

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP TODAY: ITS CRISIS AND RENEWAL

I regard it as a privilege to have been asked to give this Lee Memorial Lecture. I am only too aware that my qualifications for doing so are limited, as my sphere of work is that of a Parish Minister, in what some of you may regard as a remote town in the Orkney Islands, the town of Kirkwall, of which Sir Walter Scott had the rashness to write:

'Tis a base little burgh both dirty and mean –
There is nothing to hear, and there's nought to be seen,
Save a church where, of old times, a prelate harangued,
And a palace that's built by an earl who was hanged.

Needless to say the people of Kirkwall have always thought that Sir Walter was strangely blind to beauty!

The Trust Deed in connection with the Lee Memorial Lecture indicates that it should deal with questions of Biblical Criticism, Theology, or Ecclesiastical History or Policy, with reference more particularly to the circumstances of the time when the lecture is delivered. I wish to speak later on, I hope positively, about one aspect of worship – its renewal – but I want first to make reference, as the Lecture's terms suggest, to one feature of the present times, namely to what has been called 'The Crisis of Worship'. I begin by reminding you of some of the causes of this crisis.

Some Causes of the Crisis of Worship

In the Orkney island of Hoy, in the Parish of the South Isles, there lies the lonely but lovely valley of Rackwick, its croft houses almost entirely deserted, or used in the summer by visitors. But in earlier centuries the valley was full of people. George Mackay Brown, the Orcadian writer, in his Poem Cycle, *Fishermen with Ploughs*, gives an interesting picture of life there in the early Middle Ages. Fisher folk from Norway have come to settle, to be fishermen and ploughmen. Their life is related to the supernatural, for example, in terms of the Virgin Mary, and worship is seen to be relevant to their ongoing lives. Our Lady is asked to 'take the ploughman home from the ale-house sober'; of our Lady of the Atlantic Star of the Sea it is requested, 'may cuithe and codling hang in the chimney smoke'; our

Lady of April is asked to 'guard the labour of thirty five ewes'; yet again there is prayed

. . . blessing
On the cradle, blessing
On those laid together in love, blessing
Our Lady of Perpetual Vigil.¹

Life in the valley then, was lived in a sacral universe, in which the functions of nature and of society were related to the divine, and were thought to be controlled by the divine. Man was not in control of nature, which often dominated him, but he was able to seek divine assistance in order to live. This was done in worship, when he sought God's blessing, or the Virgin's blessing, on his ploughing, on his fishing, on his lambing, on his marriage, and on his children.

Today we live in a very different kind of world, in what is often called a secular world; that is, one in which nature and the functions of society are to be explained, not in terms of the divine but of the human. Farmers today do not, as a rule, seek God's blessing on their ploughing, or on their sowing. They just make sure they have a good tractor, good seed, and good fertilizer. The fishermen, when they get their new boat, don't ask the minister to bless it and them; they just make sure they have it equipped with the latest radar and echo sounder. Again, as far as marriage and birth are concerned, so many people now see no need for the worship of God at such times. The Social Sciences and the Family Planning Clinic, can help them to have, in their view, successful marriage, and a proper care for their children. The invoking of the supernatural in worship to help such people live well is not seen as relevant any more. For man has come of age, and instead of nature dominating him, he dominates nature. He often feels that he is well able to cope with life.

There has taken place, then, a change from a sacral universe to a secular one, and this, in the view of a good many people constitutes the crisis of worship. J. G. Davies, in his recent book, *Every Day God*, writes in these terms: 'I would describe this crisis as the result of the passage from the sacral to the secular universe.'²

