

A Book of Worship for Village Churches

By

Edward K. Ziegler

AGRICULTURAL MISSIONS FOUNDATION, INC.
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PRINCIPAL, RURAL CHURCH SCHOOL
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

with a

FOREWORD

by

BISHOP J. WASKOM PICKETT, D.D.
OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

AGRICULTURAL MISSIONS FOUNDATION, INC.

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THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

FOR a number of years there has been a deep-felt need of a book on worship, and a book of worship orders, and suggestions for the observance of Christian festivals for India's rural churches. This handbook is the author's attempt to meet that need. It is the fruit of a few years of study, research and practical experience in the villages. It is written for the great army of devoted Christian pastors, teachers, and laymen who are leading the toiling villagers of India through worship to the feet of Christ.

There is great need for further research, wide experimentation, and exchange of experience in this field. Those whose desire it is to see the Church in this land really take root in the soil are doing much work in this field, and should have some means of exchanging experience and views. They are helping the Church to appropriate at once the splendid heritage of India's culture and the vast treasures of their Christian heritage from two thousand years. Out of these two streams of culture, the Indian Church will undoubtedly develop a cultus of worship which is truly Christian and truly Indian, a worship of God in Christ Jesus in which Indians may feel that they are drinking the Water of Life indeed, and from an Indian cup!

The chapters in Part One are the substance of courses of teaching given in the Rural Church School of the Church of the Brethren at Vyara and Bulsar over a period of four years. They have grown out of the discussion and practical work with a fine group of young village Christian leaders, who know their people and love their Christ. Their contribution to this book, through the discussions in class, and then through building, trying out, and revising many programs and orders of service, has been incalculable.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Bishop J. Waskom Pickett of the Methodist Episcopal Church, whose books, *Christian Mass Movements in India*, and *Christ's Way to India's Heart*,

and in later years whose friendship and counsel, have been a major inspiration in the pleasant task of preparing this book. I am especially grateful to him for reading the manuscript and writing the Foreword.

I am also deeply obligated to the secretaries of the National Christian Council, especially to the Rev. J. Z. Hodge for continued encouragement, and to the Rev. F. Whitaker who has read the manuscript and made many valuable criticisms and suggestions. I am grateful to the National Christian Council also for making possible the publication of the book.

My sincere thanks are due to a host of friends, Indian and missionary, who have given valuable help in various ways—reading portions of the manuscript, giving suggestions and counsel, and contributing and trying out programs and orders of service. Among many others, I must mention for special thanks the Revs. P. G. Bhagat and Somchand Ukadbhai, Mr. Rupsing Mangaldas, the Rev. E. L. King, the Rev. and Mrs. C. G. Shull, and the Rev. and Mrs. Amsey F. Bollinger.

I owe a debt of thanks to individuals and publishing companies who have graciously permitted the use of materials from articles and books, some of which are copyrighted material: Dr. John L. Goheen, *The Christian Century*, *The Indian Witness*, The Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, Biglow-Main-Excell Company, Dr. Wm. E. Orchard, for materials from *Divine Service*, and The Friendship Press. Many of the Scripture portions are taken from the American Revised Version of the Bible. Permission to use them has been granted by the International Council of Religious Education, who hold the copyright. I have tried to give due credit for all materials used, but if I have inadvertently omitted doing so, I shall appreciate having attention called to it, and shall seek pardon and correct omissions in future editions.

Finally, I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to my wife, whose constant encouragement and counsel has been one of the chief sources of inspiration to me in preparing this work.

Bulsar, Surat District, India, }
December, 1938. } EDWARD K. ZIEGLER

Concerning the American Edition

I desire also to express my deep appreciation to the Agricultural Missions Foundation and to Mr. John H. Reisner, its executive secretary, for inspiration and encouragement in many ways, for making the publication of an American edition possible, and for providing a world-wide distribution of it.

Easton, Maryland

E. K. Z.

June, 1939.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

IT is a great pleasure to have a share in the wider distribution of Mr. Ziegler's remarkable book. When I first saw it during my trip to India last winter, I was immediately convinced of its great usefulness in other lands as well as in India. I therefore brought back with me one hundred copies of it to share with the executive officers of various home and foreign mission boards. The response has been so enthusiastic that we are reprinting five thousand copies of the earlier India edition. The book will now find its way to many countries in addition to India and we hope will inspire others to enrich it by their own experience and adapt it to other situations and cultures.

