Biblical Foundations for Christian Worship

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My Pilgrimage

My personal pilgrimage in understanding worship is a story of interaction between an individual and the church as an institution. In the spring of 1964 I was asked by the worship committees of the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church to contribute a paper on "Worship in the Old Testament," a project for a conjoint conference on the theology of worship. The conference was to be held March 21, 22, 1965.

Frankly, I was undecided. My interest in the Old Testament was in social ethics. I had written my dissertation on the theology of warfare in the Old Testament. I was not about to leave my interest in ethics to waste time on a theology of worship. My theology of worship was mainly a negative one based, I thought, on the oracles of the great prophets such as Micah:

> With what shall I come before the Lord,
> and bow myself before God on high?
>
> ° ° °
>
> And what does the Lord require of you

but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

On the other hand, I realized that my lack of attention to the worship material of the Old Testament was inexcusable. After all, the material is there. And if the church is to continue with worship services are we to be uninformed by the practice of worship by the community as recorded in the Bible?

Reluctantly, I said yes. At the same time I arranged to lead a seminar on worship in cooperation with Howard Charles, a New Testament scholar. As a result of these efforts I wrote a paper, "Worship in the Old Testament," a paper read to the conjoint conference in 1965.

My method in this paper was fundamentally the same as that used in my previous work on warfare. That is, I tried to look at worship in the Old Testament against the background of worship in the Near East. Some have misunderstood this method. The method does not reject the authority of the Old Testament. I am convinced that the church should emphasize even more the authority of the canon of the Old and New Testaments. Archaeology, however, has recovered whole libraries of texts of the ancient Near East, the very milieu in which Israel struggled. This brings the Bible out of its isolation and helps us to see more clearly the issues Israel faced, and how she dealt with

them in the light of her experience with God.

I discovered in my first paper what I had discovered in my study of warfare, that I was in a sense writing the paper backwards. Both warfare and worship had to be written against a strange new "politics" of God (theo-politics). As I later worked this theme I saw that it was basic to Israel's way of communal life, a way of life expressed so differently from that of other peoples, in both social ethics and worship.

When in 1969 the Worship Committee of Mennonite General Conference asked me to write a second paper on worship, I saw that this new kind of politics needed to be brought to the fore. *Biblical Foundations for Christian Worship* is essentially that which I read at this second worship conference, October 16, 1969. In it I attempt to set forth a theology of worship which spans the Testaments.

Worship as a new kind of politics does not exclude the definition of worship as celebration, but further defines it. Worship defined as celebration is much too broad; it does not distinguish between Christian and non-Christian celebration. Christian worship should be defined as the celebration of the rule of God as experienced in the life of the new community in Christ. In worship this rule of God in the life of the new community is portrayed, proclaimed, and enforced. Worship thus becomes integral to a new theo-political structure, which knows a social

ethic quite different from that which is rooted in the economic and political structures of this world. But this anticipates the paper.

For this statement on worship I am indebted to many people. First of all, I am indebted to the Mennonite-Anabaptist community of which I am a part, especially to past teachers of that community. Again, I owe much to my teachers of the Old Testament who were formerly at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, especially to David Noel Freedman, who taught me the ABCs of the Old Testament. Also, I am indebted to Edward Stoltzfus, chairman of the former Worship Committee of Mennonite General Conference, and to my colleague, Jacob Enz, who encouraged me. Then there is the publisher who dares to risk a little. Lastly, there is Miriam, my wife, who continues to live with me in my interests.

I hope that this statement will be helpful in contributing to the church's task of developing a theology of worship.

Millard C. Lind
Goshen, Indiana
April 1972

Introduction

Two themes stand out sharply in Millard Lind's trenchant treatment of worship as understood and practiced by the Old Testament and New Testament people of God. The first outlines the structure of covenant which is the basic pattern undergirding Jewish and early Christian worship. The second is what Lind calls theopolitics, that is, the politics of God; he holds that biblical worship is a political act.

Covenant is primarily a political category and is borrowed from the secular powers among whom early Israel established its identity as a people. Like so many aspects of Israel's life, the form is adapted to her own purposes but the original content is rejected. The leaders of early Israel had a remarkable genius for borrowing forms and structures, then reshaping them and filling them full with the unique content which came from God's revelation at Sinai.

The concept of biblical worship as a political act falls strangely on modern ears. Our notions of politics are formed by the political parties and functionaries of our time who vie with each other by whatever means at their disposal to gain control of the levers of power. In biblical worship, one alone is acknowledged as sovereign, and He reigns supreme as King of kings and Lord of lords. His gracious deeds on behalf of His people are recited and His law is set forth. The people are summoned to repentance

and obedience and to renew their covenant with Him. This, Lind sees as a political act far outweighing in its consequences the strange ritual being enacted in Miami Beach where at the time of this writing the major political parties of the United States of America are electing their candidates for the presidency.

This brief essay does not lend itself to a cursory reading in part because of the brevity and the scope of the treatment. It examines the basic material in both Testaments against their background and as such is a thorough introduction to the field. This theme is deserving of a full-length book. Millard Lind has done the church a genuine service in opening up these materials as lucidly as he has. In these times when "celebration" is the watchword of worship planners it is important to ask what it is we are celebrating and to anchor our understandings in the biblical revelation. Those who make the effort to work through this material with care will be well rewarded.

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July 1972

Biblical Foundations for Christian Worship

Why do congregations gather?

In thousands of cities and villages throughout the world, Christian congregations gather periodically for a "meeting." This meeting may take place on Sunday or on some other day. It may happen several times a week or less often. The question we ask here is, Why does it take place at all? Why do congregations gather? What do they do when they gather? What is the relationship of what they do when they gather with what they do the rest of the week?

It is easy to answer that Christian congregations gather together to worship. But what is Christian worship? Instead of answering this question by defining Christian worship we propose to answer it by describing worship.[1] We will describe it not as it happens in thousands of congregations in the world today, but as it happened to Israel and the church of the first century, as told us in the Bible. Why Israel and the church of the first century? Because only as we study Christian worship as

God first instituted it can we get guidance for what it is and should be today.

The Bible is composed largely of material which originally was formed for and used by the community of faith in its corporate worship. The stories of Genesis—the call of Abraham, the covenant, the promise of community and land—all these have come down to us not merely because someone thought to write them down in a book, but because these stories were used by the patriarchal clans in their worship. Later, Israel added the themes of the exodus, Sinai, the wilderness wanderings, and the conquest.

In the New Testament, Luke also tells us that the gospel narratives which he searched out were given not only by those who were eyewitnesses but who also were ministers of the Word.[2] They used these narratives in worship, for building up the church. The Book of Acts is made up to a large extent of speeches, prayers, and accounts of worship services experienced by the young church in its expansion toward Rome. The epistles and the Book of Revelation were written that they might be read in the meetings of the congregations.[3]

An understanding of the biblical foundations of worship should take into account all of this material. In a short study we cannot consider every aspect, however, and will outline only a few fundamental characteristics of biblical worship.

I. The Old Testament

A. *Israel's Fundamental Institution, the Institution of Worship*

Israel became a people or "nation" at Sinai. It is significant that the fundamental institution of this nation was an institution of worship. An outline of the Sinai account makes this evident.

