

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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- Through the Bible with the Children – Bible Stories told by Mr Seaton.
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- Sermons preached by Dr Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham



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Danger – Exercise Caution!

(The Pastor's Letter November 1976)

Dear Friends,

The case of Dugald Sinclair mentioned in Edition 122 in the article Baptists in Scotland was a man who “imbibed strange views on prophecy,” and uprooted himself and most of his church to go off on a wild goose chase – is one of those cases from which we should ever learn with regards to all such matters and the consequences of making them the sum and substance of our Christian thinking. How easy it is for men and women to get so caught up with the exploration of “things to come,” that the “weightier matters” of our present Christian living in the midst of the earth where the Lord has set us to shine, are neglected and counted as a mere piece of needless effort, indulged in by those who have no interest in the “deeper things of the scriptures.” We are being told today – and with every bit as much finality that people were told a hundred, two-hundred, and eighteen-hundred years ago – that these are “the last days.” And whereas we would have no intention of entering into any debate as to whether or not that is the case, we would honestly like to know what possible difference it can make to the ever-present duty and calling of the church of Christ whether they are “the last days” or not.

If they should happen to be the “last days,” then it, surely, becomes every professing child of God to be about the church's great calling in the evangelisation of men and women and the sanctification of their own souls, so that, when the Lord returns, He might find us so employed. If, on the other hand, it turns out that the “prophetic seers” of our own day are as far off the mark as past generations of that class of citizen have been, and that this world has yet many centuries to run, then, shall we be like those servants who said, “My lord delays his coming,” and begin to live as though we were our own masters? In other words, the “day and the hour” of the Lord's return are, indeed, in

His own will and purpose, and we may but glance with remarkably dim eyes in the vague direction of that will and purpose.

What is abundantly clear, however, is what we, as the professing people of God, should be engaged in ***until that day and hour***. Is that not a strange state of affairs – that we will give ourselves a spiritual “squint” in trying to peer into what God will not permit us to know, and yet will fail to keep our eye “single” - well focussed – on those things that are writ so large on the pages of God's precious truth for our performance? We have no wish to go further into the matter at this time; but, Oh, that the Church of Jesus Christ was up and about her business – knowing that it is her business here below, whether the days be short, or whether they be long. They are short enough for all that needs done, and long enough to have to answer for before the face of the Lord our God when He does return.

May I just leave you with two separate pieces on the general subject at hand? They are both vastly different in style – one with all the force so characteristic of Mr Spurgeon, and the other, with that “still small voice” quality of Alexander Smellie – and yet, both, clearly giving us that desirable emphasis with regards to those things that really belong to our peace.

First – Mr Spurgeon:-

“More and more am I jealous lest any views upon prophecy … should withdraw one of us from glorifying in the Cross of Christ. Salvation is a theme for which I would fain enlist every holy tongue. I am greedy after witnesses for the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Your guess at the number of the beast, your Napoleonic speculations, your conjectures concerning a personal Antichrist – forgive me, I count them mere bones for dogs. While men are dying, and hell is filling, it seems to me the veriest drivel to be muttering about an Armageddon at Sebastopol or Sadow or Sedan, and peering between the folded leaves to discover the fate of Germany.”

“Blessed are they who read and hear the words of the prophecy of the Revelation; but the like blessing has evidently not fallen on

those who pretend to expound it; for generation after generation of them have been proved to be in error by the mere lapse of time, and the present race will follow to the same inglorious sepulchre. I would sooner pluck one single brand from the burning than explain all mysteries. To win a soul from going down into the pit is a more glorious achievement than to be crowned in the area of theological controversy. To have faithfully unveiled the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ will be the final judgement accounted worthier service than to have solved the problems of the religious Sphinx, or to have cut the Gordian knot of apocalyptic difficulty. Blessed is that ministry of which Christ is all.”

And now, Alexander Smellie:-

“The Lamb of God is the centre of this mystic and glowing book of the Revelation.

There is the Lamb with His wounds – the Lamb that was slain. Even in heaven, He carries those scars of His conflict, those reminiscences of the power of the night, and the press of the storm, and the hate of the foe. Even in heaven, I shall be perpetually reminded that I owe everything to Calvary, and to Him who was both Victor and Victim there.

