Isn't it strange that in the midnight hour of his life when he has stood in the darkness of our generation, in the darkness of our age [He?] groups through the streets of life and runs to the church of God to find a little bread.

III When he first knocked he was left disappointed

Hundreds & thousand of men and women in quest for the bread of social justice going to the church only to be disappointed
(a) Look at South Africa—Lead on by a Dutch Reform Protestant Preacher
(b) Look at the British Empire and her exploitation of India—The Church of England sanctioned it
(c) The white man in America—11 O'clock is the segregated hour in Christian America

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 8, "A Knock at Midnight."

10 Daniel François Malan, a clergyman in the Dutch Reformed Church and prime minister of South Africa from 1948 until 1954, instituted his nation's policy of apartheid.


The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

"Worship at Its Best,"
Sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church

[14 December 1958]
[Montgomery, Ala.]

Recognizing that worship is an elemental component of all religions, King delineates its three fundamental aspects.

Int There is hardly any drive in human nature more elemental than the practice of worship. Everywhere man appears [to be?] as a worshipping creature. Whether he is a Buddhist praying in his temple, a Confucianist bowing in his shrine, a Moslem kneeling in his mosques, a Jew worshiping in his synagogue, or a Christian praying God in his Cathedral, man is a worshipping creature.

1 Fosdick, Successful Christian Living, p 165. "Man everywhere appears as a worshipping creature. Some of us have prayed with Buddhists in their temples, bowed with Confucians in their shrines, knelt with Moslems in their mosques, worshiped many a time in synagogues, and with all sorts of Christians have shared devotion." King wrote "Preached at Dexter, Dec 14, 1958" on the folder containing this outline and Fosdick's sermon, which King had torn out of Successful Christian Living.
Since worship is such a basic part of the human response, we may well ask, What distinguishes true from false worship? What is worship at its best?

Worship at its best consist of a threefold look

I  The upward look—seeing God high and lifted up

In our day it means going to Church and partaking of the sacraments

II  The inward look—"I am a man of unclean lips." It brings us in contact with the highest and least in reality

We begin to say as Iago said about Cassio,

He hath a daily beauty in his life

that makes me ugly.

Worship makes us aware of life’s undying dream (See Miller, The Great Realities, p 24, 32)

III  The outward look—"Here am I O lord send me"

If worship does not lead to service it is meaningless

"Why call ye me Lord Lord and do not the things I command?

Quote the prophets

Amos

Micah

Jeremiah about substituting worship for service

‘What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, love mercy.”

Be not deceived, God is not mocked by empty hymn anthem, and prayer.

God cannot be placated by pious observances

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 62, Worship at Its Best

2 Cf Isaiah 6:5

3 William Shakespeare, Othello, act 5, sc 1

4 King cites two references made to persistent dreams by Samuel Miller in The Great Realities (New York Harper & Brothers, 1955) Miller writes “Under it all there is a dream, perhaps a bit hard to remember, but a dream that will not die completely, however much it is neglected or compromised,” and further states, “This lasting dream which tortures and torments us with its undying hopes, ill treated and neglected as it is, stands embedded in the reality of our human state” (Miller, The Great Realities, pp 24, 32)

Samuel Howard Miller was minister of the Old Cambridge Baptist Church from 1935 until 1959 when he became dean of Harvard Divinity School

5 Cf Isaiah 6:8

6 Cf Luke 6:46

7 Cf Micah 6:8 In King’s notes on this verse, he wrote “Here again we find one of the high water marks of the O T The divine demand upon men is expressed in terms of elemental simplicity—justice and kindness between man and man, and a humble walk with God This was religion as Micah saw it [11]Jehovah’s good will is served not by a careful observance of the ritual, or by the bringing of sacrifices, whatever may be their intrinsic value, but by a life in accord with the principles of righteousness, by the diligent practice of kindness and brotherliness, and by a living fellowship with God in the spirit of humility Few notions so sublime have been conceived in the whole history of religion” (King, Notecards on topics from Micah, 22 September 1952–28 January 1953)

8 Fosdick, Successful Christian Living, p 172 “’Be not deceived, God is not mocked’ by empty hymns, anthems, and prayers” Cf Galatians 6:7

9 Micah 6:8 King underlined Fosdick’s use of this phrase in his annotated copy of Successful Christian Living, p 172
In this handwritten outline for a sermon he delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, King emphasizes the importance of beginning life with Christ: "When you start with Christ you go the second mile; you give a cup of cold water; you stop on the [Jericho] road and help your brother; and you even love your enemies."¹

Rev. 1:2²

I Intro:
   (A) The necessity of the right starting point in life. The starting point determines the ending point.
   (b) Our starting point should be an absolute. We must not begin with relativism.
II Christianity has always insisted that Christ is the proper starting point. Some

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¹ The 21 December 1958 Dexter program indicates King preached "Christ, Our Starting Point." He also wrote "Preached at Dexter Dec. 21, 1958" on the file folder containing this sermon.

² "Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw." King wrote this biblical citation in a second pen.