilities, offered for us once and for all a life of worship and obedience and prayer to the Father, taken to Himself our unworthy body of death, vicariously submitted for us to the verdict of 'guilty', died our death, risen again in our humanity, returned to the Father as our eternal Memorial in the presence of God, so that by grace, His life is our life, His death our death, His victory our victory, His resurrection our resurrection, His righteousness our righteousness, and His eternal prayers and self-offering to the Father our prayers and offering in the presence of the Father. So we are accepted in the Beloved and discover our status as sons.

The worship of Christ, which thus gathered up the worship of Israel and replaced it, is the substance of all Christian worship. So Calvin and the older Scottish divines expounded it, constantly appealing to our Lord's High Priestly Prayer in John ch. 17 and the Epistle to the Hebrews, in their dialogue with Rome. (Institutes ii chs. 9-11ff; IV chs 14-17). This was the heart of their interpretation of baptism and the eucharist, as of all worship; namely, that Christ's Baptism is our baptism set forth in water baptism, His Sacrifice our sacrifice set forth at the table, His Worship our worship, set forth in our worship and prayers. This was the heart of the Reformed doctrine of justification by grace, that Christ is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. "Christ now fulfils the office of Priest, to receive us as His companions in this great office. For we, who are defiled in ourselves yet are priests in Him, offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary that the sacrifice of prayers and praise that we bring may be acceptable and sweet smelling before God. This is the meaning of Christ's words, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself', John 17:19 (Institutes ii xv.6) "As man opens himself to the work of the Spirit in worship, the One High Priest, Jesus Christ, lifts up our imperfect prayers and worship into His perfect once-and-for-all self-offering. Only in Him and by the Spirit, can we offer our own selves, our neighbours and our world in ever deeper humility and ever fuller joy. In our crisis we must pray as the disciples prayed: Lord, teach us to pray." (Uppsala Report on Worship, sec. 39 1968).

According to the Shorter Catechism, "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies." We can only pray in the name of Jesus, because already Jesus in our name offered up our desires to God, in our name lived that perfect life agreeable to the will of God, in our name confessed our sins by His death upon the Cross, in our name made the one great thank-offering, as when at the Last Supper Jesus took bread and gave thanks on behalf of all men and all nations for the Father's mercies. So in prayer we come by grace alone, in the name of our great High Priest, believing we are accepted in Him who bears our names on His heart. The sole Priesthood of Christ was the central theme of Calvin and Knox in their interpretation of worship over against mediaeval conceptions of the priesthood and Pelagian conceptions of grace.

### His Worship is our worship - in the communion of the Spirit

Jesus Christ, our risen and ascended Lord, draws us into Himself, into His life of prayer in the presence of the Father - in an act of memory, in a life of communion - through the Holy Spirit.

(a) Participation: Jesus taught us to call God "Father", and in our prayers to say "Our Father...." All true prayer is gathered up in that one word. But Jesus not only taught us to pray "Father". He Himself is the living embodiment of that prayer. In His earthly life of communion with the Father, in a life lived in the Spirit, we are given a glimpse (as in John ch. 17) into the eternal life of the Trinity. The Son of God became our brother man that He might lift us up into that life of wonderful communion, and so He sends His Spirit into our hearts and puts His prayer into our lips whereby we too can pray "Abba, Father". So in the communion of the Spirit in the communion of saints our prayers on earth are the echo of His prayers in heaven, and by grace we are given to participate in His intercessions for all men. So in our corporate worship we are called to be a royal priesthood, bearing in our hearts the sorrows and cares and tragedies of our world as our heavenly High Priest does. So by grace we are given to participate in the life, ministry, sufferings, death, resurrection and continual intercessions of Him who is the Head of the Body.

(b) Memory: Jesus said to His disciples "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter .... and He will bring all things to your remembrance." At the Last Supper, Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of Me." The word anamnesis is of rich liturgical significance in the Bible (as generally in worship, where we speak of "remembering people in prayer," calling upon God "to remember" His world, and speak of sacraments as "memorials" of Christ, and of Christ as the "living Memorial").