So far we have mentioned only one cause for the crisis of worship which has its roots in the emergence of scientific technology and the social sciences, but there is also a credal cause. Behind the decline in worship – by worship, I mean, mainly, corporate worship rather than private prayer – behind this, there has been a decline in fundamental Christian belief. So it was said, in the Report on *Worship in a Secular Age*, produced at the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala in 1968, 'There is a crisis of worship and behind it a widespread crisis of faith.' I mention two ways – though there are certainly more – in which the crisis of faith appears. It is

seen in relation to belief in the world to come. Many Christians admit that they have either given this up or that they have no certainty in this regard. Hence, if there is no world to come, or if it seems pretty uncertain, why bother about one's passport to it? And this has been seen by many, in the past, to have been provided by the worship of the Church, not least by the medicine of immortality, the Mass. Another sign of the faith crisis has been detected in the lack of belief in the Resurrection. People are unsure of their faith at this point, so they cannot see either the Church or the world, as the place of Christ's presence. In particular they often cannot see the liturgical assembly of their local Church as the place where through Word and Sacrament the Risen Lord is encountered, and in Him, God Himself. 'It has to be asked', wrote the late Professor William Manson, 'whether the prevailing indifference to worship is not due also to the loss of the sense of the special presence of God at the place and time of our approach to Him' . . . the 'universal diffusion of the divine glory and the divine spirit by no means excludes the particular or localised presence of God by grace in His Word, in the Sacraments, and in the Holy Place. In every vital religion which makes use of prayer and sacrament, the sense of the special presence has been strong. It has added expectancy to the approach to worship, and given it the nature of a real transaction between the soul and God. Any weakening of faith at this point spells a loss to spiritual religion'.³

To the scientific/technological and credal causes for the crisis of worship, one more may be added, the sociological, the radical change in patterns of social life which the affluent and mobile society of today has brought about. Both in winter and in summer, people frequently move away from the place where they stay to spend the weekend elsewhere. Sometimes this is done in the pursuit of some physical leisure activity, but sometimes it is done in pursuit of an ideology. For many activist young people, having rejected the Christian eschatology, have worked out a secular eschatology, and are prepared to use a great deal of their leisure time in membership of some group, often a political one, where they battle against what appears to them as the establishment in society, in order to achieve the alternative society of their particular vision of the future.

Present Signs of the Crisis

It may be thought that too much is being made of the crisis of worship today, for it can be pointed out that there are indications of a renewed interest, especially in regard to a Pentecostal type of Christian worship. While this must be admitted, it nevertheless remains true that the signs of the present crisis in worship are

clear, and unmistakable, and I now remind you of one or two of these:

(a) *The Sign of 'Leavetaking'*

The above word is that of Jurgen Moltmann in his interesting book, *Theology and Joy*. He writes: 'What is the purpose of the Church? Many people today are asking this question. For some the question is a matter of *leavetaking*. They have been raised in a Christian environment, have enjoyed, or rather endured confirmation instruction, have been baptized and married in the Church, pay their Church dues regularly, yet rarely take part in the "life of the congregation", as they say in circles within the Church. They identify with the Church only sporadically, for example, when they happen to enjoy a Christmas Service or a special Church rally (Kirchentag). Like all large organisations, the established Churches, the territorial and folk churches, suffer from a growing apathy of their members. This apathy no longer manifests itself primarily as partial identification with the Church, but increasingly as non-identification. Many functions in the lives of men, which the Church used to exercise, have now been taken over by men themselves, or by other cultural and social institutions. When a person has come to believe that the church has no function, he begins to question its customary presence at his domicile and in the schedule of his life.'⁴

Moltmann is speaking out of the German situation but who can deny that many congregations of the Church in Scotland report a similar leavetaking. The statistics of the Church of Scotland as a whole, carry a similar message. In our land, too, if people see no purpose in the Church, why stay in it?

(b) *The Sign of Prayerlessness in the Faithful*

The crisis of worship is further reflected in the fact that very many of those who continue to go to public worship have stopped praying. This is the experience of many ministers and priests who have a genuine knowledge of the spiritual state of their people. This is not to say that they never pray but it is to assert that a disciplined regular prayer life has in most congregations gone. The point is put sharply in these words of Dr. Paul Verghese, speaking to the World Council of Churches on 'Worship in the Secular Age': 'Most people have given up trying to pray, including increasingly large numbers of pastors, theologians and priests.' These are very depressing words, if they are true, but it would be a rash person who would try to make out that to every corner of the fold of God in Scotland the disease of prayerlessness has spread, and who would maintain that even the shepherds have all caught it!

