

THE  
LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
BENJAMIN MORGAN PALMER

BY

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When Mr. Palmer went to Columbia he found his congregation worshipping in a barn-like structure of rather modest dimensions. It soon became insufficient for his congregation. Toward the end of his pastorate there, he led his people to erect a new church edifice. In the year 1853, after the usual trials and tribulations of builders, the present edifice was ready for use. It was formally dedicated to the service of God, on Sabbath morning, October 9, 1853, by the pastor; whose theme of discourse on the occasion was, the "Warrant and Nature of Public Service."

The discourse is presented entire, as illustrating his ideals of his own duty as the minister of worship in that church; and as a fine type of the sermon he was aiming to give his people:

John 4: 23, 24.

"THE HOUR COMETH, AND NOW IS, WHEN THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS SHALL WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH: FOR THE FATHER SEEKETH SUCH TO WORSHIP HIM. GOD IS A SPIRIT: AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM MUST WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH."

It is an advantage sometimes accruing from unusual solemnities, that attention is directed to those ordinary rites, which pass current under the sanction of usage and prescription, rather than from an intelligent conviction of their nature and design. Thus, at the threshold of our services to-day, questions break upon us, from the depths of the eternal world, like the surf of the seashore, which gives presage of the boundless and surging ocean. We meet professedly, with public forms, to devote to the service of God this elegant structure, a monument both of the liberality and taste of the congregation by whom it has been reared. But what is meant precisely by this act of dedication? Do we hope, by the incantations of a spiritual magic, to transform this building of stone and mortar into a true and real temple? Can any amount of priestly benedictions put holiness into these beams and timbers? Surely not. Let the wizards peep and mutter as they may, the brick and the marble confess themselves incapable of that holiness which is an attribute of sentient and rational beings only. If, under the Jewish Dispensation, the consecration of particular localities was enjoined, this was due to the typical character of that mysterious economy. Jerusalem and Zion were only because Jehovah chose there for a season to reveal his presence. It was the Shekinah between the Cherubim which made the tabernacle holy. But the tabernacle, with its chambers and its courts, its altars and its ark, its vessels and its veil, was but a type of Christ's humanity, and of the great priestly work to which this was needful. Only until "the fulness

of time should come," did it please God to dwell in temples made with hands. Now he dwelleth in the Incarnate Word, which is "the true tabernacle that the Lord pitched, and not man,"—"the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands,—not of this building." It is, my brethren, a melancholy proof how little we are imbued with the spirit of the Gospel, that good Christians should still "speak half in the speech of Ashdod." A vain superstition still babbles, in the dialect of obsolete Judaism, about temples, and altars, and priests, as though these were anything more than "figures of the truth, for the time then present." As the only Priest known to the Gospel is that High Priest, who by "his own blood entered into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us,"—so the only temple now on earth is that which is "builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit," the stones of which are living stones, taken, indeed, from the quarry of corrupt human nature, but polished after the similitude of a palace, in which God dwells by his Spirit. This dedication, then, imparts no sanctity to this material edifice. In the language of another, "No pompous ceremonies, no solemn forms, no magnificent appearances, no gaudy or golden solemnities, can sanctify any place unto God and his worship, or make it more holy than it was before. And though when a commodious building is erected for the worship of God, it is a very decent thing to begin the worship at that place with solemn prayer or addresses to God; yet, all this human prudence, this natural decency, and all these prayers, do not amount to the sanctifying the spot of ground or the building, so as to make it holier than the rest, or put any such holiness upon it as belonged to the Jewish people."\* Then, "what mean we by this service?" Why this lifting up of our hands, this invocation of the adorable and incomprehensible Trinity, these chants and Psalms of praise? We do but set apart, in solemn phrase, this House to the public worship of Almighty God. A sense of propriety would dictate, on opening a house of worship, that God's blessing should be implored upon all the ordinances to be dispensed therein; and the character of those associations should be declared, which are henceforth to invest the worshipper.

But the antecedent inquiry arises, why should men meet in public assembly to render united homage to the God of Heaven? If, as is often alleged, and in a high sense is most emphatically true, if religion be only the name of man's individual relations to God, lying only between the conscience of the creature and the authority of the Creator, what distinctly is the warrant for these public convocations? Why is it not enough, in the elegant language of Jeremy Taylor, that "every man shall build a chapel in his own breast, and himself be the priest, and his heart the sacrifice, and every foot of glebe he treads on be the altar?" It does not satisfy this inquiry that so it has been