Israel at Sinai (Exodus 19 to Numbers 10)

The Book of Exodus

1. The Covenant (19; 20; 24; 32—34)
2. A Law Code (21—23)
3. The Tabernacle and Its Furniture (23—31; 34—40)

The Book of Leviticus

4. The Laws of Sacrifice (1—7); Burnt Offering, Cereal Offering, Sin Offering, Peace Offering
5. The Laws for the Priests (8—10)
6. Laws of Ritual Cleanness (11—15)
7. The Atonement (16)
8. Ritual Slaughter (17)
9. Law of Holiness (18—26)
10. Vows (27)

The Book of Numbers

11. Events at Sinai (1:1-10:10)

The tabernacle with its sacrifices and officials (priests) was the fundamental institution of the "nation" in early Israel. What does this mean? To discover this we will survey this institution

in inverse order, beginning with the priests, the sacrifices, and finally the tabernacle.

1. The Priests

There were priests not only in Israel, but also in the nations around Israel. The Bible speaks of the priests of Egypt (Genesis 41:45; 47:22); of the Canaanite city-state, Jerusalem (Genesis 14:18); of Phoenicia (2 Kings 10:19; 11:18); Philistia (1 Samuel 5:5; 5; 6:2); and Moab (Jeremiah 48:7).

Like his counterpart outside of Israel, the priest was set apart from the sphere of the secular to that of the holy. Unlike his counterpart, however, he was set apart not from one impersonal sphere to another, but to the worship of the personal God.

The priest was guardian of the sanctuary (Judges 17; 18:30; 1 Samuel 1, 2; 7:1).[4] He was responsible for the divine oracle or word of God, a role assigned from ancient times (Deuteronomy 33:8-10). The oracle was often determined by casting the sacred lot, the Urim and Thummim (Numbers 27:21). The lot involved a "yes" or "no" answer, though no answer at all might be given (1 Samuel 14:18, 19). This impersonal means of determining the will of God was discontinued in ancient times.

The priest is usually regarded as one who offered sacrifices. This function of the priest is mentioned in the ancient blessing of Levi,

though it is mentioned last (Deuteronomy 30:10). Judges, such as Gideon and Samuel, also offered sacrifices (Judges 6:25, 26; 13:16-33). Kings, such as David, Solomon, and Ahaz (2 Kings 16: 12-16), and prophets, such as Elijah, officiated at offerings. While the priest was "minister of the altar" from ancient times, only at the end of a long period of development did he gain a monopoly on sacrifice (Hebrews 5:1; 8:3).

Above all else, the priest was the teacher of the people. This function is set forth in Israel's ancient poetry (Deuteronomy 33:10). After the exile this duty was surrendered to the scribe and teacher of the law. The prophets criticized the priests because they neglected to teach Torah. This neglect coincided with an increased emphasis on sacrifices, a more profitable enterprise for the priest (Micah 3:11; Jeremiah 18:18; Ezekiel 7:26).

As religious educator, the priest was the educated member of society. He had to write in order to create the literature of worship. He developed historical writing that he might record God's leading of Israel. He had to know Canaanite thought and literary forms to enrich Israel's worship with these forms. He needed a thorough knowledge of Israel's tradition so that in his borrowing he might be faithful to that tradition. He also had to know law, since in Israel law was oriented not to governmental administrative office but to worship.

It is impossible to clearly distinguish the priestly office from that of prophet or judge because all three offices were originally united in one person or mediator. Only later did they fall apart due to the necessity of specialization. In the beginning and in times of crisis, great personalities, such as Moses, Samuel, and Jesus, gathered up all these functions. The emphasis of the priest was upon the present fulfillment of the promise, the present rule of Yahweh, a rule founded upon his action of the past (Sinai). The prophet was interested in the future act of God which was related not to the past but to Israel's present response to Yahweh. Priest and prophet were interested in the present but from different points of view, the priest looking back to the past, the prophet looking forward to the future. The priest was the "Christian educator"; the prophet was the homiletician. These interests overlapped, however, and were not mutually exclusive.

2. *Sacrifice*

In Mesopotamia, a fundamental purpose of sacrifice was to supply food for the gods. Since the god was regarded as owner of the land, offerings were thought of as rent or dues paid for the use of the land. Offerings were required to keep the gods in good humor, to avert the consequences of their anger.

There were three types of substitutionary of-

ferings in Mesopotamia.[5] The animal might be regarded as a substitute for a sick person, bearing his defilement away into the wilderness. In another offering the slain animal was identified with the dying and resurrecting god. The sick offerer was thought by substitution to participate in the death and resurrection of the god, and in this way was delivered from his illness. In a third case, an ordinary citizen might be placed temporarily upon the throne if the omens indicated the threat of disaster. If the threat developed, he would die instead of the king and would save the state from grave consequences.

Canaanite myths and legends use terms similar to those of the Bible for various offerings.[6] It is evident that there was a relationship of the two systems though the relationship was more complicated than some have supposed. Israel developed certain taboos, such as that against the sacrifice of the pig, in order to set herself off at crucial points from Canaanite worship. Human sacrifice was rejected by the biblical faith.

Roland de Vaux lists six types of offerings in Israel[7]: (1) the holocaust or burnt offering in which the entire offering was burned, suggesting consecration; (2) communion sacrifices in which the worshiper ate much of the victim; (3) expiatory sacrifices, probably an element in every sacrifice[8]; (4) vegetable offerings; (5) offerings of

shewbread; and (6) of incense.

The sacrificial system was reoriented to Israel to some extent by the experience of covenant. The practice of sacrifice was so connected in the Near East with magical ideas that its reorientation to the biblical faith was very difficult.

Jeremiah was the most radical of the prophets to protest against the system. "Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them, 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you' " (Jeremiah 7:21-23). However one might interpret this oracle, Jeremiah was essentially right from the historical point of view. The clans at Sinai needed no command to sacrifice. They and their fathers had done this from primitive times. Yahweh's new commandment was as Jeremiah gave it: obedience to the voice of Israel's covenant God. This criticism by the prophets[9] is a reflection of a fundamental break which Moses had made with Near Eastern religions, a break which made the sacrificial system superflous. It was not at all central to biblical faith, but was a cultural item too intimately tied to human existence to be immediately rejected. Its demise is prefigured in the use of sacrificial

language to describe the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, a figure which the early church saw as fulfilled in Jesus Christ.[10]

3. *The Tabernacle: Central Institution for the Rule of God*

Julius Wellhausen held that the tabernacle did not exist in early Israel. He maintained that in early times Israel worshiped at many altars and that worship was centralized only at the time of the building of the temple. He considered the tabernacle to be the literary creation of the priests, a "pious fraud" designed to promote the religious unity of Israel after the collapse of the state.[11]

Wellhausen's position is no longer tenable. Practically all biblical scholars today accept the view that pre-kingship Israel, while organized as separate tribes, was unified by a common worship center. The fact that Israel with a unique understanding of God, a novel organization of government, and a radically new system of land tenure was able to withstand the pressure of ideas from the culturally more advanced Canaanites suggests that this people must have come off the desert with their faith and institutions already formed.[13] Israel originated as a people gathered about a common worship already at Mount Sinai, a position presented by all the biblical sources. It is plausible that the institution of the tabernacle had its origin in the des-

ert. While the tabernacle developed from a simple desert tent to the structure at Shiloh and finally the ornate tabernacle of David, it was a continuous pre-monarchic institution which the tradition telescoped in the description given in the Sinai account.

