

## BLACKFRIARS

conquering army will bear back to its own land a light little corpse for all its fruit of victory.

Without translating at large it is impossible to convey the *atmosphere* in which these tragic endings are brought home to the audience. Only those who know their Claudel can guess how he surpasses all in power of conveying tension, pause, and *systole* in stage-craft.

JOHN O'CONNOR.

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## WORSHIP

“WE went on up the narrow strait, thus anxiously. On this side lay Scylla . . . on that Charybdis.”<sup>1</sup> In the *Odyssey* of every Christian there are times and places when the words of Homer strike home. Worship and personal prayer are essential to him as motive forces directing his journey “up the narrow strait”; and in his living experience both are beset by the two monsters that lie within bow-shot of his anxious passage, routine and pietism. The one springs from misapprehending the rôle of corporate worship, the other from over-absorption in individual devotion. As there is little steerage way there must always be sufficient impetus to keep the frail craft moving straight ahead, responsive to every touch of the helmsman. Individual temperament will give an inclination to one side or the other: the scrupulous towards self-absorption and the easy-going to mechanical routine.

The same difficulty holds good in some degree for group worship with its tendency to divagate towards high-and-dry formalism or towards an unstable revivalism. Each extreme marks the over-emphasis of one of the two essential coordinates of worship, a disciplined cultus and personal responsiveness. In the history of the Church the scales have moved successively up and down without irrevocably destroying the careful balance, though the individualist side has tended to be outweighed, since corporate devotion has a

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<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey*, Book XII, T. E. Lawrence's translation.

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constant bias towards formalism, and the movements back have been sudden and violent in character.

Christian worship with its ordered pattern of Sacrifice and Sacrament and Liturgy has always given the individual scope for an active personal devotion, to form that living groundwork which ensures the real vitality of group-worship from the human side. If the individual is sacrificed to the group or vice-versa there is inevitable loss, with a swing over towards Scylla or Charybdis.

The problem of keeping a straight course in Christian worship is exemplified by the long-standing continuity of the Western and Eastern Liturgies with their tendency to conserve traditional order and discipline in group worship, without too great a concession to the other side. In the Eucharistic practice and prayer life of Anglicans, Non-conformists and Quakers, Ritual Forms have in varying degree been subordinated to the demands of individual piety.

Miss Evelyn Underhill, in the most recent addition to *The Library of Constructive Theology*<sup>2</sup> undertakes an analysis of worship, discusses its elements, lays bare the problems connected with it and reviews the character and emphasis which every body or group claiming the name of Christian exemplifies in its external liturgy or prayer. In no respect does her work seem to fall short of the high task she has set herself. Both in its principles and its development the treatment of the subject is strictly Incarnational and Christocentric. There is a merciful freedom from theological technicalities without any sacrifice of depth, and a full understanding of man's nature when discussing the problem of balancing the needs of spirit and body, of group and individual in Christian worship. The traditional Catholic teaching upon the use of Ritual, Symbol, Sacrament and Sacrifice is followed and developed in the opening chapters with a sure touch and delicacy which should exact a sympathetic reception from the most hardened and implacable opponent of traditional Christian worship.

Discussion of the dangers inherent in Ritualism and the problems it involves brings to light remarks too good to be passed over: "Habit and attention must therefore co-operate in the life of worship; and it is the function of cultus to

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<sup>2</sup> *Worship*, by Evelyn Underhill (The Library of Constructive Theology, Nisbet; 10/6).

maintain this vital partnership. Habit alone easily deteriorates into mechanical repetition, the besetting sin of the liturgical mind. Attention alone means, in the end, intolerable strain. Each partner has his weak point. Habit tends to routine and spiritual red-tape; the vice of the institutionalist. Attention is apt to care for nothing but the experience of the moment, and ignore the need of a stable practice, independent of personal fluctuations; the vice of the individualist. Habit is a ritualist. Attention is a pietist" (p. 27). For the Christian these two tendencies must work in partnership, not in rivalry. "If the extreme ritualist is an artist so interested in the acting that he loses sight of the total movement and intention of the play, the extreme formalist is a practical man, who acknowledges his religious obligations and fulfils them in the cheapest and easiest way. . . . Every ritualist has his 'bad days' on which he becomes a formalist" (pp. 36, 37).