(c) *The Sign of Dumbness*

Yet another sign of the crisis we've been discussing lies in the fact that so many Church members today are not prepared to articulate their faith. They are not prepared to give a reason for the faith that is in them, and in some cases they are not prepared even to discuss this faith. Furthermore there is a crisis in the praise of the Church, which is part of its worship. Young people, brought up in the Church, are very unwilling to sing, not because they cannot do so, but because they do not feel they have anything to sing about; they are unsure of Christ, their Saviour and Lord, so why should they try to sing of Him in the glowing terms of confident faith. Hence there are major problems in getting young people for Church choirs, and there are even greater problems in getting Senior Secondary schoolboys and schoolgirls to sing, with any conviction, Christian Praise at a school assembly.

(d) *The Sign of a 'Geriatric' Society*

In some parts of Scotland the local church has more and more the appearance of a geriatric community. The reasons for this are complex, and some of them have been mentioned already when I have spoken of the causes of the crisis in worship, but I believe that it is fitting to mention here one particular cause for the absence of young people from public worship. It is to be found in their deep dissatisfaction with the present form which worship takes in our national church. For again and again they find that worship is pre-eminently what the minister does, and they are treated, when they come, apart from the praise and the Lord's Prayer, as an audience. What Dr. Lee said of some people in the Scotland of his day can with justice be said of many of the younger generation of the present time: 'There exists . . . at least among the more educated hearers in our churches a general and deep dissatisfaction with the worship.'⁵ And Dr. Lee went on to make this pregnant remark: '... it is in the minds, not of the old, but of the young, that we read the sure prophecy of approaching revolutions.'

'Ghetto or Desert'

In the light then of the reality of this crisis of worship, which faces both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic of the present time, what is to be done in our Church? For we must not forget that 'The public worship of the Church of Scotland, as a Reformed Church, is Christian worship under continual constraint towards purification from corruption, superstition and deadness; towards improvement in form and content; and in the direction of renewal and reformation in obedience to the Word of God.'⁶

Charles Davis, writing from a Roman Catholic background, is clear what must be done by the Christian of today. A choice must be made between staying in the 'ghetto' of the traditional Church and going out into the 'desert'. Davis tells us how he has reluctantly decided to leave the ghetto of the Roman Catholic Church with its historic liturgy. He has done this for a number of reasons, but basically because he has come to see that both faith and worship are no longer supported in the culture of modern society, but that they do need a counter culture for their support; and Davis feels that the Churches will not be able to produce this: he wrote, 'The bare will to accept segregation from modern culture is lacking, let alone the energy and purpose needed to maintain a strong counter culture.'⁷ Further, he believes that: 'A counter culture of any richness and strength cannot be maintained by mere attendances at Church services. A whole series of institutions are needed to parallel those of secular society: schools, youth associations, adult groups of different kinds.'⁸ Davis also thinks that the Protestant Church too will not have the vitality to produce a real counter-culture: he says, 'It is now too late for any of the major Protestant Churches to make such a policy succeed; they are too pervaded by modernity, and no longer have the cultural strength.'⁹ So Davis has left the ghetto of the Church finding it emotionally untrue and spiritually barren, having 'a decadent culture, intellectually and aesthetically inferior to the dominant secular culture'.¹⁰ He has opted for the desert. The desert is a temporary resting place between the Christian culture of the past which is dead and inutilisable, and secular culture which has no room for faith and worship. Hence, again I quote, 'the modern Christian exists in an uneasy tension between his faith, with its living imperative but antiquated mould, and his culture with its vigorous dynamic but narrow horizons. For the Christian there is a cultural hiatus, a break, a discontinuity; he has to live for a period in the desert.'¹¹ To be fair to Davis, this same desert does not mean a place of no worship or faith. On the contrary, the communities of leave-taking-Christians that are set up, may have little worship to begin with, as they engage in the painful business of searching together for a faith, but gradually they will feel their way towards new forms of worship and towards a common faith.

Is Davis right? Is this the way ahead for the tens of thousands of Scots who, happily or reluctantly, still remain within the Church of our Fathers? Do we join the stream of the leavetakers from the ghetto of our Church, believing that there is no hope of its creating a counter culture, and feeling, as Davis does, that such liturgical reform as could be achieved, must leave the problem of meaningful liturgy for today quite unsolved?

