

*The Worship-
Driven Life*

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Driven Life*

THE REASON WE WERE CREATED

A. W. TOZER

EDITED BY

JAMES L. SNYDER

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Introduction

by James L. Snyder

A. W. Tozer – A Heart for Worship

For more than forty-four years, Aiden Wilson Tozer served as a minister in the Christian and Missionary Alliance. His most prominent ministry was thirty-one years at the Southside Alliance Church in Chicago, often referred to as ‘that citadel of fundamentalism’. His ministry, however, went beyond the confines of a denomination. He served as a voice to the entire body of Christ. His books and articles were eagerly read and his conference ministry attended with great expectation. Rarely did he disappoint those who knew him. If you were looking for formula Christianity, you were disappointed with him. If you were interested in what he referred to as ‘feel-good Christianity’, you were greatly disappointed.

During his life, Tozer earned a reputation for many things: an outspoken critic of the religious scene, an outstanding preacher, editor of a leading Christian periodical and author of several devotional classics. The real focus, however, of his daily life centered on the worship of God. Nothing else so occupied his mind and life. This worship of God was not something tacked on to a busy schedule. It became the one great passion of his life. Everything revolved around his personal worship of God.

Tozer paid the price for this lifestyle of worship. Many, even in his own family, did not understand him and his insistence on being alone. Some even regarded him as a bit odd, but what others thought of him did not trouble him in the least. His primary business was the worship of God. Nothing else mattered.

To appreciate the ministry of Tozer you must comprehend his passion for worship. If not, you will most likely misunderstand not only his words but his actions as well. He was completely committed to this one solemn activity and pursued it with all the passion he had. Tozer's ideas regarding worship were hammered into a conviction that governed his life and ministry. 'Worship,' Tozer explained, 'is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and overpowering love in the presence of that most ancient Mystery, that majesty which philosophers call the First Cause but which we call Our Father Which Art in Heaven.'

Tozer walked to the beat of a different drummer, but it was not simply because he was a rebel. That may have been a small part of it, but the main factor was his complete sellout to Jesus Christ. Family, friends, even the ministry had to take a back seat to this yearning of his. Perhaps his essay 'The Saint Must Walk Alone' explains to a certain degree his idea of true spirituality. His focus in life was on the person of Jesus Christ and he would do everything within his powers to sharpen that focus. All his spiritual energies and disciplines were directed along that singular path. Consequently, to a certain degree he

was difficult to live with, not because he was demanding or irascible but because he simply was focused on God.

At times, he would come to the family dinner table, especially after the children had left, and not speak a word. Not because he was mad at anyone; he was focused on God and would not break that focus even for fellowship around the table with friends and family. Tozer did not spend too much time working on his social graces – probably the one glaring weakness in his character. Yet doing the work he believed God had called him to demanded much time away from people, shut up alone with God.

Tozer daily cultivated the ability to focus on God. He would quiet his heart, and out of that quietness would come adoration and worship for the Triune Godhead.

Often, at conferences, Tozer seemed preoccupied. He was always musing on some aspect of God. He once claimed that he had dreams of God, so much were his thoughts directed toward the Godhead. Although quite knowledgeable on a variety of subjects and possessing strong opinions on many of them, in later life Tozer increasingly became disengaged from them. His focus on God was getting sharper. The 'art' of worship increasingly engaged his time.

The lessons Tozer learned in worship he generously shared with all who would listen. His preaching and writing were simply the clear declarations of what he had experienced in his private sessions with God. Emerging from his prayer closet, dripping with the fragrance of the presence of God, he was eager to report all he had witnessed. After such a sermon during his Chicago

ministry, one person in the congregation observed, 'He out-Davided David.'

Few writers got to the heart of a subject as quickly as Tozer. He bypassed the trivial and concentrated on those essential ingredients important to our walk with God. In this series, he bares his soul on the one great obsession of his life: worship. Many have written about worship, but I believe Tozer surpasses them all in simple passion and supreme purpose. A reader coming away from this book will not only understand worship but also experience it in his or her own heart.

You may not always agree with him, but you will always know what he believes and why. He says, 'This will be the best teaching in my ministry, comparing myself with myself.' The ensuing messages prove Tozer to be the prophet his reputation suggests.

'I want to deliver my soul as a prophet of God to the people, and to explain why we were created and why we are here, not to the satisfaction of the immediate appetite only but to something bigger, grander and more eternal, that we might worship God and enjoy Him forever.'

Throughout this book, Dr Tozer systematically presents his teaching on a subject close to his heart. Nowhere will anybody find a more fully developed thesis on worship with such sanctified passion. Tozer was one of the first in evangelical circles to call attention to this neglected Bible doctrine. He issued a clarion call for Christians to return to their first love. Now that the pendulum has swung to the other extreme in the evangelical church, this teaching is as needed today as when

Tozer first preached it. Many people are interested in the subject of worship, but most books focus on technology and performance. Here is a book deeply rooted in Bible doctrine and historical writings which focuses on presence, the presence of God. One of the great aspects of this book is how Tozer blends Scripture with some of the great devotional writers throughout history. Many refer to these as mystics, and Tozer is responsible for introducing these great saints to Protestants and evangelicals. The book is well seasoned with these great saints of the past and their Spirit-inspired writings.

A close study of Tozer's ministry will warrant the simple conclusion that his ministry was not just cranking out sermons, articles and editorials. He always had something significant to report. His entire ministry was marked with this distinction. He firmly believed that his labor must flow from a life of worship. Any work that does not flow from worship is unacceptable to God. And, after all, it is God we are trying to please, not people.

