

## **The worship of the church**

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*adheres to the orthodox faith*

# **The worship of the church**

*An Exploration of True Christian Worship,  
based on Biblical and Historical Narrative*

Moran Mor Athanasius Yohan Metropolitan

Faith and Tradition Series

The Worship of the Church  
(English)  
Faith and Tradition Series

by  
Moran Mor Athanasius Yohan Metropolitan  
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First Impression 2016  
Second Impression 2017

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Produced by  
Liturgical Commission Authorized by the Metropolitan

Published by  
Believers Eastern Church Synod Secretariat  
St. Thomas Nagar, Thiruvalla - 689 103, Kerala, India.  
[www.bec.org](http://www.bec.org)

Printed in India.

Price ₹120.00  
BEC-FTS-006E-'17

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## Preface

*In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ✠*

We, even when we hate to admit it, are like frightened children lost in a crowd, desperate to be found, to discover a sense of hope and peace. We are part of a world filled with fear and anxiety. There is no nation that is not involved in some sort of crisis.

The church is called to be the light and salt for a troubled world. But unfortunately, the light has become dark and salt has lost its saltiness. The Western Church is now in the Post-Christian era, and the difference between the church and the world has almost vanished. It feels as if the darkness of evil is thicker than ever and the modern church, no matter what you name

it after, has become silent to the desperate cry of the multitude all around her.

For the past few years, I have been wondering about this. I have desperately been seeking the reason why we're so lost, and how we can recover ourselves, if indeed we can. I am talking about the church, the people who claim they belong to Christ, and yet have no power to influence and guide their peers.

In my humble opinion, the church at large, whether evangelical, Protestant or independent, has been deceived by Satan to a great extent: so much so that we seek to find answer by our own, man-made efforts. We must admit there is no lack of fundamentals, radical sermons, books, seminars on "How to grow churches", 'moments' that puff up and vanish. We keep on inventing new methods to answer the desperate cry in our hearts for truth, for our purpose - to find God and be His.

In this little book, I share my concerns. I also share what I hope and believe to be the answer. I draw from my experiences along this journey, as I seek to lead a Church that has now grown to nearly three million precious people, all my companions on this journey.



## P R E F A C E

The faith and traditions of Believers Eastern Church go back to those that the apostles handed down to the church fathers, and the church fathers to us. We hope, as you learn about them and how they help us to centre our lives on Jesus, that you will also be blessed with the feeling of being united to your church family. This will enrich your life in joyous ways.

Any serious student of church history knows that the holy traditions of the church, given formal form in the second century, were the result of living the faith as we know from the Holy Scriptures. The Apostles' teachings, the Creeds and the "how" of living it were meant to guard the faith, and to ensure that future generations could use that knowledge to worship in ways that will bring us closer to God.<sup>1</sup>

We must not fall prey to every whim that dilutes the Apostolic teaching given to us in the Apostles' Creed. We don't have the right to determine the faith and practice based on personal preferences. This has led to endless cults and false teaching. People who claim not to care about traditions don't understand that the apostles handed down to the church

traditions according to which they lived, following in Jesus's footsteps, as we must.<sup>2</sup>

Study the customs and traditions in any culture and you will see how their practices have been passed down from generation to generation, often in the oral tradition. Even after thousands of years, they live their "faith" through these visible acts and practice.

What is the difference between 'man's traditions' and 'holy traditions'? Man's traditions go against the Word of God, make us self-righteous like the Pharisees Jesus talked about.<sup>3</sup> Holy traditions, on the other hand, help us to draw closer to God in humility and live in submission to the Word of God: that is, we live the 'Sacramental Life'. Holy traditions never contradict the Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed of the holy church.

This is where I am convinced that we must return to the ancient path. We must look to the apostles and fathers of faith who lived during early centuries of the church, and follow their ways. For the early church with orthodox faith, work was worship. They did not segregate the spiritual and the secular. They lived the 'Sacramental Life', which meant that each

## P R E F A C E

believer is called upon to change the world for the glory of God.

The call of God to be His people and know Him through worship, through embracing the 'Sacramental Life', will put us on the path to authentic spiritual recovery.<sup>4</sup>

We become like the object we worship. For too long, much of the post-Reformation church has followed 'our own' ways. It is time to return to reality and truth, which takes repentance and humility.

My prayer and hope is that we will find our own way back to God as we choose to walk away from a noise-filled, busy, modern, man-centred Church world and follow in the footsteps of the Saints of old.

May the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be with you now and always. Amen ✠

Synod Secretariat  
November 15, 2017

✠Moran Mor Athanasius Yohan  
Metropolitan



## Introduction

*“...then the Lord said, ‘Behold I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people...’ ” - Amos 7:8*

Which way must we go?  
This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'"<sup>5</sup>

I was born and raised in Niranam, a tiny village by a riverbank in Kerala, in South India. Many coconut trees grew along the banks, leaning over the river. Young boys, including myself, used to climb halfway up the trees and leap off into the crystal clear waters underneath - beautiful, sparkling water, flowing by, clean and unpolluted.

## THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

But today if you and I went by that same river, you wouldn't believe that it could've been so wonderful and idyllic years ago. Now it's dirty and stagnant, so polluted.

But if you go to the source of the river at the foothills of the mountain where it begins, you will see the clean waters flowing downstream. But over the years, people on both sides of the river polluted the river by dumping waste into it.

The story of the church and worship of God's people is also similar.

It is impossible to see those pure waters when you look at the polluted river running through my village.

When tens of thousands of denominations and independent churches sprang up after the Reformation of Martin Luther, all claiming to be the true church, how can we know what the authentic church looks like? Is there any way to know which the true church, in faith and practice, is? Is there a plumb line, something absolute, to help us measure and test to see if they are the real?

## INTRODUCTION

The answer is Yes. Once we go back to the beginning of the church that began 2000 years ago and learn more, especially what we know from the first 100 years of the life and worship of church, we'll be closer to understanding the nature of the authentic church.

When you train somebody to detect counterfeit currency, you teach them first what authentic currency looks and feels like. After days of handling and studying the true currency notes, it's almost second nature to know when a counterfeit note come into their hands. It's more than the marks, designs, colour, etc., all of which they note; but it's more than that. It combines to tell you that it feels wrong, because it has no value.

Our world is full of imitation. The uninformed, the untrained, get deceived by many false teachings.

It is my hope that when you read this little book, you will find enough information about the nature and worship of the real church, based on the Bible and holy traditions.

Believers Eastern Church adheres to orthodox

faith and worship, which the apostles and church fathers taught and handed down to us. Worship becomes meaningful when we understand the early church.

Nothing I write here is original in any way. The hundreds of books I have studied, as well as the many well-informed and godly men who understood the ancient paths that I've listened to, have helped me find my way on this journey and be part of the ancient church.

I've tried to take some complicated issues and simplify them, in the hope that all, especially the new generation, will understand the incredible significance of knowing the importance and joy of belonging to the church that began 2000 years ago. Think of it: the prayers, creeds, sacraments, signs and response that Apostle Paul and others did in their worship, we do in ours. The way they conducted the worship, both the Word and Sacrament, the 'how' of it all, is what we got from them. Thus we are part of this one, holy, catholic and apostolic church - the timeless church. Then too by this we are entering into the reality of the 'Communion of Saints' - worshipping God along



## INTRODUCTION

with the angels and archangels and the saints in heaven.

All glory and honour to the One that sits on the throne who is worthy of all our worship and adoration.<sup>6</sup>

Peace be with you.



# Invitation to Worship



## Chapter One

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# Invitation to Worship

Growing up in a Syrian Church, with roots in the ancient orthodox faith and liturgical worship that evolved from St. James, the bishop of the Church in Jerusalem in the first century, I was deeply aware of a profound sense of mystery of God's presence. We truly felt God was the audience. Before Him the church gathered, to worship the God on the throne.

As a youngster when I left home, I got involved with the Western, postmodern, reason-based approach to spirituality and worship. The sense of mystery began to fade. It was all subject to my reason, logic and understanding. I grew to view the old worship I'd grown up with - the sense of majesty and mystery, childlike faith and

wonder - critically, and soon considered it primitive and not biblical. With the new way of looking at faith, I would judge the nature of worship using my reason. In the words of C. S. Lewis, "God in the Dock": that is, man is now in control of "God" and how he will respond to the Creator.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Robert Webber in his book "Common Roots" writes, "The man-centred nature of worship is expressed either in an overemphasis on reaching the intellectual<sup>8</sup> aspect of the worshiper or an overemphasis on triggering an emotional<sup>9</sup> response."<sup>10</sup>

During my seminary education under brilliant professors, I learned Systematic Theology, Church History, Hermeneutics, Eschatology, Philosophy, Pneumatology, Hebrew, Greek and so on. Yet, amidst all of what I came to call 'head knowledge', my heart got cold and dry. I did not think about the 'heart message' of the Bible as an invitation for me to know the awesome God and worship Him with deep reverence. For me, it came to be all about accumulating information about God. This is what happened to the Pharisees. They studied the Bible and were extreme in their 'evangelical' faith, yet they

## INVITATION TO WORSHIP

'missed' God. So Jesus told them, "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."<sup>11</sup>

Even a casual reading of the Bible will tell us of this awesome God, who dwells in the light that no man can approach, the consuming fire and Creator of the universe and how we, lost undone sinners, need to fear Him, bow down and worship Him. What happened to the fear of God and any kind of reverence to God? In some modern churches, leaning back in comfortable chairs and being entertained by a few performances on the pulpit is now called worship!

A seminarian could study the Book of Acts and even get a PhD by writing about the Holy Spirit; and yet, he may miss the call to live by the Spirit through prayer and willingness to surrender all, as did the people of God we read in the 30-year life of the early church. Theologians often become lawyers for God to defend the doctrines. But they never experience the life of the living God.

What we need is not more information about

God. The church is in desperate need to know God Himself and worship Him as a way of life.