The plan of the tabernacle and temple marked off three stages of access: the court, the holy place, the most holy place. These stages were set forth in the narrative of the Sinai experience itself: the people were restricted to the foot of the mountain, the priests went up the mountain to worship at a distance, while Moses alone drew near to Yahweh (Exodus 24:1, 2). This plan was similar to that of the Phoenician temples, the place from which Solomon imported his architect.[12]

The fact that all of these institutions of worship—priesthood, sacrificial system, and tabernacle—were externally little different from comparable institutions among Israel's neighbors, but that they were radically adapted to serve Israel's unique religious and social-political structure, has much to suggest about our worship today. We will give our attention now to this unique religious and political structure which the tabernacle served.

This religious-political structure is suggested in Exodus 29:42-46: "It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before the Lord,

where I will meet with you, to speak there to you. There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. And I will dwell among the people of Israel, and I will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God."

Two words are of special importance to us in this passage.[13] The first word is "dwell," which in the Hebrew suggests impermanence and is better translated by the word "tent." God lives in the heavens, but He "tents" among His people, a concept used later by a Gospel writer concerning the incarnation (John 1:14). A comparable idea is expressed by another biblical writer in regard to the temple: Yahweh does not live in the temple, but has placed His name there. This "tenting" of Yahweh is connected both with covenant and with salvation from Egypt (v. 46).

More important for our purpose is the word "meet": "I will meet with you. . . ." "There I will meet with the people of Israel. . . ." The tent itself is called "the tent of meeting" or a better translation, "the tent of assembly." The Hebrew word "assembly" was used in an Egyptian story of a man who traveled from

Egypt to Phoenicia in 1100 BC. In the Phoenician city of Byblos the town "assembly" was called together to consider a political matter. The point is that Yahweh did not meet with Israel merely to reveal Himself, but to give "commandment for the people of Israel" (Exodus 25:22). As one biblical scholar says of this passage, " . . . in the amphictyonic gatherings, Yahweh was considered to be the head of the covenant assembly, and it was he who made the important decisions in war and peace (through oracle made by human mediation). There was no separation of church and state in early Israel."[14]

Worship in early Israel thus had a political orientation. It had to do with the decision concerning the direction of the life of the community as the community faced important options. To ignore this political aspect of worship in the Bible is to ignore the central point of biblical worship, and we might add, the central point of difference between Israel and the nations.

4. The Ark, the Throne of Yahweh

In our quote above we have said, "There was no separation of church and state in early Israel." But there was a separation between Israel and the Near Eastern states. We will pursue this aspect of Israel's worship further to discover just what this separation was.

The meeting of Yahweh described above was with the congregation at the door of the tabernacle, by the great altar. Another meeting is described in the Sinai passage where Yahweh promises to meet with Moses before the ark of the covenant in the most holy place (25:10-22; 30:6, 36).

Israel had two important understandings about the ark. Yahweh was enthroned upon the ark between the cherubim (1 Samuel 4:4), and the covenant was deposited in the ark (Exodus 25:16; Deuteronomy 10:2). These two understandings correspond with practices elsewhere in the Near East. For example, in Syria thrones were flanked with cherubim, and among the Hittites international treaties were placed in the temple at the foot of the image of the god.[15] In the worship of Israel, then, Yahweh was recognized as political Ruler, represented by neither idol nor man. At His feet lay His covenant with Israel, a covenant setting forth the principles by which He ruled. The representative of the Mosaic office received Yahweh's decisions for Israel before the ark, decisions in line with the covenant which was so important to Israel's worship and life.

B. The Covenant with Israel: Constitution of Yahweh's Rule

If you will refer to the outline of the Sinai passage (pp. 4, 5), you will discover that the

covenant act was prior to the founding of the institutions of worship. This means that the covenant was the foundation for the total life of Israel, including worship. This experience of the clans made them one people and polarized all of their practices, including worship.

If we compare Israel to Egypt and Mesopotamia, we discover that these states had mythologies which explained and gave meaning to their social structure in its integration with nature. These mythologies were used in the official worship that the community might help to bring about and preserve (by the process of magic) the accepted social structure in its integration with nature. These myths were considered the acts of the gods in regard to nature and to the state, and were projected to the beginning of the world. In the portrayal of these myths the king was the chief actor. He was thought of as the link between nature and the social order. Israel also had a "constitution," but in contrast to these states, Israel saw her past as historical rather than mythical.

Israel's covenant, the foundation of her communal existence, has no real analogies with these mythical forms. If we search for analogies to this covenant in the Near East, we find them not in the religious but in the political sphere. The international treaty forms of the second millennium BC, especially as developed by the Hittites, are analogous in form to the

Mosaic covenant, the Ten Commandments.[16] These treaties were made by the great Hittite king with his vassal states. By this means the Hittite king enlarged his empire.

The main parts of the covenant form are grace, law, and promise of reward or threat of judgment. Yahweh's saving act for His people is stated first, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt . . ." (Exodus 20:2). This is followed by the law, Israel's proper response to God's act, "Thou shalt . . ." (Exodus 20:3 ff.). The law includes also promise of reward and threat of penalty, which have to do with law enforcement (20: 5-7, 12).

From the viewpoint of the ancient Near East, these main parts of the covenant are the chief concerns of government. The covenant has sometimes been called "the kingship covenant." The king in the Near East was commander in chief of the military forces to protect the state from the outside enemy, and the head of the police force to maintain internal order. Yahweh's act of grace was His act of war (not Israel's) against the external enemy, Egypt. His gift of the great principles of law, including their promise of reward and threat of punishment, has to do with internal order.

When we add the fact of the kingly structure of the covenant to the fact that its closest

analogy is the international suzerain-vassal treaty, we see that the coming of Yahweh at Sinai was not merely a self-revelation, but the coming of God to rule over His people. This corresponds to our discovery above concerning the institutions of Israel, the tabernacle, and ark of testimony.

This kingdom of God was different from all other governments, ancient or modern, in that it was not founded upon "blood and soil," an act rising "from below," but upon God's coming, an act "from above." God's act of war, upon which Israel was founded, was an act of grace, Yahweh's gift to His people. The law itself was not based upon an act of self-interest, but was founded upon Yahweh's grace to which Israel was to respond with obedience. Because of this unique nature of law, there are principles of law here which a state would never make, and if it would make them, could never enforce. How could a state enforce "Thou shalt not covet"?[17]

C. The Covenant and Worship

In considering the relationship between covenant and worship we note that the coming of Yahweh at Sinai was a worship service in and of itself. It formed, in fact, the pattern for Israel's worship. The day is called in Deuteronomy "the day of assembly" (*ekklesia*, 9:10; 10:4; 18:16—the word used in the New Testament

for the church). The Word of God was proclaimed, the Word of grace and law, of promise and threat. To this proclamation the people responded in word and ceremony (Exodus 24). This is the essence of worship.

