

♪ Worship Notes ♪

Volume 1, Number 8 ♪ August 2006

THEME: Jesus Our Worship Leader

PROCLAMATION AND PRAISE

Hebrews 2:12 and the Role of Christ in Worship

Jesus Christ in His incarnation was “made for a little while lower than the angels” (Heb 2:9), subjected Himself to death on a cross (Phil. 2:8), and has therefore been exalted to the Father’s right hand (Phil 2:9; Heb 1:3—now exalted over the angels once again) and “crowned with glory and honor” (Heb 2:9). This was all done as the supreme expression of the grace of God, in order that Jesus “might taste death for everyone” and bring “many sons to glory” (Heb 2:9-10).

We often tend to think that Jesus’ representative and mediatory work was completed at the cross; and that now, having received back the full expression of His glory as God (John 17:5; Phil 2:9), He relates to us solely as God to man; and that His intercession for us before the Father (Heb. 7:25) is pretty much conducted as a divine transaction between two members of the Trinity.

But it is a wondrous fact that Jesus Christ is still *fully human* as well as fully divine even in His exalted position with the Father, and continues to play a unique role in mediating between God and man. Christ mediates our ongoing relationship with our heavenly Father, which is to say He mediates our life of *worship* (which sums up all that we are to be and do as we live under grace before Him—cf. John 4:23; Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 10:31).

The writer of Hebrews portrays this ongoing relationship between God and believer, and Christ’s role in that relationship, in a

wonderful way in 2:12:

(Christ speaking to the Father)
***“I will proclaim Your name to My brethren;
and in the midst of the congregation
I will sing Your praise.”***

The two halves of this verse illustrate in a vivid way how the biblical pattern of *revelation and response* (see *Worship Notes* 1.7 [July 2006]) is realized and fulfilled *in both directions* by the ministry of our living Lord in the midst of His people.

↓ **God to Man.** First Christ says to the Father (in Messianic words quoted from Psalm 22:22), ***“I will proclaim Your name to my brethren.”***

As in His earthly ministry, Jesus’ first concern is the glory of the Father; and His role is that of mediating the truth about God to us, of lifting up the reputation of God and extolling His character before His people.

Worship involves the declaration of God’s *revelation* and the grateful *response* of God’s people. The Scriptures are the record of God’s revelation to men; and Jesus Christ

thus proclaims the Father’s glory as He mediates the communication of biblical truth to the hearts of the people. Through His Word, inspired and illuminated by the Holy Spirit (who has been sent to guide us “into all the truth” about God, John 16:13) and communicated by gifted human instruments (preachers and teachers), Christ indeed proclaims to us the name (the sum total of the glorious attributes and character) of the Father.

This understanding has profound implications for how we look at what happens in

Biblical Principles of Worship*

**#6 Our
worship is
acceptable in
and through
Christ our
High Priest.**

corporate worship. The ministries of preaching and teaching are thus seen to be an extraordinarily important and holy task, as the preacher/teacher undertakes the sobering responsibility of a being a *channel for Christ's own ministry of proclaiming the name of the Father to His brethren*, mediating the Father's divine will to the people. The Son of God speaks through the faithful preacher or teacher to display the wonders of God's glory.

↑ **Man to God.** The other half of Christ's mediating work in worship is less commonly understood: "*in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise*" (Heb. 2:12b).

Jesus Christ in His full humanity mediates not only the *revelation of God to man*, but also mediates the *response of man to God*. In our worship (be it corporate or individual, formal or in our daily walk), Christ does not just receive our worship as God's co-equal, but in His grand condescension and consummate manhood He Himself is the *supreme and perfect worshiper* (cf. 2:12b, "*I will sing Your praise*")! And not only that, but He *leads* His brethren in their responses of worship to God the Father ("in the midst of the *congregation*"). He is not content to receive worship at the Father's right hand from those whom He has graciously redeemed; rather He insists on standing *with* His brothers and sisters (see Heb 2:11); and not just joining in—but actually *leading* the chorus of grateful response to the Father for His grace!