### **Reason for Exodus**

The children of Israel lived in bondage and suffering for long years in ancient Egypt. Finally, God called Moses to be the deliverer of God's people from their suffering, abuse and slavery. What was the message God commanded Moses to give the King of Egypt, the reason why he must free the people of Israel? God said to Moses, tell Pharaoh to let the people go, "... that they may worship me in the desert."<sup>12</sup>

Think about it. From the human point of view, the more acceptable reason would be something along the lines of "I want the people to have freedom from slavery, suffering and abuse etc." But here we read that the reason for their freedom was "worship". So it is true today, too. God is looking for worshipers.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."<sup>13</sup>



## INVITATION TO WORSHIP

We learn about the early church in the Book of Acts. The Jewish people we read of knew the fear of God, and what it meant to revere God with their body, soul and spirit. It was not just about knowledge. Their lives revolved around the living God.

They gathered together around the risen Christ on Sunday. Two things were prominent in their gatherings: The Word of God and the Holy Communion. The reading and sharing of the Word of God, pointing them to the Lord in their midst; and partaking from the Holy Communion, which is the visible, tangible, reality of Christ's death and resurrection and His promise of return, brought them together in worship. They were in the Holy Presence of Living Christ. This was no casual, careless, man-centred meeting, but a deep reverence, kneeling, and bowing in the presence of the Holy Trinity. They did not go to church to be entertained by the latest emotionally stirring music or to listen to a brilliant orator. No man was the focus. They understood that they were invited to join the worship in Heaven.<sup>14</sup> They were joining with the angels and archangels and the saints before the throne in worship of the living God. God was the audience. They came

together 'to worship God'. They were not there for themselves.

### **The Winds of Change**

The Reformation, which was the beginning of the breakup of the church that created thousands of denominations, the 'higher criticism', the Liberal Theology and so on, had a huge negative effect on the worship patterns that existed until then. The pre-denomination worship of the church was orthodox in faith and practice.

From the 17th century, the way of worship in Western church changed for the most part. The pulpit, preaching and teaching became more prominent. Evangelism became the reason for church service. 'Worship gathering' was winning - or saving - souls. The pulpit became the centre of the church. The man behind the pulpit was the agent who called on the sinner to repent. Eventually, almost the entire service became about the sermon. The closing hymn was the invitation for people to come forward to be saved.

Then came the 'entertainment-oriented worship' which was promoted by Christian television.

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There were people who were stars putting on a show, and became drawing cards for crowds to gather. People came to watch, to be entertained, enjoy and be informed.

But that is not the whole story. There always were those who followed God as true worshipers, led and influenced by the desert fathers and mothers<sup>15</sup> of the orthodox faith.

This new man-centred form of worship was soon exported to other nations through television and books from the West. The simple childlike faith, the worship of the early church which was sacred and God-centred, got lost for many Protestant groups. Today, there are 42000 denominations - each claiming to be the true church. How divided and disunited we can be!

For early Christians, worship was sacred. It was an event of great joy, celebrating the Cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It was about living with great anticipation of His return, longing to be at the great marriage supper of the Lamb, in their resurrected bodies.<sup>16</sup> They worshipped here on earth as though they were among the saints and heavenly hosts in the presence of Christ on the throne.<sup>17</sup>

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If we care about the true nature of worship, we must return to the first five centuries of the early church. I have sought to learn all I can of the pure orthodox faith and practice of the early church that was given to us by the apostles, the early church fathers like St. John Chrysostom, The Archbishop of Constantinople from the early 4th century. That is why we at Believers Eastern Church adhere to the orthodox faith or ancient faith and practices of the holy church. Our faith and practice reflect this.

So, the only conclusion is that true biblical worship is God-centred. God is the audience. It is centred on the Trinity. All the people of God are priests and kings to God, called to worship the Living God. The Word and Holy Eucharist are the two most important elements in the worship. No man is to be the mediator or the head of the church. Jesus is.

All prayers of the people of God are directed to God, and they're all about God's glory. Worship in the church is ministry to God. We don't start worship on Sunday morning when we go to church. There is no beginning or end to it. Worship is everlasting. When we gather in

## INVITATION TO WORSHIP

church, we join all the host of heaven gathered  
around the throne.<sup>18</sup>

May God help us to become true worshipers of  
Him who is our Life, and for Him we live!



## Chapter Summary

**One:** Although I grew up in a church with its root in the faith and practice of the ancient church, I was later influenced by the modern independent church movement and lost the sense of deep reverence for God in worship.

**Two:** One can study and know the Bible, and yet miss knowing God and true worship.

**Three:** The reason for the deliverance of the children of Israel from their slavery in Ancient Egypt was to worship God.

**Four:** The early Christians were Jewish converts and they understood the biblical meaning of

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worship: that they gathered to meet God. God was the audience.

**Five:** By the 17th century, things began to change in the worship. It was all from the pulpit, with man being the centre of it. Teaching and entertainment became the reasons for going to church. Today, there is a desperate need to return to authentic worship.



# Meaning of Worship



## Chapter Two

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# Meaning of Worship

When God instructed Moses on how the people of God should worship Him, He went into great detail as to how the place of worship should be created, and all the items that should be in it. We read in Exodus 39:32, "Moses did all exactly as God told him." This is called the orthodox way. That makes it clear that there are no changes, no variations from the instructions that God gave Moses.

Now consider the New Testament Church: We can see that the people of God in the new covenant understood the centrality of worship - the focus and object of worship was God. We see in the early church that the roots of their worship are from the Old Testament.

There is a liturgical prayer known as 'Te Deum' (Latin for 'You are God') that can be traced back through early records to 387 AD. This prayer helps us to understand that the orthodox worship was rooted in the Word of God and in the early development of the holy traditions, right from the beginning of the holy church. The overriding theme of worship for the early church was God's transcendence, His glory and God's actions throughout the redemption story. This is a fact that has been clearly established through records going back to the first five hundred years of the church, and the liturgies of the early church fathers.

Here is the Te Deum<sup>19</sup> Prayer:

*We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.*

*All the earth doth worship thee : the Father everlasting.*

*To thee all Angels cry aloud : the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.*

*To thee Cherubim and Seraphim : continually do cry,*

*Holy, Holy, Holy : Lord God of Hosts;*

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*Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty :  
of thy glory.*

*The glorious company of the Apostles :  
praise thee.*

*The goodly fellowship of the Prophets :  
praise thee.*

*The noble army of Martyrs : praise thee.*

*The Holy church throughout all the world :  
doth acknowledge thee;*

*The Father : of an infinite Majesty;*

*Thine honourable, true : and only Son;*

*Also the Holy Ghost : the Comforter.*

*Thou art the King of Glory : O Christ.*

*Thou art the everlasting Son : of the Father.*

*When thou tookest upon thee to deliver  
man :*

*thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.*

*When thou hadst overcome the sharpness  
of death :*

*thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to  
all believers.*

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*Thou sittest at the right hand of God : in the glory of the Father.*

*We believe that thou shalt come : to be our Judge.*

*We therefore pray thee, help thy servants : whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.*

*Make them to be numbered with thy Saints: in glory everlasting.*

*O Lord, save thy people : and bless thine heritage.*

*Govern them : and lift them up for ever.*

*Day by day : we magnify thee;*

*And we worship thy Name : ever world without end.*

*Vouchsafe, O Lord : to keep us this day without sin.*

*O Lord, have mercy upon us : have mercy upon us.*

*O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us : as our trust is in thee.*

*O Lord, in thee have I trusted : let me never be confounded.*

This must call our attention to the fact that worship is primarily prayer. "Worship is a prayer of relationship in which the whole creation lauds and magnifies God the Creator and Redeemer of the world."<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, many post-Reformation churches do not understand worship as prayer. Instead, worship is seen as people gathering for fellowship, self-edification, healing and theological information.

Do we truly understand that worship is the visible and invisible expression of God's glory? It's a journey to gain greater understanding of God's redemptive work throughout history.

So what is the meaning of worship? It is gazing into the face of God in awe and wonder, alongside the heavenly throng, the angels and archangels, the cherubim and seraphim, and the whole company of saints - the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs.

### **Word Points the Way**

Why should we read and study God's Word? Why did God give us the Bible? The answer seems obvious. It's so that we can study various doctrinal subjects, like we study Science,

Math or about the moon and the stars. But studying any of these subjects will not make us become one with these subjects. No matter how intricate our knowledge of the stars, we do not become of the star. We study the Word so that we may know God and make Him known. It's a way for us to have God live in us, and we in Him through Christ's redemptive work on the Cross. We become a part of His worshipping community for all eternity.

### **Holy Tradition**

The Holy Tradition of the church tells us that our life must be a living sacrifice.<sup>21</sup> Faith cannot be separated from life. All that our life consists of - food, water, sleep, work, thoughts, travel, activities, interactions - all become sacramental, for the reality of our faith saturates through our very being.

Worship makes sense to one who recognizes that they live and move as one with this God who is the same in the past, present and future - the great I AM.

St. Gregory the Theologian said, "God always was, and will be. He always is, was and will be... He is ever-existing, and that is how He names Himself with Moses on the mountain. He



gathers in Himself the whole of being because He has neither a beginning nor will He have an end. He is like a vast ocean, timeless and unbounded, transcending every human concept of time and nature."<sup>22</sup>

The true worshiper realizes God's timeless presence. The church teaches us that we may enter into this Holy God's presence by worshipping Him even when we don't fully understand Him, but as we worship Him we become more like Him.

Through worship, we enter into a "Sacramental Life", which means that our very existence is in God, who is in us, with us, before us, behind us, above us, underneath us and through us.

In worship through our senses, we are joining in the way of experiencing this 'other world life'. The Eucharist is now seen as an eternal mystical reality. Christ the Eternal manifested in the incarnation, but is now actually present in the sacrament. And we enter into holy mystery that is beyond time and space. We are created to be in communion with God.

All the various events in the act of worship bring us more in communion with God.

In the fourth century, St. Evagrios the Solitary wrote, "Worship in the historical church is not "religious" but is rather an integral part of a life lived out in the ancient yet timeless Christian cycles of fasting, prayer and sacrament."<sup>23</sup>

In true worship, we can sense the presence of this Holy God. But unfortunately, in much of the Protestant denominations today - and if people are honest they will admit this - they leave their church after their "worship" with a sense of emptiness. This is because they've been cheated by their self-invented, commercialized, trendy, spontaneously concocted "worship acts" which lack Biblical authenticity. This emptiness is because of the absence of historical legitimacy that comes from the faith of the apostles and holy traditions of the church.