The word does not simply denote an act of recollection of some remote date of bygone history, as every schoolboy remembers 1066 A.D. Rather it means remembering in such a way that we see our participation in the past event and see our destiny and future as bound up with it. For example, when the Jews in their worship remember the passover and the exodus from Egypt, they do not think of it as simply an irretrievable date from over 3000 years ago. Rather they remember it in such a way that they confess "We were once Pharaoh's bondmen, but by the grace of God, we are the people whom God brought up out of the land of Egypt. We are the people whom God delivered from slavery and made a free people and with whom God has made His covenant saying 'I will be your God and you shall be my people.' That mighty act of God was our redemption." Thus Israel lives by this kind of historical memory. Today at this point in

consecrated and healed; on the other hand, He is the Ascended Lord in whose continuing humanity our humanity is presented by our great High Priest to the Father, the One by whose eternal Spirit we are given by grace to share in the substitutionary self-presentation of Christ in the Holy of Holies. But the One who is truly present in the power of the Spirit in the eucharistic parousia, is also the Ascended One who is absent, whom we await in the apocalyptic parousia: ("till He come"). So over against the Roman Mass, Calvin used to say, Christ is quodammodo praesens et quodammodo absens, in a manner present and yet in a manner absent. Again the Christ who draws us into such wonderful communion is the whole Christ, the God-Man, in whom and through whom God and man are reconciled, for God and man are one in the God-Man, who summons us to be reconciled to one another and who sends us out in mission to be ambassadors of the Gospel of reconciliation to the ends of the earth and to the end of the age.

The Holy Spirit, through whom we participate in the Person and Ministry of Christ, exercises a two-fold ministry in a further way, corresponding to the two-fold ministry of Christ, namely, of representing God to man and of representing man to God. It is in this double sense we are to interpret the work of the Spirit in taking the things of Christ and ministering them to us. (a) Through the Holy Spirit God comes to meet us in worship, in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and summons us to respond in faith and obedience and thanksgiving, in offering ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, which is our "reasonable worship". This is the one side of the dialogue, the communion, which is worship. (b) In our human, frail, broken, unworthy response, the Spirit helps us in our infirmities, lifting us up to Christ who in His Ascended humanity is our God-given Response, the Leader of our worship, the Pioneer of our faith, our Advocate and High Priest, who through the eternal Spirit presents us with Himself to the Father. So in and through the mediatorial ministry of the Spirit, we worship the Father in the name of Christ. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8:22-27) That is, the Spirit is not only speaking Spirit, but also interceding Spirit, exercising not only a prophetic ministry but also a priestly ministry. It is all too possible for us in the Reformed tradition so to stress (a) that we neglect (b). We so stress that God comes to us as God to address us through His Word in preaching, that we short circuit the real humanity of Christ, the role of the continuing Priesthood of Christ in representing man to God, and have a one-sided view of the work of the Spirit. We can then so obtrude our own response to the Word in Pelagian fashion, that we obscure or forget the God-given Response made for us by Jesus Christ. It is possible so to obtrude our own offering of praise, that we lose sight of the One true Offering of praise made for us. (Heb. 2:12). We then lose sight of the earlier Reformed understanding of the Lord's Supper which we find in Calvin or Knox or in the communion sermons of Robert Bruce or Samuel Rutherford in the older Scottish tradition. We would also lose much of the comfort of the Gospel. God does not throw us back upon ourselves in our own strength to make our response to the Word. But graciously He helps our infirmities by giving us Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to make the appropriate response for us and in us. Can we not adapt Gal. 2:20 and say "We pray, and yet it is not we who pray, but Christ who prays for us and in us; and the prayers which we now offer in the flesh, we offer by the faithfulness of the One who loved us and offered Himself for us"?

His Worship is our worship - through a Wonderful Exchange

The Christian Gospel is a Gospel of Reconciliation, and reconciliation is enshrined at the heart of all worship. God in His grace in reconciling us to Himself, lifts us up into a life of wonderful communion by effecting a wonderful

exchange. So the Apostle says in 2 Cor. 5:18-21, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself". But how has He done it? "Christ was innocent of sin and yet for our sake God made Him one with the sinfulness of men, so that we might be made one with the goodness of God Himself" (NEB)

As Calvin argued in Book 4 of the Institutes, this is the heart of the theology of the sacraments, particularly of the Lord's Supper which so enshrines the mirifica commutatio - the wonderful exchange that Christ took what was ours that He might give us what is His. He takes our broken sinful humanity and cleanses it by His self-sanctifying life of communion with the Father, His obedience, death and resurrection, and now comes back to us in the power of His Spirit to give Himself to us in an act where He gives us back our humanity (renewed in Him) saying, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you". Our reception of Christ is our grateful acknowledgement of this wonderful exchange. The Body on which we feed is the body which He assumed for our sake: that in our worship we might be sanctified by the once-and-for-all self-offering of Christ. In the communion of the Spirit, in virtue of this exchange, we know that His Humanity is our humanity (so graciously assumed), His Death our death (which we show forth), His Life our life (Till He come), His Self-offering our offering, His Communion with the Father our communion into which He lifts us by His Spirit. The Last Supper, as an evangelical ordinance, enshrines very vividly the inner meaning of the Gospel. (Institutes 4. XVII.2)