Christ's Power to Renew His Church

It would not be right for a Protestant, who has no first-hand knowledge of the Roman Catholic Church's worship and life, to pass judgement when a Catholic leaves it, but I believe Davis to be wrong if he really is suggesting that leavetaking should be the order of the day for Protestants, including members of the Church of Scotland. Society at present may indeed be secular, leaving little room for faith and worship, so that those who believe and worship may be branded as socially deviant, but how long will this be the case? You never know how quickly there could be a wind of change in this matter, and faith and worship could find themselves once again with a good plausibility structure, being widely based in social acceptance.

Again, it is true that the human beings who make up the Church – whether in its Protestant or Roman form – sometimes seem unlikely people to create the counter-culture in which a genuine liturgy must be rooted, but has not the Church a Christological centre? Have we any ground whatever for asserting that Jesus Christ, Risen from the dead, has left His Church, whether Protestant or Roman, for ever? On the contrary, the Christ of our Faith is a Christ full of grace, and according to the Gospel, He is the One who seeks out the poor and the lost and the weak and the struggling. Hence, if indeed it is true that in many places Church of Scotland congregations are poor, and often lacking in vitality and in hope and love, in so far as they know their poverty and need, and have only a little faith to seek His help, Jesus Christ is not the one who will turn away from them. He will stay with them, according to His faithful promise: 'Where two or three have met together in my name, I am there among them'.¹² And if Christ is in the midst, have we not every right to believe in His power to renew His Church to which He can give grace to trust in Him, and for which He still intercedes? When the local congregation gathers for the public worship of God, when the Word is read and preached, when common prayer and praise are offered, when there is a good fellowship, even though there could be a more frequent sacrament, who is going to say that there has taken place no manifestation of God in Christ? And if the Risen Lord has encountered His people, however weak and deviant the world may reckon them to be, who is going to limit the result? Who is going to assert that He is incapable, even with men and women of weak faith, of bringing new life into the ghetto of His Church, and of moving out His people into His world?

We must recognize clearly that what the people of the Church in the weakness of their humanity often seem very unlikely to do, Christ in His risen power can do, lifting His people up to the Father, lifting

them up into His new life. He is able to stop leavetaking and prayerlessness and dumbness, and can radically alter a geriatric community. He is able, by His presence among His people at worship, to create a new awareness of the supernatural character of Christianity, showing us that it is not just the preaching of a higher morality. He can bring home to us the deep nature of our Faith, that through our Lord Himself, our humanity has been restored, and that, through the Spirit He gives us, we can really share in His sonship with the Father, and in His closeness to God, and in His divine glory.¹³

Worship in the Church of Scotland must become again, what it was once to a far greater extent, the genuine celebration of the life of the Risen Christ.¹⁴ He must be seen to be at the centre of our public worship, indeed to be its true source, and through the Spirit, its enabler. The rest of what I have to say consists of unpacking one way of looking at Christian worship, namely, that it is the celebration of the life of the Risen Christ.

Worship as the Celebration of Christ's Resurrection

Celebration means rejoicing over some event or achievement, by no means always connected with oneself. Indeed celebrations are often connected with an event or achievement in the life of another, a member of our family or friendship or work circle. Christian celebration, which is what we do Sunday by Sunday at worship, is essentially rejoicing, in and through the Spirit's power, over what Jesus has done, or what is the same thing, over what the Living God has done, in Him and through Him. To celebrate Christ is to go over, wonderingly and thankfully and with great rejoicing, the whole parabola of grace to be seen in Him; that is, it is to go over with joyful thanksgiving His life and death and resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit to His people. Some parts of the parabola of grace need to be stressed more at some times than in other periods. I believe that in our day we need especially to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord, for this is not only the keystone of the Christian Gospel, but the weakest point in people's belief at present.

