

FOR THE WORSHIP OF HIS NAME
A Sermon for the Feast of the Dedication of a Church, 7 August 2011
On the Text: Propers for the Day
By the Reverend Doctor Randolph Constantine

Although today is the Seventh Sunday after Trinity, it is a stroke of Providence, that exactly one year ago today, on August 7th, Bishop Grote consecrated this church building to the worship and glory of God. In that same service, he then ordained me to be a Presbyter of the Reformed Episcopal Church and your Vicar. So, today, we celebrate the Feast of the Dedication of a Church. It was a wonderful day last year for all of us, especially to have the church consecrated only two days after the steeple was put on it and the bell was hung. I watched the installation of the steeple and can tell you it was touch and go as to whether it would get done before a thunderstorm would shut down the operation because of the lightning danger with the steel boom of the crane sticking up about 50 feet into the air.

The crane operator was visibly relieved when the steeple was set and he could lower the crane, collapse it back into itself and leave the site to put it away. After a few finishing touches and a clean-up, the church was ready for the Consecration Service on Saturday. And so, the building was consecrated, made sacred. The building itself was made holy in that it was set apart and dedicated to be used only for the worship and glorification of God. It is fitting that we should celebrate this anniversary.

Most of us seldom look into the back part of the Prayer Book where, on page 527 there is a section of the PB called, *The Ordinal*. Back in 1549 that was a separate book from the first BCP of the Church of England. *The Ordinal* is the “book” that contains the orders of service for the ordination of Deacons, Presbyters, and Bishops, and also for the Consecration of a Church. These services were added into the second BCP in 1552 by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer because of his feeling that the services of The Ordinal are also services in which the laity have a great part to play in prayers and in responses to psalms and the Litany, and that they should also be reminded of how and why the church building is set apart.

There is one prayer in that service that speaks directly to the congregation about this. It is on page 566 and is prayed by the Bishop immediately after he pronounces the “Sentence of Consecration”. This prayer is, in my opinion, of such importance that it should be prayed each time The service of the Feast of the Consecration of a Church is celebrated; and so, let us pray.

Blessed be Thy Name O Lord, that it hath pleased Thee to put it into the hearts of Thy servants to appropriate and devote this house to Thy honour and worship; and grant that all who shall enjoy the benefit of this pious work, may show forth their thankfulness, by making a right use of it, to the glory of Thy blessed Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

This prayer is more full of meaning than you might expect, especially about worship. The subject of worship is something that Bishop Grote has been thinking about also. On Thursday, I received via E-mail his quarterly newsletter that is called “The Crozier Connection”. In it, he posted an article that is really a chapter of a book he began to write about 20 years ago, which he titled, *Calling on the Name of the Lord.*

“What is this?” I asked myself; what is this thing about names? I had long wondered about this emphasis on names in Scripture, especially in verses such as Acts 4:10-12 in which St. Peter speaking to the Sanhedrin, the council of the Jews says: 10 “let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the **name** of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead- by him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other **name** under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

What is it about names in the Bible? The word, *name*, appears in the KJV of the Bible 928 times in 832 verses, almost twice as much as the word, *spirit*. What’s in a name? In the Bible, far more than Shakespeare thought. In the Jewish culture in which most of the Bible was written, names turn out to be very important. My *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* tells us that, “[I]n the Bible, a name is much more than an identifier as it tends to be in our culture. Personal names and even place names were formed from words that had their own meanings. They believed there was a vital connection between the name and the person it identified. A name somehow represented the nature of the person.” For people and things, there is, of course always a difference between the name and the person or thing it identifies; but, the “name of the Lord” was virtually synonymous with His presence. Psalm 91:14 gives divine assurance of salvation to those who know God’s name: God is speaking through the Psalmist there and says: Psalm 91:14 14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

Because God's names so often express His character, the Fourth Commandment, not to take the Lord's name in vain, means not to disrespect the Lord – disrespect of His Name is disrespect of Him; and is, of course, why Jesus gave us the second clause of the Lord's Prayer, "hallowed be Thy Name,". In the OT lesson, let us look at verses 27-30: 1 Kings 8:27-30 **27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! 28 Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, 29 that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. 30 And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.** We heard Solomon ask God whether He would truly live on earth, in the house that he, Solomon, had had built, even though God had said His name would be there as He had promised in Deuteronomy 12:11. So we see that Solomon understood the small difference between God's Name and God Himself in that instance.

The right to give names was considered to be important. It was a power parents took quite seriously. It was a power God delegated to Adam for a while in Genesis 2:20, during that time when man had dominion over that God had given man in Genesis 1:26: Genesis 1:26 **26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.** God not only gave names, but also changed them, as He did for Abram and Jacob, changing Abram (exalted father) to Abraham, meaning, "father of a multitude", and Jacob (the supplanter) to Israel, which means, "he strives with God".

Finally, there is the name above all names, the name at which every knee shall bow, Yeshua, for which "Jesus" is an Anglicization. St. Paul told us that in Philippians 2:9-10 **9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;** That is a name that is truly holy, as holy to us as Yahweh to the Jews. We may not always bow to the sound of that name in this life, but God said through Isaiah: Isaiah 45:22-23 **22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. 23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness,**

and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. That we believe will happen on the Last Day, when no one shall stand proud and tall before God.

