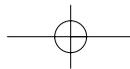
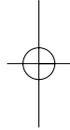
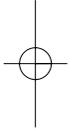




How Do We Glorify God?



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A RADICAL PERSPECTIVE

■ Not long ago I was in a certain church for the beginning of a worship service. With exuberance and uplifted hands, the choir called us to “celebrative” worship by singing, “I feel good.” I was profoundly disturbed because it seemed to me that such a call to worship is saying that we do not really need to come to God and that he should appreciate it when we take time from our busy schedules to recognize his existence. By contrast, the validity of true religious faith and the reason for gathering corporately is to celebrate the glories of God while confessing his grace toward us in the adoration of his person.

Many churches have fallen prey to cultural assimilation. They have degenerated into self-serving enterprises whose primary celebration is to exalt God as giver and to validate a message of cultural narcissism and personal advantages. Such churches have accommodated themselves to things that are not eternal. Genuine worship is not like that. It realizes the worth of God and our dependence on him. It is not a celebration of a favored socioeconomic status within a decadent capitalistic state.

Any sane person might tip his allegorical hat to a God who is merely a cosmic provider, but Christian communities

■ Glorify God

do not exist to wonder at their physical abundance. They exist to adore the God who is abundant in mercy and forgiveness.

The Erosion of God-Centeredness

Forces set in place since the seventeenth century have created a downward spiral of life and values in Western culture. A focus on God and his Word has a liberating effect on people, but a departure from the Word with an emphasis on self leads to bondage. With roots in the Enlightenment, which emphasized the supremacy of reason or natural revelation, the Modern Age (1750–1900) stressed human perfectibility through education and advances in science while denying the biblical doctrine of human insufficiency. The rationality of mankind became the hope of what was thought to be an ever-improving, increasingly benevolent world. This view of the world and life collapsed under the weight of contrary evidence. Two world wars and mass genocides have told us that while advances in science can improve life in many wonderful ways, secular education cannot and does not improve the dark side of the human species. In fact, increasing knowledge can make it even darker and more dangerous.

The Modern Age has ended. However, what replaced it was not a return to the biblical world of the first century or the Reformation of the sixteenth century but human despair. The Modern Age embraced the possibility of corporate cohesiveness through a common moral perspective, but that proved to be a myth, and what replaced it was an emphasis on the self, personal rights, and private morals. Thus was born the Post-modern Age with its call to radical self-centeredness.

The fruit of postmodernity has been a re-visioning of society. Social commentators have warned of this, from the