To celebrate Christ's resurrection means to make room for Him, to place Him at the centre of our public worship and to be ready, eagerly and expectantly, to hear His Word, and to receive what He wills to give us in His Sacrament. It is to enter into conversation and dialogue with Him. In St. Magnus Cathedral, there is a magnificent strong room. You reach it by climbing up a winding staircase into the *triforium*; you then walk round the South Transept, and you will come to this room, full of Church records, which go back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Many people want to consult these records, especially to find out about their relatives of recent

times, or belonging to the more distant past. Some time ago, someone came to Kirkwall to search these records. Whether he found out much is not certain, but to his astonishment, he discovered that one relative, whom he had thought dead, was still living. So the man forgot about the past, and made room for the living one, spending his time listening to him, and speaking with him. The words of scripture come to mind: 'Why search among the dead for one who lives?'¹⁵ Why do so many Christians try to find Jesus Christ only in the past? He is the One who is Risen, and wills to meet with us, as He willed to meet with His disciples after His resurrection. To celebrate His resurrection, therefore, is to put Him at the centre of our public worship Sunday by Sunday, and to come eagerly, expecting that He will speak to His worshipping people, through the praise and the prayer, through the reading and the preaching of His Word, through the fellowship of the family and household of faith, and not least, through the Sacraments. Of course, we must not think that the local Church to which we go has the Risen Lord in its power. The presence of Christ among His worshipping people is His gift to us, and it is given to those who come in faith, humbly prepared to hear His Word and ready to pray, 'Come, Lord Jesus'. Yet His presence is a real presence. The Church at worship is 'not remembering a beautiful hope that has faded – as were the Disciples on that first Easter Day before the Risen Lord appeared in their midst. On the contrary, in every act of worship,' Von Allmen says, 'it experiences afresh the miracle of the coming of the Risen Christ to be with His followers.'¹⁶

In putting Christ at the centre of our worship in Word and Sacrament, we are doing what He wants. We are not asking first, 'What do we want to express in worship?' We are not concerned to obtrude 'upon God with worship of our own which is little more in the last analysis than the worship of self or the holding up of our own spirituality'.¹⁷ Rather we are willing to hear what our Saviour wishes to say to us by way of judgement and mercy. However, we must remember that, in order to hear Him, we must have patience to look below the rubble often of congregational worship, below the rubble of its unbelief or verbosity or man-centredness to where the stream of Christ's life is flowing in Word and Sacrament. A desert is a place where little life is to be seen, but in every desert there is an oasis, where there is life-giving water. So in every congregation there may seem sometimes only to be a desert, but underneath there is life-giving water. This has been flowing in the Church of Christ through the centuries, but we need to be aware of it, and to take time to drink of it. We celebrate the Risen Christ, when, with others who have already found the hidden water before us, we drink of it with them, as He speaks to us in His Word, and gives us abundant life in His Sacraments.

And when we are, by grace, able to make room for Christ, and come in faith and expectation to hear His Word to us, what has He to say? He wills to speak to us through our liturgy, through our corporate worship, Sunday by Sunday, His essential Word of judgement, for often we have been poor servants of His; yet of forgiving love for He is ever gracious. So He says to us again tonight 'Peace be unto you' – what He said, you remember, to the first disciples, after His resurrection. He is saying in effect to us: 'You belong to me, despite your past, and I trust you afresh to be a bearer of My life and love and joy and hope.' How indeed can we say that this is not a relevant word? To be pardoned is to be in relationship again. It means Christ's life in you and in me, the hope of glory; it means a new way for us in the world, His way of sensitive love, the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts, a new fellowship with others, and with God, our Father.

Worship as the Celebration of Life through the Risen Christ

We celebrate Christ as we make room in our worship for a humble hearing of Him, and receiving from Him, but we celebrate Christ also when we give thanks to Him, and through Him to God our Father, for the life which He has set in us, both as individuals, and as the people of God.

And so in public worship we celebrate our new Life through the Risen Christ; we engage in joyful thanksgiving for the new life our Lord has given to us as individuals.

