Christ-centered Adventist Worship

By Nicholas Zork

Christ's supremacy over all and His centrality in the Church is a longstanding conviction of orthodox Christians (e.g., Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:13-18). If our Adventist theology and mission is to adequately reflect this radical Christ-centeredness, does that mean that we need to become less distinctively Adventist? Absolutely not! In fact, it's painful to even write the question. But is there something that we should deemphasize in order to place greater emphasis on Christ?

True worship highlights the actual fundamental choice that we (and all Christians) must make: the choice between Christ and self. The key decision before us at all times is not whether we will be Christ-centered or distinctly Adventist; the key decision is whether we will be Christ-centered Adventists or self-centered Adventists.
Here are three paradigmatic examples of how Adventist worship can affirm a theology that is both distinctively Adventist and thoroughly Christ-centered:

1. As Adventists we anxiously await Christ's soon return and seek to share this hope with the world. As we thank God in worship for the promise of Jesus' glorious appearing, we are reminded that our focus must be first and foremost on what Christ will do, on His consummating act of redemption. True worship reminds us to fix our eyes on Jesus and not let our attention become fixated on ourselves and our preparation for His return - important as our preparation is! It is only worth being ready (or possible to be ready) because of what Christ has done, is doing, and will do.

2. Worship on the Seventh-day Sabbath reminds us that we are called to rest in Christ and His work of creation and redemption. And we can truly rest only as we reflect on Jesus' work. If we lose sight of Christ's work on our behalf, we will inevitably seek to fulfill His role ourselves. True Sabbath worship helps us remember that we are not our own creators and redeemers. As the Sabbath points us to Christ's mighty deeds, God enables us in a worshful response that makes it possible for us to experience the blessed Sabbath rest God has ordained.

3. One of the great themes of Adventist theology, which deeply shapes our worldview, is the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. In the struggles of daily life it is easy to forget the true nature of this cosmic battle. We can begin to imagine that the controversy is in fact between us and Satan. This misconception is not only arrogant and dangerous, it can lead to genuine discouragement - and rightly so. Without Christ we have no hope in this conflict. True Christ-centered worship reminds us that it is Jesus who overcomes the powers of darkness. It is because of Christ's power and not our own that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God" (Rom 8:39).

Adventist eschatology has long warned about the insidious dangers of worshipping human powers who put themselves in the place of God (Rev 13). But the true alternative to such human self-righteousness cannot be human righteousness in another form. So let us ensure that in our worship we focus not on ourselves but on Christ, the head of the Church, in whom our Adventist identity is grounded and has real meaning. Our worship should be distinctively Adventist, and as such, it should exalt Christ to the highest place in distinctive ways. May we be Christ-centered and not self-centered Adventists. And for the sake of our theology, our community, and the world, may we always and only "worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters" (Rev 14:7).

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Ecos de Adoración

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Por Andrés Flores

Cuando éramos niños nos gustaba jugar a las escondidas. Qué emoción cuando nuestros compañeros de juego intentaban encontrar a nuestras escondidas que pensábamos que eran seguras. Por alguna razón, escondemos nos daba un sentido de aventura y diversión.

Al crecer aprendemos a esconder en forma más sofisticada. Escondemos nuestras emociones, nuestras intenciones e ideas y muy frecuentemente nuestra adoración a Dios. Desde que Adán y Eva pecaron Dios tomó la iniciativa y vino a su encuentro, pero ellos "se escondieron de la presencia de Jehová Dios entre los árboles del huerto" (Génesis 3:8). Desde ese momento nos convertimos en expertos para escondernos de Dios.

Cuando un escriba le preguntó a Cristo cuál es el mandamiento más importante, Jesús respondió que la respuesta de amor a Dios debe incluir todo lo que somos como personas: "Y amarás al Señor tu Dios con todo tu corazón, y con toda tu alma, y con toda tu mente y con todas tus fuerzas. Este es el principal mandamiento" (Marcos 12:30).