There is the Lamb in His royalty – the Lamb in the midst of the Throne. The head that once was crowned with the sharp cactus thorns is crowned with regal glory now. I rejoice in it for Christ's sake. I rejoice in it for my own sake, for what is there that He cannot do for me – His little one? Over the world of nature and men, over unseen principalities and powers, He rules that He may befriend my soul.

There is the Lamb with his guardianship of His own – the Lamb shall lead them. To all eternity He shall shepherd me, feed me, uphold me. I shall never be able to dispense with Him. I shall never wish to stand alone, outside His keeping and His care. Through the everlasting years I shall avow myself my dear Lord's debtor.

There is the Lamb in His triumphs – the Lamb shall overcome them. He who is for me is mightier than the hosts arrayed against me. He will conquer in the battle.

I have 'none other Hope in heaven or earth or sea.'"

May the Lord bless us all in our day.

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton

The Baptists in Scotland (Part 5)

An Heritage to Follow Yet.

The actual form of worship followed by the early Baptists of Scotland was a direct consequence of the things most surely believed among them with regards to the gospel. It was only towards the middle of the 19th century that Arminianism – that “gospel” that revolves around the free will and ability of man in the things of salvation – began to appear at all among the Scottish Baptists.

With the appearance of this other view of the gospel, as opposed to the doctrines of God's free and sovereign grace in redemption, there also began to emerge, at a later date, another view of the actual purpose of the gathering together of the Lord's churches, and hence, the form that those gatherings began to take. In a word, the typical kind of Baptist worship that became current from the latter part of the 19th century onwards, was as much the consequence of the typical kind of baptist doctrine that had begun earlier to emerge, as the older form of worship was a reflection of the older Baptist belief regarding the grace of God in the gospel. The gospel that ascribes all the glory to God, is the same gospel that will believe that God is to be glorified in the midst of His saints. So, the priority of things is set out in The Articles of Faith of the Glasgow Particular Baptists, earlier referred to; “Those who are of one faith, and have the same view of the ordinances, are bound to

meet together for God's glory, their own edification, and, if God bless his own appointments, for the conversion of sinners." We might study that order well. First, God's glory; second, the edification of the believers; third, the conversion of sinners – and this, only "if God bless his own appointments," as the article says. In other words, the original Baptists of Scotland, were of Paul's mind, that, "A man is not crowned, unless he strive lawfully." There are "rules of procedure" for the runner at the games, that's what Paul is referring to; and there are God's "appointed ways" that His church is to know and follow, and nowhere more so than when she meets to be the place "wherein His honour dwells."

Before moving on, let it be said, of course, that the foregoing remarks are in relation to the Church of Christ in her God-ward position, and involved in the united worship of His name. Our predecessors had a complete and total commitment to the souls of the unconverted, as we shall presently see, and this commitment took them forth with the Word of God in their hearts and mouths to clearly proclaim the gospel of God's free grace to sinners. But, first, there must be no neglecting, or minimising of the fact that they were called to be built into a spiritual house, an holy temple in the Lord, a royal priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, acceptable by Jesus Christ. If any one thing, then, distinguishes the original baptists of Scotland from the present day, it is the question of the church's worship. The differences are not to be accounted for by the mere lapse of time, for the departure has not merely been from the older "order" of things, but from the very principles of God's word itself in relation to this question – the principles which the early baptists grasped and expressed in their form of worship. And, of course, the root of the matter lies in the complete and total abandonment of those great truths of sovereign salvation which were once synonymous with the name of Baptist in Scotland.