The Gospel which the Church has to proclaim is not simply a new *gnosis* or teaching, it is not just the Sermon on the Mount; it is the declaration that through Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen, a new order of being is really possible for people in every age. It is, in brief, the Gospel of the New Humanity, both in Christ and through Christ. 'In Christ the closed circle of the inner life of God was made to overlap with human life, and human nature was taken up to share in the eternal communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit'.¹⁸ But the New Humanity is not just something we see in Christ, it is something we receive *through* Christ. What God the Father has done through the Gospel, through the saving acts of Jesus Christ, His Son, is to make it possible for Christ's spirit, His life and love, to be in our hearts in such a way as to bind us to this same Jesus, and through Him to God our Father, and also to our brethren. Hence, if in any sense we have known some rescue, through Christ, from the life of pre-occupation with self, from self-expression and self-aggrandisement, we must inevitably wish to give to God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, humble and hearty thanks for all His mercies, not least His mercy in enabling us not only to know

Him, and to know the dying and rising life of His Son, but also to some extent, despite our sin, to share in it. I have told before the story of the man I met at the back of St. Magnus Cathedral, who explained to me that he had *had* to come a long way to Kirkwall from the South to the Memorial Service for the life-boat men who lost their lives in the Longhope disaster. Others, he said, had heard about the hazardous rescues achieved by the Longhope crew in terrible seas, but he had experienced rescue at the hands of these men for himself, for he was skipper of a trawler lost in the Pentland Firth. He *had* to come, in part at any rate, to give thanks to God for the rescue he had *himself* experienced.

Joyful and consistent worship inevitably flows from the awareness that, to some extent, we have passed from death into life, through the grace of our Saviour. Our people need to be encouraged to recognize the life Christ has already given them, often a gracious life of love and compassion and sporadically if not oftener, a life of prayer. And they need to be encouraged too to see that He wills to give them a fuller life within, that the Risen Christ wishes to come to create a festival within the innermost heart of man so that the Christian's thanksgiving is not only for what, by grace, is already in his heart, but for the hope Christ also gives, of riches, and fuller life to come both here and hereafter.

But worship as the celebration of life through the Risen Christ also means joyful thanksgiving to God for our brethren in Christ and our togetherness with them.

We give expression to this thanksgiving as we make room for our brother and sister in Christ. It is as reprehensible to cut out fellowship with our brethren in Christ, as it is to cut out the Word and Sacrament itself. For the Risen Lord seeks to come to us through our brother, He would speak to us through him, and give of Himself to us through him. Hence the fostering of genuine fellowship in every congregation is an integral part of its worship of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Here is one of the danger points for the Church of Scotland, as in congregation after congregation, apart from certain well-known groupings, there is little fellowship between members, little time for members to meet one another, little opportunity to feel and to realize what is the great privilege of entering into dialogue with a brother or sister in Christ. If Charles Davis is right in insisting that for the Church to survive, it must create a counter culture, it is equally right to say that, for the Church of Scotland to survive in the form of local congregations with the ability truly to worship God and to celebrate Christ, we must take seriously the creation of a cellular life, where one Christian can really make room for and meet his or her fellow Christian, not least the new communicant, and where he or she can experience upbuilding in the faith

through the fellowship. Even if a new communicant has heard the Word of Grace spoken consistently in the liturgical assembly of his Parish Church, if that Word is not given some body and reality in a close-knit web of gracious relationships, one wonders how long it will be before a young person gives up the Faith, or at least starts looking for a different type of Christian fellowship. Ideally this should not happen, but a disembodied Gospel is hard to bear.

We have been discussing some of the sources for the renewal of Christian worship. Celebration of our Lord's resurrection is surely one of these, the making room, through the Spirit's enabling, by our people at public worship, Sunday by Sunday, for a humble hearing of His Word and a receiving of His life. This is best done at Eucharistic worship, in the belief of many of us, where there is a clear recapitulation of Christ's saving acts, and a bestowal of Himself. Celebration of the life received through the Risen Christ both individual and corporate is surely another. If we know anything of the joyful life of sonship to the Father through the Son, how can we stay away from the 'assembling of ourselves together', where, not apart from our brethren, but together with them, we can give thanks to God, our Father, and celebrate Christ the Son in the power of His Holy Spirit?