One more thing about names: look in your Prayer books again at that prayer on page 566. Notice one thing, that the word, *name*, is capitalized. It refers to God, and in that prayer, the Name is the same as what it stands for; the prayer would mean the same if we put the word, *God*, in place of the word, *Name*. This prayer makes obeisance to ancient Hebrew custom. From now on, when you read the Bible, you will look at names and the word, name, in a different light as you will see in the rest of this.

Bishop Grote began the first chapter of his as-yet-unfinished book by recalling that he and a Presbyterian were discussing how they were going to team-teach a course at the REC seminary on Evangelism and Church Growth. The Presbyterian asked him, “Bishop, what did the Apostle Paul mean in Romans 10:13 when he wrote, “**For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**” Bp. Grote answered by putting this verse in context with verses 10:9 & 10, but that did not answer the question the Pr. asked. The Pr. gave the Bp. a quiet response, “Bishop, isn’t that a phrase which originally comes from the Old Testament? Shouldn’t how that phrase is used in the OT have some bearing on how we understand it and apply it today? Bp. Grote was flabbergasted. That question about the meaning of the phrase, “calling on the Name of the Lord” his words, “haunted him” Then he came across something John Murray had written in 1964 in a Commentary on the book of Romans about that phrase in that verse: “In the present text, the formula is applied to initial faith in Christ, but should not be restricted to the act of commitment to Christ, which believing in Christ denotes. ‘Calling on the Name of the Lord’ is a more inclusive act of worship that presupposes faith.” That statement of Murray’s caused Bp. Grote to examine every place that phrase occurs in Scripture, and he says that study changed his life by giving him a whole new focus and meaning for the existence of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to the conclusion that “Calling on the Name of the Lord” is the essential issue in the ministry and the expression of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. That prompted him to search Bible, where he found that the phrase occurred 25 times.

He found that every one of those instances had to do with worship, but not just any old worship of God. No, they had to do with worship in a manner and form that had previously been prescribed by God. In many of those cases, we do not have a bit of scripture that tells us how

and when that form of worship was prescribed, but we know whether or not God deemed it to be acceptable. Consider the sacrifices of Cain and Abel; Abel's was acceptable, but Cain's was not.

Bishop Grote found that in the OT, almost all instances of "Calling upon the Name of the Lord" involved the making of an animal sacrifice, while that is not done in the New Testament. In Exodus through Deuteronomy, we see God giving very explicit instructions for how worship is to be carried out, including instructions for how to make what we might call vestments for the Levite priests.

In the prophecy of Joel, we have another example of God's giving of a prescription for worship in chapter 2 in which God tells Joel of the impending attack on the "day of the Lord" of the Lord's army, which is a great cloud of locusts that marches unstoppably across the land. The prophecy of the disaster is in verses 1-11; but in verses 12-14, God asks for repentance, and then in verses 15-17, He begins His prescription for acceptable worship in the face of this plague. a prescription that includes assembling all the people, and He really meant **all** the people, from the aged, to the children to babies at the breast, bridegrooms and brides. And then He gives them the words of a prayer to pray: Joel 2:17 **17 Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?** Bishop Grote notes that this refers to the assembling of all the people of God (no exceptions) to the Temple to offer worship through sacrifice and prayer. After that, in the rest of chapter 2, Joel continues with the prophecy that St. Peter tells us in Acts 2:16 was fulfilled on Pentecost, the coming of the great day of the Lord. Joel ends chapter with this: Joel 2:32 **32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.**

In this apostate world of today, when so many have turned away from God, we Christians are the remnant whom God has called, and to worship Him properly, we must call upon His Name. In Bishop Grote's continuation in the next couple of chapters of his book, he concludes that proper worship is indeed worship in the form and with the words that God has ordained; but he ends this first chapter with these words:

"An inseparable relationship in the scripture exists between worship and salvation. Both aspects involve "Calling on the Name of the Lord". In fact, you cannot and do not have one

without the other! Salvation is not conveyed simply and only by some kind of foxhole cry, "Lord save me". Rather, when in faith and repentance as a response to the Gospel, a person turns to God, confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, and properly worships Him according to God's pattern, assurance is given that sins are forgiven and [that] that person is a part of the Kingdom of Heaven. "*As many as call upon the Name of the Lord will be saved.*"

How and where does proper worship occur? In a group, corporately, when all the people of faith from the aged to babes in arms are gathered, either in a building set apart, consecrated, for the purpose, as in the Temple for the Hebrews before the birth of Christ, or this building, consecrated one year ago today. Making sacrifices, now, without blood, for Jesus made the last of those of Himself, so for us, sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, with prayers God has given us, as in the Lord's Prayer, obeying Jesus commandment to "Do this in remembrance of Me.", and as St. Paul told us in Colossians 3:15-17 **15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.**

These are things we have done and shall continue to do. We gather together in this house built for the worship of God, in the beauty of holiness, to call upon His Name, for the worship of His Name. O come let us adore Him.

AMEN!