This amazing truth means that in corporate worship it is not only the *preacher* who has the awe-inspiring duty of representing or standing in the place of Christ, and of being a conduit of his ministry to His body: so does the *worship leader*. The worship leader leads, and sings, and conducts, but it is *Christ* who is actually leading the worship—on behalf of, and *along with*, His brethren!

As the preacher is properly a channel for Christ's own ministry of proclamation from God to man, so the worship leader is to be a channel for Christ's ministry of praise to the Father! And thankfully, as the truth of God can shine forth and do its work even in spite of a mediocre human

preacher—exactly because it is *Christ Himself* who is ultimately the One proclaiming—so too the worship leader's (as well as the people's) limited and feeble expressions of praise are lifted up, absorbed, and transformed into Christ's own perfect offering of worship. Our worship is worthy and acceptable because *He* is worthy and acceptable; our worship is excellent to the extent that it connects with and relies on the excellence of *Christ*.

This is grace applied to the deepest levels of our Christian walk; this is divine enablement provided for the life of faith in all of its fullness. Whether in corporate worship, individual worship, or in our daily walk (which too is to be worship, Rom 12:1), there is not a single bit of God's truth which we apprehend without it being mediated to our minds and hearts through Christ in His ministry of proclaiming the Father's name to the brethren. Similarly, whether it be in corporate, individual, or lifestyle worship, there is no response of adoration or gratitude or commitment lifted up to the Father which is not initiated and enabled by the Son in His ministry of praise to the Father in the company of His brethren.

What could give God greater pleasure, in relationship to those He has created in His own image, than to see them receiving His revealed truth and responding in love and worship? And by His marvelous and gracious design, *what He requires He enables*, for it is *He* who is "working *in us* that which is pleasing in His sight, *through Jesus Christ* [in His mediatorial ministry of Proclamation and Praise] . . . to whom be the glory forever and ever! Amen!" (Heb 13:21).

Ron Man

from *Viewpoint*

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***Biblical Principles of Worship** (treating twelve principles, of which the sixth is dealt with here) may be downloaded at www.worr.org/articles.*

Our worship is
worthy and
acceptable to
God because
Christ gathers it
into His own
perfect offering
of praise.

TOWARDS A CHRISTOLOGY OF WORSHIP

1. The living Christ is present in our midst when we gather for worship.

“In the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise” (Heb 2:12b).

2. Only in and through Christ can we enter into God’s presence in worship.

“There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5).

3. Our worship is pleasing and acceptable to God not because of its own excellence, but because of (and only because of) the excellence of His Son.

God accepts and delights in our worship, not because of our efforts or our artistry or even our spirituality, but because of the Son’s continual offering of worship in our place and on our behalf.

4. The Word of God, by which Christ proclaims His Father’s name to His brethren, deserves priority and centrality in our worship.

“I will declare Your Name to My brethren” (Heb 2:12a).

“How are they to believe in Him Whom they have never heard? . . . Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:14, 17).

5. The corporate praise of God’s people, led by Christ Himself, is an integral and crucial part of the gathering of the church.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; with grace singing to God in your hearts” (Col 3:16).

6. No matter how they may differ in the externals, all true expressions of worship share in common that they are led and mediated by Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Through Him [Christ] we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father” (Ephes 2:18).

“For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

7. When we preach or lead worship– we do so representing Christ *whose ministry it is*. He’s the preacher; He’s the worship leader.

“I will declare Your name to My brethren; and in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise” (Heb 2:12).

8. Because Christ leads us in our worship, we can enter boldly and confidently into God’s presence.

“Therefore . . . since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God” (Heb 10:19-22).

9. By His grace God has provided in Christ the worship He requires of us.

“Grant me what You command, and command what You will” (Augustine, *Confessions* X,31).

10. Our singing Savior shows us the appropriateness and necessity of our own songs of praise.

“In the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise” (Heb 2:12b).

“I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name” (Rom 15:9).