Throughout his long ministry, Tozer never became entangled in social or political issues. Not that he did not have an opinion on these subjects, for he did. His conviction was that he was responsible to stick to the great essentials of life. That is why his writings are just as fresh and relevant today as when they were first published. He believed that certain things never change, whatever the generation. He kept to those fundamentals, and you either loved Tozer or hated him. While other ministers were becoming involved in political issues, Tozer contented himself with preaching about God.

This was his passion.

In this book on worship, Tozer's purpose is twofold: to deliver his soul on a subject close to his heart and to inspire others to cultivate a spirit of worship in daily living. Tozer lays a solid foundation, and once a person has read this book they will go on to develop a lifestyle in which worship dominates their life. Nobody reading this book all the way through will ever be the same again, especially when it comes to their personal worship of God.

Often, when in a thoughtful mood, Tozer confided to a friend, 'My ambition is to love God more than anyone of my generation.' Whatever he meant by that, it is evident that he possessed a passion for God that controlled everything in his life. Some evidence exists suggesting he achieved his goal more than he imagined.

The first book he authored that brought him to the attention of the Christian public was the classic *The Pursuit of God*. The last book was *The Knowledge of the Holy*. Tozer lived between these two books. He lived a lifestyle of worship and nothing else truly mattered to him. He sacrificed family, friends and reputation in his pursuit of God.

Tozer's criticism of entertainment within the church made him quite infamous during his lifetime. His high view of worship caused him to lash out mercilessly at times. Worship was to be pure and untainted by worldly things. In his mind, the two were opposed to each other. When someone suggested that singing a hymn was a form of entertainment, it provoked Tozer's fury. Some

of his most eloquent denunciations were in this direction. He was justly concerned about the inroads worldliness was making into the church, and its effect upon Christians. He was especially adamant about the contemporary evangelism methods that many were advocating. He felt they lowered the standards of the church and he was dead set against them.

His comments at times are sharp but this is because of his deep love for the church and the fellowship of God's people. He did not relish the idea of any compromise with the message or the spirit of New Testament Christianity. He truly believed that the church of Jesus Christ had a viable message for the world and was anxious that the message should not be mixed or diluted. Desperate times require strong medicine. And Tozer felt the church was backing away from its strong medicine and becoming adjusted to the world around it, a phrase he detested.

He aptly described his philosophy when he said, 'I believe everything is wrong until God sets it right.' This is where he began and, from that position, he proclaimed freedom through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tozer once wrote a booklet, 'The Menace of the Religious Movie', in which he set forth in irresistible logic his conviction on this whole matter of entertainment in the church. The opinions are strong yet backed by biblical principles. Not only must the message please God but the methods of getting that message out must please God and be compatible with the character and nature of God. He continually ridiculed the idea that 'new days demand new ways'.

To appreciate fully Tozer's criticism of entertainment, his idea of worship must be examined. He firmly believed that entertainment would undermine Christian worship and put the church in jeopardy, a thought abhorrent to Tozer. The integrity of the church, as Tozer saw it, was in danger of being compromised by the introduction of 'things' into the sanctuary. His ideas of music, prayer, evangelism and missions sprang from the imperative of worship within the Christian community.

The legacy of Tozer is in the area of the majesty of God. Whatever else Tozer did, his supreme desire was to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as simply as possible. He tried to set before his generation the importance of certain virtues such as simplicity and solitude. And to turn the attention of the young preachers, for he had great influence among them, away from sham and pretense and all kinds of flesh that would creep into church politics. Getting alone with your Bible and a hymnbook was highly recommended by Tozer. It was this intimacy with God that made his ministry what it became and is remembered now.

Also, a significant aspect of his legacy is spiritual insight. Tozer saw into the nature of things so deeply that it burdened him. He once made the remark that, if you wanted to be happy, you should not pray for discernment. Tozer had the gift of spiritual discernment. He could see through to the very nature of things and see beyond the present action to the inevitable results in the years to come. He could see that the way the evangelical church of his day was going meant it would soon be in serious

spiritual trouble. His message was always to turn back to God, despite the inconvenience or cost. He urged churches to forget the Madison Avenue techniques, the strategies of the world and their programs and priorities. He advocated a life of sacrifice, self-denial and service for Christ.

During his lifetime, Tozer was widely recognized as a spokesman for God. His insight into spiritual matters was penetratingly accurate. He was widely read, but rarely followed. Those who did have the courage to follow discovered, to their delight, spiritual realities surpassing anything this world has to offer. Once seen, it is difficult to go back to the religious boredom of the average Christian.

Tozer usually directed his ministry toward the common Christian, not the average. His message could be understood by the common person in the pew but the average Christian, delighting in mediocrity, took no delight in his pronouncements and spiritual ardor. It was once said of St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, that he was a radical Christian. Such could be said of A. W. Tozer.

In his prayers, Tozer never feigned a sanctimonious posture but maintained a continuous sense of God that enveloped him in reverence and adoration. His one daily exercise was the practice of the presence of God, pursuing him with all his time and energy. To him, Jesus Christ was a daily wonder, a recurring astonishment, a continual amazement of love and grace.

'If you major on knowing God,' Tozer once wrote, 'and cultivate a sense of his presence in your daily life, and do what Brother Lawrence advises, "Practice the presence of God" daily and seek to know the Holy Spirit

in the Scriptures, you will go a long way in serving your generation for God. No man has any right to die until he has served his generation.'

Correct doctrine was not enough for Tozer. 'You can be', Tozer delighted in saying, 'straight as a gun barrel theologically and as empty as one spiritually.' His emphasis was always on a personal relationship with God; a relationship so real, so personal and so overpowering as to utterly captivate a person's full attention. He longed for what he termed a 'God-conscious soul', a heart aflame for God.

