

Worship Notes

Volume 1, Number 5 May 2006

Theme: REVELATION AND RESPONSE

THE DIALOGUE OF WORSHIP

The rhythm of *revelation* and *response* is characteristic of all God's dealings with man. And this ordering of these two elements is tremendously significant, for it speaks of the *initiative* which God takes, and the lengths to which He goes, to ensure a relationship with those whom He chooses. Throughout Scripture we see God's revelatory initiative with His people, with the result that all worship, obedience and service should be seen as a *response* to God's prior activity in revelation and redemption. This is true because, as Eric Alexander has stated, "God needs to be known before He can be worshiped." Nicholls expands on this idea: "Our worship is our answer to God who has first addressed us. Man worships the God who has made Himself known. We 'praise His holy Name'—that is, we worship Him in His self-revelation."

Calvin speaks also to this natural progression: "The proclamation of God's praises is always promoted by the teaching of the gospel; for as soon as God becomes known to us, His infinite praises resound in our hearts and ears." To which Butin adds:

The initiatory "downward" movement of Christian worship begins in the Father's gracious and free revelation of the divine nature to the church through the Son, by means of the Spirit. In more concrete terms, this takes place in the proclamation of the Word according to Scripture, by the empowerment and illumination of the Spirit. . . . The "upward" movement of human response in worship – focused around prayer and the celebration of the sac-

raments – is also fundamentally motivated by God. Human response – "the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" – arises from the faith that has its source in the indwelling Holy Spirit. In that Spirit, prayer, devotion, and obedience are offered to God the Father . . . through the Son Jesus Christ.

Worship is a dialogue between God and His people: that means that our services should alternate and balance elements of revelation and response: *hearing from God* (through His Word, read and sung and prayed and preached) and *replying to Him* (with our songs and prayers and confession and the Lord's Supper). Historically, this pattern underlies both Old Testament worship (in covenant establishment and renewal) and Christian worship (in the Word-Table structure found in most historical liturgies).

But revelation should precede response: we should let God have the first word; and be careful to listen before we speak. Too many services launch right into singing; but that means we are responding before we have heard anything to respond to! This does violence to the biblical pattern, and to God's preeminence. Until we have heard from God, we have nothing to say to Him—we must worship Him as He really is, not as we (or the songwriters) imagine or hope Him to be. In this light, a "Call to Worship" is anything but outdated. Indeed, it is (whether read, or sung, or prayed, or whatever) an acknowledgement that we have come to worship God at His invitation and by and through His Word.

* Twelve "Biblical Principles of Worship" (of which the third is dealt with here) may be downloaded [here](#).

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

The pattern of revelation resulting in response, of theology leading to doxology, of God's action causing man's reaction, is a common biblical paradigm.

	REVELATION	RESPONSE
Life of Abraham	Covenantal promises, names of God, theophanies	Builds altars, call on the name of the Lord
Exodus	Revelation of God's nature (Ex. 3. Sinai), redemption from Egypt	Song of Moses, sacrifices of redeemed people
10 Commandments	"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt"	"You shall have no other gods before Me"
Israel	The Law	Obedience (or not)
Psalms 1:2	"The Law of the Lord . . .	is his delight."
Psalms 48:10	"As is Your Name, O God . . .	so is Your praise to the ends of the earth."
Psalms 96:4	"Great is the Lord . . .	and greatly to be praised."
Psalms 100	"The Lord is God" (3) "The Lord is good" (5)	"shout" "serve" "come" (1-2) "enter" "praise" "give thanks" (4)
Psalms 150:2	. . . according to His excellent greatness."	"Praise Him . . .
Isaiah 6	"I saw the Lord" (2-4) Pardon, call to service (6-8a)	"Woe is me!" (5) "Send me!" (8b)
Luke 2:10	"I bring you good news of . . .	a great joy which will be for all the people"
Luke 1—2	Annunciation to Mary & visit to Eliz. (1:26-45) Annunciation to Zacharias & birth of John (1:5-25;57-66) Angel's announcement (2:8-12) Simeon sees the Christ (2:25-27)	MAGNIFICAT (1:46-55) BENEDICTUS (1:67-79) GLORIA (2:13-14) NUNC DIMITTIS (2:28-32)
Jesus	Life (revealed the Father)	Death (propitiatory sacrifice)
Romans 1:20-21	God's attributes, power, nature "clearly seen"; "they knew God"	but "they did not honor Him as God or give thanks"
2 Corin. 1:20	God says "Yes" to us <i>in</i> Christ	We reply "Amen" <i>through</i> Christ
Hebrews 2:12	"I will proclaim Your Name to My brethren"	"and in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise"
Hebrews 3:1	Jesus as Apostle	Jesus as High Priest