Jesus gave us the very essence of the whole Scripture in by quoting from Deuteronomy:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

Love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no commandment greater than these."<sup>24</sup>

This forms the two axes of faith: the vertical, our

relation to God; and the horizontal, our relation to people around us. The People of God in the Old Testament were told to 'worship' the only true God. From this vertical reality (worship), they were able to respond to others as they should. This 'love' can be understood when we see the epicenter of the Bible, which is the Cross of Christ, His death on the Cross, burial and resurrection.

Let us look at it another way. The 39 books of the Old Testament speak in types, shadows, prophecy about the Redeemer, the Saviour coming into this world. God became man to become the eternal sacrifice that saves man from sin and damnation.

The four gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John talk about the birth of Christ, His life and ministry, as well as His death and resurrection. The Book of Acts talks about the church that was born through people who believed in Christ, and how the church, through their worship and mission, made the gospel known to the whole world.

St. Thomas, one of Christ's Apostles, came to India in 52 AD to preach the gospel and plant churches. We also have the letters the

Apostles wrote to the churches, about their lives as disciples of Christ. In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, we have the final act, where the Redeemed joins the host of heaven in eternal worship, fulfilling His Father's plans, which will be revealed then.

### **The Reason We Live**

Jesus told us to "love God with all your mind and soul."<sup>25</sup> When worship is divorced from the Bible, we might be more informed, but we will not enter into the life of God through God-centred worship. Worship, not just learning theology, is the true path to realizing the life of God.

The entire Bible is about the 'person' of Christ, who is the embodiment of the invisible God. The entire revelation of God in the Bible talks about the relationship between God and man. That is how God reveals Himself and shows us how man should respond to Him in worship. In Romans chapters 1 and 2, we see how man did not respond in the right way.

To truly understand how 'worship' is at the heart of God's revelation to us, we need to go back to the Old Testament narratives on Passover, the Covenant in the blood, temple

worship, altar, bronze serpent raised up by Moses, prophets and their messages, instructions given by God about how to worship, the death and resurrection and nature of Christ and the worship of the early church. We worship not only by recalling of the acts of God from the past but by feeling the risen Christ's presence in the midst of His people, as we see in Isaiah 6:1-5 and Revelation 5.

Ironically, true theological study points to the importance of God-centred worship of the church. This irony is often missed when man takes centre stage in church.

Biblical and historical scholarship makes it clear that worship must emphasize the adoration of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is Trinitarian worship.

### **Jesus in the Centre**

If we were to use one word to describe the whole Bible, that word would be "Jesus". The entire Old Testament points to Him and the New Testament describes the fulfillment of the Old Testament. And finally, when we look into eternity, when time is no more, we see Him on the throne, the lamb as though He was slain<sup>26</sup> and all fall on their face and worship Him.

Gathering for worship is "gathering unto Him."<sup>27</sup> The Table of the Lord, the bread and wine speaks of the cross, and Jesus' sacrifice. We are asked to remember Him.<sup>28</sup>

The Word (the second person in the Holy Trinity) became flesh<sup>29</sup> and true worship focus on the Word and the Holy Sacrament. The Word points us to the cross, and its importance. We respond by understanding its meaning and we give our worship, our adoration with all our mind, soul and body. God is the audience and we face the altar, the cross. We embrace the opportunity God granted us in this life to have a small part in worship His Majesty and by doing it we better understand the reason for our life for all eternity.

The Holy Sacrament is the visible means for us to see the Lord Jesus and His death and resurrection in the entire worship. It is important to remember that biblical worship is not something we start at any time. This worship is constant in heaven, and has been forever. We get a picture from Isaiah 6 which dates back to 700 BC and we see the same worship 800 years later in Revelation 5, when St. John in AD 100 was given the privilege a

glimpse of the future. And now, we, the people of God living in the world He created, join in the worship that is already going on with the angels, archangels and all the saints in heaven. This is how the early church saw it. Now, when we follow the worship of the Lord as they taught us, we become a part of the 'church triumphant' (in heaven) and this worship will go on for all eternity. The past, present and future become one. The communion of the saints that we confess becomes reality in worship.

Biblical worship, then, is our spiritual journey during our earthly life, moving toward the heavenly Zion. The priests, bishops and deacons are shepherds who lead the church on earth in this 'journey of worship'. The worship is done by the people of God, to God, who is on the throne.

We are invited by God to gather to Him.<sup>30</sup> Then we hear the Word, and partake from the holy sacrament before we are sent out to be His witnesses in a world that needs to know God and follow Him.

The orthodox faith has always believed that the Holy Communion is a mystery, and a matter of faith. Faith should be enough for us, for what

the Word of God tells us.<sup>31</sup> Faith should not always need explanations. This is exactly the view Believers Eastern Church holds.

During worship, when it's time for Holy Communion, we recall Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross for our redemption,<sup>32</sup> as we offer praise and adoration to the Father by the help of the Holy Spirit. This is retrospective.

We present our lives as living sacrifice as our response<sup>33</sup> through the surrender of our life to the living Christ in our midst. This is the introspective element of this part of the worship. The third element looks ahead to the future, the Second Coming.

### **Doing Worship**

So again this tells us that worship is not static. It is a journey offered by Jesus Himself: "until he comes."<sup>34</sup>

The bread and the wine symbolize the great banquet that awaits us.<sup>35</sup> Our worship is eternal, and our eternal life.

Now we come to the question of how our earthly worship mirrors heavenly worship. We take our cues from the Word and traditions of the early church, using rituals and prayers that have deep



significance. We recite the historical events from the Word, say the Creeds, sing, teach, use silence and reflection, and enact the Eucharist in worship.

Symbols are useful, in worship as in life. They are visual representations of what we cannot see, what is intangible. During worship, we face the altar, and pray, standing and kneeling, before Him who sits on the throne.<sup>36</sup> The empty cross in front of us symbolizes the Risen Christ.

Through our rituals, including baptism and the Eucharist, we follow in the path laid down in the Word, and by early church fathers. But we know the meaning behind those rituals and the symbols through faith. We believe and know the truth of crucifixion despite not having seen it.

In the early church like the Old Testament, people of God had:

**One:** Creeds - The statements of their fundamental beliefs, and in the New Testament, the church had it too.<sup>37</sup> This evolved into Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed, which have the same objective.

**Two:** Songs<sup>38</sup>

**Three:** Preaching<sup>39</sup>

**Four:** Eucharist - Passover, Temple sacrifice, image of deliverance from bondage<sup>40</sup> and in the New Testament with the celebration of the Holy Communion, we celebrate the sacrifice Christ made for our deliverance.

### **Seeing the Invisible through the Visible**

For worship to become fully meaningful, our five senses need to be engaged in worship. We must see, hear, taste, feel and smell. The interweaving of the spiritual and material realms through symbols and rituals is an important part of this. The form of worship is necessary as signs and symbols of spiritual reality. God who is Spirit (immaterial) come to us in the material form of a human person.

In the early days of the church, there arose a cult known as the 'Gnostics'. They opposed the church teaching because they held that nothing material could be spiritual; hence Jesus could not be God. According to them, spiritual reality could not be known through material expression.

The most serious consequence of this viewpoint is the denial of the incarnation. For Gnostics, Jesus could not be God in flesh. They rejected

the view of the Eucharist since they denied that Jesus came in the flesh. But this is denial of what we are told in the Word.

The Word of God is very clear about the incarnation of God in flesh. St. Paul writes, "Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory."<sup>41</sup> And St. John says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."<sup>42</sup>

St. John, the Apostle had to deal with false teachers spreading those false doctrines. To counter them he said, he who does not believe Christ came in the flesh is a false prophet.<sup>43</sup>

Bishop Ignatius of the early 2nd century of Antioch is one of those who defended the true faith against the Gnostics' false teaching.

Let us not forget, God communicates Himself through His creation: "The heavens declare the

glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."<sup>44</sup>

"Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."<sup>45</sup>

Worship is the meeting of God and man. It is bound by rules of order on how to read and teach the Word.

There is always a call for us to respond, and we do that in songs, prayers, confession, creeds, offering and symbols. All our senses are involved in this worship.

The use of symbolism, like the sign of the cross, brings the spiritual and the material together in ways that we can acknowledge with our senses.

The several symbols, icons, vestments, incense, candles, colours, sign of the cross, kneeling, bowing, raising hands and so on that are part of our worship serve to involve our whole person.

Unfortunately, during the Middle Ages (AD 500-1500) there was growing overemphasis on

the symbolic communication which led to great loss in intangible reality. This led the Reformers to seek a more spiritual approach in worship. But they took it too far, ignoring and looking down on the meaningful use of the visible in worship.

Without those symbols, the meanings and evocation behind those symbols started to be obscured. After all, we need the symbols to meditate on the meaning of them. For instance, the Bread and Wine are visible, but they help us understand the invisible and the intangible of which they speak. The sign of the cross is not just a sign. It represents Jesus' sacrifice and our redemption. The altar is holy, since it represents the throne of God. When we face it and open our hearts, minds and souls in adoration and worship of God, we join the eternal worship of the host of heaven, and embrace the priceless opportunity to be the people of God on this earth, understanding the reason for our life, for time and eternity.



## Chapter Summary

**One:** The purpose of the study of God's Word is for us to know God and be transformed into the image of Christ. One can study and get a PhD about the moon, but they never will become the moon. But the Word of God has the purpose of drawing us to God to be close to Him in worship, and thus beholding His glory we change to be like Christ.<sup>46</sup>

**Two:** When worship is divorced from Theology we may get the best information but will not become godly nor experience the life of God.

**Three:** The entire focus of the whole Bible is Jesus and the way for us to know God and experience Him.

**Four:** Biblical worship is our spiritual journey. As the people of Israel journey to earthly Zion, we journey to Heavenly Zion. Worship helps us to live in the atmosphere of God's Kingdom.

**Five:** The Word being taught and partaking from the Holy Communion is the heart of Biblical worship.

**Six:** The focus in worship is not any man but Christ who is in the center, represented in the Holy Communion.

**Seven:** We are human; we understand and experience all things through our five senses. Worship is complete only when the visible helps us to make sense the invisible God. The creed, sign of the cross, incenses, bowing, kneeling, prayers, and songs, all become the means for us to understand God and His ways.



