

These articles are excerpts from Ruth Jacobs' notebook written sometime between 1949 and 1959, when Ruth was guiding the young and growing Guild by her convictions, her thoughts and the inspiration of her personality. They have been selected and edited by Helen Kemp.

Worship

by Ruth Jacobs
1949-1959



At a famous writers' club one day the discussion was on the relative merits of the great philosophic leaders. The general opinion was that Jesus was just a great leader among other great leaders. Then one of the writers said, "If Socrates or Plato were to enter this room we would stand in respect, but if Jesus Christ were to enter, we would kneel."

That's the difference that should be the crux of our education program in the church, including the music program. The church sanctuary can too commonly become a social hall, and the classroom a prize fight ring. The church should be the place where the spirit learns to kneel, a place set apart for communication beyond the human. It is well enough to teach our children

to stand for the right, but it is when the spirit kneels that it gains the strength to stand.

We speak glibly of the art of worship as if it were the process of fitting together a few prayers, readings and choral responses. These may encourage worship, but they quite as frequently intrude between worship and worshipper. Worship is a sense of the presence of God, and the commitment of our will to God's will.

But how is this "sense of the presence of God" fostered and nourished? The burden of responsibility rests on us who direct most of the corporate expressions of worship. If our children graduate from the choir without a consciousness that the church is a place for experiences and thoughts that transcend those of school and club, if they have not learned to expect quiet of themselves when they enter the church, if their participation in the service does not reflect the sense of obligation to their own and the congregation's higher aspirations, then we have failed. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," I may still be "as sounding brass or clanging cymbal."

Training the worship attitudes of our children is like tending a rare plant. The seed must first be planted, and the soil kept in a condition that encourages growth. Once the seed has been planted, it requires patient care until it reaches full flower. When it does put forth a bud, fragrant with the richness of true worship, we may be humbly grateful for the privilege of having been the gardener.

Thought for the month:

At the beginning of every undertaking you are confronted with two ways of attacking it. One is with doubt and uncertainty, the other is with courage and confidence.

To a certain extent you create or destroy the power by which to accomplish what you undertake. One mental approach strengthens and energizes, the other weakens and paralyzes.

(from Ruth Jacobs' notebook)