The lack of spirituality among men and women today is embarrassingly evident. Tozer zeroed in on one of the primary causes. 'I am convinced', Tozer said, 'that the dearth of great saints in these times even among those who truly believe in Christ is due at least in part to our unwillingness to give sufficient time to the cultivation of the knowledge of God.' He went on to develop this further: 'Our religious activities should be ordered in such a way as to leave plenty of time for the cultivation of the fruits of solitude and silence.'

There were times when Tozer stood alone on certain issues, which never intimidated him in the least. He never concerned himself about who stood with him on any issue. His concern was always with the truth. He was fearless in his denunciation, which made enemies rather quickly. He once criticized a popular new Bible translation. 'Reading that new translation', opined Tozer, 'gave me the same feeling a man might have if he tried to shave with a banana.'

People waited upon Tozer's ministry with expectancy, knowing that they would hear old truths robed in fresh and sparkling, and sometimes startling, expressions. Tozer once said, 'Years ago I prayed that God would sharpen my mind and enable me to receive everything he wanted to say to me. I then prayed that God would anoint my head with the oil of the prophet so I could say it back to the people. That one prayer has cost me plenty since, I can tell you that.'

Raymond McAfee, Tozer's assistant for more than fifteen years, regularly went to Tozer's study each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning for a half hour of prayer. Often, as McAfee entered, Tozer would read aloud something he had recently been reading – it might be from the Bible, a hymnal, a devotional writer or a book of poetry. Then he would kneel by his chair and begin to pray. At times, he prayed with his face lifted upward. Other times he would pray totally prostrated on the floor, a piece of paper under his face to keep him from breathing carpet dust.

McAfee recalls one especially memorable day: 'Tozer knelt by his chair, took off his glasses and laid them on the chair. Resting on his bent ankles, he clasped his hands together, raised his face with his eyes closed and began: "O God, we are before you." With that, there came a rush of God's presence that filled the room. We both worshiped in silent ecstasy and wonder and adoration. I've never forgotten that moment, and I don't want to forget it.'

In prayer, Tozer would shut out everything and

everyone and focus on God. His mystic mentors taught him that. They showed him how to practice daily the presence of God. He learned the lesson well.

The primary emphasis of Tozer's ministry in preaching and writing was on this area of worship. To him, worship is the Christian's full time occupation. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with or diminish this sacred duty of the believer. According to Tozer, whatever did not flow naturally if not spontaneously out of our worship was not authentic and was at best contrived. Only cunning works of silver and gold should be offered to God.

Almost as a lone voice in his generation, Tozer stressed the need for a drastic reform of worship both personally and congregationally. Our ideas of worship must be in complete harmony with the revealed Word of God.

During the 1950s, Tozer found a kindred spirit in a plumber from Ireland, Tom Haire, a lay preacher. Haire became the subject of seven articles Tozer wrote for *Alliance Life* entitled 'The Praying Plumber from Lisburn', later reissued as a booklet. Two men could hardly have been more different, yet their love for God and their sense of his worth drew them together.

Once, while Haire was visiting Chicago, Tozer's church was engaged in a night of fasting and prayer. Haire joined them. In the middle of the night, he got thirsty and went out for a cup of tea. Some church members felt that Tom, by so doing, had 'yielded to the flesh'. Tozer disagreed. He saw in that act the beautiful liberty Tom enjoyed in the Lord.

Just before Haire was to return to his homeland, he stopped by Chicago to say goodbye.

‘Well, Tom,’ Tozer remarked, ‘I guess you’ll be going back to Ireland to preach.’

‘No,’ Tom replied in his thick Irish brogue. ‘I intend to cancel all appointments for the next six months and spend that time preparing for the judgment seat of Christ while I can still do something about it.’

It was an attitude not uncharacteristic of Tozer himself.

If this book drives you to your knees in penitential worship before God and encourages you to withdraw from the rat race of religious life and focus on your birth-right of worship, it will be well worth the pains of publication. And A. W. Tozer, ‘[...] being dead, yet speaks’.

CHAPTER 1

The Tragedy of Human Depravity

In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve, placing them in the beautiful garden east of Eden. We have only a little glimpse into the beauty of that mysterious and wondrous world. All we know is that God created it and afterwards said, 'It is good.' This meant that all creation was in absolute harmony with God, and fulfilling its ordained purpose.

Perhaps it would be correct to suggest that many people in their frantic pursuit of life have forgotten the purpose of their creation from God's point of view. Keep in mind that whatever God created, he created for his purpose and pleasure (Revelation 4:11). To entertain the idea that God would do anything capriciously or without purpose is to misunderstand the nature of God completely.

After God had created everything else, he said with a smile on his face, 'I'll make me a man.' Stooping down, he took up the clay from the bed of the river, shaped it and worked on it like a nanny bending over her baby. He shaped and formed human beings and blew into their nostrils the breath of life, and they became living souls. God stood the first man on his feet and said, 'Look around, this is all yours, and look at me, I am yours, and I'll look at you and I'll see in your face the reflection of

my own glory. That is your end, that is why you were created, that you might worship me and enjoy me and glorify me and have me as yours forever.'

God then put Adam in a deep sleep and out of his ribs formed woman, whom Adam called Eve. Together they were created with one purpose.

God's purpose in creating Adam and Eve is summed up in what they could do for God that nothing else in the whole creation could do. They had an exclusive on God shared by no other part of God's creation. Unlike everything else in this mystic and marvelous world of God's creation, Adam and Eve could worship God and God anticipated that worship. In the cool of the day, God came down and walked with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden where they joyously offered their reverence and adoration. Nowhere do we read that God came down and hugged a tree or walked with any animal or plant he had created, nor did he talk to any of the animals. Only Adam and Eve were able to provide the fellowship God desired. It was their unique purpose, shared by nothing else in all of God's creation.