Calvin is here spelling out, not only the meaning of the Evangel, but also the meaning of the Greek word for reconciliation. The Greek word katallasso means quite literally "to effect an exchange", "to buy" something, "to exchange one thing for another". So it comes to mean "to reconcile", to exchange friendship for enmity, love for hatred, peace for hostility. That, says the Apostle, is what God has done for us in Christ. Jesus came to take our enmity to Himself that He might give us love and forgiveness in exchange, to take our sins that He might give us righteousness, to take our death that He might give us eternal life, that we might humbly and joyfully receive Him, "clothed with all His benefits".

#### Consecration and Communion

Jesus effected this wonderful exchange to share with us His wonderful communion with the Father. This is enshrined in the order of the communion service. When we come to the Lord's Table to worship on a Communion Sunday, we come to offer ourselves to the Lord. But what can we render to the Lord, for our lives are so unworthy, so broken and so sinful? After the preaching of the Word, the bread and wine are brought in and set before our eyes and consecrated - not as a sign of our self-offering to the Lord, but as a memorial that 1900 years ago the Son of God assumed our life, our body of flesh, our mind, our spirit, sinful though they be, sanctified them in His own Person and in our name made the offering which we could never make. Indeed our self-offering for a moment is set aside that we might remember the great Offering made for us. But the service does not end there. That same Christ, who is our eternal Offering in the heavens, now comes to us in an act of self-giving and says, "Take eat, this is my body which is broken for you," and lifts us with our self-offering of praise and thanksgivings into communion with Himself. He gives back our life to us, converted and regenerated in Him. Is it not for these evangelical reasons that communion follows consecration? If we might again adapt Galatians 2:20 might say at the Lord's Table, "We offer ourselves to the Lord and yet it is not we who offer, but Christ who has offered Himself for us and who is our offering, and the offering which we now make in the flesh we make by the faith of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us."



intention. But from our Reformed point of view she says it in the wrong way. She makes the moment of conversion what takes place in the elements, in the act of consecration - no doubt as the act of God in the action of the priest. But this obscures, in too Pelagian a fashion, the heart of the Gospel of grace that the real conversion of our humanity took place in the substitutionary self-consecration of Jesus, in His life, death and resurrection, in the once-and-for-all action of our One High Priest, in whose life and action we participate through the Spirit, who now renews us in the image of God. Calvin and Robert Bruce could speak of a "conversion" in the use of the elements, in their being set apart from all common use to this holy use and mystery, but not in the sense of a change in the elements themselves.

## II. WHAT THEN IS CHRISTIAN WORSHIP?

Worship is our participation through the Spirit in the Worship of Christ. It is our joyful response to God for all that He has done and is doing for us in Christ, our self-offering to the Father in gratitude for the One True Offering of His well beloved Son in whom and through whom we are called to be sons.

We can therefore say three things about Christian worship.

### (1) In her worship, the Church recapitulates the History of Salvation

In her worship the Church sets forth by word and action that perfect life which we see in Jesus Christ. As her response to the Worship and Ministry of Christ, she sets forth objectively in her liturgical life what God has done for her and for the world. In worship we recapitulate, we echo the Offering, the Prayers, the Praises of Him who is our Leitourgos, in our self-offering, prayers and praises, uniting with the whole company in heaven and on earth who worship God and "the Lamb upon the throne." Our worship is witness to grace according to the divinely given ordinances of grace. We preach and pray and celebrate the sacraments, as our Lord commanded, not to bear witness to ourselves, not as a form of self-expression, but as a witness to Christ and what the world is in Christ and shall become through Christ.

Worship is thus human action, and yet it is that human action which is evoked by Christ, through the Spirit, in such a way that He is the One who acts in us and through us, so that our worship becomes real worship in spirit and in truth. So we can say that it is not we who represent Christ, but Christ who re-presents Himself through the Spirit.

Whatever form it takes, all Christian worship should be transparent, in setting Christ before the worshipping congregation. In this way, for example, all that we do in the Christian Year, in Advent, from Palm Sunday to Easter, on Ascension Day, Whitsun, Trinity Sunday, etc., all that we do in preaching as well as in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, we do as an act of anamnesis, setting forth not just the past, but also the present and future Ministry of Christ, believing that in and through our words and acts, Christ makes us participants in His Person and Saving acts.