# The Journey of Worship



## Chapter Three

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# The Journey of Worship

**K**nowing the true from the false - how can we do that?

Every church, and every sect within a faith, believes itself to be the true one. Their belief in their own practices and their ways of worship is absolute. How do we know which is true, and which is not?

Most independent church leaders have great charm and charisma. Their own staunch faith makes much of what they preach sound convincing. But if that faith itself is not rooted in the real truth, that conviction means nothing.

We must be guided by the absolutes that we can know: the Word, and the ways of the early

church, which was established and guided by those who lived close to Jesus and followed in his footsteps. The words and ways of the Apostles, and the traditions they established from their knowledge of the truth preached by Christ himself, must be our guide.

Most new independent churches are just that - new and independent. But the church is ancient. There is an abundance of tradition, history and rituals that can inform us, as to how we were meant to worship God as a church. A church that was established a couple of centuries ago cannot claim to be the true one, if divorced from the traditions and symbols of the 2000-year-old church that is undeniably the true one. We look to those traditions and symbols for our guidance, to put us on the path that will lead us to the real joy and unity of worship. Being rooted in what has been handed down to us by those who followed in Jesus' footsteps makes a church's ways right. This is what we strive to do, every day.

We must also remember that Christianity is NOT a Western religion. Jesus was not a Western man. Jesus was born in Jerusalem, in the Middle-East. In AD 52, we have churches

established in India by St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus. The Bible is not a Western book. Christian Faith is rooted in Jewish Faith and practice. Much of the New Testament is written about the church life in this specific context. But the Old Testament tells us about the beginning, which we must also understand.

To begin with, it is important to know the worship of the Living God began in eternity past. Lucifer and the millions of angels' full-time job was to worship and bring glory to the Almighty God, their Creator.<sup>47</sup>

When God made man in His image, it was God's plan that we may reflect His glory through fellowship with Him,<sup>48</sup> being in His holy presence and thus radiating His glory. The record in Isaiah 6:1-5 gives us a picture of how worship reflects this reality.

### **How It All Went Wrong**

But man fell in sin and got separated from God. Still in him is the longing for God to worship God. So we see this in the first children of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel worshiping God.<sup>49</sup>

Abraham's life and journey is filled with worship incidents, so is the life of Jacob.<sup>50</sup>

Then the children of Israel in Egypt, after 400 plus years of suffering, God called Moses to lead them to freedom, "So that they may worship me in the desert."<sup>51</sup>

Then we read of the hundreds of details of worship God gave to His people worshipping God in the Tent of Worship and later in the Temple.<sup>52</sup>

The details of worship patterns given in the Old Testament books are proof that we as humans are able to worship this invisible God through the visible. The celebration of the Passover is an example of this.

Several things stand out in the worship of the people of God in the Old Testament.<sup>53</sup> Their meeting was convened by God to gather to Him to worship and people were arranged in groups with the responsibility of doing the necessary acts for worship. It was characterized by the proclamation of the Word, the people's willingness to obey the Word and a dramatic symbol of ratification, a sealing of the agreement through blood sacrifice. This points to the cross, and now in the Holy Communion, we experience it in worship.

This points clearly to the redemption event as the heart of worship.

When God came to earth, He (Jesus) supported the Israelite worship.<sup>54</sup>

Jesus went to the Synagogue on Sabbath.<sup>55</sup>

He was concerned about the abuse, or lack of spiritual reality in the temple. He celebrated His last Passover, displays His knowledge and appreciation for the major feast of Israel.<sup>56</sup>

Jesus believed that He superseded the Old Testament institutions of worship.<sup>57</sup> He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

### **Transition from Jewish to Christian Worship**

We must not forget, the first converts to Christian faith were the Jewish believers.<sup>58</sup> Soon the church began to grow and spread to other countries.<sup>59</sup> Many priests from the Jewish faith became believers in Christ.<sup>60</sup>

The early church believed that all the temple sacrifice and rites were fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection.<sup>61</sup> This helps us to understand how the emphasis on the Word and Sacrament become the two most important, natural elements of worship of the church. Christ was the Passover Lamb.<sup>62</sup> So the gathering on Sunday morning worship was around the Holy Communion and the Word that explained to

them all about Christ and how the believers must represent Him through their transformed life in this world.

Worship was heaven coming down and glory filling the hearts of the worshipers, which gave them the boldness to be His witness in spite of all the opposition, persecution and martyrdom.<sup>63</sup>

St. Paul in 1 Corinthians gives detailed teaching as to how the worship must be conducted in the church. He emphasized the need for order in worship.<sup>64</sup> He told us about the need for head covering for women in worship and the manner in which the Holy Communion should be done.<sup>65</sup>

In spite of a great deal of persecution, the church spread all over the known world. We must remember that St. Thomas brought the gospel to India in AD 52. The gospel went to the whole world.

The simplicity and purity of worship, focusing on the Word and Holy Sacrament, was the foundation of the worship of the church.

While there was no change in the emphasis on the Word and Holy Communion, during the



4th and 5th centuries, known as the golden age of the church, the eastern section of the church began to be more and more influenced by the Hellenistic culture, which is more poetic, with a sense of imagining and artistic expression. There was greater emphasis on ceremonial signs and symbols that helped the human senses to get more involved in worship. It was ever so beautiful to listen to and feel in every way and this change was greatly influenced by Revelation 4-5. St. John Chrysostom's liturgy was mostly influenced by the eastern approach to mystical side of worship. One cannot deny this change helped to communicate the message of the cross in a more attractive and appealing way.

Like the Eastern Church was influenced by the culture, the Western Church based its headquarters in Rome and was characterized by the simpler and programmatic approach. Undoubtedly, while the Eastern type of mystical approach was more in line with what we read in Revelation, the Western Liturgy was simpler and easily transferable to new regions, and was more in line with the missiological advantage.

### **Middle Ages and Worship of Today**

The Middle Ages that span from 500-1500 AD

shifted the meaning of worship more and more towards the mystical outlook, but it sometimes lacked the inner life, the spiritual side of it. The visible was to see through the invisible, but just as in the case of the brazen serpent that became the object of worship instead of seeing the God who heals by people's obedience by looking through it,<sup>66</sup> so it began to happen to the church.

Today, the same thing happens. The Bible is not given for us to worship and become experts in theology etc. It is given to us so that we may follow it, and let it lead us to Christ Himself. What happened to the Pharisees has happened to many modern day churches.

Unless we are careful, this can make us so focused on the externals and the symbols that we forget what they're symbolic of, and what the symbols must lead us to in our worship. The visible, the tangible should not become the end but just as, 'the heavens declare the glory of God'<sup>67</sup> all the external acts of worship should help us to worship God in Spirit and faith. This is the pure orthodox way of worship, and we understand it in the light of Revelation chapters 4 and 5.

The adaptation of much of the change that brought greater emphasis on external, ceremonial part of worship was also a missiological strategy which had definite advantage. It was useful since the church was trying to help the non-Christian cultures benefited by the 'bridge of ceremony' to easily embrace the Christian faith. This was somewhat effective when we consider how a whole nation like Rome could convert to the Christian faith almost overnight.

The problem here was the lack of the teaching of the Word of God. The clergy, instead of focusing on the Word, they became more performers of the sacraments that made them more important and God was being left out. They were the stars, just as it is in many evangelical churches now. People become spectators instead of worshipers.

Today, man-centred and seeker-friendly church growth approach say loud and clear that the reason they do so is the "mission strategy". Even the sign of the cross and the Bible is often removed, so as not to cause offense to the audience that comes to their church on Sunday.

## **Desert Fathers and Mothers**

But in the midst of this negative change in the middle ages, the monastic movement stressed the authentic devotional character of worship. From St. Antony in AD 285 on throughout the eastern world and later the western world, had its godly remnant like St. Benedict, St. Teresa of Avila and hundreds of these monastics that kept the balance that became the salvation of the church.

The monastic order, during this medieval period, is in sharp contrast to growing institutionalism and worldliness of the medieval church.

One of the sadder anti-sacramental elements that crept into the church was that the Holy Communion was seen as the sacrifice offered to God by the priest for the benefit of the living and the dead. Christ's death and resurrection re-enacted, re-done by Christ in the present tense. This practice led to many unbiblical practices like selling Indulgences. Again the Word clearly speaks, the Eucharist is following His instructions; "Do this in remembrance of me... Until he comes."<sup>68</sup> The meaning of worship was lost to both the clergy and the

congregation. Thank God for the monastic orders that lived and worshipped in sharp contrast with purity of apostolic and church fathers' faith and practice.

The establishment of the church shifted the eschatological Kingdom of God to the Kingdom of God on earth. Even today in the evangelical church this tendency is seen, forgetting we are only strangers and pilgrims on this earth. The Lord Jesus is coming back soon to establish His Kingdom and the Holy Communion points us to that, "... until he comes."<sup>69</sup>

Monasticism, as it continued to emphasize the kingdom to come and reacted against the secularization of the church, continued to emphasize the godliness of Christian faith. For them the Eucharist in worship is a means to become holier, a means of sanctification and growth in Christ, looking forward to the future feast with Christ the bridegroom.

In short, the undue emphasis of the externals in worship had an eroding effect on the church. The Word of God was not held foremost and obeyed. As it happened in the Middle Ages, so it does today in the modern, man-centred church, causing the same spiritual damage to the church.

The teaching of the Word was reduced to zero in the Medieval Period, the Bible was not available to the people, nor were they allowed to study it for themselves.

And the time was ripe for the Reformation early in 1500 AD.

### **Reformation's Impact on Worship**

Martin Luther, Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss Reformer and others like them went even further. They demanded that all visible symbols be removed and only the Word of God must remain in worship. The pendulum swung in the opposite direction. To use a popular saying, that was throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Remember, this was all going on in the West under the now Catholic Church. The Protestants were against the Rome hierarchy and their manmade view of the worship and order.

It is important to remember the reason behind the use of signs and symbols - the icons, symbols, incenses, candles, vestments, the Eucharist, Baptism, prayers, chanting, and so on. These are important means God provided for us to worship Him with all our being. When these came to be an end in itself, that is where

they went wrong. But turning our backs on them is also wrong.

After the Reformation in the Western Church, the anti-liturgical movement gave rise to pedagogical worship in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the rise of evangelistic approach to worship in the 19th century.