Was this worship service at Sinai regularly repeated in some ceremony of rededication to the covenant? It was repeated after the covenant had been broken by worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32—34). A covenant was made at Shechem, which followed the same general pattern of grace and law (Joshua 24). There seems to have been a rededication to covenant by each new generation, with the change of leadership from Moses to Joshua (Deuteronomy 31; Joshua 1), from Joshua to his successor (Joshua 23), from Samuel to Saul (1 Samuel 12), from David to Solomon (1 Chronicles 22—29).[18] Again there were special periods of revival when the covenant was proclaimed anew, as at Ezra's reform (Nehemiah 9; 10). The practice was alive even in New Testament times, as witnessed by the covenant renewal service held yearly at Qumran (the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls).[19] On the basis of Deuteronomy 31:9-13, it may be that the making of covenant was celebrated every seventh year (some would say every year) at the feast of the tabernacles.

D. The Covenant Form as the Core of Worship

Whatever one may hold about renewal of covenant, there can be little doubt that the covenant provides the pattern for the worship forms of the Bible. For example, for the offering of the firstfruits at the Feast of Weeks, the liturgy begins with the recital of what God has done for His people. It ends with the presentation of the gift of the firstfruits, as required by law (Deuteronomy 26:5-10). In such a context law is not conceived as legalistic, but is a response to grace. The covenant form also underlies the song of Deborah in which Yahweh comes in a theophany of storm as at Sinai. The hymn ends with a blessing and curse (Judges 5). In Psalm 78, Israel breaks the law, despite the saving grace of God (cf. vv. 5 ff.; 17 ff.; 32 ff.; 40 ff.; 56 ff.). The poem ends with Yahweh's new act of grace, the election of David and Zion (vv. 65-72).

Closely related to the covenant is the form of the legal trial used by the prophets. Like a prosecuting attorney the prophet made his indictment: while Yahweh was faithful in His covenant acts,. Israel had broken covenant in her response (cf. Micah 4:1-8). The liturgical form of this material suggests its adaptability to use in worship.

A German scholar Artur Weiser points out the relationship of various types of psalms to the

"Covenant Festival of Yahweh."[20] He argues that this festival was held in early Israel as a New Year Festival, the Feast of Tabernacles. Whatever one may think of his thesis, one can only be impressed by the way the psalms take up the various covenant themes. As he points out, worship consists of two parts: (1) the action and Word of God and (2) the response of the congregation in prayer, praise, and decision. The response presupposes Yahweh's act of salvation.

The theme of Yahweh's coming in self-revelation, as at Mount Sinai, is found in songs such as Judges 5:4; Deuteronomy 33:2; and Psalm 18: 8 ff. This theme is closely related to Yahweh's kingship as seen above, an emphasis found in Psalms 93; 96; 97; 98; 99.

Calling upon the name of Yahweh is an important theme of prayer, the name revealed in the Sinai covenant: "I am Yahweh your God. . . ."

The recital of Yahweh's saving acts is a major theme of the psalms, a recital which calls forth the response of hymnic praise (Psalms 66; 81; 89; 106; 107; etc.).

This recital of God's acts for His people is also a favorite theme of biblical prayer (Genesis 32:9 ff.; Jeremiah 32:17 ff.; Daniel 9:4 ff.). This recital forms the basis for petition in time of need.

These recitals often include the recognition

of the enemy of Yahweh. For example, the song of Miriam (or Moses) at the Red Sea is Yahweh's victory hymn against Pharaoh and his armies (Exodus 15:1-21). This emphasis of Yahweh against the governments of this world is found in the liturgy of the Passover Festival (Exodus 12). This emphasis is in contrast with the emphasis of the religious myths of Canaan and Mesopotamia, where the chief enemy of the god is another god. In the entire account of the exodus (Exodus 1—15) the enemy of Yahweh is Pharaoh; the gods of Egypt are mentioned only once (12:12).

These gods are the impersonation of the impersonal powers behind the throne. The governments and social-economic structures are the chief points at which these impersonal powers rule in this world. If the coming of God is not a mere self-revelation or incarnation but His coming to rule, by its very nature His rule will find itself in conflict with the kingdoms of this world. This is a delicate point and must not degenerate into another nationalism, as it often did in Israel and as it threatened to do in the first-century church (Romans 13).

This conflict of the kingdom of God against the kingdoms of this world is found throughout the Bible, in the New Testament as well as in the Old. When the church neglects this conflict, she loses her relevancy. May it be that this important aspect of worship has been lost

to the church because of her historic alliances with the state? Perhaps we need to listen to such off-beat sects as Jehovah's Witnesses, and certainly to our own historic faith, to revive this aspect of our heritage. Some of the folk hymns of our day are a revival of this important biblical theme and might be used with profit in our hymnody. The very character of the rule of God places that rule in competition with the rulers of this world. Where is this great theme expressed in our hymnody and prayers?

Another theme of biblical worship is the law of Yahweh. This was a major emphasis of the Sinai covenant, as we have seen. Some psalms are praises to Yahweh for the law (Psalm 119). Others are made up of a confession that Israel has broken the law (Psalm 78).

In all of these songs and prayers Yahweh is regarded as the Leader of Israel to whom Israel responds. Israel never becomes the main theme. Israel's role is one of response. Biblical worship is enthusiasm for Yahweh.

Another worship type of the Bible is preaching. By preaching I mean the verbal attempt to effect Israel's behavior in line with covenant law by an appeal to covenant grace. An example of what is probably a priestly type of preaching is the Book of Deuteronomy. The book is composed of three speeches or sermons. Underlying this simple outline of three speeches is an outline of content which follows

the covenant pattern: the recital of the acts of God, law (both the basic covenant law, chapter 5, and a law code 12 — 26), the blessing and curse, with appeals throughout to decision.

Preaching of law can happen only when there is a new concept of law, where law is to be enforced not primarily by police force but by preaching: an appeal to respond to grace, with a secondary appeal to fear of the consequences if the worshiper refuses to respond. The radical nature of biblical faith becomes most evident at this point of law. While the law codes of the Near East hooked into government and were enforced by human administration, law in Israel hooked into covenant, the political leadership of God, and was therefore to be enforced by an appeal to the will of the people to respond to the will of God. Nowhere is such an understanding of law more needed than in the United States today.

A second type of covenant preaching is that of the prophets. The relationship of this preaching to the covenant is suggested by such a passage as Jeremiah 11:1-8. Perhaps Jeremiah had participated in a covenant service of rededication. In any case, the covenant curse forms the basis of his message. This is the theme of the majority of the prophetic oracles. The message of the great prophets was that Israel had broken the covenant and the curse had already been pronounced. Israel must now

change her course that Yahweh might also change His, that judgment which is already on its way may be averted, and that Israel might have blessing instead.

E. The Prophetic Office

We close this discussion of worship forms with a short discussion of the prophetic office. This office was obviously important to biblical worship, but it was not fitted into the worship institutions as set forth in the Sinai passage. Our method will be to examine scattered biblical passages which nevertheless have important agreement in regard to certain fundamental points.

Let us begin with the discussion of the worship institutions in the Sinai passage, the discussion of the ark. The ark was to be set in the most holy place of the tabernacle. Its seat symbolized the rule of God at whose feet was placed the covenant (25:10-22). At this ark Yahweh would meet with Moses to speak to him "of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel." In this passage are brought together (1) the ark, symbolizing the rule of God, (2) the covenant, (3) and Moses. Moses was to receive from God the new commandment, which obviously must be in line with the covenant which lay at Yahweh's feet (this is the beginning of the concept of canon).