La respuesta de Cristo afirma que la adoración que Dios anhela de su pueblo debe involucrar la totalidad de cada una de las facultades del creyente: el intelecto, las emociones, la capacidad de elegir y nuestra fortaleza física. Nuestra tendencia es esconder ciertas facultades y no rendirlas a Dios, sin embargo él desea una entrega sin reservas en la adoración pública y en la privada. Este modelo holístico de adoración nos lleva a preguntarnos: ¿Qué significa adorar a Dios con todo el intelecto, con las mejores emociones, la voluntad y la fortaleza física? ¿Cuál es el papel de los líderes de iglesia al planear servicios de adoración que involucren todas las facultades del ser humano?

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Editor's note: Andres Flores presentará dos seminarios en español en la próxima conferencia de Música y Adoración en la Universidad de Andrews. Click here for more information.
Building Trust Among Artists

By Rick Anderson Jr.

Artists can be unique people, sometimes known for egos, sensitivities and controversy despite their valuable place in our church bodies. When I set out to create a Worship Planning Committee in my worship ministry, I had no idea how complex all of the interaction between leaders would be. I kept the committee small, but representative of the various ministries that create the worship experience each Sabbath (music ministry, visual arts, prayer, etc...). Within that committee there is also diversity of culture, age and experience that is representative of our congregation.

I believe it's important to bring together these individuals with different backgrounds, preferences and perspectives, but it can also present a challenge. The challenge comes from blending diverse opinions and working together for a common cause: creating transformational worship experiences for our congregation. The only way that I believe we can effectively accomplish our goal is through committing fully to it and being willing to leave our own agendas at the door.

It's an important commitment that I asked my team to take seriously by having them sign a Covenant that outlined the standards and expectations that we will all be asked to keep. You can view that document by clicking here.

After all, our ministry is worthless if we are not exemplifying the love and mercy of Christ in our lives and relationships.

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Editor's note: What items from the Worship Ministry Leadership Agreement at New Hope Adventist Church might you include in a similar covenant at your church? Is there anything you would add?

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www.rickandersonworship.com

Featured Media

Jesus in Our History

By Sam Leonor

Sam Leonor speaks about the importance of Jesus in Adventist history. This presentation was given at The One Project, an Adventist gathering celebrating the supremacy of Jesus in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Click here to listen to it.

Worship Planning

Revelation and Response

By Nicholas Zork

If first-time visitors were to join one of our congregations for worship this Sabbath, would they be able to tell that we were responding to God? For that matter, is this always obvious to our own church members?

True Christian worship involves revelation and response: revelation of God's nature and work and responses of confession, thanksgiving, and adoration. But I fear that at times our worship gives the impression that we are actually responding to ourselves. If a service begins, for example, with an opening song that simply expresses our love for God with no mention of why, could it seem that we are simply responding to the worship leader or the music?

Here are three practical ways to embody the essential relationship between revelation and response in worship:

1. Begin worship with a hymn or song that recounts God's mighty deeds. One good example is a song like "Forever," which is based on Psalm 136. This Psalm exemplifies the Jewish form of prayer called "Berakah" - a prayer that blesses God by relating what God has done. After singing a song of "revelation," more subjective "response" songs like "From the Inside Out" will make much more sense. The Divine Object of our response will be apparent.

2. On occasion, try placing a worship song set or hymn cycle after the sermon. What better way to convey that our sung responses are grounded in God's self-revelation in Christ and through Scripture?
3. Experiment with collecting offering near the end of the service. This powerfully communicates to church members and visitors alike that offering is not the price of admission to a revelatory encounter with God. Rather, it is a responsive act of worship, a natural result of a transforming experience in God's presence. At the end of worship, offering can become an opportunity to let the revealed grace of Christ overflow in grateful sacrifice for the world.

**Worship Resources**

**ProPresenter**

By Rick Anderson Jr.