Worship changed again in 20th century with the rise of holiness Pentecost Movement with the Wesleyan roots.

Roman Catholic Church now was forced to re-examine their rigid view since the Council of Trent in 16th century and the 'constitution on sacred liturgy' in 1963 had a massive positive effect on many Protestant denominations. There was a renewed hunger to return to the early 3rd century of church worship.

The Praise and Worship Movement in America and soon spread to other countries via media and has much positive influence for people worshipping God. Yet, the emotionally satisfying worship left out the reverence and worship of God, with movie star-like preachers and music teams dominating, centre stage.

The order, liturgical, God-centred worship can be maintained with proper

understanding of the ancient orthodox faith and holy traditions, along with understanding and including the modern trends in communication. This is why at Believers Eastern Church we say that we are both ancient and modern in our approach to worship, but still true to the pure orthodox faith and practice.



## Chapter Summary

**One:** Understanding the first 500 years of church's faith, worship and practice gives us insight to the most meaningful and authentic worship.

**Two:** Worship gathering is an invitation from God and we understand the meaning of worship by learning the worship acts in the Old Testament. It is good to remember that the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament.

**Three:** The New Testament Church worship was patterned after the Jewish worship, for the early church in Jerusalem and Apostles were all Jewish.

**Four:** While the pragmatic benefits were important for the children of Israel, such as freedom from slavery and becoming a new nation for themselves in God's perspective, their call to worship the living God was the key to all else that God had in mind for them. When Moses was commanded to talk to Pharaoh to let the people go, the instruction was, "that they may worship me in the desert."<sup>70</sup>

**Five:** A great beginning of worship began to go wrong in 4th and 5th centuries by an overemphasis on the external/visible aids, and this is happening today. Man's teaching and music has pushed God aside in many church movements.

**Six:** The monastic movement that emphasized the inner life spirituality through meditation of the Word, prayer and sacraments become the reason to motion balance in the church, even today this is true in the 21st century.

**Seven:** In everything and through everything, we must see the God of Creation and redemption and focus on Him which is the importance of true worship.

# The Practice of Worship



## Chapter Four

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# The Practice of Worship

**I**n true worship, God is the object of worship. That is why the altar with the Holy Communion is the centre of the church, not the pulpit and music stands.

We are told that "unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."<sup>71</sup> He is in the midst of His church.<sup>72</sup> No man is the head, mediator or object of worship. When that is not understood, we miss the Biblical view of worship.

God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. All of heaven and all creation focus on God, who is worthy of our worship and adoration.

## THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

When we worship Him, we enter into the Holy presence of God who dwells in light that no man can approach. He is the awesome God and He invites us to come before Him. We respond to His invitation. It is all because of His love and mercy on us sinners that He made it possible through His death on the cross.

Worship is to lose ourselves in the wonder and awe of the Father's love and mercy.

Worship is to be aware of our sinfulness and be overcome by the greatness, and the holiness of God.

We worship to experience the presence of the risen Christ and the glorified Lord of all.<sup>73</sup>

To worship is to have our body, soul and spirit enter into the worship that is going on in heaven with the help of all that is visible, such as the empty cross, table of the Lord, candles, vestments, incense, icons, songs, reading and hearing of the Word. The Bible when it is taught, people's response, confession and any such things that aid the people of God is meant to help us draw near to God.

Worship is saying, "You are God."

Worship is divine-human encounter, lived through our re-calling, retracing the journey of

God with man: from Adam to the last man and woman and the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Worship is a journey of faith of the people of God as seen in the picture of the people of God under the old covenant. They travelled from all four corners to Jerusalem each year, singing the songs of Ascent.<sup>74</sup>

Worship as understood from the entire Bible has obvious four parts to it.

1. The invitation from God to gather unto Him. This is simplified in the liturgical words, 'the gathering'.
2. Reading, hearing and teaching the Word of God
3. The celebration of the Holy Communion
4. The people of God being sent out to carry out the witness to the world to be His disciples in word and deed to those around them.

### **Invitation from God**

This is our response to God's call. It is a call to obedience.

"I myself will gather the remnant of my flock

out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number."<sup>75</sup>

"I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."<sup>76</sup>

We are the body, the people of God, his flock, and our shepherd is the one called to lead the people of God - our local parish - to gather together and pause for worship.

We, like the Old Testament people of God, journey to earthly Zion in a reflection of our journey towards the Heavenly Zion.

The Songs of Ascent<sup>77</sup> are songs all the tribes sang as they walked from their homes, in all directions, journeying towards the temple in Jerusalem. This meant weeks of traveling for many hundreds of thousands of people. They were responding to the invitation of God to meet for worship. Their audience was God; they were going to meet God.

The early church understood this principle.



Therefore, the first part of the worship was gathering.

### **The Gathering**

This was in response to God's call to come together as a community, so it is with us<sup>78</sup>

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, St. Paul talks about the body of Christ coming together. Gathering is the beginning of this 'journey of worship'. Worship begins with the actions that help us to know and feel that we are there to worship God as a community.

Bowing before entering the church, making the sign of cross, removing shoes and sandals before entering the church, silence, being led together to sing a song reflecting the reason for our gathering, Gloria, reading the Psalm of Penitence,<sup>79</sup> Kauma, prayer, etc. are all part of the gathering or first stage of the worship.

Believers Eastern Church Liturgy reflects these principles.

One of the weaknesses of the contemporary model of many church gathering is that it defines worship in terms of music. This music is led by the 'worship team' or musicians, and is understood as worship. To some, the

singing time is the preparation for the preacher to appear and do his preaching, and then close in prayer. This is very unfortunate because they are falling into the same trap into which the church in the Middle Ages fell, when worship became man-centred. Then, the ceremonies took centre-stage, and man through them. Now, it's music and the pulpit. The reading of the Word, response, meditation, silence, Holy Communion with understanding and reverence etc., are all set aside and lost.

The gathering part of worship should be the preparation of our hearts, to quieten ourselves and enter into the presence of this Holy God who is on the throne. He is the one we must fear and revere. This is where our adoration or singing of songs as the people of God lifts our hearts and minds toward God.

This takes us to the next stage.

### **The Word**

This is when we listen to the Word of God and respond to it.

The church is in the world but not of the world. That is why from the beginning, the church fathers taught us to live by God's calendar,

making our lives revolve around the acts of God as we journey towards heaven.

The Lectionary of the church, Bible reading from the Old Testament, Psalms, Epistles and Gospels help the church to be aware of the seasons, and to read the Word of God with this in mind.

The church calendar begins with the Advent season, the nativity of our Lord Jesus, Epiphany, Lent seasons, passion week, Easter, Pentecost, Transfiguration, Ascension, St. Thomas Day etc. On Sunday, the readings from all four passages are based on the church calendar.<sup>80</sup>

Special attention is given to the reading of the Gospel, when all stand in reverence.

Reciting the Nicene Creed, intercessory prayer time and the teaching time from God's Word are part of the liturgy of the Word. This is when the people of God hear and learn the ways of God, to know what it means to live as the people of God in obedience to the Word of God.

From the beginning of the church,<sup>81</sup> just as in the Old Testament gathering of the people of God, much importance has been given to listening to the Word of God. (In the book,

'Guiding Principles of Believers Eastern Church' we discuss this in more detail.)

Then there was:

### **The Sacrament**

This part of worship differs significantly from the gathering and the liturgy of the Word, which points to Christ. Remember Christ telling the Pharisee, "You study the Scriptures... in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."<sup>82</sup>

The call of the Word is for us to become like Christ.<sup>83</sup>

Taking part in the Holy Communion is a sacred act. Jesus Himself said, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no part in me."<sup>84</sup> This helps us see the one who sits on the throne as though He was slain.<sup>85</sup> And we know the angels, archangels, the cherubim and the host of heaven stand before the throne worshipping God, and we join our voices with them to sing and cry out loud the eternal song of God's praise.<sup>86</sup> This is what the early Christians did in their worship. As we follow in their example, we are part of the original apostolic church.

## **The Importance of Eucharist**

Some misunderstand taking Holy Communion as a necessary evil, and follow the form without much discussion or preparation for it. Many have developed extreme views on it, going so far as to believe they can use coconut juice, soft drinks, any kind of eatables etc. instead of bread and wine for the Holy Communion. Then there are those who deny its importance at all, comparing it to just another meal.

Even a superficial look at the sacrifices in the Old Testament from Passover night when the innocent lamb was slain and its blood used to make a visible sign outside the door of the house, shows us that it had great significance and was linked with the Almighty God and the mystery of His eternal plan. Was that slaying of the Passover lamb like the butcher killing lambs in the market place or was there more to 'this' lamb, its blood, and the sign on the door post?

What about baptism? Is it the same as a bath, which includes oil and water, and which mothers do for their children every day? Adults dip in pools and rivers. Can it be compared?

Baptism is done in the name of the Father, the

Son and the Holy Spirit. Words are spoken over the candidate for baptism by the priest.

What about Christ feeding the 5000 with five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish? The bread and fish He took in His hand and 'blessed', it multiplied. It became something far more than a simple meal.

In all these instances, there is a mystery - the mystery of faith, of miracle.

The same way on Passover night, when Jesus met with His disciples for the Last Supper with them, there were many pieces of bread and several drinking chalices. But in the middle of the meal, Jesus took one piece of bread and held it up, blessed it and then He said, "This is my body which is given for you." He broke it and gave it to them to eat. He did the same with the chalice with wine in it, saying, "This is my blood." Remember, He said this about the bread and wine, after blessing it. This is as much of a mystery and miracle as when Jesus fed the 5000 with the bread and fish.

### **It is a Mystery**

Holy Communion is worship. We are partaking in this unseen, invisible, mystery of God in

God's realm. The orthodox faith from the beginning of the church proclaims the Eucharist to be a mystery. We can't explain what happens to the bread and wine after it is blessed by the priest.

But it's definitely not like grabbing a snack and sipping on juice. We cannot fully explain and understand the mystery of it all. All we know is that Christ told us that it is His body and His blood. St. Paul affirms this in 1 Corinthians 11 as he explains the Holy Communion to the church. Further, when St. Paul tells us about the danger of partaking from it unworthily, holding unforgiveness and anger towards others in the body of Christ, the danger of people getting sick and dying - that should tell us the seriousness and the mystery of this most Holy Sacrament of the church which has been given by Christ Himself. Don't fall prey to modern day "churches" that treat God without reverence and fear. For them, God is a buddy they can joke with. Imagine the folly of this belief!