What then of the "spirit of evangelism and mission," as it might be called? If the early baptists jealously guarded the purpose of the church's worship, does this mean they had no outlook towards a world dead in trespasses and sins? Indeed, no; and, in fact, the very opposite. We may remember that when the Society for the

Propagation of the Gospel at Home came into being under the Haldane brothers etc., it was “unanimously condemned” by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1799. Such marks of “enthusiasm” were not to be welcomed within the borders of Scotia. Four years before that date, in 1795, Archibald McLean delivered one of his more fervent addresses “To the People of God in Scotland,” in which he endeavoured to set before them the great obligations of that heart-felt knowledge of being a “debtor to mercy alone” that forms the great motivating principle for McLean in such an appeal, to take the truth to those “still sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death.” “In comparing our situation with theirs,” he declared, “we cannot but adore the sovereign dispensations of God and his distinguishing grace towards us, who were originally in the same state, and deserve no better than they.” And then, he moves from having the “knowledge” of God's truth in our heads to the performance of God's truth through our works; “If it be our duty to pray that his kingdom may come; that his saving health may be known among all nations, and for this end he would send forth labourers into his harvest, it must undoubtedly be our duty to act suitably to such prayers, in so far as we have it in our power.”

The labours of the Haldanes, of course, in the direction of gospel work was virtually unceasing and unstinting as far as sacrifice of time and resources was concerned. Their preaching throughout Scotland bore much fruit, and in 1816, Robert turned his eyes towards the “dark continent” that Europe had become, spiritually speaking. All had not been “sunshine”, of course, for the two Haldanes – nor for any of the men of that day who were endeavouring to call the church back to the truths of God. By the time 1816 dawned, the Haldanes' biographer is able to refer back to “Twenty chequered years of failure and success”. But, as he tells us, these “had not damped the youthful ardour with which the two brothers had devoted their lives to the spread of the gospel.” And so, there came that notable work of Robert on the Continent in general, and in the city of Geneva in particular. We refer to the biography: “Their zeal was not the offspring of wild enthusiasm, and its energy was not dependent on human contingencies. After a brief period of comparative repose, the

termination of the great revolutionary war opened up to Robert Haldane a new field of enterprise, which he was not slow to occupy. In the summer of 1816, he hastened through the press his work on the Evidences of Christianity, and announced his intention of making a missionary tour of the continent of Europe. The results of the mission stretch into eternity, and will for ever connect the name of Robert Haldane with the revival of the gospel in France and Switzerland. The distinguished historian of the Reformation, (Merle d'Aubigne), himself a trophy of this work of grace, has said that a narrative of its origin and progress would form 'one of the most beautiful episodes in the history of the Church.'"

To this testimonial of Haldane's work many could be added; Frederic Monod, "The name of Robert Haldane stands inseparably connected with the dawn of the revival of the gospel on the continent of Europe. The work he began in 1817, has been advancing ever since, and the extent of it will not be known until the day of the revelation of all things. His memory is embalmed in our hearts, and is hallowed amongst us. May it please the Lord to send many such labourers into his harvest." And looking back to Haldane from the 1852 meeting of the Evangelical Society held in Geneva, the president commented, "The Church of Christ knows nothing of political limits, of terrestrial kingdoms or republics. Geneva remembers with gratitude that it was France that sent her Farel, Calvin, and Theodore Beza; nor is she ashamed to trace the origin of the present revival to a pious Scotsman, Robert Haldane."

It is not only of course, the praise of Robert Haldane that ought to be among the people of God. As Frederic Monod says, the extent of Haldane's work will not be fully known "until the day of the revelation of all things." This is true of Haldane, who is well known in the church's history, but we are persuaded that it is also true of others whose names have not been so much brought before the people of God. Commenting on James Haldane's work on the Epistle to the Galatians, Mr Spurgeon ventures the explanation for it never being very popular to the fact that "the author in the third chapter discusses the question of baptism." He then makes a truly Spurgeonic tongue-

in-cheek remark: - “This is a fault of which we may say as the Papist said of venial sin: 'It deserved to be forgiven!'” But, you'll get the point. Being outwith the mainstream of a country's church history has a tendency to oblivion on the part of the “non-conformist.” However, we can still pull aside the veil and rejoice in those whose work is known unto the Lord in full.

Peter Grant is a name greatly associated with the Gaelic songs of praise. Wherever and whenever times of refreshing have come from the hand of the Lord among Gaelic speaking people, the spiritual songs of Peter Grant – Pdruig Grannd - have greatly featured in those times. Whereas, many of the Lord's people of the Highlands may be familiar with those majestic hymns, they may not be acquainted with the fact that he was the same Peter Grant of our articles, pastor of the Baptist church at Grantown-on-Spey. Peter Grant himself tells us something of what the Highlands of his young day were like; “At marriages and christening,” he says, “drinking and dancing, shooting and swearing was usual. At funerals, drunkenness and fights were so *fashionable*, shall we say? That one would cast up to the other, 'There was no fight at your father's funeral.'” This remark was meant to convey the fact that there hadn't been much whisky on hand for the “mourners”.

