

WORSHIP IN THE MELTING POT¹
II - RATIONAL OR ECSTATIC WORSHIP?

Introduction

- A. Bible Exposition
1. John 4.24, “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”
 2. Introduction
 - a) These are the words of Jesus spoken to the Samaritan woman at the well - Jesus spoke to her about true worship
 - b) She told Jesus that her ancestors worshipped in this mountain (Gerizim) and Jesus taught that in Jerusalem should all men worship
 - c) And Jesus said to her that the time is coming that men ought not to worship the Father in this mountain or at Jerusalem
 - (1) Rather, God the Father is seeking true worship which is in spirit and in truth
 - (2) The reason is because God is a Spirit
 - (3) Words of the text, “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth”.
 3. The teaching
 - a) There are 2 important aspects of true worship
 - (1) Worship according to spirit and worship according to truth
 - (2) These are not separate aspects that have nothing to do with each other but they are 2 aspects of the one true worship
 - (3) Both are essential ingredients to true worship
 - b) What is spiritual worship
 - (1) From the truth that God is Spirit
 - (a) God is invisible (I Ti. 1.17)
 - (b) Thus, we make no representation of God, according to 2nd Commandment
 - (2) That our spirits are moved and directed by the Spirit of God
 - (3) Worship is of faith (He. 11.6), humility (James 5.10) and offered only in the way of repentance

¹ Adapted from Peter Master from the title of the same book

(Psa. 51.16, 17) which results in full of spiritual joy and is brought willingly and obediently

- c) Today, we want to focus on worship according to truth
 - (1) Truth is God's Word (John 17.17)
 - (a) Truth as read in the call, Scripture Reading
 - (b) Truth as expounded in the preaching of the Gospel
 - (c) Truth as sung in the psalms and hymns
 - (d) Truth as heard in the benedictions
 - (2) Truth is the way we worship through our minds and understanding
 - (a) The goal of worship is edification (I Cor 14.26)
 - (i) The figure used is a building, where bricks and mortar are added to the building
 - (ii) Through the understanding of the Word
 - (a) That our minds are enlightened
 - (b) That we are assured of God's promises
 - (c) That we are comforted in our souls
 - (b) The end result
 - (i) To live a life well-pleasing to God in obedience, submission to the will of God
 - (ii) To the praise and honour of God
 - (3) Why truth is emphasized in worship
 - (a) Christ is the truth (John 14.6), who is the centre of worship
 - (i) The person and truth of Christ is the content of true worship
 - (ii) Without Christ, there is no true worship
 - (b) Christ is the Word, which leads us to the foot of the cross
 - (i) It is only there that sinners can worship God
 - (ii) The cross points our sins out, points to the solution and ends in us worshipping God out of love and gratitude to God

B. What is ecstatic worship

1. Definition

- a) It is worship through emotions and the stirring of it to produce a simulated, exalted and trance-like state

- b) Their object is to “achieve a warm, happy feeling, perhaps, great excitement, and even a sense of God’s presence through the earthly, physical aspects of worship, such as music and movement”
2. Means
- a) This is their goal and they use whatever means to achieve that, including the music programme (or choice of songs), music, singing, dance, drama, skits, and preaching
 - b) The music programme
 - (1) Aim
 - (a) This is carefully engineered to bring the worshippers to a high emotional pitch and often to a mildly hypnotic state
 - (b) They do it to bypass the rationality and get the feeling going and stir up euphoria (feelings of intense happiness)
 - (2) Programme itself
 - (a) The opening number is upbeat and will have an effect upon worshippers and the music leads the worshippers to a certain mood and then it moves to another tempo, volume and key
 - (b) Instruments, arrangements, chords and beat are used to maximum effect of bending and swaying the feelings of the people to maximise their feelings for worship
 - (c) Their aim is to make a direct assault of the soul by means of music
 - c) Preaching
 - (1) No doubt, the Word of God is used but it is interpreted according to the preacher’s fancies and it is often man-centred to please men and it is summarised in the health-wealth gospel
 - (2) The preaching is also mainly emotional, where the congregation is led to emotional high and low in order that they will come forward in the altar call and make a decision for Christ, through the use of tear-jerkers - this is none other than the manipulation of the feelings of man in order to achieve their purpose
- C. The Christian’s Answer based on the teaching of God’s Word
- 1. Ecstatic worship is false worship and not according to God’s Word (John 4.24)
 - a) True worship does not try to manipulate the feelings by earthly techniques but derives its joy from sincere, spiritual appreciation of the Lord, of his words and of the great doctrines of the faith

- b) True worship takes place when people understand their need of Christ, not by emotions but through the hearing and the Word, and comes to a conviction of their sins and repenting from it. Only then, such a conviction of sin is genuine and long-lasting
2. In true worship, Christians must pray and sing with understanding (I Cor. 14.14-20)
- a) Stephen Charnock says, “Worship is an act of the understanding applying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of the God ... it is also an act of the will, whereby the soul adores and reverences his majesty., is ravished with his amiableness, embraceth his goodness ... and pitcheth all its affections upon him”
 - b) A warning of abusing music and music accompaniment in worship
 - (1) Music must be used to an accompaniment to the singing of praise to God and not to whip up emotions or feelings
 - (2) Music is secondary and can be dispensed with but the words of the praise to God is primary and cannot be dispensed with
 - c) This is what John Wesley advised hymn-writers, “above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself or any other creature. Attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, AND SEE THAT YOUR HEART IS NOT CARRIED AWAY WITH THE SOUND, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve of here, and reward when he cometh in the clouds of heaven”