As her self-offering to God, the worship of the Church is inseparable from her total witness to Christ. Her public worship must be from the heart and not merely that of outward words and actions. There must be the real counterpart of life, personal prayer, self-denial, joy, gratitude, ministry of love, missionary zeal and faithful stewardship. As a royal priesthood, she must carry the needs of the world on her heart, not only in her prayers, but also in self-giving and practical concern. There must be no divorce between the service of God and the service of men in her witness to Jesus as Lord.

(2) Worship is the Epiphany of the Church

The Church is the Church in her worship. Worship is not an optional extra, but is of the very life and essence of the Church. Nor is it a false grovelling in the dust of the religiously minded. Man is never more truly man than when he worships God. He rises to all the heights of human dignity when he worships God, and all God's purposes in Creation and Redemption are fulfilled in us as together in our worship we are renewed in and through Christ, and in the name of Christ we glorify God. By the grace of God we seek to voice for all creation the praises of God and realise our God-given destiny to be priests of creation under Christ our great High Priest.

Worship and Mission

Thus we must never stress mission at the expense of worship nor worship at the expense of mission. Both are forms of witness to Jesus Christ and are of the essence of the Church in the world. Both have as their end the concern that all creatures should glorify God and in glorifying God realise their creaturely glory. In worship the Church faces God in the name of Christ on behalf of the world, in gratitude, confession and intercession. In mission the Church faces the world in the name of Christ on behalf of God as the ambassador of the Gospel of reconciliation. Something goes wrong with both if they fall apart, or are in any way detached from one another. To stress worship at the expense of mission is to forget that the Christ in whose name we worship the Father is the Christ whose body was broken for the world, "who will have all men to be saved and come into the knowledge of the truth" and who has called us to be a royal priesthood on behalf of the world (1 Tim. 2:1-6). Conversely, to stress mission at the expense of worship, or to subordinate worship to mission in the interests of a "relevant liturgy", may be to fail to bring our missionary witness under the scrutiny of the Gospel. This could lead to a dangerous reductionism, where our message is more the reflection of contemporary secularism than faithful witness to the Word of the Cross, with no real word of hope for the world, because it is less than a joyful acknowledgement of the Risen Lord. Where worship and mission fall apart, worship can lose its "relevance" in the mind of the worshipper (as well as its joy and vision), and mission its motivation of gratitude to Christ, who is not the propitiation for our sins only but also for the sins of the whole world. Both are held together, when both are undertaken in the name of Christ, the Saviour of the world, the High Priest of creation. Today when many apparently see little connection between life in the secular world from Monday to Saturday and public worship on Sunday, we need to recover the meaning of the confession that "Jesus is Lord" in every area of life, and find new ways of witnessing to this, both in worship and in mission, in new areas of corporate concern. In days gone by in Scotland family worship was a way in which the Lordship of Christ and the Fatherhood of God were confessed in everyday life.

(3) The Church in her worship foreshadows the Judgment and the Renewal of the world in her joyful witness to the Risen Lord.

The Church in her worship bears witness to the Kingdom which has come in Christ and which is present in the world like seed growing secretly or like leaven hidden in a lump. But the end is "not yet". What we already are in Christ through the Risen Lord, we have yet to become in ourselves through Christ. So we await the apocalyptic Parousia when we shall be in ourselves what we are now in Christ, when we shall see Him whom we love and shall be like Him.

Therefore in her worship the Church bears witness to the crucified and risen Lord in whom we have been both judged and renewed.

worship, divorced from the realities of this world. But this is to forget that the Risen Lord in whose name we worship is the One by whom and for whom all things were created, who assumed our humanity, identified Himself with this world and died and rose again that this world might be redeemed. It is also to forget that the Church in her worship is called to fulfil her role as a royal priesthood on behalf of the world, interceding for the world before God in the name of Christ the Saviour of the world. A false "otherworldliness" in her worship may imply an abandonment by the Church of all hope for this world, which would be a denial of the meaning of the Incarnation and a relinquishing of prophetic belief in the continuity between Creation and Redemption. (b) On the other hand, it is possible for the Church to be so concerned to affirm this world and to accommodate her message and programmes to the spirit of the age, that she fails to bear witness to the Risen Lord, and interpret Christian hope for this world in terms of judgment and renewal, death and resurrection. (cf. Uusala Report on Worship, I, the Challenge of Secularisation).