Moses had no office within the worship in-

stitutions of Israel. He nevertheless functioned there in relation to covenant law, as well as prior to the institution of worship at Sinai itself as covenant mediator. His mediating position was secondary—in the first instance not even mediating the covenant itself (Exodus 20: 18-20); the covenant was unmediated between Yahweh and His people, of whom Moses was a part. The authority of Moses lay not in his office (as contrasted to the priest), but in his call by Yahweh, whose Word he bore as divine messenger to Pharaoh and his own people (Exodus 3 and 4).

Was there a continuity of this function of Moses as messenger? Deuteronomy 18:15 ff., says that there was: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren—him shall you heed—just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of assembly. . . ." Here the prophet is given the function which Moses had before the ark: "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him" (18:18).

Let us now examine the prophetic materials. At his call, Samuel "was lying down within the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was." There he received the message from the Lord to Eli. After this narrative the generalization is made, "And Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and let none of

his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord." Here are brought together the ark, the call, the messenger who received and conveyed the commandment, and the designation of prophet.

In Isaiah's call (Isaiah 6) the throne of Yahweh, His kingship, the seraphim and temple are brought together. The ark may well be the object at the base of Isaiah's vision of the throne, a vision enlarged to include the heavens. This vision includes the prophet's commission as Yahweh's messenger with His commandment to His people.

Jeremiah (chapter 1) tells also about a prophetic call. In this call Jeremiah is designated a prophet to the nations over whom he is placed. The ark is not mentioned but the passage can be understood only in relation to the kingship of Yahweh. He commissions his prophet to go forth as His messenger with His commandment to the nations.

The call of Ezekiel begins with a vision of the ark. This time the ark is on wheels and is enlarged to include the firmament as Yahweh's throne. Again Yahweh's messenger was sent forth with His commandment (Ezekiel 1—3).

In summary, the kingship covenant preceded the institution of worship, since it was the foundation of Israel's government as the people of God. While it had authority over and formed

worship, it nevertheless was housed within the institution of worship. This matches the function of the prophet, who was related directly by God's call to all Israel. While the prophet often associated himself and his message with the worship institutions of Israel, he nevertheless superseded them. In this tradition Jesus openly and without hesitation placed Himself, though He saw Himself as greater than even the prophets (Luke 20:9-18).

F. The Adjustment of the Covenant

There are two major adjustments of the Mosaic covenant in the Old Testament as expressly stated in the Bible. The first was made when Israel entered the land (Deuteronomy, the "Second Law"). This adjustment may have been connected with the covenant at Shechem, where new peoples were added to Israel (Joshua 24). It is likely that this adjusted covenant formed the basis for the period of the Judges.

The second adjustment of the covenant was more serious. This was the adjustment to kingship, which the prophetic party saw as the rejection of the kingship of Yahweh (1 Samuel 8). This adjustment affected worship rather radically, as is evident from many psalms (cf. Psalm 2). These psalms can be used by the New Testament church only as they are reinterpreted (cf. Acts 4:25-28).

The prophetic party first opposed this ad-

justment of covenant to kingship. Later, the writer of the history of the kings saw every king of the Northern Kingdom as a rebel against Yahweh's rule. Yahweh opposed these kings by sending against them His prophets, His messengers who carried His Word of judgment. The prophet Hosea saw this adjustment as the kingdom of man in rebellion against the kingdom of God.

On the other hand, in the Southern Kingdom the prophets accepted kingship as a new act of God for Israel. The "king," however, could not be like any other Near Eastern king. He had to accept the fact that Yahweh alone was the true King in Israel, that the law was Yahweh's law, and that the central officer of Yahweh was His messenger, the prophet. When none of the kings answered the constitutional requirement for leadership of God's people, the prophets proclaimed that someday a new King would arise. This King would have spiritual and moral, rather than martial characteristics (Isaiah 9; 12).

Another prophet saw hope for the future in terms of a Servant of Yahweh commissioned to proclaim not merely to Israel but to the nations the commandment of Yahweh. By this Servant's suffering, death, and resurrection, rather than by martial conquest, God would win the nations to His kingdom.

Jeremiah dared to proclaim that the old

covenant itself was inadequate. He looked forward to a new covenant in which Yahweh's law would be written upon the heart (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Ezekiel was equally as radical when he said that to obey the law of Yahweh Israel must be given a new heart. Their point was not that the Old Testament needed to be changed in its intention, but that to fulfill its intention man would need a radically new character and motivation. Only in terms of such criticism can we understand the new covenant and the life and worship of the New Testament church.

II. The New Testament

A. The Order of Meetings

We have no clear idea of the order of meetings of the churches of New Testament times.[21] Both Jesus and Paul participated in the synagogue services (Luke 4:16 ff.; Acts 13:13 ff.). Jesus read in the synagogue from the prophets, made an exposition of the passage, and proclaimed it as fulfilled in His ministry.

The church made no immediate break from synagogue or temple, but these meetings were supplemented by meetings of their own. The disciples at Jerusalem met in "the upper room" where they "devoted themselves to prayer" (Acts 1). They were "attending the temple together" and "breaking bread in their homes"

(Acts 2:43 ff.). They met for prayer in their homes (Acts 12:12 ff.).

When Paul withdrew from the synagogue at Ephesus, he "argued daily" in a private hall (Acts 19:9). At Troas the disciples "were gathered together to break bread." Paul spoke to them, prolonging "his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

The writer of the Book of Revelation was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). This may suggest the importance of the first day of the week as the day the congregation met, congregations to whom He sent His Revelation to be read in their assembly.

B. The Messianic Character of the New Worship

The New Testament was a revival of covenant religion. Law for the Jews at the time of Jesus had largely fallen out of the covenant, or at least had little relationship to grace. This was true not because the Jews had deserted their ancient faith. After the fall of Jerusalem (587 BC) they had to ask themselves, "Where is the salvation history?" In answer, the prophets pointed to Yahweh's new saving act in the future. But the return of the Jews to Palestine in the time of Cyrus was never proclaimed as God's new act of redemption which fulfilled the promise of the fathers. Ezra confessed that the Jews who had returned to Palestine were slaves to the Persians and were "in great

distress" (Nehemiah 9:37). This was not changed in the time of the Romans. The Jewish synagogue emphasized the law as the foundation of its community life.

In this situation the New Testament disciples proclaimed the Christ event as the new, decisive act of God in salvation history. The event fulfilled the promise of the prophets (Acts 13: 16-41). This proclamation to unbelievers was their understanding of themselves (Acts 2:29 ff.). They were the people of the Messiah. They confessed that "Jesus is Lord." They proclaimed that He was at the right hand of God, the place of authority in the universe. His authority also was with them since He was with them in the Spirit.

C. The Political Character of Worship

As in the Old Testament, the worship of the New Testament disciples had a political character. By the term "political character" we do not mean the politics of this world, a power politics based on coercion. It was rather a politics of God,[22] whose law for the new community was founded upon the gospel, God's act of selfless love for mankind.

It is a mistake to regard Christian worship primarily as individual piety or to seek its analogies in examples of individual pagan piety. Its analogies should be sought in the official state or city-state worship of the

times, just as an understanding of worship today demands an orientation in this direction. New Testament worship received this character from the Old Testament. Its break with official religions is rooted back in that history, and can be understood only in the light of that history. This break is so fundamental and important to the history of mankind that it has been one of the chief issues of history. If this political character is lost, the essential significance and relevance of Christian worship and faith are lost.