Early church understood the holiness of it. Even with the excess of external elaborate ceremonization of it during the Middle Ages, the people of God understood the seriousness of

the sacraments by which we receive grace from God, and they inspired true awe.

The influence of the dangerous cult the 'Gnostics' can still be seen. We can see it in how many deny any spiritual meaning in the Holy Communion. Even today, that spirit of Antichrist denies that Christ came in the flesh into this world.<sup>87</sup>

Very early Christians, even when they could go to synagogue<sup>88</sup> for their Jewish worship, would gather together in homes on Sunday morning for the sharing in the Holy Communion. The table of the Lord was the focus of their gathering. He was in their midst in the Eucharist. While He might no more be with them as He was a while ago, in their faith, they sat around His body and blood, the deepest kind of reminder that He was in them and they in Him, through that expression of their obedience of faith.<sup>89</sup>

### **How to do the Holy Communion**

Bible scholars from the beginning of the church agree that the text in St. Luke's Gospel, chapter 24, the Emmaus Road experience of the disciples, provides the key to the understanding



of the Eucharist. Jesus breaks the bread and it says, "Their eyes were opened."

- ✓ He took bread
- ✓ He blessed it
- ✓ He broke it
- ✓ He gave it to them
- ✓ They experienced the mystery of it and were transformed by the event.

So it is with us. In 1 Corinthians 11, St. Paul explains the Holy Communion to the Corinthian Christians for they needed to understand the seriousness of it. This dates back to AD 57.

The Holy Communion points to the great marriage supper of the Lamb that is to happen after Christ returns for His church. Now it is the visible, tangible, intimate relationship of Christians with the risen Christ.<sup>90</sup>

In St. Paul's instructions, one of the most important matters for those who partake from the Holy Communion is confession.<sup>91</sup>

People of God must make sure they confess their sins and have their hearts cleansed before

coming to the Table of the Lord. Holy Communion then is also how we can find love and unity in the body of Christ. As the congregation confesses their sins to God, it is also important for individuals confess sins to God and make things right with the one they have caused offense or hurt.<sup>92</sup>

In the early church, the day before the Sunday gathering, believers made sure their life was right before God and others. It was a way of preparing themselves for the Sunday morning Holy Communion.

Certain sections of the church still follow the pattern of Christians having the private time to make confession to the priest, so that they can hear the words of forgiveness on the behalf of the Lord before being allowed to partake from the sacrament.

These are the steps in the sacrament of Holy Communion: Take bread, bless it, give thanks, break bread, take the chalice, bless it, give thanks, give the bread to His disciples and give the cup to His disciples.

The earliest liturgy available to us as to how Jesus and apostles conducted the Holy Communion is the St. James Liturgy. It later

became the basis of all liturgies for the church. This is in line with the apostolic tradition and teaching.

The silence was part of the Communion service where people were invited to meditate on the cross based on Christ's command, "Do this in remembrance of me."

The three blessings of people in the name of the Holy Trinity, Memorial Acclamation, Invocation of the Holy Spirit, Blessing of the bread and wine, Lord's Prayer, Communion, and sending with Benediction are the main parts of the ceremony of the Holy Communion led by the priest/shepherd of the congregation.

### **Sending**

The final part is the sending. This is the dismissal of the people of God, so that they can go into the world and be light and salt for His name's sake. They are reminded to serve the Lord by word and deed. They respond by saying, "Here am I; send me."<sup>93</sup>

Often the church forgets that the reason for our living in this world is to represent Him and bring others into His Kingdom. He invites us to 'come' and be with Him and then He says, "Go."<sup>94</sup>

The Holy Communion must be the most reverberating voice for us to become desperate and passionate for those that do not know the reason why Jesus gave His life on the cross.

When Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me,"<sup>95</sup> it was not merely to evoke that thrilling feeling within us, but to make us think deep and hard the reason for His death. He paid the full price for the redemption of mankind, and now it is the church's responsibility to deliver this message to the world. This charge to deliver is on us. Read the Book of Acts and 2 Corinthians to see and recognize the suffering, the agony, the martyrdom the early church paid for living up to their responsibility to 'deliver' by reaching out to others with the gospel.

We must not forget that remembering Christ is not merely a subjective feeling but a sober responsibility. He has commanded us fulfill His passion for the lost and dying souls. So He says, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."<sup>96</sup>

Remembering Christ involves thinking and meditating on Him and what Christ represents. We must remember His love, compassion, obedience, faith, humility, suffering, prayer, solitude, submission, prayer, grace, mercy and a hundred other things, as we abide in Him.<sup>97</sup>

May God help us see ourselves as His in this lost and dying world.

'Beholding the Lamb as though He was slain'<sup>98</sup> and seeing Him as Isaiah saw Him sitting on the throne<sup>99</sup> is to hear His voice say, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" May we His church, and you as an individual respond as Isaiah responded, "Here am I. Send me".

It's time to 'Go'. The Service ends with the Benediction by the priest.



## Chapter Summary

**One:** God is the audience in all true and Biblical worship; not man nor anything else.

**Two:** Two important elements of worship are the Word of God and the Holy Communion.

**Three:** Worship begins by understanding how we must respond to God's invitation to gather to Him, then listening to the Word and partaking from the Holy Communion. This speaks of Christ's living presence while recalling His death, resurrection and second coming. Then we leave the worship place with a deep desire to be His witness in the world that needs to know Christ.

**Four:** The “How” to do the Holy Communion and the steps in doing it are given to us by St. Paul in his instructions in the First Corinthians Chapter 11. It is important to follow this with great care.

**Five:** What happens to the bread and wine after the consecration blessing is a ‘mystery’ and what Jesus said is what we must say: “This is my body... this is my blood...” Remember the words of Christ: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”<sup>100</sup> The Consubstantiation is not what the Apostles taught nor what the orthodox faith believes.



# Liturgical Worship



## Chapter Five

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# Liturgical Worship

**H**istorical roots of liturgy go back to the apostolic church. The church did not start with a blank slate. They were used to the temple and synagogue worship, which was liturgical.

We must remember that we are not innovators in the church. We are part of a whole, which stretches through space and time for all eternity, and we blend into that great whole that is everlasting and eternal worship. We pay great heed to the faith and traditions handed to the church by the Apostles and church fathers. St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James and the church fathers prayed these very prayers, and we follow their lead in how to conduct the Holy Communion - the words, blessing etc. So now, after 2000 years,

we become part of the authentic church which was the orthodox faith and practice.

When we use the liturgical approach, it keeps us from straying from the path of true faith and worship.

Jewish synagogue passed on to Christian worship their forms of worship with its sense of order, such as reading of the Word, teaching of it, prayer and benediction.

While in the earliest account of worship mentioned in the New Testament, we see the spontaneity inspired by the Holy Spirit, soon they got organized to avoid confusion both in governance and corporate worship.<sup>101</sup> The church at Corinth did have non-Jewish members, and they began to lose control, letting things get disorderly. St. Paul had to correct them.<sup>102</sup>

By the middle of the second century (AD 150), we can see the pattern of liturgy led by the church fathers, generally followed by all congregations.

Sunday service was held early in the day in homes with the bishop as the celebrant. We get a brief description of the Sunday worship

mentioned in an apology for Christian faith written about the year AD 150 by a teacher to the church in Rome, named Justin. He was converted to the faith in Ephesus and later came to Rome, where he was martyred in AD 165.

In AD 200 a priest named Hippolytus discovered a manual called "The Apostolic Traditions" in which was compiled the customs and usages of signs and symbols etc in the church. This also confirms the use of an orderly liturgical worship in the life of the church.

By the 4th century, the church's worship took a new splendor and enrichment. The church in Jerusalem names its liturgy after St. James, the brother of Christ who was also the first Bishop of Jerusalem. Of course, later many other liturgies were developed, including the famous St. John Chrysostom's Liturgy of the East, in the 4th century.

The liturgy does two things. First, it is a worship which takes the worshiper out of the mundane world into the dimensions of the spirit to worship in the Spirit and Truth. Second, it is an expression of the message of salvation conveyed from eternity to eternity through our human senses.

## **What is the Meaning of Liturgy?**

In simple words, it is an order of worship with instructions for people to gather together for prayer, confession, reading of the Word and teaching of it, the blessings of the bread and wine in Holy Communion etc. The liturgy in the worship service is followed by the people together with God. As one they worship, and there is no surprise as to what happens next for it belongs to all people and they all knew the order and content.

C. S. Lewis always believed that a congregation should properly and profitably offer worship to God. "Every service is a structure of acts and words through which we receive a sacrament, or repent, or supplicate, or adore. And it enables us to do these things best - if you like, it 'works' best - when, through long familiarity, we don't have to think about it. As long as you notice, and have to count, the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don't notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God."<sup>103</sup>

Some misunderstand and think that the liturgical worship is only in the Old Testament. It is good to be reminded that what we are told in Isaiah 6:1 - 8 is seen again in Revelation 4. That tells us that the God of the Old Testament, the worship that is going on in heaven, is still the same. Let us not forget, too, that when the people of God gather for worship, we are not starting the worship, but rather joining in the worship that is already going on for eternity and will continue on, in measures of time that we cannot fathom in this life. And we find oneself in the future worship before the throne, as we read in Revelation chapters 4 and 5.

### **The Regal Setting of Worship**

The whole purpose of the liturgy is worship. Our worship here on earth is replicated in the image of the heavenly worship, of which we get a glimpse in the book of Revelation.

"After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.' At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one

who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal."

"In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

'Holy, holy, holy  
is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was, and is, and is to come.'

"Whenever the living creatures give glory,



honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

'You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honour and power,  
for You created all things,  
and by Your will they were created  
and have their being.'<sup>104</sup>

### **Aspects of the Liturgical Worship**

There are three aspects in liturgical worship: Order, Ritual and Ceremonial. These are found in all liturgies throughout the history of the church and we find them in the worship of the people of God in the Old Testament, too.

***Order*** - This is the structural framework, its shape and design. It is invariable. This is like the blueprint of the building.