QUOTABLES

↓ REVELATION AND RESPONSE ↑

“Biblical faith is uncompromisingly and unembarrassedly dialogical.”
(Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 68)

“Christian worship is our affirmative, transforming response to the self-revelation of God. . . . We are not seeking to find or to know an obscure, frightening being who needs to be placated. God makes and continues to make the first move, showing himself in power and in love, inviting our response. In fact, worship is *any and every* affirmative response to God.”
(Don Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal*, 100)

“The distinctive genius of corporate worship is the two-beat rhythm of revelation and response. God speaks; we answer. God acts; we accept and give. God gives; we receive.”
(Ralph Martin, *The Worship of God: Some Theological, Pastoral, and Practical Reflections*, 6)

“All worship is an intelligent and loving response to the revelation of God, because it is the adoration of his Name.”
(John Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 82)

“Worship is our response to what God has revealed about himself. The Scriptures are the written record where we receive God’s special revelation. Through the Scriptures, we learn about God; we learn about his love for his people; and we discover his redemptive plan. Worship is our response to this foundational truth.”
(Kevin J. Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 41)

“God can be the object of our worship only if he is first the subject.”
(Richard Paquier, *Dynamics of Worship: Foundations and Uses of Liturgy*, 4)

“True worship . . . involves certain reverential acts of submission and homage before the divine sovereign in response to His gracious revelation of Himself and in accordance with His will.”
(Dan Block, “The Joy of Worship: The Mosaic Invitation to the Presence of God [Deut. 12:1-14]” [audio message])

“Worship is a conversation between the God of revelation and people in need of redemption.”
(C. Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship*, xvii)

“Liturgy [the “work of the people” in worship] is an intentionally gathered community in mutual dialogue with God’s self-communication.”
(Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine*, 26)

“Christian worship is grounded in the reality of the action of God toward the human soul in Jesus Christ and in man’s responsive action through Jesus Christ.”
Paul Waitman Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship*, 77)

“True worship does not come from people whose feelings are like air ferns with no root in the solid ground of biblical doctrine. The only affections that honor God are those rooted in the rock of biblical truth. . . . True worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love deep and sound doctrine. Strong affections for God rooted in truth are the bone and marrow of biblical worship.”
John Piper, *Desiring God*, 90, 76)

“The ascending movement of the ceremonies and sacrifices is only the second beat of the rhythm of which the first is the condescending grace of God himself who indicates and gives to man the means of serving him.”
(Richard Paquier, *Dynamics of Worship: Foundations and Uses of Liturgy*, 5)

“Worship is a dialogue, but the initial call comes from God who begins the conversation.”
(Richard Paquier, *Dynamics of Worship: Foundations and Uses of Liturgy*, 8)

“Knowledge of God is the result of the divine initiative, to which man responds by self-committal to God, entering through Christ into a holy fellowship. ‘We love, because He first loved us.’ That is the sequence of this worship: the revelation of God in holy Scripture, and the response of His children in the fellowship of the great prayer.”
(William D. Maxwell, *Concerning Worship*, 38)

“When a church gathers for worship, ‘the proclamation of the divine agape is [its] first and fundamental task.’ Worship resounds with announcements of the revelation of God upon which it is founded and to which it is a response.”
C. Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship*, 212)

“Worship is the human response to the self-revelation of the triune God, which involves: (1) divine initiation in which God graciously reveals himself, his purposes, and will; (2) a spiritual and personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ enabled by the ministry of the Holy Spirit; and (3) a response by the worshiper of joyful adoration, reverence, humility, submission and obedience.”
(David Nelson, from “Voicing God’s Praise: The Use of Music in Worship, in *Authentic Worship: Hearing Scripture’s Voice, Applying Its Truth*, 149)

“Worship in the Bible is the due response of rational creatures to the self-revelation of their Creator.”
Monte E. Wilson, “Church-O-Rama or Corporate Worship” in *The Compromised Church*, 71)

“All our worship is but our response to the self-giving of God in revelation and redemption.”
(William Nicholls, *Jacob’s Ladder: The Meaning of Worship*, 53)

“The God-with-people encounters we call ‘worship services’ should include statements and actions of both *revelation* and *response*.”
(Don Hustad, “The Minister as Worship Leader” in *Formation for Christian Ministry*, 6)