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\* Dr. Watts' *"Discourse on the Holiness of Places."*

through all periods of time, and under every dispensation the voice of assembled worshippers has gone up to Heaven, as "the sound of many waters." The universality of this public worship is, indeed, fully attested by the seal of history. If, from the present moment, we ascend, through intervening generations, to apostolic and primitive Christianity, our march will be through assemblies more or less august, till we sit down with the church that was in the house of Philemon or Aquilla. If we cross the line which separates the Christian from the Jewish economy, our feet stand upon the threshold of the synagogue, in which, from the captivity, if not from a remoter age, all the parts of natural worship—prayer, and praise and reading of the Law, were continually performed. With the myriads of Israel again we go up to the holy hill of Zion, where, in the temple of Solomon, or the tabernacle, its pattern, we wait upon those ceremonial and positive institutions which God expressly ordained. Three times a year a nation trod with solemn feet the courts of Jerusalem, and a nation's anthem went up in praise, while a nation's repentance smoked in the blood of unnumbered victims. If again we penetrate the haze which hangs around the Patriarchal Dispensation, when the earth was young, when the ruler was a priest, and the priest a father, we find dim traces of chosen spots honored with the symbols of God's presence, and where lingers faintly the echo of a united worship.<sup>10</sup> So that across the track of sixty centuries, from the moment when we gathered in this assembly to the day when Paul stood on Mars' Hill, and from Peter in the streets of Jerusalem to Noah, a preacher of righteousness to sinners before the flood, the Lord's "faithfulness has always been declared in the congregation of His Saints." But this universality of public worship binds us with the authority of *prescription* only, not of *law*. It proves that some principle exists in man, prompting to these joint acts of worship, but does not declare what that principle is. Nor if it did, would the mere suitability of this worship, recommending it to such universal consent, be deemed a sufficient basis upon which to rest the duty.

Nor does it satisfy this inquiry to point out the public benefits flowing from the practice. These blessings cannot be exaggerated, though depicted in the deepest colors the most lively fancy shall invent. "Religion," it has been well said, "is the ligature of souls, and the great instrument of the conservation of bodies politic, and is united in a common object, the God of all the world, and is managed by public ministries, by sacrifice, adoration and prayer, in which, with variety of circumstances indeed, but with infinite consent and union of design, all the sons of Adam are taught to worship God,"<sup>11</sup> Science teaches that the harmony of the material universe depends upon one pervading natural law. The power of mutual attraction, which holds together

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<sup>10</sup> See Blunt's *Coincidences in the Writings of the O. T.*, Part I.

<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Taylor's *Life of Jesus.*, Part I., sec. 7.

two atoms in a lump, holds earth, and all the planets, which in the void immense wheel their course. Whole constellations, too,—“cycle and epicycle, orb in orb,” as “with unoffensive pace each spinning sleeps on its soft axle,”—revolve with complex motion round a common center, the “*primum mobile*,” perhaps the august throne on which the Godhead sits. The analogy is perfect. What attraction is to matter, binding the atom to the mass, the planet to the sun, and the constellation to the throne of God, that religion is to soul. Man’s responsibility to God gives capacity for obedience to human law. He moves in the narrower sphere of earthly duty, because fastened by a higher tie in a wider and holier relation. While the conscience responds to the challenges of Divine Law, the yoke of authority will be borne under the human. Thus religion is truly the girdle which binds together the complicated interests of society. Public worship nourishes this sentiment precisely in the form which is best suited to immediate application. It is of immense service, at stated seasons, to bring men together in the mass, where they may feel a brotherhood of nature and of race,—where all the artificial distinctions of wealth, position, education and rank, shall for the moment be obliterated,—where each shall feel that “there is one body and one spirit, even as there is one hope of their calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.” Individual differences are merged, and individual asperities softened, when all look back upon a common ruin, look up to a common Savior, look forward to a common goal, rejoice in the promises of a common covenant, weep tears of a common repentance, and experience the joys of a common pardon. Blot religion from the soul of man, and you have destroyed the cohesion of society; bury the sanctuary in ruin, and you have dashed to pieces the great magnet of earth, which draws all hearts into sympathy and union.

Still less can we overstate the influence of the sanctuary as the educator of mankind. It is God’s voice which thunders here, and the human soul must give back the echo. He speaks of law, and, like the needle to the pole, conscience points to duty. He speaks of wrath, each fluttering pulse betrays the fears. He speaks of love, the softened heart gives its wedded vows to him who won it. Under a judicious ministry, who can estimate the slumbering energies aroused, and the mental training which reaches thousands whom scholastic discipline never touched? I speak not, of course, of that fanatical rant, whose ambitious sport it is to lash the soul into a tempest of emotion, leaving only the foam to mark its passage. I speak of that discreet, well proportioned, yet earnest ministry, which feeds the Church of God with wholesome truth,—giving milk to babes, and strong meat to men,—which, not pampering to a taste craving always to be delirious with excitement, chooses to pour a flood of knowledge upon the human mind,

and suffers this light of Heaven to draw its own music from the soul on which it beams.<sup>12</sup>

Yet all these advantages, of which only a suggestive hint has been given, do not form the ground of public worship. They fully justify the wisdom which ordained it, and add motives for its due and reverent observance, but they do not furnish the warrant upon which its claims may legally be sustained.

We reach a much higher position when the authority and will of God are distinctly pleaded in its favor. In whatever form this will may be revealed, it silences dispute and rebukes distrust. Whether it be conveyed through the appointment of a weekly Sabbath, upon the lintel of which is inscribed the sentence "the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation,"—or, in the assurance of extraordinary blessings to such as frequent His courts, as thus, "in all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee,"—or, in the more explicit command, "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is;" the will of God, clearly known, resolves every scruple and binds the conscience. But the Divine authority, though recognized as ample warrant for the duty, does not forestall investigation, whether in man's essential nature, or in his religious relations, any reasonable ground exists for this practice of public worship. It infers no want of submission to God's absolute authority to trace the obvious reasons of his holy commands, and thus to inflame our admiration of his wisdom and goodness, by discovering the suitability of his laws, both to our nature and condition.