Thinking of those occasions when God walked with them in the cool of the day in the garden, I wonder what they talked about. The weather was ideal, Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect health, and sports had not been invented. Obviously, it was a fellowship based on compatibility between both parties. Something in human beings responded to the presence of God like nothing else in all God's creation. God created people in his own image, and out of that flowed the marvelous dynamic of

worship. Adam and Eve's unique purpose in the garden was to bring pleasure, joy and fellowship to God, which is the foundation of all genuine worship.

Everything in the garden was in perfect harmony and symmetry. Then God withdrew for a moment, and while he was gone, that old evil one, the dragon who is called Satan, came and sowed poisonous seed in the minds of Adam and Eve. Consequently, they rebelled against God and his purpose for them. When Adam and Eve crossed the line, immediately God knew the fellowship was broken, for God knows all things.

Also, for Adam and Eve there was a terrific sense of disorientation, resulting in spiritual amnesia. They looked at themselves for the first time and saw themselves in a different light. They saw their nakedness and, in a state of spiritual disorientation, gathered fig leaves to hide this nakedness. Thus was born religion; Fig-Leaf Religion. Religion always focuses on the externals and Adam and Eve were consumed with their outward condition. They had lost the focus of their inward beauty and purpose and no longer satisfied the criteria of fellowship with their Creator.

When God came as usual for fellowship, Adam and Eve were nowhere to be found, and God sought them among the trees in the garden, calling out to Adam, 'Where are you?'

God called out to the man who had fled from him and hidden among the trees of the garden. Adam heard the voice of the Lord in the cool of the day, as before, but he was confused. Why was God coming to Eden eastward;

what was he doing there? He was coming for his customary time with Adam when Adam should worship, admire and adore the God who made him.

Adam, shamefaced, came crawling out from behind some tree.

God asked, 'What did you do?'

Adam regretfully replied, 'We ate of the forbidden fruit.' Then, to justify his actions, he said this: 'But it was the woman you gave me.'

God turned to the woman. 'What did you do?' Immediately she put the blame on the serpent.

Already they had learned to blame somebody else for the condition of their souls. This blaming of someone else for all our iniquities is one of the great evidences of sin and the forerunner of religion.

Something happened, changing the whole scenario, hijacking and barring humanity from the knowledge of God. Adam and Eve, in that perfect environment and with their one supreme purpose of worshiping God, rebelled against their purpose, which resulted in what theologians call the fall of man, or depravity.

Our world is full of tragedy because of this great overwhelming cosmic tragedy back in the garden. Repercussions still vibrate in contemporary society.

The burning question needing an answer is: what was the tragic consequence of this fall? Why does this matter for us today, and why should we inquire into it?

Some say the fall is the source of all the problems plaguing humanity down through the years. Some point to the proliferation of disease as a direct outcome. Others

point to all the hatred infecting humanity throughout the centuries: nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, and holocausts that have happened periodically throughout history. No generation has escaped such hatred and anger. However, these are short-term effects and simply consequences, not representing the real tragedy of the fall.

So what was the real tragedy of that dreadful cosmic rupture that was forever to affect humankind? The real tragedy in the garden of Eden was that Adam and Eve lost their purpose. They forgot who they were; they did not know where they were; they did not understand where they came from or what they were there for. They forgot the purpose of their existence. Though they tried their best to shake off this moral fog, they could not, for no matter what they did it would not shake off. Therefore, hand in hand, they made their way out into the world, not knowing where they were going. Humanity still wanders in this moral and spiritual wilderness.

They suffered from what I will refer to as 'spiritual amnesia'.

This spiritual morass is illustrated, as is often the case, in the physical world. A man wakes up in the hospital only to discover he has been in a coma for about a week. He does not know how he got there or why he is there. He does not know where he is; in fact, he cannot even remember his name. He is told that over a week ago he encountered muggers, who beat him severely, robbing him of everything including his identity. Anything to tell who he was or why he was in the city was stripped

from him. The doctors diagnosed him with amnesia. It is a real problem because the man has no memory of what happened to him. He has lost all perspective on his life, not knowing even his own name making him vulnerable to people he does not know.

This identity crisis is a serious condition and, thankfully, for many people it is only temporary. With the diligent work and patient help of the medical staff, memory can be restored. But, until he regains his memory, he has lost all purpose in life and must rely on others to help him define his purpose.

This is the way it is spiritually. Because the enemy of their souls has mugged humanity, robbing them of their identity, men and women wander around in a spiritual and moral fog not knowing who they are, what they are or where they are going. This is exactly where humanity is today. We have a strange spiritual amnesia and cannot remember who we are or why we are here, and look around for some explanation of our existence. Unfortunately, men and women suffering from this seek answers from anyone offering some hope. Too often, they get the wrong answers from those with less credible integrity, not to mention a personal agenda.

Ask a young university graduate, 'Bob, why are you here?'

'I want to get married, I'd like to make money and I'd like to travel.'

'But listen, Bob, those are short-sighted things. You will do them and then you will get old and die. What is the big overriding purpose of your life?'

Looking rather strange, Bob might say, 'I don't know whether I have any purpose in life.'

This is the condition of the world today, everywhere and in every culture. From the universities to the coal-mines, people do not know why they are here. People have a strange moral and spiritual amnesia and do not know their purpose in life, why they were created or what they have been sent to do. Consequently, lives are filled with confusion and people are reaching out for any explanation, hence the proliferation of religions in our world. Religion addresses only humanity's external condition, not our internal confusion.

