

Reverence in Worship.

BY ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR.

The best of everything belongs to God. He is a God of beauty "in earth and sky and sea." The flowers are his beautiful thoughts; the mountains are his majestic thoughts; and the stars are his brilliant thoughts. The temple of old was not too splendid to be his dwelling-place. And as God claims the best of everything in his worship, so Baptists have a right to the best of everything in rendering him that worship. It has been said that the chief difference between Roman Catholics and Protestant Episcopalians is that the former are "papists" and the latter are "apists." I neither accept nor contradict the remark. I simply quote it; but I know that Baptists are neither the one nor the other. We are older than either. We talk not so much of the early church as of the earliest church; we go back to the first Baptist church in Jerusalem. All that is grand in the songs of Christendom; all that is penitential in the historic confessions, and all that is binding in the noblest professions is ours. We repudiate the idea that any body of Christians—and certainly one of the smallest and most sectarian of the sects—has a monopoly of the historic creeds and confessions. The sublime Gloria Patri, the lofty Gloria In Excelsis, the grand Te Deum—these are ours. We have a noble share in the glorious heritage of the Christian centuries. Some of the grandest hymns are ours in the fullest sense; and all the noblest songs of Christendom are ours to use and to enjoy. Let us claim our own; let us take it wherever we find it.

We repudiate the idea that Baptistic is in any sense synonymous with "booristic"—if I may coin a word. We must sadly confess that occasionally there seems to be such a suggestion; and the saddest part of it is that there are otherwise intelligent Baptists who seem to admit, and even to accept, such a relationship. Are we willing to admit that it is more Baptistic in country places to gossip on Sunday around the horse-shed or block than to come reverently at once into the house of God? Are we willing to admit that it is more Baptistic to gaze about the house of God on entering than to spend a few moments in silent prayer, either kneeling or with bowed head? Are we willing to admit that reverence in manner is more Baptistic than reverence? If so, then the time to repudiate what is Baptistic has come; but we insist that all these nobler qualities are inseparable from what is truly Baptistic. If its self-constituted censors want boorishness, unfortunately it is not wanting. There are men among whom an I places in which it is common enough; but we emphatically deny that it is either Baptistic or scriptural.

In this connection we may be permitted to say that greater care in the administration of the ordinance of baptism ought to be taken. This ordinance is beautiful in itself; it is also profoundly significant in its religious symbolism, and it ought to be made as beautiful as possible in its administration. Often, unfortunately, it is administered so as to be unimpressive and occasionally distasteful. The ordinance was honored at our Lord's baptism by the audible and visible presence of each Person of the Trinity, God the Father by an audible voice from heaven, God the Son in human form coming up out of the Jordan, and God the Spirit in the form of a dove. Who dares dishonor what God has so honored? We dishonor the ordinance sometimes by making it the subject of frivolous remark, and oftener by its unimpressive observance. Do not call the effort to make it beautiful and reverent unworthy of our thought. Let the construction of the baptistery and all the accessories of the ordinance be tasteful, beautiful and reverent. All that flowers, music and reverent propriety can do in this respect ought to be done. Were the ordinance not divine in its origin and beautiful in its symbolism our frequent careless administration of it might have led to its general neglect. Other denominations are often forced to observe it, for the people will not be satisfied with human substitutes for this divinely appointed and inherently beautiful ordinance. Let us honor its divine appointment by its reverent observance.

In line with these remarks is the importance of building beautiful houses of worship. Our beloved Home Mission Society has done much toward elevating and gratifying the taste of the people in this regard. Thank God, the day has gone by when one is almost sure that the worst-looking and most ill-located church in a town is a Baptist church. In many towns the reverse is now true, thanks to the plans sent out by this society, and to other similar influences. We bid farewell without a tear to the old dry-goods box meeting-houses. The best church in every town should be the Baptist church. God is the friend of beauty. There is no piety in ugliness. Without extra cost we may have houses which shall be models of architectural beauty and of church propriety. In the name of all that is beautiful, tasteful, æsthetic and worshipful, let us have a general, radical and universal reform in the old styles of Baptist ecclesiastical architecture. Indeed, this reform has already commenced. We give it glad welcome. Every church is the incarnation of the religious thought of those who worship within its walls. Let our thought be simple, scriptural, divine; and then let the structure in its appropriate architecture embody that thought to the glory of God and the advancement of his truth.