There are three great principles, from which the institution of stated public worship would seem to flow by necessary deduction. The first is:

I. *That man, endowed with a social nature, cannot attain the perfection which is possible to him, in the privacy and insulation of his own being.* As in worship we have immediate commerce with the Infinite One, it might seem to be a matter of individual concernment merely. But, however true it may be that religion lies only between the man and his Maker, in the sense that God only is Lord and Judge of the conscience, it is not true that religion contemplates man as an insulated being. On the contrary, it penetrates every faculty of his complex nature, and pervades every relation in which he stands. As the moon's motion round the earth does not impede the common and wider motion of both around the sun, so neither does the connection between God and the conscience become less intimate, when the worshipper lifts his voice in the great congregation, than when he breathes his prayer in the whispers of the closet. This "bill of divorcement" which men draw up between the first and second tables of the Decalogue,

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<sup>12</sup> The celebrated statue of Memnon, in ancient story, was said to utter melodious sounds, when first illuminated by the rising sun.

between their primary and secondary duties, as though the former only fell within the pale of their religion, is the charter of that "filthy Antinomianism" which, in every age, has left its obscene touch upon the Church of God. True religion does not more possess man's nature than it covers man's relations. It is as truly a part of religion to love our neighbor as ourselves, as it is to love the Lord our God with all our heart,—as much a part of religion to "do justly, and to love mercy," as "to walk humbly with our God." The earth's orbit may be around the sun, but the earth's orbit is also among the stars. Man's duty is to know and to obey God, but not the less to serve Him *among men*. True piety is thus an invisible essence, which penetrates the whole character, and relishes the entire life. With supreme love to the Master in our souls, all the hard labor with which we earn our bread in the working forge of life, all the unseen acts of wayside charity,—the morsel of bread to the hungry, the cup of cold water to the thirsty, the tear of Christian sympathy for the mourner,—all these, like the prayers and the alms of Cornelius, come up for a memorial before God; or like the sweet savour which the Lord smelled in the burnt offerings of Noah. If, then, religion though an individual matter strictly, does not *exclude*, but rather, in its comprehensive definition, *embraces* all the social relations of man, surely his worship, which is but the utterance of religion, may be rendered conjointly with others, while yet it ascends from individual souls, sweetly attracted by their Maker's love, as the single flame leaping upwards, and "trembling most when it reaches highest," is yet composed of a thousand blended rays of heat; or as the sun's radiance, which bathes this world in glory, comprises myriads of single beams, each distinct to the eye of God, though blending into common light.

But these remarks do not touch the core of the principle stated above, which was, that man having social endowments and affinities cannot perfect his own nature, in a state of complete seclusion. It is from this postulate that the whole theory of education proceeds, without which it would have neither purpose nor method. It would have no *purpose*, because if man is to live in the seclusion of his own soul, locked up to a transcendental intercourse with his Maker, why not leave him to the impulses received immediately from God, which alone can fit him for that secret communion? It would have no *method*, for no form of education is conceivable which does not draw a man out from the solitude of individual being into correspondence with objects external to himself. Education takes us out of these inner chambers, and ranges with us through the whole domain of nature. We walk among the stars, and call it astronomy; we scrutinize the elements, and call it science; we analyze all the processes of thought and emotion, and call it philosophy; we study the social fabric, with its scale of graduated duties, and call it morality; we combine together the doc-

trines of Holy Scriptures, and call it theology; we feel their influence upon our own heart and conscience, and call it religion. The whole is education, which leads forth the anchorite from his cell, guides him in these wide excursions through all the provinces of nature and reason, and endows him with a wealth of knowledge, to gather which the whole universe of matter and of mind has been laid under tribute.

So, too, man's social nature lies at the foundation of all development of his faculties. We come into being with a thousand capacities, physical, intellectual and moral, every one of which is dormant, and requires to be developed. The great law seems to pervade the world of rational existence, that moral beings shall live together in society, and their natures be perfected under mutual action and reaction. In all the universe no intelligent being is doomed to a solitary existence, but wherever there is a soul it cries out for fellowship. Angels have society in joy, and devils companionship in woe. The multitude of harpers, whom John saw upon the sea of glass, formed the General Assembly and Church of the First-born in Heaven. The consecrated millions around the Lamb, represented by the four beasts and the four and twenty Elders, in company with angels, swell the chorus of blessing and honor to Him upon the throne. Let it be uttered in the muffled tones of reverential awe, even the mystery of the Godhead teaches the same: since Jehovah, whose greatness is unsearchable, is himself infinitely perfect and ineffably blessed, in the social existence of the Trinity. This analogy, therefore, to which we have discovered no exception, in worlds above or worlds below, would seem to teach that man on earth would not be left to solitary communion with his Maker; but that, in religion, as in all else beside, the social element would have scope in the united worship of the sanctuary. When the sinner is again "renewed after the image of Him who created him," he is not left a lonely orphan, to shape his own character by the power of his own desolate musings; but he is brought into association with others of like precious faith, that by the law of assimilation, and the power of mutual support he may "grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." As a part of this heavenly education, he mingles in those public offices of religion, which profit him, not only by the greater promises of grace annexed to them; but profit him also by "the piety of example, by the communication of counsels, by the awfulness of public observation, and the engagements of holy custom."<sup>12</sup> Thus "the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

II. But a second ground, upon which we may rest the institution of public worship, is, that *it is necessary to the Church, as the visible*

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<sup>12</sup> Jeremy Taylor's *Life of Jesus*, Part I., sec. 7.

