

Worship as Adoration

Robert W Bertram

[Seminary Chapel, 9-13-67]

THE INTROIT

The Choir and The People (standing): "The God of Abraham Praise" (TLH, #40) (The Choir shall sing the first and third stanzas, The People, the second and fourth.)

The Sentry: The place on which you stand, O man, is holy ground,
 For who would dare of himself to approach me, says the Lord.

The Officiant: We have come not in our own names
 But in that Name into which we have been baptized;
 In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

The People: Amen (spoken)

The Sentry: Come, you blessed of the Father,
 Inherit the kingdom prepared for you.
 Enter into His presence with thanksgiving
 And into the courts with praise.

The Choir: The Introit for Trinity XVI
 (The Introit ended, The Choir and The People shall be seated).

THE WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

The Officiant: Meditation on The Words of Remembrance

The Choir and The People (standing until the close of the service): The Dignus
 Est Agnus (TLH, p. 122)

THE SANCTUS

The Officiant: Meditation on The Sanctus

The Choir and The People: The Sanctus (TLH, p. 26), following The Preface for
 Trinity, changed by The Cantor

THE TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

The Officiant: Meditation on The Te Deum Ludamus

The Choir and The People: Applause, and then The Te Deum Laudamus (TLH, p. 35)

THE BLESSING

The Sentry: Now may the God of all mercies,
Who has raised -Jesus from the dead,
God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Guard and keep you forever.

The Choir and The People: Amen, Amen, Amen (spoken)

Meditation

on

THE WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

"Worship as Adoration." This concludes the three-morning series which our pastoral staff has planned on the theme, "Worship." Monday it was "Worship as Corporateness"; yesterday, "Worship as Sanctification"; and today, "Worship as Adoration." This concludes the series, but of course it does not conclude our adoration. That goes on "to the ages of the ages"—for example, in the campus Communion service this evening.

Yes, in tonight's Communion, for example, we shall again hear Our Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of Me." That is a cue for the boldest, most heaven-storming sort of adoration. Offhand, it may not sound like adoration. To be quite frank, it may sound rather like a plea from a lonesome, forsaken Jesus, who on the eve of his death is afraid his disciples might soon forget him. "This do in remembrance of me" sounds like: After I'm dead and gone, why not get the old gang together now and then and think of me, will you, please? In fact, his command, "This do in remembrance of me," hardly sounds like a command at all. Instead it sounds like a dying man's request or a wake. And no doubt that is all The Lord's Supper has meant to many a dispirited, unadoring communicant.

But what all this assumes, very mistakenly, is that is we who are to remember him. Really, the one who is to remember this is God. It is God who must remember his own merciful promise "to Abraham and to his seed forever," God who must remember that Thursday evening Passover in the Upper room as the Last Supper of the old age and the

first of many in the new age, God who must remember this sacrificial Lamb with power and wisdom and glory, God who must finally vindicate this Lamb by sending him back to us, both now and at this final return, to establish his revolution forever. On Passover evening the celebrants prayed this prayer: "Our God and God of our fathers, may there arise and come . . . the remembrance of us and the remembrance of our fathers, and the remembrance of the Messiah, son of David, thy servant...." See how boldly Jesus translates this messianic reference into "remembrance of me." The prayer continues, "May their remembrance come before thee, for rescue . . ." "Before thee," "our God and God of our fathers:" This do for God's remembrance of me, for your "rescue."

What we are commanded is, quite simply, "Do this." Do what? Together to "break this bread" and "bless this cup," to share his body and his blood. By so doing, we storm heaven, adoring the Lamb that was slain for us, reminding God in all boldness and confidence to return him to us once and for all. Maranatha! "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." "Until he comes" means, not "If and when he ever comes," but rather, Until he simply has to come. Of course there's someone at home; keep ringing the doorbell "until" they answer. Keep doing this, keep sharing the bread and the cup, his body and blood, until God so remembers his promise that the Lamb comes, forever.

But that requires the bold faith of adoration, and a Lamb who is worthy of it. So we read responsive!y the *Dinus Est Agnus*, in the hymnal, page 122. (Let us rise.)

Meditation

on
THE SANCTUS

The same Passover celebration included the singing of the Hallel, "Blessed be he who enters in the name of the Lord." And who is "he who enters in the name of the Lord"? In the period of late Judaism this was interpreted messianically: The Hallel would someday be sung by the Passover pilgrims as they welcomed into the Holy City the promised Coming One, the Anointed Deliverer. It is that Hallel, then, which does accompany Our Lord's own triumphal entry into Jerusalem—the only Gospel Lesson to appear twice in the Church year; on Palm Sunday and on the First Sunday in Advent. And that Hallel appears also in our Communion liturgy, in the Sanctus. To sing it, as we do, is to proclaim that he, of whose final coming we remind God in this Supper, does already come—in anticipation of the end, in this very Supper, for the forgiveness of our sins. That is cause for adoring. The Sanctus, p. 26.

Meditation

on
The TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

However, the great hymns of adoration appear not only in our celebration of Holy Communion each week but daily, in The Order of Matins. I am thinking of the Te Deum Laudamus. That reminds me of an experience a few years back.

We were sitting in Orchestra Hall in Chicago, listening to the Robert Shaw Chorale sing Johann Sebastian Bach's B Minor Mass. Actually, we sat only part of the time. The rest of the time the audience was on its feet, applauding and cheering and almost bringing down the house—for example, when the chorus sang that passage from the Creed, "et resurrexit," "and on the third day he rose again." Even before the echo of the chorus had died, the rafters were ringing with applause. People were shouting "Bravo," and those of us who were less at home with Italian simply abandoned our dignity and yelled "Hurrah."

Then came a second wave of applause, as though we had suddenly recognized what it was we were really applauding, the way people sometimes laugh at a joke in two stages: first, on impulse, and then because they actually get the point. What were we applauding? Why, we were no longer applauding Robert Shaw and his choir, and they themselves seemed to recognize that by the way they hesitated to acknowledge our applause. We were not even applauding Bach. The applause and the loud cheers were for God. What we were shouting, if you'll permit me, was "Bravo for God." "Hurray for Jesus the Lord, who has risen from the dead." And come to think of it, that is someone to shout about.

I'll not ask you to shout or to whistle—though I'm tempted to, and I know you are, too. But in a way that comes most naturally to our middle-class enthusiasm, may I ask you, before we sing the Te Deum, at least to applaud?

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