In spite of this confusion, we try to get around somehow. We travel, play golf, drive cars, eat, sleep and look at beautiful things, but they are all short-sighted aspects of our life.

The enemy of human souls has successfully sabotaged this search for moral and spiritual identity. He does everything within his extensive power to prevent us from discovering who and what we are. Defiantly, knowing our purpose, he stands between us and dares us to cross his line. He offers everything and anything to keep us from finding the right solution. Unfortunately, he has many takers.

Where in the world can we find any answer to this dilemma? What authority in this world can bring us to an understanding of why we are here?

Fortunately for us, the Bible is such an authority, and explains to us why we are here.

I desire to deliver my soul as a prophet of God and

explain from the Bible why we were created and why we are here. It may not satisfy the temporary needs at the time, but will satisfy something bigger, grander and more eternal. That biblically defined purpose is that we might worship God and enjoy him forever. Apart from that, we have no other purpose and, short of that, we wander in a spiritual disorientation that takes us farther from finding our created purpose.

God never does anything without a good purpose behind it. God is intelligent because intellect is an attribute of deity. This intellect is seen in every aspect of creation. Nothing in creation is without meaning even if we do not see or understand the meaning at the time.

Deep within the heart of every person is an insatiable longing to know this purpose of life, which, I contend, is an indication of the residue of memory prior to the fall in the garden of Eden. Men and women strive to know the 'why' of everything. They express a legitimate concern and pose an important question demanding a satisfactory answer. The problem is, most people get the wrong answer to their inquiry.

But there is a good and legitimate answer to this query, summed up in the following scriptures: 'My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king.' 'The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your Lord' (Psalm 45:1, 11).

And I could go farther into the Psalms: 'Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker' (Psalm 95:6).

Additionally, I could turn to many more passages

of sacred Scripture that offer to all mankind a call to worship. It is the echo of the voice of worship telling us why we were born; that we might worship God and enjoy him forever. Informing us that we are to glorify him forever and, above all other creatures, know, admire, love and adore the triune God. To give to God that which he desires.

In our Bibles, we read of those who worship God day and night in the Temple and never ceased chanting, 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory' (Isaiah 6:3).

Compare this with the average run-of-the-mill church, even today's evangelical church, where there seems to be a great love of everything but this. What passes for worship in many churches today is anything and everything but what reflects the holy mind and nature of God or even pleases God. Worship in many cases is stiff and artificial, with no semblance of life in it. I am afraid many have truly forgotten what it means to worship God in the sacred assembly. There is ritual and routine aplenty but a lack of the overwhelming passion of being in the holy presence of God.

Some say the answer to all our problems in the church today is revival, as though that is a panacea for all our spiritual ills and shortcomings. Most people's idea of revival, however, runs the gamut of a week of meetings to a high-energy display of emotionalism. What is real revival? The kind that has changed the course of human history. Throughout church history, every revival has led to a sudden intensification of the presence of God,

resulting in the spontaneous worship of God. Anything less is superficial, artificial and even detrimental to true spiritual health.

When the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, why did the believers break out into ecstatic language? Simply, it was because they were rightly worshiping God for the first time. Intensive worship unexpectedly leaped out of their hearts. It was nothing planned or perpetrated by some 'worship leader.' God was in their midst. Whenever there is a move of the Holy Spirit, it is always a call for God's people to be worshipers of the Most High God above everything else. Whatever else revival does, it must restore the purpose and meaning of being a worshiper.

In the world created by God, nothing exists without meaning and purpose. Science seeks to discover the meaning of things and their relationship to one another, their interaction and effect upon one another. That is science. I have nothing against science; however, science and scientists deal only with short-term affairs, never with the overarching purpose of people's being created in the image of God.

Admittedly, science has made great strides in eliminating some diseases that in a former generation took the lives of thousands. And, for this, we all stand with heads bowed in utter profuse thanks. I grant you that science, especially medical science, has made great improvements in the quality of our life. But even that has limitations. Science can save a baby from diphtheria, save a teenager from smallpox, save a person in their twenties

from polio, save a man in his fifties from a heart attack and keep him going right on until he is ninety in good health. But the question I posed is this: if he still does not know why he is here, what does he gain?

If he does not know why he is here and does not know his purpose, all you are doing is simply perpetuating the life without direction or purpose. If a person is living just because it is the best alternative to dying, what good is it?

Somebody observed about Christopher Columbus: 'Columbus went out not knowing where he was going and when he got there he did not know where he was and when he got back he did not know where he had been. And he did it all on other people's money.'

This is the way of religion today. People do not know where they are, they do not know where they have been, they do not know why they are here, they do not know where they are going, and they do the whole thing on borrowed time, borrowed money and borrowed thinking, and then die. Science may be able to help keep you alive but it cannot help you here. Science can keep you alive so you have longer to think it over, but it will never give you any answer for the purpose of your life.

When I was seventeen years old, I associated with a certain group of people. They were not educated people and certainly not scientists. They were plain, simple Christians, the saints and mystics, and the brethren of the common life. They were the people of God, and had a simpler and more beautiful view of the world than many scientists. They did not know much, certainly not as much as a scientist,

but they did know why they were here and where they were going. They celebrated their purpose of life by worshipping God enthusiastically and unashamedly.

Suppose I were to visit some university and encounter a celebrated doctor of philosophy. I would not know nearly as much as he would know. However, if I met him downtown wandering around and he did not know where he was, I would know more than he would on that one thing.

He might stop me and ask, in a very cultured matter, 'Where am I?'

I could say to him, 'You're between Hamilton and Vineland.'

'Thank you,' he would say. I would smile to myself and think, I have not studied in Germany and I do not have all his degrees, but I know more than he did about one thing. I knew where he was and he did not.