*kingdom of Christ.* It would be superfluous here, to argue the existence of a church visible, as distinguished from that which is invisible. The latter is the Church of the Elect, embracing only the mystical body of Christ, who have "followed him in the regeneration." It is, of course, known infallibly to God only, who are the subjects of this kingdom; and it would require a special revelation, in reference to each, to bring it under human control and government. Besides this kingdom, and to a great extent including it, is another kingdom which is visible, and, as visible, is administered by men. This kingdom is the Church of God on earth. To employ the full definition of Dr. Mason,<sup>14</sup> it is "the aggregate body of those who profess the true religion, all making up but one society, of which the Bible is the statute-book, Jesus Christ the head, and a covenant relation the uniting bond." Now, what is necessary to give *visibility* to this kingdom of Jesus Christ? Obviously, there must be a covenant, or charter, securing the privileges of its subjects, and setting forth the tenure upon which these are held. There must be outward seals, giving legal value to the instrument, the use of which shall involve a solemn assumption of all the duties which are imposed. There must be laws, regulating the conduct of such as desire to be true and loyal subjects, and repressing the rebellion and wickedness of such as are traitorous and false. There must be officers, invested with ministerial power, acting always under the commission of their lawful king. There must be a court from which the symbols of royal power and supremacy may be displayed; and days of interview, when the subject comes into the presence of his monarch to offer up his homage, and to receive the favors which royal clemency or justice may dispense. From her first organization upon earth all these visible marks have been deciphered on the Church of God. Sacrifices were instituted, as the mode by which the worshippers might make an acceptable approach to their king, typical of the great expiation which should be made by the one perfect offering in the end of the world. Priests were ordained to go between the living and the dead, typical of "the only mediator between God and man—the man, Christ Jesus." The temple was erected as the dwelling place of the Divine Majesty, from which all his oracles should issue. Extraordinary prophets were commissioned to make new disclosures of the Monarch's will. Days of convocation were set, when he would display his glory to his subjects, and sacraments were given to seal the bond between himself and them. Great changes have indeed supervened upon that economy since the advent of Christ, but not such as affect the identity of the Church, as a visible Catholic society from the beginning. The sacrifices are withdrawn, but not the great propitiatory oblation in which they were fulfilled. The succession of earthly priests has ceased, only because the great High Priest ever liveth to intercede above. The temple hath not

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<sup>14</sup> Mason's *Essays on the Church.* No. I.

one stone left upon another, but the true Shekinah dwelleth in Christ, the Word made flesh and dwelling amongst us. The long line of prophets terminates only in that Prophet whom the Lord God was to raise up like to Moses, and their treasured messages are expounded from the Bible by living ministers; while the seals of the covenant have only changed their outward forms. Is it not necessary that there shall be solemn assemblies, in which the laws of this kingdom shall be proclaimed,—when this visible church, with its visible ministry, its visible sacraments, shall also, through a visible worship and visible discipline, commend itself to the love and veneration of its members? The Church, as the visible kingdom of Jesus, has the Sabbath for its court-day, the sanctuary for the King's pavilion, and its instituted worship for the subject's fealty.

But these considerations lead to the third ground, upon which this great institute may be based:

III. *Since, by means of the worship and ordinances of the sanctuary, this kingdom of Christ makes its aggressions upon the surrounding and opposing powers of darkness.* In strict analogy with all other empires, this kingdom rose from small beginnings. It was first set up, with a written constitution, in the family of Abraham; it received a visible expansion in that of Jacob, whose twelve sons were the twelve foundation-stones of the Jewish church. This kingdom, cradled for a season in the fruitful land of Egypt, soon outgrows the limits of the family and tribe, and comes forth a nation. In Canaan, hedged around with peculiar and restrictive ceremonial institutes, it lives without further development till he came, who was the end of all the types. For a season we see it reduced within narrower limits, and must search for it in the house, as in the days of Abraham and Isaac; but it is only to burst forth with a new enlargement, and assume its proper attribute of universality. Now is fulfilled the vision of Daniel, "the little stone cut out without hands shall smite the feet of the great image, and then it becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth." From the moment the Church entered into the Christian Dispensation, throwing off the restrictions by which it was swathed in the Jewish, it is confessed to be an *aggressive* kingdom. To its sovereign there is "given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people, nations and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." The genius of the two Dispensations, the Jewish and the Christian, is strongly expressed in the opposite directions given to both: under the former the language is, go up to Jerusalem; under the latter the language is, go into all the world. In the one, the Church is stationary; moored to the Hill of Zion by peculiar and local rights placed in the center of earth, as at that time known, she throws her light over surrounding nations, and attracts them to her. In the other, all her

fastenings cut asunder, she is sent forth upon a great itineracy; no longer stationary, but aggressive, she goes to the nations, who before were commanded to come to her.<sup>15</sup> In the great commission of her Lord, go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, we trace the genius of the New Testament Church. It is no exaggeration of pious zeal, when it is reiterated that the Church of Jesus Christ is essentially a Missionary Church, and her aggressiveness set forth as a capital and distinctive feature.