'Order' in worship is like the skeleton in the body. If all the bones are taken out of the body, what is left? The train runs on rails. Those rails

are 'the order' without which the engine can sit in a place and make a lot of noise but go nowhere.

In some ways, that is what happened in the Church of Corinth. Their service was filled with confusion and commotion. St. Paul had to instruct them in detail to bring order in their worship. A body without skeleton and a game without its rules cannot work.

God is a God of order. Just look at the sky and you see the order with which every detail works perfectly. The sun, moon and stars all move according to the absolute fixed pattern.

A fixed order is necessary if worship is to be corporate. People must know what to expect, what comes next. If people don't know order, they cannot be active participants.

Liturgy is *not* a personal exercise of devotion performed in public. Liturgy involves the priest and the people as one body.

The priest and people all turn to the altar as they pray and offer praise and adoration to God. Neither the priest nor worship team does the worship for the people. There is no mediator in worship. The corporate character of the liturgy

lets all participants know where and when their respective parts come in the service. There is no suspense or surprise.

Well-ordered worship liturgy has its own beautiful arrangements, and has a meaningful rhythm of movement and progress. This kind of worship is called 'the journey of worship'. During this worship, when the priest turns to the people and pronounces, "Peace be with you," it is an exhortation to follow him as we continue to worship our Lord. He is taking the people through this journey of worship.

There are four specific parts in the liturgy that we gather from the Book of Acts, from the first century church. One is Gathering to prepare the people for Worship. It includes greetings, confession, singing and prayer.

Then there is the Liturgy of the Word, when people listen to the Word and respond with praise, faith (creed) and petition (intercession).

The next is the Sacrament of Eucharist, which is partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ.

And finally, we have the Sending or Dismissal, which brings the people's worship to a close and sends them out to witness and service.

Even in non-liturgical churches, they do have an unwritten liturgy, but each church differs due to the fact that their leader and worship team make up what people should do each week.

Then there are some extreme groups that don't have any order at all, nor any deep, formed contemplation behind what they do and why they do what they do. Some, in the name of the Holy Spirit, crawl like snakes, bark like dogs, speak in tongues that no one understand (The Bible says, one should not speak in tongues in the church if there is no interpreter).<sup>105</sup> False prophets make their prophecies which are not at all prophecies according to the Bible. The whole thing is at best organized confusion. At worst, it's no different from non-Christian worship of hysteria and emotional stirring.

This is what exactly St. Paul had to deal with when the church at Corinth began to go astray.

They abused the Holy Communion with disrespect. There was strife and disunity and quarrel in the church. Resentment and lack of fear of God prevailed. Women didn't cover their heads in church. Abuse and misuse of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, false prophecy and false teaching and a dozen other spiritual problems

existed in their church. If one takes the time to read 1 Corinthians chapters 10, 11, 12 and 14, it will be enough to get a sense of a church without discipline and order.

**Ritual** - Liturgical worship is ritualistic. Ritual is the vocal organ of liturgy. The words are said or sung. It vocalizes and interprets the meaning of what worshipers do together. The liturgy begins with the glorification of God as one in Trinity. It starts with the definition of God and identifies Jesus as God incarnate. The words "Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit" are repeated as part of the adoration of the Trinity through the ceremony.

Then comes the reading and hearing of the Word of God, according to the church calendar given in the Lectionary, which involves passages being read from the Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament and the holy Gospels.

Special emphasis is given to the reading of the Gospel. The congregation stands to hear the Gospel reading and respond, "So we believe and affirm."

Then there is the confession of sin, the saying of the Creed, singing of songs in adoration,

prayers, chanting together, Kauma, Gloria, blessings etc. that are all part of the ritual in liturgical worship.

*Ceremonial* - It is the Ceremonial part that includes the 'things' done in worship, including the holy sacrament that is celebrated. They include certain gestures, symbols, the sign of the cross, incense, bowing, kneeling, mixing of the wine and water, washing hands by the priest before handling the bread and wine, raised hands, raising our faces to heaven in prayers so on, which speak volumes of spiritual reality and concepts.

These things are not just done by the priest. All of the people of God participate in it. All stand to hear the Gospel read, all go to the altar to receive the Holy Communion and all receive the blessing with making the sign of the cross.

The architectural designs, furnishings, ornaments, lit candles, altar tables, incenses, vestment are also part of the ceremonial part of the liturgical worship.

In all forms of worship and communication we have to use symbolism. New and varied forms or symbols that interpret the intangible to be

known through our senses are developed as the need arises. This we see in the many changes made in the liturgies throughout the church history, without changing the core of the liturgy.

There always exists a danger of symbols becoming an idol. This happened to the people of God in the Old Testament. Remember, we earlier considered the brazen serpent that God gave them to see His grace through, which in the end became the object of worship, becoming a sin to them.<sup>106</sup>

While the danger is less in the case of audible and verbal symbols, we must still be alive to the danger of it. The Bible, singing, sacrament, preaching can become the end in itself and we can miss the true worship of the living God. We do not need to look very far to find proof for it. All we need is to take a look at the damage done by the many church growth inventions and the prosperity gospel movements, when 'man' has become the reason for gathering.

The problem is not in the symbols but the misuse of them, which means that the God of all creation is pushed to the background and obstructed by these visuals that should only serve to bring us closer to Him.

We humans are made of body, soul and spirit. Worship becomes meaningful and complete when all our senses are involved and the ceremonial part of the liturgy is a vital part of worship. This is something we see throughout the Word of God both in the Old Testament and New Testament.

The priest and his vestment are part of the ceremonial part of the worship. There is a reason for the robes he wears during the worship: It's because all worshipping community is a royal priesthood, king and priests unto God.<sup>107</sup>

In certain Eastern churches, the priests have certain specially-made head coverings that they use on behalf of the church, which is the bride of Christ.

This is often criticized on the basis of the statement that man should not cover his head. The symbolism here is different. The priest or bishop does not present themselves as man. They represent the church. The church is the bride of the Lamb and the bride covers her head as a mark of respect to the groom, Christ. They do so only when they are facing the throne, when they act as representatives of the



church as a whole. Underneath these robes, they wear the cassock of priesthood, which actually represents the dress of the servants. The robe and black string with tassels that the priest wears were the traditional garb of the servants and slaves of the royal household. The calling to be the servant of God is visually represented by what they wear.<sup>108</sup>

The whole purpose of the symbolism is to convey the message to and through our five senses, so that we can experience a deep sense of the majesty of God and awesomeness of the Holy mysteries. We are privileged to celebrate this through liturgical worship.

On the other hand, during many modern, so-called independent and charismatic services, the congregation, by raising their hands, waving them in adoration and chanting together attempts to remedy this absence. These are different ways of experiencing the presence of God.

Traditions are different, whether in the East or West, orthodoxy or modern. The most important question is this: Are we truly worshiping the living God and is He our audience? Let us not accept any modifications

based on our conveniences and culture, which results in us not experiencing the true meaning of worship. Don't allow the core of our worship to be compromised and dilute the impact our faith.

### **What Are The Benefits Of Liturgical Worship?**

Since there are many, let's go through them one by one:

**One:** A common liturgy helps build unity in churches like Believers Eastern Church that has thousands of congregations, spread out in many nations, representing hundreds of different languages and cultures. The one thing that binds us all together, regardless of nation, colour, language, education, background etc, is our liturgy. We all keep the Christian calendar in the journey of faith. When the Lent season comes, all of our church everywhere becomes part of it. On a given Sunday, the four Scripture portions read will be the same, whether the church is in Vietnam, Dhaka, Kathmandu, a valley in the Himalayas, Mumbai or Sri Lanka. We all say the same creed and pray for the same prayer requests.

**Two:** It binds us with all churches of all ages and across the world that follow the Apostolic

teachings and maintain the liturgical worship began 2000 years ago by those who still show us the way. We are part of the one Holy catholic church through liturgical worship. We did not create the church. We did not start it; neither did the generation before us. For millennia, faithful men and women have passed from generation to generation the essence and process of what it means to worship God. We are, in our time, another link in the chain the church of the living God.

*Three:* This keeps the church from false doctrines. The Nicene Creed, the consistent proclamation and teaching of God's Word, and other parts of the liturgy protect the people of God from false teaching.

*Four:* It protects the church from man-centred worship. The liturgy keeps the congregation from following one individual's whims and wishes, which is unfortunately what happens in many or most independent churches.

*Five:* It helps us to be a community. In this culture of radical individuality, values, and spontaneity, the liturgy grounds us in history and makes us part of something enduring.

**Six:** Liturgical worship is Trinitarian. The emphasis is on the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, which is the heart of Biblical worship.

**Seven:** It helps children grow in the atmosphere of worship with holy traditions that give stability and reverence for God.

**Eight:** It is both spontaneous and predictable with great depths of theology. Its use of the Scripture and ways that keep our 'senses' involved deepens our engagement during worship. Much of the modern worship is shallow, having degenerated into repetition of meaningless phrases.

**Nine:** It reminds us that we are not of this world, and it helps us join the angels and archangels and all the hosts in heaven in worship.

**Ten:** It is based on the patterns of worship given by God. God invites us to meet Him, God cleanses us, and He consecrates us and commissions us to represent Him.<sup>109</sup>

**Eleven:** It is orderly and meaningful, with a definitive beginning, progressing in an orderly way to the end.

**Twelve:** It has a sense of reverence and instills in us the feeling that we are here to meet

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God. There is a sense of mystery, which is an important part of worship.

*Thirteen:* During liturgical worship, we focus on God. God is the audience. We respond saying, "You are God."



## Chapter Summary

**One:** Liturgical worship has its origin in the Old Testament worship that was dictated by God. It follows both the Word, and the practical and tangible ways in which the people of God should worship.

**Two:** Liturgical worship helps the people of God become part of the heavenly worship that is eternal. It lets us know that God is the audience, not any man or mediator between the people of God.

**Three:** The three aspects of liturgical worship are Order, Ritual and Ceremonial. Order is like the skeleton to the body. The order consists of the gathering, the Word of God, the Sacrament and being sent out to be His witness.

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Ritual is our singing, responding to the Word, silence, bowing, confession of sin, prayer, etc.

The Ceremonial part consists of the Holy Communion, furnishings, candles, incense and vestments etc.