### Joy in Worship

Confession of sin must always be an integral part of the true worship of God. But as the Reformers maintained, in their rejection of the mediaeval sacrament of penance, true repentance is not a meritorious condition of forgiveness, but rather a humble yet joyful reception of the forgiveness so freely offered to us in Christ. Yet in spite of this, too often in our subsequent reformed tradition, such a stress has been placed on the penitential side of worship - or even on our "unworthiness" to come to the Lord's Table - that sometimes the note of joy and assurance of forgiveness has been lost.

In repentance, both personal and corporate, we humbly submit before God to the verdict of guilty, and acknowledge the just judgments of God. But repentance can be morose or it can be joyful - "legal" or "evangelical" as Calvin and the old Scottish divines called it. In morose repentance we look at ourselves as we are in ourselves or at the world as it is in itself, and bemoan our sins and the sins of the world, as though by our much bemoaning God will be gracious to us. Such "legal repentance" as Thomas Boston and the Erskines maintained at the time of the Marrow Controversy, is based on a false doctrine of "conditional grace". In "evangelical repentance" on the other hand, while locking in godly sorrow at ourselves as we are in ourselves, and at the world as it is in itself we dare to look at ourselves and our world as we are in the Risen Lord, in the heart of the Father, in the purposes of God, knowing that Christ died for our sins and now summons us, in confessing our sins and receiving forgiveness, joyfully to renounce them, and to look for that day when by the grace of God we shall become in ourselves what we know we are in Christ.

Sometimes we are in danger in our worship today of becoming so concerned about the misery of the world and the failure of men, that in great acts of social repentance we allow our awareness of our share in the world's guilt to give us a bad conscience about rejoicing in an unhappy world. But this may be to forget the promises of the Gospel, that because Christ is risen for our justification we are summoned to have peace and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. When we meet for public worship on the first day of the week, is not our witness as a believing community to a despairing world, that because Jesus Christ is risen there is a word of hope for all this world? For through the Resurrection God has given assurance to all men that He - and not evil and violence and death - will speak the last word in this world's history, a word of judgment and renewal, of righteousness and love. (Acts 17:31; Rev. 1:17,18)

For these evangelical reasons it is important for us to reconsider at what point in public worship the act of confession should come, whether it is to be a

III. PUBLIC WORSHIP AND THE MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENTS  
(cf. "Statement on the Ministry of Word and Sacraments" of Panel on  
Doctrine, General Assembly, 1963)

- (1) Jesus Christ is the Head of His Church, and as the One Prophet, Priest and King within His Church is the Source of all Ministry within it, and through His Spirit exercises His continuing Prophetic, Priestly and Kingly Ministry in the world through the instrumentality of men.
- (2) To the Church as a royal priesthood there is committed a corporate ministry of worship and mission in union with Christ in the service of God and the service of men. Through the Holy Spirit, poured out on the Church at Pentecost, and within the fellowship of the whole Church, Christ calls all members of His Body to participate in His ministry to the whole world, in a life of witness, work and vicarious prayer, as faithful stewards of the manifold gifts of the Spirit. In this priesthood of all believers, each baptised member of the Body may read the Word, pray, offer to God through Jesus Christ a self-oblation of praise and thanksgiving.
- (3) Within this general ministry and corporate priesthood of His Church, Christ calls some whom He appoints to a special ministry to proclaim the Gospel, to shepherd His People, to lead them in their worship, to instruct them in the Faith, to bless them from God, that through this ministry of Word and Sacraments He might unite His People to Himself in a common life of memory and communion, exercise His Kingly rule and call men into His eternal Kingdom.
- (4) The Reformed Church, in receiving the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the supremely authoritative witness to Jesus Christ, and as part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, claims that in all her worship she seeks to conform to apostolic teaching and practice. She must therefore be always willing in the light of Holy Scripture and in dependence on the Holy Spirit, to scrutinise and renew her forms of worship that they may be transparent of Christ and His Gospel.
- (5) Public worship, as an act of divine service, embraces the reading and exposition of the Word and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This is conducted by a minister or ministers ordained under and subject to the laws of the Church. The greatest single change which developed in public worship after the Reformation was the separation of Word and Sacrament, both having previously always been conjoined. The separation was against the intention of the Reformers (except in the case of Zwingli) and while for four centuries there have been acts of worship in the Reformed Church where there has been the preaching of the Word without the Sacraments - and services conducted by laymen or in which the laity take a large part - the principle service on the Lord's Day was from the earliest times led by an ordained minister with the people communicating in both kinds. As Christ unites us with Himself, according to His ordinance and promise, through both Word and Sacrament, we need in our day to examine anew our practice of infrequent communions, if we would indeed be faithful to apostolic teaching and practice.