But not only is this kingdom thus aggressive; its encroachments are made through a peculiar warfare. Its only weapons are persuasion and argument. The arrows that are "sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies" are drawn only from the quiver of eternal truth. The only sword drawn from its sheath is the sword of the spirit, which cutteth to the heart. The only captivity it inflicts is that which "brings every thought into the obedience of Christ." The commission under which its armies go forth to conquest, enjoins that they shall gain their victories simply by teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And thus the appropriate symbol of this kingdom is that of the angel flying in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell upon the earth. Now, because this kingdom claims to be thus universal and makes its aggressions not by the arm of violence, but by the gracious words of its Lord and Head, therefore these public convocations are required. Wherever its subjects may be scattered, their oath of all allegiance binds them to spread a tent, and invite the nations to a parley. "The great trumpet must be blown, to assemble the outcasts in Egypt, that they may worship the Lord in the Holy Mount." They must take up the song of the angels to the shepherds, and proclaim "the tidings of great joy to all people, that unto them a Savior is born, who is Christ, the Lord." Whatever necessity may have existed in former ages, for the public assembly, it must be a prime feature of the Church in the present economy. Without public proclamation, the Gospel must be stifled in its utterance, and cannot prove itself the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto the salvation of man.

Thus far, my brethren, we have discussed the *warrant* for public worship, which we find to be the will of God expressly revealed to us, having yet a natural foundation in the social constitution of man, pertaining to the Church as the visible kingdom of Christ, and necessary to the aggressions which she is pledged to make against the world of darkness. It will be necessary now to consider the *nature* of this worship, as deducible from the text. The woman of Samaria proposes to

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<sup>15</sup> See this contrast beautifully presented in a *Missionary Sermon*, one of the earlier performances of Dr. Harris, which made him known to the church at large.

Christ to settle the dispute so jealously maintained between her people and the Jews, whether the worship of God had been appointed on the Hill of Zion, or on Mt. Gerizim, from which of old his blessings had been so solemnly pronounced. To this inquiry Christ replied by showing its utter impertinence. The time had now come when the predicted challenge of Isaiah was to be both explained and fulfilled: "Thus saith the Lord, the Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; where is the House that ye build unto me, and where is the place of my rest? for all these things hath my hand made, and all these things have been, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." The Dispensation of types is brought to a close. Henceforth, "he that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol." Among these vanishing shadows is the gorgeous temple on Mount Moriah. Shall he who "inhabits the praises of eternity," who "fills immensity with his presence," be confined within a material edifice? Behold, the frame of nature is his, and the broad earth his footstool. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, without body or parts; it is appropriate therefore, that he be universally worshipped, and with a spiritual homage. The Jewish law was but a "shadow of things to come but the body is of Christ." Since then, Christ, this body, is come, God is to be worshipped, not through the shadow, but in the substance which is Christ. The worship, therefore, which God now accepts, both secret and social, is a worship not restricted to places or to season; it is a worship not ceremonial and typical, but spiritual and internal, the substance and body of which is the truth itself,—the truth known and felt in its power,—the truth as it is in Jesus.

There is obviously the distinction between what is natural and what is ceremonial in public worship: The former having a ground in nature, so that reason itself would enforce it upon the conscience,—the latter deriving its entire claim from the express appointment of God. In the first class will fall such acts as prayer, and praise, and the study of the Word, which, having their ground in reason itself, never can become obsolete with changing dispensations. In the second class will range such symbolical rites as Circumcision or Baptism, the Passover or the Eucharist. For though these symbols may illustrate vital and holy truths, yet the will of God alone can make one symbol more obligatory than another, or indeed bind us to a symbolical worship at all. The Jewish Dispensation was marked by the predominance of the ceremonial over the natural parts in public worship. The courses of the priests, the splendor of their vestments, the variety and number of the sacrifices, the magnificence of the temple, the oblations and incense,—all gave denomination to Judaism, as a system of types and emblems. But

under the Christian economy, the natural parts of worship, those having an evident foundation in reason and propriety, and not possessing authority from positive institution alone,—these are brought into bolder relief from the suppression or withdrawal of the symbolical.

This seems to be intimated in the contrast drawn by our Savior, between the typical and the spiritual, in the text: "The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father; but the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Here to worship in the spirit is antithetical to worshiping in Jerusalem, which cannot be explained, unless these terms are the synonyms of a symbolical and a spiritual worship.