It was this general state of things towards the end of the 18th century that filled Peter Grant with a desire to see the gospel go forth among his native Gaels. In one of his hymns, he pours out an appeal to those who have already received light in the gospel. In a way, it epitomises the spirit of the early Baptist pioneers.

“You who have received grace, pity us in time,
Ere death come, and we shall be no more.”

One of those who had “pity” and had come to the highlands, was Christopher Anderson, the Baptist pastor from Edinburgh. Anderson stood closely connected with Robert Haldane in the work of Bible translation and was the founder of the Edinburgh Bible Society. The conditions that he found in the Highlands during his tours to those

parts are in absolute accord with what Peter Grant has already mentioned. “Dark as midnight,” is his assessment of the spiritual state: “As to the people's knowledge of God, our Saviour, and the means of instruction, Oh! Destitute and dark as midnight.” The reason for this spiritual blackness isn't hard to find, and it should be a startling revelation to discover that there had been no New Testament in Gaelic until the year 1767 – only twenty years before Peter Grant was born – and that the Old Testament wasn't available until 1802. The following sobering statement says it all; the Red Indians of New England had the complete Bible in their own language by the labours of John Eliot, *more than a hundred years before* the Scottish Gael had even the New Testament.” Only eternity itself will reveal the debt of the Highlands to the labours of such men as Christopher Anderson, founder of the Gaelic School Society, as well as of the Edinburgh Bible Society.

Such were the Baptists in Scotland in the original and early days. With regard to the things that they believed and practised, of course, they didn't “originate” anything; they simply rediscovered to themselves the great truths of the gospel and the principles of their expressions, towards God and towards man. Not only did they receive the truth to their own hearts, they desired to carry it to the hearts of others, and to “act suitably” in this duty, as Archibald McLean put it. And not only, of course, did they “evangelise”, but they were first persuaded that it was the evangel indeed – the gospel indeed – that they were evangelising with. Neither of these sides of the whole are to be neglected without peril: to simply hold the truth of God within the four walls of the church's meeting place is a virtual denial of holding that truth at all in its fulness; but to go forth to spread a religious message which is not “the whole counsel of God” is only to produce succeeding generations that will take us further and further away from the fulness of the gospel.

May the Lord grant us enquiring minds in our day and a desire to ask, “What saith the Scriptures?” “What do you think of baptism?” said Carmichael to McLean. And there is yet much to ask in our day.

NOTE: - The following sources have been used in connection with the five articles on the Baptists in Scotland.

History of the Baptists in Scotland	George Yuille.
Lives of Robert & James Haldane	Alexander Haldane.
The First 100 Years	Derek B. Murray.
The Menace of Modernism, etc.	John Shearer.
The Shetland Apostle	J. A. Smith.
Rippon's Register on Scots Baptists	S. A. Swaine.
Memorials of Bristol Baptist College	S. A. Swaine.
Peter Grant, Biographical Sketches	A. G. & J. A. Robinson.
Scottish Theology	John MacLeod.
History of Orkney Baptist Churches	Henry Harcus.

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Boys and Girls,

One day, a little girl called Sally was walking down the road with a basket. Her mother had put something special in it and carefully covered it with a white cloth and asked Sally to take it to her aunt Nell's house. "Don't tip the basket," she had said, as Sally left the house. And so, here she was, carefully carrying the basket. On the way, she met a friend, who said, "What's in your basket?" "I don't know," said Sally. "Well, why don't you look?" asked her friend. Sally thought for just a moment. Then she said, "If mummy had wanted me to know, she would not have covered it and she would have told me."

