

Calvin University

Calvin Digital Commons

Symposium on Worship Archive

2016 - The Book of Isaiah

Bad Worship in the Bible

Cornelius Plantinga Jr.
Calvin Theological Seminary

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/uni-cicw-symposium>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Plantinga, Cornelius Jr., "Bad Worship in the Bible" (2016). *Symposium on Worship Archive*. 26.
<https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/uni-cicw-symposium/2016/allitems/26>

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship at Calvin Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Symposium on Worship Archive by an authorized administrator of Calvin Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dbm9@calvin.edu.

Neal Plantinga

CICW

2016 Calvin Symposium on Worship

C12 Bad Worship in the Bible

OUTLINE

Psalm 98

We will also have eternal delights; all marked by music and acclamation as people join their voices and all nature sings and rings with joy, even the trees and the wolves and the lambs taking part, each in its own particular way. Whales breaching for joy, elephants trumpeting, lions roaring, horses whinnying—every creature, great and small, adding its unique voice to the celebration. Everybody and everything shouts to the Lord in universal acclamation and praise.

In an address in the Western Cape of South Africa ten months ago, eminent theologian Dirkie Smits of the theology faculty of Stellenbosch University gave an address titled “What Makes Worship Good?” *Pleasant? Important? Fitting? Transformative?*

Smits: “processes” in worship. Subversion, lament, liberation, koinonia, clarification, self-examination, equipping, transforming, elevating.

And yet (Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology*) the church enacts the liturgy not for its benefit plan but to worship God. The benefits are by-products.

The deepest conviction implicit in the liturgy is that God is worthy of worship. Adoration of God: awe of God’s glory, reverence before God’s holiness, and gratitude for God’s unsurpassable love.

The church is, moreover, *obliged* to worship God. Failure to do it wrongs God.

“God is one who participates in mutual address.”

Alas, bad worship. 1 Corinthians 11 and bad agape feasts. 1 Corinthians 13, clunky talk. James 1: no follow through. James 3: praising and cursing from the same mouth. Amos 5: famous tirade. Disturbing: exposes self-deception. Comforting: exposes Israel's honesty about her injustice.

Three examples of bad worship. Cain in Gen. 4: apathy, resentment, murderousness. Careless worship. Need for mindfulness. Small measures to increase it.

Israel in Exodus 32. Idolatry is not only having an alternative god instead of the one true God. It is also having an alternative god *alongside* the one true God. Divided worship. Idolatry is treacherous, ungrateful, futile. Alternate gods cannot save us. Idolatry is therefore not just wrong, but also stupid.

Jesus in Matthew 23 on hypocrisy: false presentation of oneself. Always involving self-deception. Jonathan Edwards: Hypocrites aware of their falseness early and late, but the worst hypocrisy is unaware of itself. Extended to worship: interest in minutiae but not in justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

Discussion.