In almost every chapter there is the reiterated insistence that worship is not the response of the soul alone, but of the whole man. Bodily co-operation is as essential to worship as it is to every other human activity. The senses, imagination, emotions must take their share in the business. The Holy Place, the Eikon, the Image are there to provide focal points of sensible devotion. Even the most austere Mohammedan turns to Mecca and the Kaaba. For the Christian the Incarnation of God the Son should make this essential characteristic of his adoring worship quite plain and evident. All the bewildering variety of Christian worship "is conditioned by a concrete fact; the stooping down of the Absolute to disclose Himself within the narrow human radius, the historical incarnation of the Eternal Logos within time. The primary declaration of Christianity is not 'This do' but 'This happened'—indeed, is happening still, since the path of the incarnation remains open, and Christ lives and acts in His Body, the Church, and gives Himself in its sacraments. And the primary Christian response to this stupendous proclamation is and must be *Venite adoremus*" (pp. 68, 69).

There are timely warnings to the fastidious who dislike what they find crude in Christian worship, and who would prefer to be dissociated from the vulgar heartiness which sometimes finds its way into church: "If we have to choose between extreme cases, it is better to stand up and sing

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'Thine for ever, God of Love,' surrounded by Christians of all sorts and sizes, from the Mayor and Corporation to the Brownies and Cubs, than to elude this bracing discipline and murmur the same sentiments in a nice quiet corner of the church. . . . The very circumstances of common worship can do much to mortify fastidiousness and religious self-regard. Moreover the Church is not a collection of prize specimens but a flock."

Two chapters are devoted to the nature, structure and significance of the Holy Eucharist which resume and weave together the earlier threads of Sacrament, Sacrifice and Ritual Action into an orderly and finely proportioned pattern, and the chapter which follows deals with the principles of Personal Worship. Individual devotion is shown to be not only necessary for personal salvation, but essential to the Church's total life. "Each Christian life of prayer, however deeply hidden or apparently solitary in form, will affect the life of the whole Body. . . . In obeying the first and great commandment, the life of personal worship obeys the second, too. Its influence radiates, its devoted self-offering avails for the whole" (p. 164). The author is here upon familiar ground and can guide with the authority of great learning and mature experience while never losing a homely and altogether enviable simplicity. There is understanding for the individual in every stage of prayer, a true appreciation of the familiar methods of mental prayer with their paraphernalia of composition, points and acts, and a measured sympathy with those devotional manuals which in less sensitive hands might receive hard treatment: "they mediate His eternal Reality in a way fitted to our condition and give to each level of our psychic life its opportunity of sublimation . . . adapting all the resources of the phantasy life" (pp. 174-5). There is the necessary insistence upon the use of sensible images in mental prayer as the only means for progress towards the contemplation of God by "a naked intent stretching towards Him."

Part II illustrates the principles already developed as they are found in practice. The same depth of learning and comprehensive sympathy is brought to bear in illustrating the element of worship that predominates in Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Nonconformist and Quaker liturgies and prayer forms. In the review of Latin worship a Catholic might

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pause at the following: "In spite of its theological and historical unsoundness—for it is certain that before the Middle Ages no particular reverence was paid to the Reserved Sacrament in any part of the Church—this devotion has proved its worth as a carrying medium of the Supernatural, and an incitement to prayer" (p. 257). Leaving history on one side one might question "theological unsoundness" as altogether valid in the context, if the author gives assent to the doctrine of theological development.

The closing chapter which treats of the Anglican tradition gives a clear impression of a sober and careful balance which is characteristically English. The incomparable beauty of its Collects, Prayers, Psalms and Scripture has to a great degree contributed to the maintenance of a liturgical form of prayer that has touched the understanding and the hearts of generations of English men and women, and is still found at its best in the Offices of Matins and Evensong, which the author, a convinced Tractarian, describes with reason as "a chief glory of the Anglican rite."

It is with reluctance that one reaches the conclusion of a book so satisfying, so readable and so courteous. Its tone and temper are redolent of the spirit of Baron von Hügel who is often quoted in its pages. Its learning and wisdom combined with a deep understanding and sympathy make it an outstanding contribution to constructive Christian theology.

AELWIN TINDAL-ATKINSON, O.P.

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## SOLIDARITY

CHRIST died wholly for me. Christ died wholly for all men. Christ did not die only for me. Christ did not die only for the totality of men. For each and for all, not for a group or a part. This is the way we are made to stand up together, each person a God's purchase and all united in Christ: firstly, as it is seen, by His death, by the price that He paid for us. In the price that has been paid for my soul I am equal to the entire human race. In the matter of redemption you don't count one, two, three; you count Jesus Christ.