Worship as the Celebration of Christ's Life in the World

This is a point very strongly made by J. G. Davies in his book already referred to, *Every Day God*, with its sub-title 'Encountering the Holy in World and Worship'. Speaking of the worship of the Church, Davies writes: 'The starting point of renewal must be sought in "life not liturgy. Roots of liturgy are in society, rather than in the Church"'.¹⁹ Further he writes: 'The renewal of worship will be an expression of the renewal of the Church as she enters into dialogue with the world, and once again becomes world centred, as is the God she claims to serve who "so loved the world that he gave His only Son . . . not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him"'.²⁰ Yet again Davies says: 'only when we take the secular world seriously, only when the Church sees its part in the mission of the holy as an entering into the struggle for human existence and welfare, witnessing to the compassion of Christ, only then will worship begin to be renewed'.²¹

In other words, the renewal of worship is and will be a by-product of the renewal of the Christian community. Theologians have their preferences as to where the renewal of the Church's worship must begin. Von Allmen, I believe it would be fair to say, thinks that this will happen, not so much through the Church's involvement with the world, as through the renewal of the cult for it is in the cult,

especially the Eucharist, according to his view, that the Church truly appears, and it is from this cult that it becomes missionary. In Von Allmen's words: 'It is in the sphere of worship, the sphere *par excellence* where the life of the Church comes into being, that the fact of the Church first emerges. It is there that it gives proof of itself, there where it is focused, and where we are led when we truly seek it, and it is from this point that it goes out into the world to exercise its mission.'²²

J. G. Davies, on the other hand, as has been already pointed out, suggests strongly that the engagement of the Church in its servant role in secular society is essential to the renewal of worship. I fail to see why both these sources of renewal should not be firmly held on to, as well as the life of God in the soul, and in the fellowship of the Church. But now we must consider further this third source of renewal of the corporate worship of the Church – The Celebration of Christ's life in the world. By celebration here I mean not just rejoicing over the signs of Christ's life in His world, but ourselves making room for the life for others there, and by identifying ourselves with our Lord's serving love there. Obviously there is a sense in which such identification is itself worship – an honouring of God – but it must be recognized that this conformation to Jesus Christ's serving way of life in the world, brings to the worship of Christians, in the sense of liturgical worship, a new and urgent content, a more realistic and worldly content in the right sense of 'worldly'.

What then is the nature of Christ's life in the world which Christians are called to celebrate, in which they must share? It is difficult to define Christ's life in the world, for it manifests itself in different ways, in evangelical ways – preaching and teaching the Gospel, also in servant and revolutionary ways. Essentially Christ's life in the world is a dying and rising life for He died to Himself and lived for the Father, and for others. The cross upon which He died was the true symbol of His life, the true symbol of the stroking out of self, and the giving of Himself in wonderfully patient and humble and sacrificial love to the very people who either ignored Him, or attacked Him, or betrayed Him. When an inter-continental team of young people was gathered together some time ago by Prior Schutz at Taizé to make up a message of Christian 'Joyful News' for the world, they declared that it should be about the festival which the Risen Christ comes to quicken in man's heart. Besides preparing 'a spring-time for the Church, a church devoid of means of power, ready to share with all, a place of visible community for all humanity, He is going to give us enough imagination and courage to open up a way of reconciliation. He is going to prepare us to give our life so that man be no longer victim of man.' Hence there was a strong *paschal* note in the message; life was going to come to the Church from its

Head and Lord, through its death, through the giving of itself to the world, especially to the oppressed, imprisoned, and under-privileged world. Hence to celebrate Christ's life in the world, means for so many young people the revolutionary life, sharing in the work of Christ who ever seeks to bring liberty to the captives. Yet it must be admitted that this is very hard and dangerous work. Indeed it involves strange bedfellows, and often the risk of being conformed to the bitterness and hatreds of the freedom fighters, and the risk of despair, for frequently the struggle against the establishment comes to nothing. Yet there is no way of excluding the Christian from this worldly engagement, for this is Christ's way which led Him back to an urgent worship.

Furthermore in celebrating Christ's life in the world, we need the vision to perceive Him in ordinary men and women, remembering how quick He himself was to see the potentiality for good in the common man, often not a very good believer or worshipper. But to help us with this perception we need what J. G. Davies calls an awareness of 'the model of the holy' in our Lord Himself. We need to be aware too that through this common man Christ would often speak His world of judgement and yet of truth to His Church.