At the request of Mr. Ziegler, the Agricultural Missions Foundation, Inc., has copyrighted the book. This was done to guarantee its free use by religious organizations. Permission to translate and publish will be freely granted to missionaries and religious bodies upon written application. Our only concern is that it be of the greatest possible service in enriching the worship of rural churches wherever it may be of use.

Copies in English of *A BOOK OF WORSHIP FOR VILLAGE CHURCHES* are available in India from the Lucknow Publishing House, Lucknow, U.P., and from the National Christian Council, Nelson Square, Nagpur, C.P. The price is 12 annas. Copies are also available from the Agricultural Missions Foundation, Inc., at \$.25.

I desire also to express our deep appreciation of the generous attitude and cooperation of Mr. Ziegler in making the American edition possible.

JOHN H. REISNER, *Executive Secretary*
Agricultural Missions Foundation, Inc.
156 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York

June, 1939.

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FOREWORD

BY BISHOP J. WASKOM PICKETT, OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

THE need for this book has been realized by many people. Since the publication of *Christian Mass Movements in India*, I have been asked by scores, and probably by hundreds of men and women who are working for Christ in Indian villages for the sort of help that this book will give. I have told many of them of the preparations being made by the Rev. Edward K. Ziegler to produce this book and I now rejoice that he has been able to complete his manuscript and have it published.

Relatively few Indian villagers are literate and the movements that have produced the Church of the Indian villages, with rare exceptions, have taken place in castes and tribes which have a rate of literacy even lower than the average. The problem of how knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ can be imparted to new Christians has baffled many ministers, evangelists and teachers. Much of what is said in sermons and lessons makes little or no impression on the minds of typical illiterate villagers. The types of worship service which have evolved in Western churches since literacy has become common do not meet the need of illiterate villagers in India. Services that are centered in the pulpit and in which congregational participation is provided only, or chiefly through reading, do not, and cannot, engage illiterates in the worship of God, and no one seems to be helped much by coming to Church to see the preacher worship God.

For illiterate Indian Christians a rich liturgy is almost a necessity. They do not have access to the Word of God. Unless their parents were Christians during their childhood their minds are stored with Hindu or Muslim lore, much of which hinders the development of a Christian mind and personality. What is said to them does not meet their spiritual needs un-

less they receive it and make it their own, and their minds have not been trained to receive and absorb. The liturgical service with its repeated use in worship of materials that express the eternal verities of the Christian faith has special values for them. These derive not alone from the acquaintance the liturgy gives with the truth but from its deposit in the subconscious mind of materials out of which personality is reconstructed and made more like unto the mind of Christ.

Bombay, India

November, 1938.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A FEW years ago the Indian Church, through the National Christian Council, set out to discover what was happening in the many areas of India where Mass Movements toward Christ have taken place. It sought to find out where and why the Church was growing, and if it was not growing, why not. The Survey commission under the leadership of Dr. J. Waskom Pickett, after several years of thorough scientific research, presented a report which has become one of the most illuminating and thought-provoking documents in the history of the Christian Church in India.

One of the most significant findings of this Survey was that concerning the relationship between worship and the growth and vitality of the Church. In those areas where the Church was growing, it was invariably found that real and satisfying worship has a major part in the programme of the Church. There it was found that the Churches were making progress in spiritual living, and had a warm evangelistic fervour. On the other hand, Churches in which the worship of God in Christ has been neglected, were almost all weak, stagnant, and ineffective. In the report of the Survey entitled *Christian Mass Movements in India*, Bishop Pickett says: "Beneficial social changes appear to have taken place most generally where Christian worship has been most firmly established, as in Nagercoil, Vidyanagar, Ranchi, and Guntur, and least generally where Christian worship has been least successfully inaugurated, as in Barhan, Etah, Ghaziabad, and Vikarabad. Where these converts have learned to worship God as revealed in Christ and have established habits of worship, they have acquired concepts of God and of themselves in relation to him that have powerfully affected their social standards, their conduct, and in the course of time their status in the villages. Worship of the God of Christ by these victims of the Hindu caste system is apparently destructive of the estimate of them-

selves that Hinduism had given to Malas and Madigas, Chamars and Chuhras. Belief in the love of God for them, enlivened and empowered by their worship, helps to create or to strengthen a sense of their value.”¹

Let us contrast this picture with that of the villages where regular, satisfying and vital worship of God in Christ Jesus is not carried on. There the Church is stagnant. There is in it little growth in Christian graces of character, no desire to evangelize or share the blessings of Christ with neighbours, relatives, and friends, and no social passion. However good may be the programme of religious teaching in such village Churches, the level of attainment in Christian character and service is found to be distressingly low.