The industry standard of presentation software for top Christian artists and megachurches is now available for YOUR church. ProPresenter has all the features that can take your worship visuals to the next level. I've worked with ProPresenter on the Mac platform for several years now and I'm really excited to see it now available on PC. Beyond the typical features of song library, multi-media playback and Bible verse integration, ProPresenter employs more advanced technology that enhance whatever worship environment it's used in. Let me tell you a little bit about why I love it through how I've used it at the two churches I've served as worship pastor at.

I worked at a small church plant of about 80 attendees (Hillside Community Church) meeting in the city hall of South San Francisco. In the small meeting room we had, there was no platform for the speaker and many complained that they couldn't see the pastor speak from the back of the room. ProPresenter was the perfect solution for us, because you can run live video straight into ProPresenter and add it as a layer to what is projected onto the screen. Using the simple built-in layout feature, we were able to run the Bible texts and bullet points as lower thirds and use the live video during the sermons.

I now work at a larger church (New Hope Adventist Church) with a whole new set of priorities and needs. At New Hope, there are several unique features in ProPresenter that have proved helpful. We used to use EasyWorship and had to switch back and forth between applications to project song lyrics, video clips and PowerPoint from the pastor. Within ProPresenter, we can now effectively play and mix all of our media. You can import virtually any type of video file as well as files from other presentation software, like PowerPoint and Keynote.

There are lots of great features contained in ProPresenter. Give it a chance at your church! Go to www.renewedvision.com to download the free version (with a watermark on the output) and check out all of the related tutorial resources and documentation.

**Worship Gatherings**

**Andrews University Music and Worship Conference**

The eighth annual Andrews University Music and Worship Conference is coming soon, March 24-26, 2011. We are excited to announce two musicians who have recently been added to our list of presenters: Grammy-winning producer and arranger, David Huntsinger, and Golden Globe-nominated composer, Kristin Wilkinson. Along with the Andrews University Singers, they will be presenting a selection of songs from their composition, Pillars of Our Faith (as seen on 3ABN and at the 2010 General Session in Atlanta). As a participant, you will have access to a variety of practical workshops and inspiring worship experiences. Featured presenters will include Dr. Roberta King, Associate Professor of Communication and Ethnomusicology at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies; and Dr. Pedrito Maynard-Reid, Professor of Biblical Studies and Missiology and Assistant to the President for Diversity at Walla Walla University. For registration and more info: visit www.auworshipconference.org or call 800.968.8428. Don't miss this exciting opportunity to grow in your ministry!

**To the Point**

"Worship is a way of gladly reflecting back to God the radiance of His worth."

John Piper

"We only learn to behave ourselves in the presence of God."

C. S. Lewis

"Worship changes the worshiper into the image of the One worshiped"

Jack Hayford

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the
point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

*The Apostle Paul (Phil. 2:5-11)*

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**Publishing Information**

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We welcome your feedback and ideas.
Worship Ministry Leadership Agreement
New Hope Adventist Church

I understand that as a leader within the Worship Ministry at New Hope Adventist Church, that there are certain expectations I must adhere to.

• I will maintain and grow a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
• I will continue to develop my technical abilities and skills to give God my best offering in worship.
• I will use my position of authority to grow those under me both spiritually and technically.
• I will publically support and respect other leaders and volunteers involved in ministry.
• I will voice any concerns or disagreements with other leaders with the following biblical principles in mind...
  o Ephesians 4:14-16: Speak the truth in love to the individual. Do not use divisive language, condescending tone or allow my personal preference to interfere with communication.
  o Matthew 18:15-19: Go to the person, one-on-one. If that doesn’t work, involve one or two other leaders. And, so on...
  o Colossians 3:12-17: Be compassionate, tenderhearted and seek peace and unity above all else, for Christ’s sake. Our ministry is worthless if we are not exemplifying the love and mercy of Christ in our lives and relationships!
• I will resolve to make worship at New Hope a transformational experience for people who come by lifting Christ above all things and eliminating distraction of any type from doing so.
• I will treat all topics of sensitive natured discussion in meetings and private conversations confidential.

Signed:  

Date:  