Let the practice of carrying notices to the pulpit when the services have begun cease. Let whispering in pulpit and pew stop. Why cannot Baptist congregations be taught to respond with an audible "Amen" to the prayers offered in the pulpit? If anything is scriptural such a response is. Baptists claim to follow scriptural usage, and in this respect they distinctly repudiate that usage. Why do not all our congregations kneel in public worship? It has been said that we may adopt any posture but imposture. We admit that posture is not everything, but still we admit but still it may be of much significance. Scripture favors kneeling or standing, but not lazily sitting before the Lord. Kneeling is the most appropriate attitude in prayer. Why are we so unscriptural in our public worship? Why do we not all join in a general and public confession? The form found in "The People's Worship and Psalter," has proved to be very helpful in the services of Calvary church. At many services Episcopal husbands may be seen seated beside their Baptist wives. But for the form of service in this church probably these Baptist wives would be seated by their Episcopal husbands in Episcopal churches. The rudeness, crudeness and unscripturalness of the services in many Baptist churches are driving cultivated tasteful and worshipful young people from us into other churches. The irreverence in whispering, in gazing about at the opening of the services, and in snatching hats and coats, and rushing out of the pew the moment the benediction is pronounced, instead of spending a few moments in silent prayer—these things disgust many of our Baptist children. Some churches, thank God, have largely overcome all these evils; others are struggling toward that end.—Commonwealth.

The Burning Bush.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

How sacred the most common things become when God is in them! How ennobled is the humblest when employed for his glory! A lonely shepherd in ancient Midian goes out to watch his flock. Before him is a prickly thorn bush just like a thousand other wild acacias of that desert region. Suddenly the bush begins to blaze with a supernatural light that kindles every leaf and twig; the bush is burning, yet it is not consumed! Out of the fiery splendor goes a voice: "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham." And the shepherd put off his shoes from his feet and hid his face, for he feared to look toward the glory of the Lord.

Here was an ordinary bush that might have been used by Moses to cook his evening meal. But God made it the place out of which spoke the majestic voice that rolls the stars along! The man who stood beside it is a simple shepherd; he is soon to become the most extraordinary of law givers; the staff which he carries in his hand is about to be used in the working of mighty miracles.

So are the humblest things enabled when God uses them for himself.

The stones and timber of yonder church might have built a warehouse or a factory. They were fashioned into a sacred sanctuary, within whose walls many hundreds of Christ's followers assembled last Sabbath to commemorate his redeeming love. Beside me on this study table lies a volume made from linen rags and printer's ink; the volume itself is the inspired word of God. Within it resides that infinite light which proceeded from heaven; it is the burning bush that has illumined the human race throughout the centuries; yet it is not consumed. I write these lines for the columns of a newspaper; and until a comparatively recent time a newspaper was not the vehicle of sacred truth or spiritual influence. But in these days the Lord makes known to millions a multitude of truths pertaining to his kingdom through the evanescent sheets that issue from the press room. Thousands of souls are converted, tens of thousands are comforted, strengthened, and directed in Christian enterprise by these couriers of the cross. Every man who holds a pen or a type for Jesus Christ holds a Moses' rod. God dwells by his spirit in a sanctified press, as in a flaming bush.

In all the history of his kingdom the Lord has chosen the weak things and the humble to confound the mighty. He lighted up the shepherd Moses, and David, the farmer's son, and Amos, the herdsmen, and Peter, the fisherman, and Paul, the tan-maker, and has not the world turned aside to see the marvelous illumination? They were no more self-luminous than the scaccia bush in the Arabian desert; the inspiration of the divine Spirit was but the kindling of a flame that shall never die out.