This language suggests, too, a certain connection between the *devotions* and the *instructions* of the sanctuary. For though the term truth in the phrase, "in spirit and in truth," does not primarily refer to any dogmatic statements, yet referring to Christ as the substance of the shadowy economy of the temple, it doubtless implies full instruction in all that relates to His person and work. Permit me to dwell with a little minuteness upon what may be termed the Protestant view of public worship, touching the stress which is to be laid upon the office of instruction in the sanctuary. There are three lines of thought which conduct to the inference that formal exposition of truth is a necessary service in the Christian Church. It follows:

I. *From the complete withdrawal of the ancient types.* It is, I conceive, a low and narrow view to take of these, that they were designed as artistic representations, to captivate the senses and delight the imagination. If no inspired interpretation of them had been afforded, drawing out stores of spiritual meaning, it would be more pardonable to speak of them as giving a scenic effect, as it were, dramatizing the worship of God, enlisting the sentiment, and drawing forth the poetry that lurks far down in the nature of every man. The Epistle to the Hebrews is sufficient to overthrow this frigid hypothesis. The Apostle undertakes to unfold the priesthood of Christ, and he does this by simply expounding the import of the tabernacle and its furniture, the priesthood in its courses, the sacrifices and purgations of the old law. We are therefore to regard these types as being really an exhibition of spiritual truths to the Jewish mind,—a sacred hieroglyph, curious enough to provoke inquiry, yet plain enough to be resolved upon investigation. They were indeed a language, peculiar in construction yet pregnant with meaning, if the key were only given to unlock the cypher. It does not concern me now to vent an opinion how far this language was actually interpreted,—whether the pious Jew was permitted to read the high import of these mysterious symbols, or whether, like prophecy, which is a cypher of another kind, the key is reserved till the day of fulfilment. Should I hazard a conjecture upon this collateral point, it would be that types and prophecies both were, in

their broad outline, sufficiently understood, at least by the spiritually enlightened,—while yet the details of both were shut up in mystery, and all questions as to the mode and time of fulfilment lost themselves in the uncertainties of conjecture. If, then, these types were a species of language, speaking to the eye, and reaching the reason through the imagination,—if the temple, with its august ceremonies, was but a symbolical painting, somewhat like the sculptured panels and painted walls recently disinterred from the ruins of Nineveh,—then they cannot be withdrawn from a dispensation claiming to be more perfect, without the substitution of a better form of instruction. What this form shall be, is most easily and reasonably determined. In Judaism, Christ was *to come*; his advent was future: In Christianity, Christ *has come*; the event is past. In the one case, the representation of what is future cannot but be symbolic; in the other, the representation of what is past cannot but be historic. In the New Testament Church, therefore, the instruction must consist of plain statements of actual facts—the facts of Christ's life, and the facts of his death—and of didactic expositions of duty founded upon these facts. The change which has taken place is just what we would antecedently expect from the chronology of the two economies. When Christ's advent was future, it was foreshadowed by types and emblems. When Christ did come these types were cancelled, and he is now held forth in the sanctuary as a fact, a substance and a body; and the instructions which are given are instructions concerning a fact; they are plain, literal, historic and didactic.

II. *The same conclusion as to the necessity of formal instruction in the sanctuary follows, from the connection of preaching, with the final spread of Christianity.* "There were great voices in heaven, saying: the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." This is the pæan with which prophecy celebrates the close of this latter age of the Church. But how is this unearthly kingdom to penetrate all earthly kingdoms, and include them? Go preach my Gospel, saith the Lord, for it is by the foolishness of preaching he will save them that believe, and "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." But who shall preach? Even they that are sent. And where shall they preach? What ye have heard in the ear, says Christ, proclaim ye upon the housetops. If what has before been said, respecting the aggressiveness of Christianity be true, and if this universal extension is to be achieved by the simple proclamation of Gospel truths, then the importance of the pulpit cannot be overlooked; and among the appointments of the sanctuary the expositions of Bible truth must be prominent.

III. *But the necessity of instruction in the House of God will appear further from the relation of knowledge to worship.* I am free to admit that the main design of these public assemblies is devotion; yet

it cannot be a blind and senseless devotion of the body, without the soul. "God is a spirit,"—and how can he be pleased with what is corporeal? If, for the purpose of instructing men in the higher mysteries of redemption, atonement and pardon, he for a season enjoined bloody sacrifices, it was not because he delighted either in the fat of rams or in the blood of bulls. When he made man in his own image he gave him a thinking soul, and endowed that soul with knowledge and holiness, and the sacrifices acceptable to him are those of a broken and contrite spirit. "To love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." But how can this devotion be spiritual without the truth? To worship God as a spirit, and with the spirit, there must be knowledge of God, who He is—"infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, justice, goodness, holiness and truth"—there must be knowledge of God in His relations to us, as our Creator, Ruler and Redeemer—there must be knowledge of His law, setting forth His claims upon our love and service—and there must be knowledge of the way of approach and communion with Him, as it is graphically summed up by Dr. Owen.<sup>16</sup> "This is the general order of Gospel worship, the great rubric of our service. Here, in general, lieth its decency, that it respects the mediation of the Son, through whom we have access, and the supplies and assistance of the Spirit, and a regard unto God as a Father. He that fails in any one of these breaks all order in Gospel worship. This is the great canon, which, if it be neglected, there is no decency in whatever else is done in this way." How, then, can there be true worship without instruction? For these things are known only as God has revealed them and He has written them in a book. Instruction, therefore, is needed in the sanctuary, to afford the materials for devotion; for the knowledge of God and His love supplies the theme of our song.