This political orientation is found even in the private prayers of Jesus. These prayers happened at moments of crisis in His ministry. He retired from Capernaum to pray before announcing His preaching tour (Mark 1:35-38). He spent the night in prayer before He chose the Twelve (Luke 6:12-16). He withdrew to the hills to pray after He had fed the five thousand (Mark 6:46), an event connected with the attempt of the people to make Him king (John 6:15). Jesus prayed in Gethsemane before His arrest (Mark 14:36, 39), and again at His execution (Mark 15:34). The fact that these prayers were at critical moments in Jesus' ministry suggests that even these private prayers had to do with His ministry for the kingdom of God.

The prayer which Jesus gave to His disciples is not designed for the individual but for

the corporate worship of the community (Matthew 6:9 ff.; Luke 11:2 ff.).[23] It is a prayer not of an individual but of a people, whose sense of peoplehood is expressed in the plural pronouns "our" and "us." It is the corporate prayer of a people whose first concern is not for themselves but for the political leadership of God in the world:

> Thy kingdom come,
> Thy will be done,
> On earth as it is in heaven.

Prayer for forgiveness suggests the new openness of this community toward God and fellow citizens. Prayer for bread suggests that those who give themselves completely to God's political activity can rely on Him to add "all these things" to them. This prayer of Jesus stands in contrast to the prayers of the "Gentiles" which know no great concern, even when elevated, to free them from isolation and egocentricity.[24]

Christian prayer demands a double reorientation: the individual must orient himself to the covenant community, and the covenant community must orient itself to the rule of God. Because of these demands, Christian prayer has been called the supreme moral act. "Pray for us" was not a demand by Paul to pray merely for his personal need, but for that need with which he and his friends identified: "that the

word of the Lord may speed on and triumph" (2 Thessalonians 3:1).[25]

Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This gathering together in the name of Christ is the worshiping congregation, in whose person and through whose spirit the kingship of God becomes a reality here and now. This gathering took on with the disciples of New Testament times a spatial characteristic to become "the church of God at Corinth," "at Colossae," and so on.

The political character of the church is also suggested by such terms as "body" and "temple." The New Testament finally lays to rest such realities as the temple when it uses this figure of the people of God themselves.[26] This radical reorientation is begun already in the Old Testament with its primary emphasis on God and people. The prophets portrayed the history of Israel as God's relationship with a son (Hosea 11), a bride (Ezekiel 16), and a vineyard (Isaiah 5). So far as we know, the use of such figures to portray the life story of a people is unique in the ancient Near East. This usage undoubtedly forms the background for the understanding of similar terms in the New Testament (cf. John 15:1-11).

Jesus used the figure of a building in His Sermon on the Mount.[27] He declared His teaching to be the secure foundation upon

which man must build (Matthew 7:24-27). In Peter's confession the image is changed somewhat. Jesus will build His church upon the foundation of such men as Peter who confess Him as the promised political leader (Luke 9:18 ff.). In his letter to Corinth, Paul says that he was commissioned by God to lay the foundation, Jesus Christ, upon which others must then build (3:10 ff.). In Ephesians 2:19, the foundation is made up of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom Paul's readers were also built "for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Such a figure arises not as an abstraction, but out of a worshiping congregation.[28] The figure of a building appears again when Paul speaks of the worship assembly in 1 Corinthians 14. The gift of the individual in the assembly is to be exercised for "building up the church."

The figure of the body is used of the worship assembly in Ephesians 4.[29] By "speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way unto him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love." The point is that the whole body makes growth from Christ by the proper functioning of each part,

who are joined and knit together in Christ, who is the Head. No "leader" is over against or apart from the body, but each makes his contribution within the body in terms of the gift which Christ has given him.

If this seems far removed from the body-politic of a Greek city-state, this is just the point. This is a new kind of body-politic which began with Moses and was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is a community founded upon grace, ruled by the God of grace who has appeared in Jesus Christ, whose fundamental structure is the structure of worship. This structure includes "bishops and deacons" whom Paul sometimes lifted out in his introduction to his letters. They were not to act as though they were leaders within legal structures, however. "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves" (Luke 22:25). The "bishops and deacons" were to exercise their gifts not from legal structures set over against the community, but within the structure of the worshiping community, along with the other gifts which the ascended Lord had given to the church.

That worship is a political matter is also suggested by the preaching of law. Law is essential to the maintenance of community.

Without law, either written or unwritten, community cannot exist. Biblical faith does not do away with law nor with the necessity of law. Biblical law is even more demanding than state law, as biblical law is more inward. "Thou shalt not covet" would not make much sense as the legal code of a state. Nor does the law: "Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." As Jesus has said, the first and second commandments are love to God and neighbor, laws which a state can neither implement nor enforce.

How is such law implemented in the new politics? It is proclaimed and enforced in worship. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was not given as a law to be enforced within legal structures, but as a law within the structure of discipleship. It was law which was preached. After proclaiming law, Jesus called His hearers to decision by setting forth the two ways, the way of obedience and the way of disobedience.

The preaching of law is also characteristic of a typical Pauline epistle, such as the Book of Romans. In the first part of the letter Paul makes an exposition of the grace of God, God's act for man in Jesus Christ. In chapter 12 and following, Paul exhorts his followers to respond to this grace by a life of obedience. This is law as transformed by the Bible. It is a completion of the fundamental break with

law set within coercive legal structures, a break made already in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is in fact the only place where one can find in ancient literature a comparable literary type, law which is preached.

As in the Old Testament, so also in the New: the chief antagonists of the biblical faith are the governments of this world. This conflict is evident already in the birth stories of Jesus. Matthew tells of wise men from the East who came to worship the Child, whom Herod the king then plotted to kill.

This conflict is also connected with worship in the temptations of Jesus (Matthew 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-8). When Jesus was tempted by the "authority and glory" of the kingdoms of this world, He quoted the Deuteronomist's exposition of the first commandment, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve" (Deuteronomy 6:13).

It may seem strange that Jesus would reply to the temptation to found a messianic kingdom by the coercive politics of this world by quoting a passage on worship. Yet this is a good exegesis of the first commandment, for in its original context it also is joined to the thought of a kingdom ruled by the politics of this world: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." "Before me" refers to Israel assembled

before Yahweh in worship. Egypt was the antagonist of Yahweh, whose gods were the personified powers of those impersonal structures which upheld the social and political order of Egypt. It is not without significance that the only Near Eastern analogy to the first commandment is found in the area of politics rather than religion. The point of the first commandment is that we are to worship not the impersonal powers which uphold the orders of this world, but the Personal Power who overcomes these powers in the establishment of a political order which is personal, in which response to the love of God is the love of man. The command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" is also the Deuteronomist's exposition of the first commandment.

The temptation of Jesus corresponds to this picture exactly, except that for Him the impersonal powers are united in the one personalized, impersonal power. Jesus realized that He could not take over the coercive "authority and glory" of the governments of this world except by worship of this impersonal power. One cannot worship both the Personal Power and the impersonal powers, for the Personal Power has freed us from the "house of bondage."

The conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world is reflected in the worship literature of the New Testament church. When Peter and John were released

from prison, the church "lifted their voices together to God and said, 'Sovereign Lord, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit,

> "Why did the Gentiles rage,
> and the peoples image vain things?
> The kings of the earth set themselves in array,
> and the rulers were gathered together,
> against the Lord and against his Anointed"—

for truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus.' "

Gerhard Delling says that this prayer "sets the accidental concerns of the moment in the great line of salvation-history, from the creation (in which the whole plan was already conceived), through the promise and fulfillment, to the eschatological oppression of the present time. . . ."[30] This setting forms the background for their prayer for boldness to disobey the

present court order, an order which continued the age-old conflict, a conflict brought to its climax in the death of Jesus.

This prayer of the church not only set the conflict in continuity with the past. It was the church's acceptance that the conflict of Peter and John was not a private conflict of these two persons with the world powers, but was the conflict of the total community in the service of its Lord. It was an expression that the acts of boldness which were to follow were not mere acts of isolated individuals, but were corporate acts of the covenant community.

This conflict between the rule of God and the powers of this world is portrayed in the Book of Revelation (cf. chapter 12). The book looks to the time when the kingdom of the world will become "the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15). With this announcement the twenty-four elders "fell on their faces and worshiped. . . ." It has been suggested that many of the worship forms of the book were used in the worship of the church at the end of the first century (cf. 11:17, 18; 16:5-7; etc.).

D. Worship Forms in the New Testament

The New Testament sees worship as confined not merely to the meeting of the assembly. Perhaps the strongest statement is found in James: "Religion [i.e., piety] that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit

orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world (1:27).

By such statements the New Testament is not saying that the assembly of the congregations is to be eliminated any more than that Old Testament passages said this (cf. Matthew 5: 23, 24; James 3:1-7). What the world needs is not a mere individualistic ethic. The real crimes of history have not been the crimes of individuals but group crimes. The real ethical problem of the human race is that individuals of themselves oftentimes do not seem so bad, and in fact may show real compassion, while the group at the point of its political relationships may do things which its individuals deplore. The fact that worship is oriented toward community means that biblical faith attacks primarily the political problem. The "righteous" individualist is ultimately oriented toward the state or some social or ethnic group which is subject to the impersonal powers. It is only in the act of corporate worship that the structure of the new politics, the rule of God, is portrayed, from which its structure may challenge and to some extent transform the structures of this world.

Jesus said, "You [plural] are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14). This corporate nature of the disciples becomes visible when they gather, as they were gathered before Jesus on the mount.

Their discipleship becomes evident when in their gatherings they extol their Leader, acknowledge before Him their failures, listen to His words, and seek to know His will for daily living as they challenge and invade the structures of this world.

An examination of worship forms in the New Testament reveals the corporate nature of the biblical faith. Since we have already discussed many of these, we will merely list some of them with a few remarks.[31]

Creedal Statements:

Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:11).

Jesus is the Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Jesus is the Christ (Messiah, 1 John 5:1).

Jesus is the Son of God (i.e., Messiah, 1 John 4:15).

These confessions were not only positive, but had negative connotations. That is, they were a denial of other messiahs and other lords (i.e., Caesar).

Hymns:

Ephesians 1:17

1 Timothy 3:16

Philippians 2:6-11

Romans 11:33-35

These hymns, like hymns of the Old Testament, repeat events of salvation history. There is really very little difference between the bib-

lical hymn and a confession of faith. Unlike the confession, the hymn was not a legally-binding act but an expression of praise and adoration.

Sermons:

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 ff.) was a sermon spoken mainly to Jesus' disciples. Since it emphasized the new law of the kingdom, it may be thought of as exhortation. The Sermon ends with an appeal to decision, which suggests how difficult it is to distinguish exhortation from preaching, proclamation to an outsider designed to lead him to decision.

The sermon of Jesus at Nazareth (Luke 4) was made mainly to the synagogue rather than to His disciples. Jesus proclaimed that that which had been spoken by the prophet was fulfilled in Him.

The sermons in the *Acts* were delivered to persons other than disciples and were designed to add men to the congregation. Some of them occurred with the church present (Acts 2) and may well describe what sometimes went on in the assembly when seekers were present (1 Corinthians 14:16; James 2:2 ff.). Like the hymns the content of these sermons is the salvation history: that God has come in Christ, as He had promised, and that with this coming a new era has begun. In light of this coming, men are called to decide for Him. The importance of preaching is stated in Romans 10:3.

The Epistles:

The epistles were written to be read in the assemblies and therefore are the best examples of exhortation or preaching in the assembly. The typical epistle of Paul with its exposition of God's act in Christ and the appeal to respond to grace by obedient behavior is little different in form from the sermon of the Old Testament.

Prayer:

For a discussion of prayer, see above, pp. ~~19, 23f.~~ 39ff, 46ff.

Communion and Baptism:

Eating of bread and drinking of wine may have been practiced weekly or even more often. From the beginning it was probably the climax of a common meal, but because of abuses may later have been practiced without it. The words accompanying the ceremony suggest that the rite was a commemoration of covenant. The emphasis was upon the past and the future, the death and coming of Jesus, with the present act of eating a proclamation of the reality of Christ for the world. The presence of Christ is not automatically guaranteed in this ceremony. The locus of His presence is not the consecrated host, but the gathered congrega-

tion who experience His coming anew in their eating together. Communion is the repeated commemoration of covenant, while baptism celebrated the once-for-all event of entrance into the covenant community.

All of these forms find their unity of meaning in the covenant form. It matters little whether the word "covenant" is used or not. The reality of God and people which comes into being by God's coming in Jesus to save and to lead His responding people is essentially no different in form from the old covenant, after which it is appropriately named the "new covenant." Greek forms of worship have had a peripheral influence on New Testament forms, but have not changed their essential content. They have not changed the personal covenant form for impersonal magical or mystical relationships.

Conclusion

A typical understanding of worship in the Old Testament is that in the beginning it was something of a state-church worship, and that worship broke out of this framework to become an individual concern with the prophets. It is only with the prophets, according to this thought, that we have individual personal worship set over against the institutional or priestly type. The New Testament and Protestant religion is held to have followed this prophetic type. But today we know that the

prophets were a revival of the ancient Mosaic worship. They were not against institutions as such, but against certain kinds of institutions, or shall we say "institutionalism" and the false cult of nationalism.

Israel's fundamental break from the state-church types of the Middle East began not with the prophets but at Sinai when Yahweh came to rule directly over His people. The institutionalized form of His rule was that of the kingship covenant which found its analogy in the international feudal treaties of the Hittites, though at crucial points it is in contrast to such treaties. This covenant form provided the structure for Yahweh's political leadership of Israel. Though housed within the worship institution of Israel, it was nevertheless the authority over all Israel, including the worship institution itself. This covenant will of Yahweh was proclaimed by the inspired prophet who stood in the succession of Moses.

This orientation of the Old Testament faith is decisive for the understanding of the New. The kingdom of God is the rule of the human community by the Personal Power instead of by the community itself by means of its own government, supported and bound by the impersonal powers. The first commandment therefore has to do with worship: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." On the positive side, worship is enthusiasm for the Personal Power. He has

delivered us from the impersonal powers by certain decisive historical acts, and is the Political Leader of His worshiping community.

This covenant form provides the structure of the community's worship. It includes the recital of the salvation history as fulfilled in Jesus Christ, in which the community participates by His Spirit. This polarizes the life of every individual forming of them the community of one body. Genuine participation in worship forms, especially prayer, is the supreme moral act. In this act the worshiper comes out from the isolation of his own concerns into the shared concern of the kingdom of God.