If Christ our Mediator deems it fitting to sing the Father’s praises in the midst of the congregation (Hebrews 2:12) and among the nations (Romans 15:9), how can we do less?

11. We need to repent of doing worship in our own strength.

“Through, with and in Christ we turn away in penitential self-denial from our own acts of worship and prayer in order to rest in the worship and prayer which our Saviour has already offered and continues to offer to the Father on our behalf” (Thomas Torrance, “The Mind of Christ in Worship,” 211-12).

Conclusion

All true worship is in and through and by Jesus Christ. This is a supremely unifying understanding of Christian worship in all times and places and styles and forms.

QUOTABLES

Jesus Christ and Worship

“Christ is the priest who, by becoming the victim, offered the sacrifice for sin once for all. This work is done. But as the priest of the eternal order he continues to pray for his people and to offer their praise, perfected in his, to the Father; he is ‘a minister [*leitourgos*] in the sanctuary’, or leader of our worship (8:1).”

(Christopher Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy: Worshipping the Trinitarian God*, 77)

“Because he is our *priest*, and because we are invited to receive his priestly ministry for us and to be included in his holy humanity, our worship is a participation in his worship. Christ is the ‘minister [*leitourgos*] of the new sanctuary’, the *leader* of our worship. He proclaims God and praises God ‘in the midst of the congregation’ (Heb 2:12). . . . He calls us to join his voice and to share in his song.”

(Christopher Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, 159)

“In our human, frail, broken, unworthy response, the Spirit helps in our infirmities, lifting us up to Christ who, in his ascended *humanity*, is our God-given response, the leader of our worship, the pioneer of our faith, our advocate and high priest, who through the eternal Spirit presents us with himself to the Father.”

(James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 88)

“We short-circuit the real humanity of Christ, the role of the continuing priesthood of Christ in representing us to God, and have a one-sided view of the work of the Spirit. . . . It is possible for us so to obtrude our own offering of praise that we lose sight of the one true offering of praise made for us (Heb 2:12). . . . God does not throw back upon ourselves to make our response to the Word in our own strength. But graciously he helps our infirmities by giving us Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to make the appropriate response for us and in us.

(James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 88-89)

“All Christian worship is made ‘through Jesus Christ our Lord’; it is a participation in His perfect worship, just as it finds its basis in the revelation that He embodied. Christian worship adds nothing to the worship of Christ, but is entirely included within it. Christ our High Priest is Himself the foundation of the worship that is offered by the Royal Priesthood of the Church.” (William Nicholls, *Jacob's Ladder: The Meaning of Worship*, 17)

“Ignace Jan Paderewski was, at one time, both the prime minister of Poland and a virtuoso pianist. A story is told about a mother who brought her young son to hear him perform. The boy was just beginning to learn the piano and she wanted him to hear a master, so she bought tickets for two front-row seats in the concert hall. They sat down a few minutes before the concert was to begin.

In the excitement of the event, the mother was looking around the large hall, mesmerized by the glitter and festivity. She didn't notice when her son climbed up on the stage, walked over to the piano and sat down on the bench. Suddenly she, and everyone else in the auditorium, heard the tune ‘Chopsticks’ coming from the piano on the stage. To her embarrassment and horror, she turned to discover that her son was committing this sacrilege upon the master's piano.

Before she could get up on the stage and stop the boy, the master himself walked out from behind the curtains. Paderewski smiled at the distraught mother and waved her back to her seat. He then stood behind the boy, reached around him with both hands and began to play a lovely obbligato to his ‘Chopsticks.’ They were coworkers but not co-equals.

We become coworkers with God only when he reaches around the feeble work of our hands with his hands and sanctifies it.”

(Ben Patterson, *Serving God: The Grand Essentials of Work and Worship*, 159-60)

“Jesus’ voice is what counts, not ours; and his voice in ‘the great assembly’ is as rich and complex as the constitution of his people. There is a unity and diversity in the voices of his assembly which we would not be able to hold together on our own.”