“Worship depends upon revelation, and Christian worship depends upon the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Worship, that is to say, begins not from our end but from God’s; it springs from the divine initiative in redemption. We come to God because God, in Jesus Christ, has come to us: we love Him because He first loved us: we ascribe to Him supreme worth because He has showed Himself to be worthy of our complete homage, gratitude and trust. Worship is essentially a response, man’s response to God’s Word of grace, to what He has done for us men and for our salvation.”
(Raymond Abba, *Principles of Christian Worship*, 5)

“Since worship is the Church’s obedient response to the saving acts of God, these saving acts must be set forth before the response can be evoked: the *Wort* must precede the *Antwort*. It follows that the Bible, in which God’s redemptive action is declared, must be read *early* in the service if the praise, prayer and offering of the congregation are to be a true response to the divine Word. Failure to grasp this simple principle results in liturgical chaos. The writer has on his files a collection of Orders of Service gathered in both hemispheres. While some are excellent, others are little more than a string of ‘items,’ the arrangement of which displays neither liturgical nor any other kind of logic. And the most common defect is that there is no reading of Holy Scriptures until relatively late in the service. The proper order of *Wort* and *Antwort* is thus reversed. When Thanksgiving, Intercession and Offering precede the reading and hearing of the Word of God to which they are essentially the response, the theological basis of worship is destroyed. Worship ceases to be dependent upon revelation.”
(Raymond Abba, *Principles of Christian Worship*, 48)

GUEST ARTICLE

WHY TRUTH IS BETTER THAN TRENDS

Bob Kaufflin

Which style of music pleases God the most?

This basic question has generated innumerable different answers from sincere Christians. In the first 800 years after Christ, most worship music was simply unison melody. One day someone added a second part, and harmony invaded the church, despite staunch opposition. Soon there were quarrels over which musical intervals were appropriate. Later, the introduction of various instruments caused great controversy—even the organ, which some early Puritans called “the devil’s bagpipe.” To this day, there are countless conflicts over lyrical content and the use of musical styles that originate outside the church.

A July 12, 1999 article in Christianity Today was titled “The Triumph of the Praise Songs: How Guitars Beat Out the Organ in the Worship Wars.” The author writes,

“Conflicts over worship in general and music in particular have erupted in churches of every denomination....The contemporary proliferation of different worship and music styles may well be the next century’s test of our commitment to Christian unity.”

Today’s “worship wars” (now there’s an oxymoron!) center around such things as high-church versus low-church worship . . . traditional versus contemporary . . . pentecostal versus noncharismatic . . . rock band versus choir...and so on.

How did we get here? I believe a large part of our problem is that we have neglected to develop a biblical understanding, or theology, of worship. Instead, we have put the emphasis on secondary issues. Let me give three reasons why I think a theology of worship is crucial.

Without a clear theology of worship, we are easily influenced by our culture and our sinful hearts.

For 40 years, western culture has been dominated by the “baby boomers.” The boomer world-view is perfectly consistent with our inherent sinfulness. (I can bust on them because I’m both a sinner *and* a boomer.) It orients us toward peers and self, and away from family, church, and community. It teaches us to evaluate every event, subject, person, and opportunity by asking “Do I like it?”, and “What’s in it for me?”

Like it or not, this is the culture we absorb every day. If we do not actively resist its influence, we will think and talk as if worship exists merely to cater to our desires and preferences. In finding a church, for example, we will give more weight to whether we like the worship style than whether we encounter God in the services. The two can certainly co-exist, but the first is optional; the second is not.

Without a clear theology of worship, we can adopt vague and misleading terminology.

Consider, for example, the ubiquitous phrase “praise and worship.” In general, we call upbeat, celebrative songs “praise” songs, and slower, more lyrically intimate songs “worship” songs. But despite our tidy definitions, Scripture offers no such clear distinction between these two terms.

Perhaps we can say that, according to Scripture, “worship” is our response to God’s self-revelation in ways that please him, and “praise” is an aspect of worship. But when biblical terms such as these become a mere verbal shorthand for different musical styles, we are much the poorer for it.

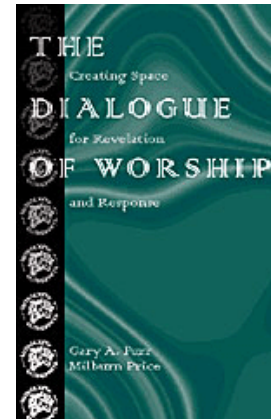
A clear understanding of what really matters in worship will position us to take our direction from Scripture. Otherwise, we will be prone to follow popular trends that promise simplicity, convenience, or effectiveness. They may sound spiritual, but if they encourage a casual approach to Scripture, sooner or later they will only lead us away from truth.

A clear theology of worship will allow us to articulate to future generations what really matters in the worship of God.