Many of our worship forms may be borrowed from the secular forms of our own day. Filled with the wine of the new content, however, these secular forms will experience a shattering, a transformation in line with the personal nature of the covenant. Only superficial aspects of the old form will remain.

Covenant worship is not the worship of a totalitarian community. This was the kind of community from which early Israel was broken away and was challenged with the "Thou shalt" of individual responsibility and freedom. The symbol used of the New Testament church is a body and a building. Yet the corporate worship signified by these symbols is one in which each member makes his response to Christ the Head, and makes his contribution to the ex-

tent of his gift for building up the body. As in the church at Corinth, the danger is that the members have not submitted themselves to the disciplines of prayer and praise. Filled with the spirit of individualism they build themselves up to the confusion of the body. This danger must be overcome not by injecting alien structures of control, but by exhortation, brotherly rebuke, and an attempt of the body to meet the unsatisfied need of the member.

The radical nature of the biblical faith is evident precisely at the point of worship: the affirmation that community is founded upon and maintained by Yahweh's act of grace to which the community responds by corporate acts of praise (faith) and surrender, the acts of worship. The church must operate by structures which are founded upon grace and which receive direction from the volitional act of the worshiping community. This means that worship must be central to the church and is in fact the foundational political structure from which the congregation involves itself in this world. The church should not regard itself as disestablished, but as Yahweh's establishment, a this-worldly community brought into existence by Yahweh's act of grace in Jesus Christ. To Him the church responds in free commitment, discerning and doing His will in its corporate existence, invading from through grace (worship) the alien structures of this world.

Notes

1. Usually a paper will begin with a careful definition of what it is about. However, to define too narrowly what one is looking for in the Bible may mean that the biblical message will be missed if it does not fit into the definition. We therefore take the broader approach out of which then will come, hopefully, a more careful statement.

2. Luke 1:1-4.

3. Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Revelation 1:1-4.

4. Cf. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions* (1961), pp. 348 ff.

5. Cf. S. H. Hooke, *Babylonian and Assyrian Religion* (1962), pp. 49 f.

6. Rene Dussaud, *Les Decouvertes de Ras Shamra (Ugarit) et l'Ancien Testament* (1941), pp. 180-183; John Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan* (1957), pp. 94-111, 140 ff.

7. de Vaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 415 ff.

8. Cf. R. J. Thompson, *Penitence and Sacrifice in Early Israel Outside the Levitical Law* (1963).

9. Cf. H. H. Rowley, "The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament" in *From Moses to Qumran* (1963), pp. 67-107. Also "Ritual and the Hebrew Prophets," *ibid.*, pp. 111-138; N. H. Snaith, "Sacrifices in the Old Testament," *Vetus Testamentum*, VII (1957), pp. 308-317.

10. H. H. Rowley, "The Meaning of Worship" in *The Rediscovery of the Old Testament* (1946), pp. 231-259.

11. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (1957), pp. 34 ff.

12. G. Ernest Wright, "The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East," in *Biblical Archaeologist* VII, pp. 41-44.

(1) "The Egyptian Temple," Harold H. Nelson, pp. 44-53.

(2) "The Mesopotamian Temple," A. Leo Oppenheim, pp. 54-63.

(3) "The Temple in Palestine-Syria," G. Ernest Wright, pp. 65-77.
(4) "The Temple, Synagogue, and Church," Floyd V. Filson, pp. 77-88.

13. Cf. Frank M. Cross, Jr., "The Tabernacle," *Biblical Archaeologist* X (1947), pp. 45-68.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 65 ff.

15. Cf. de Vaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 300 f.

16. Cf. G. E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East.* The Ten Commandments in their present form resemble this treaty structure. Because of their presuppositions, some would challenge whether the Ten Commandments had this form originally. Cf. Eduard Nielsen, *The Ten Commandments in New Perspective.* For those who share such presuppositions, this article is broad enough to include also Joshua 24 as a base. There is broad agreement among scholars that this passage in its original form resembled the Hittite treaty. Cf. Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant.*

17. Some would see the word translated "covet" originally meaning a "thoughtful aggressive act" rather than a mere desire, a meaning which developed later. Cf. Henning Graf Reventlow, *Gebot und Predigt im Dekalog* (1962), pp. 85 ff. However, this interpretation has been challenged.

18. Cf. Klaus Baltzer, *Das Bundesformular* (1960), pp. 71-79.

19. Cf. Manfred Weise, *Kultzeiten und Kultischer Bundesschluss in der "Ordensregel" von Toten Meer.*

20. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms, a Commentary* (1962), pp. 23-95.

21. Cf. C. C. Richardson, "Worship in NT Times, Christian" in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. IV, pp. 883-894.

22. Martin Buber uses the word "theo-political." Cf. Buber, *The Kingship of God* (1967), p. 136.

23. Cf. Josef Maria Nielsen, *Gebet und Gottesdienst im Neuen Testament* (1963), pp. 29 ff.

24. For this statement I am indebted to Gerhard Delling, *Worship in the New Testament*, p. 114. The reader will see that I am heavily indebted to Delling for this discussion on the New Testament. This book is by far the best work on New Testament worship which I have examined. Its weakness is an inadequate understanding of Old Testament worship.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

26. Cf. William Klassen, "Some Aspects of Worship in the New Testament," (unpublished paper), p. 5. The same is true of animal sacrifice, *ibid.* pp. 1 ff. See my comments on sacrifice in the Old Testament above, IA2. I think therefore that Gerhard

Delling goes much too far when he says, "The new reality in Christ, by which the New Testament world lives, leads to a complete transformation of the conception of worship, indeed a new creation" (Delling, p. 8). In my viewpoint there is something new, but at the same time there is a continuity with Old Testament worship. Too much emphasis on discontinuity inevitably leads to paganization.

27. Cf. Delling, pp. 16 ff.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Delling, p. 177.
30. Delling, p. 123.
31. For most of these I am indebted to Delling, cf. pp. 84 ff.

The Author

Millard Lind was born in Bakersfield, California, to Norman and Sarah Lind, the seventh of their nine sons. He grew up on a farm in the Willamette Valley near Albany, Oregon, leaving there at the age of twenty to enter Hesston College, Hesston, Kansas.

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He is the father of six children and foster father of a handicapped child. He is an active member of the College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

"Christian worship should be defined as the celebration of the rule of God as experienced in the life of the new community in Christ. In worship this rule of God in the life of the community is portrayed, proclaimed, and enforced. Worship thus becomes integral to a new theopolitical structure, which knows a social ethic quite different from that which is rooted in the economic and political structures of this world," says the author in the prefactory section entitled, "My Pilgrimage."

He begins with the institution of worship founded by God at Mt. Sinai and traces its acceptance and rejection down through history. When Jesus came, He set up a new kingdom with the Sermon on the Mount as its charter. However, the basic foundations of the worship of the true God remained. Sacrifice, fellowship, and proclamation took on new forms but not a new message.

The believer's life was still to be one of obedience lived not under law but under the grace of God. The theopolitical organization and law that guided the Israelites under God continued but in different forms. As in the time of Israel, the kingdom of God today is in direct opposition to the kingdoms of this world.

This book will establish in the mind of the believer clearly and forcibly the distinction between the two types of kingdoms and the nature of worship in each.

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