I think that was a good answer, boys and girls, don't you? Sometimes God does this to us. He hides things from our eyes and

our understanding. We do not need to know what will happen. That is up to God. We must learn to trust Him. This is called, “Living by Faith.” Christians should always live “by faith”. Some people, even boys and girls, always seem to be asking, “What is this for? Lord, Why did you let this happen?” But, we must learn to trust the Lord, because we know that whatever the Lord does He has a definite purpose in His mind.

This is what our story about Sally teaches us. Sally trusted her mummy, and knew that she had a reason for not saying what was in the basket. And God sometimes has a reason for not telling us certain things, but we must always trust Him.

Love,
Mrs Seaton

Gleanings in the Psalms *(Psalm 75)*



Verse 1. “Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.” We should praise God again and again. Stinted gratitude is *Ingratitude*. For infinite goodness there should be measureless praise. God is at hand to answer and do wonders – His Name is *Near* – adore we then the present Deity. We sing not of a hidden God, who sleeps and leaves the church to her fate, but of one who ever in our darkest days is most near, a very present help in trouble. Baal is on a journey, but Jehovah dwells in His church. Glory be unto the Lord, whose perpetual deeds of grace and majesty are the sure tokens of his being with us always, even unto the end of the world.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verses 2 and 3. “**When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.**” This is generally believed to be the voice of God, who will, when He accepts His people, mount His judgement seat and avenge their cause in righteousness. He determines the set time, and when that arrives swift are His blows and sure are His deliverances whichever the case might be. O Lord, let thy set time for grace come; and let the appointed assize come, O Jesus, and sit thou on thy throne to judge the world in equity. “The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved,” but, “I bear up the pillars of it.” Hence, there is no real cause for fear for the Lord's people. While the pillars stand, the house will brave the storm. In the day of the Lord's appearing a general melting will take place; but in that day our covenant God will be the sure support of our confidence.

“How can I sink with such a prop
As my Eternal God,
Who bears the earth's huge pillars up,
And spreads the heavens abroad.”

“**Selah,**” says the psalmist – pause and consider. And here may the music pause while the sublime vision passes before our view: a world dissolved and an immutable God uplifting all his people above the terrible commotion. “Selah.”

C.H. Spurgeon

Verse 4. “I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly ...” The Scripture hath dressed the sinner in a fool's coat. And let me tell you, better to be a fool devoid of reason, than a fool devoid of grace – for this is the devil's fool. Is he not a fool who refuses a rich portion? God offers Christ and salvation, but the sinner refuses this portion. Is he not a fool who cares for these earthly parts and neglects his spiritual parts – as if one should paint the walls of a house and let the timbers rot? Is he not a fool who will feed the devil with his soul – like that emperor who fed his lion with a pheasant? Is he not a fool who lays a snare for himself, and loves death? I said unto the fools, deal not foolishly.”

Thomas Watson

Verses 6 and 7. “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” I have often thought of many of the Lord's servants on earth, so superciliously passed by and passed over in man's catalogue of worthies. Yet with what glad and grateful surprise they will at length receive that promotion denied on earth, when their own Master shall say to them, “Friend, come up higher.” And then, as they sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, they shall have honour of them that sit at meat with them.

Barton Bouchier

Verse 10. “All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.” History is replete with the stories of men who tried to set themselves up, even above the God of heaven. Pharaoh reacted to God's command to let his people go by saying, “Who is God that I should obey him?” Nebuchadnezzar endeavoured to set his throne and kingdom above Him whose throne and kingdom are for ever and ever. Herod listened to the adulations of his degenerate admirers - “It is the voice of a god and not of a man.” Coming nearer to our own time, we have read of how Adolph Hitler gazed at a picture of himself riding proudly on a white horse, a picture which bore the blasphemous title: “In the beginning was the Word.” Then, in a voice that deliberately mocked Christ, the Eternal King, he exclaimed - “I am Providence.” But, Pharaoh and his hosts are swept to destruction; Nebuchadnezzar becomes a companion of “the beasts of the fields”; Herod is devoured by worms and Hitler becomes a suicide. “All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off.” But look at the other side of the picture. “He setteth up another.” There is another King whose glory is without compare. And “in Him” the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.”

*From Murdoch Campbell's,
“From Grace to Glory.”*

The Form of Worship

by
Principal Breed

Parts of the Service.