A.W. Tozer wrote, “When a church weakens in any generation, failing to carry out the purpose of God, it will depart from the faith altogether in next generation.” As the next generation watches us, what are they deducing to be the non-negotiables in worship? I want to be sure my children learn that the worship of God is more than singing songs about God in a musical style we happen to like. A clear understanding of what is important *to God* in our worship will enable us to articulate our thoughts clearly.

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BOOK NOOK



THE DIALOGUE OF WORSHIP:
CREATING SPACE FOR REVELATION
AND RESPONSE

by Gary A. Furr and Millburn Price
(Smyth & Helwys, 1998)

Foundational to this book was an obviously healthy dialogue and collaboration between a senior pastor and his (then) minister of music (at Vestavia Hills Baptists Church in Birmingham Alabama). May that tribe increase!

Out of that common experience has grown this helpful little book which deals not only with a biblically sound theology of “dialogic worship,” but also with the practical issues involving the planning of worship services with this pattern in mind. Elements which are conducive to “hearing from God” (revelation) are shown to be Scripture readings, Scripture songs/anthems/solos, the sermon, silence, symbols and drama. “Responding to God” includes praise, confession, thanksgiving, offerings, petition and intercession, commitment, and the Lord’s Supper. One whole chapter delves more deeply and specifically into the various ways music can be a vehicle for enhancing the dialogue of worship.

The authors also expand the concept of dialogue in worship to include that reflected in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16: in those familiar verses we are told to not only sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving and with all our heart, but also to speak to, teach and admonish *one another*. There is a necessary dialogue with one another in the context of worship as well, and there is a chapter which explores this phenomenon. We are reminded that worship should include elements of spiritual formation, confession of faith, testimony (including baptism), modeling, intercessory prayer, fellowship and mutual service.

EXCERPTS

“The tapestry of worship is formed by the various threads of conversation that occur in interweaving fashion: God’s Word being communicated to the gathered community (both individually and corporately), worshipers responding to God under the prompting of God’s Spirit, and those same worshipers sharing with each other their understandings of their faith commitments and of the ways in which God is at work in their lives.” (87)

“The primary functions of music in worship are to facilitate the dialogue and to contribute to that dialogue. Though aesthetic delight, personal enjoyment, and opportunity for a performer to share a talent may be by-products of the use of music in worship, none of these should be a primary purpose. Unless music can make a meaningful contribution to the dialogue in worship, it should be omitted. It would be better for music to be absent than for it to be an interruption or distraction.” (88)

THE LIGHTER SIDE

A MUSICAL PRIMER (PT. 2)

- Flute flies:* Gnat-like bugs that bother musicians playing out-of-doors.
Fog horn: A brass instrument that plays when the conductor's intentions are not clear.
Good conductor: A person who can give an electrifying performance.
Gregorian champ: Monk who can hold a note the longest.
Kvetchendo: Gradually getting annoyingly louder.
Mallade: A romantic song that's pretty awful.
Molto bolto: Head straight for the ending, but don't make it seem rushed.
Poochini: When singing, to be accompanied by your dog.
Pre-Classical Conservatism: School of thought which fostered the idea, "if it ain't baroque, don't fix it."
The Rights of Strings: Manifesto of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Bowed Instruments.
Spritzicato: Plucking of a stringed instrument to produce a bright, bubbly sound, usually accompanied by sparkling water with lemon.
Tempo tantrum: What a young orchestra is having when it's not keeping time with the conductor.
Vesuvioso: A gradual buildup to a fiery conclusion. (Author unknown)

SONG SEARCH

Over the last few years many churches across North America have been using *Let the Nations Rejoice*, a 32-song book and CD resource for meetings with a missions emphasis. Songs are now being sought for Volume Two, to be published in 2007. The criteria for selecting the songs is that they should be 1) short - not many verses or words; 2) singable as a congregation, not solos; and 3) themes that celebrate the Lord's global reign or challenge God's people to involvement. Send a lead-sheet (melody, chords and lyrics) to Frank Fortunato, PO Box 444, Tyrone, GA 30290. A demo CD or cassette of your submissions is not required, but preferred. Or, you may send a music notation score by PDF attachment with mp3 to fort2@aol.com. Submissions must be received by October 1, 2006. Send email to find out how to get final copies of Volume One at near-giveaway prices. Regrettably no more CDs are available.

EVENTS

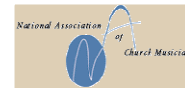


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National Association of Church Musicians

Conference 2006

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http://www.baylor.edu/christian_music



August 9th-12th, 2006

Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland

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