It strikingly illustrates, too, the wisdom of the Divine arrangements, that in the sanctuary instruction and devotion are so inseparably coupled and the former always in subordination to the latter. If Christianity were taught only in the portico and lyceum, it is hard to see how it should be kept from sliding into a sublime philosophy. But taught in the sanctuary after offices of prayer and praise, and taught as a means to these, it is retained in the heart as religion. The devotions of the sanctuary exercise a secret, but not the less powerful, check upon that spirit of unlicensed speculation, which, in reference to the deity, is always profane; while again, these instructions react powerfully upon the devotion of the worshipper, to enliven and support it. They supply oxygen to the flame, so that the vestal fire burns without extinction upon the altar within.

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<sup>16</sup> Sermon on Nature and Beauty of Gospel Worship.

It is somewhat a nice point to adjust the instructions and the devotions of the sanctuary so that they shall be mingled in due proportion. Ritualism, on the one hand, so multiplies the offices of prayer and thanksgiving as to thrust aside the exposition of doctrine. Rationalism, on the other hand, spins out discourse till the spirit of devotion is smothered under the weight of human speculations. Romanists, for example, as types of the first, substituting the Church for Christ, and cutting off all access to God save through the priesthood, have no occasion to bring divine truth upon the conscience and heart, and the sermon is ignored. Protestants, on the contrary, who maintain the individual responsibility of men to God, and cannot propose to be proxies for others in this concern, rest upon the truth, as the great medium of spiritual communion with God. In proportion, therefore, as the Protestant spirit prevails, is attention given to the preaching of the Word. The exact measures of the two may not be determined alike by all. But the very genius of Christianity requires that copious instruction shall be given—that this instruction shall hinge upon the vital truths concerning the grace of the Gospel—that it shall be conveyed, not in a dry and scholastic form, but in that practical and experimental form which shall glide most easily into the frames of devotion.

I cannot forbear, even at the hazard of wearying you, from touching upon another feature of Christian worship, clearly implied in the contrasted expressions of the text, viz: *its pre-eminent simplicity*. When Christ says, "the true worshippers shall worship the Father, not in Jerusalem, but in spirit," the antithesis lies not in the language, but in the sentiment. He does not mean to say that spiritual worship could not be rendered at Jerusalem as elsewhere. Jerusalem is here only another name for Judaism,<sup>17</sup> the "Jerusalem which is in bondage with her children;" and to worship in Jerusalem is only the formula for a ceremonial and symbolical service. Here, then, are two facts: First, that the only instance in which God has enjoined a splendid and imposing ritual upon the Church was under a dispensation clearly typical, when the truth was taught by emblems; and Second, that this picturesque and ceremonial service has been unquestionably withdrawn, being supplanted by another that is spritual and simple. As regards the splendor of that ancient service, the following language was uttered by one of the great divines of the seventeenth century:<sup>18</sup> "Mosaical worship, as celebrated in Solomon's temple, outdid all the glory and splendor that ever the world, in any place, in any age, from the foundation of it, ever enjoyed. How glorious was it, when the house of Solomon stood in its greatest order and beauty, all overlaid with gold, thousands of priests and Levites ministering in their orders, with all the most solemn musical instruments that David found out, and the great con-

<sup>17</sup> Brown, on Galatians, p. 235. <sup>18</sup> Dr. Owens' *Discourse on the Nature and Beauty of Gospel Worship*.

gregation assembled, of hundreds of thousands, all singing praises to God! Let any man in his thoughts a little compare the greatest, most solemn, pompous and costly worship that any of the sons of men have in these latter days invented and brought into the Christian Church, with this of the Judaical; take the Cathedral of Peter, in Rome, bring in the Pope and all his cardinals in all their vestments, habiliments and ornaments, fill their choir with the best singers they can get, set out and adorn their images and pictures to the utmost that their treasures and superstitions will reach to, then compare it with Solomon's Temple and the worship thereof, and he shall quickly find that it holds no proportion with it, that it is all a toy, a thing of naught in comparison of it." Yet this splendid, pompous and costly ritual has been cancelled by the same authority which ordained it.<sup>19</sup> After all, it was but a veil which Moses put over his face which the spirit of the Lord hath taken away, that "we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image from glory to glory." These were but the elements of the world," under "the bondage" of which the children of God were, "until the time appointed of the Father." The glory of this economy is that it is "the ministration of the Spirit"; who being present, as "the anointing which teacheth the believer, and is truth and is no lie," has forever destroyed that dim, ceremonial service, which, like the shadows of a magic lantern, was only "a figure of the true." To introduce, therefore, pomps and rites into Christian worship with a view to make it impressive and gorgeous, is to Judaize it.<sup>20</sup> If the intention be only to give splendor and dignity to the service; by rights which have no emblematic signification, then it is "a show of wisdom in will-worship." The whole is thereby rendered impertinent and trifling, since the Church never had, even in the days of ceremonial observance, a ritual that was void of significance.

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<sup>19</sup>"The divine command is the only basis of religious duty; and will-worship of every description has uniformly drawn down the expression of the Divine displeasure. With regard to whatsoever partakes of the essential nature of worship, it may safely be affirmed that what is not commanded is virtually forbidden. This constitutes the broad line of distinction between the worship of faith and the offerings of superstition; the former alone partakes of the character of obedience, being founded upon the knowledge and recognition of the Divine will. Whatsoever is not of faith, whatsoever has not the Divine command as its basis, is not obedience, but sin."—*Conder, on Protestant Non-conformity*, p. 165.