In far too many villages the picture of worship we see is uncomfortably like this: The minister or evangelist comes unannounced and unexpected to the village. He calls the villagers together. Someone brings out a cot upon which he sits. Another is sent to call the headman. Small unkempt, unclothed children stare from dark doorways. A bell is rung. The villagers who are not busy in their fields straggle in. Some of them are dirty and uncombed. No special preparation has been made for the service. There is no place set apart for the worship of God. Then the minister puts on his spectacles. He selects a hymn. He leads it and the children and perhaps a few others join in it. He reads a lesson from the Bible and preaches a sermon. He may take up a collection: it can scarcely be called an offering. He prays earnestly, perhaps at great length and in unfamiliar language for his flock. Then he returns to his home village.

What really has happened? A group of villagers, not a congregation, has gathered, and watched and heard the minister worship God. They have had no part in the service except the feeble singing of a hymn which they did not fully understand, and of which the tune sounded foreign to their ears. Some of them gave a pice in the collection. Is this what it means

¹ Pickett, J. W., *Christian Mass Movements in India*, New York, The Abingdon Press. p. 128. By permission of the Author.

to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness? It is neither the beauty of holiness nor the holiness of beauty! Of course this picture is overdrawn. But honestly now, have you not often seen occasions like it?

What kind of worship, then, will satisfy the heart and change the life of our village brethren? Merely watching a preacher worship will neither satisfy him nor bring him into the life-transforming holy presence of the Heavenly Father. Worship for him must be absolutely real. He must have a vital part in it. It must be his own. The minister's part is to lead the congregation into the life-giving presence of God. It is to help the humble worshipper to express the deepest yearnings of his heart toward God.

How can our worship be made more radiant and winsome? It must first of all be *simple*. It must be couched in language which the simplest mind can quite understand. While it must deal with the deepest longings of the humble Christian's heart and express his highest hopes and aspirations, yet it must all be in the language of every common day. Furthermore it must be *a witness to true Christian brotherhood*, the brotherhood of the Lord's Supper and the family of God. There must be no barrier of caste, no distinction between rich and poor, educated and unlettered. All are and ought to be one family approaching in love and simple trust their heavenly Father.

Again, *worship must appeal to the Indian heart*. Western hymn tunes and forms of worship, western style benches, long sermons and wordy prayers do not really attract the soul of Indians. Satisfying worship, too, must be sincere, warm and deeply spiritual. Only such forms of worship as meet these standards have power to attract and change our village people. Florence Moyer Bollinger in a searching paper on *Building the Church Through Worship*, says: "Finding God in the silences we are uplifted in spirit; but the creaking of the cart-wheels on the road outside recalls us to the fact that the Church of Christ in India has begun its day of toil. It is not a church which has much time for silent meditation, but largely a Church which toils. In the forests, in the fields, on the dusty

roads, in the school-rooms and in the humble homes, the Church of Christ in India is toiling. Two ideals, then, we will put down in red letters for this toiling Church: First, that our forms of Church worship must be adapted to the people and their needs. Second, that the people must share in the worship.”¹

The barrenness of our village worship services is not nearly always the fault of the village preacher. He is usually quite untrained in the art of leading worship. With the best will in the world, he does not know how to lead his people into the presence of God. He has usually had neither training nor guidance in planning worship programmes, and he has few materials with which to work. It is true that many excellent books of prayers have been written. In each vernacular such books may be found. Books about prayer and the devotional life are on the shelves of his library. A few good books on the theory of worship are available in the vernaculars. But generally speaking, there is a great dearth of vernacular literature in the field of worship and worship programmes. There are practically no books available to the average village preacher, teacher or layman from which he may learn to conduct public worship.

There are excellent hymnals in which the Church's rich treasure of song from every race and tongue has accumulated through the ages. Indians like Narayan Vaman Tilak have given the Church a priceless heritage of noble Christian song. In many areas of India the treasures of the Gospel of Christ are offered to the thirsty millions in vessels of song from which they love to drink. The familiar *bhajan*, *kirtan*, *abhang* and *kalakṣhepam* (various forms of religious lyrics and songs) have become the vessels for the water of life, and villagers as well as high-caste peoples listen all night long with absorbed interest to the great stories of Christ sung in these familiar and well-loved forms.

There is to-day a remarkable awakening to the need for advance in the field of Christian worship. The National as well

¹ Indian Witness.