

Where Is the Church (4)

Missing Worship

By Victor Beshir

Tim is a pastor and friend of mine. He attended worship in my church a few times. He came to me one day holding in his hands a book titled, "Worship," a masterpiece of worship, written by Evelyn Underhill. He said, "After reading this book, I discovered that I do not worship in my church." He continued, "Worship in most of Protestant Churches consists from a few songs in the beginning, then a very brief prayer, followed by a long sermon and ended up by another short prayer."

"Before, I thought this is worship. But, using this book's references to worship in the Bible and reading them, I concluded that what I do with my congregation is not worship as God intended worship to be." Tim said. I smiled and I asked Tim, "Do you know the roots of this problem?" He had no answer, so I continued,

"This reflects the history of struggle between man and God. From the beginning, God showed Adam & Eve how to worship according to His will. You remember in Genesis that after the fall of Adam and Eve, 'God made tunics of skin, and clothed them' (Gen 3:21). To get tunics of skin of animals, you need to slain animals. This is what God did to show them the kind of sacrifice to offer Him. Later, God gave similar instructions to Moses to do when a person would commit a sin. This worship continued throughout the Old Testament."

"One of the two sons of Adam, Abel, offered sacrifice according to God's oral instructions to Adam. However, the other son started a continuous trend of worship by inventing his own way of worshipping God, offering fruits, which God did not referred to. God did not accept his offer and worship."

"In addition, reading the Old Testament, you notice that God gave very specific details about worship in the morning, in the evening, and during specific days and in the face of specific situations, Why? Because God knows the best method of worship and He offered it to

man to follow. Yet, man refused it, and preferred his human method to God's method."

Tim listened tentatively and when I finished he said, "Now, I know the roots of what we do; it is the freedom we seek in everything even in worship, though God's methods are different." Then I told him, "Perhaps from reading this book, you followed worship of the Church of the New Testament from the days of the apostles until the sixteenth century and concluded that Christian worship during all these centuries was the same in all churches-except for a few communities who were separated from the mainstream church life. Historians recorded the fact that is a person could go from one country to another and could worship in the second country and find worship the same. Of course, music could be different because of culture and some rites will not be the same due to the same factor of culture, yet worship is the same."

I continued, "Biblical worship has altar, candles, incense, kneeling down, fasting, prayers at certain times, and even specific hymns. The Lord Supper was added in the New Testament to make it the center of worship, according to the commandment of the Lord, 'And He took bread, gave thanks and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me' (Luke 22:19)."

"New churches with no background in worship according to God's method came up with new ways of worship. Even those churches who were knowledgeable in worship, they rejected worship as it was being done for sixteen centuries in all Christian churches in the world to follow their own instinctive methods, methods based on individual freedom."

Coming to worship in an Orthodox church, Tim realized the great difference between worship according to God's method and according to man's methods. Worship in the Orthodox Church is full of spirituality and take a person into a journey into heaven. I warmly invite you to worship in an Orthodox church to experience the difference for yourself. When you visit an Orthodox Church, please keep in mind that for you to go from kind of worship to another totally different in all aspects might take you sometime until you comprehend, share, and enjoy the heavenly prayers.