**Four:** Liturgical worship helps to keep the church united as one in faith and practice. Also, it keeps us from falling into false doctrines and it makes us part of the church of 2000 years, the one holy and orthodox faith.

**Five:** Liturgical worship helps the people of God keep God as the focus of worship and Jesus the centre of our reason for gathering.



# Citations

## **Preface**

<sup>1</sup> II Timothy 1:14 paraphrased

<sup>2</sup> II Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6, paraphrased

<sup>3</sup> St. Mark 7:13, Colossians 2:8

<sup>4</sup> Romans 12:2

## **Introduction**

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 6:16

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 5:6,13

## ***Chapter One***

### **Invitation to Worship**

<sup>7</sup> C. S. Lewis, God in the Dock (United

Kingdom: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970)

<sup>8</sup> Intellectual: the heavy emphasis on preaching and teaching the Word being the focus of the church gathering.

<sup>9</sup> Emotional: the modern 'praise and worship' gathering where emotionally moving music, light and sound become the main reason for gathering.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Robert Webber, *Common Roots* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, The Zondervan Corporation, 1978), p. 103

<sup>11</sup> St. John 5:39-40

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 7:16

<sup>13</sup> St. John 4:23-24

<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 6:1-5

<sup>15</sup> The desert fathers and mothers are the earliest Christian monks inhabited the desert land of the Middle East from the end of 2nd century onwards. They chose to renounce the world in order to deliberately and individually follow God's call. They embraced lives of celibacy, labor, fasting, prayer, and poverty. Their spiritual practice greatly influenced both Western and Eastern Christianity.

<sup>16</sup> Revelation 19:9

<sup>17</sup> Revelation 5

<sup>18</sup> Revelation 4,5

## *Chapter Two*

### **Meaning of Worship**

<sup>19</sup> [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Te\\_Deum](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Te_Deum)

<sup>20</sup> Robert Webber, *Planning Blended Worship: A Creative Mixture of Old & New* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 36

<sup>21</sup> Romans 12:1-2

<sup>22</sup> St. Gregory The Theologian, *Second Oration*, A. D 388, in *The Faith of the Early Fathers Vol.2*. Translated by William A. Jurgens (USA: Liturgical Press, 1979), 38

<sup>23</sup> Alexander Schememann, *For the life of the World*, (USA: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 14-16

<sup>24</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5, St. Mark 12:30-31

<sup>25</sup> St. Matthew 22:36-40

<sup>26</sup> Revelation 5:6-9

<sup>27</sup> Genesis 49:10[KJV]

<sup>28</sup> I Corinthians 11:24-25

<sup>29</sup> St. John 1:1,14

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<sup>30</sup> Genesis 49:10 [KJV]

<sup>31</sup> I Corinthians 11

<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 53: 4 - 7

<sup>33</sup> Romans 12:1

<sup>34</sup> I Corinthians 11:26

<sup>35</sup> Revelation 4, 5

<sup>36</sup> Revelation 5:13; Isaiah 6:1-5

<sup>37</sup> I Timothy 1:16-17

<sup>38</sup> Psalm 91, 97, 99, 136, Philippians. 2:6-11

<sup>39</sup> Deuteronomy 1:5-8; Acts 2:22-34, 36

<sup>40</sup> Exodus 12

<sup>41</sup> I Timothy 3:16

<sup>42</sup> St. John 1:14

<sup>43</sup> I John 4:1-3

<sup>44</sup> Psalm 19:1

<sup>45</sup> Romans 1:19-20

### **Chapter Summary**

<sup>46</sup> II Corinthians 3:18

*Chapter Three*

**The Journey of Worship**

<sup>47</sup> Ezekiel 28:14

<sup>48</sup> Genesis 1:26

<sup>49</sup> Genesis 4:3-5

<sup>50</sup> Genesis 12:7-8, 13:3-4, 18, 21:33, 28:17-19,  
33:18-20; 35:6-7

<sup>51</sup> Exodus 7:16

<sup>52</sup> Exodus 25 -27, 33:10, 1 Kings 6 - 8

<sup>53</sup> Exodus 19, Numbers 11:16-17, Exodus 12: 21-28,  
Exodus 24

<sup>54</sup> St. Luke 19:47, St. John 1:14, 10:22-24

<sup>55</sup> St. Luke 4:16

<sup>56</sup> St. Matthew 26:17-30, St. Mark 14:12-20,  
St. Luke 22:7-23

<sup>57</sup> St. Matthew 12:6, St. John 2:19

<sup>58</sup> Acts 2:37-41

<sup>59</sup> Acts 6:1

<sup>60</sup> Acts 6:7

<sup>61</sup> Acts 7:49-50

## THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

<sup>62</sup> I Corinthians 5:7; Romans 3:25, Ephesians 5:2,  
I Peter 1:19

<sup>63</sup> See, Acts 2, 4, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 28.

<sup>64</sup> I Corinthians 14:40

<sup>65</sup> I Corinthians 11

<sup>66</sup> Numbers 21:8-9

<sup>67</sup> Psalm 19:1

<sup>68</sup> I Corinthians 11:24-26

<sup>69</sup> I Corinthians 11:26

### Chapter Summery

<sup>70</sup> Exodus 7:16

### *Chapter Four*

#### **The Practice of Worship**

<sup>71</sup> Genesis 49:10 [KJV]

<sup>72</sup> Revelation 1:13

<sup>73</sup> Revelation 4,5

<sup>74</sup> Psalms 120 - 134

<sup>75</sup> Jeremiah 23:3

<sup>76</sup> Jeremiah 29:14

## CITATIONS

<sup>77</sup> Psalm 120-134

<sup>78</sup> Jeremiah 23:3; 29:14

<sup>79</sup> Psalm 51

<sup>80</sup> Refer Believers Eastern Church Lectionary for details.

<sup>81</sup> Acts 2

<sup>82</sup> St. John 5:39-40

<sup>83</sup> Romans 8:29

<sup>8</sup> St. John 6:53

<sup>85</sup> Revelation 5

<sup>86</sup> Isaiah 6, Revelation 5

<sup>87</sup> I John 4:3

<sup>88</sup> Acts 3

<sup>89</sup> St. John 6:53-57

<sup>90</sup> Revelation 19:7-9

<sup>91</sup> I Corinthians 11:27-28

<sup>92</sup> St. Matthew 18

<sup>93</sup> Isaiah 6:8

<sup>94</sup> St. Matthew 28:19. For more on this subject, please read Acts 1:8, Romans 15:20, Philippians 1:12, Romans 1:16, 10:15, St. Mark 10:45.

<sup>95</sup> I Corinthians 11:24

<sup>96</sup> St. John 20:21

<sup>97</sup> St. John 15

<sup>98</sup> Revelation 5:6

<sup>99</sup> Isaiah 6

## **Chapter Summery**

<sup>100</sup> St. John 6:53

## ***Chapter Five***

### **Liturgical Worship**

<sup>101</sup> Acts 2, Acts 6, 1 Corinthians 11, 12, 14

<sup>102</sup> I Corinthians 11

<sup>103</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (Orlando, USA: Harcourt Inc., 1992), 4.

<sup>104</sup> Revelation 4:1-11

<sup>105</sup> I Corinthians 14:28

<sup>106</sup> Numbers 21: 8 - 9

<sup>107</sup> I Peter 2:9

<sup>108</sup> St. Mark 9:34-35

<sup>109</sup> Leviticus 9

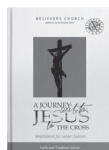


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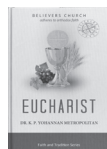
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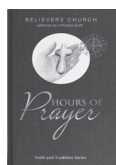
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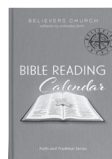


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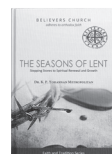
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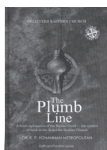
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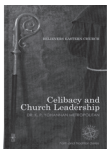
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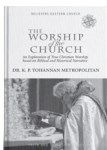
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Why some Eastern Churches mandate celibacy for their bishops? It is a reasonable question to ask since 'Believers Eastern church' adheres to the Eastern 'lineage of the church,' and in most of these churches, bishops are required to be celibate (that is, they don't marry). Another question is regarding the official ceremonial outfit that bishops wear, specifically the skull cap or masanapsa. Is it connected to this mandate of celibacy? What does the Bible say about bishops' celibacy? Is there a holy tradition of the church to support this view?



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## The Worship of the Church

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In this brief booklet, the author tries to help the reader travel back in time to the first 500 years of the early

orthodox faith of the church, to help us answer questions about a crisis of the modern-day church. The booklet explores how man has become the centre of worship instead of God, who should be the audience in our worship, and the follies of this new way.

## ബിലീവേഴ്സ് ചർച്ച്

വിശ്വസിക്കുകയും നടക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന കൃത്രിമ ലോകത്താണ് നാം ജീവിക്കുന്നത്. നാം യാഥാർത്ഥ്യത്തിനു വേണ്ടി ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നുവെങ്കിലും ആധികാരികമായ വിവരങ്ങൾ സത്യസന്ധമായി ലഭിക്കാത്ത തുകൊണ്ട് ആശയക്കുഴപ്പത്തിലാകുന്നു. ആയിരക്കണക്കിന് സഭാവിഭാഗങ്ങൾ ഉള്ളതുകൊണ്ട് ഏതാണ് നാം അന്വേഷിക്കുന്ന യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമെന്നോ ഏതാണ് സത്യത്തെ പ്രതിനിധാനം ചെയ്യുന്നതെന്നോ അറിയാൻ കഴിയാതെ അത്ഭുതപ്പെടുന്നു. ഏതാണ് യാഥാർത്ഥ്യം എന്നറിയാൻ ഒരു തുക്കുകുട്ടയോ ഉരുകല്ലോ ഉണ്ടോ? ഈ ലഘുകൃതിയുടെ എഴുത്തുകാരൻ നമ്മുടെ ഈ പ്രതിസന്ധിക്ക് ഉത്തരമുണ്ടെന്ന് വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു. നമുക്ക് എവിടെ മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശം ലഭിക്കുമെന്നും എന്തുകൊണ്ട് ആ മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശം കൃത്യവും യാഥാർത്ഥ്യവും ആകുന്നുവെന്നും ഗ്രന്ഥകാരൻ വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നു.



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