On the one hand, we must not shy away from this engagement with the world, for it is inherent, for most Christians, in an acceptance of the Faith, and because it also leads us back to the nourishment and strength Christ gives in Word and Sacrament, particularly the Sacrament. The late Professor William Manson discussed 'The Norm of the Christian Life' some time ago in a helpful article, and he pointed out that the first two elements within that norm were discipleship, and taking up one's cross, sharing in the fortunes and life of Jesus, which certainly means involvement with the world. But the third element was the forgiveness and strengthening provided by our Saviour at His Table for people who, through an attempted taking up of the Cross in the world, had made 'the discovery of the actual distance between us and Jesus Christ – a separation which no idealism can bridge, and of a weight of mortal sinful consciousness which has no parallel in the world outside of Christianity. . . . If I bring in the Sacrament here, and the sacramentalising of the disciples' way, it is because the synoptic record brings it in here . . . and if the synoptic record brings it in here, it is because it belongs here.'²³

On the other hand, Christians must not stay away from worship as that which dehumanizes, or turns away from the world, or marks them out as immature, not yet having 'come of age'. The truth is that man was made for the worship of the Eternal God through Jesus Christ His Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Through it he finds his full manhood, and his true maturity, and is led out into the Father's world in loving service. 'I am claiming', John Macquarrie

wrote, 'that man, even twentieth-century man needs the practice of religion (and Macquarrie means by that, worship,) for the fulfilment of his humanity.'²⁴ And he goes on to quote Teilhard de Chardin in these words, 'The more man becomes man, the more will he become prey to a need, a need that is always more explicit, more subtle and more magnificent, the need to adore.'²⁵

In conclusion, I wish to stress that, although I have been discussing certain springs of renewal for Christian worship, such renewal is never the achievement of man. It is ever God's work through the Risen Christ and His bestowal of the Holy Spirit.

'If the Holy Spirit is himself the immediate agent of our worship, he is also the immediate agent of its renewal . . . He renews us by drawing us within the self-consecration of Christ made on our behalf and by assimilating us into his holiness . . . It cannot be otherwise with our worship: renewal may only come through holiness . . .'²⁶ What is meant is that renewal in worship can only come through our being united to the Holy One of God in His self offering to the Father, whereby His worship becomes our worship by grace, whereby His thanksgiving to God and His fellowship with others, become our thanksgiving and fellowship by grace, and whereby His obedience and patient serving, and forgiving love in the world also become our obedience and love, by grace. Yet this binding of us to the holiness of Christ means human co-operation, not only in the celebration of Christ's resurrection, but also in the celebration of the life that is ours, individually and corporately, through our Risen Lord, and in the celebration of our Saviour's life to be seen in the world for which He died and rose again, and for which He ever intercedes.

NOTES

1. Pp. 18-19.
2. P. 243.
3. W. Manson, 'The Theology of Worship', in *The Minister's Manual*, p. 5.
4. *Theology and Joy*, p. 76.
5. R. Lee, *Reform of the Church (of Scotland) in Worship, Government and Doctrine* (1864), pp. 46-7.
6. R. S. Loudon, *The True Face of the Kirk* (O.U.P., 1963), p. 52.
7. Charles Davis, *The Temptations of Religion*, p. 112.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
9. *Ibid.* p. 113.
10. *Ibid.* p. 115.
11. *Ibid.* p. 116.
12. Matt. 18:20 (NEB).
13. Cf. Chapter on Liturgy and Kerygma, J. A. Jungmann, *Pastoral Liturgy*, p. 331.
14. Cf. Robert Bruce, *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper*. (Trl. and Ed. T. F. Torrance), p. 46 and pp. 90-91.
15. Luke 24:5 (NEB).

16. Von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice*, p. 27.
17. T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, p. 251.
18. T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, p. 241.
19. J. G. Davies, *Every Day God*, p. 258.
20. Ibid. p. 258.
21. Ibid. p. 259.
22. Von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice*, p. 44.
23. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 41.
24. John Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality*, p. 6.
25. Ibid. p. 6.
26. T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, p. 250-1.

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