I have read Albert Einstein's work on the fourth dimension and have never been able to understand it. I quit trying, but I take pleasure in knowing something Einstein did not know. I know why I am here. I belong to that company of plain Christians who believe a book called the Bible that says, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Genesis 1:1).

God made humankind in his own image and blew into them the breath of life to live in his presence and worship him. God then sent humankind out into the world to increase, multiply, and fill the earth with men and women who would worship God in the beauty of holiness. That is our supreme purpose.

I do not walk around with my head down, looking sad, because somebody has written more books than I have or knows more than I know or has been to school for longer than I have, because I have a little secret. I can tell you why I was born, why I am here and my everlasting duties while the ages roll.

The plain people I admire so much say God created the flowers to bloom so that humankind might enjoy them. God created the birds to sing for our pleasure. However, no scientist would be caught dead admitting something that simple. The scientist has to come up with some complicated reasons for what this all means. His problem is, he never begins with God.

The scientist would object and say, 'God did not create the birds to sing. Only the male bird sings and he sings only to attract a female so he can have a nest of little ones. That is just simply a biological fact, that is all.'

I think to myself, why couldn't the bird just warble or something? Why does the bird have to sing like a harp? Why do these birds sing so beautifully? Because the God who made them is the composer of the cosmos. He made them, put a harp in their little throats, surrounded it with feathers and said, 'Now, go sing.' And they have been singing ever since, much to my delight.

I believe God made the trees to bear fruit, but the scientist shrugs his shoulders and objects, 'There you go again, you Christians. What a hopeless bunch you are. The trees bear fruit not for you but so there are seeds so there will be more fruit.'

God made the fruit, blessed it and told us to help

ourselves. God also made the beasts of the field to clothe humankind and the sheep to give us wool so we can make a nice sweater to keep us warm in the winter. God made the humble little Japanese silkworms in the mulberry trees in order that we might spin their cocoons and make silk.

Throughout the Bible, the prophets and apostles all testify that God made us for a purpose and, according to them, that purpose is to sing his praises before the hushed audience of all creation. God created the silkworm to make silk, the bird was created to sing, the sheep for their wool. Everything in God's creation has its purpose.

Looking at the man he created, God said, 'I am making man in my image and man is to be above all other creatures.' Man's supreme purpose is to be above the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea, and even above the angels in the heavens. Ultimately, this man is to enter God's presence and unashamedly worship God, looking upon his face while the ages roll. That is why man was created; that is man's chief end.

Apart from that, we have no more idea why we are here. God gave you a harp and placed it in your own heart. God made you in order that you might stand up and charm the rest of the universe as you sing praises to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why we were made in his image.

With the great hymn-writer Isaac Watts (1674–1748), we can sing:

*'I'll praise my Maker while I've breath;
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures.'*

Prayer:

Lord God, for years we have wandered in the state of spiritual amnesia not knowing who we are, where we came from or what our purpose in life is. We did not know that we were made in your image for the single purpose of worshiping and adoring you. Our plight has been to lead an empty and futile life. Then Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, awakened us to our true purpose in life. Now our days are filled with praise. And we praise you with our whole being, honoring you and adoring you in the beauty of your holiness. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Searching for Lost Human Identity

Christian ministry is based on the assumption that there are some serious-minded people who want to know who they are, what they are, why they are here and where they are going. Maybe not many compared to the great masses of the world's population, but enough to form a nice congregation almost everywhere you go. If I am wrong about this, I might as well leave my Bible closed.

But I firmly believe there are some who are serious and want to know the answer to the question, 'What is my purpose in life?' Unfortunately, the masses have been given the wrong answer, leading them farther away from the knowledge of God. This includes all the religions and philosophies of our world. This has been a neat and successful trick on the part of the enemy of human souls.

Many people have tried to answer that question and consequently led many other people astray. Let me take several of their answers now and point out how empty and futile they really are, and may God deliver us from such utter foolishness.

Work

Some would insist that our chief purpose in life is to work. No other place in the world from the days of Adam to this present time has given more honor to work than the North American continent. Not that we like to work; we just like to talk about what an honorable thing it is.

Have you ever stopped to consider what work is?

Let me put it in its simplest form. Work is moving things and rearranging them. We have something over here and we work to put it over there. Something is in the pail and we put it on the side of the house, which we call painting. Something is in the cupboard; we work to put that into a skillet and then on the table to put it into our family, and that is called cooking.

Smile at this simplification if you like, but you will find this definition of work a very good and sound one. Work is taking something that is somewhere, putting it somewhere else, and rearranging it. To the observer of humanity the obvious thing about work is the fact that it has a short-range focus; it never has a long-range purpose.

The farmer has some corn in his barn, puts it in the field and covers it up. After nature has worked on it for three or four months he takes it from there and puts it back where he got it, only there is more of it. The next year the corn is gone; the cattle ate the corn. Therefore, work always has a short-range purpose.

But what is the result of all this? Why do all this? Why put that green, red or white paint in that pail and put it on

your house? You say, in order that it might not be affected by the weather, that it might stay nice and look nice.

That is very good, but there never was a house built yet that will not rot and get run-down and finally be replaced with something newer. Nobody can convince me I am merely made to work like a farm horse without having any future or any reason except that work. A man can work all his life, be identified by that work and then retire. Shortly after retirement, he dies because he has lost his purpose in life. The end result of work is utter futility.

Education

Somebody else insists we are here for a higher purpose than mere work. Our purpose is to educate ourselves, develop ourselves and perfect our intellectual nature. The process of this cultivation of the human mind is extensive.