(Reggie Kidd, *With One Voice: Discovering Christ’s Song in Our Worship*, 145)

“If it pleases Jesus to distribute his voice among a wide range of singers and musical dialects, it would profit us to accommodate our preferences and principles to his.”

(Reggie Kidd, *With One Voice: Discovering Christ’s Song in Our Worship*, 146)

“I am not much of a singer. I find it difficult to stay in tune. But when I stand next to someone with a fine voice I find it much easier. The voice I hear in my ear helps to keep my voice on line and I like to think of my voice merging with that voice so that the faltering poverty of mine is purified and beautified by the richness of the other. This is a crude and very inadequate reflection of what happens when we worship. The integrity of the worship which comes from our lips and our hearts is retained; it remains our worship but it is retuned by the greater integrity of the worship of Christ. The Spirit lifts our prayer and praise into the sphere of Christ’s worship to be purified and perfected by his prayer and praise and then presented by Christ to the Father in its new and redeemed form.” (Christopher Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, 161-62)

“The Church’s prayers of praise to God gain meaning and value only because Christ as high priest stands at her head and joins in them. Through Him, God is constantly paid the highest honor, even without our help, since his divine glorified humanity is the finest flower of creation, the supreme revelation of God.”

(Josef A. Jungmann, *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer*, 137)

“Christ encourages us by His example. . . . This teaching is the very strongest encouragement to us to bring yet more fervent zeal to the praise of God, when we hear that Christ hears our praise, and is the chief Conductor of our hymns.”

(John Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews*, 2:12)

“Where Christ comes, song comes, for Jesus Christ is a singing Savior (Heb 2:12).”

(Edmund P. Clowney, “The Singing Savior,” *Moody Monthly* July-August 1979, 40)

“The foundation of Christian worship is our Lord Himself, as the One who is both the divine Word and man’s perfect response to that Word. . . .

Thus our aim will be to relate worship at every point to the revelation and redemption which God brought about in Christ, and to show how He is the *Jacob’s Ladder* upon which passes all that traffic of God to man and man to God which is the meaning of our worship.”

(William Nicholls, *Jacob’s Ladder: The Meaning of Worship*, 12)

“Who can love God with his heart, mind, and soul?

Who can achieve perfect union with God?

Who can worship God with a pure and unstained heart?

Not me! . . .

Not you. Not Billy Graham. . . .

Not anybody I know or you know.

Only Jesus can. And he does for me and for you what neither of us can do for ourselves.

This is the message that is missing in the literature of contemporary worship. It is too much about what I ought to do and too little about what God has done for me. God has done for me what I cannot do for myself. He did it in Jesus Christ. Therefore my worship is offered in a broken vessel that is in the process of being healed, but is not yet capable of fullness of joy, endless intense passion, absolute exaltation, and celebration. But Jesus, who shares in my humanity yet without sin, is not only my Savior—he is also my complete and eternal worship, doing for me, in my place, what I cannot do. . . .

He is eternally interceding to the Father on our behalf. And for this reason, our worship is always in and through Christ. . . .

Thanks for Jesus Christ, who is my worship. We are free! And in gratitude, we offer our stumbling worship in the name of Jesus with thanksgiving.”

(Robert E. Webber, “Contemporary Music-Driven Worship—A Blended Worship Response,” *Exploring the Worship Spectrum*, 130)

“Johann von Staupitz, Luther’s mentor, asked him once, ‘Luther, what happens if all this works, if you have your Reformation. What happens to the devotions, and to the pilgrimages, and to the relics, and to all the wonderful things of the Church; and to the marvelous, majestic liturgy, with all of its pomp and ceremony; all these things that we’ve grown up with and that we love so dearly and that are so close to our hearts? What will be left when you’re through?’