"Ah," whispers some follower of Christ, "I cannot be a prophet, or an apostle, or a reformer, or a hero such as the Luther, the Bunyans, the Wesleys, and the Chalmers and Finneys have been." Very true. You may be lowlier than any thorn bush in the desert, but he who made Horeb's shrub to be bright by his presence can shine in you and through you to others. He can ennoble and consecrate your humble life by His indwelling grace. What every Christian needs to feel is that if the love of Jesus has kindled his or her soul, there he or she ought to shine. Because you are not called of God, my friend, to a theological chair or pulpit, must you not preach anywhere? You can witness for Jesus wherever you find an ear to listen to your

message. You can speak for him in the prayer gathering in the Sunday school, in the sick-room, in the dwelling of the poor, and in your own family circle. Let such live Christians as Ralph Wells and John R. Mott and Miss Grace Dodge and many a city missionary and Salvation Army slum worker testify how the bush can shine even though it be not fed from the coal bin of a theological seminary.

Next to the gift of the Holy Spirit the crying want of these days is the fuller development of the "rank and file" of Christ's blood redeemed hosts. This world is not to be saved by the geniuses, but by the common folk who are inspired by an uncommon zeal for the Master's work. If you cannot be a calcium light or a great electric burner, you can be a candle and shed a clear halo of spiritual radiance around the humblest occupation. A kitchen may become as sacred as a temple if the holy spirit dwells there in a devout heart.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.

O thou blood redeemed sinner, what did Jesus Christ turn thee into a Christian for, except to let thy light shine? Whether thou hast five talents or only half a talent, let thy thorn bush glow with a simple desire to glorify thy Father which is in heaven.—The Christian Intelligencer.

The Bible, The First Printed Book.

It is a remarkable and interesting fact that the very first use to which the discovery of printing was applied was the production of the Holy Bible. This was accomplished at Mentz, between the years 1450 and 1455. Gutenberg was the inventor of the art, and Faust, a goldsmith, furnished the necessary funds.

The Bible was in two folio volumes, which have been justly praised for the strength and beauty of the paper, the exactness of the register, and the lustre of the ink. The work contained 1,284 pages, and—being the first ever finished—of course involved a long period of time, and an immense amount of mental, manual, and mechanical labor; and yet, for a long time after it had been printed and offered for sale, not a human being, save the artists themselves, knew how it had been accomplished.

Of the first printed Bible, eighteen copies are now known to be in existence, four of which are printed on vellum. Two of these are in England, one being in the Grenville collection. Of the fourteen remaining copies, ten are in England, there being a copy in the libraries of Oxford, Edinburgh, and London, and seven in the collection of different noble men. The vellum copy has been sold as high as \$140. Thus—as if to mark the noble purpose to which the art would ever be applied—the first book printed with movable metal types was the Bible.—Selected.

A Soul-Paralyzing "If."

The following lines have been engraved upon the tomb of Professor Huxley:

"And if there be no meeting past the grave,
If all is darkness, silence, yet 'tis rest,
Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep,
For God still giveth His beloved sleep,
And if an endless sleep, He wills so best."

Contrast this sort of consolation with "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."—The Christian Advocate.

Each to His Own Place

BY JOHN WATSON, D. D.

One may hesitate to speculate about the circumstance of the other world, but one can never crush out the conviction that there must be one place for St. John, who was Jesus' friend, and another for Judas Iscariot, who was his betrayer. One has seen sheep and swine feeding in the same field till evening, and has followed till the sheep were gathered into their fold, and the swine ran greedily to their sty. The last complaint that would have occurred to one's mind was that their owners had separated them; the last suggestion that they should be herded together. What was fitting had happened, it was separation according to type.—The Mind of the Master.

Each day is a new life and an abridgement of the whole. I will so live as if I accounted every day my first and my last; as if I began to live then and should live no more afterwards.—Joseph Hall.

The true calling of a Christian is not to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things in an extraordinary way. The most trivial tasks can be accomplished in a noble, gentle, regal spirit, which overrides and puts aside all petty paltry feelings, and which elevates all things.—Doro Stanely.