It has already been noticed that worship has two aspects, the inward and the outward. The former consists of the feelings of love, admiration, and submission to the Deity as the Supreme Being. The latter consists in the manifestations of the former in speech, posture and action. Thus our Lord in times of worship, "lifted up his eyes," John 17 verse 1: "kneeled down," Luke 22 verses 41: "fell on his face," Matthew 26 verse 39. These actions were all outward manifestations of His inward adoration of God.

Whenever the inner spirit of worship exists, some outer "form" of worship will accompany it. No one form of worship can be laid down as alone right. *Spirituality* is to remain the principle characteristic, and no form which obscures that fact can be acknowledged. Aesthetic emotion stirred by outer conditions is not to be mistaken for spiritual fervour. If true spirituality is present, the form of worship will be reverent and fitting. Neither the Bible, nor the Reformed Faith hangs a "form" like a halter about the neck of the worshipper. The form of worship is governed by the examples of Scripture, and by the general injunction of 1st Corinthians 14 verses 26 and 40, "... when ye come together ... let all things be done unto edifying ... let all things be done decently and in order," (literally – according to arrangement.)

The parts of true worship are not left to the fancy of men, but are shown in the Scriptures. In this connection five essentials can be traced in the New Testament.

1. **Preaching:** 2nd Timothy 4 verse 2, "Preach the word;" Matthew 28 verse 19, "go ye therefore and teach all nations;" and Mark 16 chapter 15, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel."
2. **Reading of Scripture:** Luke 4 verse 16, "and stood up for to read;" Acts 13 verse 15, "and after the reading of the law;"

Colossians 4 verse 16, "And when this epistle is read among you;" 1st Thessalonians 5 verse 27, "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren."

3. **Praise:** 1st Corinthians 14 verse 15, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also;" Ephesians 5 verse 19, "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."
4. **Prayer:** 1st Timothy 2 verse 1, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men."
5. **Administration of Ordinances:** Matthew 28 verses 19 and 20, "baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" 1st Corinthians 11 verses 23 to 26, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me (etc.);"

On a wider view there could be added, Observance of the Lord's Day, and a duly appointed ministry. Acts 20 verse 7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them ..." And in 1st Corinthians 16 verse 2, "Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Acts 14 verse 23, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church ...;" Titus 1 verse 5, "for this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

It is evident, then, that the church must give attention to all the foregoing. Not that every one of these parts must be present on every occasion, but that each must receive due regard in church life and worship. The amount of attention given to any of the parts of worship will depend upon circumstance, and the prompting of the Spirit. Jesus

sometimes spent a whole night in prayer, and Paul spent a whole night in preaching. In times of special stress, prayer becomes more desired. In times of ignorance, as at the Reformation, instruction and preaching must be emphasised. Always must thanksgiving abound. Note Mark 14 verse 26, "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives;" 2 Corinthians 4 verse 15, "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many rebound to the glory of God;" Philippians 4 verse 6, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God;" Colossians 4 verse 2, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

Spiritually-minded persons, who are walking in the fellowship of the Lord, know almost instinctively when the outward form of their worship is suited to their spiritual attitude, and pleasing to the great Head of the Church.

Posture of Worshippers.

Everything relating to the form of worship is to be governed by the nature of worship. This has already been determined as *spiritual*. If the nature of worship is right, the form of worship will be right also. Where there is spirituality there will also be reverent and suitable posture. There is, however, no one form prescribed in Holy Scripture. Various postures of the worshippers are noted in the Scriptures in various circumstances. The chief of these are: -

1. ***Standing:*** Abraham stood before the Lord when interceding for Sodom, Genesis 18 verse 22. At the giving of the Law, the people stood, Exodus 20 verses 18 to 21. At the removal of the Tabernacle the people stood and worshipped in their tent doors, Exodus 33 verses 8 to 10. the congregation stood before the Lord at the time of the sin-offering, Leviticus 9 verse 5.
2. ***Kneeling:*** The Psalmist's call to worship is a call to kneel before God, Psalm 95 verse 6. Ezra kneeled to entreat God, Ezra 9 verse 5. Daniel kneeled in prayer, Daniel 6 verse 10. so also did

our Lord, Luke 22 verse 41. Stephen, Acts 7 verse 60; Peter, Acts 9 verse 40 and Paul, Acts 20 verse 36.