“And Luther said, ‘*Christ.*’”

(Michael Horton, taped message “Worship: The New Testament Pattern” (1998 Phila. Conference on Reformed Theology)

“However much, therefore, worship and prayer may vary in linguistic and behavioural forms, as they inevitably and rightly do when they are expressed in the habits of different societies, peoples, cultures and ages, they nevertheless have embedded in them an invariant element which derives from the normative pattern of the incarnate love of God in Jesus Christ. In so far as worship and prayer are through, with and in Christ, they are not primarily forms of man’s self-expression or self-fulfilment or self-transcendence in this or that human situation or cultural context, but primarily forms of Christ’s vicarious worship and prayer offered on behalf of all mankind in all ages. However, precisely because our worship and prayer are finally shaped and structured by the invariant pattern of Christ’s mediatorial office, they are also open to change in variant human situations and societies, cultures, languages and ages, even with respect to differing aesthetic tastes and popular appeal, if only because these variant forms of worship and prayer are relativised by the invariant form of worship and prayer in Christ which they are intended to serve. Hence when worship and prayer are objectively grounded in Christ in this way, we are free to use and adapt transient forms of language and culture in our worship of God, without being imprisoned in time-conditioned patterns, or swept along by constantly changing fashions, and without letting worship and prayer dissolve away into merely cultural and secular forms of man’s self-expression and self-fulfilment.”

(Thomas F. Torrance, “The Mind of Christ in Worship,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 213)

“Hebrews thus considers also the present lordship of Christ as a high priestly Office. As a result of this conception of the High Priest, the author connects as closely as possible Christ’s present work and His once-for-all act. ‘Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he *always lives* to make intercession for them’ (7:25). This quite clearly indicates a high priestly office which Christ continues to fulfil in the present since his resurrection.”

(Oscar Cullmann, *Christology of the New Testament*, 101-2)

“That is what it means to pray and worship in the name of Jesus Christ ‘Mediator, High Priest and Advocate’; He is *the* Offerer of all our worship to God.”

(Thomas F. Torrance, “The Mind of Christ in Worship,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 184)

“In a remarkable analogy, J. J. von Allmen [*Worship: Its Theology and Practice*, 144] suggests that the preacher is like the Virgin Mary. Like Mary, who ‘receives, clothes with her substance and gives forth to the world, God’s eternal Word,’ the preacher receives God’s word, clothes it in human words, and proclaims to the world God’s eternal Word. The deep connection between the act of preaching and the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ, is here identified (Leanne Van Dyk, “Proclamation/Revelation, Christology,” *A More Profound Alleluia*, 71)

“We don’t deserve to worship God. . . . But God graciously invites us to worship and then provides us with the means to receive communion with and revelation from God—the very presence of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is Trinitarian mystery, hospitality, and gift. (Leanne Van Dyk, “Proclamation/Revelation, Christology,” *A More Profound Alleluia*, 63-64)

“The implication of Christology for worship is that it is to be both fully divine and fully human. Overdivinization and over humanization are always heretical and usually the easiest routes to follow. The balance of fully human and fully divine is always the most challenging and difficult.”

(Robert Webber, “Culture Watch: Millennials on the Rise,” *Worship Leader* May/June 1999, 12)

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on Christ's role in leading our worship

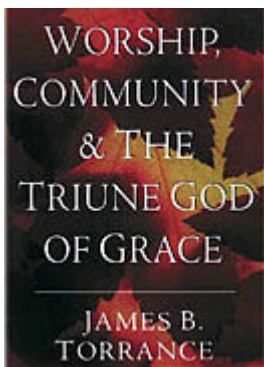
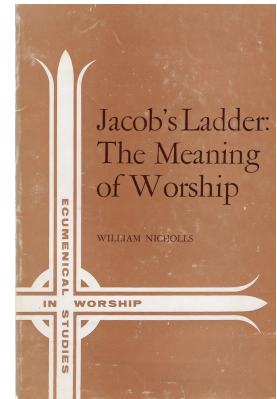
BOOKS

Jacob's Ladder: The Meaning of Worship

by William Nicholls (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958)

(out of print, but often available through used bookstores online)

Nicholls' stimulating study demonstrates that "the foundation of Christian worship is our Lord Himself, as the One who is both the divine Word and man's perfect response to that Word. . . . He is the *Jacob's Ladder* upon which passes all the traffic of God to man and man to God" (p. 12).



Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace

by James B. Torrance (InterVarsity Press, 1996)

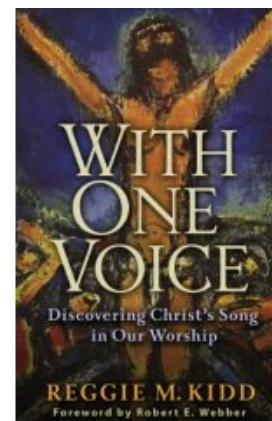
Torrance insists that "how we worship God must reflect who God is—the triune God of grace—and what he has done and is doing for us in Christ and by the Holy Spirit." (p. 10) He claims with searing insight that much if not most of evangelical worship is, in practice if not in theory, "unitarian" in nature: God has saved us, and now we do something for Him in return when we worship. How infinitely richer, Torrance shows us, is a trinitarian understanding of worship: one which fully takes into account the ongoing high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ, in His humanity continuing to mediate between God and man, in both God's revelation to us and in our response to Him. How trifling and petty our worship debates (and even "wars") seem next to such a vision!

In the fourth and final chapter of the book Torrance makes an unfortunate and rather puzzling detour into a discussion of gender roles in the church. Nevertheless, this author cannot recommend this book too highly for its refreshingly God-honoring, Christ-centered approach to worship.

With One Voice Discovering Christ's Song in Our Worship

by Reggie Kidd (Zondervan, 2002)

Kidd's desire and aim is to see God glorified by a riotous diversity (which he fits into the categories of "Bach, Bubba, and the Blues Brothers"!) of worship expressions lifted up by His redeemed people from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Revel. 5:9), rooted in the theological fact that Christ Himself is the One voicing His Father's praise through hugely varied forms of worship expression on the part of His brethren. Kidd draws upon a wide range of sources (ancient, historic, and modern; from the Church fathers to current rock lyrics; theology, literature and art) to help illustrate and defend his call for mutual understanding and acceptance of one another's worship forms and practices. What Jesus accepts and endorses (according to Psalm 22), let no man despise!



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AUDIO MESSAGES

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Sinclair Ferguson, "True Spirituality, True Worship (Heb 2:12-13)" (taped message from Covenant College).

REPORT: GCOMM 2006



“every music, every voice, every heart”

The Global Consultation on Music in Missions in St. Paul (July 11-15) was a wondrous gathering of some 250 missionaries and nationals from around the world, who are involved in the encouraging and fashioning of culturally indigenous worship music among various people groups. Its theme was “Every Music – Every Voice – Every Heart.” We heard a wonderful diversity of native instruments and sang in a wide variety of different languages. There were also messages, lectures, panel discussions and workshops on various aspects of “ethnomusicology” (the study of the musics of various people groups) and its sibling “ethnodoxology” (a newly coined word referring more specifically

to different peoples’ worship expressions).

What a vibrant representation, in all its God-honoring diversity, of the worship of our brother and sisters from many “tribes and tongues and people and nations”! I had the honor to speak twice to the gathering, on the topics [“The Gospel: A Call to Worldwide Worship”](#) and [“The Bridge: Worship and Culture.”](#)

The next GCOMM (the first one was in 2003) is tentatively scheduled to be held in Singapore in 2009.

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 ffort2@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.

WORSHIP EVENTS



2006 Louisiana Baptist Church Music Conference
Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria ♦ August 4-5

[Info](#)

WorshipGod06

the glory of His presence

August 9th-12th, 2006
Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland

[Info](#)



August 11-12, 2006
St. Andrews Baptist Church
Columbia, South Carolina

Purpose
To assist music leadership to
grow in their spiritual walk, to
be intentional disciple makers,
and to offer authentic worship to
God.

[Info](#)



[Info](#)

CALVIN SYMPOSIUM ON



January 25-27, 2006

Calvin College

Grand Rapids, Michigan

www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos

COMING NEXT MONTH:

The Holy Spirit and Worship



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