

Philosophy/Theology of Worship Paper

Aura Soraya Pichardo (Angulo)
ATS (Online)/NY City

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As Christians, worship has always been and will always be at the center of their faith. It is time of infinite adoration to God and the ushering in of the Holy Spirit. It is an invitation, a welcoming celebration and a time to do what we were created to do. As Pastor Kelvin Walker stated during a lecture on the *Discipline of Engagement*, worship is, “ Adoring and glorifying God for who He is; spending time giving God the worth He is due”. Psalm 95:6 (NKJV) reminds the faithful, “ Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker”.

One very profound quote written by Professor Davis-Abdallah et al during a worship experience workshop and shared in a lecture during Week 9 of classes, truly speaks to the intimacy of our Worship with God. “ Although we are all participants in worship, worship is about God, who God is, what God has done, and how he humbly responds to all of this. As Kierkegaard said, we are worshipping an audience of One, whether we are on the platform or in the pew. All of us, together, worship God alone”.

Throughout this course there have been many lectures and discussions that emphasized the truth that worship does not look a certain way for everyone; it is not something that can be put in a box. The definition of Worship in the Merriam-Webster dictionary means, “To honor or show reverence for as a divine being or supernatural power”. The definition itself, however, does not define how worship is “supposed” to look.

One of the beautiful things about worship is that it can look and sound like – anything; depending on the denomination and their worship practices. For examples, Pentecostals tend to worship with loud song, instruments and clapping while Roman Catholics worship quietly. Worship can include: singing, shouting, playing of musical instruments, providing an offering, singing quietly, sitting in utter silence, bowing, prostrating or laid across the floor. It can include elaborate attire or simple clothing. It is open to any and everything. 1 Corinthians

10:31 (NKJV) reminds Christians, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”. Scripture also shows us several ways we can worship: With our hands (Psalm 32:2-3), our posture (Psalm 95:6) or our voices (Psalm 27:6).

There are many aspects and styles of worship. As stated in the above paragraph, a brief example was provided regarding Pentecostal and Roman Catholic worship. Many churches include things such as arts media as part of their worship. Using Projectors to show the lyrics of worship songs so the congregation can sing along, having Praise Dancers (such as in many Baptist denominations) use their bodies to depict their worship. Many churches worship with Corporate Prayer often using Matthew 18:19-20 to support their belief in the power of praying together. This Corporate Worship uses the Liturgical Calendar. The use of Responsive Readings/ Responsorial Psalms in the Methodist denomination or the Roman Catholic and dates back to the early Church Reformers. The reading between the congregation and the Leader invited the congregation to be actively engaged in the worship and thus made the worship experience more intimate and personal.

The practice of the Sacraments also significantly informs aspects of worship. In the text *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, Leonard J. Vander Zee discusses the intimacy of sacramental worship and the realization that during that worship, “...God meets us where we are”. (Vander Zee, 25). The practice of sacramental worship in any denomination is a moment of great intimacy and union with God and one, which brings the individual closer to God.

The practice of the Spiritual Disciplines is significant in how we worship. The Disciplines of Engagement which include: Worship (Adoring and glorifying God), Celebration (Enjoying God and His goodness with friends and family), Spiritual Reading (Transform knowledge into action) and *Lectio Divina* (Seek to experience God through Scripture reading

which allows God's voice to speak through his Word all serve the purpose of bringing us all closer to God; worshipping and adoring Him in what we say, do and read.

Worship principles can be found all through Scripture. The Book of Ezra chapter 3 which describes the restoration of the altar and the foundation of the Temple contains some principles of worship. Historically, altars were a place where, according to the Law of Moses, sacrifices were burned and offerings were made to God; to show reverence and honor God. This is a principle of worship because it dates back to the Law of Moses and is being acknowledged, respected and honored. After the laying of the foundation the Levites rejoiced and celebrating with "cymbals", "shouted aloud for joy". It was the celebration of a new beginning; a new place to worship their God.

This particular book in Ezra can be applied today because it shows the celebration of the restoration of a central place where offerings were given to God; a sign of worship. It shows the joy that comes with knowing that one will be able to worship God again as they have before.

Ezra 3: 10-13

¹⁰When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the¹⁰ priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance¹⁰ of David king of Israel. ¹¹And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD:

"For *He is good,*

For His mercy *endures* forever toward Israel."

Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

¹² But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' *houses*, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, ¹³ so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.

There are some that have raised the idea that worship should be very inclusive. [The Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture covers what Christian Worship should be. In doing so, it is able to reach all people from all lands in all languages. It emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the cultural aspects of worship and the worshippers. It brings to light the reality that Christians need to be able to adapt and be more accepting in acknowledging the cultural differences of others that seek and know the Lord. The importance of the Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture, although having roots of the Lutheran faith, should be considered in the practice of Christian worship.](#)

In part the Nairobi Statement reads:

1.3 Christian worship relates dynamically to culture in at least four ways. First, it is transcultural, the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture. Second, it is contextual, varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture). Third, it is counter-cultural, challenging what is contrary to the Gospel in a given culture. Fourth, it is cross-cultural, making possible sharing between different local cultures. In all four dynamics, there are helpful principles, which can be identified.

In conclusion, the art and practice of worship looks different for everyone. It is a very personal experience between the individual and God. Although how one “should” worship has

always been and will always be debated between denominations, the most important thing that should be focused on; the most important thing that should be at the very heart of the true Believer is building the intimacy with God that can be found in worshipping Him in both “Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

Bibliography

Chapell, Bryan. *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009.

Vander Zee, Leonard J. *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2004.