3. **Sitting:** The Israelites in seeking the Lord sat before Him, Judges 20 verse 26; and David also sat before the Lord, 1 Chronicles 17 verse 16.

It will be remembered that our Lord stood up to read the Scriptures, and then sat down to expound them, Luke 14 verse 16, + verses 20 and 21.

Also that the following gestures are mentioned in particular circumstances: stretching forth the hands, bowing the head, weeping, and falling upon the face. It is manifest that these gestures and postures are not unconnected with custom and temperament. The removal of the shoes from the feet in the East corresponds to the removal of the hat from the head in the West, although these two gestures are by no means identical in significance.

A comparison and analysis of the foregoing Scriptures seems to justify the following comments. The posture of standing may be taken as expressive of alertness and readiness in worship; kneeling of humility and intercession; sitting of expectancy and waiting before God. God's children are free in these matters so long as spirituality is steadfastly maintained.

Exercise: - Imagine the following: a Nonconformist service, with the Minister in prayer. Some members of the congregation with closed eyes and bowed heads, sincerely entering into prayer. Others searching with their eyes for the origin of a draught; others counting the company; others in various attitudes of repose. What does God think of it all as He looks down upon the scene? What will God do about it?

Participation of the Worshippers.

Public worship should mean worship rendered by the public of the assembled congregation. This is expressed by the term "congregational worship". A form of worship in which the assembled

people have little or no part is not congregational worship. From the nature of the case, it is impossible for worship to be rendered by proxy.

The New Testament Scriptures demonstrate the original simplicity of Christian worship, and indicate that the worshippers had a general participation in the service. Of the first local church in Jerusalem it is said, "they continued steadfastly ... doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," Acts 2 verse 42.

A similar congregational order of service existed in the church after apostolic times. When Pliny the Younger entered upon his proconsulship of Bithynia in A.D. 110, he found the number of the Christians so great, and the heathen worship seriously undermined, that he exerted himself to suppress the new religion. Under the application of torture he could find nothing worse about the Christians than that they were accustomed to meet together, before dawn, to sing hymns to Christ as their God, to pledge themselves to abstain from every form of evil, to commit no adultery or theft, to falsify no word, and to betray no trust. Later in the day, they met together for a harmless supper.

Justin Martyr A.D. 165, in his first Apology says that on the day called Sunday, all the Christians in a neighbourhood meet together in one place, and listened to the reading of the Scriptures and to a sermon exhorting them to holy living. Prayers are offered to which the people respond with audible "Amens," and the Supper is observed.

Quite early in the Christian era, however, the simplicity of worship began to be lost. With the passage of the years, the Supper became the central point of the worship, and around this an ornate ritual grew up, so that the ordinance became less and less a service for the people.

Again, church singing was at first an exercise in which all took part. This was elaborated into choral singing which, like that at Milan, became, in the judgement of Augustine, too artificial and dramatic.

The effect of this change was to exclude people from taking part, and thus congregational singing perished.

By the time of the Reformation, worship was hardly more than a religious performance witnessed by the people. Preaching was almost non-existent; prayers were gabbled in Latin; and responses sung by a choir – while the people looked on at what was scarcely different from a "sacred concert". The reformation was from this point of view, a return to a simpler and more congregational form of worship, and the separating from the Church of England of the "Dissenters," in the sixteenth century, was a similar movement.

But old influence are at work! There is always a tendency for churches to elaborate their worship, and this always results in a departure from the congregational principle. Let all worshippers remember that no one can worship *for* them. If they are to worship at all, they must personally worship. Even the part taken by the minister is not really his alone. The people can enter feelingly into the reading and exposition of the Scriptures. So also with public prayer. Worshippers must realise that they are not present merely to be prayed *for*, but to pray *with* their minister, as he leads their thoughts in suitable petitions.

The highest kind of worship possible, is the worship of the saints above, and that is *congregational worship*.

"The Church triumphant, and the Church below,
In songs of praise their present union show;
Their joys are full, *our* expectation long;
In life we differ, but we join in song."

Waller