A young person will go through school and be taught all the important things of life. She then might continue through college and learn science, art, literature and history. If she is ambitious, she will go on to do postgraduate work and get a degree.

I see only one little catch in this scenario. That young woman, educated and well cultivated, is going to die and take all that education with her to the grave. All that culture, that love of Bach, of Brahms and everything else will go right down with her into the grave.

Everything we do for a person is going to go right

down into the grave with them when they die. If they gain forty degrees, we can put that on their tombstone, but they do not know anything about it. They are dead. Education alone is not the reason we were born. Our purpose is not for the perfecting of our intellectual nature, and the education or development of our mind. I am not against education because the alternative is simple ignorance. Education, however, does not provide the eternal purpose for which I am here.

Pleasure

Others have a simpler viewpoint and tell us we are here merely to enjoy ourselves. Epicurus, the father of Epicureanism, taught that pleasure is the chief end of man. Unfortunately, he earned a terrible reputation, but his idea was not as bad as it sounds. Epicurus did not teach that our purpose was to go out on a three-week drinking binge or take drugs or engage in every physical and carnal pleasure known to man. He taught something quite the contrary.

He taught that pleasure is the end of all things: the pleasures of friendship and the beauty of literature and poetry and music and art. 'The noble pleasures of a good conscience', he said, 'is what we were born for in order that we might enjoy life.'

Although he had good intentions and tried taking the high road, he had it all wrong. Joys and pleasures all pass away.

An old man who used to sit and listen enraptured to the music of the classics now sits and nods in the corner and does not know Brahms from Frank Sinatra, because his mind is gone and his ability to enjoy pleasures is gone as well. What does a man do when life offers him no more pleasure? Some have answered this emptiness by suicide, a tragic end to a life that never found the real purpose of existence.

Thrills

The younger and more energetic among us have the idea that the thrills of life are all that matter. Experiencing all the thrills of life is the ultimate point of living. It is a philosophy, and is widely practiced and held by a good number of people who are not Christians. It is the philosophy that sex, food, sports, excitement, and the gathering of goods is the chief end of humanity and our purpose in life. Our purpose in life is whatever produces a thrill.

Those who dedicate their time and the purpose of their life to getting a thrill out of life are going to have one of two things happen to them. Either they are going to run down physically, or they are going to run down mentally until they lose all ability to experience any thrill any more.

Nothing is quite as pathetic as an old rogue who has no thrill left any more. A bored, weary, defeated, burnt-out old man who has spent his life seeking physical thrills wherever he could find them and at any cost, and

now he is old, tired and worn out. Nothing thrills him any more. Trying to get through to him is like sticking an ice pick into a wooden leg. There is no response, no reaction, no life or feeling left.

If that is all life is for, I think God made a terrible mistake when he created this whole world. If that is all, then with my hand over my face I cry to God Almighty, complain, and say, 'Why did you make me like this?'

But the exciting news is that that is not the reason or purpose for our life. I bring you to the Scriptures themselves, not man's philosophy but what God says about our purpose in life. Scripture teaches us a number of things about the purpose of our life. It teaches us that God created all things out of his own pleasure. 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being' (Revelation 4:11).

When God decided to create humankind, it was a high day in heaven, accompanied by a big celebration – 'while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy' (Job 38:7). Here was the heavenly host celebrating when God decided to create the heavens and the earth and in particular people to worship him.

This is taught throughout the entire Bible, that God created human beings to worship him. We are the darlings of the universe, the centerpieces of God's affection; however, many unbelievers denied this.

A very intelligent man once commented, when asked what he thought to be the biggest mistake or error made by people: 'I consider the biggest mistake to be the belief

that we are special objects of Almighty God and that we are more than other things in the world and God has a special fondness for people.'

Regardless of that man's opinion, I base my whole life on the belief that God created people with a special, unique, divine purpose. I do not care how brilliant this man is; he cannot shake me from my conviction. It would be as useless as throwing cooked peas at a ten-story building to destroy any of my beliefs or doctrines or commitment to this faith.

When a little baby is born into the world, the father searches intently to see if the baby looks like him. He may be too tough to say it, but every father looks earnestly into that little wrinkled face to see whether it looks like him or not. We want things to look like us and, if they are not born to us, we go out and make them. We paint pictures; we write music; we do something because we want to create. Everything we create is a reflection of our personality. In the world of art a Monet is easily distinguished from a Rembrandt. Each painting reflects the personality of the artist.

God made humans to be like him so they could give more pleasure to God than all the other creatures. Only in human beings, as created by God, can God admire himself. We are the mirror image into which God looks to see himself. We are the reflection of the glory of God, which was the purpose and intention of God originally. Our supreme function through all eternity is to reflect God's highest glory and that God might look into the

mirror called humans and see his own glory shining there. Through us, God could reflect his glory to all creation.

You are a mirror of the Almighty and this is the reason you were created in the first place. This is your purpose. You are not created that you might merely take something from over here and put it over there... *work*. You were not created only so that you might develop your brain so that you can speak with a cultured accent... *education*. Neither are we here to enjoy ourselves, even the pure pleasures of life... *pleasure*. Nor are we here for the thrills that life brings... *thrills*.

All the holy prophets and apostles teach that humans fell from their first estate and destroyed the glory of God, and the mirror was broken. God could no longer look at sinful people and see his glory reflected. We failed to fulfill the created purpose of worship of our Creator in the beauty of holiness. We forgot this, forfeited it by sin and are now busy finding other things to fill that emptiness. It is terrible what people will look to if they lose God. If there is no God in their eyes then they get something else in their eyes, and if they do not enjoy worshiping the great God Almighty who made them, they find something else to worship.