<sup>20</sup>"Idolatry has reference either to the *object* or to the *mode* of religious worship. . . . But idolatrous corruptions of the *mode* of worship are not less at variance with the religious principle. 'The descent of the human mind, from the spirit to the letter, from what is vital and intellectual to what is ritual and external in religion is,' re-

The argument is complete either way. If the ritual be emblematic of truth, then we have gone back to Judaism, reconstructing in part at least, a system that by God's will has "decayed and vanished away;" if it be only sensuous and imaginative, then the arrogance is insufferable, which offers to guard what is confessedly unmeaning, to amuse, as it were, his heavy hours with the gauds and mimicking shows the children love.

If this congregation has erected a building more grand and beautiful in architectural design than that which to-day we have left, it has been done only in the exercise of a lawful taste about a matter in itself morally indifferent. But I would prefer to see it razed to the earth, and its foundation stones be uncovered, than it should be supposed to lend a sanction to that stupid jargon of a so-called ecclesiastical architecture, whose ghostly mutterings have of late, through some Witch of Endor, been pouring in upon us from the dark ages. Be it known unto all men that here is none of "that beauty and glory which carving, and paintings, and embroidered vestures, and musical incantations, and postures of veneration, do give unto divine service."<sup>21</sup> No pealing organ, "through long-drawn aisle, and fretted vault," here "swells the note of praise." No "dim religious light" streams here, through storied panes, to cheat us with its likeness to the twilight hour. Here have we no wooden cross, no altar, no human priest, no emblematic furniture, "no ceremonies, vestments, gestures, ornaments, music, altars, images, paintings, with prescriptions of great bodily veneration."<sup>22</sup> We know but one sacrifice, that which was offered up once for all,—the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. We know of but one Priest, who with his own blood has entered through the veil into the Holiest, having obtained eternal redemption for us. We know but one temple on earth, that which is made such by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the saints of the most high God. We know but one gospel, to wit: "that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses;" and with

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marks an eloquent writer, 'the true source of idolatry and superstition in all the multifarious forms which they have assumed.' Whatsoever tends to compromise the spiritual for the sensible, whatsoever transfers the attention of the mind from invisible realities to material forms, directly opposes the spirit and tendency of Christianity. All attempts, therefore, to conciliate the homage of the irreligious to Christianity by an accommodation of its principles, its rights or its practical requisitions to the imagination and taste of worldly men, in whatsoever motives they may originate, must be stigmatized as frustrating the primary design of the Gospel and as partaking of the nature of idolatrous corruption of religion."—*Conder, on Protestant Non-conformity*, pp. 20, 21.

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Owens' Discourse, *The Chamber of Imagery*. <sup>22</sup> *Ibid*.

Paul we say, if an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto us than that we have received, let him be accursed. As for this building, my brethren, beautiful as it may be in our eyes, let it please us to call it only a plain Presbyterian meeting house. The glory we see in it, let it not be the glory of its arches and its timbers,—not the glory of its lofty and graceful spire, pointing ever upwards to that home the pious shall find in the bosom of God; not the glory of this chaste pulpit, with its delicate tracery, and marble whiteness, not the glory found in the eloquence or learning of those who, through generations, shall here proclaim the gospel,—nor yet the glory traced in the wealth and fashion, refinement and social position of those who throng its courts. But let its glory be “the glory of the Lord risen upon it!” Let its glory be the promises of the covenant engraved upon its walls, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Let its glory be found in the purity, soundness and unction, of its pastors,—in the fidelity and watchfulness of its elders,—in the piety and godliness of its members. Let its glory be as a birth-place of souls, where shall always be heard the sobs of awakened penitence, and the songs of new-born love. Let its glory be the spirituality of its worship, its fervent prayers, its adoring praise, and the simplicity and truth of its ordinances and sacraments. Let its glory be the communion of saints, who here have fellowship one with another, and also with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Let its glory be as the resting-place of weary pilgrims, toiling on toward the heavenly city—the emblem of that Church above—

“Where congregations ne’er break up,  
And Sabbaths never end.”

AND NOW, “TO THE ONLY WISE GOD, THE KING, ETERNAL, IMMORTAL AND INVISIBLE,”—TO GOD, “GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS, FEARFUL IN PRAISES, DOING WONDERS,”—TO GOD WHO “IS A SPIRIT, INFINITE, ETERNAL AND UNCHANGEABLE, IN HIS BEING, WISDOM, POWER, JUSTICE, GOODNESS, HOLINESS AND TRUTH,”—TO GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, THE MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,—TO GOD THE SON, THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE FATHER’S GLORY, AND EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON,—TO GOD THE HOLY GHOST, PROCEEDING FROM THE FATHER AND THE SON,—TO THE SERVICE AND GLORY OF THE ADORABLE AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE TRINITY, WE SOLEMNLY DEDICATE THIS BUILDING, WITH ALL THAT APPERTAINS TO IT. “Lift up your heads, O, ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your head, O, ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of Hosts,—he is the King of glory.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> These concluding sentences formed the closing prayer of the congregation, though incorporated here with the Discourse.



TAKEN AT COLUMBIA, 1854.