If a person does not have God, they have to have something else. Maybe it is boats, or maybe money, amounting to idolatry, or going to parties or just simply raising the devil. They have lost God and they do not know what to do, so they find something to do, which is why all the pleasures in life have been invented.

God made humankind to reflect his glory but,

unfortunately, we do not. The flowers are still as beautiful as God meant them to be. The sun still shines down from the spacious firmament on high. Evening shadows fall and the moon takes up the wonders and tells us whether the hand that made us is divine. Bees still gather their honey from flower to flower, and the birds sing a thousand songs, and the Seraphim still chant 'Holy, holy, holy' before the throne of God. Yet humans alone sulk in their caves. Human beings made more like God than any creature have become less like God than any creature.

Humanity, made to be a mirror to reflect the deity, now reflect only its own sinfulness. Sulking in their caves while the silent stars tell their story, human beings, except for their swearing, boasting, threatening, cursing and all the nervous and ill-conceived laughter and songs without joy, are silent before the universe.

Change the image now from a mirror to a harp. God has put in human beings a harp bigger than anything else, and he meant that harp to be tuned to himself. However, when people sinned and fell in this tragic and terrible thing we call the fall of man, they threw that harp down into the mud; it is full of silt and sand and its strings are broken.

The mightiest disaster ever known in the world was when the human soul, more like God than anything, more fitted to God's sweet music than all other creatures, let the light go from its mind and the love go from its heart, and began to stumble through a dark world to find itself a grave. From God's point of view humanity needed to be redeemed. What is the purpose of redemption?

Redemption is to restore us back to God again, to restring that harp, to purge it, cleanse it and refurbish it by the grace of God and the blood of the Lamb.

I have wonderful news for you. God who made us like that did not give up on us. He did not say to the angels, 'Write them off and block them from my memory.' Rather, he said, 'I still want that mirror to shine in which I can look and see my glory. I still want to be admired in my people; I still want a people to enjoy me and to love me forever.' Out of this insatiable passion, God sent his only-begotten Son and he became incarnate in the form of a man and, when he walked the earth, he was the reflected glory of God. God, finally, had his man.

The New Testament says, 'The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being...' (Hebrews 1:3). When God looked at Mary's son, he saw himself reflected. Jesus said, 'Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves' (John 14:11).

What did Jesus mean by 'When you see me, you see the Father's glory reflected'? 'I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do,' said Jesus (John 17:4), and there God glorified himself in his Son and that Son went out to die and all that glory was marred more than any man and his features more than the son of man. They pulled out his beard, bruised his face, tore out his hair and made lumps on his forehead. Then they nailed him on that cross where for six hours he sweated, twisted and groaned before finally giving up the ghost. The bells rang in heaven because

humankind had been redeemed now. On the third day, he arose from the dead and now he is at God's right hand and God now is busy redeeming the people back to him again, back to the original purpose, to be mirrors reflecting God's glory.

I hope to explain what worship is and point out how tragically low this worship is among the churches. I hope to define worship and explain how we can recapture this worship for our generation and the generations to come.

Worship is humanity's full reason for existence. Worship is why we are born and why we are born again. Worship is the reason for our Genesis in the first place and our re-Genesis that we call regeneration. Worship is why there is the church, the assembly of the redeemed, in the first place. Every Christian church in every country across the world in every generation exists to worship God first, not second. Not tacking worship at the end of our service as an afterthought, but rather to worship God primarily with everything else coming in second at best. Worshiping God is our first call.

John Keats wrote of a tongueless nightingale (in *The Eve of St Agnes*): 'As though a tongueless nightingale should swell her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.' Quite a figure of speech, really. I have often thought that this great figure of speech was a beautiful thing. The tongueless nightingale died of suffocation because it had so much song in it that it could not get it out. We are the other way around. We have such a tremendous tongue and such little use for it. We have a

harp such as no other creature in God's universe but we play it so infrequently and so poorly.

When the saintly Brother Lawrence (c.1614–1691) was dying, somebody asked him what he was doing.

Without hesitation Brother Lawrence simply said, 'I'm just doing what I've been doing for forty years and I expect to be doing throughout eternity.'

'What's that?' they inquired.

'Worshipping God.'

As far as Brother Lawrence was concerned, dying was secondary; just an item on his agenda. His real occupation was worshipping God above and before all other things. He had been worshipping God for forty years, and facing death did not change that. When he felt his thoughts getting low, he was still worshipping God. He died and they buried his body somewhere, but Brother Lawrence is still worshipping God in that coveted place we call the presence of God.

You will be worshipping God long after everything else has ceased to exist. It is too bad if you do not learn to worship him now so that you do not have to cram for the last examination. For my part, I want to worship God in my own private life so fully and satisfyingly to the end that I will not have to cram for the final exam. I can nearly stop breathing with quietness and say, 'I worship him, I am still worshipping him and I expect to worship him for all eternity.'

That is what you are here for, to glorify God and enjoy him thoroughly and forever, telling the universe how great God is.

The Way of Perfection
(Frederick William Faber, 1814–1863)

*Oh how the thought of God attracts
And draws the heart from earth,
And sickens it of passing shows
And dissipating mirth!*

*'Tis not enough to save our souls,
To shun th'eternal fires;
The thought of God will rouse the heart
To more sublime desires.*

*God only is the creature's home,
Though rough and strait the road;
Yet nothing less can satisfy
The love that longs for God.*

Prayer:

O God of the universe, the God who created all things that exist, and created them for your pleasure, I humbly acknowledge you as my Creator. Restore to me the joy of your salvation. Restore the harp within that has been broken. Restring that harp in order that I might sing your praises throughout the universe and to all the angels populating your heavens. In Jesus' name. Amen.

